

THEORY OF PERFORMING ARTS

CRITICAL THEORY
Interdisciplinary Approaches to
Language, Discourse and Ideology

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Volume 5

André Helbo

Theory of Performing Arts

THEORY OF PERFORMING ARTS

by

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Foreword

The history of the scientific discourse applied to the theatrical object is nothing but an enumeration of controversies and theoretical dead ends. This is the normal price to pay if one sets out to build theatrology, a discipline which is aware of the implications of its theoretical models, and which takes into account the live practice of the theatrical spectacle. Indeed, once the “deep structure” of the text is called into question, any performance emerges as an *event* that has to be constructed. The *Spectacle*, a true ordeal for theoreticians, leads the researcher to reflect on fugacity; the object defeats all certainties: it outreaches attempts at reductive intelligibility (cognitive “strategies”) and enters the realm of pleasure and emotions. The author’s authority is superseded by a collective of theatrical enunciation; consequently, well-tried paradigms are thoroughly questioned: stable unities, codes that can be more or less easily recorded, sender-receiver communication.

In recent years, the poststructuralist current seems to have operated a split in theatrological research by highlighting the apparent incompatibility of two fundamental approaches: first the perspective that still relies on the communication model and tries to enlarge it to other fields (proxemics, kinesics) and, on the other hand, the tendency that studies theater in terms of flows of energy/libidinal exchanges. We believe that this cleavage hardly justifies the rejection of a dialectic theory of the semiotic and the symbolic exchange. In a previous study (Helbo 1983b), we have indeed examined the dynamics of the combined workings of energies and signs.

The interdisciplinary dialogue in which the new scientific partners of theatrology are involved develops along such dialectic guidelines. In this way, a specific paradigm is brought to light: the event-related dimension, which is submitted to a threefold analysis in this volume.

- The first stage is, as it were, an intellectual checkup: the paradigm is situated in the history of the theory of the spectacle.
- In a second stage, a global model is established which makes it possible

to define spectacular discourse with regard to a typology: consequently, the *specific* instruments of a methodology applied to theater can be circumscribed.

- Finally, the book is devoted to a critical discussion bearing on the relevance of classical or recent concepts of theater study: the social aspects, readability/visibility, coherence, the spectacular contract.

The theory of performing arts having developed and altered radically during the 1970s, the last chapter of the book explains what this discipline means for me today; one of the pieces of this last part has been originally published elsewhere (Helbo 1983b). The first three essays published in the volume show how the new concerns of theater theory can be regarded within the framework of a general semiotic process; the survey *Towards a theatre semiotics* has already been published in *Substance* (1977, 18-19). The second chapter was written between 1975 and 1985; it explores the evolutive limits of the critical strategies and points out in which context crucial challenges were raised; this chapter is an enlargement of previous studies which were published under the following titles:

“The Semiology of the Theater”. *Poetics Today*, II, 3, 1981.

“Evidences et stratégies de l’analyse théâtrale”. *Semiotics of Drama and Theatre*, ed. by Van Kesteren-Schmidt. Benjamins, 1984.

“Pour un proprium de la représentation théâtrale”. *Sémiologie de la représentation*, (Helbo ed.), Complexe-PUF, 1975.

I am grateful to my colleague Christophe Den Tandt who undertook the difficult task to translate part of the collection into English. I am particularly indebted to Suzan Bassnett, Iris M. Zavala, Jean Alter and Marvin Carlson who have read and corrected a preliminary version of some of the papers. I thank all the editors and publishers for their permission to reprint the articles here.

June 1986

I. CRITICAL THEORY AND PERFORMING ARTS

1. A general socio-semiotic model

1. The discourse of social sciences

The spectrum of semiotics has evolved as a function of its integration into the pedagogical tradition. Insertion at university level brought about various changes: semiotic procedures were sometimes exploited hastily, which reduced a broad methodological model to a mere rhetoric. There was an increase in technicity, but a loss in specificity; scientific guarantees had to be multiplied: stylistics, semiological philology... Since theoretical exchanges have too seldom developed into dialogues, it might be useful to consider general semiotics again, as well as its relationships with other fields of knowledge. This re-examination takes place at the same time as certain epistemological shifts, such as the waning of the Saussurean legacy, and the disappearance of a first generation that focused on the linguistic sign, segmentation and the text.

Also the ever denser exchanges between hard and soft sciences seem to promise some theoretical breakthroughs. Let us mention René Thom's philosophy of mathematics whose theory of symbols, or theory of catastrophes has given linguists food for thought. Other innovations are due to biologists, such as Henri Laborit, who writes that "the observation of biological facts has enabled us to discover structural laws that, I think, are valid for the whole living realm" (Laborit 1982:17).

At stake of this debate is the articulation of a discipline within the various fields of knowledge: interdisciplinarity, pluridisciplinarity, or the absolutism of logics or linguistics over the interpretation of the world. The most dangerous pitfall would have been to mistake the means for the end, to simplify instead of breaking down barriers. Bourdieu (1982:9) uses the term "epistemological Trojan horse" to describe the following phenomenon:

transferring the phonological model outside the boundaries of linguistics involves spreading to the whole field of symbolic products, taxonomies of

kinship, mythical systems or works of art, the initial operation that made linguistics the most *natural of the social sciences* by separating the linguistic instrument from its social conditions of production and use.

We propose to show that it is senseless to reduce semiotics to the terroristic takeover by a certain trend of Saussurism. On the contrary, we will try to demonstrate how semiotics deals with, but does not always solve, the problems of the relationship between language and society, and therefore how instead of relying on slavish borrowings, it favours self-critical transfers that confer a new transgressive dimension to social sciences.

A twofold guideline underlies our reading of the Saussurean/Peircean legacy: the relationship between *arbitrariness of the sign* and *speech (parole)*. Bourdieu emphasizes how much the access to language is rooted in social convention: competence is of a statutory rather than technical nature. The code seems related to the institution, a complicity that undoubtedly perpetuates the institution of a border marking out a discourse, but which highlights above all the fuzziness of the boundaries between an allegedly natural world and its language. We propose to examine the relationship between definitional convention and performance, the collusion between arbitrariness, its object and its discourse, which leads us to question the coextensivity of the semiotic and the social field.

1.1. *The negative image of semiotics*

A well established tradition attributes to Saussure the premonitory definition of

a science that studies the life of signs within social life; it would be a subdivision of social psychology: we shall call it semiology (from the Greek “semeion”, sign). It would tell us what signs are, and what laws govern them. Since it does not yet exist, we cannot possibly say what it will be, but it has a right to existence, it has a predetermined place. Linguistics is only a branch of this general science; the laws discovered in the framework of semiology shall be applicable to linguistics, and the latter shall thus be anchored to a well-defined field in the whole of human facts (Saussure 1978:33).

Saussure’s intuition, which is too often reduced to this quotation put out of context, immediately formulates the problem of a semiotics envisaged as a discipline of the future: the way it is articulated to linguistics, the central function of the sign, the relationships to human facts. No need to recall to

what extent Barthes (1967), Benveniste (1969), and Hénault (1979) will focus their enquiries on this threefold issue; one often ignores, however, how Saussure pursues his argument:

when one realizes that the sign should be studied from a social perspective, one only takes into account the features of language that link it to the other institutions, those that depend more or less on our choice; and in this way, one misses the point by ignoring the features that belong only to the semiotic systems in general, and to language in particular. For the sign always eludes to a certain extent the individual or social will; this is its main characteristic, but it is the least obvious (p. 34)

We think that by ranking rites, customs, etc. among signs, these data will appear in a new light, and that the need will be felt to regroup them within semiology, and to account for them according to the laws of this science (p. 35).

This point is of considerable importance: it justifies the elaboration of linguistics prior to semiotics by stressing the need to reduce the social world, to a universe of symbolic exchanges. The reflections on the arbitrariness of signs allow of some qualification:

A casual remark: when semiology is established, it will have to determine if it can deal with the modes of expression based on totally natural signs, such as the pantomime. Supposing it should do so, its main object would nonetheless remain the different systems based on the arbitrariness of the sign. Indeed, any mode of expression in a given society is usually based on collective habit or convention, which is exactly the same. Signs denoting good manners, e.g., which often exhibit some natural expressiveness (think of the Chinese who greet their emperor by bowing nine times to the ground), are nevertheless set by a rule, and this rule, not their intrinsic value, makes their use compulsory. It can thus be said that entirely arbitrary signs, better than others, fulfill the archetype of the semiological process. This is why natural language (*la langue*), which is the most complex and common mode of expression, is also the most characteristic of all. In this respect, linguistics can become the general model of any semiology, although natural language (*la langue*) is only one particular system (pp. 100-101).

While deploring the deliberately digressive, and thereby secondary value of Saussure's remark, we should emphasize here the emergence of arbitrariness seen as a universal principle, which is meant to legitimate the privileged function of language (*la langue*) among the various sign-systems. Since all semiotic systems are based on convention, language, as a corpus of rules immune from external contingencies, would therefore constitute the purest and the most characteristic semiotic system. The circularity of this

reasoning, which borders on *petitio principii*, was denounced both by Saussure's opponents as by his disciples, and many explanations and justifications were put forward. However, previously unpublished texts by Saussure, edited by Jean Starobinski (1971), offer some hope of new perspectives, and we may now suspect the first readers of the *Course of General Linguistics* of excessive orthodoxy.

1.2. Actualization - Natural language (*langue*) and speech (*parole*)

It is well known that Saussure excludes speech (*parole*) from semiology. His disciples have endeavoured to fill this gap as a matter of priority.

This is first and foremost the ambition of stylistics. By proposing to annex "to the field of language (*la langue*) a province which it is difficult to regard as one of its appendages, that is speech (*parole*) seen from the angle of its subjective and emotional content", Bally (1925) raises stylistics to the status of "a psychology of language". He juxtaposes to Saussurean linguistics a theory of actualization by the speaker in his situation. It is customary to compare these psychological premises to a metaphysical thesis, that of Wittgenstein (1968), who intimately merges language with its uses. This correlation between speech act and the wordless (pragmatic) communication act that institutes it, is presented as self-evident. Such an idealistic perspective makes it difficult to define the relationship between the enunciate/utterance and its situational context; the latter, as it is supposed to be self-evident, is never specified.

Oswald Ducrot (1972) evokes a self-evidence effect: the necessity created by the speaker's speech act (*parole*) itself as he bases on it a discourse whose presupposition determines the rule. While abiding by the *langue/parole* duality, Ducrot applies a sociojudicial metaphor ("linguistic deontology") to the language activity, which refers to the extralinguistic situation of the speakers. He describes the language act as a game, an exchange whose power is of a judicial nature (the evidence modifies the speaker's situation): "the mutual interaction of the speakers is no side-effect of speech (*parole*) it is inscribed in the very organization of language (*la langue*). The latter comprises (...) a whole code of human relationships". Discourse is assimilated to a psycho-sociological phenomenon, which seems reducible to two categories;

- a. the linguistic component: it ascribes to a meaning that embraces explicit and implicit terms;

- b. The rhetorical component: it operates on meanings in order to describe the effect the speakers in their situation can produce from them.

From Saussure to Ducrot, there has been a conceptual shift that can be schematized thus:

	SAUSSURE	DUCROT
<i>langue</i>	instrument of communication	system of rules governing the exchange of signs and the roles of speakers
<i>parole</i>	actualization of natural language (<i>langue</i>) by a speaker exterior to language (<i>langue</i>)	action, effect on others

Through the double definition of language as a “mode of social life” and as the set of rules of a game, a ludic metaphor is created, which likens social life to a game of which the judicial situation would be the relevant model.

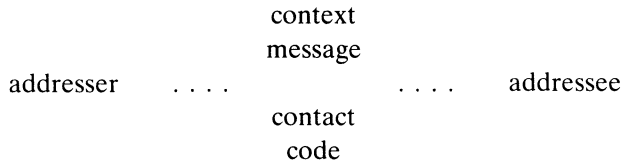
Benveniste’s (1969) theory of enunciation also relates language to the discursive relationship: enunciation, which is described as the implementation of language by an individual enunciation act, functions according to a triadic sequence which includes

- a. the vocal realization of language;
- b. the passage from language as a discourse * (semiotic system) to the semantic system (sound/reference, morpheme/word, sign/sentence shift);
- c. the actualization (by the speaker) of language into discourse; this transition is achieved through the formal apparatus of enunciation.

Benveniste’s (1970) model proceeds from a critique of the Saussurean sign, and it tries to introduce the *subject* and social relationships into semiotics. Even if the general orientation remains Aristotelian (movement from potentiality to actuality), his theoretical model aims at a more general perspective. Benveniste avoids resorting to extralinguistic elements to account for the social praxis of language. He has often been reproached, however, for failing to define the symbols (subject, act, situation) he uses to analyze enunciation.

Jakobson (1963) also considers discourse both as the constitutive

medium of its subject and as the main source of knowledge about it. Drawing on information theory, he puts forward a simulation model that uses not only the structures of languages but also those that organize society and communication:



The six functions of language (expressive, conative, referential, phatic, metalinguistic, poetic) are linked to this well-known communication model, which testifies to a willingness to go beyond the natural language - speech opposition (1963:213-218). The distinction that emerges from this is more properly between language and its effects.

Greimas (1976) puts forward the concept of communication strategy in order to base on a revision of Saussure's theories a model that would clarify a few issues left unsolved by Benveniste's thesis. In his own words:

The exploitation of the Saussurean distinction between language (*langue*) and speech (*parole*) poses some problems, in the first place because it obliges us to conceive and to fit in a mediating instance that facilitates the passage from one to the other mode of semiotic existence (...). One should also provide a transition medium (...) which would be granted the status of syntactic actant (1976:10).

For Greimas, the subject is no longer an entity exterior to language (a transcendental or psychological being) and therefore incompatible with linguistic consistency; it becomes a well-defined and constructed instance. Mediation no longer consists exclusively in actualization (transformation of paradigm into syntagm) but also in operation that structure enunciates:

it is also entrusted with certain semantic categories - such as assertion, denegation, conjunction, disjunction, to mention only the most obvious of them. The subject appears as the medium where the mechanisms of discourivization of language operate (...). Any doing presupposes a knowing-how-to-do (or a not-knowing-how-to-do, which amounts to the same thing). To the discourse, which is the manifestation of a doing, corresponds therefore the subject of discourse endowed with discursive competence. The speaking subject as an instance, while being the medium of *actualization of language*, is at the same time the medium of *virtualization of discourse*, a medium which contains the presupposed forms of the discourse, and where they enjoy a semiotic existence. The discourse, by

becoming actualized, can only manifest those forms in an incomplete and unfinished fashion (p. 11)¹.

The concept of actualization results in the two terms of the Saussurean distinction between the abstract structured system and the explicit product.

Without eluding the contrast between virtuality and actuality, the readers of Saussure have tried to integrate into language (*la langue*) the characteristics assigned to its conditions of exchange: thus a new dichotomy emerges between language and language effects. But a distinction is still very often made, according to which language would be an object of research shared by many disciplines which never propose to investigate sociality as the constitutive and constituted process of reality where any discourse is inscribed. Accordingly, Ducrot dissociates the linguistic from its psycho-sociological dimension. Even the analysis of enunciation points to superior and ill-defined evidences: that of marks constructed within the framework of a communication theory.

Anglo-Saxon pragmatics focuses on the constraints that bear on speech when it is supposed to perform actions. Austin (1962) makes a distinction between locution (that which is uttered), illocution (the immanent quality of the act performed by uttering), and perlocution (the effect induced in the addressee)². The illocutionary force (which is distinct from the perlocutionary effect induced by the utterance in the concrete addressee) branches off into the following typology: verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives and expositives. Performatives, according to Ducrot (1972:75), are “a class of actions having in common the property of being performed, in a conventional or ritualistic way, by the use of words”. Polemic discourse, for example, is characterized by the presence of the enunciator, who is the performative guarantor of the enunciatee, “the enunciatee is identified in the discourse by allusions, presuppositions, the counterdiscourse”. Polemic speech should therefore be regarded as a power-based speech, rather than a competence-based speech (polemic speech seems therefore based on power rather than on competence): it is self-commissioned, exotopic, it creates its own truth (Angenot:1982)³.

However, if conventions (Austin) and institutions (Searle) do govern society and condition the effect of an utterance, it has never been established that a single subject may transfer the effect of these determinations into language as such. Bourdieu (1982) tackles this issue in “*Ce que parler veut dire*”. The sociologist founds his “economy of linguistic exchanges” on the in-out polarity. Taking up the linguistic competence axiom, he sets out

to investigate its construction, its legitimization and its censures: symbolic exchanges, according to Bourdieu, are submitted to the laws of the market place, and language functions therefore as the transmitter of social differences. The idea of universal treasury or competence is superseded by a construction process determined by the social milieu, by the interpretative schemas by competitive strategies. Other theoreticians deal with the issue of the conditioned subject: Slatka (1974) studies ideological conditioning, Régine Robin (1973) resorts to historical materialism, Catherine Clément (1973) and Julia Kristeva (1969) concentrate on the influence of the unconscious on language.

1.3. *Language and society*

The issue of the relationship between natural language (*langue*) and society pervades the successive readings of Saussure's *Course*; the epistemological context of this concern is worthy of attention. François Hébert (183) brilliantly summarizes the issue:

All the authors who have identified an epistemological level in the *Course of General Linguistics* (CGL), have highlighted the contradictions of the text which, according to them, can be attributed to Saussure's difficulties in abiding by the anti-empirical standpoint he sets forth on p. 23 (...). CL. Normand remarks that "Saussure could not handle abstraction in a positive way, in the sense of construction of the data. This ran counter to the whole ideology of the time, which favoured facts at the expense of theory" (p. 73).

D. Slatka, on the other hand (1971:97), points out the various indications of epistemological regression discernible in a few inconsistencies of the CGL (...). The readings that distinguish an epistemological level in the CGL are therefore critical; their approach is of a "recurrent" nature. This standpoint, which is treasured by history of sciences, relates "the CGL to our current preoccupations, to our linguistic truth" and neglects a logical coherence, which is "that of Saussure's thought [...]. One should not isolate or confront "theses" on particular issues by testing their truth and compatibility, because, in this case, one fossilizes into polarized views on an object what is in our opinion only a chain of moments, of devices that will very soon be relativized as the text leads us on (p. b3). Once we have grasped why language (*la langue*) is comparable to "some contract between members of a community" (p. 31), an agreement irreducible to other social institutions (p. 104), one still has to solve the riddle of arbitrariness (...) and determine if the pieces of the jigsaw eventually fit together if one looks at those problems from another angle (p. b19).

Whether one sees it as a chain of contradictions, or as a selfrelativizing rhetoric, the experience described by Hébert deals with a relationship relating linguistic to non-linguistic dimensions.

For if we have thoroughly redefined the relationship between the interior (linguistic pole) and the exterior (extra-linguistic pole), by making it the key-issue of the text, we have only achieved this by relying on the way these relationships are presented in the CGL itself (p. b3).

1.4. *The relational structure*

Charles Sanders Peirce's (1938-1951) ruption on the semiotic stage is crucial. By focusing on a relation of signification (semiosis), Peirce downgrades linguistic intentionality in favour of a dynamics of the sign:

The triadic sign fulfills the requirements of the moment; the linguistic sign can be found in the form of symbolic legisign, and the non-verbal sign enjoy the same theoretical status as they do. On the other hand, it is sufficiently formalized to constrain us to the necessary rigour of analysis, but not excessively. Moreover, it is possible to refine the model at will to adapt it to any particular object whose semiotic structure or dimension one proposes to highlight. And finally, it is socialized, i.e. it accounts for the working of signs in social life, and not only in interindividual communication (Marty 1982:h4).

On the basis of the three categories of representamen, object and interpretant, it is possible to establish the typology on which a threefold relationship between society and language is articulated. To each dimension of the person corresponds a more or less specialized, conventionalized, ritualized socio-discursive mode of formation.

Some authors have put forward the idea of a new Peircean correlation between *the potential formal structure* (semantic and syntactic components that underlie the categories and typologies of signification (semiosis)) and *the actualization of the virtualities* within the communication process. This latter aspect, which is similar to Morris's pragmatics, is seldom underscored by Peirce. The dynamic aspect of the model, however, induces one to go beyond a strictly axiomatic approach; as Peirce (1931-1966:2) states:

A sign or representamen, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call the interpretant of the first sign (2.228).

Thus sign production and the working of semiosis are referred to a practice linked to the contextual insertion of the sign.

A distinction is made here by Peirce between two models of signification (pp. 2, 292):

- a) an immanent, abstract aspect, bearing upon the formal level of signification: representamen, object and interpretant are linked by relationships of denotation (R-O), signification (O-I) and use (I-R);
- b. a concrete or external aspect, related to the actualization and the effects of the sign, to the connection of objects with the material/ or social world. Therefore the representamen is determined by communication (it serves as channel), the object functions as a determinant in the form of a situation (it is the environment of communication), the interpretant can be compared to the receiver. The number of a house in a city, for example, is a virtual sign (*dicent* indexical legisign), but it is also concrete (its channel is the image of the number, its environment is the street, the interpreter is the passer-by).

The internal/external split characteristic of the expression plane runs through the whole triadic relationship. In this way, it is possible to distinguish between:

- *the representamen*, which is the form of expression, and the *replica*, which is the materialization of the sign (the replica is the actualization of the legisign into sinsign) (2,292);
- the *interpretant*, the semantic pole of the sign, and the *habit*, the linguistic use or the coded, social behaviour of norms (5, 491) ⁴;
- the *Immediate Object*, which is characteristic of discourse, and the *Dynamical Object*, the social and material identifiable element (8, 183).

From a semiotic point of view, the Peircean model functions on three levels:

- the virtuality of communication: the mechanism of the potential sign (selection, organization of the semiotic structure before making explicit what has to be communicated): a particular concrete content, e.g. may be referred to a sinsign, which is indexically related to its object and interpreted by a discisign: an abstract idea

- may be referred to a legisign, which is conventionally associated with its object by a rhematic or argumentative interpretant;
- the actualization and determination of semiosis at the level of the enunciate: the virtual/concrete sign relationship, and the spatiotemporal coordinates;
- the relational structure (interaction, position of partners, virtuality/actuality conversion process) of enunciation (Johansen 1980:b14-b15)⁵.

1.5. *Enunciation*

It has never been attempted to combine the results of Saussurean semiology with the results of Peircean semiotics. This pairing would have proved a hazardous theoretical stunt: in the first case, the definition of signs is of a linguistic nature, while in the second, signs have a substitutive value. However there seems to be a point where both the post-Saussureans and the disciples of Peirce tend to come together: the theory of enunciation. We know from the research of Californian socio-linguists (Palo Alto) that any communication process simultaneously conveys a content and establishes a relational pragmatics. The philosophy of language of the Oxford School (Strawson, Searle) paved the way for these developments. The fundamental distinctions of pragmatics are based on the following categories:

- the enunciation/enunciate dichotomy permits a *static* analysis (identification of marks of enunciation within the enunciate: distance, transparence, modalization, tension) or a *dynamic* one (situation of enunciation within communication: analysis of presuppositions, of the illocutionary force or of the perlocutionary effect);
- the dynamic approach itself consists of two currents: one (Austin's second theory, Searle, Ducrot) holds that any enunciate has an illocutionary value; the other (Benveniste) reduces this value to one single enunciate (which is selfreferential, which implies the authority of the enunciator and names both the performance and the performer). Bourdieu, on his part, underlines the link between performatives and social institution (a command is effective only insofar as it is validated by a hierarchical relationship). According to Bourdieu the central idea could then be that of a symbolic capital warranted by the social context rather by the discursive power itself.

2. Methodology. Spectacular discourse

2.1. *The polysemy of convention*

Quite a few semioticians feel the need to resort to the spectacular metaphor. There are two examples which are particularly typical of the way pragmatics and theatre may converge: Ducrot derives from Anglo-Saxon analytic philosophy

the idea that language constitutes some sort of particular theatrical genre, which offers to the speaking subject a few stereotyped institutional roles (commanding, asserting, promising); but instead of regarding presuppositions as conditions to be fulfilled if these roles are to be enacted, we would describe presupposition itself as a role in its own right (1972:49).

Erving Goffman's (1959) so-called dramaturgical analysis appeals to speech act strategies; the metaphor is reversed, but the result remains the same. According to him:

We should now discard the language and the mask of theater. After all, scaffoldings are only meant to build other things, and they should only be set up with the firm purpose of pulling them down afterwards. This study does not bear upon the theatrical aspects that progressively filter into everyday life. Its proper object is nothing else than the structure of social encounters, those entities of social life that crystallize whenever people are confronted with one another.

The multiple reference to presupposition, to role-playing, to everyday life probably seems to lead to a definition of the spectacular. If presuppositions are indeed components of illocutionary discourse, instead of being one of its conditions, then conventions do not make up the context of spectacular doing (*le faire spectaculaire*), they are only one of its elements. During a IASPA symposium held in Brussels, Régis Durand aptly formulated the question raised by any form of semiotics of theater:

The spectacle is no longer the exception, it has become the general rule of our culture, its everyday texture. But it still passes for the exception: it is regarded as a closed, autonomous and signifying system. Now, the spectacle, even in its most stereotyped forms, cannot grasp its own signifi-
cance, since signifi-
cance depends on multiple effects in the general framework of the spectacular (1982:d2).

Therefore, any discourse on convention leads us back to the issue of the boundaries and of arbitrariness. Bourdieu, on his turn, evokes institution

rituals and the limits of legitimation. The semiotics of theater clearly emphasizes the emergence of sociality in language; the boundary is of a social nature; it both creates and results from a social difference. We should first attempt to circumscribe the process by which, in our society, the object we construct as theater, opera, and circus is built up as a distinct entity, thereby accepting and simultaneously suspending spectacular doing (*le faire spectaculaire*). This analysis points back to the description of decision - making as the representation of an authoritative enunciation.

2.2. Arbitrariness and observation

It is customary to define the spectacle without appealing to the notion of a spectacular discourse from which it would derive. This misleading approach mistakes the outcome of a historical-cultural process (called theater, circus, opera or *Gesamtkunstwerk* depending on time and place), for its model. The whole history of semiotics corroborates the thesis of a generalized spectacular dimension, structured to different levels of convention; a specialized semiotics such as semiotics of theater may therefore serve as a testing ground, force us to re-examine general semiotics.

It should be stressed that theatrical games seem in many respects quite pregnant for semiotic analysis:

1. Conventions govern the smooth progress of the illusional performance to such an extent that they become identified with it. The very power of the spectacle is defined by means of an arbitrary *incipit*: inclusion of the natural world into a circus act (the cage, the faked failures, the mishap, will be recuperated by the narrative programme), or into a play (a vista changes, integration of the spectator into the audience, intermission, the norms of the spectacle depend on the rules of the game). Theater history abounds in borderline cases testifying to the joint breakdown of convention and spectacle: the transgression due to the intrusion of the natural world, for example (the first performance of V. Hugo's *Hernani*, the performance of *La muette de Portici* in Brussels, which triggered the Belgian revolution, the Sicilian Vespers, the panic caused by an Orson Welles radio broadcast) involves the breach of the initial contract. Performance art and happenings simulate this breakdown without leaving the bounds of the spectacular field (exhibitions of living bodies by Yves

Klein, hangings on stage depending on the level on the applause-meter in Max Dean's play).

2. Arbitrariness involves a split between the discourse and the world, which is immediately disowned by the inclusion of the natural world into the spectacle. For example some sort of ritual (the three knocks in French theaters, the curtain raiser, the intermission, the compere) will separate referential discourse from fiction, but the former will immediately be reintroduced into the theatrical area; ostension mechanisms will remind us that the sign-object both points to aspects of everyday world and endows them with a theatrical mark. In the same way, the voice/body of the actor manifests his extraneousness (Jouvet's voice characterizes Louis Jouvet as a concrete human being) and obliterates it in favour of a punctual instance of play-acting. This recurrent denegation highlights the obstacles that hamper any attempt to lay down boundaries in terms of an in/out dichotomy.
3. Conventions reveal the delegated nature of spectacular discourse. They are resorted to in order to set the machinery going. They lay down the limits of the speech- (pleasure-, energy-) contract, and circumscribe the identification of the "I" with a "we" authorized by the group. As Bourdieu puts it, "the power of speech is nothing else than the delegated power of the spokesman, and his words, that is, the contents of his speech, which are indistinguishable from his way of speaking, are at the utmost a testimony among other testimonies to the *delegation warrant* he has been invested with" (1982:105).

