

**From Dialogism to Polyphonic Aesthetics in Werewere-Liking Gnepo's
Ritual Theater *Didascalias* / *Do dialogismo à estética polifônica nas
didascálias do teatro ritual de Werewere-Liking Gnepo***

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ABSTRACT

In theater, stage directions function as a particular genre in which the author's voice is inscribed in the text to indicate the paths of representation. In Werewere-Liking Gnepo's *La veuve diyilèm* (2003), they play a broader role. There is a narrative function, sometimes author's, sometimes character's that, in a dialogic movement of reception/understanding, triggers multiple independent and polyphonic voices and consciences. To verify this statement, we will discuss the Bakhtinian reflections that will be essential for this study.

KEYWORDS: *Didascalias*; Bakhtin; Werewere-Liking Gnepo; Ritual theater

RESUMO

No teatro, as didascálias funcionam como um gênero particular em que há a inscrição da voz do autor no texto para indicar os caminhos da representação. Na obra La veuve diyilèm (2003), de Werewere-Liking Gnepo, elas desempenham um papel mais amplo. Há uma função narrativa ora autora, ora personagem que, em um movimento dialógico de recepção/compreensão, desencadeia múltiplas vozes e consciências independentes e polifônicas. Para constatação dessa afirmação, discorreremos sobre as reflexões bakhtinianas que serão imprescindíveis para este estudo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Didascálias; Bakhtin; Werewere-Liking Gnepo; Teatro ritual*

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Introduction

In her career, she has had several names, but as a multidisciplinary creator, she is known as Werewere-Liking Gnepo. As her biography states in *L'enseignement de l'Éveilleuse d'Étoiles* [The Teaching of the Awakening of the Stars] (2013), her work brings with it the pioneering hybridism between the tradition of African rituals and the modern scene. With only the first years of education, she saw in art a possibility of transformation for herself and for her countrymen:

A philanthropist, she is increasingly putting her Ki-Yi Mbock cultural initiative at the service of the social cause of the underprivileged, out-of-school youngsters. This experience, which will be officially approved as a Training Center in 1997, then Pan-African Ki-Yi Foundation from 2001, will rescue several hundred young people from despair and violence, making them models of success” (Werewere-Liking, 2013, pp.9-11).¹

In addition, the Foundation also welcomes those who need to reconnect with themselves or with “the desire to reconquer oneself to a better being in and with the world.”² It is from this desire for transformation and a set of areas in its formation and performance that its dramaturgy developed unique traits. One of these particularities is the *didascalias*.

Didascalia, or stage direction, in its traditional function, would be a scenic indication in the dramatic text that guides the interpretation of how an action, a scene, a space or a speech should be staged. According to Sarrazac, Geneviève Jolly and Alexandra Moreira (2013, p.157) in *Léxico do drama modern* [Lexic of the Modern Drama], the “rubric-text”³ of modern and contemporary dramaturgies implies verbal and non-verbal acts, on and off the stage, through the voice of a narrator, poet, or even a virtual stage director. For this purpose, there are the simple headings, of “identifiable

¹ In the original: “Philanthrope, ele met de plus em plus son initiative culturelle Ki-Yi Mbock au service de la cause sociale de la jeunesse défavorisée, déscolarisée. Cette expérience, qui sera officiellement agréée comme Centre de Formation en 1997, puis Fondation Panafricaine Ki-Yi à partir de 2001, arrachera plusieurs centaines de jeunes au désespoir et à la violence, en faisant des modèles de succès” (Werewere-Liking, 2013, pp.9-11).

² In the original: “le désir de la reconquête du Soi pour mieux être dans et avec le monde” (Werewere-Liking, 2013, pp.9-11).

³ In the original: “rubrica-texto” (Sarrazac, 2013, p.157).

enunciation;”⁴ subjective, with “reactions, explanations, doubts raised about fiction or about the scenic becoming;”⁵ and polyphonic, with “confrontation of divergent voices and of different addressees.”⁶

For the authors, “the multiplication of these voices results in the fragmentation of the purely dramatic form, multiplying the points of view on the fable and transforming the drama into the addressing the reader or the spectator.”⁷ In this sense, this study will be interested in the last two identifications of the *didascalias*, as subjective and polyphonic, because in Werewere-Liking’s works they go beyond the traditional role of identifiable enunciation and unfold into multiple voices and consciousness.

For this study, Vološinov (1973)⁸ will be one of the main theorists. According to the author, language is a social fact based on the need for communication. Language lives and evolves in concrete verbal communication, being constituted by the social phenomenon of verbal interaction, and being carried out through enunciations. All social groups, from different classes and different regions, seek in communication an affirmation and an expression of their existence.

One of these expressions is theater. For Bakhtin (1990),⁹ to be means to be for another, and through the other, for oneself. An interesting point to note is that he considers theater as monological. For the author, monologism would be the speech that is not addressed to anyone and does not presuppose a response (Bakhtin, 1986).¹⁰ From the distance that Bakhtin looked at the theater, the characters would carry the author’s consciousness in isolation. In the monological perspective, there would be a faith in the

⁴ In the original: “enunciação identificável” (Sarrazac, 2013, p.157).

⁵ In the original: “reações, explicações, dúvidas emitidas sobre a ficção ou sobre o devir cênico” (Sarrazac, 2013, p.157).

⁶ In the original: “confronto de vozes divergentes e de diferentes destinatários” (Sarrazac, 2013, p.157).

⁷ In the original: “A multiplicação dessas vozes resulta na fragmentação da forma puramente dramática, multiplicando os pontos de vista sobre a fábula e transformando o drama em endereçamento ao leitor ou ao espectador” (Sarrazac 2013, p.158).

⁸ VOLOŠINOV, V. N. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Translated by Ladislav Matejka and I. R-Titunik, New York and London: Seminar Press, 1973.

⁹ BAKHTIN, M. Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity (ca. 1920-1923). In: BAKHTIN, M. *Art and Answerability*. Early Philosophical Essays by M. M. Bakhtin. Translated by Vadim Liapunov. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990, pp.4-256.

¹⁰ BAKHTIN, M. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Trans. Vern W. McGee. Austin, Tx: University of Texas Press, 1986.

self-sufficiency of a single consciousness (Vološinov, 1973).¹¹ However, in the deepening of the analysis of Werewere's text, there is not this same monological relation.

