Non–Hierarchical Intermedial Intertwining in Contemporary Drama and Theatre[1]

TOMAŽ TOPORIŠIČ

The chapter focuses on specific forms of the intertwining of media in contemporary performative and visual practices. One could here point out performance art as the most ostensibly intermedial form; however, we choose to go down a slightly different path and use some examples from theatre and contemporary drama: no longer dramatic texts and contemporary theatre. We will focus particularly on the area of intermedia and the interlacing, or rather, intertwining of performative and visual arts; the relationship between performance art and theatre; post-dramatic texts on the one hand and visual culture and art on the other. It is a characteristic of this inter- or trans-disciplinary intertwining that it elicits insistence on traversing the borders between different genres of art, as well as between art and life itself.

1. DRAMA AND THEATRE AS THE LANGUAGES OF TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

Let us begin with the thesis that the languages that fill up the "semiotic space" (Lotman) of performance are very diverse and that this diversity is precisely the quality that enables traversing of borders. "Theatre's position as an intermediary between the moving and nondiscrete real world and the immobile and discrete world of the representational arts is the reason for the constant switch of codes on the one hand between the theatre and people's actual behaviour, and on the other hand between theatre and the representational arts. The consequence is that life and painting in many cases relate to each other through theatre which serves as a mediating code, a translation-code (Lotman 1990, 59-60)." Here we will focus on how this mediation affects the manners of interpretation.

However, the notion of in-betweenness and traversing does not stop at this point; instead, we shall also apply it to Rancière's notion of the emancipated spectator who understands the relationship between actors who build up the stage as researchers and spectators playing the role of active interpreters, thus creating their own translation, primarily as an emancipated community of narrators and translators or, rather, interpreters.

Drama and theatre thus become a matter of translation in Bourriaud's sense of the word: art explores the bonds that text and image, time and space, weave between themselves.

Traversing from one cultural landscape into another and thus generating new paths among the multiplicity of forms of expression and communication becomes a feature of performative space (and, to a large extent, gallery space as well). Thus emerges a dynamics of semiotic languages in space that is not simply a sum of individual signifying systems, but rather establishes the theatre or literary event through their interaction, according to Lotman. This event, to a large extent, depends on what Lotman designates with the notion of the relation between the text and the audience. "A text and its readership are in a relationship of mutual activation: a text strives to make its readers conform to itself, to force on them its own system of codes, and the readers respond in the same way. The text as it were contains an image of its 'own' ideal readership, and the readership one of its 'own' text" (Lotman 1990, 63).

The dynamics of semiotic languages that emerges in the theatre is therefore characteristic of both the second paradigm of theatre performance and the third paradigm of reception. The dynamics of the semiotic languages of the reception of performance becomes even

stronger when the creative potentialities of the viewer are fully acti-vated. In this sense, such texts are close to the structuralist and mate-rialist approach to interpretation as practised by Frederick Jameson. We can, however, at the same time understand theatre outside its cause-and-effect dependence on literature, of course, as an activity that not only interprets signs produced by culture but also uses these very signs enabled by culture as its own, namely—in the words of the semiologist Erika Fischer-Lichte—by using them as signs of signs.

2. POST–DRAMATIC EXAMPLES: ELFRIEDE JELINEK, SIMONA SEMENIČ, DINO PEŠUT

A kind of non-dramatic interweaving of monological forms and dia-logical currents at different levels takes place in contemporary drama and theatre (let us at this point just recall Oliver Frljić's performances *Damned Be the Traitor of His Homeland and Our Violence and Your Violence* or Elfriede Jelinek's plays, e.g. *Bambiland*). Such deconstructed dialog-ical forms of drama produce a polyphonic discourse of speech sur-faces characterised by dialogism in the Bakhtinian sense of the word. The emerging polylogic form is composed of extreme and virtually unintelligible and unreadable assemblages that are often memorial in nature. These texts do not present any fixed truth or meaning, but rather expose their own processes of representation. What is meant is precisely that which also creates and breaks down meaning itself. The interpretation of such corpora thus becomes ambiguous, often hesi-tant, while at the same time opening up new possible insights into real-ity which abolish the self-evidence of ideologisms.

