Differences on Stage

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Edited by

Alessandra De Martino, Paolo Puppa
and Paola Toninato

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PREFACE

DIFFERENT THEATRES, THEATRES OF DIFFERENCE

JOSEPH FARRELL

The first production of Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin in February 1926 caused a riot inside and outside the theatre. As news leaked out during the rehearsals about the subject and content of the play, there were already murmurs in the newspapers and rumours of trouble, and once the play opened the situation deteriorated from one evening to the next. Initially, the protest took the form of hissing, booing and stamping of feet during the performance, but on the fourth night protesters stormed the stage. The police were called and the production had to be halted. If any one man can claim to have been the founder of the Abbey, it was the poet W. B. Yeats, and he took charge that night. His was the credit for identifying and fostering the genius of Synge, and to him too should go the credit for providing a stage for O'Casey, with whom he disagreed on many points. To his dismay, he had seen plays in his theatre provoke riots, occasioned first by some one-act works of his own, then by Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*, by George Bernard Shaw's *The Shewing up of Blanco Posnet* and finally by O'Casey. An optimist could conclude that the presence of claques, gangs, organised and disorganised demonstrations was a proof that in Ireland theatre mattered, that productions aroused strong views among the population at large and not merely among the closed ranks of professional critics and habitual theatre-goers.

That consideration did not mollify Yeats, who strode on to the stage to address the audience directly. His words to the militant crowd in the stalls on 11 February 1926 were passionate and scornful, but the scorn and passion derived from his profound belief in the need for a *different* theatre in Ireland and from his growing doubt over whether the theatre-going audience in Dublin were willing to rise to that challenge. It is recorded that Yeats, who did not lack courage, physical or moral, took centre stage and

raised his hands to request, or demand, silence, which he finally obtained. He spoke forthrightly to the people in the stalls:

> I thought you had got tired of this, which commenced about fifteen years ago. But you have disgraced yourselves again. Is this going to be a recurring celebration of Irish genius? Synge first, and then O'Casey… Dublin has again rocked the cradle of a reputation. From such a scene as this in this theatre went forth the fame of Synge. Equally the fame of O'Casey is born here tonight. This is his apotheosis.[1]

There is no doubt that O'Casey, if not Synge, had deliberately provoked the Irish people and not only those who frequented theatres. He had been taunting them in the press in the weeks which preceded the production, promising a *different* theatre, with *different* characters and *different* political, ethical and theatrical motivations, one which would mount a challenge to their lazy acceptance of what had been done in their name in previous decades during the campaign which led to the independence of Ireland, and which would be in a *different* style of theatre to what they were accustomed to, and so perhaps he had no right to the outrage he expressed when his play was jeered. However, it is the response of Yeats, who was not himself reluctant to indulge in a spot of bourgeois-provocation, which is of more universal value and lasting importance, and which will be of interest to anyone involved with non-mainstream, *different* theatre. His principal worry was not over the possible failure of the Abbey, which had already established itself as one of the great theatres of Europe, and which had been a success with the Dublin public almost from the outset. For Yeats, however, that success was, paradoxically, a symptom of a malaise or a deeper failure to forge a theatre which was genuinely *different*. For Yeats, that *difference* was to lie in its ability to break free from the realism then prevailing in European theatre. He hoped to write and stage plays which would be, as he explained in a letter to Lady Gregory, "for the most part remote, spiritual and ideal." The actual success of the Abbey Theatre with the public he described as "a discouragement and a defeat," for it was a proof that the public preferred conventional realism.[2]

It is not the least of the merits of the collection of essays in this volume that it allows the readership, or audience, to make connections and associations over time. From a different age and different culture, Daniele Lamuraglia, in a discussion in the course of the conference which gave

[1] McCann, *The Story of the Abbey Theatre*, 150–51.
[2] Quoted in Mac Liammoir and Boland, *W. B. Yeats and His World*, 76.

birth to this volume, stated that "narrative theatre" was not in his blood, and that his preference was for a theatre which "maintained its potential as vision, as metaphor, as (expressing) a dream-like quality." Yeats held the same hopes and aspirations. He might too have seen eye to eye with the Romanian Matéi Visniec, who aimed at the creation, even in conditions of dictatorship, of a politically aware theatre, but one which would give space to realms of fantasy, dream and the unconscious.

The Yeats who faced the restive stalls during the fiasco of their reaction to O'Casey's work was, it might be thought, a hard man to please. He was dismayed at the success of realist plays with audiences but also outraged at the response of the same audience to O'Casey's deeply realist play. Yeats's words, however, have a deeper resonance than the response of a frustrated, angry man to one production. The concern in this volume is with attempts to establish, in Ireland or elsewhere, a *different* theatre, a theatre which does not aim to be part of the mainstream, or which perhaps wishes to extend the parameters of what is viewed as mainstream, which challenges the canon, which defies received ideas, which jeers at convention, which taunts facile expectations and those who hold them. The question could be put in these terms: A theatre *different* from what and challenging for whom? For the spirits who create that theatre, for fellow professionals of the same generation, or for the theatre-going public whose response is spontaneous and immediate and whose interest is more transitory and slight? The generational shift from rejection to appreciation is a commonplace of all art, and not only theatrical art. The impressionists moved in a generation from the *Salon des Refusés* to the great halls of the famous museums in Europe's capital cities. In theatre, the publication in 1826 of Victor Hugo's never performed play, *Cromwell,* seen now as the harbinger of the Romantic mood, was greeted with howls of derision, as was Pirandello's *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* at its first night in Rome in 1921, as was Ibsen at premières all over Europe, as were Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter on their débuts in London. How important is the audience's response to *difference?* Is it sufficient to claim to be engaged in *épater le bourgeois*? Do innovating authors seek to reform practice everywhere or do they content themselves with acceptance in chamber theatres, as did Strindberg?

