

# BOOK REVIEWS

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# PERFORMING TURKISHNESS

**Hülya Adak and Rüstem Ertuğ  
Altınay eds.**

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Special Issue





Comparative Drama's special issue on 'Performing Turkishness' is published in a moment of deep political turmoil in Turkey, where arts, academia, minorities and activists are heavily attacked, and when mass emigration from these groups have been happening over the past five years. The issue captures a moment in time about what it means to be related to Turkey as a theatre artist and theatre scholar at the second decade of twenty-first century, and does so by looking into the 'peripheries' of Turkish theatre historiography and scholarship. In this issue, the aspects that are consciously or subconsciously almost never covered or mentioned in canonical Turkish theatre historiography (including scholarly works both in English and Turkish) take centre stage. These 'peripheries' include historiographical fallacies of Turkifying Ottoman multicultural traditional performance genres (Murat Cankara), the diasporic theatre of Turkey (Ela Gezen), the Jewish theatre scene of Turkey (İlker Hepkanar), women's writing shunned out of 'the canon' of Turkish playwriting (Hülya Adak), queer Marxist theatre in early Republican period (Rüstem Ertuğ Altınay), and the İstanbul-centred alternative theatre scene (Emine Fişek).

Murat Cankara's article is probably the best historiographical critique I have encountered about Ottoman performance forms (if not the singular), and Rüstem Ertuğ Altınay's article is one of the very rare in-depth analyses of a Turkish play through queer theory. İlker Hepkanar's article, on Jewish theatre performed in Judeo-Spanish (sometimes referred to as Ladino) and Turkish in contemporary Turkey, covers an issue that have perhaps never been documented by scholars before; and Ela Gezen's article on the famous Turkish dramatist Vasıf Öngören's work in Berlin sheds light onto the little known foundational phases of the German-Turkish theatre.

Hülya Adak's article uncovers a forgotten play, *Mask or Souls?* (published in Turkish in 1937 and 1945, and in English in 1953), by the famous woman Turkish writer Halide Edip. The article documents an episode of the Edip's artistic life, as the conflicts of the era shape and change her views, through which she wrote and revised the text. Adak looks into the aesthetic and ideological influences on *Mask or Souls?*, questions the lack of scholarship around it, problematises the absence of its productions, and highlights the critical position that Edip had towards both Western colonialism and Turkey's state-imposed modernisation process. Adak claims that Edip's play is 'absurdist', but was written out of history, by both Turkish theatre and the canon of theatre of the absurd, because of its writer's gender and nationality. I feel that, in the future trajectories of research around *Mask or Souls?*, it could also be compared to other absurdist plays from the Middle Eastern region that emerged in the same era.<sup>1</sup> Another question I had was the possibility of reading Edip's play not through the theatre of the absurd, but through the canon of science fiction theatre,<sup>2</sup>

1. Iran, for example, has a strong tradition of absurdist plays in its contemporary theatre field since 1960s, but, as far as I know, there has not been a comparative study of absurdist plays of Iran and Turkey.

2. Perhaps in comparison with other canonical, early twentieth century science fiction plays, such as *R.U.R.* by Karel Čapek (1921). Both *R.U.R.* and *Masks or Souls?* use robots as a societal allegory of modern alienation.

since the text — according to Adak's description — can easily be read as a dystopia.

In her article, Emine Fişek analyses the play, *İz (The Stain)*, and does a magnificent contribution to the growing (but still limited) scholarly work on the alternative theatre of Turkey. Fişek has interviewed the writer of the play Ahmet Sami Özbudak for the article and does an extensive analysis on Özbudak's discourse. In the interview Özbudak claimed to have done a political play without intending to, because of the realpolitik of Turkey that infuses into the most private and intimate of spheres of life. Fişek takes Özbudak's position as a representative of the 'contemporary Turkish playwright', which is the only thing I disagree with in her article. I would suggest that, if the same questions have been asked to some other Turkish playwrights from the same Gezi-generation of Özbudak, such as Ebru Nihan Celkan, Şamil Yılmaz, or Firuze Engin, whose aesthetics are informed by their politics — or even to the so-called 'depoliticised' generation of playwrights from 1990s, such as Murathan Mungan or Özen Yula — the answers might have been pretty different.

Perhaps one of the major contributions this collection of articles achieves for the field of Turkish theatre studies is its success in the width and depth of critical and theoretical engagement with Turkish theatre history. The issue is both very informative and broadens the field; but I was surprised to notice that there is a lack of resources written in Turkish among the cited works. I was disappointed, for example, by the absence of Beliz Güçbilmez's *Time, Space and Appearance: the Form of Miniature in the Turkish Realist Theatre*: (Dost Yayinlari, 2016) among the citations, since it is probably the only attempt to theorise the aesthetics of Turkish theatre through the means of another Ottoman art form (miniature); but not by the Western norms of theatre. This lack, of course, can be justified by the mostly Anglophone audiences of the special issue; since

almost all of the English sources written about Turkish theatre are covered through the references of the articles (including master's and PhD theses from universities in Turkey and abroad). Overall, 'Performing Turkishness' is a great critical anthology of Turkish theatre, especially for Anglophone scholarly audiences, who can use both the articles, and the reference lists of the articles, as an entry point to the performance geography of Turkey.

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# TEATR A KOŚCIÓŁ

[THEATRE AND THE CHURCH]

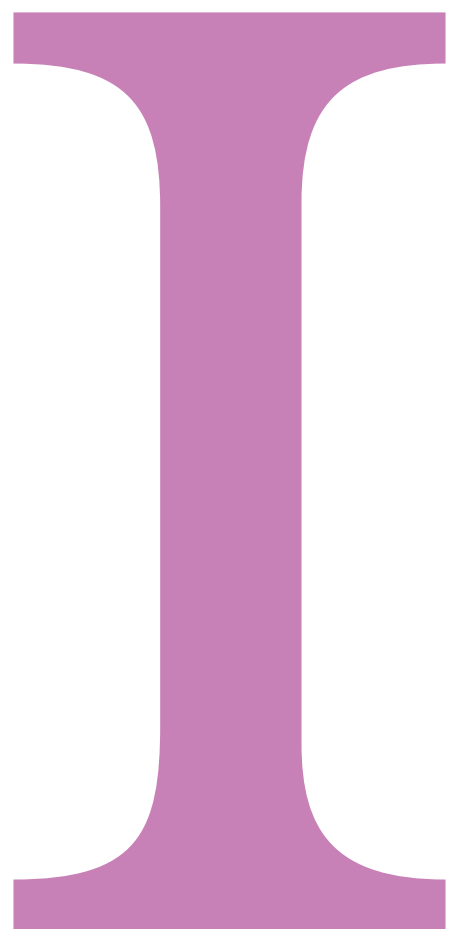
**ed. by Agata Adamiecka-Sitek,  
Marcin Kościelniak and Grzegorz Niziołek**

Warsaw: Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute, 2018, 314 pp.  
ISBN 9788366124080

**review by**  
**PIOTR MORAWSKI**  
University of Warsaw







In February 2017, at the Teatr Powszechny (Popular Theatre) in Warsaw, Oliver Frljić's performance *The Curse* premiered. In the performance, a statue of John Paul II appeared, and an actress performed oral sex on the phallus attached to the figure. The scene concerned paedophilia in the Church and accused John Paul II of tolerating sexual violence. Unsurprisingly, Frljić's performance sparked protests from the state authorities, the Catholic hierarchy, the nationalist right, and religious groups. Heated by the media, the protests that took place in front of the Teatr Powszechny showed the extent to which public space in Poland — a country that is, by law, a secular state — has been appropriated by the Church and the Catholic majority.

These events constituted the background for the conference devoted to the relationship between theatre and the Church in Poland (May 2017), and for the book *Theatre and the Church*, which is an outcome of the conference. Neither the editors nor the authors of the volume conceal their political position: the book, with a photo from *The Curse*

on the front cover, is meant to be a voice for an academic community's opposition to the appropriation of public debate by the religious and nationalist-Catholic worldview.

Grzegorz Niziołek puts it clearly in his article in the volume, 'Sacrum jako cenzura' ('The Sacred as Censorship'), where he writes:

*Saturation of public space with various signs referring to the sacred has been brought to such a concentration that this phenomenon has already acquired the status of invisibility. For it forces non-believers, or those who profess other religions, to create within themselves a mechanism of not noticing these signs, not seeing them and hearing, living next to them and in spite of them.<sup>1</sup>*

Niziołek analyses the Catholic discourse on performances considered blasphemous by the Church in the last few years. The author notes that Catholic criticism has transformed from disregard in 2011 to indignation and accusations of blasphemy in recent years, which is connected to a rapidly changing Church policy and to the introduction of more aggressive criticism. Niziołek also points out how the category of the sacred can be manipulated in order to create a hierarchy of theatre performances and their significance in the public sphere.

*The Curse* is evoked in the *Theatre and the Church* publication many times. Agata Adamiecka-Sitek, in her opening essay, describes the final scene of Frljić's performance: 'The actress Karolina Adamczyk walks to centre stage and unhurriedly puts on protective gear: boots, trousers, gloves and helmet. Properly safeguarded, she picks up a power saw and proceeds to skillfully, methodically cut down a huge wood cross, which from the opening of the performance has

<sup>1</sup> Grzegorz Niziołek, 'Sacrum jako cenzura', in *Teatr a Kościół*, ed. by Agata Adamiecka-Sitek, Marcin Kościelniak and Grzegorz Niziołek (Warsaw: Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute, 2018), p. 58. Translated by P.M.

dominated the empty stage'.<sup>2</sup> The image of a falling cross made many spectators cry with approval. In a country like Poland, dominated by Catholic signs and symbols which are additionally protected by law, the sight of a cut cross can cause a great sense of satisfaction. It can be, as Adamiecka-Sitek claims, 'righteous revenge'<sup>3</sup> for discrimination in the public sphere. Affective mechanisms allow us to transgress the fiction of the performance. Therefore, the claim made by the actors and actresses in *The Curse* that 'everything we say and do in theatre is fiction' is not true: it is not fiction in terms of the affects it evokes.

Weronika Szczawińska also writes about *The Curse* and critics' reactions. She recalls reviews of Frljić's performances; in addition to *The Curse*, Szczawińska analyses reactions to the presentation of *Our Violence and Your Violence* (*Naše nasilje i vaše nasilje*) at the Festiwal Prapremier (Premiere Festival) in Bydgoszcz in 2016 and shows the ways that conservative and progressive critics comment on Frljić's works. The aim of the conservative ones, which is quite obvious, is to 'discredit the weight and

seriousness of the performance'.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, more interesting is Szczawińska's assessment of the critics considered as progressive, who avoid statements about the blasphemous character of Frljić's performances. Polish theatrical critics, Szczawińska claims, have a problem with religious language, which has dominated the public sphere and public discourse. Even progressive and left-wing critics are inclined to deny blasphemous character of the scenes presented, which were intentionally blasphemous.