Contemporary drama and collaborative theatre texts thus deny the basic assumptions of absolute drama: dialogues, characters, and dramatic structure. These are replaced by blocks of monologues that often refer to memories. The authors are looking for new approaches to writing for a theatre of a new era. Elfriede Jelinek thus creates speech surfaces that substitute dramatic action and dialogue and combines for-mal innovations with radical political engagement in content. Most of her later work, e.g. *In the Alps*, *Bambiland*, *Work*, and *Babel*, deal with dis-tinctly up-to-date and topical events: a skiing tragedy in Kaprun, the war in Iraq, Heider and neoNazism. She juxtaposes the profound and the triv-ial, human emotions with dressing up and fashion. The values that she presents are mostly commodified and empty and had been replaced by television and marketing. Life and death thus become a giant screen obscuring the emptiness and nothingness that lie behind it.

While Jelinek likes to play around with overidentification with problematic, macho genres in everything from pop culture to pornographic content, she uses a different approach in her *Princess Dramas*: here, she borrows traditional and contemporary stories but undermines their form and authoritarian ideology from which they appear to be inseparable. Once she retells these stories in a new way, she thus also establishes new sexually determined parameters of these stories, which means that she gives new, personal interpretations to the contemporary Barthesian mythologies of Lady Di, Jackie Kennedy and Sylvia Plath by translating them into her own mythologies of the unbearable present tense at the beginning of the 21st century.

FIGURE 1: Elfriede Jelinek: *Princess Dramas*, directed by Michał Borczuch: Anja Novak, Janja Majzelj, Maruša Oblak and Damjana Černe, photo Peter Uhan, Mladinsko Theatre Archives

Just like Jelinek, Simona Semenič and other young authors in the area of (no longer) dramatic or contemporary performative practices in Slovenia choose different ways of detours or deviations of set dramatic and theatrical forms. We are witnessing the emergence of hybrid speech surfaces of immense density spewing forth massive chunks of sound material like some kind of memory geysers, where it is no longer clear which are the signified that these chains of signifiers are aimed at. This way, they point out desemantisation and emphasise the performative dimensions of the text, the acoustic material of language, the corporeality of the text, its musicality and polysemy that produce decentralised readings.

Dramatic action in Simona Semenič's plays is thus constantly being interrupted by interventions of the author herself who keeps reminding the reader/spectator that we are either in a theatre or in the act of reading a play, where the reader, who is ultimately creating the drama in the Barthesian sense and deciding about its interpretation, also has the possibility for their own creativity. They can even co-write parts of the play and the story:

> **as we've acquired this information in the previous scene; we learnt where boris came from, / which transportation he took and when he arrived, we can skip this part of their dialogue / In case someone deems this part of the dramatic text absolutely necessary, they can write it / themselves one way or another (Semenič https://www.simonasemenic.com/plays1)**

As our final example of contemporary drama, let us examine the case of Dino Pešut, the dramaturg, dramatist and novelist, representative of Croatian post-dramatic metadrama of the millennial generation. In his graduation thesis at the Academy of Dramatic Art in Zagreb, he defined writing and drama plays in general in a very autobiographical and lucid way and with some authorial licence:

> **A dramatic text is just half-literature. A dramatic text is like the penguin in Herzog's documentary which sets off onto a hill for no apparent reason to die there as if it needed to achieve something. A dramatic text is like a pencil, a young man in love, who will find out that he must die. Thus, dramatic texts are merely half-literature and hard to analyse and talk about separated from their performances. Dramatic texts are like the phoenix bird, so they must burn in order to become real (Pešut, *Deseta* 204).**

This metaphor of the dramatic text as the phoenix bird that has to burn in order to become real speaks in a picturesque, but fairly precise way, about the liminality and transitivity of dramatic writing among media.