The question of the rights and beliefs of the audience is put here trenchantly by Paolo Puppa, Italy's leading theatre historian and now a writer of challenging monologues which re-view myth and tradition, and thus creator and practitioner of a *different* theatre. Yeats stated that the audience in Dublin had "disgraced" itself. This can be viewed as an early venture into what the Cologne school of critics would call "reception

aesthetics," and which was a recognition that the response of the stalls was as important as the performance on stage. Theatre is a communitarian act, and audiences are part of the community. Only an *agent provocateur* like Carmelo Bene, and he only briefly, could advocate "theatre without spectators." Perhaps Victor Hugo was of the same mind as Yeats, and perhaps Pirandello too was in agreement, but they did not openly say so. The issue is important because it brings to the fore the relation of innovation and tradition, as well as the relations of an author, whether reformist or conservative, with the public. An eighteenth-century playwright like Carlo Goldoni was deeply aware of the need to please an audience, and records conscientiously in his *Mémoires* the reaction, positive or negative, of audiences to individual plays. In London in the same century, Dr Samuel Johnson put the matter even more squarely in his manifesto issued at the opening of Drury Lane theatre: "We who live to please / must please to live." There has been a tectonic shift in consciousness, in mindset and culture between the attitudes of these eighteenth-century writers on the one hand and post-Romantic authors on the other over the desire to "please" as against the wish to taunt. There is a gulf between the desire to be in line with audience and public expectations, or to glory in being a non-conformist, rebellious challenger. This is an issue which underlies any consideration of a theatre that is *different.* Yeats occupied the middle ground, that of the frustrated idealist, the man who oscillates between wishing to coax an audience to take the "less travelled road," or taking a perverse delight of seeing popular outrage as proof of his being ahead of the taste of lesser breeds.

This fascinating volume edited by Alessandra De Martino, Paolo Puppa and Paola Toninato examines the efforts of contemporary critics, theatre historians and theatre-makers to respond to, or to participate in, the creation of a theatre which is unorthodox, or *different.* For many, one starting point, as suggested in the editors' introduction, is the inchoate sense that contemporary theatre is facing a crisis, that its specificity and identity are under some imprecise threat, that there is a need for renewal that is not being met. The name of Eugenio Barba is the name most commonly associated with this "disenchantment," as the editors remind us. For others the first principle is the need to give a voice to, or to address, those who have been excluded from theatrical discourse. For all writers, the issue is a reformulation of the eternal question of what purpose theatre serves. Should theatre today aim to give pleasure, as both Aristotle and Racine believed? Who is licensed to make theatre, to consume theatre? Translation provides a different focus, for it invites contact with realities

which are fundamentally *different*, but through which lens should translated works be viewed?

In the Victorian age, theatre set itself well established goals, knew its audience and its aims. If the very word "Victorian" has, rightly or wrongly, acquired negative overtones, it should be remembered that the Greeks in Athens or Siracusa had equal confidence. Theatre provided an arena for story-telling, for society's discussion with itself of its most fundamental values, for the probing of emotions, for creative contact between performer and spectator, or more threateningly for the exhibition of the competing creativities of writer and actor or merely for the display of ego-power at its most red and raw. Today, *different* issues have to be faced, starting with the question raised by Peter Brook. What does it take to make an empty space into a stage, physically and metaphorically? Who can occupy that space and who can sit around it, watching and listening? What is the respect to be accorded an audience? When in the heady days following the 1968 movement, Dario Fo and Franca Rame established their touring cooperatives to take theatre to places which were not on any established circuit, they insisted that the extemporised facilities and structures they used should not be in any way inferior to those in the great city theatres of Italy. They set up improvised stages which were not merely bare planks but had sophisticated stage props as well as the accoutrements of modern lighting and sound machinery necessary to provide a high-quality stage experience for their audience. Not all view this as indispensable. Theatre in the piazza, by *giullari* or nomadic companies, has a long and distinguished history in Italy, but today drama can be created in private houses, bars, factories, yards, restaurants and refectories, on trains or in buses. At the Edinburgh Festival in 2010, an Italian company presented a monologue-play in a private car, with a maximum capacity of four passengers, which travelled round the city as the actress recited and performed. No one disputed that this was *different* theatre.