As we have schematically demonstrated, the traditional patterns of communication demand a definition of convention in terms of a relationship to something exterior to theater, a typically negative approach reduced to complementary and even symbolic terms: simulation, delegation, contradictory, makeshift, denegation. Theater semiotics highlights the lacunae of general semiotics and it reveals the lack of specific instances apt to provide a *positive* definition of conventions and their determinants. The observing actant ("observer"), which is ignored by semiotic tradition, may enable us to fill this gap. It can be approached as a cognitive role, and thus as the instance that legitimates the discourse. We would characterize this observer as follows:

- a. It is unmarked: its silent presence conditions a behaviour, but this is not made explicit in the enunciate. The spectator triggers scenic enunciation, the scene transforms him into the “audience” instance, but this power is not verbalized. The behaviour it has to observe occurs therefore *because of* this actantial presence, but it takes place *as if* the observing instance were absent. Illustrating this point Ben Vautier organized (at the Théâtre de Nice) a performance in which he just stared at the audience, holding a notice which read: “Just watch me, that will do”. This is an extreme experiment in semiotic-influenced theater.
- b. The actant is submitted to a few migrations: now syncretic (assimilated to one or the other speaker), now dissociated, it justifies the game of dispossessions of the subject in theater: migration of the author and the actor, of the spectator and the scenic instances, of the body and the voice, of the actor and the character.
- c. The enunciation triggered by the observer derives its specificity from paradox: the simulation behaviour looks like the model, but it is at the same time different from it. It cannot tend towards either complete opacity (fiction cut off from the veridictory dimension) or complete transparency (illusion, when unmasked, loses its *raison d’être*).

2.3. *The possible world*

It is for certain that we get a clearer notion of the performative value of convention when it is defined by its determinant. Since it is a discourse which actualizes what it enunciates, the spectacle can be seen as a sample of the spectacular. The crux of the matter is therefore what kind of universe is generated by convention.

Umberto Eco (1977:105-117) situates scenic enunciation in the universe of lies; he makes a distinction between two stages: first the assertion of a convention of deceit, then a pseudoassertion by the character, which would be inscribed within the framework of the possible universe generated in this way. The procedure mentioned here is relevant to spectacular discourse in two respects:

- a. By instituting a veridictory modalization (“assertion”, reference to a knowledge of the truth of the natural world) which legiti-

mates a convention (operative rules meant to induce an effect) of a denegation (lies) or illusory nature.

- b. This assertion of a convention generates an expanding discourse embedded in the first one: it contains and conditions an illusory overmodalization (pseudo-assertion) justified by a wanting-to-believe (one adheres to the lie *in the same way as* one trusts the natural world). The illocutionary nature of convention (doing that creates spectacular illusion by this very enunciation) is truly remarkable.

Conventions guarantee the working of illusion, and they organize/render credible illusory denegation. The kind of contract norms lay down may vary (the somatic program imposed on the audience of the *Plan K* theater, for example, is often extremely important; the spectator moves about through several places: a factory, an orangery, and so on...), but the basic omnipotence of illusion remains paramount (any detail can be recuperated: the tolling of the clock-tower on the piazza St Mark takes on a new fictional connotation during a rhythmic performance of the *Mudra* ballet troupe). Sometimes, the breach of convention precipitates the complete breakdown of illusion: the famous performance of *La Muette de Portici* which sparked the Belgian revolution in 1830 shows how important the event must be to neutralize the rules of the game.

2.4. *Persuasive and interpretative doing*

As in any other communicational sequence, persuasion and interpretation are interwoven in theater. The spectator interprets the game of the scenic collective, but he also persuades himself to adopt a certain order of belief (illusion) at the same time as he persuades the actor to go on playing. The actor implements an interpretative doing which generates illusion. The performer is also the first spectator of his own doing.

There is nothing specific to theater in this. As Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni remarks:

One should restore to assertion its *dramatic* character. This involves recognizing intention as its illocutionary value: intention — of making known that one thinks P'. (publicizing Lo-truth), but also — of attempting thereby to force that truth on someone else, with all the concomitant perlocutionary (meaning) effects, which may vary according to the speech situation, such a modification of R's knowledge may involve (1977:68).

The author adds:

We should now analyze the transmission of the truth-value of an utterance from the sender to the receiver.

2.5. *Modalities*

The persuasive doing/interpretative doing interaction transits through many different modalities among which we should mention deontic doing (doing related to duty: reactions triggered by the scenic device, by the poster or by the address)⁶, alethic doing (creation of truth on the basis of commonly accepted premises), but also the modalities of being able (which are related to simulation, denegation, provocation, seduction).

The figures of credibility may bear upon several parts of the chain of enunciation. It is possible to distinguish between four distinct figures:

1. Figures related to the enunciator: this specific rhetoric aims at founding credibility on the authority of the enunciator, be it his cognitive status (scientific knowledge, the director's or the spectator's knowledge) or power (political power, which refuses knowledge, religious power, even the actor's power).
2. Figures related to the enunciatee: by this we understand the presuppositions of the enunciatee, which permit the exploitation his interpretative doing (through his motivations, his credulity). Seductive strategies (relying on the enunciatee's taking pleasure in flattery/abuse) and the delegation of desire are central to this pragmatics. No need to insist on the importance of such procedures in advertising (beers for connoisseurs, or keys to success). It goes without saying that the figure of the enunciator (collective or individual) can be found now on the side of the sender, now on the side of the receiver. In theater, the audience can switch from one role to the other. A political discourse can be conditioned by the hearer. We are only trying to define the conditions of coherence and coreference that make it possible to program the common knowledge of the interlocutors. Likewise, the figure of the enunciatee is also plurimodal: since interpretative doing is already structured and modalized in the discourse, meaning recognition, which is related to competence, can be determined now by the sender, now by the receiver.

3. Figures related to the enunciation contract; this covers the images (inscribed) in the enunciate or posited in the common knowledge the interlocutors have of themselves and of their discursive partners. The exploitation of criteria of tension, distance and transparence may come under this heading: it aims essentially alethic effects (the subject wishes to pass off as universal, and assimilates his discourse to generally accepted ideas).
4. Figures related to the instances of socialization of discourse: we shall rank in this rubric the rhetoric of the medium (ostension of the actor, deixis bearing upon the image, hexis of the body, contemporaneity of the medium) and all the devices that validate the discourse through the channel (verisimilitude effects, distortion of mediation).

These four figures can be resorted to outside the enunciate itself, or they can be inscribed in it in the form of presuppositions. Accordingly, in theater, the enunciation contract is heavily conditioned by the situation. In political communication, levels of presupposition may vary. As an example, when the mayor of Liège was asked questions about rumours of resignation in July 1983, he answered: "I will not refute this". When asked the name of his successor, he repeated: "I will not refute those rumours about my resignation". If the first answer sounded quite commonplace, the repetition would tend to prove that the enunciator merely leaves in doubt only his presence at the head of the city, but will not corroborate the hypothesis of succession. This enunciate, which relies heavily on connotations, modalizes the authority (the power competence) of the enunciator with regard to his situation. The social game is central in this case, and not the explicitation of a figure.

2.6. *Specific rhetorics*

Several levels of analysis can be resorted to:

- a. *Performance production*; the event is a constructed object: the genre in which it belongs, the medium by which it is transmitted are important. The discourse, even when it is fitted to the competence of the partners, is submitted to constraint. Besides other factors mentioned above, spectacular discourse (theatrical, political, advertising) bears the marks of the delegation it performs,

and of the re/desementization it initiates. Accordingly, one should study co-reference, the co-text/context relationship. I will give a few examples: the text of a tragedy by Euripides, for instance, relies at the same time on implicit coreference to Aeschylus (the text is inscribed in a series), on the (co-textual) text/music/singing relationships, and on the contextual keys derived from current political events. Political interventions, such as King Juan Carlos's speech during the military coup, bear exactly the same marks, either co-textual (the king's sartorial hexis emphasizing the verbal authority), co-referential (restatement of the military powers of the king), or contextual (the speech was broadcast by television networks at the very moment when the events were taking place). A French advertisement for a motorcycle, in which a photograph of a well-known French actor (Michel Piccoli) was juxtaposed to that of a motorcycle, while the slogan could apply to both the actor or the machine ("L'avez-vous reconnu?") relied at the same time on co-referential (the actor and the object), contextual (the recent release of a film starring Michel Piccoli at the time of the campaign), or co-textual resources (since the image and the character's gaze directed towards the motorcycle determined the text).

- b. *Code manipulation*; the enunciation exchange, where sender and receiver alternate, depends not only on competence and on discourse construction, but also on socio-historical criteria that will be codified by convention: theatrical area, context of enunciation, historical circumstances, collective imagination. In particular, the spectacle will strive to codify in the collective of enunciation the relationship between context and presuppositions: *determination* legitimation (through social status, through knowledge, through the medium) and *presupposition* (of the frames, of the perlocutionary and cooperative goals) shall contribute to achieving meaning construction. All verbal and paraverbal codes (voice, intonation, metre, gesture, body, image, devices, acoustics) take part in this procedure.
- c. *Morpho-syntactico-semantic modulation*; this covers text analysis, in the broadest sense of the term (i.e. a grammar accounting for the generation of meaning/of ideology), the dynamics of fig-

ures (clichés, hyperboles, euphemisms), and on a more general plane the semiotic analysis that gives access to another level of analysis: that of the modalities related to the code.

- d. *Rhetoric and argumentation*; the level of tropes (rhetoric) or of topoi (arguments) will round off this study by identifying the resources of an essentially factitive modality (transformation of making known into making believe). Whether it is explicit or not, the rhetorical (deixis, ostension) or argumentative structure (figures programming interpretative doing and evolving from knowing to being able) shall contribute to refining the study of interaction linked to the enunciation phenomenon.
- e. *Pragmatic effect*; the pragmatic effect permits a deeper approach to the realization of the enunciation contract: agreement, denegation, transgression, referents (interpretable object, goals, systems of values) of the contract, concordance/discordance.

Note of the translator

*) This term as well as other words related to the issue of enunciation were borrowed from the translation recommended by Greimas-Courtés in *Sémiotique. Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du Langage*, Paris, Hachette, 1979.

Notes

1. A.-J. Greimas (1976), Greimas makes an interesting distinction that permits a more accurate delineation of the relationship between the subject of enunciation and the enunciate; "Shifting out" is defined as "the removal from the instance of enunciation" (deixis: I-here-now) "of the categorial terms that serve as support for the enunciate" (A.-J. Greimas and J. Courtés, 1978, p. 119); "enunciation, which is a mediating device between natural language (*la langue*) and discourse, relies on the categories of person, space and time, in order to establish explicit discourse. Actantial shifting out will therefore consist, in the first stage, in disconnecting from the subject of enunciation and then introducing into the enunciation a "non-I"; temporal shifting out will involve positing a "non-now" distinct from the moment of enunciation; spatial shifting out will consist in opposing to the place of enunciation a "not-here" (*idem*, p. 79). "Shifting in" on the contrary designates the reactivation of enunciation achieved by cancelling the opposition between certain terms in the categories of person and/or space and/or time, as well as by the denegation of the instance of enunciation (*idem*, p. 119).

2. A definition and a discussion of those notions will be found in Helbo (1978).
3. Roughly defined, presuppositions would be the conditions that determine the functioning of the enunciate. Russel analyzes them through an extralinguistic approach: the *presupposition of existence*; the enunciate "the present king of France is bald" will be accepted as true if the current existence of the king of France, his unicity, the identity of the bald person and the king of France turn out to be true. Ducrot reduces presupposition to *linguistic communication*: it is part of the literal signification of the enunciate, and it designates a common acceptability of the partners. Political discourse, for example, is rich in presuppositions; it is doxological (it conceals its logic, it never clarifies its assumptions) and relies on commonplaces (presuppositions) that underlie enthymemes (truths that are more a matter of opinion than of verification): its force lies in its shortcomings. See Marc Angenot (1982).
4. Ch. S. Peirce. (1931-1958:5, 491); the habit is sometimes assimilated to the final interpretant.
5. Jørgen Dines Johansen (1980) evokes the hypothesis of a contractual relationship splitting the situation into two levels: a dialogue between the enunciation instance, whether or not it is inscribed in the sign, and an addressee, whether it is inscribed in the structure of the sign or not. The notions of presupposition and competence underlie this perspective: "In other words, decoding the sign presupposes implicitly or explicitly (re)constructing an instance (...). By duplicating both the position of the speaker and that of the hearer who are endowed with an internal and an external status, one emphasizes the binary dimension of all axes and all planes. On the one hand, they will be taken on by the speaker/communicating subject as previsions about the decoding potential of the addressee; on the other hand, they refer to a definition of the addressee/receiving subject of the information relative to the coding potential and to the intentionality of the discourse" (b14).
6. Deontic doing is articulated in its turn and can be analyzed in the following logical terms:
 - persuasive doing: vote X. deixis of persuasion
 - dissuasive doing: refuse to vote!
 - dissuasion of doing: do not vote! deixis of dissuasion
 - dissuasion of not doing: abstention
 - is not to be realized

2. Towards a theatre semiotics

The very diversified exploration of the semiotics of theater, which has not ceased to renew itself since 1938, date from the first works of Jindrich Honzl (1940 in Matejka 1976) Petr Bogatyrev (1938 in Matejka 1976) and Jiří Veltruský (1940 in Garvin 1964), can both reassure and intimidate because of the richness and the radicalism of its questioning. It will be especially striking to the observer because of the severity of its initial demands, a severity long intrinsic to the search (the alibi?) for pertinent and universal scientific grids, and therefore to the refusal to proceed according to the criteria of a momentary advantage (a photogram, a map, etc., in film). It underscores, in any case, the urgent need for an *epistemological* summary which establishes the *punctum dolens* beyond the sustentative frustrations and thereby eliminates recurrent obstacles. My purpose here is assuredly not as grand. A too rapid overview of the subject, it attempts to identify, isolating and exploring, the suggestions of several dominant investigations already undertaken.

We must first insist on the specific status of theatrical semiotics and on the meager methodological results that the consultation of the “sister semiotics” of the narrative (*récit*) and of the film offers. Because of its real dimension, its intricate network of codes, and its call for another’s visual perception, the structure of the theater is hardly accessible to a method of analysis designed for the narrative (*récit*). Nor can theatrical semiotics be assimilated into cinematographic analysis: the institutional and productive background of film creates a chasm between the film-maker and the spectator which cinematographic research echoes in its fractionalizing. The relation stage subject/spectator can be conceived of in a totally different manner: the division between an optic of expressivity, that is, of meaning, in which the semiotician identifies with the spectator, and a perspective of intentional communication where the adopted point of view, that of the subject of transmission (scenic/textual), is incorporated into an approach which Umberto Eco qualifies as multilinear and which integrates the trans-

actional relation between the setting and the theater into the pluralistic study of codes and messages. Moreover, without trying to deny the logical aporia of the humanities, it is necessary to recognize that there is in theater a practical experience — dialogical — which the observer can utilize. Finally I must add, the contributions and the contradictions of the alleged (general) semiology of which theatrical semiotics has often been a polemical mirror, for example in Mounin, cannot be ignored.

When the relation between text and representation is studied in its still meager and dispersed bibliographical corpus, we are quickly led to recognize a relative consensus marking the limits of the theatrical text and to question not only the definition of representation, the theatrical phenomenon, but also the mode of construction of the object considered by semiotics, and the limits of the semiological field and method. We can, moreover, isolate several tendencies which seem to express a dissatisfaction with the resurgence of certain epistemological blocks and which are presently developing a non-semiological trend. Without arriving at Pasolini's mystical conclusions and at schizo-analytical ones, this trend notably leads to a reflection nurtured by the practice of theater (especially with Osolsobé in Czechoslovakia (1980) and in the stage directions of Bogatyrev (1976) and Mukařovský (1934/1978). Sustained by an often authentic and profound knowledge of the problems of the theater, this "technicist" wave introduces the minor disadvantage of favoring descriptive discourse, and incurs the major risk of failing to provide a global explanation: result of having the formal apparatus obscure the governing principle. Without wishing to disqualify the non-semiotic enactment of laws, we must recognize the limitation of the theatrical apparatus as to language, the actor's impression, and the instinctive explanation, and how it can be overwhelmed by the unforgivable vice which perpetuates the illusion of the natural, the non-codifiable, the non-modeled. Aside from the specific arguments which attack this position and specifically its neglect of the importance of volition which, according to Bogatyrev, determines the *artificialization* of theatrical signs, one must object in principle. The semiologist defines his object only inasmuch as he constructs it, thus assuring the separation between the natural world and the production of signifiers (*production signifiante*) (which can just as well produce meaning as non-meaning (*non-sens*)).

In the field of semiotics itself, there are several contradictions. In short, we can say that the debates are centered on the question of its interdisciplinary character. The Rumanian school serves as a good example of

this when it refers to the transfer of cybernetic and logical-mathematical models (Marcus and Dinu), to sociology (Campeanu), and to linguistics (Ilie Balea) and raises the question of whether there is not, to a certain degree, a rejection of the specificity of semiotics. That is, since an enormous methodological investment is centered on the notion of the character and the setting, this exclusiveness precludes the non-textual theatrical phenomenon from the field of investigation. The perimeter of semiotics is thus defined *a contrario* by abdication, provoking a debate similar to the current one in linguistics over the notions of subject and the social world. That is, Saussure who masked the latter notions of subject and society also conferred on them a status which, although concealed in its context, defines other concepts (person, modality, and time which allow language (*langue*) to play a mediating role). This status which can only be clarified by referring to other cognitive systems (psychoanalysis, historical materialism) thus questions the linguistic approach. Similarly, if the semiotic field is determined by an interdisciplinary approach to the text, this is tantamount to admitting its non-pertinence to the theatrical *ensemble* and exposes lacunae which are left for other disciplines to bridge.

The inflexibility of the metatheoretical field inscribing the parameters of analysis forms still another obstacle. It is necessary, as does a part of the French school, to consider theatrical semiotics as language (*langage*) of connotation with respect to several defined prolegomena? Or can the theater be seen as a vehicle of a theory of narrativity (*narrativité*) (if so, at what level of narrativity)? Or, as others think, can the theater be viewed as an analogical model, as the workshop for the development of a theory of the gestural? Or must a theory be created, or hoped for, which will develop a new model wholly adapted to its object, eventually permitting a pervasive and retrospective re-examination of a reputedly fixed body of knowledge?

A rapid and undoubtedly superficial overview of the earliest studies (Jansen (1968), Souriau (1950), Ingarden (1958)) confirms — what everyone agrees upon today — the protective character of the linguistic and narrative models for the semiology of theater. The double articulation textual framework/scenic level by which the text appears more or less as the invariant, as the deep structure, seems to validate the priority given that which is written. This priority was first (1967) expressed in the theory of *simple implication* developed by Barthes who himself was inspired by Hjelmslev. The *simple implication* links a constant (a determining function) — in this case, a text which serves as the basis for a dramatization — with

a variable (a determined function) — the representation of this text. This is an instrumental conception of theatrical language which Mounin assumes, for example, when he speaks of how dramatists use, in a one-directional relation, a linguistic device as literature. A parallel conception appears to characterize *certain messages* of the theater (particularly, those of the classical theater) — even certain sign systems such as of the decor but not the theatrical code as a whole. If, in the diachrony of the performance, the text can, however, annotate the process of transmutation into non-linguistic signs, the cognitive function remains identical in the intention of the translation, for as Kowzan (1975) reminds us spatialization of a conceptual content alters the latter. In the synchrony of the performance, the theory of *simple implication* appears to be less acceptable, for in the unfolding of the play, the spectator will not only perceive the problematic of the realization of the text, but also the relation of this realization to the activating of other codes, for example, visual and auditory and hence a relation which eventually interferes and, in an extreme case, lends to confusion (for example, in Ionesco when dialogue and sound blend to form onomatopoeia, etc.).

Parallel to these signs of the emergence of textual priority, the syntagmatic/paradigmatic relation and the primacy of *découpage*, unity, and the formal apparatus underscore the privileged position of the linguistic *interpreter*. This attitude of a more or less doctrinal fidelity to a linguistic heritage can be explained *paradoxically* by the non-textual dimension of the theatrical phenomenon. That is to say, the semiology of theater does not share the problem of other semiotics-consisting of the hiatus between sending and receiving, the distance between the *producer* (film-maker, writer, speaker (*énonciateur*)) and the receiver of the expression. It can rather borrow from language (*langue*) and from linguistics, implement the reversal of the I/you relation (as discussed by Benveniste) in order to characterize the relation setting/auditorium. Thus to the extent that the semiotician, as well as the linguist, can/must include both the language which is spoken and that which is understood, the scenic-textual proceeding and the performing proceeding, will he be able to articulate his discourse in a linguistic/semantic dimension (*horizon*). Paradoxically, many studies attempt to extrapolate the linguistic parameters and hence obscure the performing character of the theatrical phenomenon reducing the latter to a strategy of textual roles. These attempts (logical-mathematical, etc.) to quantify underscore the same hiding behind the textual fringe. Returning to the example just cited, we note that the Rumanian semiologists (Marcus, Dinu)

formalize (very often the character) by means of mathematical models of extrapolation. The undeniable rigor of these parameters underscores the intention to quantify certain given elements of the text based on the theory of graphs and games. The logical culmination of this type of research can be the elaboration of a distributional theory, a theatrical version of a grammar of the text. Brainerd and Neufeldt (1974) as well as the Revzines (1973), have succeeded in constructing such models based on the Boolean matrices used by Marcus. Surprisingly, informational theory has been one type of mathematical formalizations which has been ignored until now. The reason for this is probably that the polarity digital/ analogical fosters a pragmatic model of communication which is not reducible to the text and which poses in particular the problem of the global relation to the referent. Remaining in this same realm of ideas and without subordinating them to the verbal metaphor, we must also note a certain number of inductive typologies which aim to set up an inventory of lexemes while postulating, as did the eighteenth-century scientists to which Bachelard refers, that the "random choices of a discovery fall into place of themselves." The snag in such a procedure is evidently the rejection of the hierarchy. Tadeusz Kowzan questions this and in effect wonders whether it is legitimate to infer models and codes directly from the examination of semiotic elements. This question is important, and Kowzan's answer is moreover nuanced since it justifies a similar examination in interdisciplinary research of a limited scope. Attached to this problem is the extremely complex attempt to determine minimal units. This work is varied since it is necessary to account for the possibility of chronological intervals in the unfolding of a play or of a *découpage* by sign systems, and, in our opinion, it is practically impossible to find a constant theatrical equivalent to a morpheme, phoneme, etc. The problem of segmentation, central to semiologists of the message and, in a certain sense, to Ingarden and Jansen thus tends to initiate today, just as in general linguistics, research into the identification of the semiotic mechanism in the general significance (for example, in Bettetini (1975)). Peirce's celebrated typology is, for example, cited more and more often, but if we rely on the progress made in other fields of investigation, notably in the semiotics of film, the setback caused by the problem of finding the smallest unit must not serve as a barrier. Under the influence of Eco and Ruffini (1974a, 1974b) and within the context of the formerly mentioned "multilinear communication" theory, which is based on an idea of universality, the idea that specific signs from each code are associated at the same

moment to universal signs themselves connotatively reducible to hypersigns is developing. Still, despite some encouraging results, it must be said that such a semiotics is centered in the substance of the expression and does not reach the establishing of the heterogeneous relations between theatrical codes.

Within the model assuming linguistic priority, there is another tendency which arises from the progress in pragmasemantics and which seems naturally to flush out and even to renew the analytical perspective. This development in the study of general semantics on the production of discourse and on the subject of the discourse draws attention to the limits of the text while effecting a distinction, which of course has already been authenticated, between written and spoken articulation. For example, Leconte and Le Galliot (1973) point out that the functioning of memory in written discourse depends upon the material limits of the referential whole (the corpus). The levels of intervention are therefore totally different between the producers and the recipients of written and oral discourse (*allocation*). Likewise considerations on duration and cultural background are also examined. It is necessary to observe that until now a good number of promising attempts fall short in their theatrical application. Thus, while alluding to the notion of the "illocutionary force" and the "performatives," pragmasemanticians corroborate the double articulation of the theater by perpetuating the primacy of the dialogue of the narrative (*récit*) over the performed dialogue (*dialogue oral*).¹ The disadvantage of the semantic paradigm, even if it enlarges the role of the pragmatic, lies therefore in its subordination of behavior to the verbal structure.

In order to promote the pragmatic and to react to the semantic tutelage, numerous theoreticians view non-verbal behavior from other perspectives. Some, such as Eco, consider behavior as a partial element of theatrical practice and, in order to define it, appeal to neighboring disciplines such as kinesics, proxemics, and paralinguistics.² Others invert the relation and inscribe theater in a theory of the gestural.

If the reference to communication in the pragmatic model thus far discussed remains intact (even in an indirect manner as in the works of Bouissac on the circus or of Scotto di Carlo on miming (1973)), the theory of the gestural discredits communication in favor of a practice of designation (as understood by Julia Kristeva (1969)) which is in a way "prior to representation and a phenomenon of meaning in the communicative system."

Such a theory which makes theater a part of the reflection on the inde-

ing and deictic functions poses the problem of the aesthetic decision and more specifically the problem of the theatrical decision of the production of signifiers (*production signifiante*) as a place and practice and thereby postulates if not the break with the natural world at least questions this break and the autonomy of this questioning.

The relation of the performance to "reality" is effectively equivocal since theater is and is not the world. Hence the debates on representation (*iconisme*) and indexing have not finished enlarging Artaud's formula that theater is a "disfiguring of the real." This ambiguity can provide a way for generating models since it seems to be applicable to a good number of sign systems integrated to the theater.

In the actor's performance, the "referents" (talking, singing, gesturing, and laughing) are not represented but presented without linguistic intermediary. Similarly the object, lighting, can suggest a "reality" to the spectator, but the same time, this reality is transformed because it is chosen. shown in a specific space, and reputed to reproduce "the essential" ("life, that does not have any form," says Anouilh) constituting in this way *mimed articulation*. Moreover, as an iconic, indexed, and anaphoric reduction, the theatrical text can assume the same function since the referential speaker and listener are created on the stage through the actor, but the very intervention of these participants establishes them as characters and inserts them into a message which creates the situation. Hence the text effectively loses its value as a descriptive-narrative instrument preceded by a situation and is transformed into relays of the miming function which confers scenic existence to the interlocutors. It is not necessary to underscore here the difference between the theatrical text and the narrative (*récit*). As Antonio José Saraiva writes: "In the message of the narrative (*récit*), the 'I' is subordinated to the 'he' because the Narrator designates the Supporting-Speaker of the message in the third person; in the dramatic performance, the 'he' is subordinated to the 'I' because the Supporting-Speaker of the *récit*-message is directly presented as the miming-speaker." (1974:7).

We can now continue to pursue a semiotics of the message which demonstrates how narrative and theatrical messages interfere and cancel each other out,³ but in order to reach a more universal conclusion which also involves the notion of the code, it is advisable to attempt a definition of theater as the place of representation and of re-presentation. Such a definition postulates not only the joint procedure of unveiling and masking but also enlarges the perspective to include derision and parody because if rep-

resentation conceals what is properly called the iconic, re-presentation designates the convention by which articulation makes itself known and by which the artificiality of the sign grows in proportion to an expressive motivation in which spectators and articulatory moments are reputed to participate. Affirmation and derision of the world, the performance (*le faire spectaculaire*) is woven by dislocation and reorganization, emptiness (*béance*) and fullness. Its dimension of exchange is nourished, not by the dilemma of text/representation, but by the relation (ceremonial according to Artaud) of restitution/destitution which can be embodied in many ways.

From this follows a theory whose implications, at first glance little compatible with semiology, can however contribute to formalizing the transactional norm which has just been discussed. This theory is based on Barthes' thesis in *Le Plaisir du Texte* (1973), a thesis by which the voice is in a way the signifier of the body. As a signifier, the voice has both transparency and opacity: transparency as an objective inscription in social discourse, as a stable mark where dialogue and continuity forge their way; opacity as a mask of the impulse of the discontinuous and of the inexpressible. And we can add as Lyotard (1973) that the voice silences the body, that the theatrical device appears as the place of a displacement. "[A] theory of theatrical signs and a practice [...] of theatrical signs," writes Lyotard, "are based on the acceptance of the nihilism inherent to representation [...]; there is nothing to be replaced [...]; meaning is itself only a substitute for displacement." When impulse becomes representative, theater is then a semiotic and economic device, energetic and neutralizing. It is a discontinuous place of disintegration in the divergence between stage and auditorium as well as in the explosion of words (*paroles*). A space of recuperation and reunification of the spectator's visual perception, it is a discontinuous place of disintegration in the disposition of desire as Deleuze says, in the "hypnosis" of which Blanchot speaks, hypnosis of the auditorium which nourishes the production, in the assemblage of time and speech on stage.