*The Curse* also gave reason to talk about the power of the scandal in the national-Catholic environment (Dorota Semenowicz), as well as

to revise an understanding of Polish contemporary political theatre. Monika Kwaśniewska interrogates religious conservatism in critical theatre by Paweł Demirski and Monika Strzępka, 'the furious duo', who have introduced to the Polish theatre a class discourse quite insensitive to religious criticism, thus strengthening the existing deadlock.

Finally, the discussion of Frljić's performance makes it possible to recall the historical entanglements of the Polish artistic world and the Church, such as Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński's condemnation of some theatrical works, for example Tadeusz Różewicz's *White Marriage*, and Jerzy Grotowski's *Apocalypsis cum figuris* (essays by Zuzanna Berendt and Leszek Kolankiewicz). These historical examples clearly illustrate the position of the Catholic Church in Poland even before the transformation of 1989.

In 2017, and even more so in 2019, the symbolic and political supremacy of the Catholic Church in Poland is becoming stronger and stronger. Nowadays words about the 'rainbow plague' spoken by a Catholic hierarchy raise anti-LGBT sentiments. The question of the theatre's duty in creating the public sphere is still open. From this perspective, *Theatre and the Church* is a practical reader — a manual of strategies for resistance and a gesture of resistance itself.

2. Agata Adamiecka-Sitek, 'Jak zdjąć klątwę? Oliver Frljić i Polacy', in *Teatr a Kościół*, p. 12. For an English translation see 'How to Lift the Curse? Director Oliver Frljić and the Poles', *Polish Theatre Journal*, 1–2 (2017) <http://www.poli-shtheatrejournal.com/index.php/ptj/article/view/111/421>

3. Adamiecka-Sitek, 'Jak zdjąć klątwę?', p. 12.

4. Weronika Szczawińska, 'Uświęcanie: Polska krytyka teatralna a język religijny', in *Teatr a Kościół*, p. 74. Translated by P.M.



# COMPÊNDIO GIL VICENTE

ed. by **José A. Cardoso Bernardes**  
and **José Camões**

Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra  
and Imprensa Nacional, 2019, 616 pp.  
ISBN 9789892615479 (IUC), 9789722727105 (IN)

review by  
**THOMAS EARLE**  
Oxford University

# GIL VICENTE C O M P Ê N D I O

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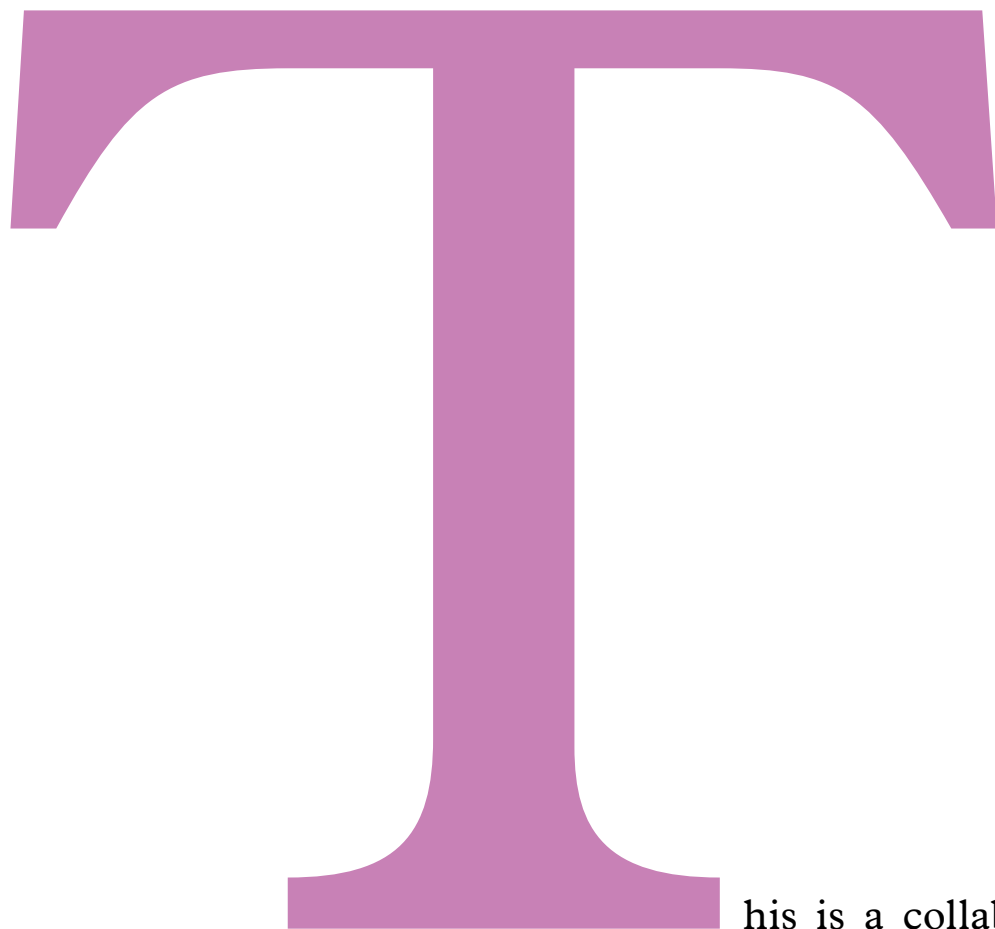
COORDENAÇÃO DE  
JOSÉ AUGUSTO CARDOSO BERNARDES  
E JOSÉ CAMÕES

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*Coimbra Companions*

IMPRENSA DA UNIVERSIDADE DE COIMBRA  
COIMBRA UNIVERSITY PRESS  
IMPRENSA NACIONAL



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his is a collaborative project, in the fullest sense. Not only are two editors and two publishers involved, but also two countries, Portugal and Spain. So, although the bulk of the book is in Portuguese, four of the articles are in Spanish. The English word ‘companion’ also appears on the book’s cover and its title page; rightly so, as the extended essays provide a helpful guide to many aspects of Vicente’s work.

The book contains twenty-two chapters, the work of seventeen authors, not all of whom it will be possible to mention here. However, the two editors deserve special praise, not only for their work in organizing a complex volume, but also for having produced between them six and a half articles (one of José Camões’s is co-authored by João Nuno Sales Machado).

The book is especially valuable for the information it provides about the multiple traditions — literary, theatrical, and others — to which Gil Vicente’s work belongs. It abolishes once and for all the old myth

that he was an untaught genius whose plays were without precedent, in Portugal or elsewhere.

Vicente’s language, for instance, relies heavily on the knowledge of proverbs and popular sayings that would have been shared between the dramatist and his first audiences — though not necessarily modern ones, who still require more help than most modern editions provide if they are to understand the underlying sense of some characters’ remarks.

Vicente’s literary culture included the work of the Spanish dramatists Lucas Fernández and Juan del Encina. However, it is now clear that he greatly extended the range of their work. The rather artificial popular dialect that they employed, *sayagués*, is made much more expressive in the rich language of the fools of Vicente’s later plays.

It is well known, and not much discussed in the present volume, that Vicente’s treatment of priests and monks is often satirical. However, it is also clear that he was very well informed about religion and had a sophisticated knowledge of the doctrines of the church, as well as of the Bible and the lives of the saints. Nor was he ignorant of aristocratic culture. In an elegantly written article, Isabel Almeida points out the importance of the culture of chivalry to him. Knights, though not squires, are always treated with respect in the plays.

He must also have known a good deal about music, not just as a performer, but also as a composer. Of the forty-five plays known to us, only nine do not end without some explicit reference to music, song, or dance, as José Camões, one of the editors of the volume, reminds us.

José Cardoso Bernardes, who has co-edited the volume with Camões, makes some important contributions to the questions of genre and of satire. The dramatist’s own views about genre are set out in his

prefatory letter to his most celebrated play in Spanish, *Dom Duardos*. Reading the plays in the light of what their author thought about genre helps to avoid the anachronistic readings which have reduced the *Auto da Índia*, for example, to nothing more than an attack on the Portuguese expansion in the age of discovery.

Many of the genres practised by Vicente, like farce, morality and mystery plays, *sottie*, burlesque sermon, and lament are clearly of French origin, though it has never been clear exactly how the dramatist came into contact with the contemporary theatre of northern France. However, the French tradition is certainly present in his work, and Vicente was sufficiently in control of it to be able to combine different genres in his own plays.

Not all of the *Compêndio Gil Vicente* is concerned with the cultural context of his work. There are two interesting articles about techniques of performance, an area seldom treated by modern writers. Tatiana Jordá Fabra points to the very obvious presence of embodied stage directions in the plays, which give some clue as to how the actors were expected to move and to deliver their lines. João Sales Machado makes good use of the visual arts of the early sixteenth century to elucidate comments in the text about the appearance and the dress of the characters in the religious plays, including supernatural ones, like devils.

There is space in the volume for biographical and bibliographical studies. Though much remains uncertain about Vicente's identity, the years 1517-18 were clearly very important to his development as a writer, as he moved from the patronage of Queen Leonor, the widow of King John II, to that of the kings themselves, Manuel and John III. Telmo Verdelho here publishes for the first time a hitherto unknown poem by the dramatist, of fairly certain attribution because his name is woven into the text. It is a wistful and yet half humorous address to some 'beautiful ladies', excusing himself from calling on them.

Four specialists write about translations of the plays into Spanish, Italian, French, and English. A surprisingly large number have been translated, particularly into Italian and into English, but it is probably true to say that no writer of real stature has ever engaged with them, so Vicente remains largely unknown outside the Iberian Peninsula.

*Compêndio Gil Vicente* builds on and complements another multi-authored volume, *Gil Vicente: 500 anos depois*, published in 2003. There is no doubt that the two books, taken together, contribute greatly to the sum of what is known about the dramatist. However, much remains to be done. There is a general lack of fully annotated editions of individual plays, and also of the critical studies that will bring home to an international and English-reading audience that Gil Vicente was the most talented dramatist to be working in Europe in the first half of the sixteenth century.





