

The Construction of Presence and the Multimediatic Stage: hegemony of an immanent presence

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ABSTRACT – The Construction of Presence and the Multimediatic Stage: hegemony of an immanent presence – In this work, we depart from the understanding that the co-presence of performers and spectators in contemporary theatre articulates itself through a focus on fiction and one that emphasizes the sensorial perception and concrete interaction. Based on a discussion of the problem of expression in Deleuze/Spinoza and on the critique of the production of meaning in Gumbrecht, we name these two modes of presence respectively emanative presence and immanent presence, with the latter becoming hegemonic in contemporary theatre. We aim to reflect on how a multimedia device, with its possibilities of intermediality, may impact on the interaction between immanence and transcendence.

Keywords: **Emanative Presence. Immanent Presence. Theatrical Performativity. Multimodality. Contemporary Theatre.**

RÉSUMÉ – La Production de Présence et le Théâtre Multimédia: l'hégémonie d'une présence immanente – Dans ce travail, nous partons de la compréhension que la coprésence des artistes et des spectateurs dans la scène contemporaine s'articule autour de deux axes: un sur la fiction et un autre qui met l'accent sur la perception et l'interaction concrète. Ayant pour bases la discussion du problème de l'expression chez Deleuze/Spinoza et la critique à la production du sens chez Gumbrecht, nous désignons deux modes de présence: présence d'émanation et présence immanente, ce dernier devenant hégémonique dans le théâtre contemporain. Notre objectif est de réfléchir comment un dispositif multimédia, avec ses possibilités de médiation, peut-il avoir un impact sur ce jeu de l'immanence et de la transcendance.

Mots-clés: **Présence d'Émanation. Présence Immanente. Performativité Théâtrale. Multimédia. Théâtre Contemporain.**

RESUMO – A Construção de Presença e a Cena Teatral Multimidiática: a hegemonia de uma presença imanente – Neste ensaio, parte-se da compreensão de que a copresença de artistas e espectadores na cena contemporânea articula-se por meio de um foco na ficção e outro que privilegia a percepção e a interação concreta. Com base na discussão do problema da expressão em Deleuze/Espinosa e na crítica à produção de sentido em Gumbrecht, são designados dois modos de presença: *presença emanativa* e *presença imanente*, sendo que a última se torna hegemônica no teatro contemporâneo. Objetiva-se refletir como um dispositivo multimidiático, com as possibilidades de uma intermedialidade, impacta nesse jogo de imanência e transcendência.

Palavras-chave: **Presença Emanativa. Presença Imanente. Performatividade Teatral. Multimodalidade. Teatro Contemporâneo.**

May the Lord be with you. He is among us¹.

The Presence: a multiple poetic concept

The issues regarding the production of presence – as a (self) referential physical state and with an extraordinarily intensified energetic charge² – and the issues regarding modalities of representation – as mediations between an actual absence and a symbolic presence – cross and create contradictory and paradoxical effects in contemporary theatre. In fact, a game is established that takes place between a performative presentation and a lasting, semiotic representation, allowing to cross questions regarding the configuration of theatrical space/time, in relation to the notion of *truth*: theatrical truth vs. the truth of fiction, or even the truth of the body vs. the truth of the character. Along the different developments of this notion, a transcendental as well as a immanent perspective are established. This distinction, for being more philosophical than technological, penetrates other, more common issues related to the theatrical presence, such as presence as a physical co-presence³, telepresence⁴, or virtual presence⁵.

It is possible to think, together with Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (2010), in the Eucharist, as one of the most prominent examples of this distinction in Western culture: a sign in the Protestant context and substance in the Catholic context, semiotic representation or performative rite. However, in both contexts, there is a transcendental truth, even if the ritualistic version is closer to an immanent realization of this truth through a concrete act whose qualities have influenced the quality of the divine presence. In fact, the Catholic case, which deals with a concrete presence of the divine in this world, states that the divine essence can be completely embodied in the mundane, as in the famous phrase by Robert Musil in his story *The Lady from Portugal*, which ends with the statement: “If God can become man, he can also become a cat” (Musil, [1988], n.p.). Gumbrecht tells us that, in the artistic fruition, the human being has an experience in which the intensity of the phenomenon is greater than the ability of the observer to explain it and interpret it as a representation of a world view, without this excess killing or making it impossible to search for a semantic interpretation. This means that, in artistic work, perceived as the presence of an impacting excess that goes beyond its semiotic dimension, what matters is something like an

embodied *elan vital*⁶ or a striking physical power (the exchange materialized between the human and non-human, between body and consciousness), above all (or even solely) insofar as the actor is able to temporarily offer a significant body, which particularly indicates its need for self-destruction in an excess of energy, similar to the cloud that makes noticeable, for the psychological-physical imagination activity, the constant existence of wind that forms it and causes it to dissipate (to reference an expression by Walter Benjamin⁷). This is the representation of a cosmic performativity inherent to the human world, performativity that the Protestant vision is not able to capture and include in its vision of the world, but which is present in the affirmation of the faithful followers at Holy Mass, as shown in the epigraph of this essay.