Still in the introduction of *La veuve diyilèm* (2003, p.30), the author explains that since 1985 she had wanted to change the way she used to write plays. In the past, only situations and words previously experienced in improvisations were effectively put on stage. It was the beginning of her Ki-Yi theater group and she was looking for the most logical way to convey what the group's discussions used to bring up, the problems of everyday life, with the politicians and with the mentalities that surrounded them.

Thus, she "intertwined these experienced words and thoughts with her own ramblings through a personal series of verbal improvisations" (Gnepo, 2003, p.30).¹² The actors, in turn, used to take those writings again and choose phrases they had liked best, in their own interpretation. However, the plays represented were no longer texts, but "almost intimate" moments of life to be shared, but not published.

It was after opting for publication that texts such as *La veuve diyilèm*, *La queue du diable*, *Héros d'eau*, *Quelque Chose Afrique* and *L'Enfant Mbénè* were born. They no longer belonged solely to the Ki-Yi Mbock theater group, and would even witness their hopes and doubts, questions and answers, passions and struggles. However, this time the author would have greater autonomy in the result of her writing, as the focus would be the presentation of these texts for publication. In this process, something new emerged: her *didascalias*, comments and stage directions aimed at actors gained such prominence that they became the character *Metteur en scène* or M.S., the French term for director. This character will appear on stage and in various texts. In some, it will be an integral part with presence and subjectivities, even performing the original function of *didascalia*.

Another factor is the originality of Werewere's theatrical conception in an African context of rites, oral tradition, rhythms and, above all, how its function when staged is far from that popularized by the European tradition.

Whether the show is apparently more secular or a ceremony of vital importance for the individual or the group, the African listener is never reduced to the contemplative attitude that the European tradition has

¹¹ For reference, see footnote 8.

¹² In the original: "Je soumettais alors tout cet entrelacement de mots et de pensées à mes propres divagations par une série personnelle d'improvisations verbales" (Gnepo, 2003, p.30).

gradually imposed. He feels like an actor among actors. (Hourantier, 1979, p.7).¹³

From creation to the stages, the Cameroonian ritual is present and, therefore, Werewere's theater is considered ritual. The author is originally from the Bassa people, one of the oldest in Southern Cameroon. And, precisely because they have this immense possibility of historical-social investigation, we will delve into the transformation of *didascalias* from a specific element that appears in the Cameroonian ritual of healing *Djinga* and is built in Werewere's theater as the M.S. character: the leader of the rite.¹⁴

In fact, he is the "director on stage." He is the most aware of the facts that will be the object of the ritual, and it is up to him to make them known to the public. He has, therefore, the possibility of choosing the best means of doing so: either by having the person interested make a public confession alone, or by having any witnesses report the facts in his presence, or by employing both procedures at the same time, which allows a better understanding and, therefore, a better positioning of people. It is, consequently, he, the leader of the rite, who gives and who takes away the word; it is, therefore, he who commands the gesture. He is at the same time the defender of the oppressed; he always sides with the weakest: the accused or the people (Hourantier, 1979, p.82).¹⁵

He guides the rite, just as the *didascalias* guide the staging. In the end, the two unite in the formation of the M.S. character in Werewere's work. In this regard, an approximation in the analysis of the play allows us to observe the different consciousnesses that permeates the construction of the text, which would allow a dialogic reading. As for polyphony, authors Morson and Emerson (1990, p.231) state that

¹³ In the original: "Qu'il s'agisse du spectacle en apparence plus laïcisé ou d'une cérémonie d'importance vitale pour l'individu ou pour le groupe, l'auditeur africain n'est jamais réduit à l'attitude contemplative qu'a peu à peu imposée la tradition européenne. Il se sent personnellement concerné, il peut parler, agir, entrer en transe, être un acteur parmi les acteurs" (Hourantier, 1979, p.7).

¹⁴ In the original: "le meneur du rite" (Hourantier, 1979, p.82).

¹⁵ In the original: "C'est en fait lui qui est le 'metteur en scène'. Il est le plus au courant des faits qui vont être l'objet du rituel, et c'est à lui qu'incombe la tâche de les porter à la connaissance du public. Il a donc la possibilité de choisir les meilleurs moyens pour ce faire : soit en passant le principal intéressé en confession publique tout seul, soit en faisant raconter en sa présence les faits par d'éventuels témoins, soit encore en employant les deux procédés à la fois, ce qui permet une meilleure compréhension et donc une meilleure prise de position du peuple. C'est donc lui, le meneur du rite, qui donne et qui retire la parole ; c'est donc lui qui commande la gestuelle. Mais il est en même temps le défenseur des opprimés ; il prend toujours le parti du plus faible : l'accusé ou le peuple" (Hourantier, 1979, p.82).

“Bakhtin never specifies just what is and what is not constitutive of polyphony *per se*.”¹⁶ Hence, it is worth specifying here that our understanding of polyphony mixes fundamentals of music and Bakhtin, and is very similar to Malleta’s perspective (2016, p.46) with a focus on “multiplicity, simultaneity, independence and equipotency of voices.”¹⁷

In the analyzed piece, *La veuve diyilèm* (2003), the author Werewere Liking Gnepo stands out for the way in which she built her relationship with the other, mainly for carrying with her Cameroonian ritualistic traditions. In her *didascalias*, her writing function is not only to guide the actor on stage, but to provide a complete narrative with the voice of dialogic authors and characters that compose multiple voices and polyphonic consciousnesses. According to Bakhtin (1986, p.138),¹⁸ “I realize myself initially through others: from them I receive words, forms, and tonalities for the formation of my initial idea of myself,” also:

Everything that pertains to me enters my consciousness, beginning with my name, from the external world through the mouths of others (my mother, and so forth), with their intonation, in their emotional and value-assigning tonality (Bakhtin, 1986, p.138).¹⁹

In this sense, our personal world is founded by the gaze of the other and their values. Everything that comes to our consciousness is accomplished through interaction with other people’s consciousnesses. For this study, the analyses were divided into three main points. First, with the support of Bakhtinian studies, *Dialogisms in Tradition* will be explored. In this first part, the experience and cultural-historical tradition of the author and her people will be put into perspective. Then, we will investigate the development of these dialogisms by the *didascalias* and how they have become *The Polyphonic Aesthetics and the Will of M.S.* Finally, we will consider the practice of this polyphony and its scenic *Implications of M.S.*

¹⁶ MORSON, G. S.; EMERSON, C. *Mikhail Bakhtin – The Creation of Prosaics*. California: Stanford University Press, 1990.

