

The Performative and (No-Longer) Dramatic in the Theatre of Dušan Jovanović and Matjaž Zupančič

Tomaž Toporišič¹

Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television, University of Ljubljana

Nazorjeva 3, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia

Email: tomaz.toporiscic@guest.arnes.si

Abstract This paper will examine how a text rhizome replaced the traditionally understood physicality of the book in the contemporary drama and theatre of two prominent Slovene theatre and drama (post)dramatists, Dušan Jovanović and Matjaž Zupančič. Both have demonstrated with their plays that the Slovene writing for the theatre was also headed for the waters disturbed by both the postdramatic turn and the performative turn. They bear witness to the fact that after these two turns, theatre texts tend to be in perpetual motion, in the process of semiosis. Therefore, nowadays the text in the theatre represents one of the elements in the weaving of various intertexts into a rhizome-like structure within the semiosphere of literature, theatre, and culture. The work of Jovanović and Zupančič thus played a significant role in the deconstruction of the so-called literary or drama theatre and in the manifestation of the performative turn.

Key words Slovene Drama and Theatre; Post-Dramatic Turn; performative Turn; Deconstruction of Drama Theatre; Dušan Jovanović; Matjaž Zupančič

Author **Tomaž Toporišič**, PhD, is a dramaturge and theatre theoretician. Currently he is Professor in history and theory of drama and performing arts at the Academy for Theatre and teaches also Sociology of Theatre at Faculty of Arts, both University of Ljubljana. His primary research interests are contemporary performing arts, literature and visual culture. From 1997 to 2003 he was the artistic director and from 2003 to 2016 a dramaturge of Mladinsko Theatre. In 1995 he co-founded Exodos Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts. In 2013 he was a guest programmer of Maribor European Capital of Culture. He was a curator of several exhibitions for *Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space (PQ)*. He has published several books and numerous papers on theatre and performing arts.

His essays include: “The new Slovene theatre and Italian futurism” (*International yearbook of futurism studies*, 2014), “(Re)staging the rhetorics of space” (*Neohelicon*, 2014) and “Deconstructive readings of the avant-garde tradition in post-socialist retro-avant-garde theatre” (*Aesthetics of Matter*, 2013).

Introduction: Towards a Text Rhizome

The dramatists we will discuss can be regarded as the two pivotal figures of the postdramatic intermedia intertwining, demonstrating with their plays that the Slovene writing for the theatre was also headed for the waters disturbed by the postdramatic turn. Thus the intertext in various cases, from Dušan Jovanović to Matjaž Zupančič, structures the contemporary (no-longer) dramatic and theatre writing in a way that is non-hierarchical, but at the same time extremely cohesive from the intertextual and intermedia points of view.

Our hypothesis will be that the status of the dramatic text or text for the theatre changed in recent decades, i.e., that the absolute drama as defined by Peter Szondi and in which the dialogue is the main component of construction — even more clearly became no longer the primary, but merely one of the possible dramatic discourses. Thus a text rhizome replaced the traditionally understood physicality of the printed text in a form of a book. Along with this deconstruction of the absolute, emerged textual strategies that no longer involve dialogue as the main principle of expression.

Jovanović and Zupančič did not extinguish the dialogic form but combined and sampled it with heterogeneous textual and metatextual and metadramatic strategies: from stage directions to descriptions that are closer to the novel and prose, to narrative, essayistic, theoretical, and “hybrid” techniques. Each of them introduced his own version of the millennium *ostranjenje* (Sklovsky) or *Verfremdungseffekt* (Brecht), reminding the audience that what it is reading or watching is no longer a mere and simple realistic dialogue with the structure of an absolute drama, but a continuing process of the disintegration of the dramatic form. Thus they both followed what Szondi termed the “estrangement from drama” (10), attempts to create forms “beyond drama” (ibid.). As playwrights, both Jovanović and Zupančič are thus (as keen and highly successful theatre directors) conscious that a dramatic text is currently positioned in the centre of diverse networks of texts that influence it in a variety of ways: from eating into the text to enhancing it and adding to its complexity. A text in the theatre is therefore no longer something separate from the other elements of the production, but is rather interlaced with

other intertexts, from textual to gesticular, musical, and visual ones.