# O TEATRO COMO EXPERIÊNCIA PÚBLICA

**ed. by Oscar Cornago,  
Sílvia Fernandes and Júlia Guimarães**

São Paulo: Hucitec Editora, 2019, 333 pp.  
ISBN 9788584041817

**review by**  
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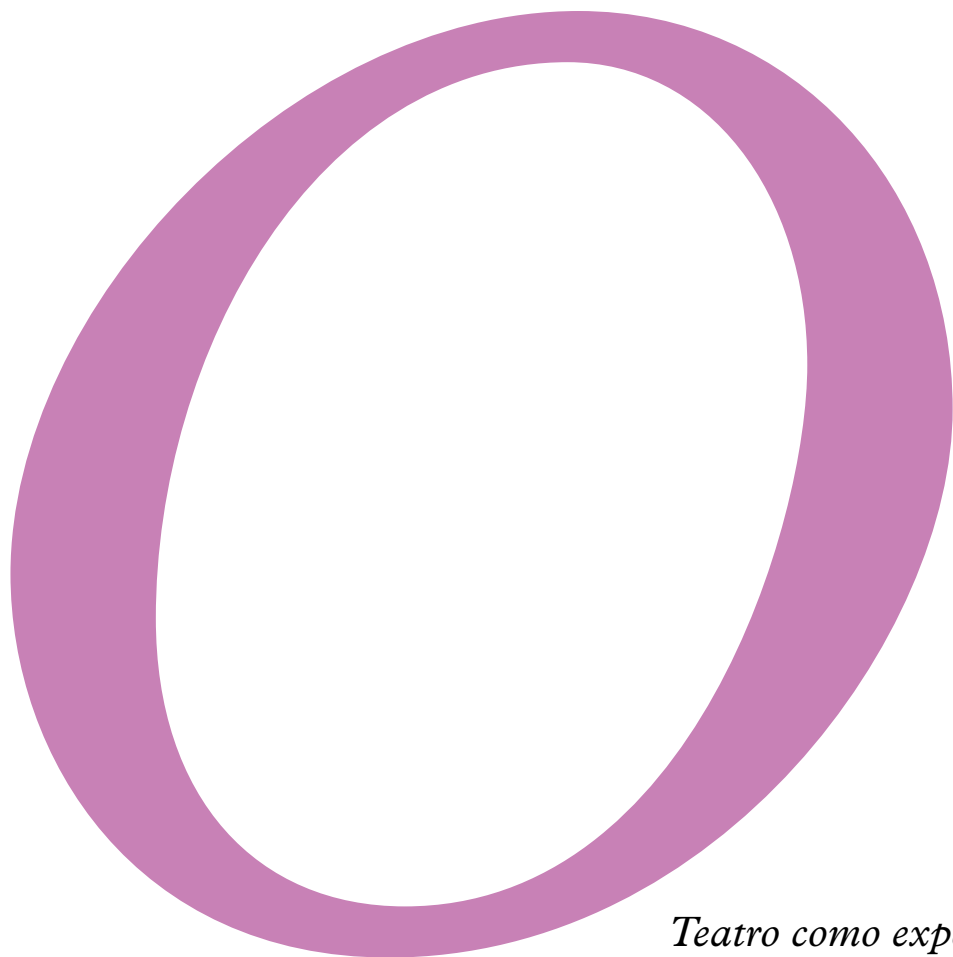
ÓSCAR CORNAGO :: SÍLVIA FERNANDES :: JULIA GUIMARÃES  
ORGANIZADORES

# O TEATRO

*como experiência pública*



HUCITEC EDITORA



*Teatro como experiência pública* (or *Theatre as Public Experience*) is a timeless volume addressing a pressing issue in contemporary performing arts: how can artistic practices inscribe themselves as action in the public sphere? In other words, which political, aesthetic, and ethical axes anchor performing arts processes and apparatuses to participate in the public sphere, including spectators, as well as the artists? In line with the so called 'social turn' in the performing arts (Jackson), and in the wake of the 'relational art' (Bourriaud) that shaped a renewed concept of participation in the visual arts (Bishop), this book contributes to further mapping and examining committed participatory projects and documentary theatre, but is not confined to it. Focusing in the present (from the turn of the century up to today), it covers various territories in Latin America (Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Uruguay) and a taste of Europe (Spain, Austria). Companies such as Berlin-based Rimini Protokoll, Teatro Ojo (Mexico), and Brazilian Cia Hiato, as well as artists such as Juan Dominguez (Spain), Lola Arias (Argentina), and Tamara Cubas (Uruguay) are some of

best-known creators considered, creators whose artistic experiments are both groundbreaking and influential to the current definitions of this kind of practices.

One of the most original features of the book is the pairing of theoretical approaches to the work of an artist with words by the same artists whose work is discussed. Each essay is followed by interviews, scripts of performances, short manifestoes, or reflections about their creative processes. This generates not only a rich and promising dialogue between peers in theory and practice but also gives first-hand access to artistic material and thoughts, which is usually the privilege of only some. In this sense, this volume is a relevant contribution to students, artists, and researchers both from the performing arts as well as from social and political sciences.

The choice of artists and authors, however, is unbalanced in its geographic diversity. On the one hand, the substantial majority of the artists and companies are Brazilian while, by contrast, Juan Dominguez alone has four articles (two essays and two works); on the other hand, the essay authors are only Brazilian and Spanish. Although the book does not claim to make a representative selection of Latin American performing arts practices, it is nonetheless a pity, from the reader's point of view, not having the opportunity to access different national academic backgrounds — namely, Latin American — that could have brought other contextual, and perhaps also theoretical, elements to the debate on publicness and performance. It should also be mentioned that *O Teatro como experiência pública* lacks an editorial commentary on the uncommon option of publishing a volume in two languages; the reader will find texts in the author's original writing language (both Portuguese and Spanish). Even though most Portuguese native speakers read Spanish (I am guessing the opposite way around is also true), it comes somehow as a surprise to the reader.



The book is organised in two complementary sections. A theoretical essay, peppered with relevant case studies by Oscar Cornago, whose research project on the public dimension of contemporary theatre triggered this publication, opens the first section. The essay offers a contextual perspective on the present moment in performance and theatre, namely considering its points of contrast and entanglement (action, body, audience, etc.) *vis a vis* the public sphere and the artistic positioning of the artists he analyses. ‘Contextos, Marcos e Situações’ (‘Contexts, Milestones, and Situations’) covers an array of diverse projects that create dispositives and situations that dialogue with specific places and/or communities through distinctive issues: historical memory (for instance Grupo XIX, OPOVOEMPÉ, and Lola Arias), the city (Teatro Ojo), identity (Juan Dominguez), labour (Rimini Protokoll), social dispositives (Roger Bernat, amongst others). The projects discussed in the first section feature creative processes and methodologies that aim at unlocking affects, memories, tensions, or desires, through performance and participation in the public sphere.

In ‘Relação e Autonomia’ (‘Engagement and Autonomy’) the focus is on expanded theatre practices and the problem of the autonomy of artistic disciplines. Sílvia Fernandes introduces some of these issues in the first text of the section, where she contextualises the role of operations of subtraction (of spectacle), relational dispositives, and play (provisional and process-oriented projects) in theatrical practices from the turn of the century. Quoting Mexican author Ileana Diéguez, Fernandes emphasises the contemporary problematic of expanded theatre practices as a framework for this section, as theatricality is in itself a dispositive that transcends theatre to dislocate the limits of the theatrical and artistic (p. 214), which sets the tone for the following discussion on autonomy and modes of social engagement. Texts in this section address Cia Teatral Ueinzz (Peter Pál Perlbart), Grupo Galpão (José da Costa), or Lia Rodrigues (Sílvia Fernandes), amongst others.

To end the book on a more philosophical note, the last essay, by Spanish ‘engaged’ author Jordi Claramonte, explores the notion of autonomy in terms of aesthetic theory. Proposing a notion of ‘modal autonomy’, Claramonte argues that autonomy (and self-organisation), as a way of thinking artistic practices as multilayered processes, requires a ‘dynamic balance’ (p. 321) between coherence (formal stability) and dissonance (play and experimentation) of modes of relation in the public realm. Thus, modal autonomy is defined as an autonomy of doing and re-doing modes of engaging with the social and the political (p. 325), providing exquisite food for thought for the reader.





# EGOIŚCI: TRZECIA DROGA W KULTURZE POLSKIEJ LAT 80

[THE EGOISTS: THE THIRD PATH  
IN POLISH CULTURE OF THE 1980S]

**MARCIN KOŚCIELNIAK**

Warsaw: Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute, 2018, 588 pp.  
ISBN 9788366124066

**review by**

**DOROTA SOSNOWSKA**

University of Warsaw

MARCIN KOŚCIELNIAK

—  
EGOIŚCI. TRZECIA DROGA  
W KULTURZE POLSKIEJ  
LAT 80.







*goiści: Trzecia droga w kulturze polskiej lat 80*, by Marcin Kościelniak, offers not only a new and much needed way of looking at Polish cultural history, but also a new anthropological project nested in the context of the Polish 1980s. I read this book as a call to choose your own fathers and mothers, to establish the tradition outside of existing patterns and narrations, to find in the past what is your present, and can be your future. By documenting and analysing the artistic practice of the group called Kultura Zrzuty — a marginal, but as it appears very potent phenomenon in Polish culture — Kościelniak adopts a cultural studies perspective. Theatre, visual arts, and performance present in different ways in the Kultura Zrzuty's work, serving in the author's thinking as theoretical points revealing the complexities of 1980s history.

The book is organised in six parts. Apart from the introduction and ending, the author includes four chapters: 'The Sense of being Polish', 'Egoists', 'Escape from the Culture', and 'Male World'. Kościelniak

begins with a very detailed reconstruction of the role the Catholic Church played in Polish politics and art. In the collective memory of the 1980s, it is the Church who gave the artists and activists the possibility to speak, act, and create. It was the space of freedom also in establishing new ideas of Poland, Polish society, and Polish history. But as Kościelniak shows this freedom was illusionary; the Church played its own political game and established its own mechanisms of censorship. The art of the 1980s, which we are used to viewing as politically engaged, critical — as a form that shaped the ideology of the new society after the break of 1989, when the first democratic elections were organised in Poland (what Poles consider as the end of communist regime) — was, as Kościelniak shows, also used as a tool in stabilising the concept of the Christian origins of Poland and Polishness. Even for those intellectuals who were atheists, Jews or ideological communists, it was obvious that 'the Church embodies the force without which it is not possible to rule in Poland' (Michnik, qtd. p. 167). They were talking about a set of universal values, the Christian fundamentals of Europe, Polish unbreakable relations with religion and Church, remaining almost blind to the political movements made by the Church's leaders. As the absolute peak of this process, Kościelniak understands the fact that religion was introduced to public schools in Poland, already in 1990, by the namely liberal government of Hanna Suchocka.

This specific situation of constant submission of the state to the Church which became — also through the use of art — inseparable from the regained 'freedom', shaped not only the discussions around critical art of the 1990s, which was anticlerical and anticapitalistic at the same time, but shapes still today the current reality of the Polish state. That's why Kościelniak offers another version of this story. In his view, contemporary Poland and Polish art does not have to be conditioned by the clash of Church and (post)communist state. He finds another path for us: the third path of what he calls egoism.

