

Present-Day Trends in the Research and Creation of Living Arts in the Academia: A North American Model

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Abstract: This paper tackles several aspects of the “opening towards the Other” that has marked an emancipation trend in the arts of the stage for more than a century; I will name them *living arts* because, of all the arts, they are distinctly characterized by this essential quality. It also finds its meaning in the institutional *decompartmentalization* and the opening of disciplinary practices towards the *others*. Under the sign of the inherent human *living* presence, the *living arts* refer to experiences in the whole spectre of the stage arts, coming under a polymorphous subject of research as early as the former half of the 20th century. It includes the most diverse disciplinary aspects, which are no longer just those of the drama, dance and choreography, performance or music, because the disciplinary practices of the *other* field and also practices from more remote fields like the visual arts, the cinema or those of the languages of new technologies connected, for instance, with the complex projections on the stage or its augmentation through Virtual Reality etc. can be added to it any time. Thus, we can notice how, in an intermedial process, in the meeting of drama and film, drama, as an art of the unmediated and of the living presence, tends to leave a mark (i.e. of the *living*) on the spectre of the delayed presence of the film in an *inter-* or even *transdisciplinary* relation. Therefore, the paper explores phenomena around the meeting of distinct entities under the *interdisciplinary* and *intercultural* aspects that mark the strong current interest in alterity and hybridity in the stage act but also in the new modes of perception in which the spectator is invited to engage or in the new interpretation grids demanded of the researcher. I will enrich this perspective by offering a few present-day research and creation trends in the living arts in the academia. They are extracted from my experience of both research-creation and doctoral project coordination. I share this experience in order to reveal a distinctiveness of research and creation at University of Laval, Québec and, at a larger scale, a trend or maybe even a model for the North American space. Apart from its descriptive aspects, my paper aims at raising new questions, inspire new possibilities and reinforcing new contributions in the research and creation of living arts.

Keynotes: living arts; interdisciplinary; intercultural; University of Laval.

“Opening towards the *Other*”... in a cultural and disciplinary way

I have chosen the “opening towards the Other” as a general topic, but this also implies the opening towards disciplines and fields *other* than drama

for these two reasons that have marked for a longer while a phenomenon by which drama has blurred the boundaries between itself and the other arts both in a cultural and a disciplinary way. This carries the discussion further into the notion of *living arts* under the aspect of an inclusiveness by “indiscipline,” which also automatically generates the aspect of their polymorphism with which I will deal in the first part of this paper. In the second part, I will introduce what is understood by the concept of research-creation in North America, and in the third part, I will show the meaning and principles of creation in the academic environment, as well as some methodological approaches to the spirit of research-creation projects. These will also be illustrated by a few examples or research models in the living arts. The examples are furnished both by my experience of running some research-creation projects and by my experience of coordinating such projects, i.e. the programme called “Literature and Arts of the Stage and of the Screen”¹ at the Department of literature, theatre and cinema² at University of Laval, Québec, Canada. I will also include the projects of the few doctoral students with whom I have the pleasure to collaborate³. In conclusion, this picture will also occasion a reflection on themes related to the *opening to the other*, namely *the internationalization of research* and *the culture of mobility*.

The living arts – opening and inclusiveness through indisciplinary

More often than not nowadays, the *living arts* prove to be at least a terminological alternative to what we usually call “the arts of the stage”, i.e. drama, dance, music, but also the circus and other performance arts as defined by the experience they offer in a stage context. However, these unifying categories (the stage and the show) are not sufficient to define them in their depth, which is that of a living form, on the one hand, and to bring them together under the quality of a free choice of expression, on the other. Their institutional framework has been an entity aimed at preserving after all the uniqueness and even the identity of each art, but also a metadiscourse with its own jargons, which is a form of confining each in a specific culture. I see this as a separation and therefore a confinement of drama, music, dance, etc. in distinctive disciplinary frameworks and contexts. This propensity, somehow natural despite its artificiality, can be observed in academic

¹ “*Littérature et arts de la scène et de l’écran*” (our translation).

² “*Département de littérature, théâtre et cinéma*” (our translation).

³ For these examples and for the discussion in this paper I already used the opportunity offered by the *Conference of the Doctoral Schools* at “George Enescu” National University of Arts of Iași, which I attended on 3 November 2022 with a paper that attempted to bring forward the somewhat idealistic topic of the *opening towards the Other* in the pragmatic context of a lively exchange of experiences among the participating universities, as well as their research and creation experiences.

vocational institutions such as art schools and conservatories and in professional institutions such as national and municipal theatres or even genre festivals. Nonetheless, there is an emerging trend towards an increasing relaxation of the disciplinary borders.

The *living arts* term brings about a new inclusive specificity related to, of course, the *living* mark of the human presence in front of a public, but also to the principle of freedom, which is itself a notion of the living, after which these arts choose and reinvent their expressions and approaches. In other words, the *living art* is essentially *living* because it is no longer confined to a specific pattern, because it follows the principle of *free* evolution and of *free* choice of its forms of expression. Of course, the *living art* continues to organise itself around a *DNA* that still keeps a whatever small amount of *nucleic* identity mark of drama or maybe of *performance* or dance, of music or opera, connecting it more to an art than to another, to give just a few examples. However, the *living art* can only be an art of emancipation: it is no longer *subjected* to a specific and unique discipline, and it tends to fully assert its opening to change and innovation through interaction, interdisciplinarity or even *indisciplinarity*. In the academic environment, they also speak, in this context, of an *interartistic* (Marie-Christine Lessage, 2008) or even *transartistic* dimension that is already signalled by the wave of crossings, trends and countertrends of the early 20th century (Liviu Dospinescu, 2022/ 2017) and the polymorphism crystallized in the avantgarde productions.

The polymorphism of living arts, from experimental creation in the artistic environment to research topic in the academic environment

Since the former half of the 20th century, in the arts of the stage the topic of research and creation has focused on the aspect of polymorphism, tending to graft the most diverse practices around the original disciplinary nucleus. Here I propose a bird's eye view of this territory for a better underpinning of the argument in some historic reference points.