Together with some other prominent playwrights of various generations who are writing (no-longer) dramatic texts in Slovenia, namely Vili Ravnjak, Dragica Potočnjak, Andrej E. Skubic, Simona Semenič, Jovanović and Zupančič bear witness to the fact that following the postdramatic turn, theatre texts tend to be in perpetual motion, in the process of semiosis. The text in the theatre nowadays represents one of the elements of the intertwining of various intertexts into a rhizome-like structure within the semiosphere of literature, theatre, and culture as a rhizome with an ever elusive edge. Connections between dramatic and other texts and media are — akin to the ones in rhizome — heterogeneous, just like the strategies of (no-longer) dramatic writing.

At the very turn of the millennium, the (no-longer)(dramatic) text and theatre became fully integrated into the postdramatic context. In the irresistible desire to face the new (media) reality, they have increasingly and intentionally become a hypertext that is characterized by connections: a textual element opens into another text and so forth into an endless chain. Our reception of the theatrical is thus non-linear, multi-directional, and non-hierarchical. Just like digital textuality, textuality intended for theatre or, rather, performance, is similar to the “rhizome.” The dramatic text and theatre therefore embody Bakhtin’s dialogicality and polyphony and Julia Kristeva’s intertextuality.

Drama in the Context of the Century of Unrest

The dramatic and theatrical work of the most influential Slovene dramatists of the last three decades must be understood in the context of what Alain Badiou calls the century of unrest, especially the second half of the twentieth century, marked by tectonic shifts that announced a departure from what Derrida defined in his seminal work *Of Grammatology*² as logocentrism and a domination of the visual and ocular-centrism.³ The embracing of a gaze and a word in which dramatic writing lost a lot of its stability but gained many new initiatives, led not only to the redefining of but also to the end of the crisis of the dramatic author announced by Antoine Vitez and his famous 1970s statement “On peut faire théâtre de tous” (Autant-Mathieu 3).

But the story of redefining the relation between drama and its representation had begun in Slovenia and the former Yugoslavia two decades before that, with the first wave of the experimental theatre movements of the 1950s. While producing and presenting new Slovene plays ranging from existentialism to absurd and poetic drama, these theatres attempted to surpass the theatre of the proscenium

stage, turn away from it as a means of framing the traditional theatre, its realism and literariness. Oder 57 (Stage 57), Eksperimentalno gledališče (Experimental Theatre), and Gledališče Ad Hoc (Ad Hoc Theatre) began to generate new readings of contemporary drama, European and American (Ionesco, Beckett, Sartre, Albee, and Anouilh) as well as young and politically-repressed Slovene authors who became the milestones of the modernist and modern drama (Dominik Smole, Peter Božič, Primož Kozak, Vitomil Zupan, Marjan Rožanc, Dane Zajc, and Gregor Strniša). The political tactics in these theatres were primarily demonstrated in the political courage of the choice of the repertoire. And this choice of repertoire clearly marked the new approaches to theatre, the necessity to introduce new styles and topics.

The Aesthetic Revolutions of Dušan Jovanović

Dušan Jovanović (born 1939) began his career as a theatre critic for the student magazine *Tribuna* (Tribune) and as a dramatist. He was undoubtedly influenced by the first wave of experimental theatre, but was nevertheless very critical about its artistic tactics. He wanted something else, something more radical. His first (and till today unstaged) play had a highly suggestive title *Predstave ne bo* [The performance will not take place] (1963) pointing to meta-theatricality and political censorship. His second play *Norci* [Madmen] (1963), was scheduled to premiere as a part of the Stage 57 repertoire, but was cancelled when the authorities suppressed this highly important theatrical movement. It thus had to wait for almost a decade to be performed in 1971. In the meantime, Jovanović concentrated on his theatrical work as the leader and founder of a newly established student theatre (ŠAG – Študentsko aktualno gledališče / Student Actual Theatre), producing the its first scandals.