¹⁷ In the original: “multiplicidade, simultaneidade, independência e equipotência das vozes.”

¹⁸ For reference, see footnote 10.

¹⁹ For reference, see footnote 10.

The objective of this work is, therefore, to explore this new configuration of dialogic and polyphonic *didascalias*, based on the Cameroonian ritualistic tradition, an essential part of the consciences that formed the author.

1 The Dialogisms in Tradition

Werewere Liking Gnepo, or in her birth name Eddy-Njock Nicole, was born in Cameroon in 1950 and settled in Ivory Coast in 1978. Some aspects of the author's life are important to understand her work.

According to Gnepo (2003), first, she had only three years of study in the basic education of modern school. Her training is mainly traditional and based on initiations from the Bassa people, which led her to become interested in oral traditions and, particularly, in rituals. Werewere is essentially self-taught and has been able to achieve academic-level performance: she began writing poetry and songs in 1966, then turned to painting in 1968.

As a writer, she has more than thirty works covering all genres (poetry, theater, novels, essays, art books, narratives and short stories). She has won several literary awards, including the Noma Prize in 2005 for her novel *La Mémoire Amputée*. As a multidisciplinary playwright and actress, Werewere is a pioneer in research theater, focusing on African rituals and rituals on stage. This fact is of paramount importance to understand the genesis of her texts. As a composer, musician and percussionist, she combines them with music, dances, puppets, costumes, sets and accessories designed to reflect the richness of African cultures.

From this, her works reflect this hybridity of genres and a strong presence of orality in her writings and, still, the tradition remains alive in the language used in her speeches. In the analyzed prism, the discourse brings the other in its composition and is permeated by several voices, which is exactly one of the principles of Bakhtinian thought. According to Vološinov (1973),²⁰ language is constituted exactly in these social relationships, in verbal interactions and through utterances. For the author, the notion of dialogism is linked to the dialogues among discourses of each one that preserve a

²⁰ For reference, see footnote 8.

relationship with each other and that is why “every utterance has a double dimension, as it reveals two positions: yours and that of the other” (Fiorin, 2006, p.170).²¹

There is, consequently, a dialogic principle in the production of dialogue, in the discourses, in the interlocutors, in the different languages, in humanity; and the other is an essential part of the constitution of the human being itself, which integrates this otherness in itself. The same will happen with the *didascalias*, also called stage directions, in the plays.

In most cases, *didascalias* do not usually occupy a leading role in plays. They are in the background, often in italics next to the lines, in notes in the corner of the page, working mainly as an element of construction of the meaning of the play and support for the text to be staged, even if in the montage these indications may not even fully appear.

It is interesting to note that, in the classical tragedies of Pierre Corneille (1971), for example, the scenic directions appear as a form of control, as they ensure that the actors do not do what they want and thus transform the original text. With the modern transformations, for the researcher Ramos (2001), the *didascalias* have a relative independence from fiction or plot. In addition, it would be incorrect to reduce them to supports of literary fiction and fail to recognize that they have a narrative dimension related to the scenic, without subordination to the story, constituted in an independent sphere.

In *La veuve diyilèm* (2003), we have the voice of a young widow named Londé that contrasts with the voice-over of her recently deceased husband. Through letters, her husband accuses her of cheating, but actually, he was the one who cheated on her and that is how he contracted the HIV virus. In the play, the first stage direction is a *didascalia* in which the author places M.S.,²² without any identification differentiated from the other lines, just as a character:

M.S.: After nine months of absence, you are finally home, Londé! You closed the door, as if you feared an untimely visit, an improvised irruption! You throw your suitcase in a corner. And now you're free, alone! What will you do? You look around the somewhat prison-like space of your “new rich” living room; you are amazed that you have

²¹ In the original: “todo enunciado possui uma dimensão dupla, pois revela duas posições: a sua e a do outro” (Fiorin, 2006, p.170).

²² Mise en scène in French or staging in English.

forgotten such important details not so long ago: the big screen TV in the middle of the room and on it, the photo of your late husband, who has just emerged from nine months of widowhood in the traditional way! You walk forward, look at the portrait for a moment and turn it over, whispering:

Londé: Not now, not yet, I beg you! (GNEPO, 2003, p.42, our translation).²³

In this passage, the first element to be observed is the active enunciation. M.S. addresses the character of Londé and seeks to bring her an understanding of herself. In the sentence “You closed the door, as if you feared an untimely visit, an improvised irruption,” the *didascalía* indicates the action, feeling and thought that cover up the acts. Thus, the speaker enunciates in terms of the character Londé, his interlocutor, requiring responsive attitudes from the actor and projecting his place as a listener of the character he also creates in the scene.

Differently from the classic view, the *didascalía* with Gnepo brings a statement that seeks to make itself understood by the character, in addition to the freedom of creation before the text. For Bakhtin (1973, p.70),²⁴ “we understand words, and we can only respond to words that engage us behaviorally or ideologically.” In the exemplified *didascalía*, now an M.S. character, the utterance provokes and shapes this reaction, as shown in the question “What will you do?,” directed to the receiver and open to the possible relationships between the interlocutors, each with their own ideological content.

According to Paul Zumthor (1989, p.65), “the text is nothing more than the opportunity of the vocal gesture.”²⁵ If we think about Gnepo’s journey in which the oral tradition served as the basis for the configuration of his artistic productions, her dramaturgy would be the bearer of the senses of Bassa existence, her origin, translating

²³ In the original: “M.S.: Après neuf mois d’absence, tu te retrouves enfin chez toi, Londé! Tu as fermé la porte, comme si tu avais peur d’une visite inopportune, d’une irruption impromptue! Tu jettes ton sac de voyage dans un coin. Et maintenant, te voici libre, seule! Que vas-tu faire? Tu parcours du regard l’espace un peu carcéral de ton salon ‘nouveau riche’; tu es ébahie d’avoir oublié certains détails qui comptaient tant il n’y a pas si longtemps: le téléviseur grand écran en plein milieu de la pièce et dessus, la photo de ton défunt mari dont tu sors de neuf mois de veuvage à la manière traditionnelle ! Tu avances, regardes le portrait un instant et tu le retournes en murmurant : Londé : Pas maintenant, pas encore, je t’en supplie !” (Gnepo, 2003, p.42).

²⁴ For reference, see footnote 8.