In the dramatic art and its new innovative visions, we can remember the way in which Appia describes how the arts of time and space work, suggesting ways in which these could collaborate in the stage act.⁴ In another exploratory dimension, Erwin Piscator used to experiment for the first time the intermediality between the theatre and the cinema with a profound insight

⁴ See Adolphe Appia, the chapter "Les éléments" *L'œuvre d'art vivant*, Genève et Paris: Édition Atar, 1921, pp. 13-31. Relevant to the topics tackled in this paper is the stress laid by Appia on the living aspect of representation in the chapters *La durée vivante*" (pp. 32-38), "L'espace vivant" (pp. 33-45) and "*La couleur vivante*" (pp. 46-53). The chapters "*La fusion*" (pp. 45-77) and "*La collaboration*" (pp. 78-88) are also very suggestive when it comes to the *opening to the Other* as I am planning to tackle it here.

and perceptiveness of the interdisciplinary phenomenon, which even today stir admiration and inspiration for new innovations on his footsteps. Almost 100 years ago, his show *Hoppla Wir Leben!* (1927) offered a first authentic intermedial model, as his writings show:

The first thing to be seen in the show had to be a huge screen on which the introductory film was cast. Then, when this cinematographic introduction reached its dramatic effect in the represented picture, the arc of the stage had to open (the prisons represented in the film appeared successively in the cell of the first scene). So this was a perfect union of film and theatre.⁵

We could also mention here Meyerhold, whose reading of Frederick Winslow Taylor's *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911) inspired his constructivist vision of articulating the actor's moves into what we know today as *biomechanics*. During his workshops, Meyerhold used to illustrate his principles on the puppet pattern, for its capacity of producing moves that lacked any useless blur. Edward Gordon Craig (1911) also built his dream of a theatre without actors⁶ around the puppet, whose pattern was used for the same reasons; he thus achieved the concept of Superpuppet⁷. Paradoxically, Craig came to offer a revival of the very art of acting, as the Superpuppet promotes the idea of complete command (cf. *super*) of the actor's art in the first place, through a process of denaturalization and bringing expression to the level of a puppet. From the same Superpuppet, we can infer yet another derivation in the show of gigantic puppets like today's street theater *Royal de luxe*.

In choreography, the approach to the dancer's training through elements of theatrical play and thinking in the pedagogy outlined by Rudolf von Laban (1950) is far from being commonplace. His poetic expressions in the preface of his books are genuine philosophical landmarks for the *art of movement*, as well as inspiration sources for his new conceptualization both in the field of choreography and in that of the actor's acting. His vision of the art of movement thus manages to achieve deep connections among disciplines that are actually very different, like poetry, philosophy,

⁵ "Le spectateur devait voir d'abord un gigantesque écran sur le lequel était projeté le film d'introduction. Puis, à l'instant où cette introduction cinématographique débouchait dramatiquement sur le tableau représenté, l'arc de scène devait s'ouvrir (les prisons représentées par le film s'enchaînant sur la cellule de la première scène). Donc une union parfaite du cinéma et du théâtre." (our translation). Erwin Piscator, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

⁶ Cf. "I believe in the time when we shall be able to create works of art in the Theatre without the use of written play, without the use of actors [...]" Edward Gordon Craig, "The artists of the Theatre of the future," *On the Art of Theatre*, London, William Heinenmann, 1911, p. 53.

⁷ *Idem*, "The actor and the Über-Marionette", pp. 54-93.

choreography and drama⁸. Last but not least, Mary Wigman's or Kurt Joos's dance experiments in the 1920s add to the challenge to the hegemony of classical ballet and break with the Apollonian expression of the perfect body, preparing the leap towards Pina Bausch's Dionysian *Tanztheater* (Phillipe Ivernel, 1996).

In music – Wagner's concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* ("the total work of art") reunites, even as early as the middle of the 19th century, the art of music, song, dance, poetry, theatre and the visual arts, anticipating a fusion of the arts in the space of the stage, which is based on his new conception of the opera genre. In the early 20th century, through the revolution of the Dada movement, we can trace lines of filiation in time: from sound poetry, as a magic blending of poetry, drama, music and *bruitage*, to John Cage's undefinable works. The bruitist and performative theatricality conglomerate of the *Water Walk* piece (1959) or the minimalism of absolute dumbness claimed and demonstrated ("Everything we do is music"⁹) by the *4'33* piece (1952) are evidence of it. In the same line, we mention the creation of the contemporary composer Herald Weiss, whose voices seem to sculpt theatricality in the fabric of an atmospheric and visual music presented in performative shows but also composed for theatrical pieces such as *Night Birds (Nattfaglar)*, a dance theatre choreography on motifs and scenes of Edward Hopper's painting¹⁰.

The *living art* aspect of these historical examples, what makes them so *alive* lies in: i) *their indefinite character*, because they do not abide by the institutional patterns and ii) *unlimited creativity*. These are common features that underpin the approaches, both in the artistic and in the academic context, which signal the new conception of the arts nowadays. It has its source in deep research and interdisciplinary experiments both in expression and in

⁸ Remarkable in this sense are his innovative texts that illustrate these connections in a profound manner in an unexpected poetic form; see Rudolf von Laban, *Espace dynamique: textes inédits, choreutique, vision de l'espace dynamique*, Éditions Contredanse, 2003, pp. 282-289.

⁹ John Cage makes this statement with regards to the *4'33* piece; see chapter "Three. His Own Music (to 1970)," in Richard Kostelanetz & John Cage, *Conversing with Cage*, London, Routledge, 2003, p. 74.

¹⁰ I tackled these aspects in my introductory essay "Croisements et contre-courants:: du décloisonnement des arts et de leurs transgressions au XXe siècle" to issue 7/ 2017 of *Concordia Discors vs. Discordia Concors – International Journal for Researches into Comparative Literature, Contrastive Linguistics, Cross-Cultural and Translation Strategies* magazine of „Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava; the version in Romanian was published in issue 5/ 2022 of *Vitraliu* magazine of the cultural Centre "George Apostu" of Bacău.

content, carried out as an aspiration towards the *opening out*¹¹ of artistic practices on account of in(ter)disciplinarity.