If such a phenomenology of impulse can appear to be if not anti-semiotic (Lyotard speaks of "generalized desemiotics"), it can at least be bades on procedures seemingly devoid of codes. It does not seem to us ineffective to try a development, doubtlessly reductive or recuperative, of the data on which the idea of an encounter between visual perception/desire of the spectator and the collective disposition of scenic articulation insists.⁴

Whether it be unconscious or not, the idea of dialogue constitutes the avatar of an interdependence which a good number of semiologists do not

hesitate to identify with communication, the keystone of all artistic semiotics. For example, in studies on decor, it has been demonstrated that the public's procedure of viewing determines the presentation of the decor. The difference between the backdrop of a setting and a painting lies in the fact that the former as soon as it is considered as decor enters into a process directed at the Other so that it does not merely exhibit, but it *demonstrates*. Inversely the decor reflects back upon the production which postulates its audience: it establishes the dramatic setting and functions in this way as a notifying indication as Prieto understands it (the production of a signal indicating to the receiver that the sender intends to transmit a message to him). Eventually at a secondary level, the decor will also be able to communicate information on the content of the setting, establishing a particular dramatic setting and hence acting as a significant direction (indicating to the receiver that the meaning which the sender seeks to establish figures among those which the receiver acknowledges. Such a signal indicates therefore one class of possibilities and defines its predicate as a function of circumstances.) The example of the decor thus easily demonstrates that there is more than one desire in the visual perception sender/receiver of the spectator. One possible response lies between signification and communication with respect to the collective disposition of articulation. It appears therefore indispensable to adhere to the general problematic of allocution/communication which, as semioticians agree, cannot be projected onto the theatrical phenomenon without prior demonstration. In this respect, it is useful to consult carefully the warning given by Mounin who pretends to avoid begging the question by rejecting the hypothesis by which theater can initially be approached as *sub specie communicationis*. "[...] this supposes the resolution of the very problems that a thorough and complex analysis of the functioning of the theatrical production must first discover and then define, exploring all the data, then perhaps begin to resolve." (1971:87). Along with the writer of *Introduction à la Sémiologie*, we can consider as pertinent the distinction between several relations furthered by the theatrical phenomenon:

- the relation actor-spectator or more accurately setting-spectator (the word setting comprising the actor, the character, and the stage-designer) where stimulated reactions, vague Pavlovian reflexes with no relation to communication, intervene. This exclusion refers as much to linguistic communication as it does to communication *largo sensu*. Concentrating on the rejection of the staging and of the transformation of the text which the former implements, Mounin

groups under the same rubric the relation author-spectator which is also at the level of a pragmatic stimulation relayed by the text. "[T]he author, the director, the stage-designer, the actors, the costume-designer, and the scenographer are all directed not so much to 'say' something to the spectator, by means of an inappropriate term, as they generally believe, but to act upon the spectator." I will not insist on the disputed nature of such an allegation: can it be said that the text relays, postpones, diffracts...? The relation author-spectator, inasmuch as it exists, appears to be a convention. We recall that the practice of writing for an audience is recent and that in the seventeenth-century, for example, the dramatist addressed himself to his troupe. After all, the idea of a relation between the author as a person and the spectator implies a somewhat naive metaphysics of intentionality which the recent research of Dubois, Tutescu, Lecointre, and le Galliot on articulation has underscored.

- the relation character-character simulated by the actors, relation revealed by Mounin, following Buyssens' example, lends itself to a curious phenomenon of analogy with reality, analogy justifying the intervention of communication. "The actors in theater simulate real characters who communicate with each other." (1971:88). Let us specify to begin with that for Mounin the act of communication implies the sender's intention to transmit, postulates the receiver's perception of this intention, and requires the message to influence the behavior of the speaker (*interlocuteur*). Mounin then affirms the reversibility of this phenomenon: the sender can in turn become the receiver and vice-versa.

It is necessary to underscore that this last correlation between linguistic communication and that of actors/characters is precisely the most contested and the shortest. Thus in a play such as Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, linguistic communication is destroyed since the behavior of the characters contradicts their understanding of messages. The meaning of the lines has hence no relation to the conduct of those who utter them, and the verbal exchanges are in a way replaced by a pragmatic sign, by a system of interacting relations which the praxis of the characters defines. (The variables of the model are based on the symmetry of the (destructive) behaviour; the system is regulated in function of one-upmanship.)

This does not hinder Mounin's typology from underscoring pertinently

the heterogeneity of the relations being staged while still identifying incorrectly this multiplicity to the plurality of codes. Without attempting a systematic application of the Jakobsonian grid to the theatrical phenomenon, we notice then that the phatic function cannot only constitute the essential mechanism of theatrical communication, if communication does exist, but also the junction of several modes of exploration of the theater. In whatever sign system envisaged, even if the sender and the receiver are acquainted with the codes they utilize, these codes are still not identical. We must therefore admit the irreversibility of the relation — a signifying project which can be apprehended in a multiple manner (a natural sign can be perceived, for example, as artificial, etc.) — parallel to the semantic manipulation proper to each sign system.

Hence re-examined in the light of a confrontation, with para-semiotic and anti-semiotic theories developed by the research on writing, the notion of communication appears to retain its pertinence in a universal proceeding where the investment setting/text is found to be subsumed in the displacement or the transformation of the referent. Undoubtedly all consequent research in semiotics is condemned to be locked in this circuit, anxious to avoid the illusion of the natural in theater. Based on the evidence of the referent-language, all language is undoubtedly sign(s) referring to such a system, but under this guise, it does not belong to semiotics. It is only implicated as a substitute-sign for that of which it can be a signifier while mediating it and articulating it — intrinsic functions permitting. One of these functions is precisely semiosis (the reciprocal relation between two forms which are moreover to be considered only as points of view, successive or not, in an analysis, in relation to a message considered signifying and whose significance may or may not refer us to meaning and to verisimilitude).

Hence let us repeat that the role of semiotics can be situated not only at the level of the expressive phenomenon, of the message, and of the relation text/representation, but especially at that of the analysis of codes and of the matrix of codes. This orientation which many contemporary studies adopt, profiting perhaps from the evolution of semantic research, which also seems to be opening new perspectives, is good. However, the cultural dimension which can at a certain period favor one code because of socio-historical anchoring remains to be recognized. Without going so far as to define theater as a primary modeling system, a step which a Barthes or an Erving Goffman have taken in their metaphor of theatricality, it seems therefore indispensable to conceive of the theatrical phenomenon as a

“complex semiotic object,” internally complex notably as a network of heterogeneous allocutionary proceedings, externally complex as a manifestation of a dramatic production (*faire spectaculaire*) which presupposes a reference to other cultural domains.

The doubtlessly transitory period of narcissistic reversal of theatrical semiology into an enactment of its own journey seems to be an enlargement of the semiotics of culture and of the subject, an enlargement which joins Mallarmé’s eloquent statement by which theater is a “majestic expansion in every person!”

Notes

1. For example, one can present Montherlant’s *Malatesta* such that Malatesta’s gesture of denial functions as a surrogate of the text. The directions which guide the presentation are assimilated into the implications of the plot in order to preclude independently meaningful activity. Verbal performance (“I refuse”) identifies the character very differently than does his dramatic gesture.
2. *Kinesics* (“the study of the meaning of gestures, facial expressions, motivating behaviour, and body positions”), *paralinguistics* (“the study of infonation, voice inflection, the different meanings of an accent, of a murmuring, a hesitation, of a “stress”, and of an inflection, even of a sob and of a yawn”), and *proxemics* (the study of the meaning of the human species, especially in the sense of the various distances among individuals).
3. A distinction is to be made about the *absolute message* such as the one in *Cinna* wherein the historical facts known by the spectators are replaced by other circumstances. The disappearance of historical reality initiates the independence of the verbal message; the *dramatic message* could by itself contain stories (a third one pointed out by the speaker) and vice versa (the speaker is introduced to a third person as in the duel of *Le Cid*).
4. Barthes (1973:104): “The texture of voice can be the subject matter of an art, the art of directing one’s body”.

3. Teatrology and literary studies

Linking teatrology to literary studies involves a few presuppositions:

- a. The first of these concerns the status of a narrative activity in theatrical analysis; let us first specify that our approach does not propose to reduce or to solve in advance the status of the text in theater: on the contrary, it endeavours to situate its code more accurately with regard to the multiple semiotic processes rooted in the spectacular event. The relationships between teatrology and literary studies will therefore adopt a dialectic mode, and, in a first stage, they will rather raise problems than allow pedagogical clarifications. Nevertheless, we shall still regard the narrative structure as a distinctive feature of theatrical discourse. It differentiates the latter from other mixed discourses (comic strips, written paintings, picture poems, etc).
- b. While teatrology has long clung to approaches derived from the narratological model, and more specifically from the latter's mentors (the various linguistic theories), an important direction of the research has consisted in denouncing "textual absolutism" and defining specific paradigms of the spectacular.
- c. The latest developments in research devoted to performance arts have come to focus on the same methodological preoccupations as literary sciences. There are three main tendencies, centering respectively on *theatrical production*, *reception*, and the *spectacular paradigm*.
- d. Moreover, teatrology has a propaedeutical vocation, insofar as its practice initiates exchanges between several fields: aesthetics, pragmatics, semiotics, sociocriticism, history, as well as dramatic art, psychology and hard sciences (biology, neurochemistry).

1. What is teatrology?

Unlike other approaches to the theatrical phenomenon, the scientific study of performance arts (*Theaterwissenschaft*) has known substantial developments in recent years. Teatrology investigates the workings (codes and messages) of the performance, and its insertion in the socio-cultural network. Methods, means and goals have become much more refined.

The emergence of new documentary techniques (files, computers, video-recorders) has led to improvements not only in the conservation and the recording of the performance, but also in its analysis. The notation techniques of the performance, in particular, have grown much more accurate: rigorous questionnaires have been drawn up, recordings have been observed systematically. But in spite of all this, the analysis remains dependent on the observer's choices: only certain kinds of elements can be taken down, and the recording process is limited to the scope of the camera.

The development of interdisciplinary research has enlarged the field of teatrology. It has several goals, and articulates several fields of knowledge:

Historical: it locates and identifies signs and shows how they feed on socio-historical patterns.

Dramaturgic: it relates vehicles of manifestation (fabula, space, forms) to world views.

Aesthetic: it establishes criteriologies which situate the spectacle within the system of the arts, and build up a poetics.

Psycho-sociological: it studies the activity of the spectator within symbolic references such as the audience whose composition, perception conditions, political sensibility and geographical origin have to be clarified.

Semiotic: it analyzes the collective theatrical enunciation and tackles the construction of the spectacular object in its double relationship to the spectator and the everyday world.

Biochemical and physical: it situates theater among the arts of life, interpretable in terms of neurochemical stimulation, behaviour functions, and organisation of sets. In short, "The discourse on the performance — if it should achieve a scientific status — reflects, in the same way as the forms of the performance themselves do, the relationship of a culture with the true/false polarity (determination/indetermination,

nature/artifice), the secret (within/without), imagination (reality, fiction, illusion), language (origin, function, structure), the biological realm (body and biosphere), the individual/collective polarity. These elements form a system, in the Cartesian sense of the term, which obliges one to take into account the plural systems of their relationships with one another" (Pradier, 1982:1).

Three relatively recent areas of research are worth mentioning, as they deal specifically with the performance:

- a. *Kinesics*, which studies body postures, gestures, facial expressions within a given culture. It attempts to define distinctive units, kinemes, and to characterize their functions (linking, emphasizing, marking, etc.).
- b. *Proxemics*, which deals with the language of interindividual space, and formalizes the meanings generated by the distance between the actors, by the situation in the semifixed feature space (furniture, doors, backdrops, objects, etc.) or in the fixed feature elements (the playhouse, the auditorium).
- c. *Paralinguistics*, which analyzes non-linguistic codes of verbal expression (vocal pitch, inflections, sobs, yawnings etc.).

The elements listed above exhibit two distinctive features applicable to contemporary theatrology:

- they focus on the factual dimension of theater, taking in behavioural processes;
- their variables are not conceived as separate features and the emphasis is on their integration into the system

Under the influence of Erving Goffman's (1967) symbolical interactionism¹, critical theories are now making a wide use of the concept of "frame", that is the procedure by which the spectacle selects and builds up its own reality, it defines the rules of illusion, and organizes perceptive experiences based on behaviours in a situation.

2. Theatrical production

2.1. Identification

Some theatrologists have attempted to *identify* the *vehicles of manifes-*

tation. It is indeed possible to enumerate the media of theatrical expression; text, speech, stage devices (lighting, music, sound effects), acting (gestures, facial expressions, movements), etc. Each of these elements was studied primarily in the theoretical texts of directors. A history of theatrical production would probably have to underline the emergence of one or another material according to the aesthetic doctrine in question, from Alain Antoine to Jacques Copeau, from Adolphe Appia to Gordon Craig, from Constantin Stanislavski to Bertolt Brecht (see Helbo and alii 1987) the following main issues come to light in such a detailed diachronic study:

The actor, who is sometimes seen as the mere embodiment of a character, totally immersed in the fabula, and sometimes as an opaque bulk, an object that evades meaning, has given rise to much debate. Among the issues raised by the status of the actor on stage, let us first mention the type of *enunciation*; some critics contend that the actor, according to the Brechtian concept of “*verfremdung*”, should be assimilated to a discursive symbol whose ultimate function consists in analyzing/revealing the mechanisms of everyday life, or even in acting on them. This view is shared, among present-day companies by Armand Gatti (1982), Ariane Mnouchkine (1975), Jerzy Grotowski (1968-1970), le théâtre Action (Boal 1979), or the San Francisco Mime Troup. Others on the contrary regard the actor’s discourse as completely identified with the character’s discourse in a myth of transparency and illusion according to which the actor can only give a good or a poor rendition of a narrated fabula. This typology can help us *make* distinctions between several figures of the actor:

- The *story-teller* is entrusted with the construction of a fabula: his only performance consists in showing that he tells a story through acting and language (locutionary level). The performance builds a possible world, that of fiction.
- The *character* is first of all a discourse constructed by means of permanent signs and scenic acts by one or several actors. This discourse consists of speech or actions (set by stage directions); it generally bears a name, but the character does not necessarily have a psychological unity; it determines dramatic action.
- The *agent* reveals the conditions of enunciation: he builds the context of the discourse, highlights the power struggle between the characters and the other protagonists (illocutionary level);
- The *body* creates the scenic performance by emphasizing the difference between theatrical illusion and the materiality of the actor as

vehicle. It therefore discloses the actor's theatricality, his opacity.

This dialectic, which was described by Diderot (1773) in *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, formulates a set of interrelated issues: the definition of acting and training (the art of the actor as a means towards self-knowledge, knowledge of social history, of myths), the actor's share in creating the play (collective invention during rehearsals, or symbol of the fiction set once and for all), the degree of improvisation (free improvisation during happenings or programmed improvisation in the *Théâtre du soleil*), distinction between leading and secondary parts (or versatility of the actor).

The spectator can also be apprehended as a participant in the production. A few key concepts will clarify the issue. Participation theater (the "communion" advocated by Jean Vilar (1963) who saw theater as a meeting place for spectators of all walks of life), insurrection theater (provocation, sometimes of a political nature which developed in the French art centres ("Maisons de la culture")), spectacles requiring either some degree of control by the spectator (for Michel Butor (1962), Augusto Boal (1979) and Fernando Arrabal (1963), the spectator can interface in the development of the play), or the spectator's manipulation (the "willingly compliant audience" for Julian Beck (1972) or Grotowski (1968-1970)).

Speech can be regarded as a medium of theatrical action. In Racine's drama, language plays an illocutionary function: it governs the actualization of the spectacle. In Beckett, however, the juxtaposed monologues ceaselessly denounce the inanity of language. Speech can, but need not fulfill an important function in staging: some critics regard speech as an avatar of the dramatic text and therefore as the only reproducible and lasting element of the spectacle; others entrust scenographers and directors with the responsibility for scenic writing: the text "should be burned" (Dario Fo), "speech is only rhythm" (Julian Beck), "theater leaves room for change" (Arrabal).

Gestures: the function of gestural behaviour, which is another element in the actor's expressive gamut, will vary according to the theatrical aesthetics. The classics confine it to a *transparent* sign subservient to the enunciate, a back-up for speech; in the pantomime it serves as a substitute for the setting; it can also become an *opaque* sign referring to the actor's own subcode. For example the gesticulation of the French comedian Louis de Funès in his rendition of Molière's *L'Avare*, or the gestures of Japanese dancers, can refer exclusively to their symbolic autonomy. The same can be

said of facial expressions, which can be mimetic or emblems of theatricality or even of movement; they can be visual metaphors of the fabula (Meyerhold), or signs in their own right, defocalizing the spectator's attention.

The *scenographic gamut* includes many other elements: lighting, set, music, sound effects, props (costumes, make-up, objects). On the whole, the scenographic organization, which is an important part of scenic writing, appears as an aesthetic component that has known contrasted metamorphoses from Antoine (where the set conditions the character) through Appia (where the movable stage device is supposed to be a projection of the character which underscores the plasticity of the bodies and the musical architecture of the stage) to Copeau (empty space which sets off speech and gestures). In the history of staging, scenography grows simpler, decorative sets tend to be superseded by lighting and music, and even by the actor himself, who has now become the main medium of the scenic image. One should distinguish between a *mimetic* scenography, aiming at conformity with the real (Antoine), the social (Brecht), the pictorial (Strehler's productions imitating paintings), the sculptural (Barba) or the psychological world, and a *ludic* scenography which exposes the theatricality of signs, and reveals the acting area for what it is pointing out bodies and movements.

The *material* identification of the components used by the means of expression raises problems of a different order. One can sometimes resort to philology (how can one establish the text or reconstruct the original "set" of ancient tragedies), or to history (situating the material in its context or defining its archetypal value), but material identification may also prove impossible. There are performances without pre-existing text, theater without words, actors as objects, among others. At a more fundamental level, the description of the media by empirical notation seems to raise the problem of the way theatrical signs are governed by the tradition of staging practices. It takes for granted *concrete* typologies introduced by practitioners of theater without tackling the issue of the construction of meaning, the establishment of relationships, and sequences between the materials. As Jindrich Honzl (1940) puts it, a theatrology of the material ignores the "semiotization" of the spectacle.

2.2. Differentiation

The issues related to identification bear therefore upon the substance

and the form of the contents, and should be related to the problem of *differentiation*. Let us consider the different types:

A first approach is that of a philosophico-aesthetic orientation: it considers theatricality. Gouhier (1968) proposes the following essence of theater:

In a performance, there is presence and present: this twofold relationship to existence and time constitutes the essence of theater. Relationship to existence: the person who comes on stage is no delegate of an absentee: he embodies a character, turning a shadow into something real. The ambassador is never the prince he represents: he only lends him his voice. The emperor is the emperor he represents: he owes him his very being. Relationship to time: any actual existence, any real presence is a present reality. He who comes on stage and the person in the auditorium are contemporaries: they live at the same time, perhaps even in the same temporal frame.

Other criteriologies, such as that of Tadeusz Kowzan (1975) are more concerned with the situation of theater within the system of the arts than with the essence of theater. By circumscribing a few categories common to theater and other arts, *Littérature et spectacle* leads to a typology of genres. Kowzan stresses:

Literature on the one hand and the spectacle on the other hand, constitute from an aesthetic point of view two realms of art which are both distinct and obviously interrelated. The interdependency of the dramatic work and the theatrical performance is an indubitable phenomenon, but it has many tricky aspects. We now have to illustrate (...) the relationships between these two fields with the general system of the arts (...) literature in the broad sense of the term ranks among the temporal arts, but it has repercussions (...) in the field of spectacular art. (p. 75-76).

In the semiotic approach, the problem of identification is posed in more radical terms that originate in a dual question: does the spectacular object exist, and if it does, how can it be constructed?

This question can only be solved by a methodological digression valid for any corpus submitted to an enquiry by the methods of general semiotics. We will not dwell on this; let us only bear in mind that the theatrical continuum is experienced by the spectator as an ephemeral event that depends on the hazards of the performance. Accordingly, the reception activity, which will be analyzed below, takes on a crucial value, since it integrates the materials into patterns of meaning that will have to be defined. Whatever the vehicles of manifestation, the enquiry will bear upon signification,

not communication. The form of expression and content will be dealt with without neglecting their specificity. Some authors set out to analyze the segmentation of the spectacle, the elementary units of which the text is supposed to be composed. Marcus (Helbo 1975b) advocates segmentation into “hypersyllables” (i.e. fundamental episodes of the action). This precedence of the fabula should however not be taken for granted.

2.3. *Text and performance*

2.3.1. In theater, the notion of *text* covers several subsets:

The dramatic text: this designates the written signs meant for reading. Certain dramatic works by Musset or Apollinaire, for example, are better suited for reading than for a theatrical performance.

The production text or stage directions: this comprises the scenic annotations destined particularly for actualization through staging (“*didascalies*”). The written signs undergo a transformation which Barthes (1970:143) describes as an operation of “simple implication”. One can distinguish between “*didascalies*”:

- Meant for the actor: they usually concern details of playacting.
- Meant for staging: these annotations bear upon the set, costumes, lighting, sound effects, music.
- Meant for the reader, and which have nothing to do with concretization on stage. In Ionesco, for example, one finds stage directions to be read rather than translated visually.
- Meant for the implied spectator.

Some critics contend that contemporary theater suffers from an inflation of stage directions. We would rather evoke a decline of verbal language compensated by the growth of other means of expression. While the last three scenes of *Phèdre* are devoted to the narration of three deaths, the ending of Camus’s *Caligula* shows the poisoning of the old emperor, and the construction of the scenic picture is described at length in the text destined for the actors. In recent times, we have witnessed the emergency of a theatrical tradition consisting exclusively of a theater of *didascalies*, three types can be pointed out:

- The performance is merely visual; it does away with the dramatic text, as in the infanticide at the end of Kroetz’s *Travail à domicile* a silent scene full of pictorial elements provided by the staging.

- A visual performance, which explicitly refers to an absent dramatic text; the stage director is entrusted with a text that has to be imitated by gestures in the tradition of silent films. Camus's *Mimodrames* resort to this technique.
- A visual performance which implicitly hints at an absent dramatic voice by revealing for example, that the different systems of expression are non-redundant. In J.M. Patte's production of Genet's *The Housemaids*, the female parts are played by bald male actors who have to say lines referring to their magnificent hair. There is a contradiction between the gesture, which is mentioned in the stage directions, and the dramatic text.

The theatrical text: it covers all the signs, those meant for reading and those meant for the performance.

2.3.2. The *performance* is defined as the enunciation act that takes place in the presence of an observer, within the limits of theatrical conventions. It takes place in a three-dimensional physical space, and in an aleatory cognitive space experienced collectively.

The three-dimensional physical space

- A theatrical space: the area contained in the playhouse, including stage and auditorium.
- A scenic space: the area where stage devices are set up.
- A scenic area: reserved for playacting.
- A dramatic space: an imaginary area, which can, but need not be represented on stage.

Each of these modalities of space will condition the discourse. The playhouse of the Théâtre du Parc in Brussels, for example, which is close to the Houses of Parliament, to the Royal Palace and the Court Hall, will influence the performance in another way than buildings whose purpose was not to serve as playhouses, such as e.g. the closed-down refinery used by the *Plan K* company. Scenic space and area, whether or not they are similar to reality, focalize the audience's attention on depth and volume. Nevertheless, some productions emphasize pictorial or plastic effects that favour the perception of a fixed picture over movement. This technique dates back from the development of perspective painting.

The aleatory cognitive space is experienced collectively. As the performance is only a transient event, it generates an ephemeral and

unstable reception space: the spectator can be included in the scenic enunciate or be excluded from it depending on the moment of the performance. In his production of *Timon of Athens* at the Bouffes du Nord, Brook exploited several variations that influenced the audience's ability to shift into the play: contrasts between light and darkness on the stage and in the auditorium, and horizontal vs. vertical playacting that oriented the focalization of the people in the stalls or in the dress circle, etc. One may note that individual horizons of expectations will at certain times share collective symbols, providing verity to an audience. But in the final analysis, the plurality of standpoints results in a multitude of different ways of experiencing the spectacular event.

In classical theater, performance was sometimes considered as the actualization of textual virtualities. Without considering at this stage different attitudes towards historicity (relativizing, ignoring or respecting the original work), one shall assume that the text and the performance overlap to a certain extent: they share a common territory, that of the translation of writing into scenic signs. This view relies on an idealistic mode of communication: the text is seen as a preperformance relayed by the performance instances (director, actor, audience). Some attribute a performative-deictic value to the text, which consists in the organisation of the virtualities that predetermine staging and segmentation.

When taking into account stage practices that are not based on the preeminence of an author's text (such as Ariane Mnouchkine's productions (1975) at the Théâtre du Soleil: group creation which evolves in the course of rehearsals), one will discover instances where the text is totally included in the encompassing whole of the performance. The text is made audible and takes its place within the scenic enunciation beside visual components. In this case, communication becomes more materialistic: the text gives way to the voice which is one among other elements in a collective enunciation where no component prevails over the others.

This led critics to regard the theatrical text as a lacunary (fabric) in which gaps are filled by an intermediate text which does not only translate the written signs, but sometimes destroys them according to the tradition of stage practices and breathes life into them in the performance.

The term *spectacular text* is widely in use nowadays to refer to a combinative system of structures, a "fabric" made up of all the elements of the performance. The notion of a visual transmutation of the written text into

space gives way to a pattern of contemporary meanings encompassing all the enunciate of the performance.

2.3.3. The *theatrical system* should be viewed as a *semi-symbolic system*. According to L. Hjelmslev (1961), there are distinctions between:

Symbolic systems, characterized by a one-to-one correspondence between each term in the expression plane and the corresponding term in the plane of content (as e.g. in traffic-lights).

Semiotic systems, which require separate analysis of expression and content (natural languages).

Semi-symbolic systems defined by the correspondence between the categories of expression and content (and not by the relationships between discrete elements of the two planes). The spatial visual category, for instance (division of the stage by means of lighting, the colours of costumes, the disposition of the actors on stage), corresponds to a semantic category (good vs evil, reward vs punishment, life vs death, etc.).

Also there are different types of codes within the performance:

- General codes, not specific to theater (e.g. language, ideology or culture).
- Specific codes, set by theatrical convention (which depends on the performance, the genre, the historical period).
- Mixed codes: use of general codes in a theatrical situation.

Here one must emphasize the importance of theatrical convention. Since it separates arbitrarily the natural ("everyday") world from the world of the spectacle — sometimes by means of a chalk circle —, it can be said to have an illocutionary value. Indeed, the transition from the everyday world to the spectacular necessitates an arbitrary boundary, a passage marked by tradition (curtain raiser, the three knocks in French playhouses) or by the director himself (outside the Bouffes du Nord building, Peter Brook set up a clock whose replica could be found inside the playhouse: transition from natural time towards theatrical time, marked by the symbolic boundary of a threshold). The boundary is not continuous however; it separates the natural world from the theatrical, but admits everyday reality into the performance (e.g. when the intermission is included in the spectacular continuum). The arbitrariness of the break is transparent in many respects, and we are thus reminded that the theatrical performance relies

on conventions. These conventions call up a possible world of illusion, and they define the powers of the observer². The history of theater fully illustrates the mechanisms of convention, and exposes its transgressions: sometimes the natural world shatters the omnipotence of illusion (e.g. Charlie Chaplin in *Limelights* tries to save the apache dancer because he really believes her to be in danger), sometimes the power of illusion intrudes on the everyday world (Orson Welles scared people out of their wits during a well known fictional broadcast which described an extraterrestrial invasion).

Many studies devoted to the theatrical situation attempt to formalize the ephemeral, to delineate the spectacular *event*. Eco has recently described the parameters of the theatrical situation on the basis of a digression found in Peirce's writings (1975:34ff). In this example, a drunken man is exhibited, in order to preach the virtue of temperance. The theatrical situation is characterized by the following marks:

- A human body, everyday gestures torn cut of their "real" context, and thereby turned into "*signs*". Any performance involves a process of semiotization.
- This semiotization derives from the fact that the drunken man is *ostended*: ostension defines the performance.
- This exhibition does not refer to any underlying intentionality, it is grounded on *convention*. The interpretation of the sign is conventional.
- The meanings thus generated are manifold.

3. Theatrical reception

The reception of the theatrical performance was first studied by the Prague School critics. Mukařovský (1934 in 1976) for example regarded the performed or actualized work as an aesthetic object, whose signification is constructed by a collective consciousness of which the instances are the director — influenced by the social context and the sensibility of the time — and the audience. As he writes:

Any work of art is an autonomous sign composed of 1. the *material work*, which has the value of a sensible symbol; of 2. the *aesthetic object*, which is rooted in the collective consciousness, and which takes the place of *meaning*; 3. of the relationship to a denoted object which does not point to a particular definable referent since we are dealing with an autonomous sign

— but to the global context of all social phenomena (science, philosophy, religion, politics, economy) in a given milieu.

The collective nature of spectacular reception concerns mainly a cognitive space determined not only by socio-historical patterns, but also by the inclusion of the perspective experience in an actantial system: the “audience”, which by its mere “presence” can destroy or defocalize the images on the stage. Coughing, laughter, good or poor audience reaction, may considerably alter the constructions imagined by the director. Whereas Mukařovský does not go beyond a social perspective, we should like to extend his approach to meaning in general, and to underscore thereby the aleatory character of this collectivity: the perspective will undergo changes according to the place where the spectator is located, and his ability to shift in or shift out of the performed enunciate (since Wagner, lights have been turned out in the auditorium, thereby excluding the spectators from the scenic enunciate, but sometimes they are turned on again!). The audience appears in fact as a merely symbolic actant, concealing horizons of expectations that eventually point to the *spectator*.

The spectator's activity is divided into two parts:

- a. On the one hand, he is confronted with a scenic *performance*: his order of belief is that of logical denegation (Mannoni's “I know it isn't true, but I believe in it all the same”). He adheres to the scenic universe as if it were real, but he knows very well to what extent the truth guarantee has been suspended.
- b. On the other hand, he has to deal with a *fiction*, to which he adheres both on the primary (alogical, premanifested) and on the secondary modes.