²⁵ In the original: “o texto não é mais que a oportunidade do gesto vocal” (Zumthor, 1989, p.65).

this human voice of living in community and passing through values present in a social semantic memory. As the author herself states:

Well, I think it began in the beginning. And by that I mean I was born into a culture where the verbal arts – poetry, philosophy, declamation – are part of a general initiation to life, called by the Bassa people the mbock. Bassas believe that one can arrange and rearrange the universe through words. When I was little, we had wonderful evening in which my grandfather brought the greatest of the Bassa storytellers to our village in central Cameroun. They sang; they played musical instruments; they danced; they mimed. They were complete artists. And my great aunt was a teacher of our initiation rites; she was one of the last sources for our knowledge of the *kiyi*, or “ultimate knowledge” (Gnepo In Sutherland-Addy, 2005, p.364).

As Bakhtin (1984)²⁶ notes in his analysis of Dostoevsky, in Gnepo’s *didascalias*-character there is no erasure of the voices of readers, actors and interpreters of her text to the detriment of the author’s voice. In part, this is possibly due to the influence of the Bassa tradition on the author’s experience. In another, to the transformation of M.S. in a character of the *didascalies*. As we can see in their testimony, the Bassa people believe that it is possible to “organize and reorganize the universe through words.” This appears in the interpretative openings that his questions employ, a lively and unfinished discourse, like the leader of the rite who is the one who “gives and who takes the word; it is, therefore, he who commands the gesture. He is at the same time the defender of the oppressed” (Hourantier, 1979, p.82).

This dialogic construction in the *didascalias* remains throughout the play with statements such as: “How could you forget about that outfit you hated? What magical symbolism kept you attached to it? (...) Then you get up with your arms swinging: what will you do now? To dust it off? To sweep?” (Gnepo, 2003, p.42). In this quote, the function of a traditional *didascalia* would be to indicate the movement of the arms. However, here, it begins with questions that refer to a past with an omniscience of the history of the character. In these inquiries, it provokes a reflection that goes beyond the construction of the character and develops the actor’s perspective in relation to the events. Finally, the same voice not only signals the action of the arms, but places the

²⁶ BAKHTIN, M. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

movement parallel to internal questions about the act and, based on these questions “what will you do now? Dust it off? Sweep?”,²⁷ manages to motivate a spontaneous body movement of the person who is in the process of reflection.

Thus, if we consider the function of the theatrical text that seeks representation, the *didascalias* as an M.S. character engender a vociferous dialogical utterance in the consciousness of those who will interpret it for the development of the character Londé. For Amorim (2002), silence for Bakhtin is a silence of silent voices and this is evident in the the text. The dialogism of the text is only produced when the voices of co-presence and interaction stop speaking. And therein lies its strength and distinction from the interactionist approach. As a result, in the play, a tension is created through the words of M.S. that drive the person who plays the character Londé to do, to listen, to create and to be.

2 The Polyphonic Aesthetics and the Will of M.S.

Before formulating about polyphony, Bakhtin covered all of Dostoevsky’s works from *Poor People* to the last novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*. According to the author (Bakhtin, 1984),²⁸ the character interests Dostoevsky as a unique point of view on the world and on himself. A rational and valuing position of everything that surrounds it. In his studies of Dostoevsky, he notes that for his characters it is not what those characters are for the world, but what the world is to the characters and what they are to themselves.

As reported by the author, another point is extremely relevant: the author-hero relation. For Bakhtin (1984, p.7),²⁹ the hero’s voice about himself and the world is as full of meanings as the author’s and it does not “serve as a mouthpiece for the author’s voice.”³⁰ Thus, there would be an independence of consciousnesses in the statements, which various values and perceptions of the world immerse and transform. Polyphony is present precisely in this possibility of several voices.

²⁷ In the original: “Comment as-tu pu t’oublier dans cette tenue que tu détestais ? Quelle symbolique magique t’y a retenue attachée ? (...) Puis tu te relèves les bras ballants : que vas-tu faire maintenant? Épousseter ? Balayer ?” (Gnepo, 2003, p.42).

²⁸ For reference, see footnote 26.

²⁹ For reference, see footnote 26.

³⁰ For reference, see footnote 26.

Furthermore, referring to Dostoevsky, Bakhtin emphasizes how the character is endowed with self-awareness “the sort of hero whose life would be concentrated on the pure function of gaining consciousness of himself and the world” (Bakhtin, 1984, p.50).³¹ In the process of individuating M.S. into character, the same construction occurs. In addition to this self-awareness, the consciousness of M.S. seeks a greater expansion through the amplification of that of Londé’s. This goes together and in tune with the traditional Bassa concept of having a ritualistic guide in the process, to be able to break with a monological unity of the world.

It is interesting to note that the concept of polyphony originates from music. It was still developed in the Middle Ages, according to Roman (1992), the first documents of a two-voice polyphony date from the 9th century, where each voice has rhythmic independence and the second voice rebounds each plainchant note in varied, contrary and oblique movements. Let us remember that, as previously mentioned, Gnepo also has a musical formation permeated by the Bassa, popular and group tradition, where several voices, instruments and percussions are in constant polyphonic dialogue guiding the various rituals, establishing tones and rhythms; and intertwining meanings.

This musical reference appears in M.S. as an orchestration directed to Londé with words such as cadence and rhythm: “One drink, one shot! Another, and yet another, in cadence! To the rhythm of your fall, your descent into hell” (Gnepo, 2003, p.62).³² M.S. enters as a kind of master character of the movements, the perspectives of the self and the voices of Londé.

As for polyphony, as the play unfolds, the *didascalía* increasingly breaks away from its original function as a narrative element of scenic indication to have its own voice personified, full of values from that society in which they are inserted:

Unfortunately, today, Londè, in your country as in mine, TV was not made to distract, but to numb. And your overwhelmed spirit turns each image into a monster. Sleep is the solution: sleep... save yourself! God! Save us from hallucinating advertisements (...)! (Gnepo, 2003, p.62).³³

³¹ For reference, see footnote 26.

³² In the original: “Un verre, un coup ! Un autre, et un autre encore, en cadence ! Au rythme de ta chute, de ta descente en enfer” (Gnepo, 2003, p.62).

³³ In the original: “Hélas, aujourd’hui Londè, dans tons pays comme dans le mien, la télé n’est pas faite pour distraire, mais pour abrutir. Et ton esprit surmené transforme chaque image en monstre. Dormir, c’est

In this quotation, the *didascalía* is included in the time of the narrative and in the experience in Ivory Coast, affirming itself as a character full of history. The use of pronouns like “mine” and “us” demonstrates the multiplicity of its function. As seen earlier, for Bakhtin (1984),³⁴ the voices appear independently of each other in a kind of combination of the will of several voices. There is also an important relationship between the use of TV and the voices of the socio-political context of the country at the time the play was written.

