The theatrical praxis and its visual roots: Sarah Kane, Maurice Maeterlinck and the Post-Dramatic

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Abstract

This article discusses probable visual roots for theatrical praxis. I observed derivations originating in the Greek verb *théa*, as well as in the noun *theatron*, found in ancient Greece. Starting from this context, I identified theoretical links with Hans-Thies Lehmann, Peter Szondi and Ewald Hackler. Two works of international dramaturgy written at different times were incorporated into the argument, namely: *Les Aveugles* (1890) and *4.48 Psychosis* (2000), whose authors they are, respectively, Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949) and Sarah Kane (1971-1999). This approach found excerpts that reveal consistent application of verbal images in the dramaturgical corpus of each of these works. Given this, I suggest academic attention to systematized studies of visual praxis in the theater.

Keywords: Theatrical praxis. Image. Postdramatic theater. Theater lighting. Design.

A *práxis* teatral e suas raízes visuais: Kane, Maeterlinck e o pós-dramático

Resumo

Discute-se neste artigo prováveis raízes visuais para a *práxis* teatral. Observei derivações originadas no verbo grego *théa*, assim como no substantivo *theatron*, encontrados já na Grécia antiga. Partindo desse contexto, identifiquei elos teóricos com Hans-Thies Lehmann, Peter Szondi e Ewald Hackler. Foram incorporadas à argumentação duas obras da dramaturgia internacional escritas em épocas distintas, a saber: *Les Aveugles* (1890) e *4.48 Psychosis* (2000), cujos autores são respectivamente, Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949) e Sarah Kane (1971-1999). Tal abordagem encontrou trechos que revelam aplicação consistente de imagens verbais no corpus dramatúrgico de cada uma dessas obras. Diante disso, sugiro atenção acadêmica para estudos sistematizados da práxis visual no teatro.

Palavras-chave: *Práxis* teatral. Imagem. Teatro pós-dramático. Iluminação para o teatro. Projeto.

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La praxis teatral y sus raíces visuales: Sarah Kane, Maurice Maeterlinck y el posdramático

Resumen

Este artículo analiza las probables raíces visuales de la praxis teatral. Observé derivaciones originadas en el verbo griego *théa*, así como en el sustantivo *theatron*, que se encuentra en la antigua Grecia. A partir de este contexto, identifiqué vínculos teóricos con Hans-Thies Lehmann, Peter Szondi y Ewald Hackler. Se incorporaron al argumento dos obras de dramaturgia internacional escritas en diferentes épocas, a saber: *Les Aveugles* (1890) y *4.48 Psychosis* (2000), cuyos autores son, respectivamente, Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949) y Sarah Kane (1971-1999). . Este enfoque encontró extractos que revelan una aplicación consistente de imágenes verbales en el corpus dramatúrgico de cada una de estas obras. Ante esto, sugiero atención académica a los estudios sistematizados de la praxis visual en teatro.

Palabras clave: Praxis teatral. Imagen. Teatro posdramático. Iluminación del teatro. Diseño.

Introduction

The observations on theatrical praxis presented herein may include certain limitations, since it is impossible to present statements about theater that I have not witnessed. After all, I have only attended plays in the last six decades, and this art has been practiced for at least twenty-five centuries. When someone decides to describe and/or analyze a play that they have not watched, they exercise their freedom to apply personal judgment, consult different writings, ideological models, and subjective standards. Talking about the theater of the past, therefore, can involve imagination, fantasy, suggestion, speculation. On the other hand, although there are many methods of recording and reproducing a play, the rebellious spirit of theater does not accept such a process, since it is transformed into another phenomenon, such as painting, engraving, drawing, photography, video, among others, with the intervention of third parties and the use of artificial media. Furthermore, even such examples will not come to life unless someone sees them, since they assert themselves as physicalized visual images waiting for an observer. Ultimately, once a play is over, the images submerge in the spectator's perception and the next performance will only come to life in an activity that depends on the audience.

Therefore, when referring to theatrical praxis, to theater, I am dealing with the theatrical event itself, whose effectiveness depends on at least two individuals: the one who conceives it — the artist —, and the other — the spectator. Such an event may include the desire to discuss, reflect, and investigate the human condition, finding aesthetic-poetic ways to build a certain degree of presentation/representation, constituting a spectacular quality, a show. I understand that the visual roots of the theater could be found in ancient Greek theater, in the meaning organically present in the Greek verb *théa*, which connects to theatron, both linked to vision. Theater was conceived by an individual as an action to be seen by another one.

Excerpts from my doctoral dissertation were included in this article, in order to bring the reader closer to the notions and concepts that support the discussions

presented here, attaching a certain degree of autonomy to the text. Observations about the work of Maurice Maeterlinck and Sarah Kane arise in the text herein to highlight the forcefulness of the visual provocations latent in the dramaturgy, in a concise presentation.