Priests and lawyers will both proclaim that there is something intrinsically theatrical about their activities in church or courtroom, but is there something utterly distinct, wholly exclusive about theatre? When in Padua in 1545 the first *commedia dell'arte* troupe of which we have certain knowledge registered their statute, they were all members of the closed shop which was a Medieval-Renaissance *arte*, or guild. Like every guild, members jealously guarded admission to the profession and guaranteed standards of product or practice. The editors of this volume refer to the "unguaranteed scene" of today, and this is an intriguing phrase. *Quis custodiet?* In modern society, who has the right to make theatre and

how is that claim to right expressed, justified and with what outcome? What does it take to produce that activity called drama? What are the constituent elements judged indispensable now? Plot? Script? Performance? Song? Dialogue? Monologue? How are we to assess the contribution to a *different* theatre which may have only some, or even none, of these elements, and which might not meet, or even concern itself with, public approval? These too are among the issues underlying discussion in this volume.

It has been often said that theatre is always *different* from one generation to the next, always self-renewing, in a state of permanent revolution or always in a state of crisis. This may be a consequence not of the nature of drama but of some deeper force, like the eternal intellectual restlessness of the human animal. It is worthwhile pondering two responses from two very different men of the theatre to this notion of theatre-as-crisis, or to contemporary disenchanted views of theatre. Andrea Camilleri provided a humorous, ironic viewpoint:

> Once Silvio D'Amico, a man of the theatre who knew what he was talking about, wrote an essay, quoting titles, articles, authors and publishers, entitled *The Crisis of the Theatre*. He listed I do not know how many, sixty or seventy, books with exactly the same title as his, *The Crisis of the Theatre*, which had all appeared in France, if memory serves, between 1820 and 1890. The truth is that theatre must live on crisis, because a theatre which is not in crisis is a theatre which is absolutely, smugly self-satisfied. I have no doubt that if someone were to undertake the proper excavation, they would find alongside the lost works of Aeschylus, a little treatise with the same title, *The Crisis of the Theatre in Greece*.[3]

Authors, directors, actors have continually to seek out new spaces, physical as well as mental. When Broadway became unduly commercialised and hostile to fresh talents or initiatives, new companies carved out an area called Off-Broadway, but when that in turn erected its own barriers, restless imaginations moved to an Off-Off-Broadway. Some *different* companies have a short life-span or are funded with an in-built obsolescence, most famously the Mickery in Amsterdam, founded by Ritsaert ten Cate as a space for alternative theatre practices but which decided in 1991 it had completed its mission and so dissolved itself.[4]

On the other hand, this sense of bewilderment over the scope of modern theatre can be, in thoughtful innovators, accompanied by a sense of loss. In the immediate post-war years, the American playwright Arthur

[3] Camilleri, *Le parole raccontate*, 130.
[4] Pearson, *Mickery Theatre*.

Miller visited Sicily. He had met Sicilians in New York and the idea for *A View from the Bridge* was germinating in his mind. Somewhat uncomfortably for him, his visit was facilitated by Lucky Luciano, whom he met by chance in Palermo and who put a car and a chauffeur at his disposal. The driver stopped at a then unfrequented spot in Siracusa and spoke one word to Miller, "*teatro*." In his autobiography, Miller continues the narrative:

> I got out and indeed there was the steel-fenced ruin of the tremendous Greek theatre…. I made my way down the stone tiers of that vast, vine-grown, sun-blasted amphitheatre chiselled out of the mountain, and at last stood on the rock stage that ended with a sheer drop to the blue sea just behind it and the arch of the sky overhead. I felt something close to shame at how suffocatingly private our theatre had become, how impoverished by a psychology that was no longer involved with the universalities of fate. Was it possible that fourteen thousand people had sat facing the spot on which I stood? Hard to grasp how the tragedies could have been written for such massive crowds when in our time the mass audience all but demanded vulgarisation. If the plays were not actually part of religious observances, it was hard to imagine what it was that fenced them from the ordinary vulgarity of most human diversions.[5]

The physical fence around the theatre was a trivial matter, but what intrigued Miller was his difficulty in establishing the nature of the metaphorical fence which divided theatre from the "ordinary vulgarity of most human diversions," particularly in an age like his which, in Miller's judgement, demanded vulgarisation. If all of the contributors to this volume are motivated by an informed passion for theatre which Miller would have recognized, some would, unlike him, revel in the description of their work as a "vulgarisation." Miller's ambition was to reach out to a wider audience while also posing the fathomless, ethical, humanist questions which he believed Greek tragedy had put. Standing in the Greek theatre in Siracusa, he recalled that Ezra Pound had translated the closing line of *Ajax* as "It all coheres!" and wondered if coherency was "the triumph, the system's manifestation and therefore God's okay, while our flux of choices merely soothes the entrepreneurial loneliness of the un-tribed, self-warring soul?"

The expression "un-tribed" is, given the site, an appropriately Delphic and tantalising one. Is theatre an activity for the tribe, whether the tribe is in Bali or Epidaurus, or indeed in the West End or on Broadway? Is theatre diminished when it addresses cloistered problems, when it tells

[5] Miller, *Timebends*, 175.

stories of interest to one coterie, caucus or caste, as is the case with community theatre such as the *teatro povero* in Montichiello, set up after World War II by the inhabitants of a small village in Tuscany to give enduring voice to their experiences of Fascism and of Nazi occupation, and also of the sacrifices made during the Resistance to such tyrannies?[6] That particular tradition is now changing nature under pressure from a new generation in Montichiello which has no memory of the Resistance. Will the new drama in the piazza have the same legitimacy? Or will it be merely but authentically *different*, like other theatres examined and discussed in this volume?

