

Theater as an Expanded Field: Image in Gilles Deleuze and Hans-Thies Lehmann

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The role of the representation of the image by consciousness, and its replacement by the idea of image as a “effect of matter” or “as individuation,” throughout the trajectory of Gilles Deleuze’s critical writings has been carefully reconstituted by Anne Sauvagnargues.¹ In her reconstruction of the passage of the image from thought to the image-individuation, Sauvagnargues analyzes, as a first step, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962)² and *Proust and Signs* (1964), both by Deleuze. In these works, we would have to replace the “representative image of thought,” understood as “a way of thinking toward the transcendence of truth” for a “new image of thought” (Sauvagnargues, 2015 n.p.). However, it is in *Difference and Repetition*, (1968) that Deleuze will have developed this critique of the “wiles of representation” and the “ontological difference between the model and the copy,” given that “we can already say, in this work, that image-individuation is very present since the philosophy of difference, anchored here in a philosophy of individuation in becoming, not focused on a substantial individual, constituted as an anthropological psyche” (idem, n.p.). This image would finally be specified by Deleuze, in the books *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (1983) and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (1985), from a Bergsonian problematic, as “sensorimotor individuation” as we shall see, in our characterization of the expanded theater.

¹ Anne Sauvagnargues (École Normale Supérieure: Lettres es Sciences Humaines - Lyon) presented the essay originally published in 2013, “Écologie des images et machine d’art,” in the Colloquium FFLCH-USP-Paris Ouest, Nanterre La Défense, organized by the Commission for International Cooperation of the School of Philosophy, Letters and Human Sciences of the University of São Paulo (Coint-FFLCH-USP) on February 27, 2015 (xerox, n.p.).

² Trans. note: The titles for all book-length texts cited in this article that have been published in English (whether in translation from the French, or originally in English) are given here in English, with the corresponding publication date. Please be aware that Prof. Fabbrini uses the Portuguese translation, as cited in his bibliography, thus pagination will not match. Also, translation is done from the Portuguese text as cited in the article, and may not correspond verbatim to the published text in English.

According Sauvagnargues (2006, p. 162), this trajectory would give rise to the Deleuzian idea of "a community of the arts" in which each one would aim to "capture forces, to give agency to hereto unresponsive forces in new materials, as would occur not only in cinema but also in literature (in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 1997), painting (in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 1981) and even in music. This idea of an arts community, coming from the notion of the image-individuation, will be extended here to the theater. Thus we can take this idea of community as "cinematographic theater," "theater with media," "intermedia theater," "pansemiotic theater" or "theater of visual dramaturgy," expressions used by different authors: a theater, in short, marked by the incorporation of media registers such as photography, holography, movies, or video, therefore resulting in different imagistic systems. This theater as an expanded field - knowing, of course, that the theater since the Greeks always incorporated new technical means - refers immediately to the concept of the total work of art (*Gesamtkunswerk*) of 19th century Romanticism, and to the artistic vanguards of the early 20th century. Thus, prior to characterizing this theater as a community of the arts, as conceived from the Deleuzian notion of image individuation, it is helpful to inscribe it into the wide arc of the artistic avant-gardes.

It should be noted, in general, that the artistic avant-garde, inasmuch as it harkens back to a concept of Romanticism, also aimed to aestheticize the real, i.e., scramble art and life. There were, however, *artistic movements* of contrary signals, considering that they took opposing strategies. On the one hand, the positive vanguards, had constructive roots: betting on the potential of technical and scientific rationality, they wished to take advantage of the industrial production of goods, to introduce art, through design, into the everyday life of the common man. On the other hand, the destructive avant-garde, of Dada-surreal roots, criticizing this blind bet in the supposedly liberating power of instrumental rationality, sought to liberate the *dream world*, within a society governed by exchange value, governed by the logic of capital. In the latter case, they reverted back to the dandyist tradition of the 19th century, making life itself, art. For these artists, whether dandies or dadas, it was a matter of reacting to the *sex-appeal of the inorganic* (to commodity fetishism), to make poetry (or *mirabilia*, following the surrealists) erupt suddenly into life, amid the gray routine of everyday life - with a bang.