Moreover, the spectator's function is not confined to perception. It also appears as an actant inscribed in the theatrical situation and can be viewed as a cognitive role: that of the observer. The spectacular situation is dependent on an observing instance; the latter instance is syncretic and it can sometimes be delegated to the spectator (most current case), sometimes to the actor (play within the play).

The mixed discourse (visual/auditory vs. narrative) of theatrical spectacle shows similarities with the readable/visible dichotomy favoured by theoreticians of plastic arts. On the one hand, the readable elements would designate verbalization, that is the construction of the narrative text carried out by the spectator. This activity is characterized mainly by linearity. It

relies on memory, on coreference, on multiple re/defocalizations, on integration. On the other hand, the visible dimension would cover the visual constituents displayed on the three-dimensional space of the scene. It is characterized mainly by its tabularity: multipolar ostension of signs organized hierarchically and meant to draw the spectator's attention, to shatter the pattern constructed by him in order to build up another. The contemporaneity of readable and visible, which is typical of performance reception, leads to a dialectical rhetoric: linear vs. tabular.

The opaqueness of the scenic image heavily conditions the task delegated to the spectator. Reception ceaselessly links signifieds denoted by plastic elements to the verbal-iconic system. This signified designates the material dimension of the performance (the actor, through the movements of his body, is at the same time the painter and the canvas), i.e. the visible aspects of staging.

4. Montage

The synthesis between production and reception theories has so far never been attempted. It can only be achieved through an investigation of montage, an analysis that would profit from a comparative study of theater and film. We should like to put forward the following typology:

- a. *The scenic preconstruct*: The production offers suggestions directed to the spectator's reason or desire. The practitioner stages a visual and auditive project of which he provisionally orients the apprehension.
- b. *Perception*: These images are inscribed in a perceptible continuum. We have seen that the main characteristic of the theatrical spectacle is linearity. The performance forms a whole in which no section can be arbitrarily "frozen" by the director. Another distinctive feature of the theatrical image is its self-referential value: the image does not refer to any contextual meaning that would supersede the visual dimension. It exhibits its full materiality: it is aimed at the spectator's attention rather than at his intelligence. This is the function of the plastic signified.
- c. *Montage*: The spectator's task consists of converting the image perceived (phenomenological evidence) into a constructed vision (selection/ordering within the perceptible picture).
- d. *Focalization/defocalization*: The scenic preconstruct consists of a

rhetoric of signals orienting the spectator's attention. One should distinguish between ostension (all the signs on display) and deixis (signals reducing proposed perceptions to significant visions). At any time, these potential horizons can be defocalized by the spectator.

The model would be as follows:

	<i>theater</i>	<i>cinema</i>
<i>preconstruct</i>	image seen by the spectator	vision constructed (selection, treatment, composition) by the director
<i>perception</i>	continuum	discontinuity (frames)
<i>montage</i>	transformation of an iconic continuum into a discontinuous pattern	transformation of a discontinuous sequence into a narrative continuum by the spectator's cognitive induction
<i>focalization/defocalization</i>	oriented towards the perceptible picture	oriented towards the visual picture

Notes

1. A mode of sociological analysis which is itself derived from theater studies. Cf. E. Goffman (1967).
2. For a discussion of convention and observer, see P. Delsemme and A. Helbo (1984) and J. Evans and A. Helbo (1986).

II. FUNDAMENTAL CONTROVERSIES

1. Research methodology

1. General survey

If spectacle analysis at the level of perception, i.e. from the point of view of the audience can perhaps ignore processes (...) — such as the transition of signs from the text to the stage — these processes are however of the highest importance for semiological analysis at the level of creation and realization, i.e. from the angle of sign-production (...).

This opposition, stressed by Tadeusz Kowzan (1981:209), clearly reveals that theatrical practice eludes any absolutist approach, whatever its purpose. Jean Pradier, a neurobiologist, corroborates this observation in the context of sciences; trying to achieve exhaustiveness implies multiplying the standpoints.

One can take two types of analysis into account: the first deals with the definition of the object, and it draws on anthropology, biology, ethnology and psychoanalysis. The second focuses on realization parameters, and it seeks support from linguistics, physics, psychophysiology, semiology and sociology. The analysis of effects on both the audience and the actor leads to experimentation (1982:b2).

The question raised here concerns the ambitions of theatrical theory and its more or less simplifying approaches. Before even questioning the relevance of an investigation in terms of realization or reception, one should test the validity of the theoretical discourse with regard to the spectacle. Theater has always been subjected to an interpretative approach, whose predominance has been implicitly or explicitly accepted. We shall not go into a historiography of the concessions to *criticism*; it will suffice to recall a few landmarks of the link between theory and power such as the dispute about the actor (from Diderot to Stanislavski) which claimed to submit playacting to a *metaphysical* passion; the *literary* controversy about conventions during the “Grand Siècle” (French XVIIth century); the *political* obligation to pay homage to the king among others; a more recent

instance can be found in the rivalry between theater and psychiatric medicine, which foreshadows a confrontation between theatrical practice and science. Maryvonne Saison (1981) explains why this collaboration has met with repeated failure; according to her:

The two final results of this confrontation and of this failure were often the theatricalization of the medical profession, in modalities that differed geographically and historically, or the medicalization of practitioners of theater who turned into scenotherapists under the guidance of the physician (...). Theater was supposed to be confined to the imaginary (p. 19).

The practitioner who wishes to defend his territory can be tempted to adopt a technical approach inspired exclusively from creative practice ("treatises" in the fashion of Donneau de Visé). This kind of empirical work is extremely useful in many respects.

The neurobiological training typical of any profession and the innate qualities that sometimes motivated the choice, can deeply modify the perception and interpretation of the subjects, so that they are able to analyze accurately things that are only perceived globally by untrained people (Pradier 1982:e10).

One should however be suspicious of intuition for its own sake. A pure description which denies the implicit hypothesis on which it is based has only a questionable value.

Any theoretical discourse, whether or not it clarifies its presuppositions, is therefore tinged with ideology. Theater, more than any other art, is aware of this influence, because of its fundamental collusion with the other. How can we therefore read the performance in the most humble, the least prejudiced fashion? This is the question raised in the first place by the critical tradition. *Interpretative criticism* picks out in the performance elements (playacting, text, lighting) that support its thesis. These choices constitute authoritative guarantees that justify nothing. One may object to the lack of explicitness and the arbitrariness of such a project: clues are collected without paying attention to the problem of segmentation of the scene into sign-systems organized more or less hierarchically. *Dramaturgy*, on the other hand studies the dialectic between a scenic form and an ideological content (the *fabula*). "But if *dramaturgy* confines itself to a very general level by focusing on the written text and the scenic and textual macrostructure, *semiotics* attempts this comparative procedure at all levels of the work performed, and in particular at the level of scenic systems. It follows an inverse approach, since it first deals with scenic signs and then endeavours

to reconstruct Form-Content systems by comparisons and additions” (De Marinis, 1978:47). If one trusts the above-mentioned definition, exchanges and syntheses between teatrology and the semiotic enterprise are bound to occur. This is quite a surprising project, if one thinks of the declarations of intention of general semiotics.

General semiotics belongs in theoretical discourse; roughly defined, it proposes to investigate systems of meaning. It is based on three assumptions:

- As a pursuit of intelligibility applied to the text, the image, the film, music, it transforms the real object into an object of knowledge. By denying the existence of an empirical reality, it constructs models apt to represent the workings of the object that has to be described.
- This pursuit is similar to a bet: any theoretical elaboration betrays the limits of the researcher’s initial point of view, the impossibility of achieving textual truth, the boundaries of knowledge, all point to the elusiveness of meaning. There is no global reading, only multiple interpretative approaches that necessarily ignore a more or less important part of their object. Semiotic reduction must therefore take into account non-interpretable elements at the confines of its investigative scope.
- The pursuit of intelligibility also focuses on its own presuppositions, on the conditions legitimating its exercise. Explanation models, for instance, are influenced by linguistic categories (articulation, nomination) that support them; likewise, they cannot escape the socio-cultural influence of the milieu in which they were formulated (sociological categories, pedagogical genres, technical-sensory units, communication channels, etc.). In addition to its activity of semantic manipulation, semiotics therefore inaugurates a second field: that of a social rhetoric, of a symbolic grammar analyzing the games of meaning that govern society.

In theater, such an approach has to take up specific challenges. The most formidable of these is probably the absence of any stable unit. The very nature of the theatrical continuum makes any attempt at segmentation into scenes or any other articulation, seem quite arbitrary. This is even more obvious in the case of methodological reduction. The only tangible medium is the text, which is only an extremely limited material in a theatrical performance, except when it is used metaphorically¹. It is situated in a

rather unstable set of relations: scenic instances (actor's voice and body, objects, lighting, architecture), the audience (identity, desire/pleasure, price of the ticket). The text belongs in a performance universe: it is integrated into it, and does not precede it, except for the reader, and it derives its meaning from significant networks (each sign-system being momentarily significant with regard to the others).

Theater, which is a live and fleeting art form, is difficult to record. Some critics, aware of this chronological hindrance, have resorted to video recordings in order to analyze the structure of live theater; this only offers a partial solution: it throws light on the end-product but ignores reception — the invention of signs by the spectators: a prefabricated meaning is forced on them, turning them into Pavlovian dogs (decoding by trials and error, favoured by sociology of theater). The semantic creativity of the audience is not taken into account by the video method. Moreover, this instrument is partial: it reflects the vision of the camera, and it adopts its choices; it apprehends sign systems involved in a well-defined communication process, but it fails to structure this system. On the whole, the recording technique proves to be a means towards a semiotics of segmentation, which is rather premature (Cf. Keir Elam 1980).

2. Semiotics of theater

Because of the difficulties aforementioned, semiotics of theater cannot simply conform to the model of general semiotics. It has to abide by two categorial imperatives:

- the intimate interrelationship between theater practice — inclusive of the spectator's response — and theater theory;
- the inadequacy of the interpretative grids derived from narrative paradigms.

By renouncing a pedagogical purpose, semiotics of theater will play a propaedeutic part; it will interconnect several sciences of the spectacle whose relevance will have to be tested. This interactive function will also be of use when semiotics of theater is applied to theater practice. A few creative artists have understood this very well; they have based their experiments on a semiotic discourse: performance theater, participation theater, body art, acting out, all dream of such a theoretical support. A few performances by the *Plan K* or the *Vicinal* centred on simulation games whose basic inspi-

ration, structure and meaning are derived from semiotics. This theater is based on relations of symbolic exchanges linked to gestures, and to biological and autobiographical elements; it replaces the lost referent by its own universe, and as such, it calls for semiotic analysis as a natural counterpart.

This kind of spectacle sets out to challenge a traditional concept of theatrology (mimesis), and therefore, it pursues the same goal as the theoretical enterprise supposed to decode it. Baudrillard writes that *representation*.

is rooted in the equivalence of the sign and reality (even if this equivalence is a mere illusion, it remains a fundamental axiom). *Simulation*, compared to the chimerical principle of equivalence, takes the opposite view: it starts from the radical negation of the value of signs; it sees them as the reversion, the death of all reference. While representation tries to recuperate simulation by interpreting it as a fake representation, simulation undermines the whole representational process by exposing it as simulation itself (1981: 16-17).

3. Relationships to other scientific disciplines

If one takes previous research into account, theater semiotics has already acquired some degree of specificity. In the field of realization, communication analysis (inspired from linguistics) has proved unsuccessful: the idealistic presuppositions of a pre-spectacle (author, text, etc.) realized by the stage have given way to a more materialistic approach; Ubersfeld, De Marinis, Elam now focus on the *signification* of the event performed; they attempt to piece together the crucial articulations of the signifying chain, on the itinerary of the performance. They are therefore obliged to highlight the essential structures of spectacles: conventions (theatrical codes such as fiction, scene, etc.), extra-theatrical codes (linguistic, ideological, cultural), mixed codes (the relationship between the actor's playacting and his special line). In addition to this, one can witness the development of a semiotics of reception, which tackles the analysis of the stage-auditorium relationship; this approach has come to raise the issue of the *delegation* of pleasure or knowledge through the theatrical medium.

In spite of some unmistakable progress, this double approach still remains dependent, theoretically or pragmatically, on general semiotics, which is meant for the reader's universe. Moreover, it often neglects major historical or geographical connotations: can we speak of stage-auditorium interaction without losing sight of the fact that the actor/audience separa-

tion, encores, applause are recent cultural creations of the western world?

Semiotics of theater should therefore put forward its own paradigm by creating a model that does not draw on the communication process, and that is suited for the factual nature of theater. This approach implies two postulates:

1. The theatrical phenomenon should be viewed as a collective system of enunciation. This hypothesis implies that the stage/auditorium split has to be abandoned in order to grasp an act of creation of meaning. The aim is to point out the distinctive features (relationship to fiction, to the everyday world, to denegation) that unite the spectator and the actor within the (self)-representation act.

Therefore the theatrical act requires a dynamic approach. The *function* of observer in the performance pact, the different stages of the enunciation contract (opening function, complicity), the presuppositions, the involvement of the subject, the enunciation marks can all be listed statistically in the very course of the performance: modalities (alethic, deontic, make-believe, informative), distance, tension, transparency; interpretation theory, however, remains open in the perspective defined by Goffman (1959).

2. The construction of the theatrical object must take the spectacular paradigm into account. Many studies (Duvignaud (1970), Goffman (1959), Baudrillard (1981), Debord (1967)) have managed to demonstrate that the spectacle is not exceptional, but rather the very fabric of our culture. But one should still situate theater in a set of multiple effects related to the spectacle. This is certainly a huge task. Apart from a few exceptions (Piscator, Meyerhold, the "Gesamtkunstwerk"), we are used to separating various aspects of spectacle. This fragmentation of the medium should not forestall more essential demarcations. Theater, opera, circus, share common differences from the everyday world. It must be possible to identify features of the spectacle between the boundaries of pure mimesis (expressed by images) and pure playing (expressed by music). This shift in the angle of vision (from theater toward the theatrical, from the actant to the function) shows how far human and natural sciences are bound

to collaborate in theater analysis. Surely Behavioural biology offers a spectacular paradigm. Henri Laborit does not hesitate to link the spectacle to behavioural features (courtship, ceremonies): "We are dealing with systems," he writes, "whose organization we have to discover before understanding their workings" (1982). Sociology (Duvignaud 1970) speaks of the theatricality of the everyday world, and it analyzes the spectacular features within the framework of a universal rhetoric. And finally, linguists (Serpieri (1978), Elam (1980)) speak of deixis and ostension, i.e. functions of language dramatized on stage.

The semiotics of theater is about to break new ground. According to the few landmarks available so far, it can be situated in a network of interdisciplinary exchanges that will more than ever stress the need of an accurate definition of semiotic practice.

4. The scientific quest

Although semiotics has by no means reached its ecumenical phase, the idea of a comparative methodology inscribed in a contrastive field is steadily gaining ground. This movement outwards originates in the first place from attempts at definition through historical affiliation. Drawing on the linguistic model, Jakobson advocates resorting to the sign (an allegedly generic notion which covers particular sets of signs). This view harks back to Locke, Lambert, Bolzano, Husserl, Peirce, Saussure, Cassirer (see Mounin 1970). Sebeok favours a multiplication of the interpretative grids which probably remains subordinate to communication: the Saussurean legacy meets philosophical (Locke, Peirce, Morris) and medical (Hippocrates, Empiricus, Locke, Foucault) traditions. Greimas (1976), among others, advocates the inclusion of non-linguistic systems. He also advocates emphasizing the production of meaning (conceptualization and organization) rather than the inventory of signs. The relations between semantics and semiotics are still a matter of debate, but one conclusion seems firmly established: semiotics has freed itself from the sign, as a science it is no longer ashamed of its methodological transfers and instead attempts to measure its relevance by controlling its manipulations. The semiotics of theater has gone through these historical mutations: it was first practised in terms of segmentation and grids; it later asserted itself as a particularly complex discipline combining a multiplicity of codes.

The multi-layered nature of the theatrical phenomenon has been discussed at length: it is based at the same time on narrativity, on an interaction of non-verbal codes, and on psychological flows of energy. It can be seen as an economical medium which brings together all the models of the semiotic approach and which at the same time eludes them all. What can be said of an approach that oversteps the boundaries of the theatrical to encroach on those of the spectacular. The text-performance dichotomy would give way to an infinitely more complex network of figures, including among others the seen/perceived, verbal/non-verbal systems, etc.

We have tried in other articles (1975b) to highlight, in different theories of theater, the marks of a protracted struggle against the tendency to dodge the issue of performance, and the non-textual aspects. It is preferable not to dwell once more on the often misleading sociological motivations of this obstinate clinging to the text, but to establish a parallel between the aims of teatrology and the aims of semiotics. It is hoped that in this way it will be possible to test the relevance of the semiotic approach alongside the theater event.

In his work on the discourse and the social sciences, Greimas makes a distinction between various types of scientific discourse. He takes up "the classic double definition of truth, either as internal consistency or as derived from the adequacy of language with the reality it describes" (1976:20). The division between the scientific quest and the adhesion to reality seems relevant to theatrical criticism: the bibliographical tradition in this field emphasizes the recent upsurge of the former approach. While the semiotics of theater seemed at first to have neglected its methodological principles to focus on the *segmentation* of its object, it is now bogged down in *questioning*. This progression is extremely important, since it reveals that teatrology seems to be on opposite lines to narratology. This reversal indicates that the object in question eludes any simplified approach. In the same way as the theatrical object seems aleatory, the very idea of a theatrical theory defies continuity. Here, more than in other fields, the subject remains present in the discourse, but destroys and reconstructs itself ceaselessly. Interpreting theater cannot be separated from theater practice: the addresser is assimilated to the spectator implied by the spectacle, or identified in turn with the observer attending the spectacle, with the actor, with the director. The theater critic takes part in a series of situations which compel him/her to be performative. Moreover, these situations are multiple and fleeting: there is a tangle of alternating dialogues between actors,

between actors and authors, between actors and spectators, etc.

When reacting to Greimas's theses, Jacques Leenhardt (1984) wrote:

One should on the contrary regard the subject of knowledge itself as an entity which is constructed with regard to *what is known*, which is defined with regard to the course of its quest (...). One must therefore admit, together with the semiotics of the critical text, that the discourse of the human sciences assumes narrative forms, but one must also take care to show how these narratives construct the subject of this field of knowledge and do not simply reveal an illusory construction (k6).

Leenhardt's constructivist perspective is particularly well suited to theater, where the spectator — and a fortiori the critic — is involved in a process of retroactive insertion: for the actor, speech is a mode of action; for the spectator, being present in the theatrical area and abiding by the conventions, public or even dramatic participation all refer to the same mode of action. The collective system of scenic enunciation has a performative value intimately related to the organization of spectacle. Any kind of theatrical criticism, whether semiotic or not, has to be aware of its own determinism, and should first emphasize the specificity of its contract. Several components combine in a critical attitude, and they can only be taken on by a plural person.

- The critic first identifies with a spectator's consciousness, accompanied by its imaginary double, i.e. a potential actor.
- The critic reads the reversion process between the creative act and the cultural figure involved in reception.
- The critic evaluates the grammar of a language of spectacle. The critic's task is organized along different axes: participant, witness, judge.

Greimas's definition of critical consistency leads to relevant distinctions between:

- The object of knowledge.
- The reading isotopie (interpretation).
- The metadiscourse supporting the reading isotopie.

The latter operations are often the least familiar. It is often tempting to conceal the pre-comprehension of the object. In the field of theater in particular, the category of mimesis often serves as an alibi for a false innocence: by focusing exclusively on mimesis, theater research loses sight of the fact that the performance produces what it claims to imitate. The com-

mon pitfall in discourse about theater is precisely that of ignoring the conditions of theatrical productivity. During the performance, a dialogical experience takes place, which can only be accounted for at the very instant of its occurrence: the spectator's impulses, the subtle game of stage-auditorium interaction, the expectations of the time and space of performance (underlined by the intermission, etc.) all make an investigation into the status of the *subject* the major priority in theater semiotics. How can one be satisfied with a poetic-narrative reading, which is nothing but an account of a convergence between the universe of the character and the universe of the reader: theatrical enunciation has a definitely collective nature, and its shortcomings (the lacunae of the character with regard to the spectator's consciousness-memory) only corroborate its factual and phenomenological aspects. If one takes into account the context in which theater criticism will inevitably take its place, the main task of the researcher will be to seek insertion into a collective system of enunciation. Since it creates meaning and delegates desire, the spectacular process will first have to be defined. In order to achieve some degree of autonomy, the latter approach will have to acknowledge the multiple presuppositions of the theater phenomenon:

1. A referential presupposition referring in this case to the only possible world of the performance in praesentia.
2. A pragmatic presupposition: the rules governing intelligibility, the mode of belief typical of the theatrical event. Enunciation competence will only be grasped within this framework: arousing curiosity, making believe, legitimating power, etc.
3. A lexical presupposition, preparing the ground for collective meaning.

When trying to define spectacular discourse, it is hard to avoid dealing with the category of paradox. A first approach would grasp the theatrical process in terms of *delegation* of knowledge by an author to a scenic medium directed to the spectator. A second hypothesis would reverse the transaction of the contract. The spectator entrusts the scenic instance (and the author) with a *specular* power consisting in communicating to himself the image of his own desire. In both cases, there remains the double bind of a logical interaction: one of the interlocutors has first-hand information enabling him to manipulate the order of communication. This blatant circularity is undoubtedly highly debatable because of the sharp distinctions and

the mediations it brings about. If theater is rooted in contradiction, it may be hazardous to look forward to a logical resolution. Theater offers an open dialectic in which a few tensions can be outlined.

1. The paradox of the subject: "Theatrical discourse", Anne Ubersfeld (1977:264) writes "is a discourse without a subject". This peremptory assertion is immediately qualified: "A discourse without a subject involving two speaking voices". This concession is of the highest importance since, whether concealed or displayed, the subject is always present in theater. Whether one accepts, like Greimas (1976), the hypothesis of a narrative approach to theater, or one advocates, like Lyotard (1973), a wider grasp of the energetic devices involved in the performance, one cannot possibly dispose of the subject. The subject of enunciation, submitted to (actantial or modal) internal migrations, survives all metamorphoses; this is the very essence of the theatrical paradox: because of its pursuit, the individual subject (spectator or actor) is doomed to lose himself through a game of delegations into the collective subject (audience) that perpetuates it. Therefore, the dispossession of the subject can be delineated by a series of rejections: in the production script the author gives up his enunciating I to partake in an I enunciated by the process of staging; the actor dispossesses his body through his voice. The character's discourse is itself without any fixed subject since its emergence is conditioned by the deixis of the spectacular performance.
2. The paradox of the referent: Everyone agrees about the self-focusing character of theater. The construction of the scenic referent is akin to oxymoron: the "reality" of the spectacle, its verisimilitude, presuppose conventions. Landowski describes this procedure quite accurately: "It is an imaginary instance invested with a semiotic existence, but deprived of any reality outside the spectacular frame which generated it, which guarantees the reality of the spectacle".
3. The paradox of illusion: Theatrical illusion is fundamentally ambivalent: simulation, playacting are only possible thanks to the spectator, who initiates pleasure. There is some perversity in a vision which approves of deception provided it can be the victim of it itself. Imposture supersedes illusion, which reveals a

whole tangle of contradictory motivations.

4. The performative paradox: The nature of the referential paradox underscores the illocutionary dimension of scenic enunciation; two discursive moments are involved here, according to Eco:
 - (a) the assertion of a convention of deceit;
 - (b) the pseudo-assertion by the character/spectator within the possible world determined in this way.

The illocutionary dimension would as it were be inscribed in the theatrical sign itself. Every event would therefore bear the mark of its discursive contradiction: theatrical speech would rank as an act, but a programmed preconstructed act, which is referred to a more fundamental relationship that nurtures it.

5. The paradox of the text and the performance. Thanks to the deictic nature of the spectacular phenomenon, it is possible to elucidate the text-performance contradiction. Indeed, theatrical signs refer to one another, and they cannot be organized hierarchically, except on the spur of the moment.
6. The paradox of the conceptual level and the body. Theater is an alliance of the symbolic and the semiotic, of communicative and non-communicative elements, of the represented and the specular. Western tradition undoubtedly favours the linguistic medium, but eastern theater (dancing, Siva, yoga) links the body to the sign. This is an unescapable dialectic between two systems meant for the invention and the transformation of pleasure into discourse.

From the considerations formulated above, we can draw a conclusion concerning the constant circularity of the enunciation act in theater. The spectacular event is a flux of contracts in constant mutation. The critic can only pinpoint a few moments of these exchanges:

- the opening function which signals the thresholds of the universe represented (curtain, applause, introductions, the three knocks in French playhouses, the bell, etc.);
- the incorporating function, which suggests horizons of expectation, a social consciousness, an allocation of parts;
- an interactive function which points to the self-conscious recognition of the previous norm.

The theatrical act is a fleeting aleatory object which offers itself to a reading of a process of change: that of the *I* in the grip of symbolic constraints such as codes, ideology or duration. This is the ultimate paradox of the performance double bind, as described by Duvignaud: “I am not this man or woman who sits passively while the actors gesticulate, but together with others, I am the foundation, the fabric without which this imaginary existence would be void” (1977).

Note

1. One should distinguish however between the *dramatic text*, which is meant to be read and visualized inwardly, and the *theatrical text*, which is meant for acting and therefore contains production notes.

2. Communication and cognition

In the chapter devoted to theater in his *Introduction à la sémiologie*, Mounin declares that the postulate which states that theater can be approached directly *sub specie communicationis* is unacceptable; “[...] this would assume that those very problems were resolved which scrupulous and complex analysis of the theatrical spectacle should reveal firsts, define afterwards, explore within the full range of the data, then perhaps begin to solve” (1971:87). The author of *La communication théâtrale* further adds that he considers a distinction as taken for granted between two relationships which the theatrical phenomenon sustains:

- the actor-spectator relationship or, more appropriately, the stage-spectator relationship (the term ‘stage’ covering actor, character, designer) in which stimulation reactions occur — vague Pavlovian reflexes which are not in any way related to communication. One should note that linguistic communication is as much excluded as communication in the wider sense.
- the character-character relationship simulated by the actors, a relationship in which, curiously, Mounin, following Buysens, acknowledges a phenomenon of analogy with reality. This analogy justifies the intervention of communication: “Actors in the theater simulate real characters who communicate among themselves” (Mounin 1971:88).

It is important to be precise about terms: for Mounin, the act of communication implies a sender’s intention to transmit a message, postulates the receiver’s perception of this intention, and requires that the message influence the behavior of the interlocutor. Mounin affirms the reversibility of the phenomenon: a sender can in his turn become a receiver and vice versa. He posits transposability as well; “a sender (of messages) communicates with a receiver [...] if the latter can respond to the former through the same medium, in the same code (or in a code which can translate the messages of

the first code integrally).”

- a. *The Stage-House Relationship*. One questions the validity of dividing relational systems in this way. It is particularly hard to see what makes communication and stimulation incompatible in the relationship between the stage and the house. In effect, Mounin specifies his thinking by affirming that “rather than trying to ‘say’ something to the spectators, as the use of an improper term generally makes one think, the author and director, stage designer, actors, costume designer, stage-manager are all attempting to act upon the spectators” (Mounin 1971:87). Stimulation would thus be categorized as a conative function, of which the least one can say is that it is not contrary to communication. Moreover, a function like this is not limited to the theater nor even to the spectacle because, according to Mounin, it postulates the superposition of intellection of the sign with a pragmatic reaction to the stimulus — a superposition inherent to the perlocutionary value of the signal. (The word *danger* for example, is perceived as a sign and provokes a behaviour. One could cite erotic literature, advertising, the mass media).
- b. *The Actor’s Sphere*. On the other hand, one should emphasize that to consider linguistic communication as belonging to the same category as that of the actors is precisely what is most debatable and what is most easily done. Thus in a play such as Edward Albee’s *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, linguistic communication is specifically disparaged since the behaviour of the actors contradicts their comprehension of the messages: the meaning of replies has no connection with the behaviour of those who make them, verbal exchanges are supplanted to some extent by pragmatic signs — by a system of relationships defined through interaction by the behaviour of the characters. The variables of the model reside in the symmetry of the behaviours (in destruction); the system is regulated as a function of overbidding — the limit being the myth of the son up to the moment when the distinction collapses between the behaviour which the myth demands and any other behaviour.

It therefore seems to us that the division Mounin proposes between stimulation and communication is not entirely relevant and that it entails

analytical categories to which one cannot subscribe without examination. We will evaluate Mounin's thesis through a consideration of three problems:

- 1) The validity of the rubrics to which Mounin reduces the theatrical phenomenon.
- 2) The relevance of the concept of stimulation, or rather, of conative communication as it applied to the theatrical phenomenon.
- 3) The relevance of the concept of communication.

Secondly, we would like to rehabilitate and define the concept of communication as a dynamic process inside which the theatrical act takes place.

1. The validity of the rubrics

Confining ourselves to the rubric which covers relationships where stimuli occur, we are struck by a presupposition which limits the theatrical phenomenon to the spectacle. In fact, by the way he uses them, Mounin (1971:87-94) seems to allow for synonymy among the following terms: theater, spectacle, theatrical spectacle, theatrical functioning, theater in the auditorium, street theater, "the circuit which goes from the stage to the house," "theatrical formulas," "the theatrical accomplishment," "the theatrical experience," "the theatrical situation," "the play performed in its entirety," "theatrical action," theatrical performance, "the construction of a network of very complex relationships between the stage and the house," "the theatrical work."

