

On the Analysis of Texts or Performances in Playwriting Workshops: a brief reflection on a long odyssey

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ABSTRACT – On the Analysis of Texts or Performances in Playwriting Workshops: a brief reflection on a long odyssey – The analysis of playwriting texts and staging has passed through several evolutions between 1976 and 2016. The renewal of directing itself, as well as playwriting and performing workshops, was even more remarkable. Having, *volens nolens*, followed the movement of this tumultuous pedagogy in the era of impoverishment and commodification of the university, the author reports his experiences in various contexts (Paris, Canterbury, Havana, Seoul, Taipei).

Keywords: **Workshop. Writing. Directing. Globalization. Management.**

RÉSUMÉ – De l'Analyse des Textes ou des Spectacles aux Ateliers d'Écriture Dramatique: une brève réflexion pour une longue odyssee – Sur une période de temps, allant de 1976 à 2016, la méthodologie de l'analyse des textes dramatiques comme celle des mises en scène a eu le temps d'évoluer. Le renouvellement de la mise en scène et des ateliers d'écriture et d'interprétation n'en a été que plus spectaculaire. Ayant, *volens nolens*, suivi le mouvement de cette pédagogie tumultueuse à l'ère de la paupérisation et de la commercialisation de l'université, l'auteur raconte ses expériences dans des cadres très différents et avec des bonheurs très divers (Paris, Canterbury, La Havane, Séoul, Taipei).

Mots-clés: **Atelier. Écriture. Mise en scène. Globalisation. Management.**

RESUMO – Da Análise de Textos ou Espetáculos às Oficinas de Escrita Dramática: uma breve reflexão sobre uma longa odisseia – No período entre 1976 e 2016, a análise dos textos dramáticos, bem como a das encenações, passou por diversas evoluções. A renovação da própria encenação e das oficinas de escrita e de interpretação foi ainda mais admirável. Tendo, *volens nolens*, seguido o movimento dessa pedagogia tumultuada na era da depauperação e da comercialização da universidade, o autor relata suas experiências em diferentes contextos (Paris, Canterbury, Havana, Seoul, Taipei).

Palavras-chave: **Oficina. Escrita. Encenação. Globalização. Gestão.**

To all my colleagues of today and yesterday.

Hardly any systematic and in-depth analysis of theatre plays or of performances seems to take place at universities these days. It sometimes seems as if these two former pillars of *old-fashioned* theatre studies have been gradually replaced by writing or directing workshops, as if understanding of the creative processes was obvious, giving way to playwriting or performance analysis and interpretation. But while textual and stage analysis does enjoy a long tradition and has tried and tested methods, writing or directing workshops are still at the experimental stage, a situation that could very well persist indefinitely, since verbal and performative forms renew themselves at a fast pace.

In this essay, which also assumes the character of an assessment, I would like to examine a few such pedagogical experiences over the last forty years, in different places and at different times. I will take the liberty of evoking the years of my academic career, not because of any inclination to be autobiographical, nor even auto-fictional, but as a means by which to trace an evolution – not merely my own evolution, but that of an entire period in which theatre studies has searched for itself, ever in pursuit of the best methods for analysing text and stage, and encouraging young people to write or to direct. I am well aware that one can hardly compare a teaching period of thirty years in France, ten years in England and two years in Korea with a few one- or two-week workshops elsewhere in the world. And yet, the same questions arise everywhere, even if the cultural, institutional and artistic conditions change from one country to the next.

Looking back at these four decades, from 1976 to 2016, I realise that my journey, more or less deliberately, corresponds to the development of theatre aesthetics and the dominant theories of the period. This is not a surprising discovery: the journey broadly follows the course of socio-political history of our period. I was not always entirely conscious of this, even if I have always done my best to teach while taking into account the political, economic and cultural situation of the moment and of the country, particularly when I've been invited abroad to give a lecture or run a workshop. The common thread in my work, both theoretical and practical, has always been the question of the relationship between text and stage, but the way this question is formulated has constantly evolved. I have

gone from the analysis of the text to the analysis of the text within a given production. I next observed the status of the text in various performative and cultural practices. And finally, I am currently interested in the constant back-and-forth between the writing of the text and the creation of the performance. Allow me to return to the different stages of this journey, with its discoveries as well as its dead ends. Only over the years have I come to understand that my research depends as much on socio-economic questions as on my own ideas on the subject. This evolution from a model of a critical political model (in the 1960s to 1970s) corresponds to the transition from a sociocritical political model to a neoliberal model (from the 1980s to our time), the last of which is now dominant in many of our universities. This is in any case the hypothesis which I would like to test here.

Université de Paris 3 Sorbonne Nouvelle (1976-1986)

After the tumultuous years of physical expression and of physical theatre in the 1960s, workshops in creative writing are slow to take shape. Despite a Sorbonne reassuringly claiming since 1968 to be *New*, French universities remain generally sceptical with regards to the possibility of teaching literary or theatre writing. Nobody believes in the possibility or was prepared to take the risk. On the other hand, scene work, drawing from the repertoire, has a long tradition, going back to actor training and to conservatoire entrance examinations as well as acting auditions¹. In the post-'68 years, approaches considered too normative (teaching the art of declamation or of delivery) are discarded, and interest focuses on an aesthetic or political reflection on the re-reading of plays, particularly the classics, which are reinterpreted with a view to an updated (and if possible unprecedented) staging of the work.

It remains however too difficult, in these re-readings and in the earliest writing classes, to escape from psychological analysis of the characters, since these characters are still likened to real people whose deepest motivations must, with the help of Stanislavski, be questioned. Swimming against the tide, I base my analysis of characters on a neo-Aristotelian and neo-Brechtian model; I substitute unending analyses of motivations with actantial grids inspired by Greimas (1970). Even if, in those years, Roland

Barthes and Michel Foucault had declared the *death of the author*, the young actors and budding writers often succumb to the illusion that their characters are just like real people, that they are *characters in search of an author*.

After this wave of structuralism, we witness, from the end of the 1970s, a wave of intercultural theatre which, in theory more than in practice, imposes the universal notion of *cultural performance*. The linguistic element is demoted to being a single element among many others. It no longer appears essential, since numerous performance traditions make do without it. The project of running writing workshops thus recedes or else limits itself to treating standardised works, well-made plays, light comedies, which have fairly simple rules and are thus easy to teach. The French university ‘misses a meeting’ with this intercultural phase and thus with Performance Studies. As a consequence, higher education and politics seem helpless, and even in denial, when confronted with the acceleration of globalization and a neoliberal drift. For playwriting workshops, this signals a new departure, but this is also a false start. This impression would for me be confirmed over the course of my years at Paris 8².

