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Yana Meerzon

Between Intentionality and Affect: on Jan Mukařovský's Theory of Reception

In their insightful study, "Affect/Performance/Politics" (2012), Erin Hurley and Sara Warner remind us that the humanities and social sciences are now experiencing a new sweep of theoretical inquiry that focuses on studying *affect* as a leading mechanism of our cognition and communication, as well as on the making and receiving of art products. Today, "the affective turn signals [our] renewed interest in embodiment and sensorial experience" (HURLEY and WARNER 2012: 99), it allows scholars to examine a theatre performance as a venue to reinforce the subjectivity of the artist and the subjectivity of the receiver; both in the aesthetic and political realms (HURLEY and WARNER 2012: 100). This article takes the above theoretical framework further. I argue that although the theory of affect is still struggling to find its own methodology of textual and performance analysis, when it is paired with functionalist approaches in theatre scholarship, it can offer interesting insights into how theatrical performance capitalizes on its built-in *intentionality* – Jan Mukařovský's *semantic gesture* – to evoke the audience's emotional or affective responses[1].

Mukařovský's structural aesthetics, positioned between Russian Formalism and Husserl's phenomenology, recognizes the importance of the artist's personality as "the major link within the communicative chain: sender-text-receiver" (LOTMAN 1994: 31). Mukařovský's 'phenomenological structuralism' introduces the idea of the socially, culturally and historically contextualized perceiver: someone who participates actively in making a work of art and thus together with the author pre-determines its *unintentionality*, the concept further developed by Jauss as 'horizons of expectation'[2]. Mukařovský defines the

1 I do recognize the importance of a nuanced discussion of the difference between affect and catharsis, but I leave this subject for another occasion.

2 In his reception theory, which stems from Husserl's phenomenology, Jauss identified a series of steps in reception practice or "horizons". The primary horizon of expectation is connected with the "aesthetic horizon"

power of an art product as situated between its *intentionality,* as established by the product itself, and its *unintentionality*, as it is experienced by the perceiver (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978b: 95–6). To Mukařovský, it is not the artist's attitude toward the work of art but the perceiver's 'unmarked' view of it that is fundamental for understanding the inherent artistic intent within the art product. However paradoxical this statement might seem, the artist's attitude appears secondary, or 'marked', from the standpoint of intentionality. As Mukařovský explains, only when the artist him/herself assumes the unmarked position of the perceiver, his/her understanding of the "intrinsic artistic intent", "the entire scope of the tendency toward semantic unity [within a given work of art, *YM*] becomes clearly and distinctly evident" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978b: 97). To Mukařovský, the work of art is never a static, fossilized object; it is constantly changing under the scrutinizing eye of the perceiver, whose reception mechanisms are pre-determined by his/her social-historical position. Hence, he proposes to discuss the work of art from a double perspective: that of its intentionality (structure, author's artistic intention) and that of its unintentionality, the perceiver's viewpoint.

In the following, I will demonstrate that when theoreticians of affect in theatre insist on investigating the mechanisms of our emotional response to the given artistic stimuli – Mukařovský's view of intentionality/unintentionality interdependency as the force that fashions meaning in creating an art product – can aid their methodological inquiry. In the first section of my study, I will briefly outline the major postulates of the theory of affect as it is discussed in theatre studies; in the second, I will demonstrate that some fundamental concepts of Prague Structuralism – intentionality, unintentionality, semantic gesture and aesthetic function – can be used as methodological tools to study audience's emotions in theatre.

Theatre and Affect: to the Rise of Subjectivity in Theatre Studies

Theater studies today recognizes affect as one of the conceptual frames to study the spectators' mechanisms of reception as psycho-physical experience, which may be similar for many theatergoers regardless of their linguistic, socio-cultural or ethnic background. This turn in theatre theory allows us to deal with today's socio-economic reality of globalization defined by the transnational diversity of the artists and their audiences' diversity of socio, cultural, linguistic, political, and ethic positioning. It focuses on the subjectivity of the artist/perceiver and studies Self as the only stable and non-negotiable (although dynamic) constant in the making and perceiving of a work of art; the view suggested yet by Jan Mukařovský. The rise

that he recognizes as "literary expectation" (RUSH 1997: 80). Jauss' secondary horizon is connected with lived experience, which "encompasses the assumptions of the whole cultural-social world of a community or an individual, whether as author, initial reader, or later reader" (RUSH 1997: 81). The work of art carries the markers of the historical and cultural time in which it was produced, whereas the reader brings to it expectations that are also marked by the personal and collective cultural time in which he/she lives.

of (auto)biographical and testimonial theatre, documentary drama, and practices of adaptation testifies to this theory. These theatrical explorations provide a fruitful venue in which the artist's subjectivity can be expressed and in which the perceiver can mimic and project it back to the stage; so the performative power of shock not catharsis marks the aesthetic search in theatre performance today (FISCHER-LICHTE 2008).