Thus, on the phenomenological level, theater would be defined in terms of the perception of a global continuum, a perception in which linguistic, psychoanalytic, and cultural codes occur as functions of face-to-face interlocutors. Such a thesis could be coherent if it didn't appear on an equal footing with remarks which consider the text as the instrument of a relationship relayed between an author who is identified with a personal-intentional instance, and a spectator: "We are in the presence of a one-way relationship which simply uses the linguistic instrument as does all literature." Here there is a conjunction of two incompatible methodological presuppositions: the one materialist, where the enunciation is formed at each moment of the play and forms the play in a coming and going of identification and distancing; the other, idealist, permits a split between what comes before and what after the spectacle, accepts the authority of an all-knowing sense to be

disregarded and/or invoked. The confusion between these two *a priori*s leads one to spurn the distinction between the theatrical text (destined for the spectacle, intended for performance and thus intended to take part in a complex whole) and the dramatic text (which can be read as non-theater and thus does not call for a spectator). This is why Mounin classes the theatrical text with “all literature,” negating the possibility that theatrical writing is specific.

2. The relevance of the concept of stimulation

Reduction to the conative function does not seem sufficient to characterize the theatrical phenomenon. We will demonstrate, with the example of a particular theatrical code, the set, that this function is inseparable from the phatic function and that it is integrated into a process which can be qualified as communicative without thereby answering to the norms which Mounin proposes. For purposes of the proof we will accept Mounin’s intentional perspective provisionally. Logically, in the case of the set, one must admit that the relationship is irreversible:

the sender, a designer who is not present during the performance, selects the performance, selects the elements of the set in terms of his meaning scheme, which is free to take intelligibility on the part of the receiver into account or not.

The receiver, thus, can perceive the set differently. Does the divergence in handling semantic technique suffice, to infer the absence of communication? We think not because the set seems first of all to be:

- a means of transmission: the set echoes the play which solicits a public. Thus it expresses the feelings of the sender and informs the receiver about the location. By the simple fact that there is a set, there is a location;
- on the other hand, the set also communicates information about the contents of the location; it establishes a specific dramatic location. In this bipolarity one recognizes Prieto’s (1972) distinction between the notificative indication and the significant indication (the first being a signal indicating to the receiver that the sender intends to transmit a message to him; the second indicates to the receiver that the meaning which the sender is trying to establish figures among those which the receiver can accept, and indicates a class of pos-

sibilities and its predicate as a function of circumstances).

Thus, the set communicates to the public the form and content of the location where text and performance acquire their meaning. The public's attention (and eventually the signal that the receiver has understood the communication: applause, whistling, muttering) are the response to this communication. That the set expresses, as Passeron says with regard to painting, "the feelings and experiences" of the author or designer, cannot be denied. But the set's expressive function is formed in accord with rules germane not only to decoration but also to information. The backdrop of a scene is only reduced to painting if it is removed from the stage location. It is involved in a process "visible to the public eye" and does not just *present*, but seeks to *show*, and is thus dependent on the one addressed. If the set is an information process utilizable by the receiver, that is because it carries a message in an appropriate form. The receiver must be able to utilize the set. In "giving form" to the message, the designer must take into account the possibilities he has to realize his design (construction) and the capacities of the public to see. Corneille's avowals concerning the genesis and rewriting of *Clitandre* as a function of the sets of the Marais confirm this idea. The more suitable the form of the transmission to the form of the information, the better the message will "get through." The more precise the content of the transmission, the better the public will understand the content of the information (of the message). The model which results from this compromise between information and its practical exigencies is the model of communication (or at least of Prieto's *indication*). Analysis of the set demonstrates that a kind of communication is possible under conditions which contradict Mounin's definition:

- even though sender and receiver are familiar with each other's codes, it does not follow that their codes are identical.
- As Franco Ruffini notes (1974:37), "communication on the part of one of the interlocutors can be limited to the phatic function [...] which in general utilizes a different code from that of the other interlocutor."
- One also doubts the possibility that the interlocutors can translate the message integrally. It is entirely possible that the receiver missees a certain meaning which is expressed in the set. This does not mean that the intention to communicate (the intention to transmit a message) was absent. Furthermore, one should note that this alle-

gation concerning the set is valid also for the text: Jean Tardieu's play *Un mot pour un autre* alters, specifically through lexical deviations, the competence of the spectator who is required to decode the situation and to refer to the cultural context.

What is true of the set is also true of the text. If one accepts Mounin's hypothesis — debatable — that the author's text has priority over the performance at, for example, the level of stage directions, one ends up with a theory of simple implication which considers the text as the invariant support, the determinant function of a performance — the production being variable (Barthes, 1970). Such a process implies a double "resemantization" and "desemantization," first at the sender's level (the transmutation of the text into non-verbal signs is altered by the emotive function of the director and the actor), then at the level of the receiver-spectator who has neither the same codes nor all the codes of the message at his disposition (he can miss cultural or linguistic allusions).¹ The presence of the phatic function thus doesn't entail the perception and the use of the same codes.

3. Relevance of the concept of communication

As a whole, the reservation formulated up to now prompt us to review the concept of communication as Mounin defines it, especially where it is applied to the theater:

a) The first base of the definition is intentionality: "Linguistics has [...] placed a central value on the function of communication. This has led Buyssens and other linguists to clearly distinguish those facts which reveal an *intent* to communicate which can be demonstrated (the existence of a locutor bound to an auditor by a message which determines verifiable behaviors) and to separate them from facts which do not present this character — even if we have until now called these facts signs and have studied them in the language. The facts which Trubeckoj calls *indexes* and *symptoms* [...] are information which the speaker gives about himself without any intention to communicate them" (Mounin 1971:68).

The distinction established in this way, which emerges through separating signal from index, can be applied to theater without consequently enabling us to neatly unravel what results from one and what from the other. In theater signs exist, from the actor for example, which do not furnish any information about the locutor or about a specific message, but

which in practice manifest an intention to say or to do something. In addition to these intentional signs there are indexes (slips, mimicry, inflections, intonations).² Like non-intentional connotations, they are the marks of an enrichment or an impoverishment of meaning. Thus, while one cannot deny the sender's intention to communicate, it is not exclusive.

b) The second criterion Mounin retains with which to disqualify the concept of communication in the theater is that of reversibility. Though one must say at the outset that this norm, considered definitive for all communication, is certainly debatable (can't a message coded in Morse require a gestural, oral, or silent response, etc.?), it is not impossible to apply it to the theater where the receptor-spectator, not content to be a counter-sender returning signs of a different nature, picks out, chooses, rejects, indeed emits signs and influences the actor in a more or less complex exchange determined by the people sitting close by, the architecture of the auditorium, the price of the ticket, the date of the performance, etc. Paul Anrieu (Ravar and Anrieu, 1964) has studied these "temperature" phenomena in the audience (coughing, movement, nervousness, spectators laughing at the wrong time, laughing fits, etc.).

c) This characteristic of the spectator, that he sends messages, leads us to examine the sender-receiver dichotomy in Mounin. To remain faithful to his thesis, we limit the theatrical phenomenon to a stereotyped archetype which unites:

- 1) "the reconstitution, stylized and much magnified, of the non-linguistic experience which the author wanted to communicate" (Mounin, 1971:89);
- 2) the activity, to which the spectators devote themselves, of interpreting indexes;
- 3) the mediatorial work between the author and the spectators.

The theatrical phenomenon, a dynamic subjected to entropy, requires a sender-creator pole, a receiver-interpretative pole, a channel of relays — a fixed triad which seems to neglect the specificity of the theatrical act, adding doubtless to the volition of the message and making of the mediatorial work itself a sender, a triad which also neglects the modifications brought about by socio-historical codes capable of transforming today's receiver into tomorrow's sender: do we not constantly attend, in adaptations of Aristophanes' political theater for example, new readings of classical discourses — a triad which ultimately reduces to the role of indexes-interpreter

a spectator who is both receiver and sender of signals, and to whom the interpretative function is more or less central according to his psycho-cultural and sociological baggage (can the professional critic be put into the same category as the anonymous spectator?).

Finally, one must point out that this conception neglects entirely the active character of the spectator on the level of social practice, neglects even "emotional contagion."³ One will remember that Mounin defines the sender in terms of the priority of an author addressing himself, uni-directionally, to the spectator, through the channel of a text put through various transmutations which are always isomorphic. This conception is anachronistic: the habit of writing for a public is Western and recent. In the seventeenth century the writer conceived for the actor; his message was addressed to his regular troupe and they determined it, thus playing a role as senders. This conception, further, gives priority to the text (ignoring *commedia dell'arte*, ignoring contemporary theater's textless creations)⁴ and, above all, it spurns equally the emotive function of the actor and the spectator. One can no more deny the specificity of the voice, the speech, the body of the actor (we speak of an actor's presence) than one can pass over without comment the mutters, coughs, and inflections of the public. These, moreover, some people class as signals, postulating that the spectator has perceived the message and allowing for reversibility in the stage-audience relationship. The hiatus between sender and receiver is thus put back into question insofar as it regroups too many heterogeneous relationships: if one considers the actor as a sender of the same status vis-à-vis the public as the author, it will be necessary even within the first group of senders to take into account an author-actor or author-director-actor relationship, itself in a conflict of addressers and addressees since, as we have seen, "stage" moments have a reciprocal influence just as spectators do. It is as a function of socio-cultural codes that the stage-house system of communication is given priority, but what is in question is a pragmatic process of communication, homologous to that which puts author-director-actor in conflict because there truly is a reciprocal influence. This interaction should not obfuscate the continuity of the theatrical chain because the work of the director will be effected in terms of a here-and-now communication with the public. At every instant, each term of the process is in interaction.

To conclude, the theatrical phenomenon seems to be, in actual fact, within the scope of communication process because it is comprised, among other things, of intensional signs: it postulates a reversible relationship

between the sender and the receiver; and it accentuates the phatic, conative, and emotive functions. Nevertheless, the condition that codes be identical seems less authenticated. This reservation should not by any means suffice to disqualify the concept of theatrical communication; on the contrary, it gives credence to the concept of a reactivation of the message whose intentionality, while undoubtedly unconscious, is inherent in every allocutive relation. While it characterizes the essential signs of the theater, volition is thus not incompatible with the idea of a creative transaction between the code of the "inventio," i.e., the message, and the new code (theatrical, ideological, linguistic, and sensorial) fomented by the message, etc. Thus, semiological reading is in itself creative within a circularity, an "act," in which all the interlocutors participate.

Notes

1. Ubersfeld mentions the methodological allusions of Racine and the dialectual ones of Goldoni. We ourselves have alluded to the case of Tardieu (cf. Helbo 1975b: 75).
2. The boundary between the index and the signal is sometimes hard to determine: what about the silences or mutters or certain actors which sometimes attract the spectator's attention like true signals?
3. Ubersfeld (1977:57) reports a case of fantasy participation in a theatrical performance.
4. We note here that other anachronism which makes the director into the simple intermediary of the author. One remembers that, apart from a few prestigious exceptions, the modern conception of the director goes back to Antoine.

3. Pragmatics and discourse

We shall define theatrical discourse as an enunciation act with the following properties¹:

1. It is made up of two elements: the participants and the linguistic event, which is seen as the modification of a situation that of the spectator, or of the actor.
2. The participants can be reduced to a minimum of two instances (and perhaps to several kinds of role-playing): an actual and a potential agent. How to determine the identity of the agent (spectator, actor or author), or his actantial function is still an open question which should be discussed according to the empirical data provided by teatrology. Actor and spectator, individual and group can perhaps take on these functions by turns; we study this question further in this book from the vantage of the problem of the observer.
3. Any enunciation inscribed in a communication situation allows for context analysis (Van Dijk 1977). The latter element is seen as a situation of speech interaction (Van Dijk 1977), a situation which is liable to a description in terms of action theory (Moles-Rohmer 1977; Van Dijk 1976; Schmidt 1974). Indeed, in a given context, the instances need not belong to the same cultural or linguistic communities, but they are supposed to share the same interaction conventions (Van Dijk 1977). The convention itself situates the speakers as subjects and transforms their *saying* into *doing*.
4. The communication situation is characterized by the fact that the partners are present (except for the author?) and that they are in direct dialogical contact (Sandig 1971) even if the mediation phenomenon sometimes interferes (according to a model still to be determined).

The criteria mentioned above concern more or less any speech act. One will resort to the empirical data collected by teatrology in order further to define the status of the interlocutor, the conditions of discursive production and reception, the relationship between convention, illusion and presupposition.

1. A double delegation process

What do we understand by the term theatrical language or discourse? The first answer will be of a dialectic nature: whether one deals with the performance, the text, the union (inclusion?) of text and performance, or comedy, illusion, convention, and simulacrum, one has to go back to the double process of imitation of reality, i.e. re/desemantization or re/decoding. This double transition from reality to the stage amounts however to little more than a terminological diversion if its meaning and working are not clarified.

According to a first hypothesis, the spectacular process partakes of a delegation phenomenon between several entities. The performance would therefore be a communication act to be included, together with roadsigns, in social sign systems (Buysens 1970). The movement would start from the author towards the spectator through the stage medium. Communication is thus reduced to its prescriptive function of behaviour stimulation. This theory presupposes a split between stages anterior and posterior to the spectacle. It postulates a knowledge existing prior to the performance. The most recent form of this theory is cybernetic, whereby theater is defined as a specific communication medium between people, by means of representation (mimesis), and it makes a distinction between intra- and extrafictional communication, the latter being characterized by the spectator's feedback conveyed through specific codes. On closer analysis, this appeal to logic is *paradoxical*: the theatrical performance appears as a communication discourse only after the ludic confrontation between two situations that have each their own deixis. On the one hand, an enunciation system linking speaker to addressee; on the other hand, a reception situation which only contains an addressee. This contradiction can be solved only at the cost of a presupposed convention: the *theatrical* presence of the speaker embodied in roles, a culture and a specific poetics.

It is also possible to reverse the delegation process and to assume that it starts from the spectator towards the stage or the author, insofar as they can be differentiated (cf. the *Plan K* theater in Belgium). In this hypothesis,

the spectator commissions the scenic entity, he/she entrusts it with the power of communicating to him the reflection of his desire. The notion of delegation of desire appears here as a semiotized, simplified form of phenomenological concepts such as Sartre's unauthenticity or Brecht's alienation-involvement dynamics: the actor, both object and reflection of the spectator's vision, enacts the spectator's imposture. Lyotard's libidinal theories give a convincing account of the process by which the split of the performance is thus artificially mended:

a theory of theatrical signs, a practice of theatrical signs (...) are based on the acceptance of the nihilism inherent to the performance (...); there is no gap to fill (...); meaning itself is nothing but a substitute for the displacement (Lyotard 1973).

The relationship to the spectator appears here, through an exploitation of the desire, as an imposition of social discourse on the inexpressible, as a language game knitting together on stage the loose stitches of speech. Through delegation, the theatrical phenomenon enters the communication field of transparency and contact (Helbo 1978: 50 and ff.). The characters of Ionesco's *The Bald Soprano*, e.g., aptly symbolize the role of the speakers (subjects) in theater. According to Metz, this contract is situated within an order of belief, but I would rather call this a *logic* of communication (Metz 1977b). Indeed, the double bind is fulfilled: one of the interlocutors, i.e. the spectator has got firsthand information (his desire) that allows him to govern the communication frame, while his partner accepts his *deontological* norms (in Ducrot's acceptation). This feature constitutes a common point of most teatrological theories, and many studies attempt to apply Jakobsonian functions to the theatrical phenomenon (Ubersfeld 1977).

2. Enunciation instances

Both the first and the second hypothesis postulate a sharp distinction between the production and reception systems relative to the enunciate. Identifying the sending or receiving instance amounts therefore to a binary choice — only the starting point varies. Two cyclical processes can therefore be defined:

1. Real author - director - collective system of scenic enunciation (person/character) - audience - audience response towards the author.

2. Real spectator - implied spectator - character - actor - actor and back to the spectator.

In both chains, there is a pivotal notion which as it were guarantees perfect circularity and perpetuates an Aristotelian logic by means of mediation. The seemingly casuistical aspect of these two theories stands out when one looks at the status of the interlocutors in comparison to the judicial system². The double function of the judge, who is at the same time the embodiment of written law (by delegation) and the interpreter of case law, is very similar to that of the actor, embodiment of the spectator's deontology and interpreter of his desire. However, on closer inspection, this comparison seems dubious; there is a radical difference between the judicial and the theatrical world: As Florence Dupont (Ubersfeld 1977:271) very relevantly remarks, "theater is a world (...) where judicial acts do not count, where one can neither take an oath, nor sign contracts or agreements". Justice is indeed acting (the trial dramatizes the offence by simulating it through the characters' play-acting) and also factitive, imperative deontology deriving from a mandatory legislation; it appears both as a show and a performative process. But illusion never supersedes mandatory syllogism; the exercise of justice never denies society. On the contrary, as Ubersfeld remarks, theater is dominated by oxymoron: "What is, exists above all — if not exclusively — through scenic means".

The process of persuasive illusion leads us to examine the notions of communication and role. Let us specify from the start that here again, the similarity of linguistic notions constitutes both a support and a hindrance. Performance discourse has its own relevant features. Thus it always takes place *in praesentia*: the production and reception acts are not cut off materially (at least not in time, and sometimes even not in space), even if there can be an actantial separation. The issue of participation brings us back to interaction, or in other words to the interlocutor's role-playing³. An "arsenal of roles", a "catalogue of interhuman relationships" that make up natural language (Ducrot 1972), are displayed on stage; but the role medium shows however a double characteristic: for the actor, it is set by the production text and by the institutional conditions of discourse production; for the spectator, convention and ideology also play an important part. Already at this stage, we should like to resort to a case grammar which, at the level of the scenic instance provides useful tools to make a distinction between:

1. The abstract polarity of the role: a given character can perform a

given actantial competence (agent, instrument, etc.).

2. The concrete polarity related to the enunciation situation, the confrontation of actantial virtualities and scenic situations.
3. The rhetorical polarity determining the type of global discourse achieved by the concretization by the actors/spectators.

This analysis emphasizes the synchronic and structural aspects of stage events, but it is excessively technical and it seems to postulate a stage/auditorium separation. However, as Metz remarks, the bilateral playaction, the actor's final bow, the physical togetherness of the audience, and the fact that the "object" (the scenic entity) is aware of the presence of an observer, all point to an order of active consent in which everyone is involved (Metz 1977:88-89).

Rather than limiting ourselves to opposing various approaches which seems to prevail in theatrology we think resorting to linguistics would provide a more flexible perspective, namely that which introduces the notion of interlocutor's presupposition. We have dealt with the issue of the relevance of transphrastic semiotics in another article (Helbo 1978). We shall extend to the spectacular enunciate the double category (Ducrot 1972) of semantic and context analysis. This allows us to distinguish between:

1. A referential presupposition, related to the possible world evoked by the enunciate. This is in fact the only scenic referent presupposed by theatrical discourse in the performance time and area⁴.
2. A pragmatic presupposition, conditioning the acceptability of the speech act; the status of the interlocutors, their relationship (desire, place, time, intentionality) are taken into account. When making the synthesis of the multiple relational entities, it is possible to sum up this order of belief in the form of live logical axioms:
 - the speaker must believe his interlocutor to be able to follow up his stimulation;
 - the speaker must believe that his interlocutor wishes to be represented/perceived by him;
 - the speaker must be motivated (Ducrot 1972); he must have a reason to utter his spectacular discourse (production text, price of the ticket, desire), or even to aim at a particular effect;

- the speaker and the interlocutor must achieve credibility, that is they have to accept the *deception* on which their game is based. The whole process is aptly described in Peter Handke's theater (cf. *Kaspar*).
- 3. A lexical presupposition which sets the semantic of the enunciate and which makes it possible to recognize⁵ its meaning. Arrivé's analysis (1972) of the metasemiotic relationships between Jarry's *Ubu Roi* and *César Antéchrist* illustrates this presupposition which, in theater, remains dependent on the other two.

The second type of presupposition is essential in theater. In this perspective, one should specify the types of context underlying the interlocutors' relationships. The main factors are of several orders:

1. *Psycho-cognitive*: they bear on the partners' intentionality (Van Dijk 1977).
2. *Social*: they cover the audience's background and sociocultural group (cf. Ravar's study: Anrieu 1964).
3. *Pragmatic* in the strict sense of the word: they concern the conditions necessary to perform the enunciation. One should define here the laws that link micro-discourse to scenic macro-discourse. When applied to the scenic instance-spectator relationship, this law would regroup a few dialogical sequences based on the need of a (presupposed) precedent and of a (focalized) continuation, while the global discourse is carried on from an element which is expressed explicitly, deriving from the presupposition. This whole process corresponds to Ducrot's (1972) ludic model and it involves a deontology typical of theater. Theatrical discourse is thus characterized by its ability to select the data *consistent* with regard to its fundamental presupposition ("this is theater") and to submit this data to its dialectic of language and silence. As Karl Bühler writes "the spectator goes to the theater quite aware that he who comes on stage (...) will act with the full range of an actor's tricks" (Bühler 1934).
4. *Communicative*: they concern "the rules of the game", the codes, laws and conventions. This gives an opportunity to apply to the theatrical field the "conditions of (in)felicity" defined by Kiefer and Austin (Kiefer 1972; Austin 1970). The conditions for the successful performance of the theatrical speech act in a com-

munication situation concern:

- a. The material performance of the act: this requires a playhouse, actors, an audience, a “good atmosphere” for that particular representation.
- b. Production and reception conditions (cf. Ravar and Anrieu 1964).
- c. The time and place chosen for the performance.
- d. The modalities of enunciation have to be recognized by convention even if the interlocutors do not have all the keys to all the codes.
- e. Speaker and interlocutor have to enjoy an equivalent status, and they have to be aware of their role. It is thus possible to determine the following functions of theatrical discourse:
 - the illocutionary value defines the performative function of theater which underlies the modalizing functions and the contractual functions (the latter are the source of theatrical effects, which raise expectations, and of conative, anticipating and aperitive effects);
 - the perlocutionary value defines the persuasive and stimulating function directed towards the interlocutor. Even a superficial analysis of Artaud’s theater will provide numerous examples of those functions.

3. **Ponendo tollens**

In conclusion, it seems that two considerations should be taken into account when delineating the specificity of the theatrical phenomenon.

1. The data of pragmatic semantics appear able to account for the categories of theatrical language.
2. The empirical data of theatrical tradition disqualify a view of theater that would be limited to mere communication or to a sender/receiver split.

This paradox obliges us to ponder over the definition of both theater and semiotics. Following Ernst Cassirer (1923:18): “The sign is not only a vehicle of concepts given beforehand: it is the tool and the expedient of the transformation and of the definition of this concept”.

Notes

1. In the sense defined by us in *L'enjeu du discours*; see also E. Benveniste: "any enunciation requiring a speaker and a listener, and assuming in the former the intention of somehow influencing the latter, in short all genres where someone addresses someone else, expresses himself as a speaker and organizes what he says according to the category of the person" (1970).
2. One knows that judicial logic relies on the alibi of a recuperation of social life in the form of themes geared to the statement of the legal conclusion. In the same way, the psycho-social unity of the subject (spectator, actor, scenographer) would be pieced together again in theater through a perfectly consistent and transparent deontology of vision.
3. Cf. for example the passage from the Prologue to Anouilh's *Antigone*: "She is called Antigone, and she will have to play her part to the end" "She will knit all along the tragedy". "Now you know them all, they can enact their story".
4. Cf. Anne Ubersfeld (1977). This is a common point to both traditional and avant-garde theater. Compare these two passages from manifestos:
 Apollinaire: "I thought we should come back to nature itself, but without irritating her in the fashion of photographers. When man tried to imitate walking, he created the wheel which does not look like a leg at all". *Oeuvres poétiques*, Paris, La Pléiade.
 Ionesco: "(...) a *structure* that is therefore not the world (but (...) however crystallized in the ideal image of the world). This issue also appears in the relationships between folklore, mime and theater (cf. Shakespeare).
5. Two remarks: the term "enunciate" comprises not only the textual but also the scenic elements. "Recognizing" is defined with regard to "understanding" (cf. Benveniste 1969).

4. The code, irrelevant concept?

Up to now, the analysis of theatrical structures has been practised by drawing on linguistics or logic. What would be the status of a critical approach that would seer that connection, that would reject any kind of theatrical support and would therefore be reduced to existential discourse?

A dynamic study of the performance would fail to escape linguistic empiricism, because it would be involved, even without realizing it, in a text-performance distinction that inevitably leads back to narrativity. In this “text-performance” perspective, several minimal syntagms could be identified. According to Kowzan (1975):

- spoken text,
- body language
- the actor's appearance (mimicry, gestures),
- aspect of the stage,
- articulated sounds.

These are artificial distinctions. The laws of articulated or inarticulated communication often overlap, the actor's mimicry and the set are complementary, no hierarchy can prevail between speech, bodily and visual aspects. Staging itself can be verbalized, it can be integrated or not into the text; the sounds can serve as setting, etc. Attempts at stratification often prove arbitrary, because they are only legitimated by the mechanistic ends that are supposed to govern the relationships between those units. Such classification proceeds from a sterile dependance on the double articulation.

The determination of distinctive features in the theatrical phenomenon, which is practised in the name of convenient categories, comes up against an epistemological obstacle: presuppositions. These may assume many forms, among which:

- analogy, or the search for “autonomous segments”, which links in an empirical way the textual to the non-textual levels¹;

- the refusal or acceptance of an implicit absorption of non-linguistic levels into the text itself².

The specificity of theater is based on a few data that only semioticians of film have identified by contrast and classified:

1. Staging or visual expression contributing to concentration.
2. Dramatic logic, whose mainspring is the division into “moments” (scenes?) or the predominance of action over narrative (without any intervention of an external narrator) is also characteristic of the dramatic phenomenon.
3. The pre-eminence of space over time.

The latter discrimination, typical of theater, is characterized by an absence of diegesis. As Metz puts it: “The play is action in a set; films and novels are homogeneous pseudo-worlds” (1972:68). Likewise, the set will always stand aside with regard to action or the person it sets off; better still, the areas of the set, of the actor, of the spectator, are autonomous.

Finally, the actor’s body, his gestures, refer to a semiotic system different from the text. This poses the problem of the relationship between the word and its physical incarnation. Beyond this, the exchange with the audience is involved here; as an instantbound phenomenon, this transaction is aleatory, elusive, fleeting. This is why Mikel Dufrenne formulates the opposition between theater and film as the difference between an “art of representation” and an “art of presentation” (in Metz 1972:68).

Theater semiotics can rely on the numerous contributions of practitioners whose often trail-blazing intuitions deserve to be developed.

Among the important issues tackled by directors, we propose taking up a few points which semiotics can perhaps work out.

- a) The actor’s role. In *Propos sur le comédien*, Louis Jouvet deals with the “depersonalization” of the actor. The director advocates “the dismissal of the self”, depersonification. This remains an open question. It was satirized by Bernard Shaw, for whom there cannot possibly be such a thing as the possession of a part by the actor. An actor is a mere human quiver, an honest workman contributing to the dramatic phenomenon. The pivotal issue in this debate resides in this residue of reality that seems to hinder *interpretation*, to spoil it like a parasite.
- b) A corollary of this issue, “the naturalness of playaction”, belongs

in the same field of investigation. Robbe-Grillet wonders if actors should not speak “affectedly” in films in order to point out the absolutism of fiction. Film-directors like Sadoul and Grémillon unanimously advocate artistic choice, the abolition of the real in favour of aesthetic ascesis (as far as we know only *Atalante* by Jean Vigo which was filmed on a real barge in winter, as well as the “cinéma-vérité” style depart from this view). Since the Commedia dell Arte, there has been a wider range of diverging opinions among playwrights. One of the best illustrations of this problem can be found in Anouilh’s play *La répétition ou l’amour puni*: a squire and his mistress are rehearsing a play by Marivaux in which the actors they are impersonating are entrangled in mental situations similar to theirs. A deliberate confusion of the naturalness of life and theatrical naturalness draws the audience into a game whose boundaries cannot be discerned so easily. This ambiguity, which affects situations and characters, also contaminates the function of the scenic *object*. In the same way as Carné turns an underground station into a film studio in *Les portes de la nuit*, Anouilh claims that “life is very fine, but it is quite shapeless”. The audience cannot elude this dilemma, when confronted with scenic space and time. The spectator, who is submitted to the rules of the theatrical ceremonial, necessarily dissociates the performance, which is confined to a specific area, from reality, which is scattered throughout space. Although a few traditions have been shattered, whether cultural, sociological, or sartorial, the aesthetic standpoint underlying the experiments of street theater demonstrates the mesmerizing power of the performance area. Michel Butor highlights the involvement of the audience in *Répertoire III*: “We are the heroes of this obscure drama we hear and see performed, and of course, we miss the set a little”.