The nature of artistic creation in academia

Artistic creation in the academia is closely connected with the concept of *research-creation*. The syntagm provides that in the academic environment it is compulsory to approach creation by coupling it with research. Lately, there has been a dramatic orientation towards the activity of creation, but that calls for a close collaboration between theory¹² and practice. Therefore, we can speak of an intersectoriality among fields that used to be very separate, at least in the academic environment, which has thus stimulated a variety of research practices with a high potential in the development of artistic subjects, of creative or teaching methods, of theoretical patterns and of teaching innovations in the living arts. In research-creation, the stress may be laid on either of the two structural domains, i.e. theory or practice. The relations among these may vary according to the stress laid on either of the two domains, allowing for a diversity of approaches, as the studies conducted by Chapman and Sawchuk (2012) of Concordia-Montréal University show. I will introduce them in the following section.

“Research-for-creation” is the first subcategory of research-creation and it refers to:

an initial gathering together of material, ideas, concepts, collaborators, technologies, et cetera, in order to begin. This gathering is «research» in the same way that reading through recent journal articles, tracking down important references, or conducting interviews are key elements of producing various academic contributions to knowledge [...] The gathering is research because it is directed towards a future «revealing», enabled through an artistic perception.¹³

This subcategory entails getting the field ready for the creation project, nuancing the process of getting to grips with the artistic concepts, documenting the technical aspects or developing the dramatic art project, the production or

¹¹ For the Romanian version “Crossings and Countertrends: on Arts and Their Transgressions in the 20th Century” I have chosen this term for lack of a better word for “*décloisonnement*” in the context in which it is used in French in the original version of this article. On the other hand, in the summary in English that accompanies the original version in French of the essay, the term “*decompartmentalization*” was used.

¹² ... or at least scientific documentation.

¹³ Chapman, Owen; Sawchuk, Kim, *Research-Creation: Intervention, Analysis and ‘Family Resemblances*, “Canadian Journal of Communication”, vol. 37, p. 15.

reception strategies, etc. This approach is mostly used by practitioners, whose project targets the public presentation of some exploration laboratories or of an experimental work of creation.

Research-from-creation “can [...] involve analyzing different dynamics that flow from a [...] creative project and may lead to the writing of more formal academic papers that are based on an experimental art practice.” (Chapman and Sawchuk, 2012: 16) The element used here is the research potential of the act of creation as an experimental laboratory, as the authors also suggest: “Pushing the limits of different technologies, developing paths of exploration and experimentation – this leads to the development of new research questions [...]”¹⁴.

Creative presentation of research refers to

[...] the presentation of traditional academic research in a creative fashion [...] The explosion of academic genres in recent years is one clear indication of the liveliness of this dimension of research-creation across a number of disciplines, including sociology, cultural studies, anthropology, and communications and media studies.¹⁵

This is about a method in support of research result dissemination, more accurately in the spirit of their illustration through various creative methods, such as graphic presentations, conceptual patterns, phenomena simulations, etc. This allows for a larger and better understanding of the research subject and results.

Creation-as-research is the last subcategory taken into account by the Canadian authors:

[It] involves the elaboration of projects where creation is required in order for research to emerge. It is about investigating the relationship between technology, gathering and revealing through creation [...] while also seeking to extract knowledge from the process. Research is more or less the end goal in this instance, although the “results” produced also include the creative production that is entailed, as both a tracing-out and culminating expression of the research process.¹⁶

Thus, *creation-as-research* chooses the creation process as a keystone of new theoretical explorations, of how some methods are conceived and validated as a result of exploring the phenomena manifested in the field of

¹⁴ Chapman, Owen; Sawchuk, Kim, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

¹⁵ *Idem*, p. 18.

¹⁶ *Idem*, p. 19.

creative experience. Therefore, creation becomes a research tool or a reason for creative research.

Present-day research-creation trends in the arts of the stage and of the screen

In the sections above, I have tackled some interdisciplinary aspects in the field of the living arts as a source of renewing especially forms of expression, and as an emancipation from the institutional grids. Apart from these, I will also approach, in the examples through which I will try to outline at least one facet of a North American pattern of research-creation, the intercultural aspect of creation. Interculturality, which has been thoroughly debated recently, sometimes quite passionately¹⁷, is perhaps the most profound way of *opening to the Other*, not only in the field of the living arts in search for new forms of expression, but in the whole art spectre in general, and at the level of the individual in a more and more globalized society.

Both in the act and in the form and content of creation, interculturality refers specifically to *meeting the Other* or the meeting point of distinct cultural entities, and it involves a process of *mongrelization*, a cultural *hybridization* or *fusion*. In the process of creation, these entail an exchange, then adopting or appropriating certain cultural elements such as myths, traditions, customs, rituals with a virtually universal potential. Finally yet importantly, interdisciplinarity and interculturality together are aspects that leave a poignant mark on the interest in alterity and mongrelization in the act of creation, both in the artistic environment and in the academic one. In the latter, which will be my focus in the next section, the two transactional aspects are the most frequently suggested issues in research-creation projects.

From my experience of the *research theatre* at University of Laval

First of all, I would like to introduce myself as a professor and researcher at the Department of literature, theatre and cinema of the University of Laval in order to outline a contextual framework for my examples of research that I plan to give here in the attempt of constituting what I called in the title of this paper “a North American model” of research-creation. Thus, I would outline my profile of a researcher-creator as well as my philosophy in this matter by stating an *intermittent alternation of theory and practice*. As a professor, I teach only one tutorial, which subsumes several theatrical practices, namely *Mise en scène III – La*

¹⁷ I mean the recent debates about cultural appropriation, which I will not discuss now. For further details on this issue, see Shelley Ruth Butler, “Appropriation culturelle: de quoi parle-t-on?”, *L'état du Québec 2020*, Clé 12, 2019, Institut du nouveau monde, 2019. [online] <https://inm.qc.ca/edq2020-cle12/> (accessed on 20 November 2022).