In psychology, the term 'affect' refers to the active processes of experiencing a strong emotion: our instinctual reaction to any psycho-physical stimuli. In theatre, affect can identify the processes of making and receiving a theatrical event. To Anne Bogart, an American theatre director, affect can be "associated with action", when "our blood rushes faster, our mirror neurons spike new synaptic activity throughout our bodies, [and] adrenalin courses throughout the system" (BOGART 2010: xii). For the audience, it is specifically associated with "the thrill of being in the presence of actors who are radiantly experiencing the present moment" (BOGART 2010: xii). For example, watching an acrobat performing life-threatening jumps and summersaults, the spectator/perceiver experiences a "mixture of fear, pleasure, and confident hope" (BALINT 1987: 23), the emotions that constitute the fundamental work of affect (HURLEY 2010: 11–3).

An instinctual reaction, affect is identified by a set of expressive physical mechanisms common to all individuals. In theatre, however, as Hurley suggests, it "can be a very subjective experience marked by durational and mimetic categories related to the experiential definitions of Self" (HURLEY 2010: 13). Our experience of affect precedes our experience of empathy, compassion or catharsis, the emotions directly connected with our system of moral, ethic, social, cultural and aesthetic values. Affect "exceeds us by happening against our will" (HURLEY 2010: 14). An example of the psycho-physical response to the outside stimuli, affect can be "traced phylogenetically, which means that we can see [it] across the evolutionary history of the human species"; hence it can be used as the "beyond or above-cultural category" of performance analysis (HURLEY 2010: 15). Theatre, as we experience it as theatregoers and as many of us practice it as professionals, "can't help but makes us feel, even when it doesn't mean to, when it isn't particularly trying to, or when its design fails outright" (HURLEY 2010: 8). Thus, the uniqueness of the theatrical event rests with the volatility of emotional outcome. It "requires two sentient bodies: one to act, another to apprehend" (HURLEY 2010: 26); and it is based on the encounter between two embodied experiences: that of the actor and that of the spectator.

Affect as a purely subjective experience is marked by durational (MUSE 2012: 175-7) and mimetic categories related to the experiential definitions of Self. As a relational and temporal encounter between bodies, affect leads to excessive creative expressions that in their own turn can rely upon a number of mechanisms found in various art forms. For example, Deleuze and Guattari recognize affect as a type of thinking done through art: something that relies upon creating emotional stimuli by using "vibrations, harmonies and dissonances of literary words, musical tones, or painterly colors" (CULL 2012: 193). Studying affect in theatre forces one to recognize, as Deleuze and Guattari do, that "the role of artists is to stage affects as en-

counters that exceed 'those who undergo them'; they [the artists, *YM*] must invent affective works that 'make us become with them'" (CULL 2012: 175). We can say in turn that the work of the performer is not to represent emotion, but to devise a procedure to extract the affect, to reconstruct in performance the power of another human being "to pierce us like an arrow, force us to think, and enable us to act in new ways" (CULL 2012: 193).

In theatre, visual and sound-scapes, including the director's work with actors and designers, take on the role of emotional stimuli in creating affective encounters between the stage and the audience, something that Hurley identifies as the processes of making and perceiving theatre performance or as *feeling-work* or *feeling-labour* (HURLEY 2010: 9). These processes characterize "the work [that] theatre does by making, managing, and moving feeling in all its types […] in a publically observable display that is sold to an audience for a wage" (HURLEY 2010: 9). Thus, if a theatre artist intends to manipulate our emotions, he/she can employ audio and visual stimuli to activate our reactions. Loudness, noise, pauses, rhythmical syncopation, and melody turn into mechanisms of authorial intention or semantic gesture that would characterize this particular performance intentionality (LEVITIN 2006: 168–70).

However, these encounters cannot be effectively measured today. With the arrival of scientifically advanced mechanisms of assessing our emotional responses we may be able to identify, describe and seriously analyze the way affect functions in theatre. Today, I argue, we can only use the traditional structural and phenomenological methodologies of textual and performance analysis to indicate the points of high emotional tension in the audience, as they have been predetermined by a theatre performance's *intentionality* or *semantic gesture*. At the same time, as theatre professionals know, although a production team (including a playwright, a director, an actor and designers) can predetermine certain emotional responses of the audience, the artists are always fully aware of the power of chance, the work of art's *unintentionality*, which rests with the active position of the perceiver, who is emotionally and sometime even physically involved in co-creating a theatrical performance.