Despite all the differences, “the critical generation” of the experimental theatre Stage 57 and Dušan Jovanović’s new generation shared one crucial “victory”: they removed the fourth wall, creating a theatre space where there was a strong interaction between the actors onstage and the participating audience in the sense of Max Herrmann’s redefinition of theatre as a performance act that always brings emphasis to the third paradigm, the spectator. When theatre began to understand the spectator (as in Vsevolod Meyerhold) as the *third creator*, the one which in himself “completes that which the stage merely hints at” (Meyerhold 135), it became politically dangerous. The space shared by the audience and the actors transformed itself into a subversive political space, which had to be controlled by repressive politics. And the simplest way of doing this was to close it down, to ban it.

There is no doubt this new understanding of the performance as something that is not “a representation or expression of something which already exists elsewhere — like the text of a play — but as something which is brought forth by the actions, perceptions, responses of both actors and spectators” (Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual* 23) was the big achievement of the first experimental theatres, particularly Stage 57 which had a strong influence on Dušan Jovanović and his generation that produced the new “aesthetic revolution” of the 1970s, namely the performative turn in the Slovene theatre and performance arts.

Dušan Jovanović is probably the most influential and pivotal figure of the Slovene theatrical neo-avant-garde period, the period of the late 1960s and 1970s in which the theatre was in the hands of a generation that demolished cultural taboos. They understood politics also in the sense of a sexual revolution, whilst crossing the strict theatrical borders and moving towards the experiences of happening and performance. This radical return of the theatre to the theatre in a sense of Antonin Artaud and his theatre of cruelty was a new aesthetic revolution, a political act provoking heated reactions from both the audience and the critics. Jovanović and his generation (Lado Kralj, Zvone Šedlbauer, Ivo Svetina, Milan Jesih, Iztok Torkar ...) deliberately provoked the audience. This generation saw the reaction and participation of the public in theatre as a political act in which the audience was to be freed, together with the actors. It was only at that point that the emphasis truly moved from the field of the repertoire and the text to the theatre medium itself, to its process of liberation which, just like the theatre of Schechner, Grotowski, Barba, and others, became open to the field of other artistic media and spheres.

In 1968 with his performance group Pupilčki (the Pupilcheks), Jovanović *shattered* the hegemonic language of the dramatic theatre in order to “touch life” (Artaud 13) in the performance *Pupilijski, papa Pupilo pa Pupilčki* [Pupilijski, Papa Pupilo and the Pupilcheks]. Along with his *Spomenik G* [*Monument G*] (1972) this performance was a radical search of theatre, based on the awareness that the stage is a physical and real space which asks to be filled and allowed to speak a real authentic language. Or, using once more a paraphrase of Artaud, combined with Fischer-Lichte’s terminology: Jovanović tried to invent the grammar of this new language creating a unique “autopoietic feedback loop” (Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen* 287) between the performers and the audience.

Redefining the Text, Performers, and Public

The second half of the 1970s brought within the experimental theatre a redefinition of the roles of text as well as audience and performers with Jovanović’s play *Igrajte*

tumor v glavi in onesnaženje zraka [Play a Tumour in the Head and Air Pollution] (1972), performed by the SLG Celje (Celje People's Theatre) and directed by Ljubiša Ristić. According to Lado Kralj "the subject of this play is the theatre itself in which the theatre's organization, creativity and, finally, its very essence comes into crisis" ("Slovenia" 772). In other words, in his play Jovanović focused on the failure of the basic premises of the avant-garde theatre of the 1960s: the emphasis on the process rather than the result, the strong interaction between the performers and the public in what Erika Fischer-Lichte names in her book *Ästhetik des Performativen* an auto-poetic feedback loop, mystical catharsis, collective ecstasy, expanded consciousness, replacement of textual language with the language of the body and melodic, onomatopoeic sounds.