We realize that, in this process of immanent corporal expression, there is a co-presence established between the representational and the performative, between a reference to a fictional absence and an affirmation of an energetic presence, between processes of signification and processes of performativity. It is not an exclusive relationship, but a mediating relationship. In the theatrical context, the bodies or objects involved in this relationship function both as signs and as substantial things in which energy is materialized. In these double bodies, we find the need to rethink the notion of presence around them and which connects them with the objects and beings in their surroundings.

In the Brazilian theatre scene, we see it has become common, as perceived by Icle⁸ (2011), that the presence is being intertwined with the quality of the actor's acting, presenting "[...] complementary, correlated senses." Thus, presence is conceived as:

[...] a being in the presence of someone in the spatial sense of the term or in the temporal dimension, when one is in the present. The presence may also allude to something invisible or disappeared, which is made present. Thus, objects, places and beings may have a presence, the presence of something invisible. When we use the word to designate the quality of acting, in some form, we use it with all these senses and then some. It becomes intertwined with the acting itself, since the performative practices are nothing other than the arts of the presence (Icle, 2011, p. 15).

If, on one hand, this fusion of significant findings comes dangerously close to the creation of a con-fusion, it seems clear that

this notion of presence that exists around the acting is manifested as a legacy of dramatic theatre. It puts the state of *being in presence*, above all, as an attribute of someone (the main actor) or something (the poetic object) and not as the effect of a relationship⁹. This presence, being linked to the epistemological system of dramatic theatre, can only manifest itself as emanation, since it already has a transcendental aspect that alludes to something invisible or something that has disappeared, made present through the acting (body). The dramatic present is stated as an emanative, auratic presence.

Contemporary theatre, when putting itself – as Lehmann (1997) states – first of all as a physical co-presence that implies a reciprocal and – due to its emphasis on the senses – even opaque relationship between the artistic work and the spectator, it tends to fraction the possibility of an auratic presence, given that it imposes a paradoxical game on the scene, between immanence (presentation) and transcendence (representation), although the body continues to participate in the “[...] paradox of its presence” (Lehmann, 1997, p. 256). We realize that, in this paradox, an affectation arises that brings together both its own emptying in ephemerality and its intensification in the constant flow of the moments, disturbing the notion of a presence that emerges around the acting.

In the words of Lehmann (2007, p. 239-240, translation adapted after comparison with the original text), this contemporary and performative theatre favors a state of presence that focuses on the elusive property of the present:

Reformulating the presence as the present of the theatre means, above all, thinking of it as a process, as a verb. It can be neither object nor substance. [...] We are content with the understanding of this present as something that happens. [...] This present is not a point of a now objectified on a timeline; it goes beyond this point, constantly fading and, at the same time, is a caesura between the past and the future. The present is, essentially, erosion and an escape from presence. It refers to an event that drains the now and, in this same emptiness, makes the memory and the anticipation shine (Lehmann, 2007, p. 239).

This ephemeral present, therefore, is able to create an extraordinarily intensive moment, outside the continuous time line, by conjugating the participating elements (actors, spectators and scenic elements, including the multimediatic devices) and simultaneously

represents and carries out its constant emptying and perforation. It is, above all, this draining of the now that produces the intensity of this esthetic moment: a present whose presence is considered by the experience of a constantly flowing temporal intensity; moreover, an interstice in this flow of time that makes us perceive its stitched character. We are faced with an emptying, an evacuation, rather than a constant temporal coming or even a constant filling. Lehmann's position seems to put in check all the versions of presence that are supported by a transcendental context that is materialized in a here and now full of existential and invisible, pre-existing and universal energies and forces.

We propose that this present, contaminated by an elusive character, by the permanence of its transience, may be captured through Deleuze and his reading of Spinoza as an *immanent presence*, a moment of extreme intensity and a moment that is even self-transgressive, which depends on a specific quality of interaction between the participating elements. In Deleuze's reading of Spinoza, this specific quality seems to be the perception of the unending game of particularities that are quantitative, dynamic and constantly differentiating itself. In this perception, we would say, nothing is in fact being represented. Rather, it affirms itself as the experience of a crack present in linear time, as the present of a continuous discontinuity¹⁰. We are tempted to formulate that this time is the experience of both our mortality and our evolutionary potential or, in Deleuzian-Spinozian terms, the fluctuation between the decrease and increase of our power¹¹. In its play with this continuously discontinuous present, the immanent presence of the contemporary scene becomes clear to us.