It seems apparent that if the modern project had fulfilled its purpose of aestheticizing life, this would entail, according to the avant-garde ideas, the end of art as an *autonomous form*. For example, we see the position that Piet Mondrian took in the 1920s that if the Neoplasticism program were effective "we would have no more need of painting and sculpture because we would live, from this moment, as realized art" (Mondrian, 2008, p. 171). This "Mondrian conviction," as noted by Guy Brett, was also instrumental in the constitution of several artists' imaginaries of the late avant-garde in the 1960s and 1970s (Brett, 2005, p. 56). In this state of "synthesis of the arts," or "total work of art," or rather in the "state of art without art" - as analogous to Lygia Clark, in the 1960s - "there would be no intrinsic difference between being and creating, producing and existing" (Clark, 1998, p. 188). Not only would objects in this "aesthetic state" be, at the same time, beautiful and useful, but also an effective, vigorous harmony between sensitivity and understanding would exist in man, or, in other words, between "formal impulse" and "sensitive momentum," mediated by the "ludic impulse" (or imagination) in the Kantian terms of Friedrich Schiller. In other words, the avant-garde program of the last century, of romantic extraction, aimed to "provide a new kind of being" - the "whole man" - giving "human existence" its "essential liberty" (Schiller, 1990, p. 83).

You can not, however, identify the "theater as expanded field," resulting from the confluence of artistic languages such as theater and cinema, as either coming from the program of the historical avant-gardes of the 1910s or 1920s, such as Dadaism and Futurism, or as the countercultural ideology of the later vanguards, such as the happenings or body art of the 1960s or 1970s. As recently shown by Nicolas Bourriaud and Hans Obrist, the artist "these days" does not seek a "reconciliation between art and life" in the "utopian form of the total art work," but rather inserts signs, pragmatically, into the "the lived everyday," producing "possible alterities" (Bourriaud, 2011, p. 168). In other words, the investment of avant-garde art, the heroic as well as the later one, in the "transformation of the world," according to "the revolutionary project" guided by a "political utopia," has been replaced by an "operational realism," turned towards a "flexible, everyday" (or "heterotopia"), the "invention of the possible," of post-avant-garde art (idem). The notion of the total art work is now approached in narrower terms, limited to a "platform" or

"station" and understood as territories in which kinds of "laboratories" would be testing out new ways of inhabiting the existing world, distanced from the romantic and avant-garde idea of building a radically different society. In other words: It is possible to think about the negativity of art, after the avant-garde, from the confluence of artistic languages, without having to attribute to art forms, or to the poetic gesture (Dada or neo-dada), revolutionary utopian powers.

Can one, in this context, conceive of theater as an expanded and privileged place for consideration of the possibility of "another version of the virtual" (of a "new image")? The theater as expanded field, while amalgam of media - as shown by Hans-Thies Lehmann in *Postdramatic Theatre* - is composed of bodily signs and illumination, or light, signs. This does not assume, of course, a multimedia theater as an "image machine that performs only a reproduction of reality;" as something alternative, "the mere strengthening of the text" (Lehmann, 2007, p. 368). Neither does he consider this theater as a result "the adaptation of film or video to the theater," attributing to "the electronic image an occasional function of endorsing current representation" of images circulating on television, on the Internet or in films made for entertainment (p. 382). In fact, from the perspective of Jean Baudrillard - whose thinking appears more current as time passes, as Lehmann perceives - in this case we would have a visual staging in a weak sense, because of the reaffirmation of the hegemonic image in the society of the spectacle, namely flat images (whether in HD or 3D); planed; smooth; superficial; epidermal; pellicular; recoilless; without enigma; no mystery; without any hidden facets; no other side; no pleats; unwrinkled; without top; without a backside.³ They are flat pictures "since no target appears in consciousness as background of the image" - as Lehmann, confirming the diagnosis of Baudrillard, puts it - "unlike what happens when the eye remains before the real body," so in front of those images "no lack appears" (p. 401). Because for these images circulating in the "total-plasma-screen" (Baudrillard, 2005), there would be no "relief, perspective, or line of flight" that would cause "the formal system of vision," "at the risk of losing itself," to invest in impulse, converting into the "look" of a "desiring subject" in the sense of Jacques Lacan (1996).

³ These are terms used by Jean Baudrillard, throughout his copious essay, to characterize the image in the "society of the spectacle."