According to Dragan Klaić, *Play a Tumour* shows "with an anticipatory imagination the development of the avant-garde theatre of the sixties, the *cul-de-sac* of the utopian quest for togetherness, closeness, oneness" (*Utopianism* 126). This self-criticism, "a unique re-capitulation of his hitherto experiences with literature and theatre" (Inkret 404) can be interpreted as a radical, meta-literary, meta-theatrical, and meta-artistic discourse; a self-criticism in connection with the fundamental premises of the liberated, neo-avant-garde, Artaudian, and Schechnerian theatre, which Jovanović himself advocated and realized in *Pupilija* and *Monument G*.

Jovanović entered the waters of engaged drama and theatre, which rejected any kind of traditionality as well as any ideology already in the 1960s, with *Norci* [Madmen]. A decade later he took this idea and in *Play a Tumour* only combined it with the (self-) criticism and (self-) irony of a performative turn of the happening and neo-avant-garde performance. He created "a dramatic postscript to the 1960s and to their characteristic brand of theatre, written before the era was in fact truly over or before we could notice that it was over and with what kind of an outcome" (Klaić, *Utopianism* 128). Through this, he emphasized the seriousness of the crises of representation and the dramatist on the one hand, and on the other the dynamics of the rises and falls in the radical theatre practices of the second half of the twentieth century, directly connected to and interdependent with these crises.

According to his contemporary and colleague, theorist and art historian Lado Kralj, Jovanović "writes from an explicitly theatrical perspective" (Slovenia 772), "numerous plays waver between grotesque irony of the Theater of the Absurd and Brechtian documentary drama" ("Goli otok Literature" 253), starting with his blasphemous second play *Madmen*. Following his aesthetic revolutions within the field of performance and (no-longer) dramatic texts he played a key role in the

Yugoslav political theatre with his plays *Osvoboditev Skopja* [*The Liberation of Skopje*] (1978) and *Karamazovi* [*The Karamazovs*] (1980) breaking the socialist taboos and opening his dramatic procedures to a strange mixture of realism and metafiction. In the former, all the events of WWII and family tragedies are seen through the eyes of a six-year-old boy, a perspective which opens a highly subjective and non-ideological interpretation of the political events. His later play opened the taboo theme of a Yugoslav communist concentration camp on an Adriatic island — a specificity of Tito's break with Stalin and the Soviet Union in 1948 — in which lots of soviet school communists were killed as a part of severe re-education system. In order to open this theme he enters into a dialogue with Dostoevsky and his famous novel *The Brothers Karamazov* that enables him to show dramatically the generation gap between a father and three sons.

He further developed his post-Brechtian technique in plays written during and briefly after the war in former Yugoslavia. In 1993 he wrote his highly personal version of *Antigone*⁴, influenced by the ongoing war in Yugoslavia. If he deliberately entered into a dialogue with Dostoevsky in order to write about the “dark” and paradoxical events in the history of Yugoslavia, he chose the Greek myth in order to distance himself from the actual banality of war, or rather, to show how even the mythical structure of the Greek tragedy had become something quite banal and predictable at the end of the twentieth century. As Dragan Klaić interprets it:

The hatred was transformed into a blind, almost visceral passion with no evident cause or purpose. In Jovanović's Thebes the violence has become so pervasive that it had imposed its own construction of the reality, which was in turn internalized by all those affected. It had become transgenerational and only some intervention from outside the system could break spell. That should be the role of the deities but in Jovanović's play they remain in the background as a source of evil, refusing to assume the role of either arbiter or rescuer. /.../ Even Antigone's space for resistance becomes extremely narrowed, almost non-existent. (*The Crisis of Theatre? Theatre of Crisis?* 151)

In his second play dedicated to the violence in former Yugoslavia, he entered into a meta-theatrical dialogue with Brecht, namely, his *Mother Courage and Her Children*. In *Uganka korajže* [*The Puzzle of Courage*] (1994), Jovanović also deliberately addresses Brecht's system of epic theatre and its specific no-longer dramatic procedures in terms of stage space. He rewrites the convention of epic

theatre space in an original way, based on the play as a landscape echoing the psychological states of the protagonists and their small micro stories.