We will depart from this hypothesis to sustain it, conceptually, in the context of contemporary theatre. Later we will reflect on how it impacts a multimediatic device in this game between immanence and transcendence, since the first concept implies the physical co-presence of its producers, while the second requires the existence of a stable external horizon, in which a larger truth lies. Therefore, the mediatic resource, such as live video and the edited projection of pre-recorded images, is self-affirmed in its physical reality¹² and simultaneously points to an absent reality. It intensifies and makes the relationships between the participants more complex, diversifying them and possibly dispersing them. Here arises the first indication

that the mediatic resource needs to understand presence as a possibly contradictory notion. The multimodality (and even more so the intermediality) on the contemporary stage puts into play, at least, a presence of the *full substantial now* and a *dynamic now that is constantly emptying*. If both models have their auratic version, each one will also lead to a different sociability: on one hand, an intensified set from a homogenized relationship among the participants and, on the other, a tenuous and unstable relationship from the participants' multiple views (almost elusive) of themselves, of the others and, most importantly, of the relationship between the two, critically focusing their own views as a structuring force.

The Production of an Immanent Presence in Contemporary Theatre

In the search for a better understanding of the production of presence in contemporary theatre, we begin with three questions: 1) given the importance of the presence of the present in contemporary theatre, how can we philosophically understand the production of presence as an intensified flow of the present?; 2) how do we understand this presence of the present, in a way that allows it to become fruitful for the comprehension and construction of a contemporary performative scene?; and 3) what are the possibilities of a scenic drama making use of mediatic resources to build a perception of the presence of the present in a theatrical situation that interacts directly with its participants? As we mentioned above, we realize, in drama made up by a system that engenders separation of the stage/audience and spectator/actor, a configuration of the scenic presence around the body of the actor/actress, on one hand, through the assumption of a mask/character and, on the other, the *materiality of the scene* and of the body¹³, since these elements are presented as mediators of communication between the author/director and the reader/viewer. Thus, the spectator's participation may occur through two focuses: an interpretive focus, which favors the construction of a semantic layer *behind* or *before* the concrete materiality of the scene (*what the scene wants to say, what it wants me to think of it*), and the other focus, which favors the perception and concrete, immersive interaction (*what the scene does to me, how I arrived here, what do I do here*).

Therefore the spectator becomes a co-participant in two different scenes: the first is situated in an imaginary, fictional or semantic space, while the second is situated in the concreteness of the physical space and the sensory relationships between the bodies present. Even if the two scenes are co-present in the fruition of the theatrical experience, the possibility, and even likelihood, arises that a certain spectacle favors one of the two or, in more complex cases, plays with both and starts a passage of the spectator through both¹⁴.

Starting with the problem of expression in Deleuze/Spinoza (1968) and the criticism of the production of meaning in Gumbrecht (2010), we propose the correlation of these two scenes with two types of philosophic presence. We have the presence produced through the drama (*representation*), which makes up an intellectual sharing of a previous reality that is now absent; and the presence of a physical manner of sharing the scenic event (*presentation*) as an important single reality¹⁵. Inspired by Deleuze's reading of Spinoza, we speak, respectively, of *emanative*, or *transcendental*¹⁶ presence and of *immanent presence*.

The first would be a presence that is established around the subject-object paradigm, and which is configured as the effect of an exterior cause, to be represented by the drama and materiality of the scene: the dynamic of the scene materializes an essence that is prior to and outside its existence. The second, in turn, is a presence that is established as the questioning of this paradigm, meaning, where cause and effect are contained within the scene itself, as latency and expressions: the dynamic of the scene expresses, in its concrete, material form, a latency contained in the co-presence of the elements, which makes up this presence in both its physical and conceptual sense¹⁷.

We have observed that the immanent presence has two significant parallels with the context of the contemporary performative practices: self-reference and direct interactivity. Self-reference, although involving a dynamic property, possible semantics or an earlier concept¹⁸, does not *represent* its cause. Since it is immanent, it *contains* its cause that it is contained latently within it. In its process of revealing itself, the cause arises as an effect of the concrete materialization of a present, but does not predate it, so that it affirms itself always in the here and now and allows to produce various possible *before* and *after*, without referring to presence that

is already fully finished outside of time. By affirming presence as the emergence of a mundane phenomenon in the context of other mundane phenomena, immanent presence is also relational, that is, an individual phenomenon never affirms its presence as self-sufficient. Its self-reference reveals in this sense a self-deficiency. Therefore, it affirms interactive relationships between the elements present and the expressed causes. In other words, in the immanent presence, the special and social relationship is built among the scenic spaces, the artists and the audience's space, the participant-spectators, as a privileged place to be revealed. The immanent presence is not built only on stage, but also along the relationship between stage and audience and only for the length of time it takes to build and maintain this relationship.

Adopting the perspective of Gumbrecht (2010), according to which the subject-object paradigm corresponds to an eccentric relationship, as informed by the transcendental mode, to the split between subject/observer and the object/world observed, we understand that the replacement proposed by Gumbrecht by *being in the world* of Heidegger enables the conception of this *being in the world* as an immanent presence: a dynamic relational existence, in which it is the relationship that is presented as self-referential and autopoietic (and not the subject!). We realize that, in the notion of *being in the world*, each immanent situation is made up of dynamic relationships between the participant elements of this *being in the world* and them with themselves¹⁹.