Perhaps the new, emerging *different* theatre is *ipso facto* enriching. Who would dare say there is something impoverished or limited about Romani theatre, gay theatre, feminist theatre, theatre performed by prisoners, the disabled or inmates of a mental hospital? And here too, in another glimpse of that continuity of trust and aspiration which discussions of theatre encourage, we can defer to the humane and humanist views expressed by Antonin Artaud and made his own by Pippo Delbono. Artaud distrusted theatre of the word alone since he believed in theatre for the deaf or the blind and feared a "theatre of the word" which might exclude some. If dramaturgy needs to be reinvented, Delbono suggests, it is so that it becomes not merely *different* but more genuinely "dramaturgy for others." The parallel dilemma is over whether such a theatre is endowed with greater force and appeal precisely because the newly empowered and included communities are those who were denied a voice in the traditional mainstream. Its practitioners might know better their own minds and not share the doubts and hesitations, the "disenchantments" Eugenio Barba has identified in his theoretical work and in his productions.

And maybe the idea that there is something exhausted about the contemporary mainstream is an illusion, but also a sign of healthy impatience and enquiry. In 1945, the indefatigable Silvio D'Amico published a pamphlet with the title *Il teatro non deve morire*.[7] That bold proclamation clashes with the assertions of Barba only superficially, and it expresses the spirit which anyone reading this volume will find animating the theatre of the Romanian Matéi Visniec or the Senegalese Mandiaye N'Diaye. Theirs is a theatre which hopes not merely to be provocatively *different* but also to make a difference. It is offensive to refer to theirs as theatre of the margins, since they draw on the rich traditions of their own countries and cultures. It is also curious to see how they look to other

[6] See Andrews, *A Theatre of Community Memory*.
[7] D'Amico, *Il teatro non deve morire*.

traditions as well to enrich their own writing. Visniec writes in French, as have several of his best known fellow countrymen such as Ionesco and Cioran, and used theatre unashamedly as a weapon of "cultural resistance" to the Ceaușescu regime. His theatre was no agitprop but a sophisticated blend of memory, theatre history as well as fantasy and ventures into a dream dimension. Mandiaye N'Diaye made Aristophanes part of his own repertoire. These essays by Gerardo Guccini and Fernando Marchiori are bracing, highly informative pieces. Taken as a whole, this volume is a testimony of the continuing, restless vitality of theatre.

All unattributed translations are by the author

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FOR A THEATRE ON THE EDGE: AN INTRODUCTION

PAOLO PUPPA, ALESSANDRA DE MARTINO AND PAOLA TONINATO

All existing theatres—be they in the centre or on the outskirts of town, publicly funded or poor, with satin seats and enormous chandeliers or marginalized—all of them represent an empty ritual, the relict of a vanishing kind of society. Eugenio Barba, among others, states this with lucid disenchantment in his latest book.[1] In a way, the stage of death and the death of the stage mirror each other. Among stage events representing the passage from the end of the second to the dawn of the third millennium, those that come to mind are the mannequin-cadavers in Kantor's *Dead Class* (1975) or the ghosts in Ascanio Celestini and Gaetano Ventriglia's *Cicoria* (1996), taken from Pasolini's *Orgia* (Orgy) and *Uccellacci e Uccellini* (The Hawks and the Sparrows). Or even, among Barba's productions, the skeletons in *Anabasis* (1979). Hence, very often *noir* confers to these fragile monuments of the theatrical scene real nocturnal explosions which are truly Yiddish, almost *Dybbuk*-like. Driven back to the borders, ignored or hindered by the market and its laws, this kind of theatre is becoming ever more aware of the loss of its *aura*.

This volume, inspired by a conference that took place at the University of Warwick in 2011, deals with a theatre interested in differences. In a global world that is developing an ever more diverse fabric—both in linguistic and cultural terms—theatre cannot but acknowledge the presence of a multitude of voices that feel entitled to speak up. Thus, the form is plural, as many and various are the stages that perform diversity. An unguaranteed theatre, at ease in the places of unease and sufferance, mirrors of its own condition. In these fields, both experts and performers drop any claim to providing a service to society, or of cultural and ideological revolution. A modest theatre, in the etymological sense of the word, satisfied with apparently modest aims, which are secondary in

[1] Barba, *La conquista della differenza*, 30.

comparison with the supremacy of political discourse. A theatre that exists in our time without actually being in our time.