direction d'acteurs. I should translate it, using a paraphrase, as a class in theatre staging. Everybody understands the term *mise en scène* and everybody is able, I think, to notice the richness of nuances that the French expression brings to our getting to grips with the act of staging. Key to this class is *guiding the actor*. That is to say that the students understand how to *direct* the actor's acting, but also how to let themselves be directed, for the very reason that the art of directing is a process that demands the knowledge of both the professional and human aspects of the *living* stage performance creation. Thus, as aspiring stage directors, we let ourselves be guided by the principle *let yourself be guided if you want to be able to guide, you don't aim at growing a stage tyrant*. My opinion is that this is an integrated approach to the art of acting and directing, respectively, because this helps to fulfill the actor's entire potential, at the same time showing respect for their humanity, art and sensitivity, in order to emphasize a major ethical aspect. Essentially, this class is about a *fundamental opening towards the Other*, that is the meeting of the director and the aspiring actor...*with each other*. In my pedagogical vision, *the director should have a minimum experience and a deep understanding of the actor's spirit and art, as much as the actor should have a minimum experience and a deep understanding of the director's spirit and art*...I conclude the teaching and pedagogical side of this profile mentioning that, although the other classes I teach are theoretical (fundamental, thematic, panoramic, etc.), I added an experimental component to most of them: thus, I encourage my students to put into practice a theoretical notion of their choice, previously tackled in class. This is how I make sure that the theory is not merely a dry word, as the students may have the impression it is in their chase of a dream, which is only natural, of the luring limelight...

“Stage writings for permeable screens”

Now I can proceed to the presentation of a first example of research that I am extracting from my own experience. I have chosen a project that I deem to be representative for the concept of research-creation explained above, and also of significance for me as an experience. Being developed along an *inter-* and even a *transdisciplinary* axis, “Stage writings for permeable screens” is a project that entailed a work with advanced stage and screen techniques in an intermedial theatre/cinema approach. In order to give it a proper introduction, I will start with the research questions and objectives, I will explain the concept of *permeable screen*, and then I will give a brief description of the stage concepts of the two experimental productions achieved, as well as of the results they yielded both in practice (i.e. playing with the screen) and in theory (i.e. contributions to a hyperrealist aesthetics and the development of new ways of perception).

The research questions of the project revolve around several aspects of the “permeable screen,” which I will define later: *How can a screen become a passage to the projected film on a theatre stage? How could the two universes of representation, i.e. the real (on stage) and the virtual (in the film) be fused? Is it possible for an actor in the physical reality to cross a screen on stage by inscribing his acting in the universe of filmic projection in a realistic manner? What would the technical and aesthetic implications be? How would that impact reception?* These are the questions that guided this project carried out between 2010 and 2013 at LANTISS – *Laboratoire des nouvelles technologies de l’image, du sen et de la scène* at University of Laval. The project’s objective was to explore the possibility of creating an **organic connection** between stage and film action and fiction, in other words the illusion of a *contact* between the world of the theatre and the world of the film that cohabit the space of representation with an effect of the real, and this in spite of an *impossibility* of the nature of an *aporia*. I set myself specific objectives of a technical nature, i.e. conceiving some special projection devices called “permeable screens”, and of an artistic nature, i.e. exploring stage dramatic art in the light of a hyperrealist aesthetics around the idea of the *screen permeability*, therefore of *enabled crossing*.

“**The permeable screen**” a key concept of the project, implies treating the projection screen as a living surface, which therefore *lends itself to* being crossed from the stage space to the filmic space and vice versa, with an effect of the real. There is a close connection here with the concept of *Live Movie* developed by Kirby Malone and Gail Scott White (2002). From their collective work, I retained a first view of the concept articulated by Jennifer Parker Starbuck: “One distinguishing feature of this category [i.e., *live movie*] is an examination and often a deconstruction of working film and video techniques and their translation into the live performance space”¹⁸. Of course, it did not take me long to realize that dramatic art must also admit the idea that the film is a physically accessible world, i.e. “permeable matter”, despite its *impermeable* nature.

Aesthetically speaking, hyperrealism proved to be the best trend to lead to the idea of *crossing* conceived as a “travel in hyperreality”¹⁹. Our intermedial adventure also drew on Baudrillard’s concept of “simulacrum” (1981). I hope that these landmarks will moor the concept both practically and technically, as well as theoretically, as an underpinning element of the research-creation project. As far as its results are concerned, in several

¹⁸ Kirby Malone, Gail Scott-White, *Live Movies. A Field Guide to New Media for the Performing Arts*, Fairfax, VA, Multimedia Performance Studio, George Mason University 2002, p. 45.

¹⁹ Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality. Essays*, San Diego, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1986, pp. 36-100. “voyage dans l’hyperréalité” (our translation).

exploratory labs and also in the public presentation of two experimental creations, I realized that when the actor crosses the screen, something unexpected occurs at the level of perception: the virtual character (who continues the plot *in the film* after crossing the screen) seems to inherit something of the *living* nature, of the presence invested in the actor on the stage. Thus, the permeable screen works a paradox (or a feat of magic) that consists in the fact that the actor and the permeable screen turn into a double interface that *allows the transfer of the actor's presence and living nature from the theatrical environment to the cinematographic one...to the* spectator's big surprise. So we witnessed a *transgeneric* and *transmedia* effect, or even a *magic* one, if one takes into account the feeling invested by the spectator in this manner of perception.

In order to complete the project, we explored along several field research sessions around the world various techniques and practices in the sphere of the “magic” play with the screen – and this brings me to the aspect of *research for creation* and also to that of the importance of the *culture of mobility*. In the first place, I had the opportunity of talking with the American researcher Kirby Malone from George Washington University about the concept of *Living film*, then I had the opportunity of visiting two companies that use in their productions devices that are very close to the concept of “permeable screen”. My first visit was to the ZUR – Zone utopiquement constituée in France, which allowed me to discover various screen devices, among which a form of “sand screen”, a concept I took over and developed in the experimental production *Sables vivants* (2012). In this show, an adventurer à la Indiana Jones uses the screen to plunge from one world into another: he *enters* and *exits* the world of the film to save somebody held captive there. The effect, which is spectacular, proves to be very efficient at least in a theatre performance dedicated to the young public.

I had the opportunity of visiting the British company Forkbeard Fantasy, whose productions are very expressively labeled as *liquid film*. Here I realized the importance of synchronizing the actor's acting with his/her image in the projection in the moments when (s)he is ready to *enter* or *exit the screen*. The technique I had to develop – for the character in another experimental production, *La Boite* (2012) – is a matter of craftsmanship, not so much the actor's as the magician's, which implies a lot of precision and finesse of performance when it comes to the synchronicity between the living actor's moves and his/her image on the screen.