We can understand, therefore, the existence in this *being in the world* as marked by a constant interaction between individual beings, other beings and things. As seen above, in Deleuze's reading of Spinoza, this interaction articulates, more or less actively on the part of the the human individual, the construction of relationships with different amounts of power:

Increasing their power is precisely to compose the relationships in such a way that the thing and I, as we make up the relationships, are no more than two sub-individualities of [...] a new formidable individual (Fragoso; Cardoso Junior, 2005, p. 63).

We experience the immanent presence, not only when we experience this new power, but, more importantly, when we experience the transition from one state of power to another. When

the perception of this transition becomes intense, with a quantitatively specific intensity, we realize, according to Deleuze and Spinoza, a version of eternity, the duration:

The passage from the previous state to the current state differs in the nature of the previous state and the current state. There is a specificity of the transition and it is precisely this that we call duration and what Spinoza calls duration. Duration is the passage experienced, the transition experienced [...] while one state is as irreducible as the other (Fragoso; Cardoso Junior, 2005, p. 57-58).

There is a clear similarity between the description of the transition by Deleuze and the definition of the temporal mode that is dominant in post-dramatic theatre, by Lehmann. We believe that the strong emphasis on self-referential, but internally unstable structures, in the context of contemporary scenic arts is due, among other more analytical and critical reasons, to these possibilities for building an immanent experience while experiencing a transition from one state of power to another. It is not only about building an elevated state of power, but building an extra-quotidian perception of the continuous variation of the degrees of power, which we build when creating relationships with ourselves and with beings and objects around us.

Lastly, it seems important to emphasize that the experience of belonging, which the presence of the present (or experience of a duration) establishes, is not based on the possibility of overcoming differences, but on the need for coexistence with them, since the duration manifests itself in a continuous differentiation. However small it may be, the present opens up a gap, and interstice, both in the linear time and the spatial perception. It is the distance in relation to the other that allows the individual to experience the mutual belonging. Meaning, it is the renewed tension between the scenic proposal and the spectator's perception; it is the semantic excess (and not the unifying comprehension) that unites them as a vector of constantly renewed mutual interest. Understanding the distance and the vectors of attraction is only the secondary step.

It is the distance that is inherent to the transition that makes the subject experience the variation of its affections and its states of power within a larger relational structure. However, this larger structure (*a new formidable individual*) does not refer to a prior model, but emerges from the composition of specific relationships

and may only be experienced and modified at the very moment when the participants are co-present. The presence of the present alerts the perception of the actors and spectators to the instability that is inherent to existence and gives those present the task of updating the possible transition and the desirable transition: one that increases the power of all involved.

Accordingly, the relational self-reference of this encounter within a theatrical space constitutes a dynamics that introduces an existential temporality that cannot be measured or understood linearly as succession. If, in the experience of emanative co-presence, the spectator imaginatively creates a section in the time – separating, while he or she is present, the scenic representation of everyday life – in the experience of the immanent co-presence, this section ceases to exist, and has an indivisible, but also dynamic, time, with multiple qualities. Therefore, the duration may allow the immanence to transcend itself; a transcendence that does not come from beyond creation, but from the presence of an implicit, transgressive property. This transformative force may be described with the presence of a strictly immanent God, but also with the principle of self-transgression that is inherent to all empirical reality²⁰.

Immanent Presence and the Performative Turn

As indicated above, we have observed, from Deleuze, the importance of two spatial and temporal aspects in creating a presence of immanence: the here and now of the phenomenal event and a kind of specific relationship between the embodied human perception and the existence of another person's body (whether animate or inanimate). Together they constitute a relational set of meetings that articulates different qualities and quantities of intensities.

We associate these changes, in a theatrical context, with the performative turn, as noted and analyzed by Erika Fischer-Lichte²¹, and with the concern for the theatrical situation as a device capable of generating physical and perceptual transformations through direct meetings between the beings present at the theatrical event²². These transformations happen primarily through a sensory-corporal affection, and not necessarily through a hermeneutic activity, as Lehmann (2007) states.

Fischer-Lichte points out two aspects that interest us because of their connection to the phenomenon of an immanent presence: a) the role of the direct interaction that strengthens the role of the co-presence of actors-performers and spectators-participants in the construction of the theatrical event²³, its impact and possible meaning; and b) the notion of “emergence of the meaning” (Fischer-Lichte, 2001, p. 277-279) instead of its substantiation.

Therefore, what Fischer-Lichte calls the “emergence of meaning,” through the repetition of materialized forms (gestures and acts) brings us to the phenomenon of the duration as a perception of the transition from one quantitative state to another; as a perception of the individuality of a body and the phenomenon of the dynamic duration. What Fischer-Lichte calls co-presence (2001, p. 77-82) is equivalent to the affirmation by Deleuze/Spinoza, according to which the empowering meeting produces a new formidable individual, an interactive relational structure between the participant bodies.