In 2002, Ivory Coast has its first civil war and first French intervention in the country. According to Penna and Koffi (2014, p.166), on September 19, a group of insurgent soldiers from Burkina Faso attempted a *coup d'état* with the aim of taking over the country, occupying the capital Abidjan and the cities of Bouaké and Korhogo. Unsuccessfully, a war broke out between the two forces: the insurgents and the forces loyal to the institutions of Ivory Coast.

Werewere published the play in 2003, a year after the first civil war and one before the second French intervention, in 2004. There were numerous attempts to defuse the conflict, “the Armed Forces of Ivory Coast launched *Opération Dignité*, a major military offensive against the *Forces Nouvelles* rebels, who occupied the north of the country.” (Penna and Koffi, 2014).³⁵ It was during this operation that nine French soldiers and one American civilian died in an air strike by Ivorian aviation on the French base at Bouaké. This is what provoked a great counter-attack. French forces attacked Yamoussoukro and Abidjan and, instead of mediating conflicts, the country became the main antagonist, causing a wave of protests. In the course of all these conflicts, the media was always present, as the authors say:

The general balance of confrontations leads to a war of numbers between French and Ivorian authorities. Images from the reports made by French TV, Canal +13, provide an account of the deaths and

la solution : dors...Sauve-toi ! Dieu ! Sauvez-nous des pubs hallucinantes, des présentatrices aux petites têtes improbables émergeant de monceaux de pagens comme par magie !”(Gnepo, 2003, p.62).

³⁴ For reference, see footnote 26.

³⁵ In the original: “as Forças Armadas da Costa do Marfim lançaram a *Opération Dignité*, uma grande ofensiva militar contra os rebeldes das *Forces Nouvelles*, que ocupavam o norte do país.”

conditions of the massacre, by the French army, of unarmed Ivorian protesters (Penna and Koffi, 2014, p.166).³⁶

That being so, as the *didascalía* confirms in the text, for Bakhtin (1984),³⁷ the artistic will of polyphony is the will to combine many wills, the will of the event. Besides, it is exactly in this direction that M.S. points in the final dialogue:

Londé: Widow... No doubt forever! I lost my certainty. I caught the virus of doubt. Widow forever? I don't think I have a choice! Joyful? What for?

MS: Why not? Through experience that expands consciousness. For the life that goes on. For the pleasure of sharing. Look! On the TV you just inadvertently turned on, *A Touareg Marries a Pygmy*, the last show you two saw together and that you both loved so much. The last image of the gushing water and the polyphonies... How to resist such a call to life? Why not a positive image? As the show's end credits roll, you sing a song of hope, reach out to the future you wish to be open to, and disappear into your room, where you can finally start a new beginning... (Gnepo, 2003, p.84).³⁸

The voice that resounds from the *didascalía*, now a character, no longer fits in itself as a domination of scenic movements, but is influenced by Londé's words and the world that surrounds the character, and thus, it is transformed. At the same time that M.S. is in constant dialogue with the conscience of Londé, MS makes oneself as a conscious voice, a character freed from the powers exercised by others over themselves and over their own realities, so that, finally, M.S.'s voice reaches one's will in amplitude.

In this way, the conflict of these voices that intersect and have unique worldviews is also born. We have the voice of memory, the voice of the *didascalía*, the voice of

³⁶ In the original: "O balanço geral dos confrontos leva a uma guerra de números entre autoridades francesas e marfinenses. Imagens das reportagens feitas pela TV francesa, Canal +13 trazem um relato sobre as mortes e as condições do massacre, pelo exército francês, de manifestantes marfinenses desarmados" (Penna e Koffi, 2014, p.166).

³⁷ For reference, see footnote 26.

³⁸ In the original: "Londé: Veuve... Sans doute à jamais! J'ai perdu ma certitude. J'ai attrapé le virus du doute. Veuve à jamais? Je crois que je n'ai pas le choix! Joyeuse? À quoi bon?"

M.S.: Pourquoi pas? Pour l'expérience qui élargit la conscience. Pour la vie qui continue. Pour le plaisir de partager. Regarde, à la télé que tu viens de rallumer par inadvertance, Um Touareg se marie à une Pygmée, le dernier spectacle que vous aviez vu ensemble et que vous aviez tant aimé. La dernière image de l'eau qui jaillit, et les polyphonies... Comment résister à un tel appel à la vie? Pourquoi pas une image positive? Pendant que la générique de la fin d'émission se déroule, tu entones un chant d'espoir, tends la main au futur que tu souhaites ouvert, et tu disparais dans ta chambre d'où enfin tu pourras repartir d'un nouveau départ..." (Gnepo, 2003, p.84).

Londé, the voice of the Husband in the conscience of both, the voice of the feeling that the present provokes, the voice of the culture in which they are inserted and their demands, the voice of change and, finally, the voice of a call. The *didascalía*-character starts the play and ends it by evoking a call to life, to polyphonies and to a better future for this widow without using a full stop in the voice, but opening it up with reticence.

3 Implications of M.S.

After the analyses, a reflection breaks through the limits of dramaturgy and staging. In *La veuve diyilèm* there is the influence of the Bassa tradition in the dramaturgical and scenic composition, with orality and musicality permeating both in a semantic and social memory. In addition to the role of *didascalías* that, while provoking and shaping the character's action with an active discourse in the playwright's composition, is also a character and has an utterance that reverberates in the consciousness of those who will interpret Londé. From this, questions arise around the author's place in the staging process and its scenic implications. Would the model of your *didascalías* be an immersive polyphonic strategy focused on creation by the actors? Or still, how would the public reception be given, which, in traditional models, would only have access to *didascalías* through reading the play, and now this access would be possible through staging?

It is known that the Werewere's theater has some singularities mainly due to its multidisciplinary. She writes, acts, stages, directs, orchestrates, composes, choreographs as well. Hence her practice fits into the modernity in which the diversity of signs is superimposed before the text. Furthermore, this joint practice also connects with ritualistic values transmitted by the Bassa tradition. The corporal movement, the orality that not only presents, but also provokes reactions, the musical and visual plastic elements. All these elements demonstrate from the beginning the polyphonic basis of her theater. About the latter, Sarrazac (2005) unfolds the concept of rhapsody into possibilities between dramatic and lyrical, theatrical and extra-theatrical forms. The dynamic montage that the author presents is very similar to the dynamism in Werewere,

which narrates in observable artistic hybridity, but also questions and unravels in different subjectivities.