In the specific approach developed herein, such nuances interact with the work by Hans-Thies Lehmann, *The Postdramatic Theater* (2006). Since its original publication in German, 1999, this book has caused international discussion. It was translated into several languages: first in French and Japanese (2002), followed by Slovenian (2003), and Persian (2005), reverberating loudly in Brazilian university theatrical praxis since its Portuguese publication, in 2007. It seemed that a manifesto had emerged, a definitive document of support – or a timely poetics of programming – quickly incorporated by artists and theorists (Tudella, 2017). The **deconstruction** of the dramatic character had become real. However, despite the initial reaction, post-dramatic theater soon had its appeal relativized. It is noteworthy that Lehmann's ideas provoked some dissensions. Elinor Fuchs (2008) considers them to be a generalization, when he brings together several theatrical manifestations in the same expression.

Opening her translation into English, Karen Jürs-Munby (2006, p. 1) summarizes Lehmann's proposition:

> Hans-Thies Lehmann's study has obviously answered a vital need for a comprehensive and accessible theory articulating the relationship between drama and the 'no longer dramatic' forms of theatre that have emerged since the 1970s.

This translation, which was praised by the author himself, was used in this work. Lehmann's first attention-grabbing observation appears right in the preface to this Anglo-American edition. In other words, highlighting his interest in theatrical performance, not in the text (literary-dramatic), he mentioned the tension between theater and what he called **new** or post-dramatic theater. Lehmann's declared intention focuses on the theatrical event rather than the text, the words that precedes it. On the other hand, he recognizes the importance of Sarah Kane as an author who, in his own judgment, produces one of the most important works in the context. His observations generated consistent material for this article, since

they allowed a kind of link between theory, playwright, and theatrical praxis.

Concerns about the role of the text in the postdramatic scene and the subversion of the spoken word as one of the aspects of action (of a character) strongly imply the need for something to be seen in the theater (from the afore mentioned Greek verb *théa* — to see. The most remarkable approach to the Greek theater, which would appear in Aristotle's work, had such repercussions among scholars throughout Modernity, to the point of making Greek tragedy academically known as Aristotelian. However, the poetic discourse included in the manifestation called **theater** by the Greeks and the importance of the words heard in the **Greek-Aristotelian** tragedy, in the dialogues constructed through the prism of tragic events, originated over deep desires of the characters, would eventually disappear under the postdramatic theater (Tudella, 2017).

In any case, the degree of heterogeneity of both the postdramatic thinking and the manifestations that it validates can lead to a certain derivation, commented on in the translation published in London and New York.: "[...] the notion of postdramatic theater and its valorization of the performance dimension does not imply that texts written for the theater are no longer relevant or cannot be considered in this context." (Jürs-Munby, 2006, p. 9) Such assertion may seem like a mere supplement to a tradition condemned by the "vanguards" of the 20th century. However, it can also include some strategic acumen of the revolution in vogue. After all, the theatrical praxis questioned, modified, and subverted the dramatic text throughout history without, however, disregarding its decisive role in relevant moments of the theater (Tudella, 2013).

On the other hand, the eagerness for questioning the Aristotelian observations gives way to initiatives as the one mentioned by Tim Etchells, director of the British theater company Forced Entertainment: "The piece talks about physical action and set construction as forms of writing, it talks about writing words to be seen and read on-stage rather than spoken [...]." (Etchells apud Jürs-Munby, 2006, p. 9) The desire to deconstruct the dialogue originated in the Greek initiative deeply incorporates, then, the visibility, in the diversified postdramatic model that assumes a type of radical interpretation of the Greek idea of scene — derived from the Greek notion of *skene*, a space that was transformed into a place of action by

the presence of the performer (the character). In other words, disregarding the spoken dialogue, remains in the postdramatic – as a legacy of the theater conceived by Greek thinking – what is latent in the noun that names theater itself, that is, the emphasis on theater as physicalized visual image (Tudella, 2017). The preliminary considerations of the translation, whose key aspects will be mentioned below, represent excellent effort to introduce the new theater envisaged by Lehmann:

> The adjective 'postdramatic' denotes a theatre that feels bound to operate beyond drama, at a time 'after' the authority of the dramatic paradigm in theatre. What it does not mean is an abstract negation and mere looking away from the tradition of drama. 'After' drama means that it lives on as a structure – however weakened and exhausted – of the 'normal' theatre: as an expectation of large parts of its audience, as a foundation for many of its means of representation, as a quasi-automatically working norm of its dramaturgy (Lehmann, p.27).

In the postdramatic theater, the text must — or should — present certain latent **theatricality** which pulls it away from the dramatic representation of a closed fictional cosmos and from the mimetics of a fable. Separated from drama in the second half of the twentieth century, the new theater brought the imposition of the materiality of the action and the deconstruction of the hegemony of the (literary-dramatic) text. The language sought by what Lehmann called "new postdramatic theater" required a new posture that incorporated diverse instruments, accessories, and control, to promote visual excellence. Therefore, even in the confrontation with drama, there was still a line that connected theater and post-dramatic, the context of the visual image, mental and/or physicalized (Tudella, 2017).