The book describes various artistic and performative activities of the group called *Kultura Zrzuty*, which was active between 1981 and 1985. It was established as a kind of milieu joke in Łódź by the artists who did not want to play figures of fine arts masters, intellectuals, or revolutionaries embodying the needs and hopes of the community. They were more like rebels against everyone, people defining themselves as not engaged, not caring for communism, Church, state, nor anything meaningful. They operated on the very margin, using jokes, irony, and self-humiliation as a strategy. The author analyses profanatory, blasphemous, and obscene collages (the picture of God's mother with added moustache sent as a postcard), sculptures (a penis from bread evoking the prison sculpture which normally would depict a Christian cross), performances (drunken and naked presence in frames of the cycle 'embarrassing art'). Kościelniak describes this Dadaistic, nihilistic, and egoistic attitude as deeply political: forming the new understanding of what is political in art. Adam Rzepecki, Marek Janiak, and Jacek Kryszkowski, leaders of the group, were constantly shifting the border between artistic expression, party, stupid jokes, and rebellious social acts. Under martial law, they were playing football at the Old Town in Warsaw, they were intervening in other artists' shows, disturbing their course; Kryszkowski even shot (with blanks) the famous Polish avant-garde artist Tadeusz Kantor at the door of the Foksal Gallery, in order to punish him for his indifferent attitude towards martial law in Poland.

And it is Kryszkowski who seems to be the main figure of the book. This artist did not conform to any artistic system, was always outside any artistic institutions (although he finished a proper art academy), always in negation of established art, and was the true ideologist behind the *Kultura Zrzuty* pitching-in culture. He was searching for the way to abolish not only the art and its systems, but also to run away from the culture as such. This informal situation of pitching-in for the bottle of vodka offered a model of the event that was not possible to be captured

by any system. Pure community, not formalising itself in any way, was supposed to guarantee a state of freedom: from the state, the party, the Church, society, strikes, patriotism, art, and freedom (in its capitalist and liberal form) itself.

This vision, marginal and not commonly recognised at all, becomes in Kościelniak's book the possibility of a new anthropology where apparently transparent and obvious models of the Polish subject become questioned and problematised. As the author states, from the third path it is possible 'to question the myth of national communality of the 1980s. It is possible to ask: if that "we" was not a camouflage for the relations of power? If it was not a construct based on exclusion?' (p. 186). Those questions might seem local, important only in the context of Polish culture and history. But, looking from the global perspective, *Kultura Zrzuty*, with its performative tools and anarchistic attitude, could be a chosen tradition for other contemporary cultures and arts. This is the deep sense of the third path — it is chosen from another point in time, it is visible as possibility only in the retrospect. I find that gesture very important and needed in the current situation, which is reorganising politics not only in Poland but also in other European countries, as well as in the United States. The big part of the conservative turn we are witnessing relates to a very linear, narrow, and manipulative understanding of history. Kościelniak's book offers another possibility of dealing with past.

But this project has its limits. For the author, this limit comes with place of the women in the artistic practice of *Zrzuta*. Misogynistic acts, texts, and images are also a part of the archive which constitutes what *Zrzuta* can be today. Kościelniak states that, in this sense, the tradition he writes about is not political but conservative and backward. The third path is the path of male egoists, not possible to reconcile with today's political sensitivity. What to do with this kind of heritage is a question



that remains open, adding to contemporary discussions triggered by the #metoo movement. Can political art really be separated from questions of social responsibility? Can artists be egoists? Even though the third path cannot offer us the solution, for today it can offer a complicated tradition — tradition that should be consciously constructed and chosen. The most important thought is that no culture is stuck between two possibilities. There is always another way.

In my opinion, the book offers a new and very original reading of 1980s Polish culture and should be read by those interested in the subject. But, at the same time, it offers a very important methodological frame and can be useful for those scholars and readers who deal with contemporary theatre and art historiography. By concentrating on the phenomenon that was more of a milieu than a disciplinary, defined artistic practice, Kościelniak's book expands notions of theatricality and performativity outside their borders, which again can be useful and interesting for different theatre and performance scholars. I highly recommend the book as an example of innovative history writing that I find much needed, especially today.

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# IL TERRITORIO IN SCENA DIECI ANNI DI RESIDENZE ETRE

**ed. by Stefano Laffi  
and Andrea Maulini**

Milano: Franco Angeli, 2019, 146 pp.  
ISBN 9788891780133 (pbk)

**review by**

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Stefano Laffi e Andrea Maulini (a cura di)

## **IL TERRITORIO IN SCENA**

Dieci anni di residenze Etre

FRANCO ANGELI



**L**e residenze artistiche sono, a tutti gli effetti, i nuovi spazi di creazione spettacolare che, nell'ultimo decennio, hanno molte volte sostituito i teatri come centri di produzione. Questa è chiaro se si guarda, internazionalmente, a casi di studio specifici come ad esempio Barcellona con le sue 'Fàbriques de creació', che figurano al secondo posto in termini di indicizzazione digitando 'Theatre residencies' su Google. Stesso discorso se si guarda ai programmi specifici, ad esempio, dell'European Theatre Convention, il cui obiettivo è 'promoting emerging theatre in Europe'.

Si rende quindi necessaria una riflessione critica e accademica sul tema delle residenze artistiche, riflessione che non può prescindere da due principali traiettorie di indagine: una prima indagine artistica, guardando alle prassi, ai processi creativi, agli artisti e ai prodotti scaturiti dalle esperienze artistiche; una seconda linea, parallela alla prima, che contestualizzi le residenze artistiche e creative da un punto di vista economico e organizzativo all'interno della filiera spettacolare e in generale dell'industria creativa.

Se infatti i programmi di residenza si moltiplicano — basta, ad esempio, consultare le call presenti sui siti dei principali istituti nazionali di cultura e il sito del network EUNIC, per rimanere solo in Europa —, stessa cosa non si può certo dire per la letteratura critica sull'argomento che appare abbastanza scarsa e non proporzionata all'importanza crescente che le residenze teatrali hanno assunto nel funzionamento della filiera teatrale. Una possibile bibliografia critica non si concentra infatti solo sul teatro ma sul mondo artistico in genere, includendo quindi anche arti visive, letteratura, cinema, fotografia e altro. Un esempio è sicuramente il fondamentale *Policy Handbook on Artists' Residencies*, redatto dall'Open Method of Coordination (OMC), gruppo di lavoro in seno all'Unione Europea, che definisce l'essenza delle residenze artistiche: 'Artists' residencies provide artists and other creative professionals with time, space and resources to work, individually or collectively, on areas of their practice that reward heightened reflection or focus' (2014, p. 9). Interessanti sono inoltre il numero 8/2016 di 'Exhibist' e gli ormai datati contributi americani *Mind the Gap* (2011) e *From Surviving to Thriving: Sustaining Artist Residencies* (2012) — entrambi a cura dell'Alliance of Artists' Communities —, il giapponese *Microresidence!* (2012) dello Youkobo Art Space, e gli europei *RE-tooling RESIDENCIES. A Closer Look at the Mobility of Art Professionals* (2011), stilati per conto della RE-tooling RESIDENCIES e CCA Ujazdowski Castle, e *ON-AiR: Reflecting on the mobility of artists in Europe* (2012), report presente sul mirabile sito di TransArtists.

Si tratta, come detto, di risorse bibliografiche che ragionano prevalentemente sulle residenze artistiche e non propriamente spettacolari e teatrali, molte volte con un approccio manualistico piuttosto che critico, volto a facilitare le domande del singolo artista.

In ambito italiano, e guardando solo al mondo del teatro, un discorso diverso deve essere fatto per *Il territorio in scena. Dieci anni di residenze*

*Etre*, a cura di Stefano Laffi e Andrea Maulini. È in primo luogo necessario individuare cosa sia 'ETRE': l'Associazione ETRE è un network che raccoglie residenze teatrali e multidisciplinari che hanno sede in Lombardia, nata nel 2008 e promossa dalla Fondazione Cariplo.

*Il territorio in scena. Dieci anni di residenze Etre* è un libro dalla doppia anima, riflessione e ricerca, e che si sviluppa in maniera articolata anche in questo caso secondo due direttive, molto simili a quelle enunciate nella prima parte di questa recensione: da un lato si tratta di una narrazione artistica, un vero e proprio 'story-telling' delle esperienze delle compagnie che hanno usufruito delle residenze e che hanno creato, in quel contesto, i loro progetti teatrali. Passano così in rassegna, ognuno come specifico capitolo o contributo, le testimonianze, ad esempio, di Chiara Boscaro e Marco Di Stefano della 'Manifattura K.' (pp. 27-34), di Nicolas Ceruti di 'R.A.M.I. Residenza Artistica Multidisciplinare Ilinxarum' (pp. 35-42), di Jacopo Buschini della 'Cooperativa AttivaMente' (pp. 43-40), di Simone Severgnini de 'Il Giardino delle Ore' (pp. 55-60), di Stefano Beghi e Matteo Sanna di 'Karakorum Teatro' (pp. 97-101) e di molti altri. Queste testimonianze costituiscono la seconda parte del volume e affiancano una prima sezione su 'La nascita di Associazione ETRE nelle parole dei suoi residenti' (pp. 17-23). Non si tratta tuttavia di due sezioni giustapposte: la sezione 2 'Le voci delle residenze' (pp. 27-101) — di cui tutte le testimonianze citate fanno parte —, è infatti complementare alla precedente nascita di ETRE. Non si può infatti comprendere totalmente l'attività dell'Associazione senza leggere le testimonianze di chi vi ha preso parte. In questo senso, il volume non è accademico nella sua stesura, ma, come detto, rappresenta una narrazione, che tuttavia lascia parte all'indagine accademica nella Parte 3 'Guardare ETRE' (pp. 105-134). Qui il percorso del libro segue la seconda traiettoria di indagine per le residenze teatrali: l'analisi economico-organizzativa. Ciò appare evidente dall'ultimo contributo del volume, a firma del curatore Andrea Maulini, 'Il pubblico

di ETRE' (pp. 115-134). La narrazione lascia il passo alla ricerca pura che guarda, come precisato da Maulini nel primo paragrafo, a:

1. le caratteristiche, i comportamenti, i giudizi degli spettatori che seguono la programmazione delle residenze ETRE, non solo quelle specificamente legate alla residenza [...];
2. la conoscenza, la percezione, le opinioni sull'Associazione e sulle sue attività da parte degli stessi spettatori delle residenze, ma anche dei diversi stakeholder con cui ETRE entra in contatto (pp. 115).

La ricerca è rigorosa, considerando dati sia qualitativi che quantitativo-statistici, fornendo un modello per intraprendere l'analisi di altre residenze in Italia, ed è soprattutto una ricerca utile in prospettiva futura e in ottica di *audience development*.