Jan Mukařovský's Intentionality-Unintentionality in Art: from Structuralism to Affect

In his 1988 study, "Mukařovský's Aesthetic Object", John Fizer has clearly outlined the difference between the Prague School's view of the aesthetic object and a later semiotic renderings of it,[3] stating that "Mukařovský's view of the spatio-temporal accidentality of the subject in the noetic processes is manifestly phenomenological" (FIZER 1988: 157). To Mukařovský, the work of art remains an autonomous sign in which the aesthetic function

3 The 1999 collection of articles, entitled *Jan Mukařovský and the Prague School*, edited by Herta Schmid and Vladimír Macura, contains a number of important studies that argue a similar position.

dominates; but it can originate only within a dynamic communication model in which the artistic information moves between the sender/artist/author and the perceiver/audience member. In this model the focus is neither the art product with its structures and significations nor only the perceiver's subjectivity. To Mukařovský, the focus of investigation is the act of communication, as formulated by Karl Bühler's linguistic model.

A representative of the German school of Gestalt psychology, Bühler saw the processes of cognition as holistic and the brain itself as an autonomous mechanism with self-organizing tendencies. Bühler identified the following three functions of everyday communication in speech: 1) the Expressive Function (*Ausdrucksfunktion*); 2) the Referential Function (*Darstellungsfunktion*, i.e. describing function); and 3) the Conative Function (*Appellfunktion*, i.e. appealing function). Mukařovský adapted this model to study art and invented a fourth function – aesthetic – to distinguish the everyday act of communication from that used in art. In this way, Mukařovský's aesthetic model recognized the impact of both artist and perceiver in making a work of art as their emotional work.

Hence, in his phenomenological structuralism, heavily influenced by the work of Edmund Husserl, Mukařovský identified the subject (artist/perceiver) as "'an evolutionary factor' in the overall development of historical context" (FIZER 1988: 157). To Husserl, the subject was "the determinator of the 'essential nature of the objects and contents of the judgments'" (HUSSERL in FIZER 1988: 157). On the contrary, Mukařovský's take on Self was historical: he never recognized subjectivity outside the socio-cultural-economic and historical processes, the context reflected within and making one's Self at the same time. Further on, Fizer outlines the evolutionary nature of Husserl's thought, which in its later stages would come much closer to Mukařovský's views of Self. Thus, he writes, if in his early works Husserl would insist on understanding Self and consciousness as "'a self-contained system of Being' with no spatial-temporal exterior, that cannot experience causality from anything nor exert causality upon anything" (FIZER 1988: 158); in his later works, Husserl would posit the Self as the subject of the communal existence, both as the spatial-temporal entity and as the linguistic construct. To Husserl of the late 1930s, the individual becomes a unit only within the inter-subjective socium (FIZER 1988: 158). To Mukařovský, much the same way as to Husserl's later thought, intentionality is a dynamic reciprocity between the artist and his/her historical community. His position, and later that of Felix Vodička, "attempts to accommodate two mutually exclusive conceptions of literary art – essentialist and functionalist" (FIZER 1988: 159).

Mukařovský recognizes the work of art as a triad: a sign, an object and a social phenomenon, in which the materiality of the art-product and its phenomenological or perceptive signification coexist. In his theory, the work of art becomes a historical phenomenon: a subject to "the historical evolution of collective consciousness" and a subject of the aesthetic norm, determined by this collective/communal and not individual/psychological experience (FIZER 1988: 160). This position portrays the philosophical makeup of the Prague School as situated at the crossroads of formalism and phenomenology.

Mukařovský recognizes the work of art as a 'man-made' (*intentional*) object, which originates with the authorial work (*intentionality*) and the perceiver's work (*unintentionality*). As he writes, "intentionality requires a subject from whom it proceeds, who is its source" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978b: 163). The subject is found within the work of art as 1) the set of its philosophical, social, or other issues; 2) in technical aspects as the "selection and distribution of colors, the brush strokes" if it is a painting; and 3) a point of view or perspective from which the landscape is painted or the story is told. This way, he argues, intentionality is the work of the subject/the author as well as "an intrinsic principle of the artistic unity of a work" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978b: 163).

This phenomenon is explained through the dual position of the author, who is both the sender and the receiver of the message. This duality provides the inner intentionality of the work of art: the dichotomy of semiotic meaning (i.e. intentionality) versus its materiality (i.e. unintentionality) constitutes its dynamic unity or integral whole. "The work of art stands out among human products as the prime example of intentional creation. […] Only as an integral whole does the work of art fulfil its functions as an aesthetic sign" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978a: 89).

Mukařovský's proposal to study the role of individual in creating a work of art distinguishes his aesthetics "from subsequent Structuralist and semiotic theories which declared the subject null and absent" (FIZER 1988: 163). He defines the relationships between the subject (author) and it object (the work of art) as historical and semiotic. Mukařovský recognizes the author as the product of certain socio-cultural and historical circumstances and the work of art as a highly codified semiotic system that is never "a straightforward document of [the author's] life, but a message conditioned by the immaterial social conventions that are implemented in it" (STEINER 1984: 530). He leaves it to the sphere of perceiver's aesthetic activity to determine the aesthetic value of the work of art, something that will also change from one epoch to another. Mukařovský recognizes the work of art as synchronically predetermined by the perceiving audience of the time of its creation, even as it will also be re-evaluated according to aesthetic, social, political, and existential norms of each successive perceiving generation. To Mukařovský a "sign is [a] social reality" that is "liable to continuous historical displacement", and so the great value of any canonical text – from Sophocles to Dostoevsky – that is re-evaluated by every new generation of their readers "indicates that the referent of an artistic sign is not existential experience of its author but that of its audience" (STEINER 1984: 531).