The play, the text, the words, the lines, had to be transformed into one or more aspects of set design and the scenography, sometimes revealed in images reproduced by a variety of audio and video media. Dealing with the notion of scenography, it is crucial to avoid superficial translations that reduce the meaning of 'graph' just to write, and to consider the amplitude of this term in its Greek origin, *graphein*. That is, more than expressing by written characters, but rather in the classic sense, drawing, representing by lines drawn, and originally: scraping, scratching. Thus, it is worth observing the notion of scenography with the scope

that includes meanings aligned with graphic representation, layout, and drawing. Once again, we are dealing with the theatre to be seen.

Even when the spectator was invited to act as a co-creator of the play, which implies a process of recycling, reusing, and remaking, free of norms, similarly linked to the palimpsest[3] by Jürs-Munby. It is worth noting the combat between Aristotelian notions of balance, as well as the totality of the drama that presents approaches of extension and duration inherent to its logical and manageable construction, as a mirror of an apprehensible world.

The postdramatic theater could be related to disbelief in control, based on what they call a slippery and fragmented contemporary daily life revolved by technological entrails. According to Jürs-Munby (2006, p. 12), the world was no longer the fictional totality enclosed by the fourth wall, as Denis Diderot (1713-1784), André Antoine (1858-1943), and August Strindberg (1849-1912) believed. In short, the performer would no longer represent a character: he/she performs himself/herself with the audience. This is not fiction. The performance takes place at that defined time and place, like a celebration. Perhaps it is possible to say that the desire of postdramatic action was to be **true**, living, present, or **real** (?!) action.

Was it another "naturalism" or a naturalism elevated to the highest and radical power? If Emile Zola had lived in post-dramatic times, would he have applauded it? Would the theme cease to be the human condition and instead turn to the desire to celebrate a certain fragment, in a space and time chosen by the performer, implying a ritual? In order to build his approach to theater, Lehmann returned to the notion of totality. It sounds like a theatrical totality, not primarily dramatic, characterizing the spectacle as a type of absolute text. The value of a play is reduced, and the written word is treated as one aspect of the theater, sharing importance with the visual and sound aspects, as well as the tactile and olfactory senses.

Eliminating the famous hegemony (of drama) made way for a partnership that demands flexibility from the text since it ceased to represent the speech of characters – if they could still be found – assuming certain autonomous

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[3] Papyrus or parchment, whose original text has been scraped off to make room for another.

theatricality. This new function of the word destroyed the figures (characters) of supposed depth that, in the old 'dramatic' theater, used to speak. Immersed in the universe of vision, Lehmann made a statement full of clues to the profound commitments of his new theater: "[...] instead of the illusion of three-dimensional space, what is being 'staged' is the picture's planeness, its two-dimensional reality, and the reality of color as an autonomous quality". (Lehmann, 2006, p. 18)

Confronting the notion of three-dimensionality with these new two-dimensional patches of color, he indicates relationships between scene and painting, delving into visual thinking. The spectator would look at a multiplicity of layers produced by a performer or a group of performers, including technology (electro-electronic-digital), but still choosing a moment and a meeting place in which the life should open and accommodate this new theatricality. Nevertheless, still defining a moment and a meeting place with a particular order in which the everyday life would be invaded by events. Could the new theater be a new "multiform" typology of theatrical discourse, caused by the lack of stability in the everyday life? As some self-reflective meditation that incorporated rhythm, tone, and silence – highlighting its musical quality – in a theater based on grotesque gestures and forms, sometimes in the so-called **empty** spaces (Tudella, 2017). Therefore, we would find some radicalization in post-dramatic theatrical praxis, implemented in visual assertions. In terms of the treatment of space, Lehmann left a vigorous visual articulation of his new theater. One of its most important indications is found in the prologue:

> Although it remains debatable to what degree and in what way the audiences of former centuries were taken in by the 'illusions' offered by stage tricks, artful lighting, musical background, costumes and set, it can be stated that dramatic theatre was the formation of illusion (Lehmann, 2006, p. 22).

Following the reasoning that constructs such a statement, it is possible to underline the decisive role of the physicalized visual image in the illusion to which the author refers, since the theater needed – and depended – on light to show, on stage, devices and arrangements used to visually deceive the spectator. Furthermore, lighting becomes increasingly artful through the incorporation of

technology. Therefore, when considering the visual commitment assumed by the postdramatic theater, all possible care will be appreciated within the work of the lighting designer who is still interested in Lehmann's proposals, otherwise they may repeat the named **tricks** of the realistic theater that Lehmann intends to condemn.

Even the first commitment to lighting already appears in the verbal images inserted by Lehmann:

> With respect to newer theatre texts, scholars have talked about 'no long dramatic theatre texts', as already mentioned, but what is still missing is an attempt to survey the new theatre and the diversity of its theatrical means in more detail in the light of postdramatic aesthetics (Lehmann, 2006, p. 26).