In the production of *La Boite*, the concept of permeable screen put into practice is more abstract than the first (the sand screen). *Entering* and *exiting the screen* is done, apparently in a banal way, through the doors situated on either side of the screen (Figure 1). When the actor in physical reality seen from behind (at the entrance) or up front (at the exit) opens the door, the

same image is cast on the screen, but it is caught sideways (Fig. 2). In the combination of the two images and angles, we discovered a cubist effect²⁰ that puts the spectator in a perceptual dilemma, at the intersection of the two worlds, the theatrical (of the stage) and the filmic (cast on screen). It is this *in-betweenness* that creates a certain blockage of the spectator against the background of the dilemma “*Which of the two worlds shall I watch?*” since the stage introduces one to the world of the theatre and of the film at the same time, giving equal importance to the two distinct modes of perception. Eventually, this complex of effects allows the unperceived transfer of the *living presence* of the character on stage towards the character on screen – hence the *magic* effect of the real at the level of reception. A special effect of this form of cubism can be noticed in Figure 3, where the characters are on either side of “the same door”, the male one in the film and the female one on stage.

This project benefited from numerous other original discoveries at the level of hyperrealistic aesthetics. According to *Dictionnaire de la peinture* of Larousse²¹,

being a formalist rather than analytical vision, Hyperrealism tends to demonstrate, through the force of virtuosity, that painting can create the illusion of a verisimilitude with the accuracy of photographic language.²²

Therefore, hyperrealism would characterize the possibility that painting should imitate reality as well as photography does. Likewise, in my project, hyperrealism tends to demonstrate that the film can create the illusion of a verisimilitude to reality, going as far as imitating the presence of *living nature*, which is characteristic of a theatre performance. Furthermore, the concept also plays with the magical effect of a form of *virtual reality* (the film cast) *that wakes up to life, being augmented by the presence of the theatrical universe*. Hence the idea of a *living film*. I called the hyperrealist effects that I conferred to the project in some key moments dramatic and aesthetic hypertrophies (cf. *hyper-*, i.e. *over* related to the real, the stage universe). The idea of hypertrophy, as it appears in the video-stage performance, also seems to reinforce the analytic *hypertrophied* dimension of hyperrealism, according to the definition in the *Dictionnaire Larousse*. This is the result of effects that rely on the very superposition of parallel worlds

²⁰ According to the principle of the simultaneity of several points of view of the subject, cf. Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger (1912).

²¹ Laclotte, Michel & Jean-Pierre Cuzin (Eds.), *Dictionnaire de la peinture*, Paris, Éditions Larousse, 2003, pp. 391-392.

²² “Vision formaliste plus qu'analytique, l'Hyperrealisme tend à démontrer, à force de virtuosité, que la peinture peut créer l'illusion d'une vraisemblance avec l'exactitude du langage photographique.” (our translation) *Ibidem*.

(the stage and the screen) and on the acuity of the passage from one world to another through the aporia of screen crossing²³.

From my experiences as a doctoral project coordinator

The examples to which I am going to introduce you here contribute to the outlining of an obviously partial image, which is nevertheless sufficiently diversified, of the doctoral research within the “Literature and arts of the stage and of the screen” programme at University of Laval. I will highlight the projects of a number of doctoral students with whom I collaborate as a coordinator. Those projects offer a representative image for our doctoral programme on the axis of the studies that develop both the interdisciplinary and intercultural dimension of the living arts. It is a small panoramic view that also allows of an illustration of the methodological categories of Chapman and Sawchuk’s research-creation and also of a *research* (theoretical thesis) approach. All these projects are very well accommodated to the central issue of “the opening towards the Other” that I have also chosen to articulate in this paper, and most of them valorize the themes of *research internationalization* and *mobility culture*.

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“*Le rêve d’Urmilla [Urmila’s Dream]: a research-creation project starting from the study of the Rasa theory in Natyashastra*” is the title of the thesis undertaken by Sylvie Belleau, a doctoral student of the “Literature and arts of the stage and of the screen” programme. She has a vast experience of the art of storytelling and dance, but also as an actress and producer in the field of the living arts and as an author of children’s literature. Her interest in the non-Western forms of the theatre gave her the opportunity to specialize in the kathakali dance in India, which she practises in many of her creations, most of which are interdisciplinary and intercultural. She presented one of those creations in her thesis, whose methodology as a whole is one of *research-for-creation*, because the creation project starts from the study of the *Rasa* (savour) concept and experience in *Natyashastra*, the dramatic art treatise of ancient India. There is also a *research-from-creation* side to it because the creation process also occasions a reflection on the intercultural

²³ Based on this model, I could summarize and discuss a series of other figures and their effects in several moments of the performance. They were approached in several conferences at: Université Laval, Québec (2012), Ștefan cel Mare University, Suceava (2013w), Université de Lyon II (2013), Istanbul Üniversitesi (2015), Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca (2015), Université du Québec à Montréal (2016), and lately as part of the presentation given at the Conference of the Doctoral Schools „Intersecții în cercetarea artistică: modelul Celuilalt și cultura mobilității”/“Intersections in artistic research: the Other and the culture of mobility” at “George Enescu” National University of Arts, 3-5 November 2022.

and interdisciplinary relations implied in the integration of the *kathakali* practice in a performance designed for a western audience. The thesis explores the impact of the Indian theatre techniques and of the elements of Indian culture both upon the actor and the spectator of western cultures. Hence some conclusions, which are at least partial at the present moment: firstly, upon the adaptation to these techniques both of the western actor's body and way of reception, and upon the adaptation, in reverse order, of the *techniques* meant to facilitate their assimilation by the western actor's body and spirit, on the one hand, but also the mediation of their decoding by the western spectator, on the other.