For Sarrazac (2005, p.127), “it is therefore, above all, to operate a work on the theatrical form: to decompose and recompose – to compose is to join and to confront at the same time –, according to a creative process that considers writing dramatic in its becoming.”³⁹ Regarding the becoming, the concept was extensively explored by Deleuze and Guattari (2010). The idea of art as non-representative or imitative brings with it the possibility of the process, of which expressly *becoming* with the other makes it possible to reach another world, when leaving the place of the self.

In the author’s work, *becoming* permeates the concept of force present in a work of art. For the authors, perceptions are independent of those who feel them, just as affections and sensations have sufficient value in themselves, art would also exist in itself. Deleuze brings the view that art is capable of providing forces or even developing a sensitivity to the forces presented by the world.

In Werewere (2003, p.52), the character-*didascalias* seem to trigger this sensitivity even in the initial stage of production, with the indication to the actress: “MS: Once again, you turn around the furniture, touch them, the measures... Come on, a little positivity still! It’s still your home, your furniture! And you fought so hard to get them (...).”⁴⁰ In the first sentence, *didascalia* plays a role in the character’s body and movement. Soon after, instead of the emotional directions coming in a direct form, they unfold by dialoguing with the character as a kind of inner voice that expands and creates various subjectivities. Another issue is the use of the timeline that is not restricted to the present, with the need for positivity towards the house and furniture, but it also builds a past with “and you fought so hard.” It is precisely this reconstruction of the self that *becoming* becomes essential for the composition of the character.

What, then, would be the implications in the staging of a writing programmed for the future? In a study on the *Linguagem da Encenação Teatral* [Language of

³⁹ In the original: “Trata-se, portanto, acima de tudo, de operar um trabalho sobre a forma teatral: decomporrecompor – componere é ao mesmo tempo juntar e confrontar –, segundo um processo criador que considera a escrita dramática em seu devir” (Bakhtin, 2005, p.127).

⁴⁰ In the original: M.S.: “Encore une fois, tu tourne autour des meubles, les touches, les jauges... Voyons, un peu de positivité quando même! C’est tout de même ta maison, tes meubles! Et tu as tant lutté pour les avoir...” (Gnepo, 2003, p.52).

Theatrical Staging], Roubine (1998, p.51) historically analyzes the relations of staging with the text, for instance, in the beginning of the 20th century when staging always needed a written contribution. In his remarks, one fact is interesting when he explores Stanislavski's methods for achieving an authenticity of interpretation. For him, the director employs in the performance the "particular personality of the actor,"⁴¹ an essential element in the composition of the character, and insists "on the fact that he cannot become someone else except through his own emotions, and that he remains himself, while making the character's life his own."⁴² Thus, the fact that Werewere also assumes the performance and direction of the plays she writes, her writings show traces of an elaborate orchestration of elements that succeed the writing, in a search for the absolute, as Vilar says:

Considering there are no poets, although there are so many dramatic authors that the role of playwright has not been effectively assumed nowadays. On the other hand, the initiators, the technicians, I mean the directors, have surpassed sometimes with happiness the borders that a conformist morality of the theater had fixed for them. It is to the latter that we must offer the role of playwright, this overwhelming task; and, once this is admitted, no longer to harass them or try to weaken the taste for the absolute in them (Vilar, 1963, p.85).⁴³

Werewere-Liking transforms her writing by being multidisciplinary and able to fully access the different stages of theatrical production. Her *didascalias* make evident the use of the text not as a finitude and final objective, but as an opening for the creation and transformation of tradition. This is done by a *didascalia* that is not only a character, but carries within itself a ritualistic conception of being.

About this, Roubine (1998, pp.62-63) brings the notion of beyond the text. For him, "a text cannot say everything,"⁴⁴ it expresses and suggests, but there is something

⁴¹ In the original: "personalidade particular do ator."

⁴² In the original: "no fato de que ele não pode tornar-se outra pessoa senão com as suas próprias emoções e permanece sendo ele mesmo, enquanto faz da vida do personagem a sua própria vida."

⁴³ In the original: "Considerando que não há poetas, embora haja tantos autores dramáticos que a função de dramaturgo não tem sido, nos tempos de hoje, efetivamente assumida. E que, por outro lado, os iniciadores, os técnicos, quero dizer os diretores, têm ultrapassado, às vezes com felicidade, as fronteiras que uma moral conformista do teatro lhes havia fixado, é a estes últimos que devemos oferecer o papel de dramaturgo, essa tarefa esmagadora; e, uma vez isso admitido, não mais importuná-los nem tentar enfraquecer neles o gosto do absoluto" (Vilar, 1963, p.85).

⁴⁴ In the original: "um texto não pode dizer tudo."

that goes beyond and that surpasses the limits of the word: “Beyond that point, another zone begins, a zone of mystery, of silence, of what is usually designate as atmosphere, *ambience*, climate, as they wish. The expression of it is the director’s job.”⁴⁵ At this point, it is necessary to remember that the *didascalias* in *La veuve diyilèm* are called “*La Mise en Scène*” or just M.S. That is, the text itself carries the role of director and it is understood beyond what words can achieve, transforming itself into a character.

The theater of Werewere-Liking seems to develop from the initial stages a versatility that sets in motion the sensitivity and creativity of all those who participate in the project. When the actor is faced with issues in the text and in scene that provoke and surface his subjectivity, he also becomes part of the creative project, renewing the text each time it is interpreted in a cycle of reinventions. That is how the Ky-Yi Mbock Group, through its experiments, came about to create the raw model of the texts that, soon after, was reconstructed by the writer’s pen and, from its scenic indications, the creation of a character performing the original function of *didascalia*. In this sense, Artaud (2006, p.8) says that: “It is necessary to believe in a meaning of life renewed by the theater, where man fearlessly becomes the master of what he is not yet, and makes it born.”⁴⁶ Without, in this way, being satisfied with the documentation, but overflowing it and contemplating it in what is to come and what is becoming.

Final Considerations

From the analysis elaborated, it is possible to verify that, in fact, the *didascalias* in *La veuve diyilèm* (2003) expand their possibilities within the narrative and reconfigure their function within the dramaturgy, in its representation, and even in the development of multiple consciousnesses.