# DIRE LES GUERRES: PERFORMANCE ET CRÉATION

**ed. by Martin Mégevand**

Paris: Les Éditions des Cendres, 2019, 192 pp.  
ISBN 9782867422645

**review by**

**RUI PINA COELHO**

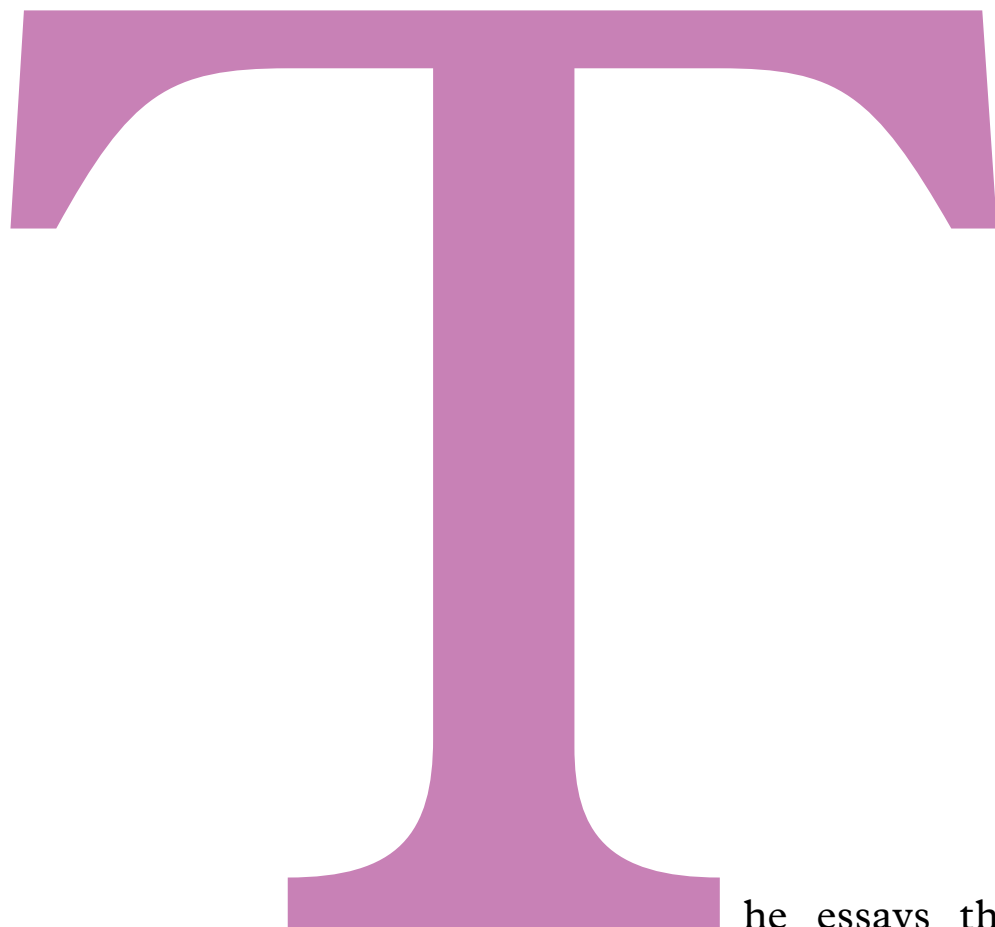
University of Lisbon/ Centre for Theatre Studies

## DIRE LES GUERRES

performance & création



ÉDITIONS DES CENDRES



he essays that feature in *Dire les guerres: Performance et création* had their first public appearance at the international and transdisciplinary conference 'La Guerre en Performance dans La Création Littéraire', held in Paris, at Théâtre National de la Colline and at Columbia Center on the 4 and 5 December 2014, and organised in the context of the centenary commemoration of World War I.

The book, directed by Martin Mégevand, a scholar at the Département de Littérature Française et Francophone, Université Paris 8, Vincennes à Saint Denis, with a long-standing academic interest in the representation of violence, war, and related subjects, takes as its point of departure a very sharp question:

Que peuvent nous apprendre des œuvres de création, petites ou grandioses, canoniques ou non, de la chansonnette à l'épopée, composées au cœur ou à l'issue de cet effondrement

majeur, psychique, familial et social, qu'est une situation de guerre sur les façons humaines d'y résister. (p. 12)

If we consider the state of the world today, and if we accept that two of its most evident traces are 1) dwelling in a permanent state of exception, and 2) trying to find some sense and feeling of belonging in a return to (identity) narratives, the topic, *Dire les guerres* ('To Say the Wars') is, understandably, acutely pertinent. The representation of war in the arts can be traced since early antiquity, and it has never diminished throughout the years. One could argue that the representation of violence changed after the Second World War, with the aftermath of Auschwitz and Hiroshima making it more difficult to portray war in a realistic or spectacular way, with the focus much more on the systemic nature of violence; one could also argue that everything changed again after 9/11, letting the Real and documented violence enter the stage once again. Notwithstanding the chronologies one chooses to adopt, what *Dire les guerres* clearly makes obvious is the transhistorical nature of war in many different artistic expressions.

For a French reader, this book is aligned with other authors engaged in the topic, such as David Lescot's *Dramaturgies de la guerre* (2001), Catherine Naugrette's *Paysages dévastés: Le théâtre et le sens de l'humain* (2004) or Paul Ardenne's *Extrême: Esthétiques de la limite dépassée* (2006), to name just a few.

*Dire les guerres* is divided in two main parts. The first part, under the spiritual token of J.L. Austin and Hannah Arendt, deals with the limits of words and literature before the phenomenon of war in fictional texts, criticism, philosophy, and war songs. Thus, the specialist in the history and religions of India, Charles Malamoud ('La nuit du cauchemar ou la performance dans la guerre') returns to *Mahabharata* in order to perceive, through the analysis of battles narrated in the Indian



epic, war as an actualisation of a sacrificial act (remotely echoing René Girard's *La Violence et le Sacré*, 1972); Jean-Michel Rey ('Le terme de la guerre') addresses the strength of discourses that rebel against the performance of power (Jean Améry, Gunther Anders, Charles Péguy...) and discusses the way they 'strike back'; Patrice Loraux discusses the notions of *polemos* and *logos* in the work of the historian of classical Athens, Nicole Loraux (1943-2003), leaving the reader with an emotive and remarkable map to understand some of the works of his wife, and to better understand today's world through the lens of the classics; Françoise Davoine analyses Pat Barker's trilogy of novels, *Regeneration*, *The Eye of the Door*, and *The Ghost Road* (published between 1991 and 1993) under the scope of traumas of war, in order to underline its ceremonial dimension.

The final essay of the book's first half and the first text of its second half can be seen as an interlude or a moment of passage, from *logos* to *opsis*, from words to performance. Thus, respectively, Jaqueline Rousseau-Dujardin's corpus of analysis are songs composed during World War I, underlying its performative and resistive validity; and Éric Eigenmann makes an original reading of Michel Vinaver's *Par-dessus bord*, finding the traumatic memory of war in different layers of the text.

This collection of essays gives us a kaleidoscopic perspective of how war and its narratives permeate, either as a celebration of human capacity to surpass adversities or as permanent reminder of the darkness of human violence.

The second half of the book deals specifically with performing arts. Thus, after Eigenmann's essay dealing with Vinaver's play, there is a corpus of performances that are scrutinised under the scope of the representation of war and violence. Thus, performances such as Marina Abramović's *Balkan Baroque*, Lida Abdul's *Once Upon Wakening*, Hotel

Modern's *The Great War* and *Kamp* (by Josette Féral), Superamas' *Theatre*, Christoph Schlingensiefel's *mise en scène* of Elfriede Jelinek's text *Bambiland* (by Éliane Beaufils), Jérémy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave*, and Tanya El Khoury's *Gardens Speak* (by Chloé Déchery) are brought to attention. Closing this section, Marvin Carlson offers an insightful approach to the phenomenon of war re-enactments.

One thing that strikes the most throughout the reading of *Dire les guerres* is the flexible use of the term 'performance', either used in the Francophone or in the Anglophone tradition. Recognising the difficulty of establishing a static understanding of the term, Martin Mégevand offers the reader, in his 'Avant-Propos', an impressive rendition of the plurality and volatility of the term, helping the reader to better navigate the following pages. These will not be, arguably, the final words on the topic (performance and war), but the use and understanding of the term(s) disclosed in this book can undoubtedly enrich debates on the ontological domain of war, performance, creation, and performativity.

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# EXPLODED GAZE

**Goran Sergej Pristaš**

trans. by Žarko Cvejić

Zagreb: Multimedia Institute, 2018, 322 pp.  
ISBN 9789537372460

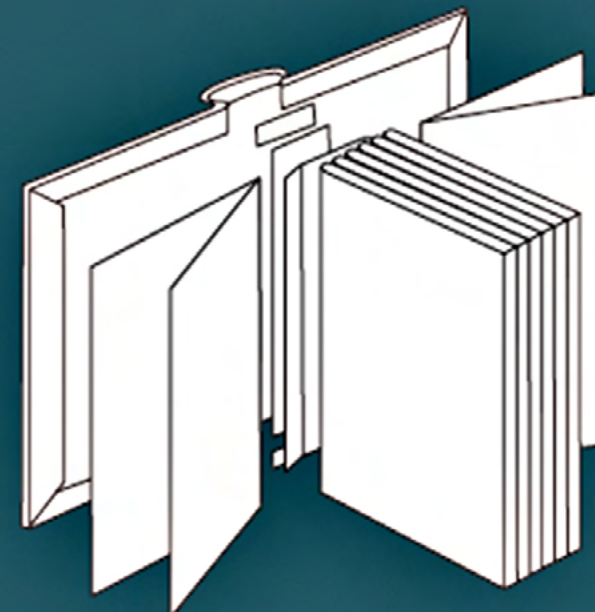
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**Goran Sergej Pristaš**

# Exploded Gaze



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*Exploded Gaze* is a long-awaited volume of essays by Goran Sergej Pristaš, a dramaturge, founder member of performing arts collective BADco., and professor of dramaturgy at the Academy of Dramatic Arts, University of Zagreb. More than 300 pages of Pristaš's book are divided into four main sections, each of them consisting of several chapters. In addition, there is an appendix, author's notes and sources, as well as an afterword by Bojana Kunst.

At the very beginning, the author describes the book as a 'volume of artistic notes', but this is only one, albeit important, part of the whole picture. *Exploded Gaze* is much more than that, it is 'a rare treat of poetics and political and philosophical thought at once', as rightly emphasised by Bojana Cvejić in her statement on the book's back cover blurb. Pristaš's intention is to tackle many important subjects — from specific conditions of artists' work and modes of production in theatre, to many theoretical concepts embedded in the discourse of the humanities in general, and performing arts studies in particular. At the same time,

he keeps the text readable and communicative. The structure of the book is open and the narration is not entirely linear. The red line running through the book, however, 'is an analysis of the relation between poetics and materialism', as Bojana Kunst points out in the afterword, 'and this gives an insight into the very matter of (artistic) work as the material power of production' (p. 285).