As one can see in the example above, he applies the term 'light' to refer to the ideas of postdramatic theater. In addition, Lehmann confirms and reinforces his confidence in the contribution of light, at certain times, although, when discussing Aristotle's Poetics, he makes an important remark:

> Aristotle is concerned with the philosophical in tragedy. He regards mimesis as a kind of 'mathesis', a learning that becomes more pleasurable through the enjoyment of recognizing the object of mimesis – a pleasure only needed by the masses, not actually by the philosopher (Lehmann, 2006, p. 40).

Since the audience is not exclusively composed of philosophers, one may infer that the theater decided to incorporate the relevance of the physicalized visual image (the recognition of objects), making it indispensable in its constitution. Quoting Aristotle himself, Lehmann presents what can be considered a relevant argument for designing lights to theatrical praxis:

> Understanding is extremely pleasant, not just for philosophers but for others too in the same way, despite their limited capacity for it. This is the reason why people take delight in seeing images; what happens is that as they view them, they come to understand and work out what each thing is (Aristotle apud Lehmann, 2006, p. 40).

After all, with the image having the power to be in the place of the thing, Aristotle seemed to be right. If today it is not possible to accurately assess the relationship between human beings of our time and the image, at least we can

witness the role of that same image in the construction of culture, recorded by Lehmann himself throughout his book. In the discourse about the first historical manifestations of modern vanguards, he quotes Michael Kirby:

> Symbolist aesthetics demonstrate a turning inward, away from the bourgeois world and its standards to a more personal, private, and extraordinary world. Symbolist performance was done in small theatres. It was detached, distant, and static, involving little physical energy. The lighting was often dim. The actors often worked behind scrims [...] The art was self-contained, isolated, complete. We can call this the 'hermetic' model of avant-garde performance" (Kirby apud Lehmann, 2006, p. 57).

An imagination trained and familiar with the study of theatrical iconography from different phases of history would portray, in its own way, the visual quality, the atmosphere inscribed in, or desired by post-dramatic theater, after identifying that the use of screen and penumbra are not necessarily innovations of the symbolists. One of the most relevant nuances of the issue is that, since their first incursions, the so-called theatrical avant-gardes that emerged in the 19th century treated lighting as an integrative and indispensable aspect for the praxis in question. Presenting radical marks of what Lehmann sees as the prehistory of the vanguards, Symbolism brought in its aesthetic proposition a deepening in commitments with visual image:

> With this, the dissolution of the traditional amalgamation of text and stage became possible, in addition to the possibility of a new way to reconnect them. Looking at the play with an independent poetic dimension and, simultaneously, considering the 'poetry' of the stage decoupled from the word, as an atmospheric poetry of space and light, a new theatrical disposition became possible (Lehmann, 2006, p. 59).

In a certain sense, by pointing out the contribution of lighting to the new theatrical forces, to its "atmospheric poetry of space and light", Lehmann challenged the criticism that attacked the connections between atmosphere and the theatrical image of realism. Although the post-dramatic revolution has lost its appeal, we still can highlight the visual commitments of this theater and assess to what extent this visual yearning has been discarded, whether it has been discarded at all. Postmodernism asserted itself through the independent elaboration of the poetics of theatrical visual images, demanding very particular aesthetic

contributions from visual discourse.

Lehmann underlined the text *4.48 Psychosis*, by the English author Sarah Kane, whose premiere took place on June 23, 2000, just over a year after her death in February 1999, as a relevant text to approach the postdramatic paradigms.

4.48 Psychosis

To work on Sarah Kane's dramaturgy I avoid medical analyses, relationships with presumed disorders or mental illness, since my fields of study are of aesthetic interest, seeking aspects of the visual, physical and/or mental image.

In Lehmann's own understanding, the radical dynamics of post-dramatic theater can incorporate various texts that interact with its propositions. *4.48 Psychosis* was read as a challenge regarding visual propositions to a performance, avoiding detailing the analysis to keep this writing within the limits of an article. On the other hand, seeking an approximation with the visual roots in the genesis of the theater, the main objective is to find latent visual provocations. It can even be argued that the construction of *4.48 Psychosis* does not determine the explicit intention of theatrical production since there is no conventional construction of dialogue or identification of speaking characters. In a certain sense, nothing prevents the text from being understood as a poem to be read, nothing connects it to the acknowledged literary-dramatic structure in which the logical elaboration of an environment where the theatrical action will be physicalized.

Conversely, it is possible to observe in the text the efforts of the author to communicate and express a certain disorder in the speech, as if the appearance of chaos was created by whoever wrote it. The boundaries between Kane's possible mental illness and her choices as an artist are avoided in the present study. Although, when one considers the speech she brings up – the voice of someone talking about disequilibrium, suffering, guilt, relationships with death and cry for help – it is possible to observe an organization of the discourse that demonstrates interest in verisimilitude. One can see herein the considerations of a reader moved by a visual understanding of the text, without the depth of a theorist, critic, or director, much less of a neurobiologist, a psychiatrist or even a

psychoanalyst (Tudella, 2013).