Université Paris 8 Vincennes-Saint Denis (1987-2007)

Switching from one Parisian university to another, going from Paris 3 to Paris 8, I benefit from even greater pedagogical freedom, even if, transplanted in 1980 to Saint-Denis, the Vincennes university is no longer all that experimental: times have changed and the utopian star has dimmed. In this pedagogical system, no final grades are given: one decides whether or not to award a *unit of value* (to validate a seminar or a workshop) without putting a number on the candidate’s performance. The gesture of letting the students mark their own work has also been abandoned. Granted, the students at Vincennes would tend to give themselves low grades, which seems most unfair. We can no longer follow the (provocative and humorous) instruction by Alain Badiou that absentees should receive *poetic* validation for their seminar (Image 1)! No marking, then, or only symbolical marks, but often, on the other hand, personal and direct feedback: veterans of Vincennes still remember it! They remember all the better as the French university remains almost free and the professors and

the students alike often manage to ignore the bureaucratic instructions of the Ministry of Education.

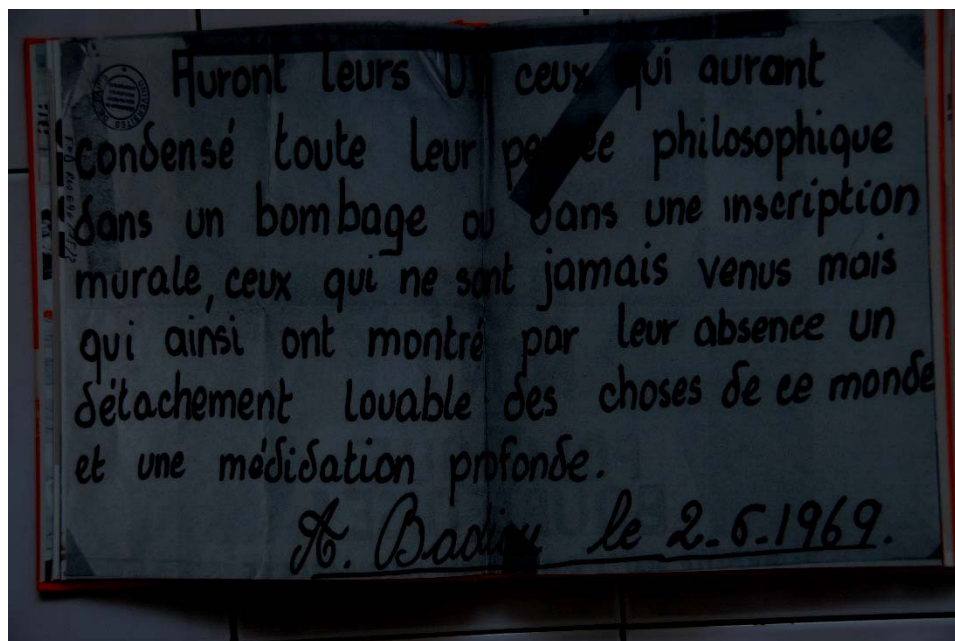


Image 1 – Picture of the poster in Vincennes in 1969. “Those who had condensed the set of their philosophical thought in a graffiti or in a wall inscription, those who never attended but who, this way, showed with their absence a commendable detachment of things of this world and a deep mediation will have their Units validated” (Djian, 2009, p. 54-55).

For me, little has changed in the 1990s, despite the rising force of globalization and the deterioration of the mass university in an increasingly unequal society. I still work with students on scenes of their choosing or of mine. My practical workshops remain separate from my theoretical seminars. Practice as Research, invented in Britain in the 1990s, is yet to be introduced in France. Sometimes actors create a new scene, but this is not standard practice. The relativity of the meaning of a text, of its reception, and its recreation by the reader or the performer is something permitted and accepted as a challenge for the actors. The criticism proposed for a scene follows its own logic, its own range of options, its own assumed coherence, its own errors of detail, its own possible improvements. This method of feeling one’s way teaches us to see the meaning of a text as relative, to hijack it, to take into account all of the signs in the work and thus to use staging and directing as tools for rereading texts. There is a risk that Cartesian methodological doubt and relativism will turn into scepticism, into a generalised deconstruction, into a mere semiological management of signs.

Those years, for me as for many other scholars, still belonged to dramaturgical analysis. But this was a dramaturgy reinvigorated by the return of the text, progress in theatre publishing, and new forms of stage (or non-stage) practices. What was difficult, in my analysis of contemporary French plays, was not only adapting the tools of dramaturgical analysis to contemporary plays (postdramatic or not) and beginning with micro-analysis of the texts (Pavis, 2002), but also finding the means of testing each notion and each of the five levels of analysis that I proposed through practical applications, even in actor exercises, all the while not losing sight of the overall textual or stage dramaturgy. All these notions are often located at a high level of abstraction, thus readily accessible to the dramaturg or the director, but difficult for most actors to conceptualise, preoccupied as they were with psychological concerns around motivation, concentration, energy, identification, survival tools they were reluctant to abandon in exchange for abstract analyses that seemed outside their remit.

Here we pressed against the limits of the rereading of works, whether classical or contemporary, conducted via productions that were regarded as new each time. The director believed he or she had found the right reading, an unprecedented and original reading that cancelled the previous ones. Confronted with the formal play of interpretations, the reader or spectator would end up believing that everything had the same value, that everything was relative and possible. According to political belief (as with Roger Planchon, for example), a good director was one who had finally found the most effective political reading for understanding our times; according to formalist belief (as with Antoine Vitez), the interpretative variations were countless, and thus relative, since they led to contradictory results. The political analysis in the style of Planchon soon became authoritarian, simplifying and even simplistic, while the formal variations of Vitez soon became a dazzling game of deconstruction, leaving the spectator somewhat disoriented.

This limit on rereading texts, the difficulties of proposing a theory of the dramatic text, of updating and extending the Western conception of theatre, and this scepticism about writing workshops can also be explained by the upheaval in stage and non-stage practices. With the advent of interculturalism and of intercultural performance forms, my dramaturgical

work on texts lost some relevance. On the one hand, in these non-European, or mixed (intercultural) forms, the text was not at the heart of the performance, but was often accessory, secondary, as if transparent, replaced by the ancestral traditions of the acting: hence the difficulty, or even the danger of tacking textual dramaturgy onto works to be analysed or created in the writer's workshop. On the other hand, the enemy-brother of intercultural theatre, the so-called *postdramatic theatre*, constituted as a reaction to the directors' theatre of the 1960s and 1970s, also tended to marginalise the text and to reject any dramaturgical or systemic analysis of texts. The result was profound scepticism towards the type of workshop based on learning textual rules, on dramaturgical know-how or on a few directing tricks.

In thinking back on this, I realise that it would have been possible, with time, effort, and patience, to test systematically the categories of my analytic model on the new performance forms³, even to challenge a model still too textual and dramatic. But the university did not properly perceive the changing times and mentalities. Seeking to be directly professional, it yielded to the cult of urgency, of expressiveness, and of individualism. This is clearer still in the case of the British university, which adopted a logic of immediate profitability, drifting into a particularly disastrous neoliberal model.