The issues raised here were dealt with in Perice’s typology, and even more exhaustively by his disciple Sebeok (1976). Let us first restate the contents of this classification. We shall apply it to the theater later on. Sebeok distinguishes:

- the signal: when a token automatically or conventionally triggers a reaction from the receiver, it functions as a signal;

- symptoms: the symptom is a compulsive, automatic, non-arbitrary sign, in which the signifier is naturally linked to the signified. A syndrome is a set of symptoms governed by certain rules and associated to a stable designatum;
- the icon: a sign is iconic when there is a “physical” analogy between the signifier and his denotatum;
- the index: a sign is considered indexical if its signifier is contiguous with its signified, or constitutes an example of it;
- the symbol: if a sign presents neither analogy nor contiguity with its signifier, but shows a merely conventional link between its signifier and its denotatum, and determines an intensional class for its designatum, this sign is regarded as a symbol;
- the name: a sign that presents an extensional class for its designatum is a name.

We should like to add to this:

- the stereotype, which is a sign set by habit;
- the clue, which is a signal without any communicative purpose.

Despite its promising aspects, this system requires some qualification. The field defined by this grid is partly of a linguistic nature. It goes without saying that no attempt at unification is postulated here. But extrapolations tempered by a critical perspective may prove fruitful.

1. The icon

First we should immediately dispel an ambiguity about the notion of iconicity: it must not be opposed to Saussurean arbitrariness. Metz writes that “the analogical is not at all the same as the motivated sign, and it is not only (nor simply) opposed to the arbitrary sign”. This dichotomy is all the more unhappy because the theatrical sign is indeed motivated, unlike the linguistic sign which is arbitrary. On fact, the theatrical sign seems to lend itself very well to an analysis in terms of iconicity. Iconicity should also not be mistaken for figurativeness: the antagonism between word and image that would result from this rash assimilation would lead to an absolutely unwarranted incompatibility. Christian Metz writes: “We should rather situate the image among the different kinds of discursive phenomena” (1972:152).

Bentley remarks that “all art is a laying bare of the human soul, but

this exposure is achieved through the presence of human flesh on the stage” (Kott 1969). The relationship between the actor and the character is thus formulated in terms of iconical process, of link between signifier and denotatum. Brecht understood this split very well, and he managed to actualize it. Likewise, costumes in choreography, e.g., in Bejart’s ballet designate the flesh while concealing it in order to underline the *signifying* character of the dancer. A symmetry effect is created, which defines both the identity of the actor and of theatrical “naturalness”. From circus, through mime, to theater, it is indeed possible to establish a classification based on analogy with regard to the denotatum. This inventory would refer to iconization, defined by Sebeok in terms of distance from reality (cf. for example, the model-original-copy relationship).

His analysis can also be applied to the techniques used in theater. Let us take the example of gestures. Walking, which belongs to natural behaviours, can be regarded as the transposition of an everyday action to the stage. Others, like Donneau de Visé, will contend that “every step, every glance are counted”. Running, insofar as it requires a choice and some miming, illustrates more clearly this iconization process. The same goes for the actor’s gestures. The famous slap in the face in *The Cid* requires using a glove in order to dampen the sound. Without this artifice, this smacking would not be iconicized, and it would look grotesque. This is also true of theatrical laughter, manifesting its literary and written character, even beyond the voice by which it is actualized.

At the verbal level, iconicity can designate the integration of the enunciate into the production. In Jakobsonian terms, iconicity could refer to the representation of the referential function. On the theatrical plane, the problem of the referent involves the relationship between situation and message. The specificity of the performance resides precisely in the fact that the production already contains its own situation. Two instances are immediately conjured up by the theatrical context, the place of enunciation: the word uttered by the character becomes communication toward the addressee. Only this reticular shift defines theater: outside this exchange, here is no theater any more; third party instores the narrative. Whereas the dialogue between interlocutors-actors mimes the address to the audience, the outsider to the dialogue creates a separation.

In his article published in *Poétique*, Antonio Saraiva (1974) makes a distinction between several kinds of messages:

- the “simple message” which depends on external supports and which is performed through the manipulation of a “thing” external to the linguistic code, directly represented or virtually presented in the message itself;
- the “absolute message”, independent of any support or purpose exterior to itself;
- the “oratorical message”, which contains its own supports and which is at the same time included in its real supports, the relationship between the former and the latter being such that the latter are the referents of the former. We shall take the third category to be the relevant feature of the theatrical phenomenon.

Indeed, as soon as the performance is set up, a split is revealed between the actors (who are both enunciated medium and enunciating instances) and the spectators who observe the game without being explicitly involved in it. The uttered message therefore creates the situation, the very utterance of the word turns the character on stage into a “speaker addressing an addressee”. This first distance is however cancelled by referential assimilation, because the attributes of the actor (singing, gestures, mimicry) refer to actual actions which are not represented. The spectator recognizes his own norms, and interprets them simultaneously as feigned.

2. The index

Indexes probably constitute the link between the epic and theatrical traditions. More than narratives, theater stages situations that have to be actualized and pointed out to the audience.

The most typical illustration of indexical systems can be found in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, which can be rightly considered as a self-mirroring play. Indexification plays an essential part both from the point of view of the character and the spectator. Indeed, the central theme of the vainly eluded prediction repeatedly anticipates the ending. The character’s task is therefore to act in spite of the indexical disclosure of the truth.

On another level, the actor represents for the audience another form of indexical sign, since he discloses, through his trials, the very essence of drama. In circus, the final parade also constitutes an indexical process. The ancient (or regional) mourners belong in the same perspective.

It is rather easy to imagine all the indexical (verbal and scenic) devices or deictic elements whose performative origin is not in the least debatable.

3. The signal

Signals take on a pregnant importance at a time when, according to Mac Luhan, one finds “hot media” that leave a large degree of autonomy to the receiver. Many signs that are supposed to be symbolic or iconic, and thus submitted to the free interpretation of the spectator, prove to be signals in all the instances of the performance. The stereotyped cues for laughter or applause in circus (the compere, the clown) are obvious illustrations.

A few modalities of participation are in fact related to automatisms or conventions. In the field of circus, which is probably the theatrical mode which is closest to reality, many signs can be interpreted as signals: the music underlining dangerous turns is a very good example. The same goes for the brass music of bullfights. The signal can also be of an olfactory nature (the smell of the circus).

4. The symbol

Symbols function in a very efficient way within the performance. They can also govern its external rules. The circus program, with its well-established norms, can for instance be regarded as symbolic. We shall distinguish between the various types of symbols according to the following principles:

- a. *Metonymy*: the beak for the bird, the horse's head for the whole animal. Metonymy can apply to:
 - objects: the sceptre for royalty, the bow for the hunter;
 - attitudes: the wrinkle for the feeling;
 - movements: a shifting backdrop evoking travel or the sea;
 - costumes: clothes for social class;
 - language: accents for sociological origin, etc.
- b. *Arbitrary conventions*: the prompt side — opposite prompt side distinction in French classical theater; colour symbolism in Chinese theater, etc.

According to the more or less symbolic character of theater, the performance will be coded or not. Establishing a theatrical rhetoric probably constitutes the first heuristic step towards a semiotic (/symbolic) corpus.

5. Stereotypes

They are made up of signifying elements set by custom, which point to a single signified. This rubric covers all stylized gestures, the recurrence of identical characters (the French *Guignol*, *Punch and Judy*), etc.

The signifier can refer to iconic and also verbal determinations, and therefore endow a single signified with several valencies.

This attempt at classification has no pretension to exhaustivity whatsoever. It tries at the same time to avoid the pitfalls of a simplifying linguistic model and to outgrow the empiricism of a mere scenic repertory. By referring to theatrical "craftsmanship", this grid looks forward to an open approach which would account for the plural dimension of the phenomenon. If it is pursued, this investigation will require a revision of the epistemological axes underlying semiotics. Only a broad pluridisciplinarity, including for instance kinesics and proxemics, will allow semiotics adequately to account for the theatrical event not only as a set of messages, but also as a network of specific codes, organized and generated by laws of subordination within global systems.

Notes

1. Kowzan's monosemiotic absolutism; the quantification in the form of scenes advocated by Brainert-Neufeldt in 1947.
2. The written text is seen as a "deep structure" by Jansen, Pavel, Marconi, Pagnini, for example.

III. NEW PERSPECTIVES AND NEW INSTRUMENTS

1. The visual paradigm and the scene

For a long time semiotics has passed as “ventriloquist knowledge”. The mesh of relationships and of intercultural appropriations perhaps justifies this kinship between the historical fabric inherent in our discipline and the one in linguistics, in logic and biology. While tutelary models have succeeded each other without having anything in common, nobody now hesitates to define semiotics in *propaedeutic* terms. Rather than a pedagogical division, semiotics proposes a transgressive skill, a coextensive methodology in the field of knowledge, one of the greater merits of which is that it evaluates itself as well as judging the others’ stance.

Now that the epoch of blind eclecticism or syrupy ecumenism is over, semiology adopts the course of comparatism. Through various approaches, diverse metalanguages (organizing or creating), aware of the repercussions that ideology imposes on method, researchers can attempt the encounter — of schools — in the construction itself of their *text*. The rapprochement is even more evident when it strives to break through the boundaries of regional semiotics.

We will argue, then, in favour of a reticulate approach of semiotics. Research has often intuitively adopted this conception: the transphrastic hypothesis valid in narratology has indeed nourished the study of segmentations in film; on the other hand, the semiotics of the theatre has proved useless such a transfer in its own field: forced to reinvent its *démarche*, it has no doubt supplied other provisions (the scenic model), pointed out certain hiatuses of general semiotics (the observer-actant) and enriched the latter by providing feedback. The argument that we are about to embark upon is inspired by this type of inquiry. It reunites — in the form of a critical balance — the attainments of two “territorial” semiologies, the semiotics of the image and of the theater, both of which we will confront in the visual “paradigm”.

1. Process of an encounter

The comparison between the two-dimensional image (painting or mixed discourse) and the visual components of a theatrical performance cannot do without the theoretical justification we will now proceed to.

Common sense provides as many arguments in favour of the rapprochement as objections against it; the answers of semiotics can undo a dilemma which empiricism would painfully prolong.

No doubt history provides good a priori reasons to conceive the idea of a common methodology. Francastel has shown the consequences of the invention of perspective in painting: theatrical staging imitating pictorial formation coincides with it. The importance of the visual is beyond doubt: from the "fourth wall" that naturalist theater removed to satisfy the audience's voyeurism to the pure and simple accentuation of visual supports (slides, projected images) with Piscator and to the insertion of video. Let us also consider some boundary-fixing experiences induced by a number of observational performances: Ben, who posed motionlessly in front of the audience of Nice theater for two hours, provided with a poster saying: "Watch me, that's enough"; or Yves Klein, who organized exhibitions of living bodies. These are ephemeral practises representing nothing but themselves: there is no autonomous work outside the ephemeral event within the exchange with the spectator's vision. Clearly, these examples are parcelled and privilege visual manifestation excessively. The study of theatrical space for example underlines, however, the existence of a multiplicity of traditions: in the Italianate theatrical tradition and in a number of contemporary realisations with many scenes and in which the audience is part of the picture and joins in (Théâtre du Soleil, Plan K at the Orangerie), the spectator's vision is preeminent; but in ancient theater, Elisabethan theater and certain contemporary performances (Peter Brook in the "Bouffes du Nord", "Théâtre du cri"), sound is preeminent.

There is no need to specify that the visual components in theater are integrated in a mixed discourse of which the vehicles of manifestation are manifold: the actor's body and voice, plot, light, music, etc. What is shown associates with what is said and every message is susceptible of a game of redundancies and focalizations: Tartuffe's words: "Hide that breast lest I see it" manifest themselves as a verbal message as well as in the form of an "image", reflected simultaneously by the actress's body and the player's gestures.

It is necessary, then, to determine and define the theatrical image at once allowing for the obstacles hindering such an attempt in the field of “planar” semiotics. Let us consider some difficulties:

- Is it possible to define image and visual components, writing and nomination? At best, terminological variation should be studied.
- Scenic space is by definition not flat: it is tridimensional, related to volume. Staging may be pictorial, but it is sculptural too, defined by body, movement, gesture.
- Are the spectator’s vision and reception comparable? The spectator in theatre submerges in a physical and cognitive space, of which the segmentation varies in time. Light may submerge actor and spectator in the same enunciation. The house’s darkness, on the contrary, provokes a disengagement that expels the audience from the enunciation. Analogous focalizations are possible on stage. The actor’s acting (vertical or horizontal) may elicit a comparably precarious division (*Timon of Athens* at the “Bouffes du Nord”, separating balcony and pit). The contemplator of a canvas (two-dimensional image) sets out to an encounter with an enunciating (painter) with which he will identify or not (cf. anamorphosis); he will invest his culture and his language according to the coordinates (semes, relevant optical features) objectively present in the instant.
- The position out of which the observer investigates the object varies as well: one may read and re-read a painting starting from its enunciation, but the reception of the play is ephemeral, experienced collectively and unpredictable (Ubersfeld: “pre-constructed but not premeditated”): the onlookers do not all see the same things wherever they are and a fit of laughter from the audience may completely defocalize the reception.
- To finish, let us underline the specificness of the codes determining what is visually representable on stage (Helbo 1983b:51): the history of architecture determines a historical mode of functioning of vision; social modes are “imitated” on stage; imaginary structures are represented as well.

The tools at the scenographer’s disposal are equally specific: spatial coordinates, materials used for the décors, lighting, music, actors, etc.

Such are the apparent divergences that are to be taken into account when dealing with the visual component of the theatre and two-dimensional

observation; beyond this issue the attainments of semiology in relation to the theory of the image should be evaluated. What is the methodological arsenal semiology offers? We will now propose a short critical balance especially focused upon mixed discourse, which seems the most suitable for a comparison with the scene, because of its entanglement of verbal and non-verbal codes.

2. Semiology of the image

The inaugural text of the semiology of the image, "*Rhétorique de l'image*" (the Rhetorics of the Image), establishes a famous distinction between the *linguistic* message, the *denoted* image (uncoded iconic image, the sign vehicle reflecting photographically a signified, assimilated to the referential model), the *connoted* image (coded or symbolic iconic message, of which an outstanding example is the drawing) (Barthes 1964).

At the risk of forcing an open door, we should like to underline the extent to which the semiological relevance of the image is here defined by its analogical, iconic character; the sign character attributed to the icon has been regulated in advance: an opposition *by definition* between the linguistic message and the image warrants their constitution as a semiological object.

We have recalled the classical distinction between word and image because the history of art sometimes questions it: anteriority of one or the other, respective dependences, even reciprocal subversion or osmosis: furtive exchanges (hieroglyphs, incunabula) are sometimes transformed into systematic research on mixed discourse (strip cartoons, illustrated pictorials). We know of almost experimental cases of iconic scripture: *calligrams* in the shape of a watch or a tie persist though representative of an absent referent¹; a number of researches by Butor (*6.810.000 litres water per second*) are veritable rhythmic compositions: typographic masses visualised like a painting by Mondrian in geometrical figures; the *universal interpretant* of language (Benveniste) emphasizes the image: we might also think of Dotremont's letter drawings. The *written image* is equally tenacious in tradition: Klee's dynamic canvases orientate reading by means of arrows, Kandinsky's lexemes evoke a syntax; Alechinski's narrative space (marges, juxtaposed planes) recalls the levels of articulation, linguistic linearity. The cartoons even more explicitly practices systematic contaminations in mixed discourse: the figurative tends towards abstraction, while the verbal

(onomatopeias) is reified: the balloons integrated into the drawing illustrate it and are involved in its decipherment; the letters are drawn, hybrids of the pictograph and the ideogram; some plates are tabular and necessitate the exploration of all the possibilities of narrative figuration.

There is, however, an aesthetic tradition that seems to call the Barthesian definition of the image into question: the afigurative mode in which any discursive orientation falls short. One could cite Dotremont, but especially Butor (Helbo 1975a:79), certain pages of whom have no other theme than the focalization of eye-movement: overtly quoting Jackson Pollock, Butor balances masses and lines (*Mobile*) in such a way that the only legible denotation is circularity or the oblique. Cursive writing is no longer involved: motion in space is. No longer can we speak of an analogical image, but rather of graphism, trace, performing act². We are here dealing with a plastically denoted signified absent in Barthes' theory, which would replace the opposition iconic-linguistic by the dichotomy iconic-plastic.

Moreover, the concept of the "written image" counters an analogical definition of the image; this criticism is confirmed by Peirce's research on iconicity (and by Barthes himself in "*La Chambre Claire*"). There is no already-there in the image (resemblance, analogy, essentially opposed to the symbolic coded image) corresponding to a division of reality. Iconicity (resemblance) should be apprehended as one of the three theatrical functions of the message (Helbo 1983a:42), the two others being the *index* (contiguity in relation with the object: Aldo Moro's picture was shown by the Red Brigades as an index of his death) and the *symbol* (coded by or dependent on an ideological or historical interpretant. It renders more or less occult the apparatus of enunciation, etc.). We are dealing with interacting conceptual constructions that can be privileged if the problem involved justifies it, but irredentism by definition seems to be debatable. A map in a Paris underground station overwritten with the inscription: "Quel cirque cette vie de con" ("This damned life is a circus") loses its initial iconic value (icon of the railway-system and index of places and movements) and becomes a hieroglyphic symbol of chaos: the image having as a legend the tracks, the circus, disorder, becomes a coded metaphor of the absurdity of existence (example cited by Fresnault-Deruelle).

Conclusions:

1. *Rhétorique de l'image* ignores the "plastic" signified of the image.
2. The "boundaries" of the image are problematic if they are defined by means of the substance of the expression. Metz: "The

fact that a message is visual does not imply that all its codes are visual and the fact that a code declares itself in visual messages does not mean that it cannot occur elsewhere. Moreover, a code (even if visual) is never visible since it consists in a network of logical relationships."

3. The opposition by definition between linguistic message and iconic message appears to be a blocking factor.

3. Visual semiotics

The study of visual *communication* allows for these objections and attempts to move beyond the discrimination between linguistic message and iconic message. In "*La struttura assente*", U. Eco (1968) is interested in the codes of the image: his approach is twofold and concerns in the first place the perception of the message (the code of codes being psychological) and the internal functioning in which he distinguishes "*tropes*" and "*topoi*" (premises and arguments). That thesis produces the idea of a proper logic and a specific functioning, visualizing figures of speech. More or less universal (antonomasia: every item represents the genre or species) classical tropes are realised visually (advertising of cigarettes by means of litotes: a cloud of smoke and the caption: "This is all we've got to sell"), but also specific tropes derived from the metaphor are visualized (a car near a medieval manor benefits from the aura of nobility; the ultimate case: the "kitsch iconogram": "Dante oil", "Gioconda soap", etc.). Such an analysis would tend to illustrate the existence of linguistic or rhetorical structures underlying the image. The first Barthes mentions in a note the case of an advertisement recommending the aroma of a label of coffee that is kept captive" by the pulverized product, depicting a box of coffee that is chained and padlocked: the linguistic metaphor ("captive") is literally represented in the image. Metz specifies and generalizes what in Eco and Barthes mainly concerns publicity (mixed discourse) by drawing a parallel between image and dream: figures of speech and the topical level according to him reflect the operation of dreams. Evoking the rhetorics of the unconscious of Benveniste, Metz interprets linguistics at work in the iconic or translated by the iconic³, using fundamental operations of dreams: figurability (latent/manifest), condensation, displacement, etc. He postulates a primary level, a common rhetoric, a latent premanifestation that psychoanalysis should take into account and that is manifested by the icon. The twofold intelli-

bility (linguistic/imaginary at work) becomes unanimous in pictorial criticism: readable/visible (Marin), joint of what is said/what is perceived (Damisch), the implied in the image (Schefer).

Louis Marin mentions a *figurative text* (1971), in which the visible and the readable are interwoven. The figurative text verbalizes the representation (one says the painting when reading it), but it also signs the figurability (the unconscious or linguistics underlying the manifest). At the moment when “nothing can be said about the painting”, it “can only be said.” Reading, a linguistic construction, reflects an implicit linguistics and an iconics, the two levels being mixed.

The *semiotics of signification*, which forgoes the perceived sign (unit of communication) in favour of the produced text of the process of analysis (unit of discourse resulting from the combination of a number of structures/codes, whatever the vehicle of manifestation or the referent is: image, sculpture, music, noise, speech can be analysed and constructed setting out from the relationships) adopts this double perspective: primary processes of a psychoanalytical nature and secondary processes assumed by either narrative discursive logic (functional analysis, contents) or by thematic analysis (semiotic square if morphology does not support any syntax).

Conclusions:

No matter if you are interested in the perceived sign or in the text, the articulation of iconics and linguistics takes place in a complex whole, in which the following converging items can be distinguished:

1. Plastic materiality,
2. The linguistic/the premanifested at work in the figured,
3. The verbalisable readable, named figuration⁴,
4. The visible, coded through myths, history, ideology.

4. The theatrical text

Our theoretical detour has supplied us with four factors within the visual components. Does this definition constitute a support for the semiotics of the theatre and within which bounds?

4.1. Plastic materiality

The vehicles of manifestation in theatre are infinitely more numerous

than in the case of the two-dimensional image: plot, gestures, the actor's body, speech, noise, music, lighting. Every vehicle emerges in its materiality and its opacity. The actor, a syncretic medium, is the painter and his canvas. He is producer of an enunciation and enunciated product at once: body and personage. The corporeality of the actor is largely taken care of by criticism. But if the primary materiality is received inevitably, it is simultaneously integrated in sense-constructing work as well.

Of all figurative arts, the theater is the only one that is defined by a physical presence (of the actor and in the second place of the décor), by a reality (that makes a sign) rather than by its representation. But at the same time this materiality is "artificialized" (Prague School), perceived as being illusory, analogical, symbolical. "Plastic" and iconic material signs are synchronous.

4.2. *On the relationship premanifested-linguistics-iconics*

- a. Contrary to the two-dimensional visual discourse, which may have a non-narrative character, the theatrical discourse involves by definition a narration.
- b. Moreover, we are concerned with a mixed discourse, like the strip cartoon accumulating verbal and non-verbal messages. If these messages are closely correlated in the contemporaneity of the theatre (any actor's words or any visual object may at the same time constitute the icon of a personage: Marat's bath-tub with Weiss, the shoes with Beckett), it appears to be much more difficult to evoke an anteriority of linguistics in connection with the visual components of the representation, except to some extent in the case of the scenario. The phonic text is part of the spectacle alongside other systems.
- c. What about the double intelligibility of the primary and secondary processes in theater? Does the theater visualize a latent content? Does the practitioner, in the manner of dreams, work at the construction of images of which the text "unfolded" by the spectator and the syntax relayed by the words will guarantee the emergence? The question is complex:
 - The programme of departure (latent contents) of the practitioners varies: written text (idea), "pictorial" vision of the scene (Strehler), the perception of the voice (Thomas Bern-

hard), the relationship to the body (Barba).

- The operations of representation recall figurability; selection and transformation by condensation or displacement: one single theatrical image (the false renewal of the décor of the “Bouffes du Nord” refers to several universes of reference (of diverse cultural and theatrical traditions), the counter-application of an actor may act as a double metaphor, etc.
- As far as the difference from the two-dimensional image is concerned, the construction of a play is based upon (real) material signs, perceived as such before being merged into fiction. Although the history of theater sometimes insists upon the revelation or effacement of the scenic and extrascenic (theater as a cognitive instrument or the pure and simple junction of phantasms) referents, the relationship we are concerned with here associates a “worldly” reality with its theatrical representation/visualization.
- The (secondary) logic implied by this double process is always one of “I know, but anyhow” (Coleridge: “the willing suspension of disbelief”). The order of belief the scene and the house have in common is an agreement on the mode of truth of a reality that is not perceived as such. The denial of the judgement of truth — the denegation — concerns the imaginary, the incarnation of phantasms — one single sign is shown at once as being real (material) and as being iconic (simulating an extrascenic model it refers to), at once as a performance and as a fable, fiction, plot.

This is why the theatrical tradition has developed rituals of transition that separate the natural world from the theatrical one: the entrance, the three knocks, the interval (proportionate to the effort demanded by the illusion). Convention (the boundary between the object seen and the real object) sees to it that the performance goes off smoothly. Sometimes a transgression as a result of an intrusion of the natural world destroys the illusion: “Muette de Portici”, “Hernani”, Sicilian Vespers. Here the cognitive boundary identifying theatre-going with theatre-making is discovered.

4.3. *On the verbalization of the figured*

- a. If the painting “says” itself, the theatrical performance also can verbalize itself. But we are only dealing with the beginning of a work of semantic construction here. The spectator transforms the visual object into a text: he elaborates his reception, but constructs it at once. Whereas the painting can be read, re-read, named in several ways, it perdures, while the theatrical performance offers itself fragmentarily to an ephemeral coherence.
- b. Moreover, the reception is at once linear and tabular, torn between a synchronic readable and visible: on the one hand a succession of images offered in bits and pieces to a spectator who selects and glues together, on the other a contradictory necessity to simultaneously store relevant messages of heterogeneous codes. Interpretation continuously constructs its unity and new messages destroy it, defying the power of integration. It is necessary to reconstruct and compose a meaning as each sign is offered.
- c. The way in which this work proceeds is determined
 - by the recipient of the enunciation: he selects according to his expectations, imposes a hierarchy according to his culture — the plot and the gestures against the light — memorizes according to his ideology or the frame of reference that permits the integration of what is new to anterior presuppositions;
 - by the enunciator who will try to focalize receptive competence, to elicit reading rules. This is also present in certain paintings: the aesthetics of perspective invite the recipient of the enunciation to adopt the point of view fixed by the enunciator: the identification, the referential illusion annihilates the distance between the universe of the enounced and the enunciation. But in theater this preconstruction is always arbitrary: it does not last and the spectator can quite easily defocalize what is shown to him.

4.4. *On codes*

Codes (the history of theatricality, ideology, the spectator’s memory)

that will orientate perception indeed exist.

Notes

1. Even if reference here opens the meaning; the calligram — like Ben — also refers to its own process of metaphorical representation.
2. The code would here be the invention of significant relationships within matter itself, within the substance of expression: geometrical and psychological codes are sometimes forced upon reception, however.
3. *Figurability*: an operation that transforms oneiric thought in an image. (Freud: “I’m thinking that I have to correct in an article a passage written in an unpolished style.” Symbol: “I can see myself polishing a valuable coin.”).
Selection: transformation of ideas by making them representable in visual images; the transformation in pictorial language, confounding the versuses (nearer rhetoric and as a result also nearer communication, while the dream does not throw any light on our phantasms) is comparable according to Metz. The laconic plot of a dream is opposed to its latent content, which is intelligible but repressed, so that every manifest (though opaque) element is determined by underlying meanings (oneiric thoughts). The iconographic equivalent of this structure invites the conception of the image as a rebus to be described verbally so as to discover operations of condensation (iconic representants of verbal images: a short cut of which the logic is metaphorical), displacement (metonymic, transformer into the contrary), conversion (surdetermining, connecting isotopies), etc. in it.
 For an example we can refer to “Coup d’oeil sur les extraterrestres” by Gotlib (a glance at the extraterrestrials): the rocket is provided with a tin-opener (the passengers feel as if they’re in a tin of sardines); the flying saucer really has the form of a saucer: when a cup in the form of a bowl (French: un bol) (resembling one) is put upon it for exploring the atmosphere, its occupants are spoons. This bowl, ejected by the saucer into the atmosphere, evokes the French idiom: “prendre un bol d’air” (take the air). Still another example is cited by J.M. Rey in *Saussure avec Freud*: Holbein, signing his painting “*the Ambassadors*”, drawn on the bottom of the canvas a white, stretched form that, viewed from a certain angle, represents a skull-emblem of his name (Hol-bein = hollow-bone = skull).
4. In connection with nomination one will remember Metz’ remark that disqualifies the contradiction between the subject’s phenomenological performance and the object: “the word, the lexeme (and on the other hand the visual object once recognized) are only terminal products, complexes of cultural production in the lap of which the central role is devolved upon relevant traits: traits of visual identification on the one hand (Eco), linguistic semes on the other (Greimas).” (Metz 1977:140).

2. Readable and visible dimensions. Opera and theater.

1. Definitions. Why is opera theory relevant to theatrology?

Although I am a staunch supporter of a performance semiotics in its own right, i.e. free from the monopolistic privileges of narratology or other disciplines, I should like to borrow the two basic concepts of this study — readability and visibility — from visual semiotics. These will first be situated in their proper theoretical framework. It is well known that the sharp distinction between the linguistic and the iconic fields was initiated by Barthes in *Rhétorique de l'image* (1964), in which the French theoretician dealt for the first time with mixed discourse (linguistic message and denoted or connoted image). No need to recall the unease that grew out of the notion of natural boundaries between the linguistic and the iconic fields. This is why a footnote in *Rhétorique* drew the critics' attention: it evoked an advertisement that described the aroma of coffee as “trapped” in the coffee powder this was conveyed figuratively by a coffee box fastened by a chain and a padlock: the linguistic metaphor is therefore taken literally and pictured accordingly. The *opposition* between the analogical image and the word gives way to a *transmutation* of the word by the image. Hence the sudden craze for research on the production of mixed discourse (osmosis: comic strips, iconic writing of picture poems or written images by painters: Klee, Butor) and on the *reception* of images (pictures translatable into words: glosses, verbalization of the figurative image, colour spectrum). In latest research, this issue is viewed as a genuine *interpenetration* of words and images, Metz (1977b) speaks not only of a linguistic dimension involved in the iconic, translated by the iconic elements, but he also accounts for this process by referring to the working of dreams (figurability: dream-latent process vs. image-manifested dimension.). Marin (1971) creates the concept of *figurative text* (“one cannot say anything about a painting, one can only say it”) to articulate a double level of intelligibility (primary, pre-manifested and secondary logico-discursive levels): there are many methodological

convergences confluence of what is said and what is perceived, articulation of the readable (linguistic level inscribed in the painting, and verbalizable construction) and the (actualized) visual elements. One should therefore resort to the notion of verbal-iconic complex, opposed not to analogical reality, but to a plastically denoted signified (materiality, trace, spatial logic — the slanting line focalizing eye movements in *Mobile* — in which the word is deprived of its figurative signified). The non-figurative tradition, in which there is no discursive element, is based on this plastic signified.