The theatrical event is projected beyond its primeval moment. In the situation built by Kane two presences can be perceived: one that asks and another that answers (or not), in addition to the spectator (the one who observes), who can be interpreted as a witness, a present third-party. If the opening moment is treated as a dialogue – even if performed by an actor or actress alone in the performance – the witness may ask: "Where and when does it take place?"

Sarah Kane wrote:

> I am sad | I feel that the future is hopeless and that things cannot improve | I am bored and dissatisfied with everything | I am a complete failure as a person | I am guilty, I am being punished | I would like to kill myself | I used to be able to cry but now I am beyond tears | I have lost interest in other people | I can't make decisions | I can't eat | I can't sleep | I can't think | I cannot overcome my loneliness, my fear, my disgust | I am fat | I cannot write | I cannot love | My brother is dying, my lover is dying, I am killing them both | I am charging towards my death | I am terrified of medication I cannot make love | I cannot fuck | I cannot be alone | I cannot be with others | My hips are too big | I dislike my genitals […] (2001, p. 206).

A set of speeches, single or fragmented, referring to what, in realistic drama, could be presented in the opening *didaskalia* (*διδασκαλία*) and/or during the action, even if a realistic character does not declare himself so explicitly. She may be sad or heading towards her own death, to the point of not being able to show it in her own writing. On the other hand, Sarah Kane presents a situation that can represent a considerable challenge and a trap for theatrical lighting designers. The character may constitute, or the performer may be referring to someone crying for help. In any case, the person is in a specific place, at a specific time. With the decision to move the text away from the dramatic-realistic approach, this place and this time must be those in which the action takes place, such as a shopping mall, any city square, the stage of the country's main opera house, or wherever an artist (or group of artists) decides to work with Sarah Kane's text.

The fragment above seems to indicate a crude exposition of someone describing herself. Superficial **over spectacular** effects can negatively mask or **over theatricalize** the environment, destroying an atmosphere that might be revealing a cry for help: "I don't want to die […] I don't want to live".51 (Kane, 2001,

p. 207) If one can listen to fragments of speech, it is plausible that they could be able to see dynamic fragments of images, or fragmented images — to perceive through process of afference and efference involving the sensory nervous system, vision system, and including the oculomotor contribution to perception. In short, what the spectator, as a human being, wants to see, actually sees, or is allowed to see.

In the title, psychosis is followed by the number 4.48. Therefore, it is worth asking why she chose such a title for the play if we can consider her text to be a play. It is known that the author woke up every morning at that time and saw, in that moment of darkness, great flashes of light that dispelled confused feelings or episodes of psychosis. The term psychosis stands out in the text (without the interference of other interpretations, including those aimed at non-theatrical approaches to the issue), through isolation, as it is not explicitly repeated at any other time. Regarding the visual context, isolation and positioning, in general, are important indications for the composition, for the *in situ* (the character on stage, the performer at the scene of the action) as a physicalized visual image. On the other hand, the term psychosis – even if in a superficial and unscientific way – can refer to a certain state of maladjustment, suggesting the action.

The image text 4:48 appears right after the presentation mentioned above: "At 4:48 | when depression visits | I'm going to hang myself | to the sound of my lover's breathing [...]." (Kane, 2001, p. 207) Read after the title, these words can indicate an action that occurs at a time and in a place, a moment that precedes 4:48 am, before the visit of despair, in the company of the lover. Or perhaps the action starts at 4:48 am sharp. Why 4:48 and why does 4:48 reappear? The text reads:

> After 4.48 I shall not speak again." 53(Kane, 2001, p. 213). At 4.48 | when sanity visits | for one hour and twelve minutes I am in my right mind. | When it has passed, I shall be gone again, [...] (Kane, 2001, p. 229).

And more: "At 4:48 | I shall sleep [...]" (Kane, 2001, p. 233). Did she mean forever?

After all, does time flow or does it stand still? Will the mind control, related to the precise moment, at 4:48am, lead to silence, to sleep, to death?

In other words, elaborate lighting movements can propose moments in which time and its variations, such as tempo and pulse, rhythm, are considered in a musical sense.   Kane may have suggested, in the evocation of the title and throughout the text, a temporal provocation that could be incorporated into the performance´s treatment, not necessarily in the sense of linear time or realistic assumptions. That is, lighting movements may design and physicalize these moments, without including compromises with figurative representation, but with extreme attention and emphasis on the person who is speaking, as a body and as an image, a body-image **— body** that generously acts as a **medium** to build **image** (Tudella, 2013).

Objectively, angles arising from the positioning of artificial light sources that operate in the place where the body is located can generate shadows that visually determine the relationships between whoever speaks, in the literary-dramatic text, and whoever acts (including speech) in the theatrical environment or place. For instance, a shadow that firmly projects the physical limits of the performer's body, suggesting attention to the point where it/he/she (the shadow) reaches the environment, or the whole body can have its shadow diluted, fading away, suggesting the removal of its logical limits. We are dealing with aspects of the visual approach that can provide artistic consistency to the treatment conceived by a lighting designer. Such observations refer only to one unit (instrument). What if other sources of artificial light are added, multiplying the shadows?