University of Kent at Canterbury (2007-2016)

Compared to French universities, British universities give an impression of wealth and impeccable organisation. Undoubtedly, along with the undeniable attraction of the language, this is what draws the countless continental European students one encounters on the campus of the University of Kent at Canterbury. The Practice as Research experiment was to a great extent developed (at the beginning of the 90s) at the universities of the United Kingdom, before spreading across the English-speaking world, then the rest of the world. In Canterbury, this approach produced excellent results, but almost exclusively at Masters or doctoral level.

I am able to observe this as examiner for numerous Masters programmes, then as a part-time professor. The work meets my

expectations of embodied theory (or intellectualised practice). Most times, the dissertation offers conclusions useful not only for candidates but for the community of scholars. Supervising a third-year BA playwrighting class, my astonishment is thus great when I notice that the theoretical and practical reflection of Practice as Research has disappeared from the class's course outline and, for the most part, from the students' expectations. The syllabus imposes a separation between the theoretical sessions, in the form of lectures, and the actual workshops, in a theatre space with the students seated head-on, like spectators coming to watch a show. This eternal difference between those who do and those who watch thus finds itself reproduced, like a security or protective barrier, which does not lend itself to any outbreak of creativity.

But the extreme planning of the class does not end there. A Module Specification Template forcefully details everything over two pages. The module has necessarily been approved and signed-off by a School Director of Learning and Teaching/School Director of Graduate Studies (as appropriate). It is entrusted to a module convenor, who can call on a tutor and on guest tutors. But this is not the end of the preliminaries preceding the candidate's creative act, and the candidate is not yet out of the woods; he or she is commanded to read the contract with care: '*YOU MUST refer to your DRAMA STUDENT HANDBOOK for the following information: Concessions Procedure, Criteria for Assessment, Module Evaluation, Plagiarism*'. If still in any doubt, the candidate must consult his/her professor, who could always refer to the 58 pages of the Staff Handbook, or to other directives available online...

One could easily link this series of filters and apparatuses that the university continuously places between itself and 'its' students (customers?) to the devices that managerial frameworks place 'between prescribers and workers'. This process is comparable with the 'Disembodied managers' whom Marie-Anne Dujarier calls '*planeurs*' (a French neologism combining the sense of 'planning' and 'gliding'): the 'conceivers of apparatuses, being too distanced from the 'real', [and who make high-flying plans] and have no idea of what is happening [down on the ground]' (Dujarier, 2015, p. 67). The '*planeurs*', in Dujarier's terminology, plan everything, down to the smallest details (as 'Ubu-esque' as they are Kafkaesque); they glide or elevate

themselves into the sky of high-altitude directives, like hot-air balloons, making no contact with the solid ground and anything of substance. The problem is that the administrative planners would like to transform the teachers into PlannerS-pedagogues. The demands of the mercantile university are such that the teacher-researcher has to become an auto-planner, an auto-entrepreneur, the administrator of a pre-masticated, pre-programmed, normalised knowledge that now need only be confirmed, without making too many waves. Or without casting a shadow, like Chamisso's Peter Schlemihl⁴, who carelessly sells his soul to the devil. Without casting a shadow, without freedom of research, the teacher-researcher becomes a mere shadow of his or her former self.

Every initiative, any desire for originality, every experimentation is quickly channelled off. Everything must be planned: the unalterable sequence of themes, the standardised bibliographies, the set order of sessions with their topics determined in advance, the assembling of constituent parts of a theory delineated systematically, the attendance register to be completed without exception by the teacher-controller. This teacher and thereby the student, no longer has much room for manoeuvre.

I can obviously only talk for myself: on one hand, I feel like a *subjectivized* subject, constituted as a teacher responsible for a group of students but for an original research which I owe the community; on the other hand, I feel *desubjectivized*, because the directives, the instructions for use, depend on the PlannerS and not on the accumulated pedagogical experience or the expertise in a given field. I find myself caught in a stranglehold between the managerial discourse of the PlannerS and the concrete experience of the students. In this uncomfortable situation, I find myself caught, if not crushed, between a normative teaching and an arrowed research course.

Practice no longer gives rise to research, as Practice as Research, emerging in the United Kingdom, had allowed us to expect. At this point, one soon falls into the pseudo-professional teaching of *How to* (write a play). All the control and verification mechanisms are in place to reassure the customer that things will proceed without a hitch. The comprehensive insurance policy, sold at a high price and obsessively to students, goes hand in hand with a growing precarity of teaching staff. Thus my own artisanal

analysis of a play or a performance with its necessarily experimental and groping aspect collides frontally with the new neo-liberal norms of this new mercantile educational enterprise (standardization, efficiency, delocalization, subcontracting).

I remain convinced that what is important in this situation is for each workshop participant to write about whatever takes their fancy and to follow their own tune. I therefore encourage everyone to make a start on writing a play, be it a self-contained work or part of a larger piece. Each weekly three-hour session is dedicated to acting out what the students have written at home, that I am sent the night before (or that morning) by email, and which furnishes material to test. This model of performing live often provides rich material, if only in order to assess what has been understood, where the story will take us, what pitfalls to avoid. With groups of more than fifteen participants, it is usual to *get through* seven or eight scenes in a morning, which thus enables the group (or half of the group) to make a preliminary, if superficial, evaluation, before getting more involved. In my opinion, the test of walking through a version still in the process of being written is crucial. But one has to be able to analyse the text in detail, if possible according to all of its parameters (Pavis, 2002, p. 13), in order then to undertake a semiological analysis of the extract shown. Too much explanation is not possible, given the limited time, since this would risk making the other participants, sitting in the first rows of the auditorium, impatient or unsympathetic.

One should, however, find the time to experiment with other forms of acting and encourage more audacity, ambiguity, and risk. Acting exercises (yet to be invented) could have proved useful here. I nevertheless remain sceptical of those exercises using formal constraints, to overcome the writer's block and to encourage writing, exercises better suited to children, to adolescents or novices (Danan, 2012, p. 62-71). The exception that proves the rule would be Les Essif's book, *The French Play*, which theorises the mounting of a production, going through all the different steps and proposing at each stage exercises for developing awareness of staging for students, particularly students of French (Essif, 2006).

A school of the arts, even in a university, needs a warm atmosphere in order to function and survive. I encountered such an atmosphere

everywhere, also in Canterbury, a few years ago. Since then, the university has shown its real face: neoliberal, consumerist, bureaucratic, mercantile (Hibou, 2012). Research no longer belongs to researchers. Teaching is disconnected from research, and so research no longer feeds into teaching. Teachers are obliged to produce immediate, marketable, results, and projects likely to attract funding and the attention of a wider audience. Terrorised by management and its silent and sneaky PlannerS, we teachers have all become 'Animals sick of the plague⁵:' 'Not all of them died, but all were struck'. Overwhelmed with administrative tasks, both futile and useless, with frenzied research to develop their institution, engaged in projects already explored but currently in fashion, on stereotypical avenues of inquiry, uninspiring or trotted out a thousand times before, or far removed from their real interests, many theatre lecturers are no longer in the mood to compose an operetta.