Mukařovský dedicates a number of his studies (including "The Individual and Literary Development" and "Personality in Art") to the analysis of subjectivity in art, i.e., the position of the author/individual as the creator/perceiver of his/her own art product. For example, in "Personality in Art", he provides an account of the historical evolution of the author's function in making a work of art. Mukařovský suggests that in medieval and Renaissance times, the concept of personality was radically different from what one finds in the modern period. During the Renaissance, personality was seen as "more a quantitative than

a qualitative" expression (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978b: 152), and so for the Renaissance artist "personality [was] a force", whereas a work of art was the result of his/her "conscious will, of skill" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978b: 153). The value of the work is not in the fact that "it may be an expression of its author but in the fact that it grasps the order and composition of nature" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978b: 153). As Mukařovský proposes, the idea of artistic genius as a moving force of art belongs to the Romanticism of the early 19th century. Genius, as Mukařovský writes, "is no longer personality creating through a conscious will, attentive to the external reality which it cognizes or reshapes. Genius is a creative involuntariness – spontaneity" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978b: 154), i.e. the primary category to measure the artistic value of the art product. The genius of the Romantic epoch creates "not because he wants but because he must […] for something within him creates" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978b: 154). A work of art becomes an expression of the artist's inner world, consciousness, and identity, it "appears as a genuine expression of the artist's personality, as a 'material' replica of his mental organization" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978b: 154). The artist's Self, his/her inner world and his/her internal reflections of the external world become the focus of the artist's investigation, a tendency that continues today. Hence, as Mukařovský suggests, studying a work of art today requires us to examine the impact the author's personality has on the product's aesthetic makeup. In examining a work of art, one should discuss the artist's subjectivity: "the epistemology of [his/her] biography must be systematically considered" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978b: 179).

The same method of biographical archaeology applies to studying the role of the perceiver, who is also always a product of his/her own socio-political milieu. The *automatization of the personality/subjectivity* of the artist, Mukařovský argues, elevates the role of the perceiver, the ultimate addressee in creating art, and whose emotional reactions this work of art would have taken into consideration (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978b: 157–8). The work of art originates with two subjects, "the one who presents it and the one who receives it" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978b: 160), the communicative formula that Erin Hurley also evokes in her definition of affect in theatre. The perceiver becomes the co-author of the product, specifically when the work of art travels in time. The perceiver, who is historically, culturally and socially positioned, and whose subjectivity is always privileged in the communication model in arts, influences the outcomes of art-making:

> The perceiver's active participation in the formation of intentionality gives this intentionality a dynamic nature. As a resultant of the encounter between the viewer's attitude and the organization of the work, intentionality is labile and oscillates during the perception of the same work, or at least – with the same perceiver – from perception to perception. It is a common experience that the more vividly work affects a perceiver, the more possibilities of perception it offers him. (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978a: 99)

Intentionality rests with the communicative processes that take place between the author and the perceiver and the structure of the art product. In making his/her artistic statement,

a unified form of art, which to Mukařovský is always defined by its semiotic nature and thus takes the form of a sign, the artist "takes into account in advance how the listener will understand him; he formulates it with regard for the listener" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978b: 162)[4]. The task of the work of art is similar: "In his creation the author heeds the perceiver, takes him into account; the perceiver, on the other hand, understands the work as the author's utterance and perceives the author behind it" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978b: 162). In this way, one can say that the work of art is capable not only of taking into account the perceiver's emotional reactions but also stimulating them. Going further in this direction, Mukařovský states that a work of art originates in a "living artistic tradition" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978b: 166), and thus is the product of its historical time. "The work of art is impossible without preconditions" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978b: 166), the artist him/herself is the historical constant that is conditioned by his/her time, culture, gender and other circumstances. The external influences come to the point of intersection with the artistic personality, up to the point when we face the danger of losing the individuality of the artist to the myriad of circumstances that make him/her, a phenomenon that has been widely experienced and exploited by Postmodernism. Hence, to Mukařovský, although the subject of critical inquiry remains with the work of art, the position of the perceiver takes over: beauty is in the eyes of the beholder after all.