In the first part of the book, Pristaš discusses transformations of artistic work and the work of art: the institutionalisation of theatrical routines, on one hand, and the project-based forms of artistic work resulting in quantification and temporalisation (so called 'projective temporality') of every part of artistic work not captured by institutions, on the other. His preoccupation in this part is the status of the work of artistic production, in relation to the dominant mode of production in contemporary capitalist society, and one of the key problems of that relation: how to create interruptions in the present model of the project-based artistic work, determined by overall standardization and continuity of its 'projective temporality', which is a fusion of past, present, and future work (i.e. writing reports on past projects, doing present projects, and, at the same time, conceptualising future projects). It is a continuous acceleration where the ancient Greco-Roman motto *speûde bradéōs/festina lente* ('make haste slowly') no longer applies.

In the second part, however, Pristaš argues that it is precisely this theatre that could potentially generate a rupture in dominant images of time. It is a 'theatre of refraction,' a theatre 'where one observes the world not only from the theatre, but also through the theatre', and, last but not least, 'one of radically slowing down' (p. 55). In this section, Pristaš introduces more explicitly some concepts and methods generated in the last twenty years of his permanent work with BADco., a collaborative collective of dancers, performers, dramaturges, and thinkers from Zagreb (Tomislav Medak, Ivana Ivković, Nikolina Pristaš, Ana

Kreitmeyer, Zrinka Užbinec, etc.). For instance, ‘the exploded view’ is a term used by the collective to denote ‘a mode of presenting the relations between the integral parts of a set, whether an object, mechanism, or machine’, or, as elaborated by Tomislav Medak, it is ‘a mode of presentation that, in synchronicity, shows an exploded view of diachronic processes’ (p. 59). This method suggests encounters and junctures, and at the same time highlights another BADco. concept, ‘the interstice’, the space of a rift between the elements. A major part of this section, however, is devoted to three concepts or procedures derived from Benjamin, Brecht, and Althusser: literarisation, displacement, and change in the regimes of interest. All of them are related to methodical interruptions, and shifts within the process of showing how something is brought into being (in theatre): gestic interruption is in the core of Brecht’s concept of literarisation; Althusser’s displacement effect is, in fact, another name for Brecht’s estrangement effect (*Verfremdungseffekt*); a regime of interest is a set of conditions that define the field of the problem: ‘The proposition of a new problem shifts the regime of interests and vice versa, while a shift in the regime of interests renders a new problem visible’ (p. 80).

The third section is the central, and most extensive, part of the book. Here Pristaš takes a close reading of Diderot (one of his favourite authors) and his thinking, by which materialist thought made its way into theatre and prepared the terrain for Brecht’s materialistic (dialectical) turn in the theatre of the twentieth century. What concerns Pristaš is the perspective of Diderot’s theory of the theatre and ‘the reconstruction of thinking about theatre as a strategy of viewing and expression’ (p. 106). He analyses, in an original and productive way, a number of main terms of Diderot’s theory of theatre, such as event, situation, tableau, pregnant moment, energy, interest, and ideal model. Besides Diderot, Pristaš owes a lot to Barthes for stimulation of his theoretical imagination, especially to his seminal essay ‘Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein’

(1973), according to Pristaš, ‘a key text for understanding the concept of representation’ (p. 146).

These theoretical explorations will finally pave the way for the concept of cinematic modes of production and viewing in the fourth section of the book. Here Pristaš draws on insights from the book *Cinematic Mode of Production* (2006) by Jonathan Beller, and his thesis that the dominant mode of representation, the cinematic, has become the dominant mode of production. Pristaš explains his views on this concept by introducing and analysing several paradigmatic examples, such as an exhibition by Xavier Le Roy, performances by Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, Robert Rauschenberg, Oleg Kulik, and Dragan Živadinov, including a performance by his own company.

*Exploded Gaze* is the finest selection of Pristaš’s reflections on the transformation of the theatrical *dispositif* in the last twenty years of his theoretical and practical work in theatre. The intertwining between his theoretical insights and practical experiences with BADco. is, in particular, a special quality of this valuable book. It is one of the best examples of what Josette Féral calls a ‘third theoretical vector’ of performing arts theories, a theoretical approach that develops in a fluid zone between ‘analytical theories’ and ‘theories of production’.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, Pristaš’s book should find its way to a wide range of potential readers, no matter if they consider themselves to be theatre ‘theoreticians’ or ‘practitioners’.

1. Josette Féral, ‘Towards a Theory of Fluid Groupings’, *Theaterschrift*, 5–6 (1994), 58–80.





# GROTOWSKI E GURDJIEFF

**Franco Ruffini**

Naples: Editoriale Scientifica, 2019, 284 pp.  
ISBN 9788893915274

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FRANCO RUFFINI

## Grotowski e Gurdjieff



Editoriale Scientifica



y admission of the author himself, *Grotowski e Gurdjieff* appears as a dialogue with Jerzy Grotowski ('prima d'essere uno studio su Grotowski, queste pagine sono un dialogo con Grotowski'), (p. 51) focused on a kind of research which frequently exists outside the theatre: 'the ancient path of life and knowledge' (p. 75).<sup>1</sup> The monograph takes up an extremely circumstantial subject, but the field of observation allows a wide-ranging approach, avoiding the strict limitations of the treatment of a topic that is too specific.

In fact, Franco Ruffini explores a wide and complex *territory*, examining in depth some issues raised by the studies about Grotowski's work, at the hands of his disciples/heirs (especially Thomas Richards, Ludwik Flaszen, Peter Brook, Eugenio Barba, and Zbigniew Osiński), and theatre historians (Antonio Attisani, Georges Banu, Marco De Marinis, Leszek Kolankiewicz, Ferruccio Marotti, Carla Pollastrelli, Mirella

Schino, Ferdinando Taviani et al.). These matters — underlined for the first time by Richard Schechner's historical and critical remark — concern the role played by the spiritual *teacher* of the 'Fourth Way' system, Georges Ivanovič Gurdjieff, in Grotowski's theatrical and parath-eatrical activity.<sup>2</sup>

Ruffini highlights the meeting points between the paths of the two *gurus*, who have never had any direct contact (Gurdjieff died in 1949, when Grotowski was only sixteen years old). The author discusses the subject by identifying and analysing three main events: 1) the Pontedera Symposium of Workcenter activities presentation (13 and 14 February 1987), in which Grotowski points to Gurdjieff, for the first time in public, as an essential reference for his *Performer's* work (see Ruffini's chapter 'Appunti per la storia di un silenzio', pp. 74-91); 2) the interview *C'était une sorte de volcan*, conducted by Peter Brook in February 1991, and published in the *Dossier H* devoted to Gurdjieff by the editor Bruno De Panafieu,<sup>3</sup> where Grotowski lists his personal reference books, excluded from the official bibliography, through which he finds his own Gurdjieff — Irmis Popoff's *Gurdjieff: His Work on Myself with Others For the Work, Talks by Madame Ouspensky*, edited by Robert De Ropp, and Fritz Peters' *Boyhood with Gurdjieff* (see the chapter 'Grotowski grand-père', pp. 23-73); 3) a ten days workshop in Turin, organised by Gabriele Vacis, from 25 February to 8 March 1991,<sup>4</sup> when Grotowski recognises Gurdjieff as an essential companion along the way (see Ruffini's chapter, 'Dal principio', pp. 92-124).

In actuality, as Ruffini states, at the beginning of Grotowski's relationship with Gurdjieff lies Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching*, which he read in the 1960s. The text provided him nothing more

1. 'È il cammino della vita e della conoscenza'. J. Grotowski, *Risposta a Stanislavskij*, in *Grotowski: Testi 1954-1998, Volume II: Il teatro povero* (Florence: La casa Usher, 2015), p. 64. For the first edition of the text see K. Stanislavskij, *L'attore creativo* (Florence: La casa Usher, 1980).

2. R. Schechner, 'Exodution', in R. Schechner and Lisa Wolford eds., *The Grotowski Sourcebook* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

3. Georges Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (*Les Dossiers H*), ed. by Bruno De Panafieu (Geneva: L'Age d'Homme, 1992).

4. See G. Vacis, *Awareness: Dieci giorni con Jerzy Grotowski*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Rome: Bulzoni, 2014).



than information, ‘diagrams, concepts, reasonings, demonstrations’ (p. 32), while Grotowski — leader of a movement willing to free human life by the *means* of theatre — was looking for ‘indications about *doing*’ (p. 34), more likely to be found in the non-conventional reference books about Gurdjieff mentioned above, to which, at least, must be added *Monsieur Gurdjieff* by Louis Pauwels. Despite what Ruffini calls a long ‘accord to silence’ (‘consegna del silenzio’, p. 74), broken during the Pontedera Symposium in 1987, the Armenian mystic’s teachings were already attended *chez* Grotowski in the 1970s.

According to the author, Gurdjieff’s permeation into Grotowski’s work can be identified especially in the use of the *super-effort*, as well as — and probably above all — in the kind of master-disciple relationship established with his collaborators. Ruffini’s analysis dwells, in particular, on Grotowski’s relationship with Zbigniew Osiński (see the chapter ‘Maestro e allievo’, pp. 125-144), and on the transition from *theatre performances* to the *essence of theatre* (see the chapter ‘Teatro dell’essenza’, pp. 145-168). In Ruffini’s opinion, this switch is responsible for transforming the conjunction between the two kindred spirits: from ‘Grotowski e Gurdjieff’ to ‘Grotowski-e-Gurdjieff’.

By way of conclusion, the book also contains a four-chapter attachment (‘Libri e testi di Jerzy Grotowski’, pp. 181-278), in which the author follows up his critical reflection on the postulates of the philology of Grotowski’s writings, complied with the publication, at the end of 2012, of his complete works, *Grotowski: Teksty zebrane*.

Ruffini began writing this book in 2015; the writing process lasted nearly four years. Nevertheless, his reflection on the subject finds its origins even further back in time: forty years before, in 1975, while he was participating at the University of Research of the Theatre of Nations, created and directed by Grotowski. Since then, the author

had to deal with something, coming from the Polish *teacher*, he could not understand. This experience enabled him to realise that the true challenge of intelligence is to renounce the rational understanding of phenomena, in order to prefer the comprehension that arrives by *doing*. That is why *Grotowski e Gurdjieff* also retraces the history of Ruffini’s quest throughout his entire career.