Korea National University of the Arts (2011-2012)

For me too, research continues. Perhaps it has only just begun. It now takes place on an ad hoc basis in very different places. I expect a great deal from new contexts in terms of resolving the *enigma* of writing, the *magic* of stage *embodiment* and above all the *miracle* of going back and forth between text and stage.

Invited to Seoul by the Korea National University of the Arts, I can freely choose what I teach: one or two theoretical seminars on the analysis and aesthetics of contemporary performances, a practical workshop with student actors, directors, and authors. Students in other categories (those taking scenography, dramaturgy, theatre studies) are poorly represented in my weekly workshop. My proposition is to work on a scene written each week by a different member of the group in Korean, and I obtain an English translation. After short deliberations, each of the (six to ten) participants has the task of proposing a basic staging of the scene written for the session. We compare the different versions, we criticise them, correct them, we sometimes attempt a synthesis for the staging from the propositions that seem most relevant. I do not intervene in terms of the proposed Korean text, unless a dramaturgical observation (on the story, the action, the coherence, for example) seems necessary. This is after all not a

writing workshop, but once again a workshop in critical reading and stage interpretation.

Strangely, I have no difficulties with the author-actor-directors in my workshop: neither in terms of their thematic choices, nor their acting style, and less still with the shape their dramaturgy and staging takes.

Among the Korean universities, most of them private, and thus with high fees, the Korean University of the Arts has a very special status. A very prestigious, elitist school, it recruits its students only after a very strict selection and difficult examinations. As an example, only five students per year are chosen from 600 candidates for directing, selected by exam and on the student portfolio (the criteria honestly are beyond me). The same draconian selection process applied for the performers, the set designers, and the actors. The selection process for the theatre studies section is less stringent.

From a technical perspective, I have no problems at all with my Korean students, all the more since the programme of study is mapped onto the American model. The work of many North American and British authors is performed. Young Korean authors, even when they address Korean subjects, seem to be influenced by a Western realist dramaturgy, but also sometimes by a fairly abstract writing mode, rejecting plot and dramatic tension, as in *postdramatic* writing. I sometimes have the strange impression that the students, their professors (often with diplomas from North American universities), and the general population is more Westernised and globalized than I am. In the case of technology, be it microprocessors or the functioning of universities, this is blindingly obvious. No doubt, however, the mentalities still owe a great deal to culture, history, religion, and Confucianism. In any case, education, training, the politics of pedagogy and of the university have difficulty evolving, locked in their own purpose and in their conservative cultural politics. Only a few young artists and a few professors, those very critical of the society and of politics, as marginal as they are radical, attempt to resist, with no chance, for the time being, of achieving a change of course. The Korea National University of the Arts does not gag these young artists, but in the professional world they struggle to survive after leaving the university.

Over the course of that time, 2011-2012, I was determined to take this Korean context into account. To refine my reflections on plays and writing for the stage, to understand the place of education in a very capitalistic economic system, except in a few elite school, I was keen to take inspiration from Korean cultural traditions and from its economic situation. But as soon as the instruction is first to write a text then to interpret and perform it in the American mode (rarely the European one), one takes one's place in the Western dramatic tradition. One cannot expect contemporary actor-authors directly to draw on the traditions of popular village dance, proposing choreography, music, physical or even acrobatic know-how, or popular celebration. From the perspective of their training at this school, these student-authors are supposed to supply a text. Dramatic writing and the writing task (as given to the authors) is first an intellectual act of written composition. My work consists mainly in defining concepts of European dramaturgy. Classical (Aristotle), neo-classical (Brecht), and postdramatic (Lehmann) dramaturgy becomes the underpinning of our analyses. I cannot settle for the *dramaturgical* commentaries and explanations on a play and its staging by one dramaturg, as found in the first pages of a theatre programme, where the meaning of the play is explained and key elements of the staging indicated.

But what of the directors and actors from my workshop? They were surprised, certainly, but has their critical spirit, their understanding of politics been changed? I never gave unchallengeable orders or directions to the actors; I did not suggest I knew the right way to stage their text. Despite the extreme openness of the minds of the students, I was not able, nor did I even try, to do work that was explicitly political and critical of cultural and socio-economic life (and I regret this today). They were themselves in a closed university environment, momentarily protected from the outside world of the job market of the arts, with which they will soon be confronted, when they leave the school (Pavis, 2017).

Havana (2016)

After Paris, Seoul or Canterbury, I cannot imagine a starker contrast than that of the *Instituto Superior de Arte*, in Havana, recently rechristened,

perhaps to give it a global air, *Universidad de las Artes*. This is my chance to check all of my convictions and to test some of my findings.

My experiences at Seoul and Canterbury have confirmed for me the inherent value of dramatic literature and the legitimacy of dramatic writing workshops. The dramatic text is considered a work in its own right, whether or not it is published or even performed. One is able to read it *on paper* and to imagine the staging that might suit it (and us). Michelene Wandor quite rightly has us observe that ‘the process of creating (of writing) a dramatic text is, from the writer’s point of view, complete in itself’ (Wandor, 2008, p. 117). This seems an extraordinary revelation after all the performative years, precisely because the theory and semiology of performances had for a long time tended no longer to consider the text – if there still was a text – except as a step taken in order to reach the performance and the image.

Thanks to author-director-theorists like Joël Pommerat and Michelene Wandor (2008), a clearer conception of the link between text and stage takes shape. One ‘cannot,’ as Pommerat puts it, ‘separate in my work the writing of the text and the writing of the stage. This happens in parallel by way of a regular back-and-forth motion’. Wandor appears to echo this claim: ‘Meanings are created in the interface between writing and performance’ (Wandor, 2008, p. 117). Drawing on this conviction, which might seem obvious, but is nevertheless the result of deep reflection, I land on the island of Cuba on April 1, 2016.

University education in Cuba is entirely free. And a good job, too, since with a monthly salary of \$50, students and their parents could never afford British – or American – style fees.

I am invited by the University of Arts of Cuba, to spend ten days in Havana giving a workshop on a theme of my own choosing: globalisation and private life.

Because my workshop notes summarize the actual state of my reflection on the writing/staging relationship, because they also reflect how Cuban students live the daily grip of globalization and their difficulty of standing on the margin of our neo-liberal world, it is useful to quote these notes during that highly political week.

Session 1:

1) Say a few words and do some action to show who you are and how you position yourself and react in the face of globalisation, its impact on your everyday and personal life. Give a short, two-minute presentation.

2) Take a few fragments of the material previously presented, improvising in a process of enlargement or, on the contrary, of concentration of the materials (physical situations or fragments of text).

3) Go back and forth between scenes played (without words) and words 'emerging' from improvised situations; thus, move from text to acting and conversely, seeking ways in which they complement one another and what you, little by little, seem to want to say, what you wish to say.