One can argue that when put in the proper historical context Mukařovský's theory not only paves the path to pure phenomenological approaches in theatre, but also allows for a shift in critical inquiry, in which it is the process of perception itself, the position of the beholder, that becomes the subject of critical analysis. Mukařovský's aesthetics recognizes the impact of the individual in creating/receiving a work of art and it proposes to take this impact into consideration when examining the product itself. Similarly, the theoreticians of affect insist on the supremacy of one's experiential experience in determining the artistic value of the art product. They argue that only the psycho-physical (or sensual) response to artistic stimuli can determine the coherence and aesthetic value of an art product, which is often constructed according to the norms and expectations of a certain literary or theatrical genre. These norms function as the factors of intentionality, the art product's semantic gesture, and so can predetermine the spectator's emotional response. Intentionality, therefore**,** is determined neither by the author's artistic nor other pragmatic objectives or feelings; it is predetermined by the work of art's *semantic gesture,* the semantic energy that controls the work of art's meaning-forming processes and its emotional coherence. In both cases, intentionality is the key to the experience: it rests with the embodied experience of authorship and the embodied experience of perception. As Mukařovský explains,

4 Another fruitful echoing that comes to mind in this context is the speech act theory as formulated by J. L. Austin in his book *How To Do Things With Words* about locutionary (meaning-forming), illocutionary and perlocutionary (or performing) acts of speech. The difference between the illocutionary and perlocutionary speech act is in the power of assertion. In producing an illocutionary statement, the speaker formulates or performs a certain action, which in its own turn produces perlocutionary effect; which implies that the speaker makes an assertion on the part of the listener, and hence anticipates that the listener will react or follow the instructions/the forces implied within the illocutionary statement. In this position, it seems to me, Austin's theory echoes Mukařovský's thinking of the interdependency of intentionality and unintentionality in art; again the subject of a separate study.

> [t]he semantic unity is a very relevant condition in work of art, and intentionality is the force which binds together the individual parts and components of a work into the unity that gives the work its meaning. […] [Intentionality is] the force operating within the work which strives towards the resolution of the contradictions and tensions among its individual parts and components, thereby giving each of them a specific relation to the others and all of them together a unified meaning. Hence intentionality in art is semantic energy. (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978a: 96)

For example, the play's dramatic structure and its genre expectations can predetermine how a theatre performance will stimulate the spectators' emotions. Writing about Greek tragedy and how catharsis – the mechanism of feeling in this case – is constructed in this form, Hurley echoes Mukařovský when she states that "the formal organization of the tragedies, the way the plays were put together – acts as a feeling-technology" (HURLEY 2010: 40); the speeches of the chorus with their self-reflective and performative powers and the alternating dialogue-based episodes "not only separate incident from reflection in Greek tragedy; [they] also mitigate or otherwise digest the incidents and their affective effects" (HURLEY 2010: 40). Like tragedy, melodrama employs the basic dramatic categories of plot, character, and conflict to arouse our empathy, the emotion marked by our desire and ability to recognize, identify and sympathise with the characters and situations presented in the text and on stage. The melodrama's stock devices include characters in need and distress, innocent victims, forgotten orphans, abused maidens, and reunited families. Melodrama also engages with heroic actions and presents conflicts that involve pathos and thrills. It employs emotionally explosive language and investigates the mechanisms of physical and psychological violence. It includes visually effective actions, such as the scene of sensation based on disturbing images of fire, flood, earthquake and other natural or industrial disasters. In melodrama, then, as Hurley states, such mechanisms of emotional stimuli as empathy and pathos, which are secondary to Greek tragedy, become the leading devices of feeling-technology (HURLEY 2010: 24–5). Thus, one can claim that intentionality in theatre appears as the device of dramatic or performative structure, when an artistic team intentionally factors the audience's emotional response into the basic structure of a show.[5]

Going further with the question of intentionality, one needs to consider the importance of *aesthetic function* (as described by Mukařovský's communication model), which determines the work of art's semantic dominant (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1970: 7). Aesthetic function exemplifies and foregrounds the artist's own attitude to the reality he/she cre-

5 Erin Hurley further suggests that in today's theatre the mechanisms of feeling technology originate not only with the given dramatic structures, but also within the rehearsal process, and are further augmented at the level of production/perception. Hurley recognizes the techniques of emotional recall and affective memory as the major mechanisms of feeling technology (as practiced by Lee Strasberg in his Method Acting) as directed at actors/authors. She examines the technical elements of production as the mechanisms of affect now directed at the audience (HURLEY 2010: 56–7); the techniques that one can see also as the production's unintentionality.

ates within the artifact. It is "the mode of a subject's self-realization vis-à-vis the external world"; so a man can "realize himself vis-à-vis reality either directly or by means of another reality" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1987c: 40). The aesthetic function is not a vehicle of emotions. It implies the processes of distancing, the perceiver taking a step away from the work of art. "For the aesthetic function, reality is not an immediate object but a mediated one. Its immediate object […] is an aesthetic sign" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1987c: 46). The aesthetic sign expresses the essence of the created fictional world and characterizes the disjoint relationships within the elements of the artifact, such as colors, shapes, bodies, and sounds. It is independent of reality, whereas aesthetic function refers to it. Aesthetic function refers to reality "as a whole, never to one of its individual elements"; it "projects into reality as a unifying principle the attitude which the subject adopts toward reality" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1987c: 46). Therefore, in any work of art, aesthetic function is fundamental and unmarked, while the dominance of another function is considered as extra-aesthetic or marked.