Pešut's plays are written as a proper Babylon of dramatic, prose, poetic and essay tactics combined with the author's strong investment in writing down the often banal reality:

> **My real and artistic world is made up of banality. And I am no longer afraid of my banality. This text is banal, I talk about myself with a special meaning, I ground my own youthful enthusiasm**

> **and try to connect it to my artistic path. And all that is has already been written and revealed. (Pešut, 2017, 209)**

Pešut is well aware here that, in fact, everything has already been written down and spelt out, that it is impossible to discover anything new in reality (and probably also in art); it is, however, possible to interpret it in different ways, including authorial ones. In his plays, which are often written in free verse, Pešut keeps returning to Greek tragedy and mythology. He is interested in its content as well as structure, but above all in an intense authorial metatheatrical dialogue with it. He feels very close to Greek mythology, their gods, and the structure of Greek tragedy that inspires him in his disclosure and "undressing" of modernity. An example of this is his acclaimed generational play *H.E.J.T.E.R.I* [H.A.T.E.R.S.], which was successfully staged at the ZKM theatre in Zagreb in 2020. [2]

In this play, which is about the millennial generation that went through burnout and has been symbolically sacrificed at the altar of neoliberalism, mythology appears as a starting point for an authorial interpretation of modernity through ironic paraphrasing of the past. This is done to elaborate the story about a group of friends who are scattered all over the world in different life situations and with diverging dreams, but nevertheless share a common past and a generational bond. Their childhood was marked by war and by growing up in postwar poverty. Through this group and their associations with the antique tragic experience juxtaposed with today's banality, Pešut interprets and topicalises the present.

It would appear that Pešut (as well as part of his generation and even some younger dramatists) is turning back to the drama of language derived from absurdist plays and their verbal violence, however, incorporating these elements into a textual polyphony of voices, inner monologues and other speech surfaces, as well as a hypertrophy

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2   KORANA: Gees… I haven't partied since… Huh! I'm Hera! Brilliant!
SANJIN: Right, the patron of marriage between a faggot and his bitch.
KORANA: Who are the children?
MAK: Hera and Zeus's? Hmm… Ares, Hephaestos, Hebe.
PAŠKO: What is this mysterious link between gay teenagers and Greek mythology?
SANJIN: Well, there's some comfort in gods also being flawed.
ROZA: And for them to fuck around and get pissed.
MAK: When I was a kid and I realised I was gay, I was totally ashamed…And I thoght I had to hide it. But then I started to hide my rage and sorrow… Everything. But than this put out all my love and happyness and everything…Then I started reading mythology and that saved me. Their hate. They throw hate on everyone, fact. And they bicker. And make war and love and split up and they get horny. That was also when Kylie Minogue was releasing those clips where everyone was making out. To love you must also hate a bit. There has to be a balance. They forbid us to make love. Then they tell us we are ungrateful. But it's just a minority.

of external happening that can also be written in the way of dramatic dialogues which, however, often change at a moment's notice into quasi-dialogues, long monologic structures, puzzling quotations or poeticised speech.

3. THREE EXAMPLES FROM THEATRE: TOMAŽ PANDUR, VITO TAUFER, AND OLIVER FRLJIĆ

FIGURE 2: Ivo Svetina: *Sheherezade*, directed by Tomaž Pandur: Janez Škof and Olga Kacjan, 1989. Photo Tone Stojko, Mladinsko Theatre Archive.

Besides dramatic and post-dramatic dramatists, it is often the directors in contemporary theatre who interpretatively translate literature into theatre signs, thus creating performances intended for readers who ultimately create drama in the Barthesian way. Let us take an example that is today already considered a classic of Slovenian and Yugoslavian "theatre of images" from the 1980s: the oriental-occidental opera *Šeherzada* [*Sheherazade*] by Ivo Svetina, as directed by Tomaž Pandur. Pandur derives his power of theatre madness from the 'rhizomatic' (Deleuze-Guattari) and open form of Svetina's text. The author knocked the sphere of poetic drama out of the orbit of the then-modern aestheticised political theatre dedicated to the collective spirit and established his own, specific and autonomous theatrical organism. In the staging of *Sheherazade* thus emerged a new "interpretation which is a new text into which the elements of the interpreted text have been

inscribed and any interpretation of which is a contextualisation of the text-object" (Théâtre, Modes, 1987, 121).