4) In writing, as in acting, do your best to materialise (to render concrete) then to dematerialise (to render abstract) a situation, a physical language, a text, and so try to make them tangible, and then intangible. Introduce an ellipsis into the text or into the situation. Introduce into the text or the acting clarifying points or, conversely, ambiguities. Regulate and dose what should or should not be represented.

5) The Pommerat method: the basic idea is that

[...] these two moments, what we call writing and staging, are not separate. The act of writing a text, the scenography, the actors' movement, their gestures, their physicality, their voices, the clothes they wear, the sound, the light, all these create meaning. I write with all these elements. I write for the stage and with it, in collusion with a whole team (Pommerat, 2010, p. 51).

Your work will consist of creating a fragment of theatre by way of the back and forth between writing and acting, without beginning with a finished text, instead developing step by step the writing and the acting, testing one with the other.

Session 2:

We go through the various propositions of the groups and of each member of the group. There are two main concerns: 1) To move the narrative along, to develop and organise it. Little by little, we find the expected fabula and we construct the plot, or at least link a few fragments according to a certain narrative logic, by progressively establishing the

narrative structure, marking the points of support, the different stages, the sequence of events, with the contradictions, the ambiguities, the ellipses. 2) The second concern is to approach the placing of the themes, specifically globalisation and what we are starting to understand about it. What do we want to say about it? How does the inquiry unfold? How does each participant's experience contribute to addressing the chosen themes?

The notion of apparatus, as proposed by Foucault and Agamben, serves as a link between the spatial apparatus of the stage and the apparatus where power manifests itself, notably the power to control people.

Session 3:

Pommerat:

One must distinguish two aspects of our work. There is firstly a search for 'letting be', a search for an abandonment in terms of the actor's work and then a very great mastery and many details, thus constraints, in terms of the staging and the placing of the bodies (Pommerat, 2010, p. 51).

Session 4:

This is devoted to the problems of writing and rewriting, of the choice of a version and the establishment of a possible staging. We are still in the testing phase, and not at the stage of explaining. The actor, Pommerat tells us, must absolutely avoid 'fabrication, *doing the acting* in order to make something happen' (Pommerat, 2009, p. 94).

Session 5:

The back and forth between writing and acting is easy on paper, to state the obvious! Put another way: it is easier to stage textual material than to write or rewrite something based on what actors show, since, in the case of the latter, we must go straight to verbalising, not only in our heads, but by transforming our impressions, our ideas, into words on the page, words that others might one day read and interpret in their own ways.

Havana Conclusions

These exercises and strict instructions of my quinquennial plan executed over five Cuban days correspond to the state of my research at the moment of my peaceful landing. But this research begs to be tested, or contradicted even, by the practice of this new generation of students. The

question is of knowing if the workshop participants feels globalisation concerned them, or whether they consider themselves sheltered from this phenomenon, isolated as they are on their island, far away still from a neo-liberal, mercantile university. The slight provocation on my part consists of inciting the participants to reflect on their future in the light of the globalization and liberalisation of the economy: Does your political system – founded on forced and frenzied isolationism – have in your opinion any chance of survival? Do you consider yourselves *the last of the Mohicans*?⁶ Can you continue to produce this excellent contemporary experimental theatre, and at what cost? Of course, I expect protests: ‘but, we too, especially us, we are victims of globalization! In Cuba, globalization is a luxury product, giving for example access to high-speed Internet, but this ‘gadget’ unfortunately does not serve well the official politicians in maintaining and improving contact with abroad; it is on the other hand sought by the young people in order to establish communication at the individual level with the outside world, particularly via social media.

Be that as it may, at the end of that week of work the question again arises as to how this practical work in Havana on Cuban-style globalization may have changed my (Eurocentric) theory and methods of research, as well as my understanding of globalization and of a more and more neo-liberal university (outside Cuba).

On a *purely* theoretical level, I feel that I should now adapt my analyses to the Cubans’ discursive strategy, to their sense of humour, irony, double meanings, to their ease at twisting the meaning of a text, their un-saids, their fragile relationship with the powers at every level. In this Cuban workshop, the effects and the tricks of globalization come in a wide variety of comical situations. In Cuba, globalization is endured, it comes from outside. The craftiest manage to profit from this with all kinds of tricks and businesses, at every moment of the day; most Cubans suffer from the situation, if only when they wonder what there is to eat and in what currency the food must be bought.

On the *crudely* political level, they, like me, have to say things indirectly: double meanings and irony are our main figures of speech, a way of bearing the system and surviving it. One can certainly critique the abuse of control, the double-standard applied to the people and to equality, but

students and intellectuals I meet do not reject the system as a whole, and some still hope to reform it. Entrepreneurs, in the economic or cultural world, prepare themselves to compromise, to adapt, to resuscitate a moribund economy. In everyday life and social life, the class struggle is coming back, even if the common person has no chance, for now, of overturning the class of the regime's most privileged, entrepreneurs or the nomenclatura, even if this is the ultimate taboo that must not be breached, at least not head-on. Most artists from the relevant groups live very modestly from their art, but they do survive, for now. In a neoliberal society only concerned with profit margins, they would not stand a chance. At the same time, and this is the paradox that Europeans do not always understand, this creativity is always released on probation, in a state of artificial respiration, and in a political system based on repression. That is why I only feel like a visitor in Cuba and I would not like to live there. I would be too afraid, and I would have a guilty conscience: while I did lead this workshop, I should not forget the resurgence of repression⁷.

In their examples of globalization, with its causes and its effects, the workshop participants know to find the concrete object, the typical everyday situation to bring their little stone to the global monument of frustration. But they always do so with simplicity and elegance: one particular detail, one allusion, a hypothesis, a caricature, or a wink. This results in a group photograph, a global and abstract capturing that opened the way to an explanation, in the Brechtian manner.

After Cuba: what to do and in which university?

At the conclusion of my workshop, the participants no longer seem blocked: neither in writing and less still in acting; each of them masters a sliver of truth and delivers it in a personal sketch and according to a collective destiny. The aesthetic and political results exceed my expectations. The cell phone and computer are instruments frequently used as demonstrative props, as objects used to illustrate a moment of truth, whether manipulated or attained, utopian or possible. Sometimes, when things go well, the artistic gesture, created by the actor-directors, provokes, for themselves or for the spectators, a sudden intuition, an illumination, almost a *satori*, and an image that enables social phenomena to be

understood in a critical, political, or poetic manner. The formal work – on the dramaturgy, text, scenery – thus necessarily leads to a re-evaluation of the contents, to a questioning of clear-cut divisions existing between public and private, social and individual. For this to happen, it is necessary that the artistic work on the form trigger in the spectator a sudden awareness, a sudden awareness of possible meaning, an understanding of an aspect of social reality, helping us to reflect on the contents that the form carries or produces. In moments when the most concrete is associated with the most abstract, this sudden awareness spares us long speeches or muddled explanations. It then offers what we from the outset were seeking in this ‘Globalisation Project’: a better knowledge of social reality through artistic work. In diverse forms and experiments, this is what we sometimes call an apparatus (Foucault and Agamben), a ‘structure of feeling’ (Williams, 1973)⁸.