In today's theatre, however, it is the power of phatic and communicative functions (those of shock and affect) that takes over the work of art, so the perceiver's emotional identification with the art-product becomes its intentionality. For example, in today's documentary theatre and its search for authenticity and truth on stage, the attention to the archive, document and the artist/narrator's biography is in the forefront. In theatre of compassion that relies on the author/narrator's testimonies, the audience's emotional identification with the action takes on the primary affectual and semantic force. The creative team instigates stage-audience tension as the structure of affect. It aspires that the collective feeling of the group (audience) will emerge "in an alternative or oppositional relationship to hegemonic structures of power", i.e. the action on stage (PESCHEL 2012:162). These practices also recognize the importance of authorial intention, almost the same way as Mukařovský saw it. As he wrote, in watching a work of art,

> [w]e assert that the path from the artist's personality to the work is not direct and immediate; especially not spontaneous, we are far from denying the artist's personality, rather we would prefer to emphasise it. Social, general cultural, and artistic influences affect the personality only in so much and in such a manner as the personality itself (whether consciously or unconsciously) allows. Personality is not a sum of influences but their equilibrium – their subordination and superordination to one another, and it is for this reason that the artist's personality proves to be an imitative force just as any other personality. (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978b: 167–8)

In today's theatre, spectator – as a co-creating author/personality – is often expected to 'go along' with his/her sensual and emotional experience and to 'give in' to the fragmentary story-lines and psycho-physical stimuli generated by a performance. As Fischer-Lichte explains, the act of perception causes the spectator's *infection*:

> [B]y transferring the emotions perceived on the actor's body to the spectator's body during the performance[;] 'infection' denotes an essentially 'classical' state of liminality, an in-between state which marks the passage from good health to illness. The concept of 'emotional infection' evidences the transformative power of performances. (FISCHER-LICHTE 2008: 192)

In such theatre practices, affect becomes the device of semantic energy: the process of meaning-forming in the work of art. It originates in this *transformative power of performance,* in the materiality (the thingness) of the actors' bodies and stage objects, "something of something phenomenon" (FISCHER-LICHTE 2008: 141). Fischer-Lichte moves the discussion of the aesthetics of the performative from the semiotic nature of representation to the materiality of presentation and the possible effects it can have on the audience. In her model the expressive function (that relates to the actor) and the conative function (that relates to the audience) dominate. Thus Fischer-Lichte introduces the concept of the "something of something" phenomenon; in which,

> materiality, signifier, and signified coincide in the case of self-referentiality. Materiality does not act as a signifier to which this or that signified can be attributed. Rather, materiality itself has to be seen as the signified already given in the materiality perceived by the subject. To use a tautology, the thing's materiality adopts the meaning of its materiality, that is, of its phenomenal being. What the object is perceived as is what it signifies. (FISCHER-LICHTE 2008: 141)

The sign/thing dialectics constitutes the essence of a work of art as once an autonomous sign and a material thing. In its materiality, a work of art "affect[s] man's mental life, causing [one's] direct and spontaneous involvement and penetrating through its action to the deepest [existential, *YM*] levels of the perceiver's personality" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978a: 128). The following is an example of how a theatre performance today can shift its focus of interest to the spectator as the doer of the action, the protagonist of its intentionality.

On The Complimentarity of the Intentionality/Unintentionality Effect

The 2013 site-specific performance *Peter and Valerie* features a London based performance artist Peter Reder and a Maltese-Canadian actor/film-maker Valerie Buhagiar, as a semi-fictional family, Peter and Valerie mourning their close friend Frank.[6] Presented during the Magnetic North Festival, in Ottawa, Canada, the show plays for a number of exclusive audiences, of maximum nine people during each presentation. At the beginning, Peter greets

6 *Peter and Valerie* was created and performed by Peter Reder and Valerie Buhagiar; *Peter and Valerie Production* (Toronto/UK), for the Magnetic Theatre Festival, in Ottawa; June 7–15, 2013. Peter speaks English with the British accent and Valerie speaks English with a slight Mediterranean touch, the features that reveal their geographical and cultural background.

every spectator at the door of his Glebe home and invites us to come to the living room, where Valerie thanks their old friends (us) for joining them at this sad gathering. In order to create a bond of trust with the spectators, the performers use their own names, personal stories, photographs and video-recordings. They act on the assumption that the audience will accept the 'given circumstances' and go along with the game, willing to improvise the actions and so to become the co-makers of the story. Hence, the progress of this theatrical encounter depends on two related conditions. On one hand, Peter and Valerie have to fill out the dramaturgical matrix of the evening by bringing it to its logical conclusion, the performance's intentionality. The show must close with the audience joining the performers in a nearby park to perform the ritual of scattering ashes and clapping to Frank's memory. On the other hand, this interactive performance cannot unfold without the audience's involvement in co-constructing the proposed action, by simultaneously following and destroying its dramaturgical routes or unintentionality. And so, as the evening unfolds, we find ourselves reminiscing about Frank, his artistic gifts, love for traveling and music.