Fischer-Lichte’s thoughts (2001) suggest that in this performance dramaturgy – in the face of a meaning that is not given by an external reality, but is articulated in a tense relationship with this reality in the duration of the affection of the bodies – establishes a specific and confined dimension for the performative construction of identity and gender, as analyzed by Judith Butler. The immanent presence allows the spectator to feel and understand more clearly how the sexual and ethnic attributes and marks on the body are performatively and precariously acculturated on the human body. Thus, one can realize how “[...] the body in its particular matter is the result of the repetition of certain gestures and movements” (Fischer-Lichte, 2001, p. 55).

In this co-presence of different performative elements (real, self-referential, realized as *autopoietic*) that are equipped with semiotic cultural attributes, epiphanies manifest themselves, which stabilize and destabilize the scenic phenomenon in the movement between their appearing and disappearing. This is due to the fact that these elements are not intended to update the social possibilities of identity (representing) and change them; on the contrary, from the affection of the bodies of the actor/performer and the spectator/participant, they intend to bring tangible bodies into play that may end up extrapolating the possibility of their discursive identification through social, historical, unequivocal and other types of characteristics.

It is a dramaturgy that has moved from a signifying system focused on meaning to the performative substance of co-presence. The latter's driving force is the interactive game between powers to create sensory impacts and sensations. In this game that has been configured from the paradigm of *being in Heidegger's world*, the meaning derived from a hermeneutic perspective is diluted, giving rise to a sensory presence made by the impact of the immersion in the construction of the scene of the presence of the spectator-participant.

As a consequence of this game, a production of sense is established, which is the result of the interactivity of manifest presence in the acting of one body on another (as a body and like a body), spreading like a contagion, like a couple that dances and, with the dialectic adjustment of their bodies, establishes reciprocity in the feeling and being together. Thus, differences are articulated in a significant network of transitions and intensity in the time and in the space, building the possibility of the experience of a *semantic duration*. This experience of the co-presence tends to emphasize the present dimension, setting itself up as an unrepeatable event, such as in the *happening*; setting up a community, a ceremony, a rite.

Seeking to better understand these performative acts that tend to establish themselves as a rite, Fischer-Lichte (2001, p. 27-29) finds, in religious studies and the historical relationships between ritual and myth, between rite and dogma, the perception that their practices are older than the interpretations attributed to them in the form of myths or religious systems. In other words, historically, in this context, the production of presence, given the dimension of the present, precedes the production of sense. Again, we encounter the hegemony of the immanence over the metaphysical, in the sense that the rituals organize an empirically palpable reality in order to manifest their potential to be materially transcendent: an empirical reality that transgresses the mere silent materiality of a simple *being there* without communicative potential. Materiality gains meaning in the midst of the momentary game and not before, homogenizing the participants. Since there is no message or specific content to be transmitted from the stage to the audience²⁴, one can see that the presence in this event is shared, favoring a communion between those present from the articulation of material intensities, energetic states and atmospheres, i.e., a *scenic praxis*. Therefore, the fact that

the meanings (cultural and historical references) are not previously expressed is reiterated.

When reflecting on the creation of theatrical studies by Max Herrmann, in Germany, Fischer-Lichte (2001) shows the displacement of the theatrical practice of implementing meanings (as if it were a kind of reading act) to a scenic realization of the presence of actors-performers and spectator-participants. In this realization, the possibility of creating effects of meaning depends strongly on the creation of effects of presence, that is, we are facing the hegemony of a presence of immanence:

When transforming, in a fundamental aspect of its definition, both the physical co-presence of actors and spectators, that together make the scenic realization happen, and the corporal actions performed by both groups, and when focusing attention, with this, on a dynamic process, unpredictable both in its path and its result, Herrmann marginalizes the expression and the transmission of previously given meanings. The meanings that emerge in this process can only be produced within it and through it (Fischer-Lichte, 2001, p. 72).

The meanings can only emerge through a process of experience by the actors and spectators, even if it is subsequently possible to try and communicate this process, its impact and its meaning, linguistically. First and foremost, the scenic realization aims for the creation of an effect of presence as a process of immanence that results in the here and how of the co-presence and the physical and active perceptual cooperation of the participants who are present. It is necessary for a kind of short circuit to be established between the participant artists and spectators, which Fischer-Lichte calls the *poietic feedback* loop.

What happens with this loop that retroactively feeds itself when one of the elements involved is set and pre-recorded? How does the intermediatic hybridity impact the possibilities of building one transcendent and another immanent presence?

The Contemporary Multimedia Scene and the Production of a Presence of the Present

The co-presence of different materialities on the scene (live body, recorded technical image or live image and the physicality of

the visible technical apparatus), in the context of the multimedia scene and of intermediality, helps us to keep in check the emphatic notion of a transcendental presence²⁵. We realize the need to affirm that the co-presence of live bodies and bodies transformed into a mediatic image requires a rethinking of the phenomenon of the presence in relation to the concepts of transcendence and immanence, since the coexistence of physical presences (live) and other mediatized images creates the possibility for entering and exiting the physical mode of a physical co-presence to enter into a physical relationship with the mediatic device and the reality of the image instead of the body²⁶.