After all these tours and detours, from Paris to Paris via Canterbury, Seoul, or Cuba, have my ideas on the teaching of theatre, in particular of the theory of texts, of their writing and their staging, also moved? Not as much as I might have wished. They have evolved with the test of time, of personal experience, of History. Theatre, it is banal to say, has changed a great deal since the 1970s. The types and places of performances have evolved; theatre’s aesthetic identity and social function have shifted continuously. But, in the end, it is still not leaving its post! Theatre is an eternal grasshopper, always ready to plead famine: ‘At the house of the Ant, her neighbour,/Praying her to lend her/Some grain to survive/Until the new season’⁹. The grain, however, is not cheap; it costs a great deal, even the grain of folly. Everywhere the price to be paid is high, even if the terms of payment vary from one country to another.

– Paris, is finished for me, since I left the French university ten years ago. My former colleagues and my readers (Jourde, 2011)¹⁰ inform me that the French, too, have entered the era of obsessional checking, and of absurd questionnaires endlessly to be completed. The profession of teacher-researcher has not become a search for grants and subsidies (at least in the humanities). However, here too, the PlannerS’ task has become to check, control, control the controllers. Bullshit jobs¹¹ are blooming, PlannerS

dictate their law and fly even higher. I am not sure that in Paris I could still conduct research into staging with a small group of actors.

– At Canterbury, I had the fortune to lead, in very good conditions, Masters seminars with British and international students. The competition for students between institutions is fierce and the recruitment of Masters students is insufficient to ensure the viability of highly specialized programmes of study, and thus of a coherent postgraduate curriculum. The situation is hardly better at undergraduate level. Despite an excessive administrative apparatus (for locating funding, controlling, and checking the appropriateness of publications deemed eligible for national funding, etc.), the recruitment of new students is a major challenge. And yet, the presentations at university open days suggest something idyllic; the statements from the previous year's students are eloquent and the satisfaction ratings proffered are *soviet*.

– In Cuba, the situation is quite different: the intellectuals (the professors, not the civil servants or the officials) think that their reforms to theatre studies, their theoretical reflections, will have the power to influence the cultural politics of their country, and then of politics, full stop. It would suffice, they claim, to reform the operations of cultural affairs, then, from within, that of the state apparatus in order not only to avoid a liberal drift, but also to reform the socialist regime. Their main challenge is that of dismantling the official Marxist discourse expected of them and which they still somewhat believe, and to place all problems in an international and globalized framework. They know very well that a neo-liberal system of education would mean their intellectual and socio-economic annihilation. Taking their distance from the misguided ways of the system, they obviously run the risk of being denounced by bureaucrats and officials, themselves *careerist* pseudo-Marxists well placed and always masked, pampered by the regime and thus in a strong position. This mass schizophrenia, this role-play by my fellow theatre professors is quite touching, but also quite disconcerting and hopeless. None of this leads to calm: one senses in them great weariness and disenchantment, but never cynicism.

If we take a counter-example, that of a university in an ultra-liberal system like that of a British university, we note a situation that is just as

inextricable, but whose downward slide, and threat to students and professors alike, is palpable, yet without any way of stopping the mechanism of global alienation in sight. But the trust necessary for any pedagogical exchange is readily shaken by the suspicion that the deal between teacher and student is not a fair one: the teacher fears that the student does not think he or she is getting value for money; she will be mistrusting of them, will adapt the curriculum and any remarks to the sensitivities of the customers she depends upon, whether she likes it or not. Conversely, the customer will think not only that she has a right to scrutinize the teacher, but that the teacher does not speak the whole truth and thus, in a certain way, does not give value for money. In the case of a purely aesthetic judgement on a work in progress, of an almost existential experience of creation, often the first such experience for the student, the consequences of this mistrust and this deal can be devastating. The prof thus must choose between the cynicism of the salesman and the despair of a failed mentor. Unless she is made to choose both, thus risking severe schizophrenia.

But let us instead return, as we reach the end, to more hopeful thoughts! These final comments revive the central thesis of my reflections: what matters in our search for a theory of the text and the stage is not only its sophistication nor even its truth; it is also the art of establishing how such theoretical knowledge is linked to society, influences it, how and to what extent. With the help of Foucault, let us reflect on the relationship of knowledge to power. Let us adapt his theories to the modest matter of a theatre workshop:

Now, see how carried by recent developments, new problems have come to light: no longer what are the limits of knowledge (or its foundations), but who are they that know? How does the appropriation and distribution of knowledge take place? How does a knowledge form in a society, develop, mobilise resources and place itself at the service of an economy? How does knowledge form in a society and transform itself? Hence, two series of questions: some of a theoretical nature, on the relationship between knowledge and politics; and others, more critical, on the University (the faculties and the high schools) as an apparently neutral place where an objective knowledge is supposed to be distributed equitably (Foucault apud Djian, 2009, p. 150)¹².

We have reason to think that knowledge about the text and the stage, or about writing workshops has an impact, however modest, on society and above all on the University. We still have therefore to describe the different types of knowledge, of analysis, and of awareness that this knowledge allows. We must next evaluate what this knowledge implies for the politics of universities and more generally for the society in which it participates. The knowledge produced through textual and stage analysis must thus continuously be subject to a process of historicisation of its theories and methods. These must be brought into confrontation with the socio-economic conditions in which different theoretical knowledge impacts on the powers of society. But what kinds of knowledge are involved in the case of theatre?

Three Types of Knowledge:

1) *How to read at several levels* is to read the dramatic text or the staging at different steps moving away from the surface of the text. These levels, aside from that of the textual surface, are those of plot (I), fabula (II), action (III), ideology and the unconscious (IV)¹³. The knowledge produced at each level reduces to a more precise awareness of an element and of its functioning within the whole. Nothing is preventing us from applying this model for the fictional text to social reality, taking care to transpose the categories of the five levels into concepts that explain the functioning of society and its storytelling. The questions are therefore: how is society described (A)? What does it tell (I)? What does it deep down tell (IV)? Thanks to what acting forces (III)? To tell us what and to what aim (IV)?

2) *Knowing how to recognise the staging indications*: in attempting to reconstitute the choices of any staging, the instructions given to the actors and collaborators in order to construct the production as a whole, we become aware of the conventions of the performance. By analogy with the notion of convention, we understand that any society, too, is based on conventions and rules. Sometimes, a staging is readable from the society it depicts and depends upon. Sometimes, however, a society is captured and becomes legible by way of the modelling and imaging afforded by theatre. The staging and the society is never like for like; the reader or the spectator must reconstruct the process of imitation-deformation-recreation.