The book explores, first of all, the ancient proximity between performance and madness, as Roberto Cuppone points out in his analysis of Marco Cavallo's epic deeds, staged by doctors and patients in 1973 at the mental hospital in Trieste under Giuliano Scabia's direction, and of the troubled start of the new Law no. 180/1978, for the closure of psychiatric hospitals. Interestingly, this legislative act preceded by two years only the publication by the Italian screenwriter and journalist Ennio De Concini of his book *Graffiti della follia*, containing a plethora of graffiti written on the walls of a psychiatric hospital, which he had gathered and meticulously recorded over a period of seven years. These are all stories of people who used to be "normal" and then drifted into a state of progressive isolation and marginality because they no longer reflected the canons of normality imposed by society. It is worth citing, as a paradigmatic example, one line of graffiti that recites as follows: "We are substantially normal people, a little different, and slightly offensive to 'collective correctness:' we are, therefore, revolutionaries, are we not?"[2] This is a cry for mental and spiritual freedom, underscoring the fact that the contrast between so-called normality and madness is only apparent insofar as madness is a residual concept of all that does not fit within homogenized canons. With no therapeutic strategies, this liberating feast—that comes two years before the filmic splendour of *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* by Milos Forman—re-emerges, though in a different context, in more definite experiences. For instance, in the *Accademia della Follia*, directed since 1992 by former patient Claudio Misculin, similarly to the magical societies described by Marcel Mauss, where the sick person becomes magician and priest; or with Bob Wilson, who worked with deaf-mutes and brain-damaged people at the beginning of his career; or in the Argentinean and Italian *Teatro Nucleo* in Ferrara, directed by Horacio Czertok and Cora Herrendorf—ex-Comuna Baires, of Jewish heritage—who expatriated from Argentina after Videla's coup (1978), and were housed in the abandoned spaces of ex-OPP[3] in Ferrara. However, the most significant character in this regard, a figure for whom disability becomes a model of communication, is certainly Pippo Delbono, with his angel coming out of the hell of a mental hospital and masterfully brought back to light. This is the case of *Barboni* (Tramps, 1997), set in Milan train station, with Bobò, a deaf-mute who was rescued from the mental hospital of Aversa after forty-five years of detention and then adopted by the

[2] De Concini, *Graffiti della follia*, 164.
[3] OPP stands for Provincial Psychiatric Hospital.

company. Likewise, in *Guerra* (War, 1998) the boy with Down syndrome Gianluca Ballaré, who was a former student of the artist's mother. Delbono underscores the political significance of physical diversity in the chapter discussing his theatre as "the place of talking bodies." To bring diversity onto the stage is to bring back humanity, the same humanity that aggressive capitalism and widespread hunger for power seem to have forgotten. Therefore, by combining visual and aural forms of art, he has fashioned a theatre where the human being, with all its weaknesses, is back at the centre of society.

A theatre that shows no apparent ambition to change the world. Nonetheless, among its various forms, one can find the so-called Theatre of the Oppressed that supports participation in and contribution to community structures. Augusto Boal, who paved the way for this type of theatre, uses this medium to go beyond professional experience and to avoid perpetuating oppression in the form of separation between actors and audience. Nonetheless, his well-known statement on "the theatre for all" does not rule out the recognition of the specificity of theatre and of the actor's competence, however questionable they might be. In his contribution, Fernando Marchiori investigates experiences that are different in terms of aesthetical choices, artistic languages and geographical locations, such as César Brie with his *Teatro de los Andes* in Bolivia, the *Takku Ligey Théâtre* in Senegal and David Mondacca in Bolivia, all referring to Boal's teachings, which have changed territorial settlements, methods of production, social relationships and artistic aims through different theatrical realities.

If dreaming is no longer a liberating weapon, given its unimportance in the empire of mass-media, nonetheless, theatre can serve as an expressive pole of attraction, far from the centre of economic and cultural power. Pasquale Verdicchio does not hesitate to recall Gramsci's view on such a point, especially with regard to dialect. Nevertheless, his discourse goes even further and takes shape between Pasolini on the one hand and Ngugi wa Thiong'o—the Kenyan playwright and poet—on the other, who are both suspended between resigned acceptance of the dominant language and alternative practices in favour of native idioms. The borders crumble and crack in different situations, where the main issue is translation, that is to say moving the scripts between different language systems. The hegemonic role of dominant languages and cultures manifests itself more strikingly in translation, which is considered to be the means through which we become acquainted with the Other, although in most cases it homogenizes it to the receptor audience's norms and expectations. Even though the translator is unquestionably an author in his/her own right,

he/she is also a cultural mediator engaged in the task of reducing the gaps between different, at times very distant, realities. The issue at stake is, thus, the cultural independence of the foreign work. How far can the translator go with his/her liberty to manipulate the source text without infringing on the foreign culture? To what extent can the source culture be domesticated to please the receiving culture? How can minority cultures be introduced into dominant environments without losing their individuality? These are some of the questions which post-colonial translation tries to address in order to fulfil its role of cultural bridge. Patrice Pavis's suggestive representation of translation as an hourglass, in which the foreign culture, contained in the top bowl, flows through a narrow neck to reach the bottom bowl where the receiving culture lies, clearly describes the risks of such a process, since if the hourglass "is only a mill, it will blend the source culture, destroy its every specificity […], if it is only a funnel, it will indiscriminately absorb the initial substance without reshaping it through the series of filters or leaving any trace of the original matter."[4] Theatre translation, as a multiple process involving hermeneutic as well as dramaturgical and directorial interventions on the play text raises further issues of playability, which in turn become issues of saleability in the receiving milieu. If cultural translation puts forward cultural transmission as its main goal, then the translating process becomes one of interpretation of cultures and not of their homogenization to dominant ones. But this becomes a theoretical exercise if theatre remains subjugated by market requests. In the polarity between stage and dramatic writing, the operation may appear demanding if it draws upon a vernacular world, supported by deeply rooted traditions and the language of the body with its well-defined codes. Alessandra De Martino deals with this topic in relation to Eduardo De Filippo, translated into English, in her chapter which is sensitive to the major themes of his texts, but yet suspicious about dialect considered as culturally inferior. In a different dramatic context, theatre translation provides the tools to look at the narrowly missed social tragedy of miners trapped 700 metres underground in the Chilean desert in 2010. The result is a narrative plot that sticks in the theatrical mind of that country but is in contrast with the media that mythicize it as a tale with a happy ending. Catherine Boyle does exactly this by analysing the settled modes of the theatrical scene in Chile in the last decades of the millennium.