In the expanded theater, the reverse of the total-screen, there would be no instrumentalization of the media, as often happens when media technologies are implemented in the staging of dramatic theater based on the text and representation; nor would there be a spectacularization of these technologies to virtuosic effects, as evidenced in the US blockbuster movie. In any case, it should be emphasized that in the incorporation of electronic media - recalling, as we said, that the assimilation of technical means, such as lighting or projections, are integrated into the history of theatrical performance - there are two risks to be avoided by a playwright: converting theater into a means of communication (the document); and its reduction to mere spectacle (or cultural event), in the register of "fascination" in Baudrillard's sense of the word (1991), or "aesthetic abuse," as Jean Galard would have it (2012).

What stands out here, before analyzing the risks of a given work succumb immediate communication, or the spectacularization of culture, is the meaning attributed to the theater of visual dramaturgy, or "cine-poetic," as it has also been called, not forgetting that in this theater, the actor's body, in interaction with the electronic image, is also, in turn, a body of light. It can be said, though, that this theater, thus envisioned, is simply a "theater of the image" if we take the term in the sense given by Gilles Deleuze to "image-individuation," following Henri Bergson. Because the criticism that Deleuze developed regarding the wiles of representation and the ontological difference between the model and copy operates effectively in interpreting the expanded theater, considering this theater's opposition to the image-representation of dramatic theater, to classic cinema, as well as to the simulacra image of the mass-media world. The theater prioritized by Deleuze, it's worth repeating, is one that modifies theatrical matter: It is a form of theater that ceases to be representation, constituting itself as "theater of non-representation" in the line of Antonin Artaud, Bob Wilson, Jerzy Grotowski or the Living Theater (Deleuze, 2010).

Gilles Deleuze's notion of "image-individuation," while a criticism of representation, as we said above, became the books *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (1983) and *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (1985), discourses that we have mobilized here in our characterization of the "expanded theater" (or community of the arts). Starting from Bergson's problematic, "image-individuation" is characterized in these books

in terms such as "sensorimotor individuation," as "sensory center of indeterminacy" that "tracing perspectives," unfolds as a "bundle of perceptions, actions and subjective conditions and materials," according to Deleuze (1985). It is possible, therefore, operating with the notion of "image-individuation, to link the "theater of the non-representation" to an "insubstantial philosophy" of singularities (or "haecceity"), in which the image would not be taken "as a passive reproduction of something external," but as "production of a difference" (Deleuze, Guattari, 1997); or as "collective assemblage" or as an "effect of matter," in terms shared by Deleuze (idem) and Jacques Rancière (2012).

The "image-individuation" constitutes itself, in other words, as duality between "a current individuation and a virtual subjectivity;" in "metamorphosis, or becoming" (Deleuze, 1988). This image, extending the "sensorimotor arc," "would capture becomings in action" as "new experimentation," as Deleuze claims (idem). In other words, the "theater-cinema" can be the place to evidence a non-substantiated image, since the "image-individuation" is "the image itself and its model," in such a way that it can make a critique of representation, which does not imply emptying the image of its political dimension, but rather to sharpen its edge. It is interesting to consider that from the point of view of dramaturgy, the image-individuation can be constituted as a field of forces between signs - between a corporal sign and a lighting sign, - in function of "variations of longitude, i.e., of complex relationships between velocities and delays" or "latitudinal variations, understood as alterations in forces, the power to affect or be affected," in Deleuze's terms (1997).

Conceived in this manner, visual dramaturgy would not be limited to the field of composition in the classical sense of "unity in multiplicity" (or, hypotaxis, in a hierarchization of elements), or as construction in the modern sense of a juxtaposition of parts (i.e., parataxis, or a series of interchangeable elements, as in certain "montages" of Beckett and Robert Wilson), because in these cases this would still be within the scope of the relationship between the part and the whole. One also could not, in this dramaturgy, presuppose the notion of authorship (or playwright as demiurge) founded on a philosophy of the subject, given that the dramaturgy of image-individuation consists of "relations of material and transitional forces" that assume no unity, no stable identity (Sauvagnargues, 2006, p. 163). In other words, the "image-individuation body-light" (as in certain video installations),

would be a "zone of indeterminacy" or of passages between signs, from one to another and from one into another, within a field of forces such as those effected by "diagram" in painting (in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 1981) or the "conceptual characters" in literature (in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 1997 [English translation]); or, of course, the "movement-image in cinema" resulting from passages between "image-perception", "action-image" and "image-affection" (*Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, 1983).