In a similar vein, Pandur's performance *Sto minut* [*One Hundred Minutes*] is a distinctly authorial dialogue with Dostoevsky which derives from the orbit of the American theatre of images. While in the staging of *Sheherazade* Pandur was still fascinated by intertextuality that nevertheless consciously persisted as part of theatre (albeit theatre with a capital T, i.e. Theatre), in the case of Dostoevsky he is more interested in the intertwining of media: literature, theatre, film and the new media. He is interested in the theatre of images that adheres to Richard Wagner's utopian model of combining theatre, music, dance, painting, photography, video, sculpture and architecture, thus bringing closer together "theatre and the visual arts in a new understanding of performance, demonstrating why these two histories must be integrated" (Marranca, 1996, 163–164). At the same time, he is also interested in a contemporary, post-democratic world following the Bosnian War, the Kennedy assassination, 9/11, and the Iraq War. The sliding signifiers thus produced by the sophisticated visual-acoustic interpretation of Pandur's modern-day spectacle after Dostoevsky create ethical imperatives and at the same time a sense of uneasiness.

This way, Pandur creates his own interpretations that bring the underlying textual and ideological base to an explosion of seemingly unified texts and sign systems into a multiplicity of contradictory and paradoxical elements. Thus, in his reinterpretation of Dostoevsky, we all become Raskolnikov, both the protagonists on stage and the audience in the auditorium. Just as we all remain voyeurs of some kind of *culture in extremis* in the time which Baudrillard designates as a period of the "transpolitical, transhistorical and transeconomic" (Baudrillard, 1988, 104). And we are forced to take heed of the fact that theatre as a traditional, classical bearer of signification remains in the background.

Both of these performances embody the essential postulates of Pandur's theatre, precisely what the director himself speaks about in his Madrid interview (when he uses the Artaudian-Kosovel syntagmas of "turbulent electrical field", "a series of images that we have never yet seen in our lives, but we are able to recognise at the level of archetypes"), which make up the central theme of his "theatre cosmogony". His performances establish a dialogue between visual and textual languages that are neither in opposition to each other nor in a hierarchical relation. Neither of the two functions as the matrix for the other one.

Here, two parallel paths converge in the act of mutual inspiration: the path of the text and the path of the visual and other theatre codes. The flourishing of visual and gestural elements in Pandur's theatre did

not herald the death of the theatre or the book, nor a cataclysm or a reconciliation of man with himself. It merely announced that "there is within the confines of the stage a privileged zone in which theatre speaks of itself" (Ubersfeld, 1999, 27).

Pandur always conceived of theatre as a personalised attempt at delineating his own gaze, his personal interpretation which is, however, never a dialectical one nor a materialist one. His performances speak in a distinct language, in a dialogic relationship with their textual material or proto-material, and at the same time with numerous corpora of staging tactics from the history of theatrical and performative arts, especially the fundamental technopoetics and phenomena of performative arts of the 20th century.

Sheherazade (1989), followed by the spectacles *Faust* (1990), *Hamlet* (1990), *Carmen* (1992), *La Divina Commedia* (1993) and *Ruska misija* [*Russian Mission*] (1994), as well as his "German" (*Inferno*), post-Yugoslav (*One Hundred Minutes*, *Caligula*, *Tesla Electric Company*) and "Spanish" *Hamlet*, *Barocco*, *Medea*) performances from recent decades, which are equally or, arguably, even more sophisticated and mature in their multi-layering and acting-performing prowess, represent theatre creations with no classic dramatic structure. Thus, we have to interpret them in their spectacular form as postmodern simulacra of Wagner's Gesamtkunstwerk structure in which opera arias are substituted by the non-hierarchical juxtaposition of "verbal declamations" (Marranca). Despite that, they still function as operas in their visual aspects. The meaning is here generated "by the iconography employed" in the performance that has to be understood in the sense of the theatre of images which "owes most of its appeal to the director's ability to replace textual explanations with images, movement and sound" (Foretić, 1997, 268).