2. Theater

Theater is without any doubt a mixed discourse combining readable and visual axes. The terminological comparison two-dimensional images and the scenic spectacle has only a limited value, as we have pointed out (see p. 101). To be brief, let us repeat that the specificity of theater consists in always offering a narrative structure, which always reduces the coexistence of readable and visible to that of verbal and visual. The production brings into play a named / displayed world through *vehicles of manifestation* more numerous than those of the two-dimensional image (set, lighting, audible elements (music), actor's voice and body), in a tridimensional physical space and in a cognitive space which is both aleatory and experienced collectively. While readable and visual elements are offered simultaneously to the spectator, reception will however dissociate those two aspects. The spectator builds up his narrative text (the spectacular text is narrative: he selects and links up units according to horizons of expectation, to coreference (new/old), to culture (narrative and gestures vs. light)), but he must simultaneously take in other messages in heterogeneous codes, which shatters coherence.

There is a linear and tabular exchange of the possible meanings orchestrated by the director. The issue of the plastically denoted signified is more complex: while the materiality and the opaqueness of the performance (the actor is both painter and canvas) are grasped by a secondary reception process (logical denegation), fiction is apprehended both through the primary and the secondary mode.

3. Opera

Opera has often been studied from the angle of a subservience to the

readable (narrative) dimension, precisely because the proliferation of vehicles of manifestation favours defocalization. Music has been described as totally dependent on the plot, for example. The narrative structure of many operas is supposed to prevail on the other tools available to the director. The beginning of Mozart's operas has been presented as extremely brisk, whereas the finale would be slower. This would represent the need to penetrate by force into the fictional world, and the reluctance to bring the plot to an end once the adherence to the world of illusion is achieved. The last act of *The Marriage of Figaro*, which brings on new developments, would testify to a narrative urge to master the performance and to go on with it at all costs, even if this involves delaying the return to the natural world. The same device can be found in the false endings of the *Tetralogy*, where the end of the first three days is repeatedly delayed to the next day, until on the fourth night, the denouement gives way to eternal return as the beginning of the piece is taken up again in the form of a leitmotiv. This anaphora points to a reluctance to dispel an illusion that was established with difficulty. The narrative would therefore serve as a catalyst, a focal point for all the vehicles of manifestation. This is why, for instance, Wagner conceals the orchestra pit in order to mask the materials foreign to the narrative, while Chéreau integrates it into theatrical space (during Siegfried's *Funeral March*, the people listen to the musical summary of Siegfried's life and wonder: the groups are looking at the pit. Elsewhere, Siegfried nods to the rhythm of the music, reducing sound to its narrative meaning). By privileging the visible dimension, opera, which is a linear, conventional genre, is as it were condemned to developing the narrative, the backbone of illusion. Everything is determined, recuperated, the soprano's indisposition, far from hampering the performance, is engulfed in the narrative: the technical achievement is even more admirable (cf. Brecht: opera "ein-theatert"), the somatic event is integrated into the convention.

4. The emancipated image

Today, under the influence of a style that grows closer to theater (Boermans, Delvaux, Sireuil, Vitez) the visible/audible codes seem dissociated from the readable in a more specific way: the pictorial apprehension of the scene, the perception of the voice, the relationship to the body are organized in a different way in the programs of those new scenographies. Chéreau regards the text as "a prop for images": "The reading of

the libretto, as well as the perception of the music, the interpretation of its peripheral readings or of the ideas that permeate it, are all brought together by a theatrical director". Everything should be oriented towards a gesture, an attitude, an image on stage. Chereau introduces a new concept in the operatic field: *visual materialization*; by going far beyond the text/image dichotomy, his work can be situated in a Barthesian framework similar to the readable/visible distinction defined above: for instance, at the end of *The Rhinegold*, a replica of Loge denounces the gods' blindness; the situation is evoked in the fashion of Strehler through sets inspired from Breughel's procession of the blind: metaphorization of the libretto and condensation of the intertext; we are dealing with the visualization of a trope: the faithfulness to the libretto and to the narrative are therefore considerably modified.

- a. The image against the libretto: in the third act of the *Twilight*, Siegfried's narrative evokes "a bird perched in the boughs of a tree, one of them sang". Chéreau has the bird caged up, thereby symbolizing the captivity of nature. Moreover, from a scenic point of view, Siegfried is given a visible interlocutor in an act where he is seen standing on stage most of the time.
- b. Image against music (disconnection): by having the separation performed to the musical theme reserved for attraction; one should "divert music from its apparent function: the theme of Sieglinde should never be used directly by Sieglinde — let Hunding play during that theme — and Sieglinde's unease while he is glancing at her should bring us back to her, but in a less elementary fashion."

5. Enunciated historicity

Since the new developments in scenography point to a resurgence of the visible dimension, while the readable traditionally prevails — a dialectic which is typical of any *theatrical* performance — one can ponder over the specificity of the operatic performance. It resides less in the historically justified reception (the attitude of the audience is comparable to that of any spectator in front of a coded performance, be it theater or ancient tragedy: the enjoyment is not necessarily related to a prior knowledge of the codes) than in production: as far as the readable dimension is concerned, opera is akin to ancient or 17th-century drama. The libretto, like the dramatic text

prevents the director from eluding the reading process, interpretation, translation. The conductor also has to take the score into account, even if he sometimes has to make a choice. (Boulez “corrects” Wagner). During the staging process in the first place, the director is faced with the problem of the readable components. That is why poetics of opera so often deal with (un)faithfulness. Nattiez (1983): “Eulogy of mistranslation”, “I am on the side of the traitors”. In fact, this issue refers to several planes of enunciation linked to historicity, and thus to different attitudes of directors which question any attempt at generalization of the poetics of opera.

- a. The libretto, for example, if reduced to a mere narrative sketch, focalized by all the scenic images, can serve as foundation for a dream of universality or intemporality; the staging can also glorify archetypes, those myths Artaud, Vitez or Willand Wagner were dreaming of: in Chéreau, this ideal is expressed through the Rhinegold, the giants, the dragon, Siegfried. The same intemporality pervades the archaeological reconstitutions that present the work as an absolute, an object immune to the evolution of the audience: Pounelle reproduced the setting of the court of the Duke of Mantua at the Zürich opera (Monteverdi’s *Orfeo*); *The abduction from the Seraglio* was performed in Köln in front of Emperor Joseph II, who played the part of the enlightened despot Selim Bassa himself; the *Traviata* in Bejart’s production, in front of actors embodying the bourgeois of the time, etc.
- b. On the contrary, the stage can relativize the fabula, it can resituate the readable dimension in context by means of images, marks, indices that bring out the relativity of the forms of imagination: H. von Kleist’s *The Prince of Hamburg* was staged in Hamburg by Karge and Langhoff in such a way that the social context, not war, came to the fore. Chéreau underlines the presence of the industrial world (cogwheels next to the armour, the actors’ dinner jackets in the middle of historical costumes).
- c. Beyond the emphasis on a contradiction, there are productions where the libretto is a disposable material, a pretense for the representation of images, of multiple visible/possible meanings; this ideal can be traced back to Peter Brook. With Delvaux (*Pelleas* at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels) and Chéreau, this is limited to inserting contemporary revisions (the setting of

- the New York alleys in the finale of the *Twilight*)
- d. Another attitude consists in emphasizing the visible materials while displaying them as possible objects of an historicist decoding: the set, the actor, the orchestre, the code, are all taken as an object for readability. By dressing up the actors in the same dinner jackets as the spectators, or by reproducing on stage the Corinthian columns of the Bayreuth playhouse, Chéreau incites the audience to reflect on the convention. This is similar to Planchon's "playing about" with *The Cid*; this treatment can be applied to a whole work: a grand opera by Mozart can serve as a paradigm of the genre (*Idomeneo* by Pounelle in Köln) or as its opposite, opera buffa (*Titus* in Ruth Berghaus's production in East-Berlin).

6. A poetics

Four basic principles have been evoked so far, corresponding to types of staging practices: universal readability, manipulation of readability, emergence of the visible elements, manipulation of visibility. According to the choice of the director, the operatic production can therefore apparently favour the readable/visible axes, or (un)faithfulness to the libretto. But these concepts clearly cloud the key-issue, i.e. the opaqueness of the libretto induced by degrees of historicity. This was already mentioned by Brecht in his discussion with Jehring; the contribution of the practitioners has not been fully understood; we have not properly studied ideology. Boulez (1981:514) and Chéreau, who read Wagner from a contemporary viewpoint, claim they can rediscover the "true Wagner", a dewagnerized Wagner, i.e. free from the oral tradition: "What matters when you are scrutinizing the masterpiece, is to clear this awful rubbish to which you can only get used too easily". And here, clearing the rubbish means getting back to details, to the rigorous annotations of the score. This is rather a strange way to tidy things up, which reminds us of the "cleanups" stigmatized by Vitez: "if one speaks of a "cleanup", this means that there must have been some "fouling up": an unsoiled object whose meaning has been lost and which could be recovered by cleaning and dusting out. That is precisely what is going on with works of art. Or else, one does not bother about the dust and one goes about it as before. This was for a long time the function of the Comédie Française; letting layers of dust settle one upon the

other, and eventually concealing the dust by a fresh layer of wax. Or else, one should attempt something else, for cleaning up is not the only possibility: one can also alter the object. A vase, if beautifully preserved, can still be of use. Not so with a play. The object itself has become thoroughly modified even if the text is perfectly intact". In this passage, Vitez underscores the historicity of those "layers of dust", the way the work entertains multiple ties with past (the myth) and present, with dialectical knowledges: a text which is a guarantee of meaning, even if it is polysemic, as well as transient performance materials that modify the meaning. The notion of a poetics of faithfulness cannot be taken seriously after all: the director can choose an unfaithful archaic mode, or a faithful modern one (When De Coster staged *The Trojans* by Euripides in a room of a Munich museum, he remained faithful to the spirit of the play). Respecting the text can also be synonymous with innovation and unfaithfulness: Planchon has given a new interpretation to one of Berenice's lines which is a key to Titus's character and to the tragedy ("I sometimes wishes I could take my father's place"), Chéreau has unearthed elements of the *Tetralogy* that had been concealed by tradition.

The past/present, readable/visible contradiction, the poetics of faithfulness prove quite frail in front of the issue of historicity. The latter concept underlines the autonomy of the stage and the libretto. The alliance of the two is determined by a process that should be described beforehand: the staging practice would then appear as an attempt at enunciation, and the text as an underlying network of ideological or cultural structures.

3. Reception and relation

Let me first warn the hardened practitioners of theater that this chapter has a purely methodological purpose: it endeavours to unearth the presuppositions and the theoretical foundations of the notion of the theatrical relationship. The preliminary construction of the scientific model, which cannot be separated from the correlative practical applications, seems to require some clarification, especially in an artistic medium as aleatory as theatrical performance. Too many highly sophisticated studies rely on virtuosity to conceal this *petitio principii*. Is it legitimate to confine the analysis of the theatrical performance to a narrow approach that would merely delineate relationships? How can this be justified? These are the issues that inevitably hamper the efforts of those teatrologists who hesitate to embark on the straight course of phenomenological reflexion.

The concept of relationship belongs to a metaphysical field: it covers both the growing apart and the coming together, splits and continuity: the spectrum remains wide and ill-defined. The spectacle may include the dialogue between stage and auditorium, the link between text and performance, or between dramatic and performance text, or even cover the spectator-actor exchange and communication between spectators or between actors; the rules determining the sequence, the presuppositions of scenic enunciation are also included in this category.

By favouring the hypothesis of a transaction (or separation?) the researcher will have to consider the instrument of relationship; between saying and doing, between theater and its area, between performance and reality, between oneself and others, even within the very self, there is a tangle of complicities, of breaks whose instrument varies infinitely: from the body to the voice, from tonemes to the text, from language to architecture, to the price of the ticket, etc. The very status of the channel invites caution: does not the relationship generate its own support rather than being dependent on preexisting factors? In other words, should we legitimately regard theatrical relationship as an enunciated product, or should it

be viewed as an integral part of an act — perhaps of a spectacular discourse — that can be referred to the enunciation model. Unless the generating principles of this demonstration are clarified, it would obviously not go further than a mere terminological diversion.

Answering those questions is probably a matter of scientific option. The relationship is a *construct*, it is projected by a vision, by a decision whose process should be described accurately. The attitude that uncovers the relationship at the expense of its possible constituents implies that the object studied (the oneness of this multiplicity) cannot be investigated in itself. On the contrary, it is otherness that seems fundamental. This Platonic line of thought already appears in *The Sophist*: “About the essence of Otherness, we shall say that it pervades all others for if each is individually other than the others, it cannot be so by virtue of its own essence, but because it participates in the nature of Otherness.” (Plato 1964). When applied to theater theory, this axiom would tackle the spectacular phenomenon from the angle of its definitional insertion within the theatrical system (/ discourse?). “Things, like the actor himself are born again in the theatre, they become different (...). The object the actor is playing with can be charged with new functions quite foreign to its original nature.” (Bogatyrev 1971:519).

When Lyotard (1971) attributes to theatricality a poetic function described in terms of mask and opaqueness, he only corroborates this situation of a language that focuses on its own convention. “Words are not signs, but as soon as a word is uttered, the denoted object becomes a sign: if an object can become a sign, this means precisely that it hides a content within its apparent identity, that it can show a new facet to a new vision cast on itself.” (p 82).

1. Mask, otherness

This issue is closely related to the philosophical approach expressed in this case by a comparison between self-focusing theatricality and games. Role-playing and the being-pretending dialectic highlight the iconic nature of theater, its double reference to its own procedures and to the world.

Sartre contends that the individual invents himself by inventing history; theater is reality itself, the stage intrudes on territories beyond its proper area. One may wonder if the idealistic view of the “programming” of man by historical determinants is so innocent after all: is not the role

destroyed by the task, is not Flaubert threatened with neurosis as soon as he embodies his time? This is Jean Genet's preoccupation (1968): he separates theater from reality and confines the spectacle to its duration and place. A desperate discourse of simulacra, theater carries out the beleaguering process described by Ionesco and shuts itself off from what goes on beyond the stage. "Theater. We shall toy with the idea of reflecting ourselves in it, and we will see ourselves sink in its waters like a big black narcissus." Reflections on the exchange between playacting and reality influence the condition of the actor or of the spectator. In the same way as the Rhetor, Kean, half-sorcerer, half-clown, or Genet in Sartre's description, fascinate the audience in order to better expose their imposture. The spectacle gives way to the spectacular dimension; vision apprehends the crack that runs through being, scenic enunciation gives way to "mauvaise foi" in the sense defined by Blanchot (1947:13-16). Brechtian metaphysics draws a lesson from this paradox: it contends that the spectator most acutely experiences the emptiness of his action in the world at the very moment when he identifies with the universe presented on stage. As the mirror of a split consciousness, theater serves as a catalyst for an unauthentic society which is ceaselessly betrayed by the image that should have been its refuge.

These consecutive reversions manifest themselves on different levels. Without embarking on a history of contents, we should underscore that modern drama clearly relies on such strategies. We have mentioned the trompe-l'oeil dialectic of *Saint-Genet, comédien et martyr*, where deception is in turn unveiled and masked by both actor and spectator. *Contagion* is sometimes restored by the characters, such as Pirandello's Henry IV or Musset's Lorenzo: the latter, who ends up looking like the tyrant he had to assassinate, embodies at the level of the plot itself a rhetoric of deferred permutation, and mirrors the frustrated identification of actor and spectator.

2. The theatrical object

The indispensable recourse to an ontological approach, which is considered essential by extremely dissimilar authors such as Lyotard or Duvignaud, casts doubts on semiotic perspectives that do not try in the first place to define themselves with regard to their object. By trying to circumscribe the specificity of theatrical discourse, one is led to examine the definition of

the spectacular system. What is the theatrical object? This is the preliminary question — the categorical imperative — that governs the apprehension of the relationships involved. The very fact of addressing oneself to this question eliminates a few pseudo-problems that still hamper methodological progress in this field: one can therefore cast aside the alleged flimsiness of the performance, which one supposedly could not record because it is linked to duration. Like any production of meaning, the spectacle calls for a global definition; the controversy about segmentation into the smallest possible unit becomes irrelevant as well. Why require from semiotics the scholastic consolation of discerning perennality where there is none, of denying shapelessness in order to justify a formalizing approach which requires no other guarantee than its very practice? Theater semiotics has to be specific, and therefore semantic in the sense of Benveniste: it has to formulate rules about the “opaqueness” of the spectacle, and therefore about games¹.

3. System of the game

Genette writes that there is a representative and a legitimate spatiality: “It has been often said that language seems somehow better equipped to express spatial relations than any other relation (and therefore relations of reality), which is why the former are used as metaphors of the latter; all is treated in terms of space and therefore all is spatialized (...). By strictly distinguishing between speech acts (*parole*) and language (*langue*), and by attributing to the latter the main part in the semiotic process, defined as a system of purely differential relationships (...). Saussure and his followers have highlighted a mode of being of language that has to be described as spatial. But as Blanchot puts it, this is a form of spatiality whose true nature cannot be grasped by reference to ordinary geometrical space or to the space of everyday life.” (1969:44-45).

The notion of a “spatiality of language” viewed in its implicit system, that is the system of “*langue*” which governs and determines any speech act leads to the comparison with theater as an art of relationships. A few linguists do not hesitate to speak not only of relationships, but also of the theatricality of language. Indeed, the hypothesis of a theatrical act derived from speech acts seems relevant in many respects. Many authors use the spectacular metaphor: Ducrot, for example, does not hesitate to take up the comparison: “If one assumes that the individual speech act is rooted in

a general pattern of linguistic activity — the confrontation between a speaker and an addressee considered as such — it is then possible to characterize the enunciate with regard to enunciation: we can describe it as apt to somehow specify the roles of its possible speakers and addressees, as apt to attribute them certain parts in the theatrical sense of the term.” (1978:107-108).

Not only the situation, but also the allocution activity are referred to the theatrical model: “many difficulties in linguistic semantics originate from the lack of distinction between the addressee — a character in the illocutionary comedy — and the real recipient of the message” (1978:116). If one clearly distinguishes between “the addressee as such, i.e. the character in the speech act” and “the person exterior to this act to whom this act is directed”, in the dramatic game, the situation is created by the message. By merely speaking, the character on stage becomes a speaker addressing an addressee (Saraiva 1974:5). The analogy with scenic discourse becomes more accurate when the “self-focusing character of all enunciation act” comes to the fore, “so that, when trying to understand a particular speech act, one is necessarily referred to at least one enunciation act, i.e. this self-same enunciation”. Language would then be a performance referring to its own insulation. (Ducrot 1978:114).

The characterizations of enunciation can also be compared to the theatrical phenomenon described above. Communication appears as an inner strategy: “enunciation has a definable sense within the ideal world” which originates from it, “not in the historical reality where it is inserted.” (Ducrot 1978:115). Speech acts require some degree of sacredness: “Understanding enunciation U as carrying out illocutionary act A (asserting, asking, questioning) corresponds to believing that it has bestowed upon itself the magic power of creating a new judicial situation.”

4. Approach of the theatrical game

In the same way as Genette draws on the constitutive relationship of language to situate the study of a particular language — literature — in the spatial field, we shall invoke the theatricalization of discourse as a legitimate ground for situating the analysis of the theatrical phenomenon within the framework of the discursive issue. “Because of the specific spatiality we have just mentioned, language (and therefore thought) is already a form of writing, or in other words, the manifest spatiality of writing can serve as a

symbol for the deep spatiality of language.” (Genette 1969:45). This metaphorical association is in this case entirely relevant, since Benveniste reminds us that semantics of discourse was conceived for speech rather than for written language. Lecointre and Le Galliot (1973) add that “enunciation facts take different forms when they manifest themselves in speech or in the written text (...). Games and masks are made possible by the insulation of the text and by its permanence (...). This notion is no longer relevant in the field of speech where an irreversible dynamic progression implies chronological succession, and therefore requires an analytic grasp of the patterns of meaning.” This dissimilarity between speech and writing can easily be transferred to the spectacle which draws on both text and show.

Let us re-examine theater practice in the light of language games. While Saussure resorts to the image of the game of chess which perpetuates the break between the speaker and his product, while even Benveniste accepts the idea of an idealistic mediation, performed by a subject of enunciation without any other theoretical status than that of ludic operator of a formal apparatus, Greimas and Ducrot, on the contrary, evoke a strategy or a deontology which attribute to (the) language system (*la langue*) characteristics that were traditionally reserved for its conditions of use. We shall limit ourselves to Ducrot’s theory: the speaker institutes through his own speech a socio-judicial pact. While in theater the discourse established its own convention, it stirs up a strategy of world-denegation, as Lyotard and Jean-Michel Adam remark: “Defining the rules of the theatrical game involves questioning a few rules of the social game.” (Adam 1976:27). This “insurrection” takes the guise of referential jamming: theater is characterized by a dwindling of symbolical power due to its poetic function. This loss of an external reference underscores the illocutionary nature of the theatrical act. Let us quote Ducrot again: “(...) it is essential for any enunciation act to be, in Benveniste’s words: “self-focusing”. If A designates a certain kind of act, and if this act is of an illocutionary nature (promise, order, question), then enunciation E can perform A only by referring to itself: E refers to E by signalling that E is an A; this unescapable degree of self-reference is derived from the illocutionary aspect of speech.” (Ducrot 1978:114).

If we assume that the enunciation situation can serve as a simulation model enabling us to construct the spectacular relationship and instances, we can then enumerate a few factors that will prove relevant to theater analysis. We could rank among these, for instance, the inventory of performative

utterances: in the same way as Jakobsonian functions simulate the structure of language, of society, of the subject, the identification of performative classemes, reveals which category of "doing" is conveyed through the channel of the theatrical act, and it illustrates the coexistence of addresser and addressee. Theatrical convention is rooted in the cultural situation, and in this way, the power of the spectacle is defined. While they are rather an inefficient channel for the meaning (the logico-linguistic function) of discourse, performative utterances delineate the configuration of the actant: depending on whether the latter is defined through deeds or speech, it delimits functions relevant not only to its particular determination, but also to the global production of the spectacle: in *Happy Days*, Winnie performs her last act through language, and she underlines this illocutionary value by means of the functional predicate *I say*, to which all semantic analysis should be reduced. In Ionesco's *The Lesson*, acts are conveyed through scenic annotations, which disqualifies any verbal form of performative utterance. In Montherlant's *Malatesta*, the actant is more often defined through the gestures in the production text than through speech². Performative utterances (acts embedded in discourse, opposed to acts described by discourse) make it possible to circumscribe the determinations of the actant, its functional characteristics, and therefore to define the production of the spectacle.

In the same way, one could resort to the concepts of presupposition (cultural codes), of modality (model presentation of theatrical discourse on stage), of tension, of opaqueness of theatrical discourse. These categories could be applied to the analysis of the subject of discourse, which is constructed during the theatrical act. The issues described here can also profit from the study of substitution games, among which we have picked out a few syntagms: saying/doing, text/stage, enunciation/enunciate, theatrical discourse/enunciated character, rhetoric of language/scenic act, etc. etc. By appealing to presuppositions, we can reformulate the old message/code dichotomy in terms of culture, of ideology, of psychoanalysis. This would lead us to define laws governing both the participation required by the spectacle and the degree of theatrical specificity.

This short survey cannot make a systematic inventory of all the instruments of analysis brought into play by the metaphor linking language and theater. We have however attempted to give a survey of the territory which semiology of theater should explore. This ranges from the theatricality inherent to the signifying practice of language to the act of theatrical discourse by which the stage becomes language. Within this area, which is

both open and insulated, gestures, indexical/iconic signs, enunciation, appear as dialectic landmarks which contribute to defining the performance. By circumscribing the methodological contract required by the investigation of the spectacular phenomenon in terms of relationships, we hope we have been able to emphasize how the phenomenological presuppositions underlying this approach can generate a pragmatic interpretation. The latter accounts for the complex problems raised not only by the written text, but also, on a more general plane, by the performance.

Notes

1. "From a semiological point of view, there are two aspects to the problem of games: on the one hand a morphology whose purpose is to reduce games to their "immediate constituents" in order to classify them and to define their function, i.e. their combinational rules; on the other hand, a semantics (and a symbolics) that will have to define the meaning and the social function of those "ludemes" within a cultural field, as well as the mythical roots on which they are based and which enrich them with connotation". (Guiraud 1973, 114-115).
2. Cf. Montherlant's *Malatesta*, IV, 4. Let us compare the production text ("The pope — Pick up your knife (Malatesta makes a gesture of refusal) Malatesta — And I want to...") to the verbal enunciation ("the pope — pick up your knife. Malatesta: I refuse.").

4. Constructing coherence

1. Methodological premises

Before setting out to study coherence, one should consider a few preliminary issues of which we shall first give a short survey.

The first warning concerns the scientific context out of which the metalanguage focused on coherence has grown. We mean by this text theory which derives from linguistic research. Its limits, its relevance, its methodological advantages and lacunae should be examined with regard to the theatrical object. First of all, we should underscore a distinctive feature: coherence in a theatrical spectacle does not concern exclusively the non-verbal components studied by text theory proper, nor even the verbal components, but rather an entanglement we have described as *mixed* (pp. 98 and 104). At first glance, the theatrical phenomenon seems infinitely complex, because of its syncretic character: at the level of spectacle production, we are confronted with multiple unstable exchanges between visual/auditory components and verbal components: through Marivaux's lazzi, for example, we have got used to games of reversion between gestures and speech; at the level of reception, however, there is a verbalizing construction process (the spectator pieces together his own text) whose coherence is problematic: linearity (integration/transaction into a system) clashes with tabularity (instantaneous reception), and the logical secondary mode of thinking (I know this *performance* is not real, but I believe in it) is at odds with the primary-secondary complex (I identify with the *fiction*, I breathe life into those fantasies). Therefore, the production of theatrical discourse does not privilege verbal or non-verbal components, but it orchestrates them simultaneously according to plural hierarchies. Reception carries out a transposition process of the visible/audible into the readable dimension (the spectator's verbalized text). This activity draws on multiple registers of the mind.

The second remark refers the issue of coherence to another criterion,

specific to the theatrical event: the aleatory character of the cognitive space of the performance. The history of staging practices highlights the cognitive variation related to the unfolding of the spectacular event: the segmentation of the scenic enunciation varies according to lighting (the spectator's shifting in or shifting out with regard to the scenic enunciate depends on light or darkness on the stage), the somatic program (whether or not the spectator participates in the event by being walked around, through narcissitic circulation or through immobility), the actor's play-acting (whether or not it is aimed at one or the other classes of the audience: king, rich man, the fool), the fabula (which in Fo or Arrabal leaves room for "contingencies" linked to the audience's suggestions). Theoreticians of the text have neglected this fugacity, which conditions the construction of the collective of spectacular enunciation.

Finally, we should make an observation about the correlation between the notions of coherence and communication. Textual linguistics contends that these two categories are related by a link of simple implication, but teatrology hesitates to jump to such conclusions. Accordingly, teatrologists try to differentiate an approach that does not rely on communication but that takes into account the coherence principle, from one that relates the latter principle to the enunciation/communication conditions. At the risk of embarking on a slightly overdidactic explanation, we would say that the notion of coherence can be seen from several methodological angles.

- a. It can be referred to the perception register: arousal/stimulation, articulation, re/defocalization of attention belong in this first rubric. The description of emotions (stimulation, articulation, focalization) belongs in part in this approach, which one could call rhetorical, and which could also grasp intercultural invariants.
- b. It can also be referred to the semio-cognitive register: how do certain emotions come to serve as interpretants for others? The semantic activity can to a certain extent be situated in this conceptual field of communicability.
- c. It can finally be referred to a "multi-faceted" (pragmasemantic and psychoanalytical) register, which we would characterize as semiotic. It bears upon the working rules of the spectacular contract: production/reception of logical belief (based on the denegation of reality) relating to performance, and production/reception of an order of involvement in the fiction (which is both pre-manifested and secondary).

The pluridisciplinary usage of the concept of coherence can easily be explained: it is a property that analysis attributes to the spectacle (even to experiments that are incoherent at the sending stage, such as certain kinds of happenings), and not an immanent entity which preexists before analysis. "Will be considered coherent those spectacles for which analysis has managed to build a coherent textual texture" (De Marinis 1978:69).