As a creator of the show, Sylvie Belleau is interested in understanding and managing the effects of *strangeness* (cf. induced by the "foreign" elements) at the level of the spectator's experience. Facilitating the reception of the elements of oriental tradition occasions a reflection on the intercultural issues related to both production and reception. Indeed, there is a whole range of issues for each, which is related to the fact that the western public is ignorant of the *kathakali* codes, and therefore cannot receive the show according to the *Rasa* principles, namely the *savour* that the corporeal expression in the Indian theatre must be capable of inducing to the viewer in front of the experience offered by the stage. Of course, through its universal dimension, the *kathakali* dance can easily be appreciated for its exotic (a.s.f.) aesthetic qualities, but *decoding* the *mudra* [i.e. "seal", "mark", or "gesture" in Sanskrit, a series of symbolic body postures and hand movements used in South Asian classical dancing or art] continues to be a problem at the level of its semiotic meaning according to the *kathakali* codes. Here it is why: the *mudra* is a complex of mimic and gesture with a symbolic significance, and although they are underpinned by the principle of mimesis in order to represent the character's moods and emotions, they are nonetheless, as most of the oriental theatrical forms are, highly stylized, and thus they can be reduced to some abstractions in the eyes of the western viewer.

Sylvie Belleau's thesis plans to bring solutions meant to facilitate decoding without altering the *Indianness* of the play in an excessive manner. In order to do so, she summons a series of western stage languages, such as the art of storytelling, but also a form of Brechtian *song* that help the viewer understand the essence of the dramatic conflict and of the relations among the characters, as well as a dramatic art that is intertextual and, through the sources composing it as part of the oriental and western space, also intercultural. As such, Urmila's story inspired by the Indian mythology is built as a mirror image of Penelope in the Greek mythology. This triggers a whole process of intercultural negotiation that entails a comparative study of dramatic art (Urmila vs. Penelope), oriented towards ensuring a minimum of familiar elements, sufficiently accessible to the western public, as well as

towards devising a dramatic art that may easily lend itself to the oriental cultural graft. Eventually, this negotiation has the advantage of allowing the Indian forms to give a peculiar aesthetic colour to the production: to invoke, without imposing or copying it, the *Indianness* of the creation topic, to support that of the stage representation and, last but not least, to infuse reception with that *savour (Rasa)* inherent in the dramatic principles of *Natyashastra*. Thus, Sylvie Belleau opens research towards a discussion of how both cultural and disciplinary *hybridity* is assumed at the level of her creative design but also of her management of the creation process.

“Theatricality in the traditional Brazilian celebration and its transcultural reinvention: contributions to the actor’s acting and the spectator’s involvement in a form of ritualistic theatre adapted to the non-Brazilian theatre” is the title of Claudia Funchal’s research-creation thesis project. Claudia Funchal, also a doctoral student of the “Literature and arts of the stage and of the screen” programme, with a rich practical experience of the comic actor and clown’s art, proposes a doctoral creation project that is original not only by its title, *Conversation of Oxen and Cows*, which already transports us into an absolutely special world in which the main characters, *oxen and cows* stand out in their unexpected human dimension of a *wisdom* lost on humanity. This project is also original by the variety of the stage modalities of representation, the actor’s art intertwined with many carnivalesque aspects. Claudia Funchal’s artistic and research interests relate to the theatricality of the folk comic and the corporeal ways in which the festive spirit is transmitted. This last aspect is present in her doctoral creation and her success, in terms of performativity in the *spirit* of John Langshaw Austin’s speech act theory (1962) relies on blending theatre acting with other art forms like storytelling, singing, music, Brazilian traditional dances and the *capoeira* martial art.

The main concept and objective of creation is the fusion of the stage universe and the audience towards the achievement of an intercultural festive spirit. To this end, the issue of improvisation *with the involvement of the audience* is approached in the spirit of folk theatre cultures like *commedia dell’arte*, *théâtre de la foire*, dramatic dances in the Brazilian tradition and the art of the clown. A specific objective of the project is redefining the relationship with the audience in order to integrate them into a ritualistic form in the spirit of *celebration*, pursuing the visions of Jean Jacques Rousseau or Vesvolod Meyerhold. Therefore, the project needs a solid balance of practice and theory achieved through bridges with a theoretical and methodological framework inspired by Jean-Marie Pradier’s ethnoscenology (2001), Eugenio Barba and Nicola Savarese’s anthropology of the theatre (1991), but also Victor Turner’s cultural anthropology (1969, 1982) for the notions of “social ritual,” “social drama” and “social remedy.”

This project belongs in the subcategory of *research-for-creation* as long as the theoretical framework seeks to facilitate reaching the objectives of creation, but also that of *research-from-creation*. Claudia Funchal is already well equipped at a theoretical level, so she plans, as an ultimate subcategory of methodological approach, to extract from the experience of creation a series of concepts and situational relations in order to theorize them in support of her production strategies, and therefore extract a model of transcultural reception. The forms of expression being those of Brazilian culture, the project calls for a cultural mediation through stage acts in order to make the *non-Brazilian* spectator accept the Brazilian stage forms and also embrace the contents they carry. Ultimately, the project's aim is not just to coalesce the multicultural fabric of creation but also to actively participate in accomplishing the ritual by inducing cultural reflexes that are close to the Brazilian model.

Claudia Funchal masters several techniques of folk comic, which is a true catalyst of her project, but along her doctoral research she did not hesitate to develop her skills through activities of formation in a *mobility culture*: she activated in the interdisciplinary Centre of theatre research of the Sao Paulo la Campinas University, she perfected her clown's art with Sue Morrison from the Centre of Theatrical Resources of Toronto, she explored the *comedia dell'arte* with Cristina Ioviță from the Théâtre de l'Utopie of Montréal. From Victor Turner (1986) she took the model of "anthropology as experience," practising it in 2018 in *field research* of the folk theatre traditions and forms in a rural community in the south-east of Brazil. As a matter of fact, that is where the foundation of her creation materialized in her decision of building it starting from the *Bumba-meu-boi* ritual²⁴. All these experiences in the mobility culture are at the basis of the project's success, and through her thesis Claudia Funchal attempts at demonstrating and discussing it on the multiple plans of the construction and functions of her ritualistic theatre. The last one is eventually examined not only as an aesthetic experience but also as one of *sharing* between actors and spectators the ephemeral perspective on the cultural communion that aspires towards the universality of living in the space and time of celebration and in its spirit.

²⁴ The ritual is entered in the Immaterial Cultural Legacy of Humanity, see the article "Cultural Complex of Bumba-meu-boi from Maranhã", in UNESCO (2019), *Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity* [online], retrieved from <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/cultural-complex-of-bumba-meu-boi-from-maranho-01510?fbclid=IwAR0dXGevXWNs2cB92AlWxuKGsx5heNgb8fwae3kKuy-uKOOinNII1VZVU>, accessed on 18 November 2022.