For our second example, let us refer to Vito Taufer who undoubtedly introduced the principles of the dramaturgy of space and theatre of images to Slovenia with his performances in the mid-1980s. Let us point out his theatre reflection on Lewis Carroll's classic tale of *Alice in Wonderland*, a performance for young audiences which combined in-depth exploration of theatre space and time with a sensibility for children audiences in the times of late socialism (The Mladinsko Theatre, 1987). Taufer's staging was marked by strong highlights in the area of the post-dramatic and the theatre of images.

While Taufer introduced his departure from Aristotelian dramaturgy and "theological stage" (Derrida, 1967) in the performance *Jaz nisem jaz I.* [*I am Not Me, part 1*], which established the theatre as a means of a post-dramatic interweaving of "image-music-text-technology" and intertwining of different media through its intermedial conception

(painter: Sergej Kapus; stage designer: Iztok Osojnik; live music: Srp; choreography: Ksenija Hribar; masks: Eka Vogelnik; slide show: Bojan Brecelj, etc.), it was his staging of *Alice in Wonderland* that, in dialogue with Carroll, highlighted theatre where "the painterly and sculptural qualities of performance are stressed , transforming this theatre into a spatially dominated one activated by sense impressions, as opposed to a time-dominated one ruled by linear narrative" (Marranca, xi-xii).

Taufer introduced the *tableau* as a central unit of the composition of performance. In dialogue with Artaud, he deconstructed Carroll's nonsense through a parallel reading of two conceptually extremely innovative authors: he translated Carroll's text and drama theatre in a way that created—to quote Deleuze when discussing Artaud—"a creative, central collapse, causing us to emerge in another world and in an entirely different language" (Deleuze, 1990, 83-84). This other world and language belong to the de-hierarchised theatre of images in which "visual and verbal imagery" (Marranca) on the one hand "deconstructs, displaces and puts in question the very questioning of the notion, logic and technological structure of the political" (Lehmann, 2002, 8). Taufer thus connected Alice's journey through spatial and temporal surfaces of the performance "with the montage of juxtaposed or imbricated virtual spaces, which – this is the crucial point – remain independent from one another so that no synthesis is offered, a poetic sphere of *connotations* comes into being" (Lehmann, 2006, 79).

This way, Taufer positioned *Alice* into the world of children of late socialism as well as the mythical world of Lewis Carroll, creating an homage of a kind to Robert Wilson and his theatre of images in both varieties—for children and for grownups. He applied Wilson's narrative system by using the architecture of bodies, space, sound, colours and costumes, as well as Carroll's nonsense, of course, which created the freedom of non-logocentric speech and the special geometry of the performance which was at the same time cubist and Euclidean. It also created the cinematic framework of the theatre stage that was insistently associated with the world of film.

The question that Taufer posed in his performative tactics, along with Carroll and *Alice*, was the following one: Even if the world is subjected to the intrusive terror of ideologies and as such has no sense, what prevents us from inventing sense ourselves? He shaped his performance together with Carroll's characters, e.g. the Mad Hatter and the White Rabbit, whom he related to 20th-century iconographies, which, according to Alain Badiou, was the century of wars. With this, the director found it crucial that the actor developed their own imagery, freely inventing their characters and letting their imaginations run wild.

FIGURE 3: Lewis Carroll – Vito Taufer, *Alice in Wonderland*, 1987, 1994. Sandi Pavlin and Olga Kacjan, Mladinsko Theatre Archives

All of the above bears witness to the fact that during recent decades culture has more than ever been happening on the borderlines that both divide and connect. The borderlines of languages, cultures, styles, media, and ideologies. Virtually all marginal languages of performative practices are being expediently translated into the languages of "our" semiotics, through filtering membranes which so transform foreign texts (of music …) that they become part of the semiosphere's internal semiotics while still remaining foreign to it.

   This way, Taufer (with the aid of Gregor Tomc, who scored the engaged, somewhat Brechtian songs) created a special form of translation into the language of theatre semiotics through membranes filtering and transforming alien texts (of music, visual culture, late-socialist iconography) and the stage essay that textually binds Carroll's speech surfaces, monologues and dialogues. Vocal and acoustic as well as kinetic elements created the space in all of its dynamics, besides visual elements. A jungle of voices and bodies of the many actors representing Carroll's characters surrounded the audience. Taufer built up his stage essay out of eclectic dynamic interweaving of bodies and sounds in seemingly infinite spaces of a cinematically extended film-like but at the same time three-dimensional stage in which he established new performative techniques, new semiotic and phenomenal spaces of *Alice* that commented on prisons and free territories of late socialism, while at the same time creating powerful reflections of the reality of here and now, albeit in fairytale and mythological motifs and iconographies.