3) *Knowing how to hijack a text* is one of the great talents of directors and other politicians. They are nevertheless not the only ones to practice hijacking. Fundamentally, one must always read at another level, not only to lie or deceive, but to enrich, augment, appropriate, redistribute a text that is too banal or on the contrary too secretive. One will read for example a poem at multiple levels, before deciding how to understand it. In this regard, Benoît Lambert (2010, p. 7) reminds us that Vitez defined *mise en scène* as the art of augmentation. Indeed, Lambert tells us, “[...] the director reproduces by augmenting, by consciously and willingly deploying the signifying potentials that it initially holds, as if unknowingly”. For the spectator, this is indeed a question of ‘appropriation and a redistribution of knowledge’ that will be useful to society by making it discover unknown aspects of human experience conveyed by the work. What the audience does with this rereading will be a more or less visible action, a symbolic power. Thomas Ostermeier recently complained that ‘there are not enough authors today who do the work of stage updates on intellectual, social, economic and geopolitical conflicts’¹⁴. This pertinent comment is a timely reminder: a text of fiction is not only able to describe and critique the real, but also to contribute to integrating into it and acting upon it. This form of knowledge that is fiction thus places itself at the service of a political and economic power. Conversely, the economy and the mark of society never fail to influence the fictional knowledge that is theatre, sometimes to the point of threatening the very existence of theatre.

Returning one last time to my starting point, the plan to theorize or more simply to describe and to achieve a playwriting workshop, I am well aware, I must confess, of not having been able to do with this exercise what I am used to doing through the analysis of dramatic texts or performances: to render visible a few key lines, to explain how text and stage function. As for telling people how to write and to stage – even if I knew how, I would have reservations about doing it, having always considered that it belongs to an individual and private creative act. The writing or directing workshop thus remains for me the ultimate frontier that cannot and should not be crossed. In any case (and this reassures and consoles me somewhat), this frontier is always receding as one approaches: writing techniques and the aesthetics of the stage are in constant mutation, just like the social and

cultural reality that always somehow escapes us, despite our efforts to grasp it and express it by means of art.

It would seem, however, that the different types of knowledge on and around theatre, 'their way of taking place in a society' (Foucault), end up joining together and complementing one another:

Three Types of Knowledge of Theatre:

(1) *Knowing how to read a text* (a play written for the stage or any text used onstage) involves being familiar with and making use of a few dramaturgical rules.

(2) *Knowing how to watch a performance* necessitates understanding how the spectator's gaze is directed by the staging, which allows the spectator to follow the logic or the process of the performance.

(3) *Knowing how to write a play* involves knowing a few dramaturgical rules (1) while also envisaging in what stage context and in what situation (2) the text would be spoken.

If I now tie up the three types of knowledge in society as Foucault describe them and the three forms of theatre knowledge I have just enumerated (reading, seeing, writing), I notice that they more or less correspond to the three stages of my own research. At each of these three stages there is a dominant conception of the theatre and also of a politics of knowledge and behind it a politics for the universities and a politics, full stop. Let me name these three moments of my journey through the theatre:

1) Structural analysis was done against classical philology: no longer the hermeneutical and final interpretation of texts, but the possibility of reading the same text at different levels.

2) Semiology of *mise en scène* was done against the idea that it would be enough to transfer term by term the textual signified in order to produce a necessarily faithful *mise en scène*. The point was therefore to confer to the theatre, through its *mise en scène*, an autonomous identity. This view was against the idea of a stable referent, of theatre seen as always a mimetic representation of reality.

3) The writing/staging workshop, which is the last step of my current research, moves back and forth between writing and staging. It allows for an interaction, an infinite game between texts and actors. It relativizes all

analytical methods. It rejects efficiency, verification, reproducibility at the lowest cost, economic quantification of knowledge. Bad news for the PlannerS!

(Overly) General Conclusions

The need to compare and to bring into confrontation these three types of knowledge encourages us that we reconsider the institutional, but also artificial frontiers between the specialisms of theatre studies and the frontiers between the different studies of performance. It is thus up to us to reimagine the programme of studies, in particular the distinction made by conservatoires and universities between acting, staging, dramatic and theatre writing, scenography, the act of documentation, activism and the politics of the 'theatre artist'.

One last time, we must return to the managerialist discourse that underlies theatre and its teaching, the organisational activity of a creative and theoretical knowledge. One should not a priori discredit the notion of the management of studies or the organisation of a writing workshop. We should, however, agree on the model of economic and social administration that such management implies.

This management today must choose between a neoliberal, Anglo-Saxon, American model and a more social-democratic model, both Latin and Nordic. The first of these models is Taylorist: it seeks to support efficiency, productivity, performance, and the rationalisation of profits. The second model, on the contrary, is preoccupied with the understanding of the objective working conditions of the people involved¹⁵. Chance, even if the hand was somewhat forced, has meant that these two models are almost embodied in the British and Cuban examples in my inquiry.

In Canterbury, the PlannerS go along with this managerialist rationale, in confirming (more than in innovating), the required steps of dramatic production on the assembly line of the liberal workshop. Prescribed knowledge becomes a check-list, a straitjacket for the youngsters, a security system. The administrative ideal of the British university is that of 'excellence', an idea as pretentious as it is naive and stupid. The 'glob profs', currently 'Br-excited' by the idea of all continental

artistic experimentation, victims of the pseudo-rationalism of disembodied management, have not given up and are waiting for better times.

In Cuba, my colleagues of one week, Anti-PlannerS most of them, are still enjoying a respite, after the doggedly planned economy, from the 1960s to the 1980s and before, one fears, the neoliberal drift and suffocation through bureaucracy. They take advantage of this, and rightly so, to work on a model of teaching and of training that gives the students the opportunity to use their talent for study, theory, acting, and salsa. As this system does not seek to compete with the liberal Taylorism and capitalist production, there exists an unexpected space of freedom and experimentation. This freedom is not (not yet?) curbed, as in the UK, in Korea or in many other places on the planet where the productivist, managerial model is followed. Whether one studies medicine or theatre, one can be sure, in Cuba, of bare survival: so why not choose comedy!

Between these two extremes, British or Cuban, the French model seems undecided and uptight: anarchism, individualism, and deconstructionism are the lifeblood of France. The *méthode* is always in *discours*, in a permanent state of *déconstruction*. The theatre profession has become sceptical towards theorising that is going nowhere, and which is not always linked to actual society. It knows only too well that, like academia, it cannot escape the influence of the PlannerS and managers. It is in search of just such comprehensive and participative forms of management. Thus, the specialist in human organisations, Jean-Michel Saussois, calls for a model of management that, instead of Taylorism and performance, emphasises understanding and real work. This model conceives of organisations ‘in three different ways: as problems to be resolved [...]; architectures that follow the principles of construction [...]; processes of action in which collective action continuously structures itself’ (Saussois, 2012). For me, the workshop leader/manager would gain from approaching things as a manager of understanding, as described by Saussois (apud Reverchon, 2016, p. 5):

The manager must be able to settle for saying: ‘You’re the ones who know the subject, go ahead, move forward, but I can help you by way of the experience and the methods I have acquired’. He must be a manager-acupuncturist, who only intervenes in order to unblock a situation. Enterprises die from too much

management, from 'indi-gestion' (mismanagement). But the basis of autonomy lies in the autonomy of the basis.