# DIRECTIONS FOR DIRECTING: THEATRE AND METHOD

**Avra Sidiropoulou**

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# DIRECTIONS FOR DIRECTING

THEATRE AND METHOD

AVRA SIDIROPOULOU







vra Sidiropoulou's recent monograph is a very useful and inspirational book, not only for emerging directors and students of directing, acting and scenography, but also for any theatre-loving person in general.

Combining a theoretical and methodological approach by integrating work examples and observations drawn from the experiences of individual artists, theatre scholars, and critics together with a dynamic workbook section at the end of each chapter, the book offers a unique approach that makes for a highly original contribution to the existing bibliography on theatre practice. In effect, the scholarly and the artistic, the theoretical and the practical come together, complementing each other.

Sidiropoulou lays out the main tenets of the art of directing art in six chapters that analyse the director's relationship with the mental processes of inspiration, interpretation, and leadership/collaboration, as well as with the text, the stage, and the actor. As the author herself

claims, 'the book is, therefore, an attempt, means of communication, as well as instruction, to tap into those notions of the art that are a series of abstract considerations but also a handling of different skills — organisational, interpersonal, and technical' (p. 2). *Directions* altogether fulfils the expectations it has raised. Sidiropoulou is just as at home with critical theory, theatre history, and theory as she is with the practicalities of her craft. Without alienating her readers, she manages to create a solid framework within which to argue and unfold the complexities of the directing art.

More specifically, Chapter 1 explores the director's process of inspiration. Chapter 2 gets into the particulars of interpretation, offering valid and interesting examples from popular playscripts, while Chapter 3 explains the application of method, leadership and collaboration in the work of the director during rehearsal. All three chapters, as Sidiropoulou argues, 'analyse the mental steps that inform the director's understanding of a play, but also discuss an array of production choices in which the director engages before and during rehearsal' (p. 3). Major aspects of the director's mental work — such as determining one's style and point-of-view — are discussed alongside the logistics of auditions and assessing different performance venues. The remaining three chapters guide the reader through an understanding of major production demands, addressing the details of the dialogue that exists between director and text (dramatic as well as non-verbal), director and space/artistic collaborators, and, finally, director and actor. I found Chapter 5 most original in scope, especially as it familiarises us with forms of collaboration that have not been adequately dealt with in most of the existing 'manuals' on directing: the conversation between the director and the sound designer is one such notable example.

The structure is excellent; in the author's own words, it intends to follow the 'work of a director from the play's conception through to the

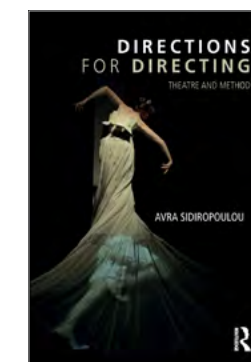
moment a performance is delivered to an audience', organising the different sections of the book 'in such a way as to suggest the director's multiplicity of roles and the complexity of the directing profession' (p. 4). It is supported by boxes that condense the arguments made throughout, as well as the extensive workbook sections that contain practical exercises in various degrees of complexity. Undoubtedly, the boxes make the book even more accessible to readers, among whom one is expected to find many practical-minded directors and actors, accustomed more to exercises than the more abstract discourse that is also part of the study. The accompanying web companion palpably illustrates many of the points raised in the book through video interviews, presentations and tutorials with theatre artists from all over the world: from Spain, Denmark, and Greece to the United States, New Zealand, and Japan!

The logic that exists between the plain-speaking introductions and the list of suggestions and questions in each of the boxes is well balanced. The direct 'you' address to the reader puts things into perspective, carving a path that we can follow. Step-by-step, the directing process unfolds in front of our eyes: getting inspired; researching the world of the play; organising auditions, running rehearsals, and navigating mishaps; understanding text and stage composition; working with the actors and the design team; preparing for the 'shock' of opening night. This is no mere practical 'handbook', but an inspired series of conversations between the writer and the reader.

In general, one gets a comprehensive, holistic view of the entire directing process: from the moment of inception to opening night. In certain chapters, there is also a solid review of dramatic history, which is carefully and closely linked to the workbook sections, so that theory clarifies and adds to the discussion of practice. This structure gives clarity and guidance to the reader—Sidiropoulou moves from Plato to Meyerhold, Beckett to Ostermeier, to the Wooster Group and Hirata with ease, never losing

sight of the main axes that define the art of the director. Sidiropoulou's writing is rich and imagistic but exact, analytical but flowing. Her combined experience as a stage director and an acclaimed academic has generated a practical book that gives practical advice, posing effective questions that address diverse aspects of the directing art and craft. However, while she offers her significant experience as a theatre practitioner, she also recognises the value that exists in different methods and styles. She describes, for example, the work processes of *auteurs* such as Robert Lepage and Ariane Mnouchkine and moves further into ensembles such as Blast Theory, whose ways of theatre-making are highly collaborative and effective in bringing different modalities together (the section on Alternative Dramaturgies in Chapter 4 is especially illuminating). Needless to say, this dual approach makes the book a worthwhile tool and a notably enjoyable read!

*Directions for Directing: Theatre and Method* is one of those rare, personal, deeply felt, and intelligently argued approaches that would be of tremendous use to any theatre practitioner, from beginners to professionals, as well as theatre students at BA, BFA and MFA levels.





# EL TEXTO INSUMISO

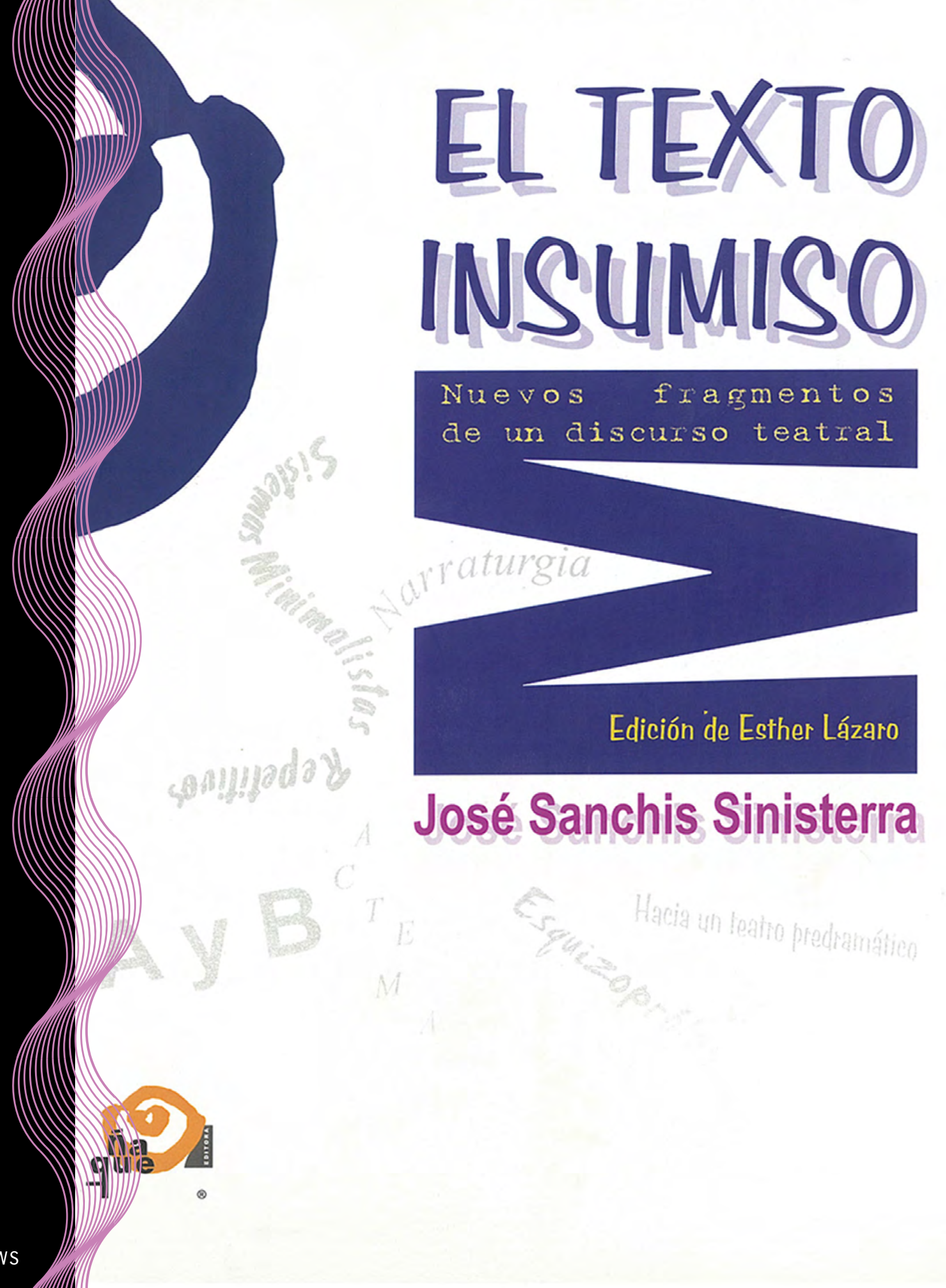
ed. by **José Sanchis Sinisterra**  
and **Esther Lázaro**

Ciudad Real: Ñaque Editora, 2018, 208 pp.  
ISBN 9788366124066

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**J**osé Sanchis Sinisterra (1940, Valência) é um dos autores marcantes do teatro contemporâneo espanhol, tanto pela sua profícua produção dramática e cénica, como pela longevidade da sua carreira. Para além de dramaturgo e encenador, Sinisterra trabalhou como dramaturgista, adaptando obras de repertório clássico e moderno, traduzindo do francês Jean Anouilh, Paul Claudel ou ainda autores catalães da sua geração como Josep Maria Benet i Jornet, entre outros. Ao mesmo tempo que assina mais de 40 textos representados (entre originais e adaptações) e dezenas de encenações suas (não só dos seus textos como de autores de repertório), o seu percurso tem sido, desde 1968, galardoado várias vezes. Fundador de projetos como Barcelona el Teatro Fronterizo (1977), sediado na famosa Sala Beckett, a obra teatral de Sinisterra vive um momento chave de transformação, quando o próprio estreita a sua relação com a América do Sul, a partir de 1985. Bem mais tarde, já em Madrid, funda o Nuevo Teatro Fronterizo (2010) onde continua os seus projetos de criação e investigação.