By relying upon our feelings of shock and pleasure, when we find ourselves in the middle of the 'acting work', pretending to be the old friends of Peter and Valerie, the guests in their house, this show confronts our knowledge of theatre routine and hence points at the intrinsic complementarity of Mukařovský's 'intentionality/unintentionality' binary, which determines the way affect works in theatre. During the night I attended the show, most of the spectators went along with Peter and Valerie's ritual. Some of us supplied extra information on Frank's life; some of us readily responded to the hosts' questions, and one of the spectators even asked Peter to turn off the TV since it was disturbing her concentration and took her attention away from the grimness of the situation. The audience felt 'safe' and engaged with the action; since the performers did not violate our private space and did not ask us to reveal anything personal about ourselves. The spectators enjoyed the ambiguity of the situation, willing to improvise with the proposed turns of the scenario. For example, as the show was moving along Valerie was behaving in a more and more unpredictable manner. In the middle of the action, she left the living room sobbing, so one of the audience members asked Peter whether any medical attention would be required, whereas another one followed Valerie to the kitchen, offering help. This moment presented a clear example of the 'immersive theatre' techniques that seeks active theatre audiences by shifting the focus of a theatrical encounter from the actors as the doers of the action to the spectators. Imposing on us the function of intentionality, the performance team expected their audience to experience analogous to the actors' performative transformation. The spectators were to undergo a similar to the actors' process of turning into a character, to engage our imagination and become Frank's friends for the 60 minutes duration of this show. As the result, the spectators experienced emotional discomfort and displayed signs of anxiety, which added to the play's given circumstances the 'authentic feel' of unease and even agitation.

Such psycho-physical engagement of the spectator with the performative action is the central element of Mukařovský's intentionality/unintentionality binary, when a theatre play, instead of seeking our intellectual involvement with its action, would repeatedly

investigate how by engaging with the "physiology and neurology of the human body as a receiver of outside stimuli", the material mechanisms of production "can assist the artist in using sensorial stimuli to compose a live theatrical event and create an in-between state of experience and awareness" (DI BENEDETTO 2010: 1). Analogously, the primary artistic goal of *Peter and Valerie* was to make the audience members re-connect with their own bodies, memories, and other psycho-somatic experiences 'inside out', to exchange our positions of passive spectators with the active one of the actors. The actors/audience close proximity, the space of a living room with people sitting next to each other on a sofa and a loveseat, created a high voltage energy of this show. It accentuated the feelings of danger and unpredictability, the sensations that bring us pleasure in watching a theatrical event live. In watching/participating in the show *Peter and Valerie*, the audience members became the active players of the proposed action; Rancière's "emancipated spectators", who challenge the habitual theatrical binary "between viewing and acting" (RANCIÈRE 2009: 13). Our will for and necessity of emancipation instigated by *Peter and Valerie* performative situation took us beyond our normative position of receivers/transmitters/senders of energy in theatre (RANCIÈRE 2009: 14). The audience members, who participated in the action and thus changed (even if just slightly) its course, became the creators of a new theatrical community with the acting team in its centre. By placing the actors and the spectators in an arm-length proximity to each other and by forcing us to actively participate in making its performative dramaturgy, *Peter and Valerie* engaged with the spectators' nostalgia for gaming and mimicry that characterizes our childhood experiences of cognition and play. It acted upon the aims of the experimental theatre today, trying "to abolish this [stage-audience, *YM*] exteriority […]; by placing the spectators on the stage and the performers in the auditorium, by abolishing the difference between the two; by transferring the performance to other sites; by identifying it with taking possession of the street, the town or life" (RANCIÈRE 2009: 15). In *Peter and Valerie*, this stage/audience given circumstances created demanding working conditions for the team as well. It forced them to act as natural as possible and be as focused as they could in order to sustain the authenticity of the action. Audience engagement, on the other hand, turned this show into an "unintentional reality", which was "carried by [its own] unifying intention" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978a: 103).

At the same time, I found this objective a bit too ambitious and partly naïve; since no interactive, game-based theatre experience depends on the spectators' will only. From the Greek theatre practices to those of Meyerhold and Artaud, theatre audiences have been acting as the subjects of artistic experiment and emotional handling; hence the targets of intentionality. I expected a similar master-plan devised by the production team, however, when I asked Peter and Valerie, how they would behave if at least one audience member rejected their invitation for this theatrical game, thus slowing down the action or completely destroying the proposed circumstances; the performers replied that they did not really anticipate such a situation, since they expected the audience members to be civilized and to respect the hospitality of their guests. In case someone would categorically refuse

the game, Peter and Valerie would adjust their behaviour by employing their theatrical training, going back to the scenario and bringing the story back to its original route. This way, in other words, the creators of the performance would remain in control of its action, allowing spectators only the minimum degree of creative freedom, making sure that the show keeps up with its dramaturgical canvas and can be successfully terminated within the given time-limit.[7]

Conclusion: Why Mukařovský?