“The search for the ludic mode in the epic arts: the analysis of the *mvét* practice of Central Africa”²⁵ is the title of the doctoral thesis undertaken by Essouma Long, a doctoral student in the “Literature and arts of the stage and of the screen” programme. This *research* project (creation is not a request here) consists in a descriptive and critical undertaking of theorizing the practice under analysis. The author knows the practice very well from his own experience, as he practises the *mvét* art. Having undergone all the stages of traditional formation, of which the initiation stage only in the expression forms and in the rituals attached to it takes an interval of no less than seven years, the art is vocational and it was acquired directly from an experienced *mvét* practitioner. Thus, Essouma Long chooses to resort to distancing himself from his own experience, maybe also to avoid the inherent biases, but especially in order to be able to appreciate and compare it with that of the members of his fellow artists so that he can describe it objectively and define its formative principles, in particular in connection with the ludic mode and the aspect of theatricality. His major research question refers to the specificity of *the theatre play* in the *mvét* performance, and the preliminary explorations occasioned at least a few certainties so far: *Mvét* is an art of the epic actor, of storytelling by means of the actor’s acting, among others.

Indeed, the *mvét* teller possesses a great skill of playing the characters and *playing with* them, but also with the audience and, which is interesting to notice, one does it with the same detachment and stylization found in Brecht’s play. The peculiarity of this play is also found in the musicality of the *mvét* performance, including the aspect of singing. The teller resorts to them as mobilization and entertainment instruments but also as *distancing* effects similar to the alienation effect in Brecht’s theatre. Therefore, the *mvét* resorts to music and singing in order to establish a contact with the spectator, and that performs a function similar to the Brechtian *song*, which aims at causing a cognitive disturbance in the spectators and making them aware of the theme of the performance, more often than not with social implications. These aspects also contribute to an interaction against the background of a *ritual act* involving the audience, which is also an aspect to take into account in this project.

Being extracted from his own experience, these preliminary considerations allowed Essouma Long to build a set of well targeted questions and to get answers that he validated through ethnographic methods and means like the questionnaire. Thus, in a field research mobility in Cameroon, in 2019, the meetings with several *mvét* tellers helped him carry out this task. Essouma Long’s involvement in the Euro-African Network of Epic Research is also an aspect of his research mobility, which reinforces the

²⁵ Essouma Long, *Quête du ludique dans les arts épiques:: analyse de la pratique du mvét d’Afrique centrale*, Thesis project, as a partial requirement within the Doctoral programme in Literature and arts of the stage and of the screen, Québec, Université Laval, 2019.

research potential in achieving the scientific portrait of the mvvet art. Until he defended his thesis, I could appreciate at least the quality of his hypothesis, namely that “the epic ludic mode lies both in the narrative and in the actor’s conceptual and technical apparatus. Any mvvet performance would be a duality that fuses the verbal and the non-verbal, the seen and the unseen. This concurrence is confirmed only in the acting space, which is a place where intentionally ludic actions are performed”²⁶, and those are performative, I would like to add. That is so because beyond the established scenario, these acts refer to the interaction with the audience, but also with the character of the community, the everyday, its customs and stories – all of them waiting to be integrated into the performance.

This dimension of the interaction is a complex one, as it seems to develop on the *long way*²⁷ the teller takes from the moment of accepting the invitation to that of the performance *per se*. Spanning at least nine days of preparations, the process is marked by a series of rituals in the host community, under the provisions of a *quiet* management of the social and professional activities, as well as the prohibition of any festive activities. These are meant to prepare the meeting between the mvvet artist, considered to be a keeper of spiritual values, and the community that thus aspires to a refreshment of collective memory and a renewal of trust in the shared values and life.

“Bodily violence as a return to ritual in Jan Fabre’s shows” the project undertaken by Beatrice Lăpădat, also a doctoral student in the “Literature and arts of the stage and of the screen” programme, concludes the panorama of the examples I planned to give in the context of this conference and in proceeding publication. At face value, it is a classical theoretic thesis, but this is only a formal impression given by its theoretic dimension, because the topic tackled and the approach are as original, topical, and pertinent as they can be. She proposes a deep analysis of the figures of bodily violence in four shows directed by Jan Fabre, in order to demonstrate that what seems to be a transgression of the classical rule of decorum (which provides that the theatre show should not shock the public) is ultimately a way of integrating the spectator in a social ritual. As it can be seen, Victor Turner’s anthropological motif is recurrent, and it will be explained in the context of this thesis. Beatrice Lăpădat shows how the figures of bodily violence weave

²⁶ “le ludique épique réside autant dans le récit que sur l’ensemble de l’appareil conceptuel et technique de l’acteur. Toute performance de mvvet serait à la base une dualité qui fédère le verbal et le non verbal, le visible et l’invisible. Cette concomitance n’est confirmée que dans l’espace de jeu, lieu de déploiement d’actions intentionnellement ludiques.”, *idem*, p. 20.

²⁷ Essouma Long narrated it to me in a discussion we had about the mvvet art and its practice, video recorded for a didactic purpose in my personal archive, “Arts vivants, société et culture”, 14 October 2022.

connections with various ages and civilizations in which violence is either an outlet for the society's frustrations or an instrument of manipulation with a view to preserving the privileges of the *elected*. From witchhunts, going through the punishment by exposing parts of the body, the repulsion at the "woman's unclean body" to the imposition of the rejection of the carnal or erotic body (with its echoes in some cultures of the present-day), all these attest to the *dark* or *unassumed* side of humanity, present in each of us.

Exposing the spectators to these figures aims at facing them with the accomplished facts of the history of humanity, and thus preventing them from *forgetting* or *not looking at* them. The spectators are thus compelled to assume responsibility for the horrors of their own species, and it is exactly this aspect that could be part of a *social ritual* meant to save not so much their conscience as their *refusal to know* what defiles it. The exposure to violence would thus gain the value of a *remedy* for a humanity dispossessed of its values, but not of its right to claim its human nature due to its instinct of self-preservation, of the preservation of comfort and personal calm as deeply asocial attitudes. Therefore, this is what connects it with Turner's concepts, among which that of the social ritual aimed at finding a social remedy, and which promises to be one of the most interesting ones in developing this topic through the analyses and interpretations it proposes, with incursions in the history of culture and civilization and with arguments from various fields of the humanities.