It is also possible to conceive of time in the theater as an expanded field in view of Deleuze's considerations on the cinematic image. The transition from one image to another, to which we referred, can be thought of in this theater-cinema, in a analogous manner to the passage between "image-movement" that allows an "indirect representation of time," that is, that subsumes time (associated with the classic cinema, for Deleuze), and the "image-time" (associated with modern cinema) that enables "direct presentation of time," into a "pure time released from the movement" (Deleuze, 1990). Thus it would be possible, in this theater, to modulate time according to its latitude and longitude, as we have seen, in view of the variations of velocity and image potency, respectively. Without giving up the indirect representation of time, but taking it only as one of the conceivable ideas of time, one could, in short, think of time in the image from the idea of a "temporality beam," given that it is not a question of, here, "one timeline, or a circle of time, or either of an inverted arrow, or broken line, but rather as a network that involves multi-temporal navigation in open flow - time as a network of intercrossed flows" (Pelbart, 2000, p. 191). Each staged work in this visual dramaturgy would create, in synthesis, a "singular figure of time" (*idem*).

Because it is a mix-of-medias incorporated into the staging structure, this theater as a composite form would thus be an "optical landscape" in Lehmann's expression, characterized by "real exchanges" between "a live body" and "digital technology" or, as Deleuze puts it in *A Thousand Plateaus*, between the "cine-mechanic universe" and the "subjectivized body of images" (Lehmann, 2011; Deleuze, 1997). According to Lehmann, in this situation of "co-presence" we would have a game, or play, between the "video presence" and the "live presence of the actor's body"; i.e., "a game like the experience of conflict between the present body and the immaterial manifestation of an image within the same scenario" (Lehmann,

2011, p. 382). In this hypothesis, the actor would be a "disturbance of the electronic image" and vice versa (p. 383). This relationship between the "video image" ("immaterial") and the "live actor" ("the present body"), considered by Lehmann as confrontational or disturbing the scheme of images, can also operate, it is worth noting, as mutual fertilization between different forms of realization; or between ontological levels of the image.⁴

The use of electronic media as an endorsement of representation, without its effective incorporation into the structure of staging may result, as we have alerted, in theater as a document, that is, mere instant communication. Document is understood, here, as something directly referenced in a said existing reality, so that in a "documentary theater" there would be no reconfiguration of material reality in the immanence of theatrical form, i.e., as an image-individuation. As Hal Foster has shown, from the late 1990s there has been a progressive return to the "referent," with the replacement of the subject defined in terms of economic relations by a subject defined in terms of cultural identity. It is the notion of the dramatist as ethnographer, which would, in this case, allow us to understand the current trend of the "return of the real" (Foster, 2014, p. 167). The dramatist, assuming a position of "ideological patronage," would eventually reduce the works to "ethnographic reports," as happened - according to some critics - in several works, mostly videos, presented at the 31st. Bienal de São Paulo in 2014: "As (...) things that do not exist." This position carries the risk of "auto-alterization", i.e., the dramatist "taking on the other being as primitivist fantasy" in an "idealization" according to which there would be "something pure, unmediated," and, ultimately, unfathomable; or, to the contrary, it would signify the possibility of a "full access to the other," taking on, in this case, a "realistic presupposition" - which would tie together aesthetics and politics. (Foster, 2014, p. 167). Rejecting these assumptions, Foster argued that "reflexivity," or "critical distance," is a necessary condition to protect the artist

⁴ In *Arquivo*, a play presented at the Mostra Internacional de São Paulo (MITsp) in 2015, the Israeli performer Arkadi Zaides created a choreography on stage from video images displayed simultaneously with his corporal performance. They were technically precarious images, anti-spectacular, produced in 2007 by Palestinians who inhabited a territory illegally occupied by settlers and Israeli military. There was a complex play of visibilities in this performance, in which the public occupied the space of the exhibition hall - the position of the Palestinians videographers. There was a *perturbation* in the perception of the viewer, as Lehmann would put it, given that attention is made to move, repeatedly, from the "living body" of the performer in the present and the video image that registered an action in the past. Adding to this disturbing displacement, the performer's incorporation of the gestures of the characters shown in the video, in such a way that it became, in the course of the play, a living archive: the gesture of gesturality.