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the objective of this paper: an attempt to rethink Jan Mukařovský's view of intentionality/unintentionality interdependency – the work of art's semantic gesture, its meaning-forming force – as a methodological tool to study affect in theatre, the mechanism of our emotional response to the given artistic stimuli. Since we do not possess any trustworthy devices to measure spectators' emotions in theatre today, we often stand on a slippery road of interpretation. The methodologies of performance analysis as developed by Mukařovský and other representatives of the Prague School can be used to discuss the audience's emotional response as something that is factored in by the artwork itself, a mechanism of intentionality; and as something experienced by the perceiver, a thrill factor or unintentionality.

As Doležel writes, the epistemological makeup of the Prague Structuralism is firmly rooted in phenomenological thought and historical determinism, thus being a foundation for further studies in reception and cognition. Given the diversity of its analytical categories – including its functionalism and pragmatics (DOLEŽEL 1999: 16-7); the interdisciplinarity of its methodological apparatus (DOLEŽEL 1999: 17); historicism (DOLEŽEL 1999: 18); a communicative nature of aesthetic activity based on "the producer (the writer), the work (the literary text) and the receiver (the reader)" triad (DOLEŽEL 1999: 18); and its "zigzag method of literary analysis" stemming from the praxis of literature (DOLEŽEL 1999: 19-20) – Doležel calls the Prague School project "not a historical monument, but a guide for the future" (DOLEŽEL 1999: 23), a position that allows one to borrow its analytical tools to study thrill and affect experiences in theatre. Hence, one can argue that although Mukařovský's thinking remains the product of high Modernist culture, it predates today's theories of affect that reflect the zenith of Postmodernist aesthetics with its focus on artist and perceiver's subjectivity. It recognizes Self as the only stable cognitive and aesthetic criterion, according to which everyday life and artistic products can be measured.

Mukařovský's notion of semantic gesture as "a concrete, though qualitatively not predetermined, semantic intention" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978a: 111) describes the unity of the intentional/unintentional relationships between the artist and the work of art. It is the difference between the ideal image of the work of art, which originates in the artist's imagination

7 Talk back with the University of Ottawa theater students, Friday 11, June 2013.

and his/her artistic consciousness, and its incarnation within the realm of a particular work of art. This semantic gesture is the unifying force within the artifact's structure perceived by the audience: "The perceiver, then, introduces into the work of art a certain intentionality. This intentionality […] is evoked by the intentional structure of the work […]; further the intentionality is considerably influenced by the quality of this structure" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978a: 111). In this schema, the artifact functions as an autonomous aesthetic category and a message directed towards both the author/sender and the spectator/perceiver. It establishes a referential relation to both the sender's and the perceiver's "experiences or to a set of his experiences in his subconsciousness" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978a: 96); and it justifies the intrinsic complementarity of Mukařovský's binary "intentionality/unintentionality" in theatre.

Hence, to Mukařovský, in art the fundamental subject is not the originator of the action, but the individual, the perceiver towards whom this action is directed. "Insofar as the artist assumes a relation to his product as an artistic product (not as an object of production), even he himself sees and judges it as the perceiver" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978a: 94). Unintentionality functions as one of the structural elements of an artifact and as a primary principle of perception, "a certain kind of intentionality" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978a: 125). Intentionality and unintentionality characterize both the activity of a creator and that of a spectator: "intentionality allows the work to be perceived as a sign, [whereas] unintentionality as a thing; hence the opposition of intentionality and unintentionality is the basic antinomy of art" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978a: 128). To conclude, Mukařovský's recognition of the function of a perceiver as the subject of the aesthetic inquiry puts the Prague School Theory in the Avant-Garde of historical thinking. Mukařovský's thinking turns useful for current theatre inquiry, when he insists that "although they are in constant dialectic tension, intentionality and unintentionality are essentially one" (MUKAŘOVSKÝ 1978a: 125); theoretical premise that places subjectivity and reception in the centre of its aesthetic model.

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Summary

Erin Hurley and Sara Warner in their insightful study "Affect/Performance/Politics" (2012) remind us that humanities and social sciences today experience a new sweep of theoretical inquiry, focusing on studying affect as a leading mechanism of our cognition and communication, as well as making and receiving art products. This paper takes this theoretical proposition further. I argue that although the theory of affect is still struggling to find its own methodology of textual and performance analysis, when it is paired with semiotic approaches in theatre scholarship, it can offer interesting insights on how theatrical performance capitalizes on its built-in structural or artistic intentionality – Jan Mukařovský's semantic gesture - to evoke the audience's emotional responses.

Keywords

affect, audience, emotions, semantic gesture, intentionality/unintentionality in art, performance analysis

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