This intertwining and intermedial performance essay bears witness to the fact that the elementary act of theatre (just like Lotman argues in the case of thinking) is a translation originating in a dialogue produced by the differences between semiotic structures (the languages of literature, visual arts and theatre) of the participants in the dialogue: Lewis Carroll and the artistic team. This dialogue proceeds from semiotic differences but also similarities, as a complete difference could never result in a creative dialogue.

A characteristic of this performance is also its specific dramaturgy which derives from spatial principles that often shape its story or subject as much as from textual ones. The performance (similar to Wilson's performances) points out the intermediate position of theatre between the moving and the immobile worlds of representational arts (Lotman). It establishes *play spaces* (to use a term coined by Meta Hočevar) which are explicitly chronotopic and dynamic in the sense of traversing across borders inside Lotman's semiosphere. Deriving from Carroll and his nonsense, dramaturgy is often unpredictable and fluid, it does not produce one single bundle of stories and meanings, let alone ideologies. It would be too much to claim that this derives from Wilson's principle that formalism on stage is more productive than "realism", nevertheless, Taufer does not build on realistic narration nor does he construct a mimesis of reality, but rather new, specifically theatrical and authorial spaces for the real.

The Croatian theatre director Oliver Frljić applies seemingly different but in essence very similar procedures of translation in his politically engaged projects.

As an example, let us examine two performances Frljić directed: *Preklet naj bo izdajalec svoje domovine* [*Damned Be the Traitor of His Homeland*] produced by the Mladinsko Theatre in 2010 derives from the final verse of the anthem of the second Yugoslavia which the director uses to interpret the dissolution of Tito's socialist state and its consequences. The other one is the controversial European co-production *Naše nasilje in vaše nasilje* [*Our Violence and Your Violence*] by the Mladinsko Theatre, HNK Ivan Zajec from Rijeka and several other European co-producers which is a very loose interpretation of Peter Weisse's novel *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands* [*The Aesthetics of Resistance*], setting the stage with bizarre stories and quasi-documentary theatre about our postmillennial world of the refugee crisis in Europe. In both of these examples, we are dealing with collaborative theatre, or rather, devising procedures in which the text and its interpretation are emerging parallelly to the process of preparation of the performance in a way that both the text and the staging have multiple authors.

FIGURE 4: Oliver Frljić: *Damned Be the Traitor of His Homeland,* 2010: Draga Potočnjak, Uroš Maček and Primož Bezjak, photo by Nada Žgank, Mladinsko Theatre Archive.

In both cases, Frljić applies the technique of appropriation and reinterpretation of artistic tactics from the past. He uses theatre as a public forum for open discussion that produces the truth in Badiou's conception of the thought of art as produced by art itself. This emphasises the notion of the immanence of truth, or rather, interpretation inside art: "Art is a thought in which artworks are the Real (and not the effect)" (Badiou, 2005, 9). An artistic interpretation is thus "the configuration 'in truth' of works - /and/ is in each and every one of its points the thinking of the thought that it itself is [*pensee de la pensee qu'il est*]" (Ibid., 14). Frljić defends Badiou's notion, demonstrating by his theatre that art is not merely a thoughtless truth that requires a thinker or, rather, a philosopher to think it. Instead, it is at the same time its own thought of itself. Art not only is its own truth but in its works already functions as a reflection of this very truth. Thus, any Frljić performance is also a reflection of the artistic configuration designated as a theatre performance.

In his performances, the director constructs interpretations that represent the theatrical framework of their staging and performative laboratory, inhabited by stories from different parts of the world. However, for Frljić the main point of interest remains the peripheral sphere of the European theatrical, cultural and political semiosphere: the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, followed by the war in Croatia and Bosnia, and the Srebrenica genocide. In recent years, this framework has been replaced by the crisis of post-refugee neocatholic and neoliberal Europe with all its newly-composed orientalisms.