In relation to colors and textures, what relations can be established? The intention here is not to exhaust possibilities, as neither does it seem possible, nor necessary to provide an extensive and complete enumeration of probable paths of visual approach to any work. However, it is recommended to visit other moments of the text to support the argument. Then, there is a reference to time, duration, presence, and permanence:

> (A very long silence.)
> – But you have friends.
> (A long silence.)
> You have a lot of friends.
> What do you offer your friends to make them so supportive?
> (A long silence.)
> What do you offer your friends to make them

so supportive?
(A long silence.)
What do you offer?
(Silence.)" (Kane, 2001, p. 205).

Kane operates with a great deal of generosity as the reader (the director) is free to determine the duration referring to quantifications of silence, such as 'long' or 'very long' silence. What extent is suggested, or determined by the term 'silence'? Moreover: it is possible to understand this indication as a vocal silence, but not necessarily, gestural and/or a movement, 'body silence'. If the lighting designer is working with a director who is familiar with Lehmann´s research, there is a great possibility that some observations of Lehmann will emerge in the production meetings:

> It cannot be reduced to a merely external visual effect. When physical movement is slowed down to such an extent that the time of its development itself seems to be enlarged as through a magnifying glass, the body itself is inevitably exposed in its concreteness. It is being zoomed in on as through the lens of an observer and is simultaneously 'cut out' of the time-space continuum as an art object. At the same time, the motor apparatus is alienated: every action (walking, standing, getting up and sitting down) remains recognizable but is changed, as never seen (Lehmann, 2006, p. 164).

The body made radically concrete has the power to reveal more than the mere external appearance of the person on stage. It can expose the internal laceration of the being. Light plays a unique role in this context; a role that belongs solely to its domain, encompassing lighting and visual revelation, building physicalized visual image.

The silence mentioned in the text, of initially unknown duration, could represent an excellent research topic for the designer — a type of research different from the one that searches for answers to theoretical problems. This is an investigation in search of images, of a succession of visual images, which will be physicalized, inscribed in the fictional/theatrical time. There are no 'rabbits to be pulled out of hat'. In other words, there are no ready-made answers, but rather specific questions. Smoke tricks may not have any value in these images. Digital gobos that swarm, circle, or squirm may not contribute. Colors that are 'being used a lot' may even continue to be used, but in other instances. In other words, there

are no ready-made answers, but specific design issues (Tudella, 2017).

In a possible performance, visual images will contribute to raising a wide variety of questions. Moving further into the text, one can observe that the author made a visual, graphic decision, making her text also operate as a physicalized visual image: after the initial dialogue, she divides the page with a line, marks it with a dash that seems to indicate the end of one fragment and the beginning of another, which may suggest a diversity of places and times. Who is the person who remains silent in the opening and where is she? Does she exist? Is she physicalized in the action?

Afterwards, separated by the incisively drawn line, one sees an unfolding of verbal images that mix the figurative description of a place with hints of fantasy:

> A consolidated consciousness resides in a darkened banqueting hall near the ceiling of a mind whose floor shifts as ten thousand cockroaches when a shaft of light enters as all thoughts unite in an instant of accord body no longer expellant as the cockroaches comprise a truth which no one ever utters [...] (Kane, 2001, p. 205).

The person responsible for the lighting design will find many questions, possibilities, and provocations in this fragment. The author immersed herself in a visual mode of thought; the poetic aspects of literary construction can mix with the verbal images latent in the words. Difficult to determine, and perhaps not important, where does the accent or relevance lies: in the poetic/verbal elaboration or in the visual images? There is a challenge: to reveal a banquet hall in the dark, a universe of heightened visual provocation. Furthermore, the salon has a particularity: it is located close to the ceiling of a mind whose floor resembles the movement of 10,000 cockroaches. Why are there cockroaches? Will the subject-narrator who describes the environment be afraid of cockroaches? Who likes cockroaches and why?

What is the relationship between the person narrating and the cockroaches? The darkened environment is suddenly invaded by a beam of light that can connect thought, body, and cockroaches. However, already in the darkened room, it was possible to see the movement of the cockroaches and identify the room itself. The intense light, however, breaks the darkness — or the penumbra. Plagues, darkness, light, and revelation; it suggests a mythical, mystical, and even biblical atmosphere.

The questions pile up. If, in a spectacle provoked by Kane's text, artists decide to physicalize that mind in which the movement of the cockroaches would be installed, responding to the provocation originated by the dialogue that precedes the description, the fantasy generated by a verbal image can lead the spectator to incorporate plausibility in any action (including sounds, words, dialogue) that is presented or represented. Therefore, the guiding thread in the unity of the discourse will be a visual fantasy, a kind of guide for the game proposed by the performance. Thus, everything will be validated in the context of this fantasy. In other words, what is possible in a place like this?