During the time of war in Yugoslavia he wrote also a third part, *Kdo to poje Sizifa* [*Who Sings Sisyphus*], which became *The Balkan Trilogy* using what he described as a dialogue with the dramatic form, dealing with archetypal situations. He deliberately chose the deconstruction and the reconstruction of the classical antique and contemporary plays and myths: *Antigone*, *Sisyphus*, and *Mother Courage*.

His latest serious play *Razodetja* [*Revelations*] (2009) is a genre hybrid of closely and densely interwoven thoughts, self-quotations from the play *Karamazovs*, and some other of his dramatic pieces contaminated by today's jargon of authenticity (in the sense of Adorno). Jovanović's latest plays are a result of his resistance to the world of neoliberals, to the telecracy of the global world in which the scripture cannot produce its own difference. His plays therefore echo the (no-longer) dramatic universe of Peter Handke, Heiner Müller or Richard Foreman.

Each of his new plays brings a new, alternative attempt to think theatre and art. What he is concerned about is today's lack of ethics in the society. Jovanović has described his approach to theatre writing as follows:

My writing starts with the need to feel the world through detail, a scene followed by a line of others, written in a form of a fragment. The new whole emerging from this combination of fragments is fragmentary in itself, therefore translating the very feeling of the division and partiality of my experience of the world that is not global, objective, but very particular and subjective. ("Muke z vojno" 4)

Jovanović thinks that after Shakespeare one can no longer speak about new, specific forms of authors, that there exist only two big dramatic forms: Noh theatre and Greek tragedy. He sees the contemporary author (using the term of his Macedonian colleague Goran Stefanovski) as a *plough-wright*: "I do not write but build up the plays" (Ibid.).

Plough-Wright Matjaž Zupančič

One of the best descriptions of the theatrical work of Matjaž Zupančič could be summed up in a two word phrase: *plough-wright*. A theatre director and playwright who studied theatre direction and dramaturgy in Ljubljana and London, in the 1980s he became the director of the Experimental Theatre Glej and proceeded

on his career both as a dramatist and theatre director as well as a professor at the University of Ljubljana, Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television. The author of more than fifty theatre productions, he began to write (no-longer) dramatic pieces in the late 1980s and soon became one of the crucial Slovene contemporary playwrights, receiving several Grum Awards for Best New Slovenian Drama and also becoming the most staged Slovene playwright in Europe and beyond. He has received numerous awards for sixteen of his plays.

His plays enter into a dialogue with Lacanian psychoanalysis, uncovering the plays of sliding signifiers and new versions of the desire of the Other, designating radical alterity, an other-ness which transcends the illusory otherness of the imaginary. In his early plays, written in the 1990s, he uses and appropriates the very nature of various genres, including the underground culture of thrillers, maliciously defining “the transition between inside and outside, between man’s solitude and individuality which are threatened by something from outside such as the community, individuals, voyeurs and snoopers” (Bogataj 12). This is already suggested in the titles of his plays: *Izganjalci hudiča* [*The Exorcist*] (1991), *Slastni mrlič* [*Delicious Corpse*] (1992), *Nemir* [*The Unease*] (1998), or *Ubijalci muh* [*The Fly Killers*] (2000). The plays by Matjaž Zupančič take place in in-between spaces, receptions, and corridors with people constantly on the move, arriving and departing in a mysterious chain of occurring events. Matej Bogataj comments on *The Fly Killers*:

This “fantastic play” does not contain anything consistent; furthermore, the hotel becomes more and more undefined. Upon a mysterious death, the hotel even resembles the purgatory from where the guests go for a walk only to come cross dead bodies of a concrete and ordinary clash of interests. (12)