Liminality is also present with reference to gender roles, as in Dacia Maraini's writing which is investigated by Sharon Wood with regard to

[4] Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Cultures*, 4–5.

her civic commitment (rather unusual for Italian playwrights), especially in *Passi Affrettati* (Hurried Steps, 2005) and to the transfer to other linguistic cultures. Maraini's attention towards history, which has been taking shape since the 1960s in Via Belsiana, is reinforced by the intense synergy with Amnesty International, while sketching private life and domestic violence against women, taken from different geographical areas, from Tibet to Nigeria. Likewise, in the monologue *Ragazze* (Girls), Lella Costa, a renowned one-woman-show of the Italian stage, openly declares women's superiority, as a provocative cry against centuries of marginalization and belittlement.

Moreover, liminality can be intended as problematic cohabitation with censorship imposed by dictatorships of different kinds. In the last few years, main European dramatists have often stood up against homologation and silence. This is the case of the Romanian playwright Matéi Visniec, who became naturalized French in the wake of Ionesco. Gerardo Guccini analyses his works, where hallucination, grotesque and surreal lyricism cohabit especially in his anti-naturalistic early works. They reflect the trauma of the fall of the Soviet Empire and the end of Ceaușescu's regime that forced the playwright to live far from the theatrical environment of his home country. His plays show the intertwining between war and power—symbolically summarized by rape as in *The Body of a Woman as a Battlefield in the Bosnian War*—and also report the horrors of social homogenization by Socialist propaganda and the false freedom of global consumerism.

Mariano d'Amora focuses on a special variation of gender, delving into the abysses of pathology and the joyful, wild side of sexual liberation, depending on the different perspectives, at the crossroads of cinema and theatre, between Naples (with its *femminiello*) and the Anglo-American society with its drag queen phenomenon. In such an eccentric world, the body turns into a real laboratory of fake mutation and authentic emotional transfer. Memories and ancient practices—suffice it to think of the baroque *castrati*—are presented again in the "short century" as the right to break free from an unambiguous sexual identity.

Theatre in prison is discussed by Paolo Puppa, who looks at Armando Punzo's *Teatro della Fortezza* in Volterra that celebrates separation with metatheatrical consequences, turning it into happy delirium and, at the same time, into a reappropriation of values in the desolation of detention.

Furthermore, Daniele Lamuraglia's reflections on the anthropological dimension linked to the myth of the *limen* open up to personal experiences, where theatre enables a whole community to speak out for itself in spite of its marginal position in the collective imaginary. This is

the case of the Romani people (commonly known as "Gypsies") who are the subjects of important examples of writing and staging in the suburbs of Florence, sprung from the collaboration with influential author Antonio Tabucchi. They are the archetypical example of a life on the margins, the embodiment of Georg Simmel's "stranger,"[5] perceived by western European audiences as "ultimately foreign." The diasporic existence of this group seems to call into question the founding elements of the nation-state, and in particular the fundamental principle that "a people must have a land in order to be a people."[6] This is why Romani minorities have historically been marginalized and persecuted. And yet, what in the eyes of the dominant group is a form of defiance towards the established socio-political order has in fact given rise to cultural formations characterized by intercultural richness and creativity in dealing with "difference."

Theatre can still play a role in nurturing a sense of common belonging among dispersed and marginalized minorities, as confirmed by Romani actor and journalist Damian Le Bas, whose moving voice, using the term in its etymological sense, is strongly identified with belonging to this culture. In his contribution, Le Bas argues that the emergence of Romani theatre is closely connected to the creation of a diasporic political consciousness. Romani drama accomplishes an important educational function in relation to Romani issues by debunking centuries-old stereotypes and rectifying misleading beliefs that still characterize the dominant view on "Gypsies." Romani artists are permitted to perform their domesticated "Gypsy persona," but are prevented from portraying Romani identity as it evolves in the present. The "infinite deferral" of the Romani image in favour of a fictitious version of the "Gypsy" is resisted by Romani artists, who want to present the public with a more realistic portrayal of Gypsy identity in its multifaceted manifestations.

Starting from the significant production *Oltre i confini. Ebrei e Zingari* (Beyond borders. Jews and Gypsies, 2011), by Moni Ovadia, passionate narrator of the *Shoah*, but also storyteller of Yiddish humour, Paola Toninato looks at the remarkable consonances between the Gypsy world and the Jewish one, in terms of century-old persecutions, and amazing musical and cultural analogies. The exilic perspective embraced by Ovadia in his Yiddish theatrical production is connected to the Romani nomadic *Weltanschauung*. In both cases, the experience of nomadism and exile has brought about a higher level of critical self-awareness, and their theatrical production reflects this. Diasporic marginality acts as a powerful mechanism through which our ethnocentric perception of cultural

[5] Simmel, "The Stranger."
[6] Boyarin and Boyarin, "Diaspora," 718.

difference is challenged, thereby paving the way for a decentralized sense of identity. By encouraging the audience to identify with and participate in the performative enactment of alternative or marginalized identities, this form of theatre fosters a higher degree of unity within the minority group, while also encouraging the establishment of cross-cultural solidarity.