If, on one hand, what is materialized in the presence of the mediatized images is not a transcendental, universal and eternal pre-existing reality, but a historical reality – a specific and qualified reality technically captured as well as invoked by the existence of the apparatus itself – on the other hand, the reality of a specific recording may transcend itself, in the sense of being an embodiment of civilizing forces that point to the presence of a so-called virtual reality as a transcendental horizon of human symbolization processes and practices. The entire natural body is undone in the fabricated embodiment and far from its mediatized image. When manufactured, the image and the embodiment are shown as dependent on historically specific cultural practices, while the live body has the possibility to create vectors that point to something beyond culture²⁷. The binomial of transcendence of the technique *versus* transcendence of nature emerges.

In this context, it also becomes necessary to think about the possible fixative function of the media on stage as devices that frame and submit a dynamic reality to the most mechanical aesthetics of its capturing. The technical apparatus arises, once again, as a possibly transcendental instance for the construction of mediatized images.

On the other hand, the inclusion of recorded scenes does not extinguish the possibility of an immanent presence, of a set of constant differentiations. Rather, we are facing a coexistence of presences and telepresences²⁸, which causes a crisis with both the notion of performative presence, which depends on live bodies and their poietic interaction in real time, and the transcendental horizon of the telepresence, which promises the reproducibility of this effect,

regardless of time and place (as happens with a film). The coexistence of bodies together with the images of these bodies allows us to not only discuss the dependence of one phenomenon on another, the impact of an entire technical apparatus, but also reinforces the need to rethink the construction of a presence of immanence.

In the words of Nibbelink and Merx:

Presence becomes both virtual and actual simultaneously. In intermedial performance, body, time, space and perception reveal themselves as multifaceted and dynamic phenomena. This complexity in turn invites a reciprocally flexible method for describing and analysing the phenomena (2010, p. 218).

More than discussing the analytical methodology for this type of spectacle, we are interested in how the mediatization of the stage, with its multi-faceted and dynamic properties, impacts on the possibilities for building an immanent presence, since it puts at risk the functioning of the autopoietic feedback loop between spectators and actors-performers, on which its intrinsic character depends.

What are the specificities of this multi-faceted dynamic and the simultaneity of the virtual and actual, of this multimediatic hybridity, especially when we think of it as intermedial? In the previous section, we formulated the hypothesis that the multimediatic scene may contribute substantially to the configuration of perceptual instability; it can perform transitions in this view that make the objects emerge intensely, since they emerge as if they were marked by the temporal and special gap that accompanies the perception of the phenomenon of duration or presence of the present flow. In other words, the multimediatic scene can have an effect that is, let us say, *deontologizing*. It can also, however, allow for new forms of interactivity and immersion that, in a certain way, can serve as a replacement for the ontological transcendental context, by offering an immanent and relational context.

For this last point, we thought especially about experiences in the context of installation, such as the works by Mexican artist Rafael Lozano Hemmer, which evidence mediatic work as the result of a social interaction²⁹. What emerges from this work, as a fundamental element, is neither a specific object, nor computerized technology and the *World Wide Web*, but a social use, the meeting of human beings that, together, make up the artistic work. This artist's works show

all the potential for expressing an immanent presence only to the extent that one perceives the collective work done for its realization.

This type of immersive work proposes an intermediality in which the human body is a media and a means of semantic and social mediation. Here, we realize the need to think of the multimediatic theatrical scene as a scene in which the human body is a medium, among many others, and what matters is the interaction between these mediums in order to build a condensed perception. It is important to understand not only the instability of the images experienced during the theatrical presentation, but also the different social relationships and energetic and ontological transitions offered by this intermediality of the social condition. This is how the contemporary theatrical scene seems to be able to offer an experience of the immanent presence as a communal presence. The major advantage of a multimediatic scene conceived in an intermedial manner is the possibility for mutual questioning between the technological apparatus and the human body, in order to prevent one of the two from being established as the recipient of a transcendental truth.

The different elements involved in the construction of the theatrical scene may form a kind of dynamic network that, in its ontological hybridity and critical-parodic dynamic, emphasizes notions such as repetition, non-intentionality, and citational and relational identity, which are connected to the construction of an immanent presence³⁰ and do not fall into an ontology of transcendence, expression of an extra temporal source endowed with an inherent intention. Accordingly, the interlacing of live bodies with recorded images, not only allows for a contemporary way of working with modernist principles from a dominance of the self-referential *poiesis* and a self-reflective nature of the performance, but also offers new ways to imbricate the spectator, in a self-conscious manner, in the construction and reception of the multi and intermedial work.

At the intersection of the different languages, multimediality is used not as an addition of different scenic languages, but as a challenge to create a self-reflexive intermediality, which investigates the role of the images in the construction of our contemporary sociability. The multimediatic theatrical scene, therefore, not only offers opportunities for questioning the status of the esthetic field in empirical life today – the classic attempt to use art as a formative force

in our everyday lives to show how much life is already estheticized and dramatized, therefore bringing art and life closer together – but also causes us to rethink this sociability in the world, to the extent that the image can be simultaneously real and mediatized until becoming even a virtual being, such as the human body on stage.