Zupančič likes to toy with various dramatic techniques and styles, from hyper-realism to mysteries and thrillers, from a straightforward depiction of reality to the absurd but also the strangely poetic. In his black comedy *Bolje tič v roki kot tat na strehi* [*A Cock in the Hand is Worth Two Thieves in the Bush*] (2004), in which the style of Monty Python meets that of Harold Pinter, the characters act as robots producing a series of repetitions that end up in a strange feeling of black comedy using the vocabulary of psychiatry and neurology. But, using the interpretation of Mateja Pezdirc Bartol from the essay “Fluid identity in the plays of Matjaž Zupančič,” he is “interested in the contradictions of the modern world, extreme situations provoked by the question of human identity. /.../ He is not, however,

interested in cultural or national identities, but rather in the individual in his/her relationship to the collective and/or system” (131).

In his play *Padec Evrope* [*The Fall of Europe*] (2011) he comments on and discloses the background of the present society. In a small, local hotel on the outskirts with the meaningful name Europe, a private party is being held with the local jet set telling dirty jokes and wrapping up business deals. But when the rather tipsy party plans to part, a global revolt is taking place outside with demonstrations and riots. The police close all entrances to the town, the roads are blocked and cars are burning. In this hopeless situation, the falseness of the local elite is revealed. Zupančič depicts the world with his sarcastic black humour and uncovers the very crisis of ethics in today’s society, Europe and elsewhere.

In his *Shocking Shopping* (2011–2012) he draws a global image of the world using the microphysical example of Joseph Kotnik (an allusion to Kafka’s Josef K) who, while in the “Shocking Shopping” mall buying bread and half a chicken, finds himself being announced the fifty-thousandth visitor of the mall with a promise of significant benefits, discounts, special offers, etc. But this apparently ideal world (in the sense of Voltaire’s *Candide*) turns into the nightmarish backstage of the mall with things becoming increasingly bizarre, horrifying, and cruel. The Mecca of shopping becomes an Artaudian theatre of cruelty that sucks the (anti)hero into a brutal swirl with no escape. In this strange twenty-first-century passion play, Zupančič uses his specific mixture of brutal concreteness and pure abstractness.

When Theatre Meets Reality Show

Let us have a closer look at his probably most (post)dramatic or mediatized play *Hodnik* [*The Corridor*] (2003)⁵. In a simulacrum of the form of classical drama and theatre, he examines the phenomenon of reality-TV shows. Or, as Ivan Majič states in his essay “Big Brother — from Simulation towards the Contemporary Myth (reading / watching Matjaž Zupančič’s play *Hodnik* [*The Corridor*])”: “This is a play that (using the similarities to the reality show Big Brother) positions itself not only within the literary aesthetic field but also comments on and acts within the context of the contemporary (media) situation” (150).

Zupančič deliberately chooses live performance, namely theatre, as a medium that comments on and deconstructs a currently highly exposed form of media, more precisely, reality TV. His starting point can be illustrated by Guillermo Gómez-Peña’s statement: “Each metier, language, genre and/or format demands a different set of strategies and methodologies” (14). As an appropriate media he uses “pure theatre” while deliberately avoiding the mixed media resources of today’s theatre,

staging the corridor of omnipresence of reality TV imagery, the very space of media violence in an age of “humanitarian impotence” (Gómez-Peña 27).

Thus he discloses the problematical status of the subject, which disposes of fictitious freedom offering itself as an illusion of interactivity, openness to participation, dialogue, intensified through electronic media of TV. He stages reality interpreted as an image of Auslander’s universe of TV, which is able “to colonize ‘liveness’, the one aspect of theatrical presentation that film could not replicate” (Auslander 15). Zupančič is fully aware of the fact that theatre has developed into an imitation of media discourses. The taste of today’s public is shaped by TV, which has become a model and telos of theatre. Capital is no longer interested in the economy of representation of live performance.