The discourse is accordingly dialogic and polyphonic, with the presence of multiple voices with different referential perspectives and volitions of a world. Furthermore, this factor was influenced by the Bassa tradition in which the author was

⁴⁵ In the original: “Além desse ponto começa uma outra zona, zona de mistério, de silêncio, daquilo que se costuma designar como atmosfera, ambiente, clima, conforme queiram. Expressar isso é o trabalho do encenador.”

⁴⁶ In the original: “É preciso acreditar num sentido da vida renovado pelo teatro, onde o homem impavidamente torna-se o senhor daquilo que ainda não é, e o faz nascer” (ARTAUD, 2006, p.8).

inserted during her life and where she developed her relationships with the various arts and orality. In this way, the technique of implementing these elements guarantees a permanence in the belief in the power of the spoken word and renewal of its culture and work, as well as a circulation of oral tradition in modern representations.

Finally, the investigations of the play foment questions about the influence of orality on the composition of writing, the transformations that the polyphonic dialogs bring to the body of those who interpret and how the intersemiotic encounter among texts takes place. In this last one, Werewere's writing was shown to stimulate a creation beyond the proposal outlined by the writing of the work, provoking a joint sense of conception.

In line with the impossibility of studies to analyze the play on stage, we ask ourselves about how the various possible elements of *mise en scène*, such as movement and music, occur in this configuration of *didascalias* proposed by Werewere.

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Acknowledgement

I am grateful for the support and critical review of my PhD advisor, Professor Maria da Glória Magalhães dos Reis, who guided me in the development of this article.

Translated by the article's author.

Received August 26, 2021

Accepted June 02, 2022

Reviews

Review I

The article presents a relevant discussion, putting language studies and theater studies in dialogue. The objective is achieved throughout the text. The theoretical and methodological procedures are well described and discussed. The considerations point to significant results. It is suggested that the author update the references to the Bakhtinian works cited in the text, especially considering the new available translations, and that she properly references the texts from the *Aesthetics of Verbal Creation* volume used in the article. Due to the scientific contribution that the work represents, the opinion is favorable to publication in *Bakhtiniana: Journal of Discourse Studies*.

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Review II

The article “From Dialogism to Polyphonic Aesthetics in Werewere-Liking Gnepo's Ritual Theater *Didascalias*” presents an interesting and thought-provoking *corpus* and research object and its reflection can undoubtedly contribute to the study of dramatic text and dramatic discourse within the Bakhtinian theory. Section 2 is especially highlighted, in which lies the originality of thinking about the *didascalias* of such a rich object through a polyphonic bias, which the author defends quite well.

However, I would like to problematize two theoretical issues in the theatrical field that precede the discussion of the article itself, but which are taken as postulates, in our view, erroneous.

The first one concerns the dramatic genre (or play, as some prefer). I am not a purist to the point of blindly following what Bakhtin advocated decades before the turn of the theater in the second half of the 20th century (especially in what Lehmann called “postdramatic”). But I believe that a dramatic text must be read taking into account its representation (even if virtual, built in the reader's imagination). The article now points to this direction, but prefers not to consider such specificity (that the dramatic text is written to be represented and relies on the representation for the full completion of its supposed meanings). This makes it difficult to accept the reading of supposed *didascalias* – which are scenic indications – without taking into account how they supposedly or truly should appear on stage.

The second question concerns the figure of M.S. (“*La Mise en Scène*”) in the text. Although it is literally called “the staging,” at no time does it cross the article’s author’s idea that M.S. can be a character (or that she is a narrative voice in off), although she is indicated as character lines in the constitution of the text. Since allegorical characters have existed and since the medieval theater and that Brecht had really brought the epic narrator to the stage – which “authorizes” the reading of MS, as it is presented in the article, as a character –, it makes the impression that the author of the article does not come up with this idea – is there an indication in the object? Is it expressly described by the author that these lines do not come into play? Did the author of the article have access to a performance, whose performance conditioned you to read the text?

From these two questions, which in my opinion are central and necessary to be answered in the writing of the article, as they are doubts that will be raised by any attentive theater reader, others arise. Throughout the writing - and which, sometimes, is just a lack to “look at your interlocutor,” to understand who the reader of the Bakhtinian magazine is.

And I start with this point: for a discourse analysis journal, there is no need for an introduction on what a *didascalia* is, what its “traditional” function is, in order to understand the novelty of Gnepo’s text.

Still on presentations, the author is only introduced at the beginning of section 1, “The dialogisms of tradition.” However, already previously, in two moments in the Introduction, the Cameroonian tradition is evoked. I believe that the author could make it easier for the reader by already presenting the information necessary to understand the reasoning, since she is not a widely known author.

About the presence of the Bakhtinian theory in the text, there are some issues to be pointed out: In section 1, Bakhtin is inserted in the discussion very abruptly and, initially, without logical connection with what had been said previously. The first two paragraphs dealing with Bakhtin (pp.2-3) are very loose, with information that could encourage discussions, but which do not and do not complete each other.

Likewise, in the second paragraph of section 2, the author of the article brings the author-hero tension, very productive in the Bakhtinian theory and very interesting to think about the individuation of M.S. (her “conversion” from narrator to character?). However, the article does not resume this discussion in the following paragraphs, even causing noise with a proposal of “unbundling” between *didascalia* and author (???), when it could usefully resume what had already been exposed by Bakhtin’s theory - which would give more body to the good argument of section 2. There are more layers between M.S. (be it *didascalia*, narrator or character) and the empirical author.

Returning to section 1, why is Corneille the reference about classical theater? The first time he is mentioned (p.5), he operates by way of example; but, on the next page, it comes back as “example.” Attention to the organization of speech. And, at the conclusion of the first section, there is a concept that is forged but not explained: silent *didascalias*. What is it? How does it work? From my perspective, as a reader of the text, when thinking about silent *didascalias*, we think about those that will not enter the scene – as speeches or as gestures (See, for example, Act without words). If the author does not follow what is the “pattern” of the meaning of the *didascalia* in the text, being contemporary dramaturgy and mimetically indicated as a character’s speech, which guarantees that they be silent – which I understand by “they do not go to the scene, although somehow

compose it? ” In short, the conclusion of the first section does not conclude it (and perhaps contradicts what was said in the section, or what is presented to us from the text).