Thanks to the complexity of the subject matter, encompassed between intellectual reflections, aesthetic yen and political engagement, the academic contributions of this volume interweave with the practitioners' own experience in mutual complementariness. This is certainly due to the ambivalent nature of the arts involved, which are intellectually, as well as practically, inspired. But it is also, or rather, above all, a methodological choice of the editors insofar as they stress the importance of bridging theory and practice; of a pragmatic culture, where theoreticians are not entrenched in an ivory tower, but are part of the multifaceted texture of society. It seemed natural, therefore, to include a round-table discussion with three Italian theatre practitioners, Lella Costa, Pippo Delbono and Daniele Lamuraglia, reflecting on the state of contemporary Italian theatre; and to create the section entitled "Dramaturgies" with three monologues that have already experienced the stage and are heralds of the uneasiness of our times.

With regard to the essays contained in this volume they can be inscribed, at different levels, in the condition of poverty/wealth inherent in the theatre on the edge. The reference to Barba is once again essential and it is also useful to link these contributions to his lesson. Indeed, in 1976 the director, who from Apulia moved to Denmark, christened this marginality as "third theatre," in opposition to both institutional theatre and neo-avant-garde experimentations. A theatre that first of all questions the idea of working in the theatre and that shapes its identity by drawing upon lost traditions. Often, the master pedagogues of the first part of the twentieth century are the archetypes of these minor practices, that is to say the unheard and hindered prophets, who want to start afresh and are willing to get away from a worn-out routine by inventing new personal poetics. They are figures such as Stanislavski, who taught actors how to write a novel on the characters they played—indirectly opening the way to the genre of narrative theatre, now very popular in Italy and partially in France—and how to value the importance of the method. Or Meyerhold, who acted for the supremacy of theatricality that saves literature and for a register of the grotesque. Or else Ejzenštein with his film montage and striking juxtaposed shots that contributed to giving greater impact to the main actions. Alongside them stands Artaud's charismatic and elusive lesson epitomised—at the end of *The Theatre and Culture*, the preface of

The Theatre and Its Double—by the image of the actor sending signals while burning, and by his/her rejection of the written form of theatre, which is seen as an act of blood and not of non-performance. These are the prophets who are distant and close at the same time, like Grotowski, who focuses on the performer and on the way he/she works on him/herself, almost as an initiation, or yoga practice, beyond the limits of individuality. From the initial mix of derision and apotheosis of the archetypes, one moves on to the unusual approach to only a few spectators inside the scenic space—abolishing the division between those two worlds like visitors in a zoo without cages—to finish with the witness, who keeps alive the memory of what he/she saw. In the end, the moment of performance is belittled, inasmuch as the exploration of the self and of the Other is the target of a psycho-physical experience of expansion/intensification of the conscience. An extreme spiritual tension gives substance to such an experience. From it derives the religious, though Godless, element that inflames the reconstruction made by Barba in 1964 in *In Search of a Lost Theatre*—a kind of theatrical Gospel, in which the pious apostle reveals the practice and poetics of the Polish director's theatrical workshop. This inspirational will echoes in the rich series of metaphors through which he imagines his *Odin Teatret*:

> I have often talked about theatre as a haemophiliac body that bleeds as it collides with reality; […] a ghetto of freedom, a floating island, a fortress full of oxygen; […] a canoe that rows itself against the tide while remaining in the same place as the third river bank; […] a vessel made of stone that lets us sail through the experience of individuals and history; […] a wall that forces us to stand on tiptoes to see what is on the other side; theatre as barter, as *potlatch*, as waste, as emigration.[7]

The theatre on the edge entails more complex critical/theoretical tools than mainstream theatre. This was indeed achieved by ISTA, the International School of Theatre Anthropology, set up by Barba in 1979, which consisted of a series of workshops carried out in periods of joint theoretical and practical work. Here, the distance between classical oriental, independent European, and Latin American theatres is overcome. Different traditions, especially oriental, from the Japanese dancers to the Indian masters of *Kathakali* to Beijing Opera theatre come together in the feverish sessions of this university of travelling theatre that encompasses the best of international acting, and has become a sort of cultural centre of interdisciplinary—not only anthropological—theatre science. As a result

[7] Barba, *Teatro*, 279.

theatre and dance meet again in the West, where they had been abruptly separated in the history of the modern European theatre at the end of the seventeenth century. As a minority entity, third theatre also means looking for other minorities to get in touch with, across the Ocean, as if among far away catacombs. The *Odin Teatret*'s interlocutors are the Colombian theatre of *Candelaria*, the Peruvians of *Yuyachkani*, the Polish *Osmego Dnia*, *Teatro Tascabile* of Bergamo, *Potlatch Theatre*, *Théâtre du Soleil* and César Brie's Bolivian *Teatro de los Andes*. In the meantime, it is essential to create and retain the audience, to become its memory, to grow up and grow old with it. A pact is hereby made with the users, who are ready to follow the productions, as they recognize themselves in them, and outside the conventions of performance.