The play concentrates intensively on the economy of media repetition as presenting itself as a representation of the reality of here and now. Zupančič starts also from a fact which Auslander defines as follows: “What we are seeing in many cases is not so much the incursion of media-derived ‘technics’ and techniques into the context of live performance, but, rather, live performance’s absorption of a media-derived epistemology” (16). But in spite of this, he makes a decision for live performance, more precisely theatre, that “in the economy of live repetition /.../ is little more than a vestigial remnant of the previous historical order of representation, a hold-over that can claim little in the way of cultural presence of power” (17). Aware of the fact that our concept of closeness and intimacy are derived from the firmament of TV, he exploits this concept and the symbolic power of TV as a media that receives greater cultural presence and prestige than theatre in order to intrigue spectators and drive them into a state of awareness of TV manipulation and its “electronic noise,” presenting itself as a reality which is more real than the reality of live performance.

The question posed by *The Corridor* is therefore a crucial question, which Auslander keeps repeating and answering throughout his excellent book *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*: does live performance dispose of ontology of its own, which is more sincere than the repetitions of TV? The answer to this question is no. In addition to this, Zupančič’s play and performance expose a crucial question about the possibility of subverting reality TV in a live performance. This question is well-defined in a statement by Stojan Pelko:

The question of theatrical *Corridor* and the transmission of a TV dispositive to the stage is therefore primarily a question of whether it is possible for a live performance to intensify this production of real effects, or, on the contrary,

does live performance merely virtualise this stage, while dealing with it as with as a phenomenon and not as a production of events. (19)

The degree of subversion is — similarly to other cases of contemporary politicized art — relatively low. It is constantly accompanied by TV noise denying access to the intimacy of the event. But it nevertheless resists, as long as we face the fact that a live performance is being followed by a live audience facing the stage and forced to become a witness of — to quote Pelko once more — “watching on the stage a void of TV reality” (20). The void of currently recurring surfaces of display without depth, defined by Debord as:

the manufacture of a present where fashion itself, from clothes to music, has come to a halt, which wants to forget the past and no longer seems to believe in a future, is achieved by the ceaseless circularity of information, always returning to the same short list of trivialities, passionately proclaimed as major discoveries. Meanwhile, news of what is genuinely important, of what is actually changing, comes rarely, and then in fits and starts. (*Comments* 13)

By means of purely theatrical media, *The Corridor* thus — while speaking about *Big Brother* — opens up a picture of the deterritorialized ethics of the post-modern world and its cybernetic models of organizing reality, the real fabricated electronically, from matrices and memory banks, collapsing into a black hole, produced by the media. As Debord defines it:

Understood in its totality, the spectacle is both the result and the goal of the dominant mode of production. It is not a mere decoration added to the real world. It is the very heart of this real society's unreality. /.../ Spectacular government, which now possesses all the means necessary to falsify the whole of production and perception, is the absolute master of memories, just as it is the unfettered master of plans which will shape the most distant future. It reigns unchecked; it executes its summary judgments. (*Society of Spectacle* 6)

And the society of *The Corridor* or *Big Brother* is permanently producing those quick summary judgements in the name of the people.

Conclusion: Re-examining and Restructuring the (No-Longer) Dramatic Texts for the Postdramatic Theatre

Let us conclude using some remarks by the British scholar Lesley Anne Wade from a highly informative and enlightening introduction to the book *Slovene Theatre and Drama Post Independence: Four Plays by Slovene Playwrights*. When speaking about contemporary Slovene drama she describes the specificity of the dramatic landscape of the 1990s, the period in which a strong postdramatic turn took place. According to her this was a period in which “an increased number of playwrights are theatre practitioners, either directors (Dušan Jovanović, Matjaž Zupančič, Vinko Möderndorfer) or actors (Drama Potočnjak, Saša Pavček)” (28–29). She also states that this was also a period in which new plays about wider global and philosophical issues emerged, paving the way for Matjaž Zupančič and his new (post)dramatic textual and performative tactics as well as for a new wave of “post-avant-garde,” “post-conceptual,” and theatre of images that governed most of the Slovene stages for almost a decade in a confusion of the post-socialist world reflected by performances which undermined both the notion of theatre as mimesis and the logocentricity of dramatic theatre. This new re-theatralization and deliterarization provoked a specific revolt in which “writers also saw the importance, as Dušan Jovanović has remarked, of retaining the written play text, as it is a basic form for cinema and television” (Wade 29).