Finally, and moving on to what was exposed in section 3, I reaffirm that it is essential for the understanding of the whole of Gnepo’s dramatic text to know that she, in addition to writing the text, also acts and directs the show, because the dramatic text is incomplete-- that is, she is needed for the scene to be completed. The fact that she herself completes the scene in the two main “other poetics” that would dialogue with the dramaturgy on stage, which is to say a synchrony and even a literality of the scene in relation to the text (or of the text in relation to the scene – and there it is because you need to know about the creation process). Still, after giving the information that Gnepo herself writes, acts and directs the show, the article begins to propose the contact of the text with an actor (or an actress) who proposes to represent the text of another – it is not the case here. From the information obtained in the article itself, Gnepo wrote the text and wrote it for herself: who is Gnepo? What is her physical size? How is her voice? All of this is context and, as such, figures in the text.

In short: even if the article is talking only about the dramatic text, and not about the spectacle: here, more than in others, they are intrinsically linked. The spectacle and the actress are part of the production context of this discourse – even the printed and published discourse.

One last thought (because I, too, encouraged by the article, am entitled to thoughts outside the box), could not the *didascalias* be read as an expression of an interior monologue? Or, if we can explode the boundaries between genres, as the free indirect speech of the character Londé? Still, it is possible to think of M.S. as a distant narrator or character.

When reviewing the text, the author must also reserve time for technical-linguistic refinement, as the text needs a careful textual review, especially with regard to the journal’s rules, use of commas, repetitions of terms, regency and agreement.

As already mentioned, it is an article whose publication is of great interest, both for Bakhtinian studies and for theater studies – and, of course, for theater scholars inserted in Bakhtinian studies groups. I propose that a revision be made in order to answer the questions raised here and that the text be resubmitted for a new round of evaluations. Look, I reiterate: these are substantive issues, which can affect the whole of the article, but which do not make the argument unfeasible – they just make it too fragile in the current formulation. It is an important discussion and one that needs to be faced head-on in Bakhtinian studies.

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Editorial Review

Considering the reviews above, we ask the authors to rewrite the article, taking into account (and responding) especially to the observations of the second reviewer; then resubmit the text for a new round of evaluation.

Review III

From the first version of the article presented, much of the author moved towards what was pointed out as a basic problem (in this sense, I am very happy to have been able to help). The text presented here is accurate when reading the work of Werewere-Liking, touching on pertinent concepts of Bakhtinian theory and theatrical studies to compose its analysis.

Regarding the title, by bringing the term “ritual” to it, the author gives the impression that this rituality would have to do with the proposed “polyphonic aesthetics” – which, to a certain extent, is confirmed in the article, when there is a lot of Bassa tradition in Werewere theater. However, this polyphony of the Bassa tradition is not explored in the article, and recognizable “procedures” that could be reproduced or referenced by the actors on stage are not presented. Let me explain myself better: there is an idea (a concept) of the importance of the word in the Bassa tradition that is also present in the Werewere theater, but this in itself is very broad and intangible. What would bring materiality to this, or which would materially be recognizable from the Bassa tradition on stage: “Gnepo also has a musical formation permeated by the Bassa tradition, popular and in group, where several voices, instruments and percussions are in constant polyphonic dialogue” (p.9). How do these “various voices, instruments and percussions” operate “in constant polyphonic dialogue?” Is it like medieval plain song? Is it like *Inhotim*’s sound sculpture? Referencing, in theater, works as a material-form, as a re-signified replication.

This in no way detracts from the very well-constructed argument of the text, but it is strange when one expects that the text will deal with a “ritual theater.” It is not (or the text does not make that clear) the ritualized aspect of Werewere’s theater that builds its polyphonic aesthetic: it lies in the productive use of the theater’s conventions, be it ritual or otherwise. Thus, I propose the deletion of the term “ritual” from the title. Werewere’s theater may be ritual, but it is not this characteristic that makes a difference in the analysis undertaken.

Still on titles, I have questions about the title of the section “Scenic Implications,” because, as we are basically talking about headings, it gives the impression that we are going to talk about the staging of the text, which is not at all what this session is about. Unfortunately, I can’t think of what to suggest, but the question remains, if you happen to have another title option. Sorry for not being of much help on this one.

The question raised in the title echoes in the objectives of the work, which are “The objective of this work is, therefore, to explore this new configuration of dialogical and polyphonic *didascalias*, from the angle of the Cameroonian ritualistic tradition, an essential part of the consciences that formed the author.” From my reading perspective, which can also be biased, the analysis is not made “from the angle of the Cameroonian ritualistic tradition,” but, at most, “from the Cameroonian ritualistic tradition.” This is because, in my view, the text starts from a context, a Werewere background, but the central discussion of the text is based on general theatrical conventions. Perhaps the intention was to give more prominence to the ritualistic tradition, but the text also has its autonomy – sometimes paths are imposed during writing.

Both theories raised, from Bakhtinian studies and from theater studies, are satisfactory. Regarding Bakhtin’s texts, sometimes there is a somewhat harsh or closed look at the theory, more emphatic in certain aspects than Bakhtin himself was, but these moments do

not invalidate the use of the theory or the arguments developed from it. Likewise, theater studies: it comes in sufficient form to support the argument. The advantage of this is that the *corpus* predominates in the foreground of the article.

Just a good presentation by an unknown author in Brazilian lands would be the merit of this publication. However, by explaining the proposed path, “from dialogism to polyphonic aesthetics” and by emphasizing an element so important and so undervalued in theatrical analysis as *didascalía*, the author resumes and produces a contemporary reflection on concepts and questions that discursively are always in constant update, but that are often looked at in a tight way by the academy.

Finally, the text is well written and well structured, but it presents not very serious linguistic problems: agreement errors, regency errors, etc. Those that compromised the understanding were highlighted in the document that I sent attached to this opinion, but those that can be resolved by a competent reviewer were not indicated.

I hope that the observations of the opinion are useful and considered (not necessarily accepted) in their entirety. However, I highlight two corrections that, in my view, need to be made. On p.12, there is an indication of a “monological statement.” It is a piece of period, but as it is, it makes the central argument of the article unfeasible. I suggest that that passage be deleted or revised (in the case of revision, I suggest an explanation in a footnote, in addition to the reformulation of the period).

Less problematic, but more sympathetic is the observation on p.2, as we have to remember that this is a language studies magazine and not all its readers will be aware of the conventions, even the most basic, of theater. Since you take the rubric as a narrative element, it is important to remind the reader of this information from the beginning.

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