Both the fragments/moments and the state of the person can be linked to the **states of image** mentioned by Lehmann when he relates the theater to the elaboration of images in a painting whose process is invisible to the viewer, the observer: "The theater here showed less a succession, a development of a story, more an involvement of inner and outer states" (Lehmann, 2006, p. 68). At 4:48, depression visits (who?) (Kane, 2001). At the same time, however, sanity appears (Kane, 2001). Is it possible to establish a contrast between the moments (states) in which the person with depression incorporates different ways of thinking about the world and about themselves, and those in which the same person is behaving, as in the second occurrence at 4:48 am, under the rules of sanity?

After all, there is a moment when it reads: "I'm seeing things | I'm hearing things | I don't know who I am [...]" (Kane, 2001, p. 225). Here the author may be pointing at images inscribed throughout the text. Many images, besides those already mentioned, invoke the inside of a mind: "I will drown in dysphoria | in the cold black pond of myself | the pit of my immaterial mind [...]" (Kane, 2001, p. 213). That is, in order to understand what can be read and glimpsed in what is inserted in "I am seeing things", it is worth starting with a close look that underlines these mental images, and facing the challenge of incorporating, as an example, this dark and cold lagoon, lodged in the pit of a mind devoid of matter.

Yet, and not less important, it is necessary to highlight the dozens of specific references to light and lighting, as already mentioned, including darkness, vision, eye, sight, night, color, day, brightness, and time. When the noun "light" is

particularly considered, certain periods draw attention: "Remember the light and believe the light" (Kane, 2001, p. 206). "Hatch opens | Stark light" (Kane, 2001, p. 225). Such invocations of light establish links with faith and truth, but also with imprisonment and violence, accentuating situations that are repeated throughout the text. It is also worth mentioning the numerous references to the Bible, among those cited below, to bring the reader closer to the images that burned in the author's mind: "[...] it shall come to pass [...]" (Kane, 2001, p. 228). There is another example, also evoking darkness: "[...] Behold the light of despair | the glare of anguish | and ye shall be driven to darkness [...]" (Kane, 2001, p. 228).

Moments of great imagery provocation for the lighting design amplify: "I saw visions of God" (2001, p. 228): God, whose invocation is repeated seven times, number also present in the mentions of tests to which patients with mental illnesses are submitted, to observe levels of concentration and memory. As if that were not enough, it is worth highlighting the visual mode that guides the construction of the text, the special arrangement of words as visual interference on the page itself, which can be seen in the example below:

> Hatch opens
> Stark light
>
> A table two chairs and no windows
>
> Here I am
> and there is my body
>
> dancing on glass [...} (Kane, 2001, p. 230).

Given the situation (or events that guide the text), this fragment may suggest, or indicate psychosis, intertwined with the elaboration of visual images: the hatch (a door, a way in or out?) leads to an environment harshly exposed by the starkness, the crudeness of the lighting. Insulated, table and chairs. Those who stay there find themselves alienated from the outside, as there are no windows.

For the narrator who has a voice at that moment, life embodies the feeling of a disposed dancing body on a surface that can be cold, slippery, cutting, finely dangerous, and so on. Insecurity, despair, uncertainty, loneliness, pain and anguish

gathered in a small but full of visual logos fragment/moment. The lighting designer could try to make the spectator perceive the interval, the gap, an empty space, or silence graphically expressed in the next page.

This brief approach refers to verbally printed text as an example of visual provocation. In a performance, such a category of observations could play a crucial role in a designer's point of view. Comparing it with that of the person, or group of people who carry it out, this process may contribute to a concept that will support the lighting design (Cf, Watson, 1990, p. 8). Therefore, note the possibility of establishing the environments in which situations and fragments occur. After all, Kane permeated her text with different instances of light and lighting, opening routes for diverse approaches. The theatrical event that results from it, in its entirety or in fragments, gives the artists involved the opportunity to incorporate distinctive visual logos.

Therefore, it is observed that, based on the critical considerations of Hans-Thies Lehmann, going through the work of a director who he cites as an exponent of post-dramatic theater, Robert (Bob) Wilson, and ending with the text of an author who recently caused buzz as an extreme novelty, Sarah Kane, whose work was endorsed by Lehmann's theatrical thinking, the interaction between scene and visual context has proven to be intense (Tudella, 2017).

The movement in Maurice Maeterlinck`s dramaturgy

Contributing to the discussion of the central theme of this article, that is, the investigation of theater's probable visual roots, I propose a connection that may seem unusual from a chronological point of view. I observe a common ground with Maurice Maeterlinck, in whose work I glimpse movements of visual expression in the pulse of theater. It is worth highlighting Maeterlinck's text mentioning his static theater (drama statique), as an embodiment of the image in theatrical praxis. This image is seen here beyond the recording and reproduction carried out by current analogue and electronic-digital media and I see them as primeval images present in spectacular ancestry.

It can be said that Maeterlinck was an atypical author, having received the

Nobel Prize for Literature in 1911.