É o estudo, a transmissão de saberes práticos e teóricos, que norteia parte da vida profissional de José Sanchis Sinisterra e que o transforma também num pedagogo. Torna-se Professor Adjunto de Literatura Espanhola na Faculdade de Letras da sua cidade natal, prolongando a sua carreira académica nos anos 70 e 80 do século passado, em Barcelona. Além desse marco universitário inicial, o autor costuma realizar, sobretudo na Europa e na América Latina, conferências, palestras, seminários e oficinas. É neste contexto que a obra *El texto insumiso* nasce, atuando como um espaço privilegiado para partilhar com os leitores, por um lado, a forma como sistematiza alguns eixos da arte teatral, nomeadamente a questão do texto em cena, e, por outro, o modo como pretende transmitir a sua ideia de teatro, moldando assim um habitat conceptual para a sua obra dramática.

Pelas mãos de Esther Lázaro, que assina a edição da obra, *El texto insumiso* reúne dezenas de textos curtos, de dimensão teórica e pedagógica, escritos, em grande parte, na primeira década do nosso século. Entre ensaios, artigos, prólogos, materiais para folhas de sala ou textos redigidos em jeito de elegias, Sinisterra propõe uma obra ensaística profundamente fragmentada, ato que o autor denuncia ao subtitulá-la *Nuevos fragmentos de un discurso teatral*, subtítulo este que havia atribuído (excetuando logicamente o termo ‘nuevos’) a *La escena sin límites* (Ciudad real, Ed. Ñaque, 2002), obra que se definia como um exercício de pensamento, à semelhança do novo volume. O carácter fragmentado de *El texto insumiso* é devolvido ao leitor no seu índice, que procura reunir os textículos do autor em quatro partes: *El texto insumiso*, *Miradas en torno*, *palabras de apoyo*, *extra-bíos*.

A primeira parte junta os textos de longo fôlego e, nas palavras de Lázaro, relaciona-se diretamente com o seu trabalho de dramaturgo (p. 13). A segunda procura dar enfoque a aspetos temáticos do teatro e questões de pendor histórico que marcam ainda hoje a teoria e a prática

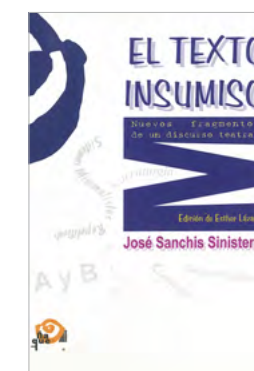


teatrais. A terceira parte aprofunda o enunciado da anterior, contudo, centrada já em algumas obras literárias e cénicas do autor. Por fim, a quarta parte, *extra-bío*, organiza textos curtíssimos de âmbito oficial.

Além das partes nomeadas, existe ainda um forte aparato paratextual que envolve *El texto insumiso*. Se Lázaro assina uma breve nota introdutória e ainda um texto que apresenta o percurso biográfico e bibliográfico do autor (*Bio-bibliográfico de José Sanchis Sinisterra*), este escreve um texto auto-ficcional, presente ainda antes da nota editorial, que intitula *Esquizoprólogo (o mejor: autoentrevista)*, no qual explica o seu gesto editorial e as suas filiações artísticas.

Nessas páginas introdutórias, o dramaturgo entrevista-se a si próprio, criando um diálogo a duas vozes, o jornalista e o poeta, parafraseando assim dispositivos similares de outros autores como, por exemplo, Brecht, que invoca inúmeras vezes, ao longo de *El texto insumiso*, como uma das suas referências para pensar o teatro. Cita igualmente outros autores fundamentais como Franz Kafka, Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter, Julio Cortázar ou ainda Walter Benjamin. Não só refere autores, como as áreas de saber que privilegia quando concebe projetos, começando pela Estética e a Antropologia, passando pelos Estudos de Género, pelas Ciências e a Filosofia. Em *Equizoprólogo*, Sinisterra revela igualmente, no âmbito das suas atividades relacionadas com o Nuevo Teatro Fronterizo, temáticas a que tem dado mais atenção e que compõem a atualidade política e noticiosa da última década, como a igualdade de género, a imigração e a questão dos refugiados na Europa. Por fim, a auto-entrevista procura justificar o propósito da presente publicação pelo facto de ‘Ni el trabajo actoral ni el puesta en escena tienen por qué sustentarse solamente en la experiencia, en la intuición, en la emoción’ (p. 10). *Equizoprólogo* torna-se assim numa espécie de mapa — ainda que desmembrado — que permite guiar a leitura e os subtextos de *El Texto insumiso*.

Para reunir cerca de 60 textos escritos pelo autor, o título escolhido não é anódino, marcando uma posição clara em relação ao papel do texto no dispositivo teatral que prolongou em vários dos seus fragmentos. Embora explicita em *El texto insumiso* o seu imaginário de encenador, Sinisterra tende a focar o seu discurso na relação entre actor, texto e público, por forma talvez a celebrar a literatura dramática como pivô das transformações estéticas, passadas e futuras, que o teatro vive(u). Insubmisso e celebrado, Sinisterra lamenta as consequências de uma ditadura franquista que abafou a presença tanto do dramaturgo como da sua produção dramática e ainda o triunfo do encenador como intérprete-rei, já não do texto, mas do espetáculo, destacando as décadas de 60, 70 e 80 do século XX. Parafraseando uma expressão de Bernard Dort, o autor espanhol recomenda no seu texto *El espectador ideal*, em tom de ironia, que ‘muchos directores deberían hacerse una liposucción del ego’ (p. 79). É com esta e outras invetivas que Sinisterra mantém uma fervorosa defesa, tanto na teoria como na prática artística teatral, de uma dramaturgia contemporânea viva e transgeracional, que continua a promover não só em Espanha como no amplo espaço ibero-americano.



# IL TEATRO DEI ROBOT: LA MECCANICA DELLE EMOZIONI DEL ROBOT-HUMAN THEATRE DI HIRATA ORIZA

**Cinzia Toscano**

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*Cinzia Toscano*

## ***Il teatro dei robot***

■ *La meccanica delle emozioni  
nel Robot-Human Theatre  
di Hirata Oriza*



TRAME  
Antropologia, teatro  
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stablished thanks to the collaboration between the director and playwright Hirata Oriza and the engineer Ishiguro Hiroshi, the Robot-Human Theatre Project is one of the most interesting experiments that combines performing arts and technology with the interaction of human and robotic performers. Krisztina Rosner writes the following in an article for *The Theatre Times*,

Hirata's robot theatre performances have become important not only because they are robots and humans, their primary importance lies in the fact that his shows go beyond being mere spectacle of the robots. The performances are more than a spectacular entertainment of "what to robots look like". In Hirata's performances, the robots play different characters, he tries to reflect on the fundamental issues of coexistence between human and robot through the means and tools of theatre as art.<sup>1</sup>

In her book *Il teatro dei robot*, Cinzia Toscano investigates a complex game of relationships between theatre, technological development, and anthropology, with the Robot-Human Theatre Project at its centre. She also aims to discuss the repercussions that robotics has on contemporary Japanese society and how art can represent this evolution. The work appears, from this point of view, to have two clear and distinct faces. In terms of content, Toscano's research uses a strong multidisciplinary approach that only tangentially considers pure theatrical studies, for instance in the analysis of Hirata's working method, or his dramatic writing called 'Teoria del teatro colloquiale'.<sup>2</sup> Toscano, indeed, prefers to use a theoretical framework that, rightly, includes theatre, sociology, anthropology, and robotics.

From this point of view, the work is undoubtedly interesting, with a clear second part — corresponding to Chapter Five — focused on the analysis of some of the main works created by Hirata and Ishiguro: *I, worker* (2008), *Sayonara* (2010/2012), *Three Sisters Android Versions* (2012), and *La Métamorphose version android* (2014). This section, around eighty pages of the entire volume, is certainly the most interesting and in-depth part, with precise references to the text and the staging.

In general, *Il teatro dei robot* seems to suffer from problems related to its structure and to the succession of chapters. A clear sample of this 'structural instability' of the volume is the first chapter, 'Clapping robots, il fascino talentoso degli artefatti semoventi' (pp. 7-28), in which Toscano outlines an all-inclusive review that looks at robots in museums;

← 1. See K. Rosner, 'The Gaze of the Robot: Oriza Hirata's Robot Theatre', *The Theatre Times*, 11 March 2018, online. Rosner's revealing article on Hirata is based on her research, supported by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, as a part of the author's JSPS postdoctoral fellowship project Reconsidering The Performer's Presence: Non-Human And Neo-Human Aspects Of Contemporary Japanese Theatre, conducted at Waseda University between 2015 and 2017.

2. Cinzia Toscano, *Il teatro dei robot: La meccanica delle emozioni del Robot-Human Theatre di Hirata Oriza* (Bologna: CLUEB, 2019), p. 141.

Blanca Li; the Italian experience of *Umano ma non troppo*; *Talos*, by choreographer Arkadi Zailes; the high-tech mask of Asai Nombuchi; and *Mai Hi Ten Yu* and the new frontier of artificial intelligence in music. This huge amount of material overwhelms the reader, and probably would have deserved more space for discussion, or, in this short form, simply be positioned as an appendix (such as ‘Other Robotic Experiences’).

The real beginning of the volume is, therefore, Chapter Two, ‘Understanding Robots’ (pp. 29-68), which constitutes the necessary background to fully understand the implications and repercussions of the Robot-Human Theatre Project in relation to the Japanese society and technological development. Here, the author uses not only a theoretical framework that comes from robotic science — together with an interview released by Ishiguro himself — but also approaches the issue through psychoanalysis, applying the Freudian concept of the uncanny to the relation between human being and robots.

The overview of Japanese theatre which follows, with particular regard to the world of automata (Chapter Three, ‘*Karakuri ningyō* automi dal Giappone’, pp. 69-108), is well delineated, even if it has some limits in terms of space and contents (interesting, for example, is the absence, among the references, of the dated but seminal book by Benito Ortolani on Japanese theatre). This chapter is important for contextualising Hirata’s work within a theatrical tradition, and not only in relation to the technological discourse. In reality, Chapter Four, on the historical and artistic context in Japan from the post-war period (pp. 109-140), could have been incorporated into this third chapter, reworking the paragraphs dedicated to the acting method by Suzuki Tadashi, and the drama of silence by Ōta Shōgo — that do not really add specific elements to the understanding of Hirata — to focus more on what is the core of the volume: the Robot-Human Theatre Project, which makes its true entry into the volume only in Chapter Five, (‘Seinendan Theatre Company di Hirata Oriza’, pp. 141-216).

As mentioned, starting from this point, the volume focuses on a punctual analysis of Hirata’s works, looking at his dramaturgical method, with interesting considerations on his conception of dramatic structure, and at his activity before and after the Robot-Human Theatre Project, before finally examining the details of the staged productions.

In conclusion, the volume is certainly interesting, with many important considerations that other scholars should account for in further research on the relationship between art and technology. However, there also exists the feeling of a volume that reaches its core late, due to its desire to have a broad spectrum of investigation that is valuable, but may sometimes appear dispersed.

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