Indeed, in this kind of theatre, whilst the tired strategy of reproduction of reality fades away, intensification of life gradually sets in. As a result Barba himself, in his compositional method, does not combine the elements according to their significance, but in relation to real actions and to the synchronies of the actors' bodies, pursuing organic effects, laws of life movements and the spectators' kinetic reactions. Indeed, on this stage, single characters assigned to single actors tend to vanish. The result is a simultaneity that in some way reminds us of Futurism, for the triumph of plurality with a highly mimetic strategy, in Joyce's terms, that recreates the complexity of life actions, as well as the never straight, never unambiguous path of thought in action. Moreover, during the long rehearsals, the director disturbs the improvising actors with interferences, reversals, and provocations that make relative meanings vanish, and only in the end does one discover the full meaning of it. Simultaneity is, first of all, within the actors themselves: their bodies are not intended as a whole but as the place for contrasting actions. A similar effect is produced by the gap between the verbal and corporeal levels—following Meyerhold once again—that makes the spectator more aware. In this way, training ensures multi-level acting, accentuated and overflowing, that frees the body and disfigures it at the same time, decentralizing it in poses and attitudes in different directions: for instance, gaze and face, with respect to body and limbs, as in the oriental theatre. The result is a flood of oxymoron, a dance of the opposites inside the body, to recall another work by Barba that dates back to 1981.[8] A whirling accumulation of meanings springs out and underlines an inseparable mix of good and bad, purity and madness.

As a matter of fact, the bravest theatrical research at the end of the millennium can be divided into two strands. On the one hand—from the

[8] Barba, *Corsa dei contrari*.

Living Theatre to Bob Wilson—space/time is embedded into everyday life, with unpredictability, indeterminacy and fortuity, and is even hyper-realistically deformed. On the other hand, space/time is separated from everyday life, turned into a numinous sacrality, and here the Grotowski-Brook-Barba line emerges with its irresistible charm. Surely, at this crossroads socio-cultural issues pose further challenges for scholars and professionals. The reason is that in the spaces outside the most definite theatrical system, the cultural and ideological horizon oscillates between interculturalism and transculturalism. The former, though threatened by globalization, implies the idea of an encounter/confrontation between different cultures, whilst the latter challenges established identities, both individual and collective, and supports a pre- or post-cultural objectivity, which are recurrent principles and patterns common to all performers.

Another function of the theatre on the edge, based on the relationship between actor and spectator, is to challenge their stereotypes and prejudices. As a result, the stage becomes the way to accept the Other, perhaps even the uncomfortable side that lives in exile inside us. After all, the actor is historically an expert of exile, since his/her own DNA is marked with the stigmata of a micro-society that is both disdained and feared. It is, therefore, necessary to leave one's roots and become emigrant and stateless, a stranger who settles somewhere else and chooses instability as a source of knowledge. Theatre as a response to any nationalistic abuse, since evil is there, in the collective will that we normally call home, country, family, civilisation, as Barba firmly states.[9]

On the happily excluded stage, the role of the director is enhanced and reconsidered at the same time. Whilst the play of an individual author is less and less important, the *metteur en scène* becomes the main spectator—as in Grotowski—or editor, mediator of nocturnal excursions**,** of his interpreters/co-authors' improvisations, as in Barba. And this is the training that, from the propaedeutic phase of performance, often becomes a self-learning exercise performed in endless sessions, with military or conventual-like schedules. This ascetic devotion creates performers who are multifunctional tools, and can reproduce any aspect of reality, whether abstract or real, and any ideas and emotions. It is first of all a poor theatre, as the Opole-Wroclaw-Holstebro line confirms. Here, a few objects are feverishly turned into something different, with the mesmerizing fascination of *bricolage*, so a Calvinistic simplicity and baroque proliferation of messages come together. It is worth reiterating that the actor's body is the moving space. Nonetheless, the verbal score is not to be

[9] Barba, *Bruciare la casa*, 130.

neglected. Conversely, the phonetic dimension of these actors, normally characterized by different idioms, frequently represents a happy Babel, paraphrasing George Steiner's *After Babel*. For words spinning in vocal action are uttered with such violence that they cross borders and work perfectly with the audience even though the vocabulary is unknown. Indeed, such impasse would be insurmountable without the subterfuge of an abstract language and its musical dilatation. In this way, the tragedy of being a stranger and emarginated for incorrect pronunciation is exorcized and—in Fo's terms—enhanced in the *grammelot*. Likewise, stammering and expressive clumsiness become a precise stylistic choice that can cross national barriers, just like music and dance. Sometimes, starting from improvisation exercises, the actors are encouraged to forge even an autistic *koinè*. This is an expressive *Esperanto* in the oscillating motion between every day and reinvented languages that may also be those of the host country. It seems appropriate to recall Umberto Eco's words—discussing the amusing power of literature—by saying, *mutatis mutandis*, that "capturing [viewers'] dreams does not necessarily mean encouraging escape: it can also mean haunting them."[10] This is, ultimately, the space in which this volume can be ideally placed.

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[10] Eco, *Reflections on the Name of the Rose*, 72.

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