from "over-identification with the other," which, in the extreme, would eventually compromise the very "condition of the other" (p. 194). Turning away from works aimed at direct representation of a given social or political reality (the so-called 'referent') the author posits "the work as a parallax, that seeks to "frame the framer," while he frames the other;" or, even, approaching Jacques Lacan's claim that art must figure individual and historical experience as "trauma," i.e. as a "failed encounter with the real" understanding this last term as that which is impossible to be represented but must be supposed in order to maintain its consistency (Foster, 2014, p. 167). Thus, the expanded theater - attending to Foster's warnings - would not be a theater of "immediate communication," nor an "ethnographic document," as with groups of the contemporary theater scene that, in an attempt to politicize aesthetics, represent unmediated social and political reality; but rather a theater of "communication ... without communication," which, by "the effect of matter," alludes to the "unpresentable" in the words of Jean-François Lyotard (1993, p. 93), or to the "real" in Foster's reading (2014).

This theater of visual dramaturgy can succumb to, as well, the spectacle of images, the "hyperbolic speech of the media" in the words of Lehmann: "If the gestures of reflective interruption are considered dispensable in favor of the immediate register of information, technologically versed perspicacity threatens to become ideology, in the apotheosis of blind functioning" (Lehmann, 2007, p. 402). In other words, it is necessary to differentiate a "merely decorative, illustrative, utilitarian, digestive, pyrotechnical and eletro-entertainment use from an effectuation honestly trying to create an aesthetic experience" (Campos, 1993). Therefore, one should not fetishize new technological means, "but produce an interplay with perception," "allowing the concrete experience of the public attach its fascination to the monitor image" (Lehmann, 2007, p. 402). This theater with media, which "cannot do without, in most cases, direct visual contact between actors and audience," would therefore constitute a space of "self-awareness on the part of the public of their coexistence," or, as Hélio Oiticica and Neville d'Almeida said about the purpose of *Quase-Cinema: Block-Experiments*, in *Cosmococa*, (1973), of "its *coni-convivência* [living connivance]" with "technological structures," increasingly more present (Favaretto, 1992).⁵

⁵ Not always, however, is there a tense coexistence of electronic images and bodily signs. In *Stifters dinge*, the German composer and director Heiner Goebbels, also presented at the International Exhi-

Taking away the question of the dramatization of the media, one would also evade the fascination with electronic images, understanding, here, the term fascination for a "nihilistic passion for modes of the disappearance of the real" in the sense of Jean Baudrillard: "We are fascinated by all forms of disappearance, by our own disappearance; melancholic and fascinated" - or even "euphoric and dysphoric," now using Gilles Lipovetsky's terms (2004, p. 63) - "this is the general situation in our era of involuntary transparency," within the "society of hypervisibility" (Baudrillard, 1991, p. 62). This fascination, known also by Baudrillard as "psychological and operational seduction" or even as "seduction of multimediatric games," is devoid of "eroticism" of "mythical, dual and antagonistic seduction-challenge" (idem). In this "society of hyperreality" in which images are perceived as more real than the "real," life would be a "slow death, "comatose" from the "real" (defined here as *erfahrung* or individual and collective experience), "without the possibility of a redemptive sigh" (Baudrillard, 1986, p. 90).

Reacting to this state of mourning for the "death of the real," the "expanded theater," as well as certain video installations of Nan June Paik, Bill Viola, Gary Hill, or Wilhelm Kentridge, would be a "laboratory platform" in the words of Nicolas Bourriaud, in which to problematize the contemporary image. It is necessary to promote an archeology look, or perspective, in the theater room as well as in video installations in the circuit of visual arts, so that the image can go back to the moment of its own constitution. It is necessary to go back to the origins of vision, to the night before the emergence of forms; considering that the "darkness is a pre-image" indispensable to the "order of things visible" in the view of the blind photographer Evgen Bavchar (1992, p. 30). The darkness, as alluded to by Bavchar, attributes a light effectively distinct from from media light (from the analog or digital image of the mass-cult or digital network), and opposes the hypervision of the consumer society. Light is present here as the negativity that anticipates the image. This would be like the penumbra space of a video installation, or in the darkened room of a theater-cinema in which the actor's body interacts with the image of light that