The reservations we have just formulated should not inhibit research: they only trace out the boundaries of a pedagogy which aims at the broadest inclusiveness, and which is aware of its coarse curiosity. The theatrical event intimately mingles performance and fiction, attention and communication (except for borderline cases): by rather unwillingly privileging a cognitive dimension, for the sake of the scientific alibi, we are still very much aware that there subsists an irreducible core. Contrary to what can be rationalized to the describable strategy, it is precisely theatrical pleasure that resists analysis.

2. The spectacular text

Textual linguistics defines the text as an abstract theoretical construct (Schmidt 1973); we shall adopt an acceptation which is both more limited (focused on theater as a unit of manifestation) and more flexible (open not only to intelligible speech sequence, but also to other signifying processes). We shall agree to call *text* any organized (*semiotic*) system obeying interrelated working rules: a theatrical spectacle therefore makes up a text; for a scenographer, lighting effects make up a text; we shall call *structures* the (*semantic*) paths inscribed within the text: the configuration of certain quartzes that focalize the actor constitutes a structure; this structure is contained in the produced text, but it also codifies a reading situated in a social contract (Mukařovsky).

Our definition attributes to the plane of structures the selection of signifying units, which classical text theory associates with coherence. Textual linguistics reduces the coherence of reception to a complex *schema*, which is sometimes determined by production ("textual structure") only in the case of conventional narrative programmes. In a more general case, the schema also depends on reception (choice of signifying items) as a function not only of context but also of the receiver's idiosyncrasy (interests, aims, horizons of expectation, previous knowledge of the themes of the work in question) (Van Dijk - Kintsch 1978:366). In our model, the attribution of

semantic segmentation to the receiver is partly apparent in the “structure” which is understood as the dialectic path of constructed meaning and of reading.

From the outset, we can pinpoint a few problems a systematic study of theatrical coherence would have to deal with if it were limited to a semantic/semiotic approach:

- a. The determination by production comes to light in the continuity principle (the spectacle displays a continuum) whose articulation, according to linguists, is based on redundancy; the same observation can be formulated about reception: an interpretative/evaluative approach will have to fit instantaneous selection into a linear macrotext; there should be “some partial predictability about what is going to follow on the basis of what precedes, which makes it possible to link the different elements of the message.” (Moles 1986).
- b. The idiosyncrasy of the producer (the director’s project) or of the spectator will manifest itself here in the form of extrasemantic constraints: either of a cultural (stock of knowledge/traditions of acting), of a conventional (theatrical conventions: asides are said aloud) or of a referential nature (relationship between theater and the natural world, possible neutralization of truth values, etc.).

3. The components of the spectacular text

One of the major problems that hampers analysis is the identification of the produced verbal and non-verbal components articulated by coherence; one of the peculiarities of the spectacular text is indeed the fact that it is *semi-symbolic* in the Hjelmslevian sense of the term: instead of relying on total adequation between every term in the planes of content expression (symbolic system of roadsigns), or on disparity (semiotic system of natural languages), it creates a conformity between *global* categories of expression and content; the correspondance will not involve isolated terms of the two planes, but the categories as a whole; one particular spatial (visual) category defined by lighting (darkness vs. light) can for example correspond to a semantic category (night vs. day, madness vs. reason, positive vs. negative). In J.P. Vincent’s production of *Le Misanthrope*, slanting lines institute an order of expression that relates to the psychological and political values of

the content. The same goes for the figure of the spiral in Ionesco's *The Lesson*. In such a system, the terms of expression are to a certain extent aleatory, specific to and dependent on the context (cf. Jakobson: the theatrical message invents its own code). Beyond the verbal/non-verbal network, one can discern a multiplicity of components, which can be organized hierarchically according to two different principles:

- a. cultural principle: western tradition, for example, subordinates music and lighting to the fabula or gestures;
- b. aesthetic principle (at the production level): the director can focus on sounds (Thomas Bernhard's *Oui* in Damien's production) or on visual elements (Strehler's pictorial productions, etc.).

Each of these components constitutes in itself a subtext of the spectacle itself. Therefore, the text of the spectacle is a macrotext with heterogeneous components. This macrotext is situated in a production-reception system depending on pragmatic enunciation.

4. Pragmatic study of the spectacular text

Language analysis distinguishes between:

- The *illocutionary* act, which constitutes a judicial/conventional and intentional relationship between speaker and interlocutor, which also represents a commitment made in front of a third party, submitted to conditions of felicity, and which is meant to transform reality (Helbo, 1978, 19-26).
- The *perlocutionary* act, which manifests a consequence or an effect of the former at the level of social interaction.

The illocutionary dimension of the spectacular text appears in the following factors:

- a. The system of the signifying processes offered in the course of the performance creates a relationship between interlocutors; it has been deliberately initiated by a scenic enunciation and by the "audience".
- b. It is made possible only by virtue of a convention: it is precisely this latter element that starts up the relationship and that makes it credible. It is because we are at the theater that the performed

drama becomes meaningful.

- c. This relationship is an offer of the persuasive-interpretative type: the interlocutors gain the possibility of vision, theatrical game, pleasure through a network of delegations whose final goal is the knowledge/creation of illusion.
- d. This offer of a contract constitutes a judicial constraint and a commitment made in front of a third party which are specific to theater; the third party, which is the guarantor of enunciation, appears in the form of an *observer*, a term ignored by general semiotics, and which can be characterized as follows:
 1. It is unmarked: the external vision — of the spectator, e.g. — brings to life the universe represented on stage; the actors perform for it. But this legitimating presence which determines behaviours is silent, confined to its role, without the power to influence the enunciate, or to be made explicit by it. The observed behaviour takes place because of the very presence of this silent actant, but it is as if the observing instance were absent. Let us but imagine that the spectator interferes in the performance: he would disrupt the rules of the game by exposing its fictitious character, which would involve a breakdown of the performance. Or he could be recuperated as a locutor and he would then change scenic behaviour or the scenic event.
 2. It is syncretic. What has just been said about the spectator can be said about the stage: it is the presence of the actor that justifies the spectator's behaviour, his insertion into the audience, etc. This actant is not necessarily synchronic (assimilated to one or the other speaker: it can be identified with another actant: an actor can be both ostender and observer, speaker and observer). The play within the play, eighteenth-century French comedies (scenes in which an actor peeps through jealousies, spies by means of mirrors or other props) are based on such a split.

The observer actant, which can be described as a cognitive role, is not always inscribed in enunciation, it is sometimes external and cannot therefore be identified with the context.

The perlocutionary dimension of the spectacular text is more aleatory. The transformation of the contract into a perlocutionary act depends on the local acceptance or refusal by the instances.

5. Contextual study of the spectacular text

The spectacular text is situated:

1. spatio-temporally: it occurs in *praesentia* and the interlocutors meet therefore *hic et nunc*;
2. - from an interactive point of view: speaker and interlocutors share the same convention (determined by the observer);
3. - cognitively, by a set of presuppositions:
 - a. referential: bearing upon the possible world evoked by the enunciate: we have studied this issue at length (pp. 83 and ff.). Let us but repeat that the difficulty resides in the paradox existing between a self-referential universe (this is theater) and an extra-referential one (the picture presented to me refers to the everyday world, it introduces the latter into the performance but expels it from it at once);
 - b. semantic: it is extremely difficult to reduce the spectacular enunciate to a lexical set in which one could identify by intension immanent meanings that could be correlated by extension to "things one talks about". This would involve reducing the spectacular event to the mere cognitive processes: transmutation of the meaning of the text into that of the production for the scenographer/practitioner of theater, translation of the scenic universe into semantic representations by way of the spectator's mental structures. We prefer speaking of the semiotic dimension of the spectacular text, leaving the semantic aspect to structures; this amounts to saying that an activity of invention of meaning is required every time a sign is produced/received within the text; the relationship between these creations of meaning are determined by aleatory processes which we will examine below (focalization, content/expression relationship, culture, emotion, attention, codable/non-codable, referential aspects, pragmatic dimensions). The meaning generation activity is highly paradoxical too, since each sign in theater is supposed to be *homomaterial* (it achieves adequation between the vehicle of manifestation, the enunciator, and sometimes the enunciated product): the actor is at the same time the painter, the canvas, and sometimes even the painting; each sign constitutes therefore a micro-reality, displaying its

materiality which we have called *plastically denoted signified* (pp. 101-2); this visible (or audible) dimension is integrated into a readable system that can sometimes neutralize the visible/audible aspect. This readability relies on several determinants of a rather pragmatic nature: psycho-cognitive determinant (any theatrical sign is perceived as intentional; the Prague School speaks of “artificialization”), psychoanalytical determinant (fantasies/drives converge in the collective of enunciation), communicational determinant (whether or not the fictional rules work);

- c. pragmatic presuppositions: this layer, which has just been discussed above, bears primarily on the relationship between interlocutors: status (right to speak, speaking initiative, who communicates to who?), relationship (order of belief, knowledge, desires, goals), conventions relating to the rules determining the sequence of macrodiscourse.

6. Text and coherence

From the remarks formulated so far, one can deduce that coherence has to be constructed: scenic instances preconstruct data (images and suggestions of readability) but do not premeditate them; the spectator does not perceive them passively; he pieces together a text in his turn in which the verbal component prevails and which sometimes destroys the image that has been suggested to him.

One can therefore identify at least three “interpretants” of coherence:

- a. The first of these is of a *perceptual* nature: the spectator has to program and receive signs, and constantly to rearrange what has just been produced/perceived according to what has already been created/recorded. This rebalancing process can be perceptual (exchange between linearity and tabularity of attention), psychological (since memorization is selective, only those elements that can be integrated into a signifying system will be remembered), semiotic (exchange of the plastic, the referential iconic and the linguistic dimension), cultural (hierarchies of codes in theatrical tradition).
- b. The second is *cognitive*: one has to establish redundancies that

run through the macrodiscourse: this involves the suppression of lacunae, the creation of causal relationships, the establishment of constants and variables: as far as reception is concerned, one should mention in this connection “aberrant decoding” discussed by Umberto Eco: the activity described here always lags behind the possible intentionalities of the sending process.

- c. The third interpretant is *socioepistemological*: production and reception have a multilayer structure: they rely on collective ideological and cultural strata that will sometimes be drawn upon in a contradictory fashion according to the constraints of knowledge, social origin, etc. The most obvious illustration of this resides in the distortion between the knowledge of the ancient chorus and that of the spectators of the time; likewise, the learned spectator will apprehend a classical play according to his previous reading. Peirce has aptly remarked that there is a “common ground”, a collective ideological store shared by the auditorium and the stage, but on which each subject will draw according to his own characteristics; these characteristics can be epistemological; sometimes the spectator will find the keys to a certain work, sometimes he won’t; sometimes the spectator who watches a play by Euripides will make the connection with Aeschylus, but sometimes not: the characteristics can be inscribed in the fabula: the distance between a mere superstitious murder and the sacrifice of Iphigeny by Agamemnon resides in the constraint of the cultural model that governs the narrative, and which is supposed to be known by the audience.

Our pragmatic conception of coherence is based on an enlarged and redefined text theory: it remains however quite vague as far as the perceptual definition of this notion is concerned. We should emphasize to what extent the communicational aspect of the spectacle is entangled in a rhetorical perspective that concerns focalization of attention and that views coherence in terms of montage.

It is indeed possible to consider coherence as a methodological junction for two kinds of montage: that of the production pole (the director) which constructs a visual/auditory continuum by creating “frames”, by stimulating perceptual focalizations by means of signals; that of the spectator, which segments the continuum and integrates his own cuttings into

the organized system of his own text.

Montage is a precarious dialogical activity: at any time noise or unexpected re/defocalization caused by the group (the audience), the place, the actor, etc. — can disrupt the paradigm described above. The object of stimulation is, as we have said before, attention.

The same process can be attributed to emotion; coherence would therefore be a convergence (or even delegation) of emotional systems.

The perceptual and cognitive aspects of our definition are far from contradictory: Nelson Goodman (1968) raises theatrical emotion to the status of a frame for the spectator's conceptual experience, and notices the inverse influence on emotions of the cognitive experience that develops during the spectacle; it seems therefore logical to articulate on primary emotions complex emotions that would interpret the former and that would be semantically marked (positive or negative, for example). Likewise, one may assume that the linking together of the focalizations of attention can be performed by signifying processes: framing by gestures or language (deixis) at the level of small unities, linking by means of act, scene, significant intervention of the character at the level of large unities (Marcus's "hypersyllables").

7. Conclusion

We are aware that we have not provided an exhaustive analysis of the issue of coherence: but we hope we have been able to plant a few cornerstones of a text theory apt to account for the workings of the theatrical spectacle.

This survey has highlighted the plurimodality of the concept of coherence, and it has brought to light the preliminary questions (notably the reduction to communication implied by a methodology of coherence). To conclude, we shall repeat the main processes that should be dealt with in an approach of production/reception centered on theatrical coherence:

1. The acknowledgement of existence and of neutralization of the scenic object. The stage produces visual/auditive components that have to be *recognized*; reception opposes the universal figure (reference valid in all situations) to the sign-object inserted in the context of scenic enunciation.
2. The confrontation is rhetorical: it bears upon *perception* and the insertions of marks of readability into the produced visual/audi-

tive enunciate; this is how the autonomous and self-referential image integrated into the concatenation becomes meaningful; in Brecht, the actor's body does not only display its plastic materiality: it is embedded into the concatenation of images and becomes a metonymy for society; this is Brechtian "verfremdungseffekt".

3. The confrontation is also psychological: it bears on *identification*: it identifies the perceived ostended/object, refers it to its public figure and attempts to have it coincide with the psychological characteristics of the subject.
4. The confrontation is cognitive and bears upon *interpretation*: it compares the features of the perceived/ostended object among themselves and inserts them into a cognitive system.

5. The spectacular paradigm

The interdisciplinary (semiotics, biology, anthropology) analysis of the spectacle constitutes one of the latest trends of theater criticism. Though we have tried to give an impetus to this kind of research ourselves, we should like to express a few reservations about the use of the spectacle as an axiom. It seems quite useless to look for a universal model (Marconi-Rovetta 1975) from which all possible spectacles might derive. Ruffini (1982) has demonstrated very well how the deductive hypothesis fails in this case. We could at most imagine some makeshift assembling of paradigms specific to the spectacle (They would only be relevant within the boundaries of their genetic association; such a model could only be *induced* from previous specialized research). Such an approach might of course privilege one area of discourse over others: Western classical drama has been studied much more thoroughly than opera or circus; it is therefore dangerous to extrapolate from single *matrixes*.

One should however immediately denounce the opposite pitfall: an empirical investigation of the spectacle which could only produce limited descriptive views whose generalization would inevitably be subjective.

Attempting to make a survey of the multiple temptations to which the semiotics of theater has been submitted since the thirties amounts to recording the shifting supremacy of one aspect over the others. There have been the absolutist tendencies of a form of literary semiotics which sees the text as the score of the performance, or the predominance of the stage which “forces” the performance on to the spectator. This points to the inflation of a cultural tradition. Indeed, the stage/auditorium dialogue is reserved to that form of theater that presupposes an audience like that of western playhouses.

Which is why a new perspective has come to light, which stigmatizes the narrow-mindedness of the linear readings dependent on a material medium (text, libretto, stage, etc.) and which demands a global expansive approach. It would deal simultaneously with (western and eastern) theater,

circus and ballet and it would take historical relativity into account.

This hypothesis is striving for a synthetic methodology, stemming from cultural pluralism and interdisciplinary exchanges, since the standpoint adopted inevitably influences the method. In the constant reorganization of its conceptual field, the semiotics of theater seems therefore bound to develop into a semiotics of Performing Arts. The latter discipline cannot be established easily: needless to conceal the unease, the feeling of treading dangerous ground involved here. As soon as one attempts to account for extremely fleeting events, one should give up any hope of stability or predictability.

On the other hand, the alliance of semiotics and the spectacle is not recognized by everybody. In addition to defining the conditions of a semiotic approach, one should also outgrow a discourse that tends to preserve the boundaries of the scientific field: the question raised here concerns the boundaries of knowledge, the possible exchanges and the games of power that govern not only the articulation between the different semiotic perspectives, but also the human sciences/natural sciences relationship.

Another crucial issue bears on vocabulary, terminology and rhetorical figures: in spite of attempts at rigour, researches cannot resist the metaphorical temptation. Even the practitioners of the so-called natural sciences, such as Henri Laborit, analyse theater in terms of zoomorphic comparisons: nuptial display, ceremonial rites of animals, etc. (1982b). The status of critical discourse and the limits of its metalanguage should therefore be specified.

Finally, defining the spectacle as a semiotic object also raises difficulties of an historical order. One runs the risk of reformulating in semiotic terms the tenets of classical aesthetics, of taking for granted the comparisons of which the spectacle usually represents the semic system of reference. Greimas, when evoking the link established by Tesnière between basic utterance and spectacle rightly questions the relevance of the correlation (1966:173).

The last major obstacle is the idea of a stable, segmentable object, and of its integration into the enunciation process, into the relationship that generates it.

Let us repeat that the foundations of a semiotics of performance are difficult to establish, most of all because of its doubly absolutist ambition: there cannot be one single semiotics, no more than an idealistic theory of the performance. The first point concerns the degree of existence of the

performance-object. A theoretical discourse requires a well-defined object; the possibility of grasping all the elements (all of them and nothing but them) culturally identified as spectacular requires — to avoid any metaphorical blurring — a drastic revision of vocabulary. Western aesthetics traditionally separates scenic practices (opera, ballet, circus, theater) so that we could be tempted to rule out that separation in order to create a new cultural category: this is a dangerous reaction that could lead to the generalization of a nomenclature related to one single school: Meyerhold or Piscator's total performance, or the model of the Foreign culture, e.g. This reaction is useful however, in that it underlines the historico-geographical relativity of tradition, and because it shows, as Franco Ruffini remarks, that, although semiology cannot be confined to a mere empirical reflexion, a theory deprived of its corpus remains quite vulnerable. This is the double stumbling-block of hypothetico-deductive logic: coherent thought has to be *constructed*, and construction has to be anchored *hic et nunc*. There is a wider temptation to favour only one element of the spectacular object, which would justify all kinds of inclusions: as an art of pure performance, the spectacle would include music; as a discipline focused on mimetic representation, it would encompass film and painting. Before even thinking of extending the boundaries of the field, one should first define extremely accurate parameters: relationship to the natural world, relationship to fiction, techniques of representation, the imaginary, pleasure, performance, economic networks, etc.

Secondly, we have to analyze the modalities of knowledge: which model should we put forward? The single paradigm or plural perspectives; which specialized sciences shall we draw on? To which branch of semiotics should cultural operations be referred? Michel de Certeau, who denounces the absolutist aspirations of knowledge, regards the recognition of insurmountable differences as the only guarantee of scientific rigour. This warning does not only concern the spectacle: it also applies to the definition of semiotics. No analysis of performance can escape the following major obstacle: investigations into the spectacle cannot be separated from theater practice. In the same way as the stage produces what it is meant to reproduce, the reading activity, is an active construction process carried out in the course of the performance. The critic is at the same time an anonymous spectator and a potential actor, a participant constantly dispossessed of his parts. How can one then articulate a discourse in which none of these roles is repressed.

The use of the term "spectacle" is far from recent, however: it can already be traced in the first works of the Prague School: it was understood as a rhetorical figure evoking live theater. As an experienced linguist, Michel Corvin (1980:93) takes up this tradition and limits the concept to the performance in progress. Pavis (1980) yields to the temptation of defining the spectacle even more specifically as "the visible dimension of the play". If confined to the visible area of theater, the word "spectacle" could still cover several acceptations: the first of these (Pavis) is oriented towards traditional western realization; it focuses on visual display offered to the addressee. The second circumscribes the spectacle through its conditions of production (enunciation, ideology, economic conditions). The last sense, which we find most relevant, hinges on the collective creation of meaning, in which both addresser and addressee would take part. The restriction to one single form of performance practice is of course a matter of debate: it is probably more fruitful to compare the analysis with other disciplines cognate to theater that also imply audience participation/interaction. Those objects cannot however be brought together so casually without turning the spectacular category into an ambiguous presupposition. Where are the boundaries of the field, and what are the conditions of the methodological dialogue? This is a tricky question; when describing spectacle in his dictionary, Greimas adds a few tolerant afterthoughts which seem to leave room for almost anything: "besides theater proper, it also includes opera, ballet, races, sports, street shows, etc." (1979:393).

The choice of definitional criteria thoroughly determines the field of investigation. It is thus possible to mark out the boundaries of a semiotics of spectacle by making an inventory of the parameters.

Tadeusz Kowzan (1975:25) sees the spectacle as "an art whose products are communicated through space and time, which means that they require space and time to be communicated." This is an extremely inclusive formula: It demands an accurate definition of communication, which is a highly risky business. The hazy metaphors that pervade theater theory seem indeed related to their mould: the obscurities of spectacle theory proliferate in direct ratio to the number of borrowings. The notion of communication, when derived from Mounin's information model, is ill-suited to the spectacle and one should therefore multiply examples.² In Kowzan's view, the communication parameter constitutes the guarantee of the collective dimension of spectacular production/reception, which is characterized, according to him, by human participation (sociability), by articulated lan-

guage, by the link of the fabula. Kowzan then sets out to build a typology which contains a few interesting nuances:

- a. The notion of space-time dimension permits a distinction between spectacles and temporal arts (poetry, music) or spatial arts (architecture, etc.).
- b. The criterion of predictability — which is in our view debatable — separates games, sports (submitted to the hazards of real life) from the spectacle.

If this perspective is undoubtedly of an aesthetic nature, it corroborates however, by other means, the importance of the referential and ludic functions of the spectacular object. When considering the approaches of the other branches of semiotics, one is struck by the specificity of the spectacle: the two extremes — the iconicity of the cinema and the sheer performance of music — are illuminating examples in this respect.

Metz (1973:130) puts forward a definition of cinematographic language based on the relevant features of the expressive material (iconicity/duplication/multiplicity/mobility). This delimitation, which is entirely centered on realization, has a minimal extension (see Odin (1977) for counter-examples): it cannot therefore cover more than part of the cinematographic field.

Nattiez, on the contrary, when venturing a definition of music with a maximal extension, is faced with the problem of a comprehension so reduced that it borders on tautology: “one would expect”, he writes, “the concept of music to include at least the variable of *sound*”. But after mentioning “musicless music” or “music for the eye”, he is finally forced to adopt as definitional criterion for musical production the fact that it was created by “a person known as the composer” (1975:107). Venturing a definition of the spectacle in terms of relevant features seems quite bold, but it can be useful in a first stage because of the exclusions involved: by situating the spectacle between pure mimesis and sheer performance, for example, one can immediately put aside a semiotics of the cinema or of music.

This double exclusion leads one to reinterpret theatrical categories that should be defined with regard to both the everyday world and fiction. The spectacle dismisses the natural world to reintroduce it in its discourse. This is a transposition procedure: “a language that speaks another pre-existing language, which both interact through their systems of convention”. (Eco

1968) At the core of the extra/self-referential relationship that characterizes the theater lies *the paradox*. Information theory speaks of a “double bind”: on the one hand, a pseudo-reality is created (the scenic-theatrical context), on the other hand, one finds a situation animated by a perceptive competence. This game of disavowal of reality constitutes an essential difference, because it marks the boundaries between spectacular and narrative discourse. The latter does not encroach on reality, and it uses other strategies to establish verisimilitude. The logical model evoked here cannot however solve the problem raised by the relationship to the referent. The logical specificity of the spectacular/object, according to Metz, is precisely linked to the conflict between orders of belief related to *ostension* and representative *fiction*. Spectacular meaning would therefore be *reticular*, and the observer’s standpoint would be located *in between*, at the junction where things find an opportunity to become signs: two contradictory perceptions are involved here: the object as reality (body) and fiction (the conceptual dimension).

This definitional issue points to a split between irreconcilable viewpoints. Greimas tries however to keep both parties sweet, once again at the cost of extremely inclusive formulas: “The definition of the spectacle includes, from an internal point of view, properties such as the presence of a closed three-dimensional space, proxemic distribution, etc, whereas from an external point of view, it implies the presence of an observing actant” (1979:393).

Two perspectives are brought together here: the first describes the field of what is realized and stresses the relation between enunciators. The second favours one of the functions of the spectacle, deixis (and ostension), to such an extent that the spectacle becomes identified with it.

Venturing a synthesis of the two viewpoints seems rash: if the deictic function is assimilated to the spectacular function, the spectacle becomes a universal feature of behaviour, and one hardly sees how Greimas’s “internal restrictions” are justified. This is Serpieri’s theory ; it has been systematized by Keir Elam, who is led to conclude that “deixis is the most significant linguistic feature — both statistically and functionally — in theater,” (1980:27). Osolsobe puts forward a distinction between deixis and ostension: “It is ostension proper — i.e. the object on display itself — that provides the major form of information, whereas the verbal or non-verbal packaging with the whole deictic arsenal of language and all the resources of verbal indexicality can only serve as a frame through which one com-

municates that one communicates, thus as a metacommunicative or metacommunicating frame.” (1980:416).

When making the inventory of the distinctive features that characterize the spectacle, one notices that they oscillate between several poles whose typology could be schematized thus:

energy	desire
ostension	factual perception (psychological, logical)
presupposition	frame analysis
communication	interaction
illocutionary act	
enunciation	construction of meaning
representation	simulacrum
fiction	iconicity-substitution

The definition of terms such as *code* or *convention* will depend on the criteria adopted. Favouring verisimilitude, for example points to a fictional narrative option, which appears at the bottom of the table. The first lines of the table correspond to the conception of the spectacle as a form of *behaviour*, which entails the rejection of semiotic formalization based on linguistic or logical models.

Towards an analysis of the production of signifying systems

The theatrical phenomenon seems to elude analysis: no grammar can account for it if it has not been first articulated with regard to narrative discourse, i.e. dissociated from it. Theater analysis is above all *syncretic* and *transversal*: reception is both linear (logical-temporal) and tabular (exchange of signifiers). As Greimas puts it (1979:392), “one has to reconcile the presence of multiple signifiers with that of a single signified”. Moreover, the spectator has to grapple with clusters of signifiers in the performance continuum, which are brought face to face with the paradigms of memory and of the unconscious.

It is therefore extremely dangerous to speak of the theatrical sign, and even more objectionable to limit oneself to a technical description. Even the term theatrical reception is questionable; as a dialogical experience, a contemporary event, theater does not belong in a reader’s universe. Much

like the stage, the audience produces what it claims to reproduce. If it wants to avoid censuring the conditions of productivity or prejudging the theatrical object, semiotics shall have to account for the construction of meaning in *praesentia*.

Whereas semiotics of realization and reception are rather radically distinct in the case of the text or the film, theater calls for a more nuanced, less rigid distinction: the situation (inclusive of the ideologico-historical context), desire, the interaction, the exchange of the specular and the represented elements, all characterize an enunciation act that is ceaselessly renewed. The semiotician will therefore have to formalize the signifying intercourse or even identify predominant codes within the performance, instead of making inventories.

The notion of code itself is problematical: Marco de Marinis suggests characterizing the spectacular code in terms of "convention which, in the spectacle, makes it possible to link specific contents to specific elements of one or several expressive systems (1978:83-84). This theory presupposes a break between the two end of the production chain: as if the audience and the actors were manipulated, inscribed in separate codes, instead of being the inventors of such codes. Since theater cannot be grasped through a rhetorical approach, one should determine procedures able to describe the permanent inflow of creativity that generates it, the constantly renewed genesis of sense. Indeed, De Marinis seems aware of the danger, as the following double reservation illustrates: "It is well known that these two lists of codes (those of the addresser and of the addressee; A.H.) seldom coincide, much to the contrary." And the author sets out to distinguish between several levels of "naive" or "learned" enjoyment, culminating in an interpretative activity that goes far beyond decoding. That is why we would put forward a definition of the spectacle influenced by reception theory, and which would take into account the fabric of extra/self-referential relationships, the network of generative relations. As a signifying and coded event (and therefore distinct from the everyday world), the spectacle is characterized by the joint presence of the interlocutors.

The introduction of the spectacular tool has the major advantage of reorienting theater analysis, of cancelling the distinction between the two ends of the production chain in order to reveal the collective gesture by which a group of participants invent themselves within the particular context of theatrical *presence*. It is certainly possible to debate endlessly the characterization of this creation-reception process. It is an ambiguous con-

cept, which, for want of anything better, we shall assimilate to language. If the choice of the metaphor may seem unhappy, the function identified thus is nevertheless extremely important. Duvignaud's general theatricality, Goffman's playacting in everyday life — which is a reformulation of the paradox of nature and culture — all underline the crucial role of categories such as simulacrum and rite. There is a subtle contradiction that permits us to identify the theatrical with regard to everyday life: as a fleeting, signifying, coded event, the performance exposes its *marks* by creating its imaginary world.

Notes

1. Symposium of the International Association for Semiotics of Performing Arts (IASPA-AISS), University of Brussels, 23-25 April 1981, Proceedings in *Degrés*, 29-32, 1982.
2. This issue has already been discussed in our analysis of Mounin's concept of communication.

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