Conclusion

Following Nibbeling and Merx's hypothesis that an intermedial spectacle does not destroy but intensifies the spectators' perception of the co-presence of the live bodies³¹, we understand that intermediality can strengthen the construction of a presence of immanence. It is clear, however, that the creative challenge lies in the fact that the mediatization of the spaces of performance builds a specific type of interactivity, through which the physical coexistence – needed to create and configure an immanent presence and the *feedback* relationship that Fischer-Lichte talks about – of the performing agents (which includes actors and spectators, but also potentially the other scenic languages, such as costumes, set design, sound design etc.) may not only intensify and strengthen, but also threaten the production of an immanent presence. This occurs when it makes the technology a transcendent element that expresses what the immanent presence is not: the embodied and representational promise of a universal and timeless truth or reality. Intermediality, as a transcendental presence, would be the eschatology of a technological apparatus. It may also, however, be the presence of an unstable temporal immanence, continuously discontinuous. Therefore, it would put its *cyborg* characteristic (part human, part technical) at the service of the impulse of self-transgression, inherent to any living structure, intensifying and strengthening the impulses of this vitality with its side effects, causing a crisis among the fixative forces in human existence.

Notes

- ¹ Excerpt from the Liturgy of the Word at the Holy Catholic Mass.
- ² Regarding the definitions of this type of presence, see Fischer-Lichte (2011).
- ³ As in Lehmann (2007) and Fischer-Lichte (2011).
- ⁴ See Auslander (1997) and Santos (2012).
- ⁵ See the discussion about the impact of new media on the scenic work of the actor, as well as the phenomenon of virtual communities on the internet in Bay-Cheng et al. (2010).
- ⁶ We found, in Ferracini (2014a), an attempt at thinking of this *elan vital* as a power that coexists with the poetized bodies from a non-transcendental approach in relation to the actor's work. What seems important to emphasize is the fact that, in this non-transcendental approach, the forces and energies of excess are not configured as a finished field (mirror or supposedly perfect representation of the truth of a concept), but as an embedded, dynamic activity, ultimately, a cosmic and not only human activity.
- ⁷ Sometimes we find surprising affinities, such as between this citation of Benjamin and another by Deleuze and Guattari: "The flesh is only the revealer that vanishes in what it reveals: the compound of sensations" (1992, p. 236).
- ⁸ For Icle, presence is relational, it is an experience shared with someone who witnesses "[...] a performative practice," in a way that "[...] one cannot be present or have presence, in the theatrical sense, when alone" (2011, p.16).
- ⁹ Renato Ferracini points to the problem of presence as the effect of an individual ability: "We increasingly learn, in our everyday lives as actors-researchers, working at LUME, that stage presence is construction and composition in relation to some other. Maybe this is the invisible force that Grotowski said it happens between the audience and the actor and which, for him, defines THEATRE. Following this line of thinking, we can say that a stage poetics, for an actor, only completes itself, becomes effective and actually concrete, when it is poetically composed as something/some body outside of him/herself" (2014a, p. 227). Even if this questioning focuses this *some/thing-body/outside* as an element co-present for us, it does not differentiate how this actual emerging or concretization takes place: as emanative embodiment of a truth prior to our co-presence (see, for example, Grotowski), or as a co-articulation to our co-presence without referring to an ideal model as its external source (see the kind of poetics that work with seriality).
- ¹⁰ It is the perception of this gap that makes us choose the reading by Deleuze of the work by Spinoza as a point of reference, despite the fact that Deleuze takes, in the concept of *passage of time*, this gap from a more creative side than what matters to our work. Here the gap appears as a shadow that follows this passage of time as a continuous undoing.
- ¹¹ It is possible to reflect on the mimetic potential of this social organization of the esthetic meeting. Erika Fischer-Lichte (2001) distinguished between various types of mimesis in the work (from the outside world, from the consciousness of the artist etc.), and, among them, there is a mimesis of the interpellation. We understand that the mimesis of interpellation offers the spectator a participative mode that represents the possibility of experiencing

another relationship with the world. Due to the restricted space, we cannot develop possible relationships between the immanent presence and the interpellated mimesis in the context of the scenic arts.

¹² However difficult it is for our assessment to attribute a status resembling a host to the multimedia device, it is exactly what it is: the mediatic apparatus can function as a sign and substance, not only as a support so that other signs can emerge.

¹³ We understand that the system that produces the immanent presence poses it as an evaluative and interpretive prerogative, which Gumbrecht identifies as the *materialities of communication*: “[...] all the phenomena and conditions that contribute to the production of sense, without being, themselves, a sense” (2010, p. 28). For the purposes of this study, however, we have called them, herein, *materialities of the scene*. They are not an ontological condition, but a condition that appears in a scene as the opposite of the significant dimension.