bition of São Paulo (MITsp) in 2015, we have an "installation" of musical instruments and scenographic elements. This "theater of absence," because there are no actors, stages visual and audio apparatus (sound, light, water, mist etc.), thus approaching the visual arts (such as "sound installations"). The only corporeal presence is that of the public (or the prop people). Even supposing that the intent of this "scenic concert," or "performance-installation" that displays mechanisms as if these operate by themselves is to criticize existing dystopian reality, we must consider the threat that technical virtuosity endorses, here too, that same reality, despite the director's intention.

could illuminate - judging by the works of these artists - an image as it is being born, and not yet corrupted by exaggerated exposure: an *other* image.

In other words: this situation of co-presence of the actor's body and electronic image could, opposes the cliché nothing is hidden to reveal "the face distanced from absence": "the space off that presents itself as excluded" (Dubois, 1994, p. 169). According to Philippe Dubois (1994, p. 325), the pollens of light, the support of the electronic image, produce, in this case "a floating image, postponed," a "mute presence" a "tumultuous silence" that would "impregnate" the viewer's imagination. This twilight (like a *Fort-Da* of skittish light) returns the viewer to the power of interpretation, "diving into interior depths, a deep penetration into meanings and affects" in the sense of "capturing insensitive forces in new matter," according to Deleuze (Sauvagnargues, 2006, p. 162). it is necessary, Lyotard tells us, to proceed to "a phenomenological analysis of virtual presence" (Lyotard, 1998, p. 118) when inspecting the potency of the technological image power and, analogously, Lehmann claims the need to "another version of the virtual" (Lehmann, 2007, p. 387), referring to the mixed media post-dramatic theater." Furthermore, Lyotard asks (1988, p 101.): "Is it possible to get to "pathos" by the electronic image?" Could "something occur" (a "sense of joy" or "belonging" due to the "immediate communicability" between the work and the observer) by means of a computer (Lyoyard, 1997, p 258); or, will the "video image" (analog or digital) negate the facticity of events preventing a "carnal reception," i.e. an enjoyment "by man, in time, in one place," according to Lehmann (2007, p. 414). Many authors do not believe, however, that the possibilities offered by new media will allow the observer to "access the pathos" in the terms cited by Lyotard, or to raise new technical means "to the new aesthetic universe of the technological sublime" in the sense of Mário Costa (1995, p. 22), as shown by the large number of "hollow digital images," "images without presence," which represent nothing other than emptiness (Maciel, 1997, p. 253). Perceiving these images, according to Lyotard, one can only say: "There is absolutely nothing represented here now; there are only *non-happenings* and nothing else happens" (Lyotard, 1997, p. 253).

Let us take, for example, the scenic video installations Wilhelm Kentridge presented both in the circuit of the visual arts as theater, based on outdated technologies of animated films, drawn frame by frame. This "old Magic Lantern" animation, as

the artist himself (playwright; cine-entertainer and choreographer) characterizes it, operates as a form of resistance to American movies software that reduced high technology to the pyrotechnical production. In these handmade animations, inspired by ancient puppet theaters, silhouette figures jiggle around, rattle, in function of the craft of their construction, prompting the viewer to fill the fractures, supplying images (allegedly) missing. This is what happens, for example, in his animated 199 film *Shadow Procession*, in which the artist "stages" the transition from apartheid to "democracy," using the shadow theater, produced from puppets, characteristic of South African popular culture. In this video, edited according to principles of avant-garde montage, Kentridge turns to the relationship between bodies and shadows, in other words to the question raised above about the origin of the images in multimedia context given that animation is designed in an installation composed of various materials: "The very tenuousness of illusion (in function of the trepidation, movement and blurriness of the silhouettes), says the artist director, urges us to complete the recognition, and this urges us to the consciousness of the activity in itself - to recognize in this activity our actions to apprehend the world " (Kentridge cited in Huyssen, 2014, p. 62).⁶

Similarly, authors such as Philippe Dubois or Bellour Raymond (1997), in investigating the course images have taken in contemporary times, have referred to an "aesthetics of imperfection," a form of refusal to the present neutralization of the image. In fact, reacting to the pregnant image (HD, or virtual), some artists, in a similar direction to Kentridge, found in the *floue* image of faded colors, the blurred contours or in *gauche* images - dubious, amateurish, intentionally deglamorized and rushed - the possibility of returning the image to its enigma, and the observer, to the unforeseen.