The best workshops are often those that remain or will always be in a state of becoming. It is in the nature of Man never to be satisfied. And it is the nature of a workshop to prepare or repair what is destined no longer to work one day. What one considers broken or repairable varies from one place and one moment to the next. With time, I have got used to the textual patchwork and to trying things out on stage. I have long since lost any illusions about the scientific nature of theory. I am ready to try all sorts of solutions, dodgy things, daring jokes.

I like very much workshops where from the start everything is up for discussion: text written in advance, the first steps towards a staging. One of my most gratifying experiences was a workshop in Taiwan, at another National University of the Arts, TNUA in Taipei, in 2012¹⁶. Prior to my arrival, the participants had already written and learned their texts, rehearsed, tried many things out. All that was left was to watch, to propose things rather than construct or even deconstruct them; one could make suggestions that would or would not be taken into account, or transformed, improved, refined. Analysis made its return; theory was now light and joyous, destined to improve a situation already found and accepted. I did not feel obliged to say *how to do it*, nor to judge, nor to lecture the actors, nor to give marks, even in the style of Badiou. The students' text in Chinese had been translated into English. We could continue to laugh, together, and even in Chinese: to know how to laugh, and to know how to introduce young people to an artistic activity, is that not worth its generous cost in terms of energy and pleasure?

Notes

- ¹ For example, the entry examination for the *Conservatoire National Supérieur d'Art Dramatique* (Paris): in 2017, the candidates must present four scenes: one in alexandrines, two more from the repertoire – before 1980 and after 1980, the last is called 'free process', 'expressing another art of the stage or interpretation of a non-theatre text (*Présentation du règlement du concours*).

- ² I leave aside in this overview curricula entirely and specifically devoted to the training of authors or directors. Such programmes can last two or three years, in the framework of a theatre school. Oddly, in such curricula no details on the technique of writing can be found, but rather great caution in accounts of the content. Thus, the ENSATT in Lyon shows its hand: ‘Rather than offering academic learning, it is a question of supporting and encouraging the individual quest for radical artistic originality’ (Prospectus). For the directing diploma in the same school, the programme of study is given, but the claims are just as stark: implemented are ‘a handover of pluridisciplinary technical skills [...], an intellectual training [...] and an actor training. For all that, it is less about reaching a truth than conveying the means allowing one to assert one’ (Prospectus). We find the same modesty in the curriculum of the *Szenisches Schreiben* programme at the Universität der Künste in Berlin, which for a long time has been led by Jürgen Hoffmann: ‘The core of the work, the highly personal and complex process of the training and learning is fundamentally impossible to represent’. (*Leibhaftig schreiben, Welten phantasieren. Zwanzig Jahre Studiengang Szenisches Schreiben Universität der Künste Berlin* (Ed. Stefan Tigges, 2009, p. 5). The programme of the Oslo Theatre Academy is a bit more specific, but in the end, makes everything the responsibility of the students: ‘The programme aims to introduce students to different ways of creating theatre scripts. Starting points will include concepts, documentary material, topical and political themes, prose, characters and situations, theoretical models, and other text forms. Students will develop a broad understanding of what dramatic texts are, and can be. The course requires students to assume considerable responsibility for their own learning’.
- ³ See Pavis (2002). See the extended edition, Pavis (2016).
- ⁴ Adelbert von Chamisso, *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte*. Suhrkamp Basis Bibliothek 37, 2003 (1813). The novel tells the story of P. S., who sold his shadow to the devil.
- ⁵ Jean de La Fontaine: ‘Les animaux malades de la peste’, *Fables* (“Ils ne mouraient pas tous, mais tous étaient frappés”).
- ⁶ In the sense of the last members of a group; cf. F. Cooper. *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826).
- ⁷ “The (economic) lockdown is accompanied by a resurgence of repressions. The number of arrests of the opposition is rising: the Cuban commission for human rights and national reconciliation (affiliated with the International

Federation of Human Rights) have counted 1416 in March 2016, despite the presence of the American President. These arrests are often accompanied by physical violence”. Paulo Paranagua, “Le parti communiste de Cuba retombe dans ses vieux travers” (*Le Monde*, 26 April 2016).

- ⁸ ‘Structure of feeling’: ‘It is as firm and definite as ‘structure’ suggests, yet it is based in the deepest and often least tangible elements of our experience. It is a way of responding to a particular world which in practice is not felt as one way among others – a conscious ‘way’ – but is, in experience, the only way possible. It means, its elements, are not propositions or techniques; they are embodied, related feelings. In the same sense, it is accessible to others – not by formal argument or by professional skills, on their own, but by direct experience – a form and a meaning, a feeling and a rhythm – in the work of art, the play, as a whole’ (Williams, 1973, p. 10).
- ⁹ Jean de la Fontaine, *La cigale et la fourmi*. It went to plead famine: At the house of the Ant, her neighbour,/Praying her to lend her/Some grain to survive/Until the new season.
- ¹⁰ En particulier: *La destruction de l’enseignement et de la recherche*, p. 75-109.
- ¹¹ On this notion of bullshit jobs, see: David Graeber, *Strike*, August 17th, 2013. Cf. Hibou (2012).
- ¹² Foucault, ‘Le piège de Vincennes’, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 9 February 1970. Text reproduced in *Vincennes. Une aventure de la pensée critique* (Djian, 2009, p. 150).
- ¹³ For more details see: Patrice Pavis (2016).
- ¹⁴ ‘Sortir de la crise du théâtre’, *Le Monde*, 6/7 July 2014.
- ¹⁵ This distinction is inspired by Antoine Reverchon’s in his document ‘Le règne des managers’, in *Le Monde*, 10 September 2016.
- ¹⁶ Lili Yang. ‘Searching for the Exact Route to Pass through the Forest of Text: Reflections on Patrice Pavis’ Workshop on *Theoretical and Practical Questions of Staging Contemporary Chinese Plays* at TNUA. In his summary, Yang Lili gives, better than I could, a precise sense of my workshop. I am grateful for this: ‘Patrice Pavis came to Taiwan to run a six-day workshop entitled *Theoretical and Practical Questions of Staging Contemporary Chinese Plays* at Taipei National University of the Arts in late June, 2012. This article summarises and reflects on the content, methodology, theories and practice of

the workshop. Quite significantly, Pavis' workshop shared the same basis with Antoine Vitez' pedagogy of acting; both contend that interpretation of text only comes through exploration and creation. Their contention constitutes the fundamental spirit of this workshop'.

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This unpublished text, translated by the author and proofread by Ananyr Porto Fajardo, is also published in French and Portuguese in this issue.

Received on June 17, 2017
Accepted on August 23, 2017