The dramatic innovations of both Jovanović and Zupančič can therefore be seen as a part of the specificity of the second part of the twentieth century, marked by unrest and a Badiouian inability to decide between ending the old and beginning the new. Both dramatists witnessed and participated as key figures in a series of aesthetic revolutions that disrupted the configuration of drama and theatre. They were not only witnesses but also the key figures of a process in which media, theatre and literature went through distinct transformations from the dramatic to the non-dramatic, non-literary, postdramatic and to the primacy of performative, the stage itself has been re-examined and restructured, dismantled, and newly put together over and over again.

The dramatic and theatrical oeuvre of Dušan Jovanović and Matjaž Zupančič is probably the best witness to the fact that during the second half of the twentieth century it became clear in Slovenia, too, that a theatrical creation is something specific, that it is always what a close collaborator of Jovanović, scenographer and architect Meta Hočevar, calls a *performance concept* and what she captures in the following Artaudian sentence:

I don't agree with the statement that first there was the word. The word wasn't first, darkness was first and then something was seen. Then after a long while

came the word. And I think the approach in the theater should be exactly the same. The director must first see and then hear. And only then search for the word. ("Space is Captured Light" 105)

Jovanović and Zupančič constantly re-examine and restructure the (no-longer) dramatic texts for the postdramatic theatre. As Zupančič summarizes in an interview:

The referential field of the drama — or art in itself — is wide. The art never starts from everyday life only, but always also from art itself and the history. But this is not crucial. To dare and to be innovative means nothing else but a radical attempt to find the authentic means to gather the idea into a stable and firm dramatic score. A good play is not a list of data for the performance; as this list we could use even a telephone directory, and build up a good performance from it. For me personally the dramatic text is an artistic universe closed in itself — but written nevertheless as a theatrical text: This means that it invites us to interpret it theatrically. In other words, when I'm writing a drama, in a way, I always think the theatre. (Kosi 10)

One could say that both discussed dramatists think drama, theatre, and society in a (post)dramatic form out of the need to tell new and newer stories about the post-millennial crisis of ethics and society conditioned by the neoliberal as well as the post-socialist society. Both dramatists have demonstrated with their plays that the Slovene writing for the theatre, too, was headed for the waters disturbed by both the postdramatic turn and the performative turn. They bear witness to the fact that after the two turns, theatre texts tend to be in perpetual motion, in the process of semiosis. Like Deleuze-Guattari's *rhysome* they move from local (Slovenia) to global (anywhere in the world), from dramatic to postdramatic, from realistic to absurd, from physical to metaphysical, from theatrical to meta-theatrical in order to grasp the remains of the fractured and fragmented meanings produced by sliding signifiers that only occasionally and temporarily meet the signified.

Notes

1. Linguistic proofreading Jana Wilcoxon.
2. See Jacques Derrida. *Of Logocentrism*, Trans. Gayatri Spivak. (Baltimore. John Hopkins University Press, 1967).

3. See Alain Badiou. *The Century*. Trans. Alberto Toscano.(Oxford: Polity Press, 2007).
4. See the English translation: Jovanović, Dušan: *Antigona*. Trans. Ema Peruš. *Gledališki list SNG Drama*. Ljubljana, 1995.
5. See the English translation: Zupančič, Matjaž: *The Corridor*. Transl. by Lesley Anne Wade. Prešernovo gledališče Kranj: 2004.

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