This theater as expanded field would, in short, be the place par excellence for the development of perception in contemporary drama. The question referred to in this text in terms of theatrical practice is at the heart of current aesthetic reflection. The possibility of a critique of the current images in search of an image-criticism - Walter Benjamin's "dialectical image" (1984) can be carried out at the confluence of languages, of light signs and the actor's body. We can conceive of this theater,

⁶ Trans. note: This volume of Huyssen's, published in Portuguese, is a collection of his essays and therefore does not correspond to a specific book in English.

dramatized here as agonistic, as a decisive place and moment in which to develop a relative fight for the destiny of the image. In *Exorbitant Beauty*, Jean Galard shows that it was with "aesthetic abuse" that we realize that the "difficult beauty" "was so deadly" (Galard, 2012, p. 73). The "scrupulous image" would be one that could "solicit an apprehensive look, with a bit of anxiety, or even fear," with which to react to "exaggerated beauty" (ibid, p. 59). Averse to imperative beauty, in "allusive beauty" - that which hides something - what attracts is not what is shown but what is only indicated, what resides in the latent power of image: returning to the eye the possibility of being able to see. Hence the laboratory, or heterotopic character of this intermedia theater, that permits us to glimpse an image in its becoming, alternatives to existing reality.

It is in this sense that "the politics of theater is a politics of perception realized in the scale model of the theatrical situation" - in Lehmann's view (2007, p 388.) - "because it takes the very nature of sight as the object of conscious perception: the vision of vision." This agonistic image is mentioned also in Deleuze's texts on cinema, which question the status of the image status within the society of the spectacle. According to Deleuze, the drama of perception would be captured in the "self-reflexive cinema," as in Jean-Luc Godard, and not in the "reflective film," such as those of Ingmar Bergman. Thus, "instead of adhering to a negative critical consciousness (as the cinema of political denunciation, based on direct representation of an object), or just parody, the most important cinema" - still according to Deleuze - "is engaged in the most elevated reflection, and has continued to become more profound and to develop reflection." Thus we would have, for example, "in Godard, formulas that would express the following problem: if the images have become clichés both inside and outside, how to extract from all these clichés an image, just an image"? (Resuming here Godard's famous words: "It's not a just image, it is just a image") (Deleuze, 1985, p 263.). "From all these clichés" - Deleuze concludes in *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (1983) - "one *image* must be left" [...] "With what politics and with what consequences? So what is an image that would not be a cliché? Where does the cliché end and the image begin?" (An image-individuation that, incomplete, is glimpsed as the "most difficult," says Deleuze [p. 263]). The problem for the spectator becomes, then, "what is there to see in the image?" And no longer: "What we will see in the next image" (p 264.).

Similarly, Lehmann said that "the electronic image is devoid of a 'lack,' and therefore merely leads to the next image, where once again nothing disturbs it, "considering that the civilization of images is an endless succession of images - the "total-screen" in Baudrillard's words (already mentioned). Taking up the issue again, proposed recently: "like expecting that from all the clichés (understood here as image-representation or image-simulacrum) an image (an "image-individuation ") would *stand out*?" Therefore, in the theater as a community of the arts, it is necessary that the languages of theater, cinema or video are employed up to the limit of their strength and intensity: intersections that would result in a "difficult beauty," in Galard's terms; an image in which something comes out, an impelling image, coming from the outside with something that "forces thought" in the Deleuzian sense; something like the "becoming of being," paraphrasing Derrida's term (2003, p. 78); something that "happens in the event," as Lyotard says (1987); something like the "hitherto unthinkable," argued by Foucault (1981); "A vague possibility," as summarized by Lehmann (2007); something, finally, as the "it" in the psychoanalytic sense of drive or impulse, unconscious, from another meaning; something that breaks, finally, with the horizon of the probable to interrupt any performative organization, any convention or all context controllable by a conventionality. Only thus, with the subtraction of all elements conditioned by power in this visual dramaturgy, will a non-representative force be liberated as the potency and potential of the image.

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