In her thesis, which is about to be defended soon, Beatrice Lăpădat will also expose some particular aspects of her stance as a researcher under a perfectly legitimate subjective aspect, namely the reaction she had to the manifestations of the "radical body" in Fabre's shows, but also how she coped with them. Furthermore, she will account for the way in which she dialectically transcends the conflict this body stirs between its crude theatrical representation and the moral judgement to which it appeals. For it is exactly by maintaining this conflict open or supporting it that Fabre would try to trigger the spectator's sense of guilt at least towards the tacit acceptance of the culture of violence as a consequence of its self-preservation instinct, if not also for other better assumed reasons such as religious ones or having their sources in ultra-conservative cultures. Therefore, I find interesting the capacity of this thesis of challenging our conscience, this being what takes it out of the paradigm of more classical theses.

Thus, Beatrice Lăpădat's research thesis tends to open itself towards a *practical* form, be it of reception, albeit a creative one, whose effects at the level of one's conscience echo the "social ritual" that is central to the theoretical argument. It is certainly not *research-for-creation*, nor is it *research-from-creation*, but it has the potential of generating a very original modelling as a *creative presentation of research* in Chapman and Sawchuk's

terms. And the model will consist in the account of the researcher's own reaction and of the cultural context of her subjectivity to eventually situate her in a mechanism capable of illustrating the "remedy" effects of the "social ritual" of which dramatic art is part, and staging the figures of violence in Jan Fabre's work.

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Of course, there are still other doctoral projects that are as many original challenges in the "Literature and arts of the stage and of the screen" programme, even among those that I am pleased to coordinate, all of which stir my curiosity and interest or help me enrich my knowledge and even my expertise. Those I have chosen to present here are either one of the most advanced or they allow me to illustrate my topic. I would also like to mention that the research(-creation) model of these doctoral projects, together with my own project, is extracted from my own experience of research-creation and of coordinating such doctoral projects; of course, I could not afford to introduce here ongoing projects that I do not coordinate. Once this aspect made clear, I could notice the interdisciplinary and intercultural aspect in most of the doctoral projects hereby presented, but also the incidence of Victor Turner's cultural anthropology in them, especially through the concepts of *ritual* and *social drama*. Methodologically speaking, I could notice that most of the projects had an important ethnographic dimension manifested through different specific activities, oriented towards the practices summoned to be used in the stage act: kathakali in Sylvie Belleau's approach, techniques of the traditional comic in Claudia Funchal's approach, or the epic art of Mvet in Essouma Long's approach. In the first and in the second example I highlighted two subcategories of approaching research-creation, namely *research-for-creation* and *research-from-creation* according to Chapman and Sawchuk's model, and in the third example, following the same model, I gave an example of the *research-for-creation* approach. In Beatrice Lăpădat's research project I noticed, apart from her theoretical and critical approach, that she highlights the aesthetics and the functions of the figures of violence at the level of theatrical representation, and also the potential of developing a very original approach to *creative-methods-presentation*, also belonging in Chapman and Sawchuk's research-creation subcategory system. Last but not least, in my own project "Stage writings for permeable screens", I tackled two approaches to the same system, one focused on the documentation of the creative techniques for the development of the "permeable screen" concept in a research-for-creation approach, and the second carried out according to the *creation-as-research* model, because I was interested in a contribution to the development of the *Live Movie* genre, with an eye both for the principles of a hyperrealist dramatic art and for the new modes of perception they imply.

Ultimately, the perspectives of the *opening towards the Other* topic can be declined on the grounds of *research internationalization* and *mobility culture*. These depend not only on the researcher's will but also, to a large extent, on the institutional support, including the financial one, if this is possible at an academic institutional level, and if it is not, at a governmental level. However, it seems essential to me that the university, through its study programmes, should offer the formative support necessary for guiding the young researchers and orienting their research towards the direction and spirit of Victor Turner's "anthropology of experience." The young researchers do need to be encouraged and *trained* to get out into the world, *on the field*, or to bring the world *home*, this meaning the experience of the Other or of the other space of research or creation. The internationalization of research is a topic of interest for the completely academic environment worldwide, as it is made obvious if one looks at the projects described here. I have tackled it especially under the very important aspect of *getting out of the comfort zone* and enriching the research or creation experiences. That is because, especially in the field of theatre studies or, even in a more enhancing and interdisciplinary manner, *all performance studies*, research cannot be limited to the study in the libraries and the research of the Internet data bases, all the more so as the *creation* component is part of the transaction game projected by research in a globalized world. Although the more classical research hypostases and procedures mentioned above remain fundamental for each project, related to the category and process of the research-creation and to the researcher's complex stance between theory and practice, they must be seen as a starting point or a *launch* basis. Thus, research per se in our field needs to prove to be as dynamic and *alive* as the artistic and disciplinary spectrum it explores. As a matter of fact, I have seen and I am aware of how important *meeting the Other* or *meeting on the territory of the Other* is for all the projects presented here. I can only encourage this conception of mobility, being convinced, also based on my own experience, that it is the catalyst of the progress and development of creative knowledge, competence and practice in the academic environment and beyond.

(Translated by Dana Bădulescu)

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Annexes



Figura 1: Spațiul scenic, cu cele două ecrane și cele două uși de *intrare în și ieșire din film*, al producției *La Boîte* a proiectului *Écrans perméables*, prezentat la LANTISS, Université Laval, Québec, QC. Foto: Luciana Nechita (2012).



Figura 2: *Ieșire din film* – personajul real deschide ușa din spatele dispozitivului ecranic în sincronie cu imaginea lui din filmul în proiecție. Captură de ecran după filmarea producției *La Boîte* (2013) a proiectului *Écrans perméables*, prezentat la LANTISS, Université Laval, Québec.



Figure 3: Personaj masculin (virtual) în film și personaj feminin (real) în scenă; ușa este singurul reper care întreține efectul cubist. Imagine dintr-un laborator experimental pentru producția *La boîte* a proiectului *Écrans perméables*, LANTISS, Université Laval, Québec, QC. Foto: Julien Poirier (2013).