4. INTERTEXTUAL AND INTERMEDIAL TRAVERSING AS THE BUILDING BLOCK OF CONTEMPORARY ART

Comparing Frljić's interpretative framework to the one in the works by Simona Semenič or, even more, Dino Pešut, one can discern certain similarities, the main difference being that Pešut is sceptical about political engagement, while Simona Semenič is a bit less radical. Frljić's performances are deliberately politically incorrect, thus producing a specific form of the aesthetics of resistance. As noted by the Canadian critic Raymond Bertin in the magazine *Jeu, Revue du théâtre* when describing the audience's reactions to *Damned Be the Traitor of His Homeland* in Montreal: "This politically incorrect performance that is malicious, grotesque and ripping, is a demonstration of the ravages of war and nationalisms, but also a reflection and rethinking of theatre itself, the role of the artist, the responsibility of each individual in times of war and after that" (Bertin, 2012, n.p.).

Frljić builds his aesthetics of resistance through double encoding and by undermining unambiguous and clear interpretations by spectators (critics included):

I think that the foremost quality of the performance *Our Violence and Your Violence* lies in situating the spectator into a lack of a framework that would clearly determine the mode of functioning of the performance – is it meant ironically or not. /.../ I never set myself the goal of turning into some kind of moral arbitrator (Toporišič, 2016, 4).

Thus, Frljić points out that we are living inside a domain of transcultural business that can interpret and translate any intercultural artistic act into the logic of potential exploitation by the global transpolitical economic and political lobbies. However, through his political incorrectness, he endeavours to turn this situation to his advantage, to shift the interpretation from the field of reactionary thinking into the field of liberation. Contemporary art thus appears to join Susan Sontag in her exclamation: "In place of a hermeneutics, we need an erotics of art" (Sontag, 1978, 438).

To summarise: In contemporary theatre, a performance still represents a semiotic space of traversing or, rather, transitional forms arising between diverse media, as demonstrated by the analysis of selected performative and textual corpora, At the same time, it also records the very process of traversing the borderlines between stage and auditorium, actors and spectators, writers and readers, i.e. the special dynamics of the autopoietic feedback loop. In contemporary performative practices which often intertwine diverse media, genres and cultures, the space of play and watching (as we were able to see in the analysed

examples) frequently becomes an issue of translating and re-coding information from one format into another. Theatre art in the broadest sense of the word thus turns into an exploration of the bonds that interweave words and images, time and space, thus creating the dynamics of semiotic languages in space. The interaction of the time and space of a theatre performance establishes the theatre event as such.

Actors-performers sovereignly build up the stage, while the spectators are active interpreters creating their own translations that are typically creative weavings of words and images, time and space. In the sense of Bonnie Marranca's reading of the theatre of images and Lotman's perception of artworks as systems for the functioning of languages that fill up "the semiotic space" of a performance, a special dynamics of time and space emerges in such theatre corpora, the characteristic of which is traversing or rather breaking through the borders inside the field of creation and reception. In the process of semiosis, contemporary theatre weaves or, rather, interweaves space, light, sound and movement into an unusual open texture that produces meanings on the one hand and aesthetic enjoyment on the other, while both are accompanied by a post-Brechtian attitude of awareness that, despite everything, art can establish at least a temporary community between performers and spectators in a common space of the stage and the auditorium which allows for a temporary feedback loop.

In conclusion: By establishing a dialogue with the traces of the performative turn as defined by Erika Fischer-Lichte, performative practices endeavour to re-legitimise themselves as performative art par *excellence*. Intertwining, nomadic nature and transitivity are thus the qualities demonstrating that live and mediated performances are today no longer to be understood as ontological opposites. The reception of both is a matter of experience through representation in which live performance is no better off or in any way more here and now than a mediated one. The performative turn positions the audience in a liminal state in which the spectators' perception of themselves and the world surrounding them is destabilised. At the same time, it is the very exploration and traversing of the boundaries between live performance and mediated events which produced some of the most interesting examples of the non-hierarchical intertwining of media.

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