¹⁴ It is one of the great merits of the book *Is Theatre Necessary?*, by Denis Guenoun, having analyzed the relationships between these two layers in different key historical contexts.

¹⁵ Let us note that this division corresponds to the differentiation between the spectacle as text and as event.

¹⁶ About the principle of emanation and immanence as ways by which God participates in the world and the world in God, see Deleuze (1968), especially chapter 11.

¹⁷ “One cause is immanent, however, when the effect itself is “inherent” within the cause, instead of emanating from it. What defines the immanent cause is that the effect is in it, as it could be in something else, certainly as in something else, but it remains in it. The effect remains in the cause, as the cause remains in itself. From this point of view, the distinction of essence between cause and effect will never be interpreted as degradation. From the point of view of immanence, the distinction of essence does not exclude, but implies an equality of being: it is the same being that remains in the cause itself, but also in which the effect remains as in something else” (Deleuze, 1968, p. 156).

¹⁸ A performative arrangement invokes the transcendental presence when it clearly *emanates* from a previous conception that submits to its proposal, for example by representing a *truth* of the text or the director’s conception as its previous cause.

¹⁹ Ferracini and Pucceti present reports of a “relational presence” (but what presence could not be?); of a “[...] presence that is completed by the spectator” (2011, p. 361) and creates (almost) harmonious effects. In fact, this effect, possibly lies in a subversive source inherent to the theatrical event as a poetic communion. However, we cannot forget that the meeting between the scene and spectator, when destabilizing, always implies perceiving a dimension of threat, of fear and of more or less violent rupture. The being in the world implies a porous body (as the two actors from LUME indicate), but a body that, in this porosity, necessarily activates the existing tensions (conceptually, but also historically).

²⁰ Here it would be interesting to discuss this self-transgressor principle in relation to the dialectic principle, which would amount to a discussion about the relationship between the philosophies of Deleuze and Marx. Deleuze obviously denies the dialectic principle

as the sole structure of self-transgression. But this discussion goes way beyond the scope of this work.

²¹ See, especially, Fischer-Lichte (2011), although we do not agree with Fischer-Lichte's statement that a hermeneutic reflection cannot suitably reflect on the characteristics of this immanent performativity.

²² We say beings and not human beings, because, in the contemporary scene, it is not rare that we see an animal on stage whose presence affects the spectators.

²³ We understand that even the performative construction of materiality is based on the reflection that the concrete materiality is not something fixed and given, but a phenomenon that undergoes intensifications and dilutions. This occurs to the extent that materiality appears on stage so that it becomes a specific materiality, a specific body, from which meanings emerge as capabilities of its corporal presence. We also would like to stress, contrary to what Fischer-Lichte seems to affirm, that materiality does not come into existence on the theatrical or social stage as a kind of pure materiality free of social meanings. What seems to us to be at stake is the materiality's power of excess in relation to these social meanings attached to a specific materiality and a certain kind of body.

²⁴ Although the relationship between materiality and creation in its cosmic dimension is a semiotic layer co-present with the focus on materiality itself, as we said at the beginning, in fact, a co-creation of the processes of meaning and performativity takes place.

²⁵ But it seems clear that the presence of the multimedia can be used in order to strengthen an emanating concept. This happens when the recourses do not express any self-referential dimension and self-criticism in this self-referentiality.

²⁶ On this topic, see, for example, Phillip Auslander's position in *Liveness*. The author postulates that one cannot construct an ontological opposition between a live performance and a recorded performance, in a response to Herbert Blau and his essay *Theater and Cinema: the scopie drive, the detestable and more of the same* (1981).

²⁷ See, for example, Grotowski's project of making the actor's body overcome the cultural layers to achieve sacred forces. This corresponds to the conception of acting as an emphatic conception of the presence and co-presence of actors and spectators that invokes the idea of a rite of communion.

²⁸ The term telepresence was coined to discuss the effect of pre-recorded scenes over the live scene and the spectator's perception. See Bay-Cheng et al. (2010) or Santos (2012).

²⁹ See Coulter-Smith (2006), especially the chapter *Attaining the Interactive Goal: vectorial elevation*.

³⁰ As we can perceive, for example, in the commentary by Kattenbelt on the temporality evidenced in the post-dramatic works in clear dialogue with Lehmann: "[S]tage directors such as Robert Wilson, Alain Platel, Gerardjan Rijnders, and Jan Lauwers [...] have used techniques of fragmentation, juxtaposition, repetition, duplication, speeding up, and slowing down in order to emphasise and intensify the experience of the continuity of the performance itself" (Kattenbelt, 2010, p. 34).

³¹ “We will argue that in intermedial performances spectatorship in itself becomes a self-reflective act and in this process of becoming is able to entail a politics of spectating. [...] However much the ontology and the experience of the life may be provoked or problematized by digital intermediality, we believe it is exactly the live performance that enables such a provocation” (Nibbelink; Merx, 2010, p. 218).

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