MISE-EN-SCÈNE AND/OR MISE-EN-CADRE?:

QUESTIONS FROM THE BOOK

POST-CINEMATIC THEATRE AND PERFORMANCE

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Piotr Woycicki is a Lecturer in Theatre and Performance at Aberystwyth University. His main teaching areas and research are *New Media Performance* and *Shakespeare in Performance*. The title of Woycicki's *Post-cinematic theatre and performance*, published in 2014, refers to a new classification of a specific area of artistic hybridisation. It is a field where cinema, theatre and performance are mixed; and from which, through reception, a critical perception of space can be created following the conventional cinematic codes.

In analysing these post-cinematic practices, he uses an empirical corpus made up of several theatrical works, but also a film: Robert Lepage's *Elsinore* and *The Andersen Project*, Station House *Opera's Roadmetal Sweetbread* and *Mare's Nest*, the Wooster Group's *House/Lights* and *Hamlet*, Katie Mitchell's *Wunschkonzert,* Imitating the Dog's *Hotel Methuselah*, Duncan Speakman's *As If It Were The Last Time* and also Lars Von Trier's film, *Dogville*.

Woycicki defines "post-cinematic" through the existing analogous theatre studies' theoretical conceptualization: "postdramatic theatre", which was defined in 1989 by Hans-Thies Lehmann in his book of the same name. Woycicki focuses on what he calls a subset of "intermedial theatre" and / or "multimedia theatre", a category that has been analysed by Freda Chapple and Chiel Kattenbelt (2006); and his main thesis is based on what Lehmann presents in *Postdramatic Theatre*, an aesthetic in which new forms of multi-perspective narrativity and new "politics of perception" or "response-ability" are generated. In the case of the post-cinematic, these forms are translated into potentialising a critical reflective stance from the spectator (p. 3).

As he states: "what interests me here is what is politically and culturally at stake, and how post-cinematic theatre and film can interrogate and perhaps exhibit a form of resistance to this dominant cinematisation through deconstructive intermedial practice" (p. 4). Other authors, such as Bolter and Grusin and their book/concept

Remediation (2000), or Auslander with his book/concept *Liveness* (2002) are also referred to in framing what Woycicki calls "post-cinema as a cultural phenomena".

For a more specific analysis of the empirical artistic corpus, he applies post-structuralist theories by Jean- François Lyotard, Emmanuel Lévinas, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Rancière and Jacques Derrida, which allow him to "articulate what is perceptually at stake in the aesthetics of disorientation, undecidability, multiplicity and aporias", but also the "deconstruction of cinematic conventions from different angles: political agendas, ethical perceptions, perspectivist approaches to narratives [and] moral frameworks" (p.6).

Despite this theoretical framework, which allows Woycicki to make a highly interesting approach to the analysis of the works that serve him as an empirical corpus, there are also some limitations. One concerns the very idea of cataloguing, such as the post-cinematic proposal, in that we can question this proliferation of concepts that are often merely different and subjective views of the same things. This is cataloguing that really does not add any truly new approaches in developing analysis of the field. There are also limitations with regard to the "evolution" of artistic practices and the various "metamorphoses" in the history of media spectacle. In other words, this classification advances to what "comes after" without taking into account the history of existing intersections between theatre and cinema in the early 20th century and, crucially, without considering the history of cinematic theatre.

The book also lacks an approach to the role of the theatre in the first filmic productions. These practical examples of shows, together with the "montage theories" of Eisenstein and Brecht, could have been listed and discussed. Among others, Piscator and his political theatre could have figured here. Woycicki might here have discussed the trajectory of the post-cinematic terms theatre and performance, as well as concepts such as mixed-media and intermedia, along with the repositioning of some futuristic and surreal experiments, where the interweaving of the two media cause disrupted perception.

In this context, Woycicki could well have analysed concepts justifying "intentional" or "organic" hybridity (Bakhtinian concepts), as well as transgression, surprise and disruption to justify a more emancipatory and participatory political perception for the spectator.

Post-cinematic theatre and performance has, however, two great virtues. The first, mentioned above, is that it provides a good analysis of the works under study. The second is that this analysis shows clearly, albeit unintentionally, that the core uniting these two

media is the relationship of two concepts intrinsic to each of the media: *mise-en-scène*, in theatre and *mise-en-cadre*, in film.

In a note, *mise-en-cadre* is defined as, "the cinematic counterpart of the mise-en-scène. It means all that is included in the frame of a shot" (P. 253, note 7).

The mixture of the two framing modes in the same space enables new dimensions of performativity and de-framing, time, space, scale, concurrency, etc. to be created. As an example, here is his analysis of Station House *Opera's Roadmetal Sweetbread* "through an interplay of film and live action, the virtual characters from film materialise on stage and become part of the *mise-en-scène* action. Through this intermedial playfulness and by re-enacting the transition between *mise-en-scène* and the *mise-en-cadre* in a back and forth mechanical manner, the scene negotiates a space for jouissance of spectating movements lost in the process of setting them to a fílmic frame. These movements do not necessarily conform to an aesthetic framework, but potentially disrupt it". (P. 88).

In another discussion, he argues that: "these elements break the framed notion of a *mise-en-cadre* by introducing the unpredictability and potentiality of the *mise-en-scène* action (P.99). This intersection between the scene and frame ultimately presents the spectator with a *mise-en-abime*, showing physical and mediated presence, light and shadow, reality and dream, the ghostly, the multiple possibilities beyond a linear narrative, among other hybrid dimensions that only the spectator, as a singularly perceptive entity, can reflect.

Translated by Mick Greer.