> "[...] in appreciation of his many-sided literary activities, and especially of his dramatic works, which are distinguished by a wealth of imagination and by a poetic fancy, which reveals, sometimes in the guise of a fairy tale, a deep inspiration, while in a mysterious way they appeal to the readers' own feelings and stimulate their imaginations" (The Nobel, 2012).

Maeterlinck's treatment of the scene impressed Peter Szondi (1983), who considered him responsible for a new direction in drama. Szondi mentions the opening notes of *The Blind* [*Les Aveugles*, (1890)] in which the playwright "paints" what can be considered the 'zero' verbal image of the play, a kind of imagery suspension where the visual logos inscribed in a play is introduced. The expanse of the image created by Maeterlinck, whose fragments are mentioned by Szondi, is full of provocations that refer to light:

> A northern forest, very ancient, eternal in appearance, under a brilliantly starry sky. In the center, and facing the depths of the night, sits a very old priest, wrapped in a large black cloak. Your back and head, slightly facing upwards and mortally immobile, they rest on the trunk of an enormous and cavernous oak. The face has an immutable waxy lividity, where purple lips are parted. Mute, staring eyes no longer look at the visible side of eternity and seem bloodied under a great volume of ancient pains and tears. The hair, of a serious whiteness, falls in hard and rare locks on the face more illuminated and more tired than anything around him, in the attentive silence of the same forest. Thin hands are rigidly attached to the thighs. On the right, six blind old men are sitting on rocks, dead stumps, and leaves. To the left and separated from them by an uprooted tree and pieces of rock, six women, also blind, are sitting in front of the old men. Three of them pray and lament in a deaf and broken voice. Another is very old. The fifth, in an attitude of mute dementia, has a sleeping child on her knees. The sixth is a luminous young woman, whose hair floods her entire being. They, like the old men, wear loose, dark, uniform garments. Most wait, elbows on knees, face in hands; and they all seem to have lost the habit of the useless gesture and no longer turn their heads towards the muffled murmurs of the island. Great sepulchral trees, yews, willows, cypresses, cover them with their faithful shadows. A tuft of long, diseased asphodel blooms near the priest in the night. There is a profound darkness, despite the brightness of the moon, which here and there, tries to remove, for a moment, the darkness from the foliage (Maeterlinck, 1890, p. 75-76).

Ewald Hackler, in his unpublished article dealing with tangencies that connect Maeterlinck and Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), emphasizes the dramaturgical

quality with which the play *The Blind* is imbued. According to Hackler (1983, p. 25), the play does not include a plot: "[...] the guide of a group of blind people, a priest, had died during an excursion through the forest; the blind are seated around the dead priest and await his return". Hackler suggests a first comparison between Maeterlinck and Beckett pointing out the similarity with *Waiting for Godot* (1948/1949): "[...] the category of action, in drama, is replaced by the category of situation, the description of the condition". (Hackler, idem) He complements: "The drama as a traditional space of action has lost its original function. *Les aveugles* is no longer drama, in the Greek sense of *dran* (δρᾶμα - if it is true that this word is indeed the origin of the noun 'action')" (Hackler, 1983, p. 25). There is an implicit suggestion of the root of what would be named the **theater of the absurd**.

Szondi, in turn, comments on speeches that move in parallel or even in the opposite direction, in a 'dialogue' that mischaracterize the acknowledged condition of drama, as can be read in the excerpt below:

> Third Blind Man – It's time to go back to the asylum.
> First Blind – We need to know where we are.
> Second Blind – Cooled down since his departure[4]
> (Maeterlinck, 1890, p. 77).

Maeterlinck incorporated precise verbal images into his fragmented dialogue – if we can call his text a dialogue, interrupted by the sounds of the island. There is a kind of presence-absence embodied inside the immobility, as the only one who could see and guide the group is now a corpse. Besides, even the blind people who have been together for years don't know each other. Now they can only wait for someone who will remain absent because, although the priest is very close and at the center of the situation, he is immersed in the silence and immobility of death. The lament expressed in the prayer of the three blind women establishes the sound atmosphere that works as an essential aspect of the situation, settled in the darkness of a forest of sepulchral trees, located on the island (Tudella, 2013).

The body of a dead old man, however, expresses the visual force of immobility that advances the "invisible" intrigue of the dialogue. The postures can

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[4] From original French; Troisième Aveugle-né. II serait temps de rentrer à l'hospice. | Premier Aveugle-né. II faudrait savoir oú nous sommes!| Deuxièmes Aveugle-né. | Il fait froid depuis son depart.

be observed as rationing of physical action, and the depth of the **mute and deaf** sound is amplified in death, projected from the purple lips of an inert face, in a kind of ritual, or ceremony. Szondi states: "All this finally says that the *dramatis personae* are far from being causal agents or subjects of an action. They are, quite simply, objects of an action." (Ibidem, p. 221)

The categorization of **static theater** can be understood since the situation created by Maeterlinck does not seem to contain or undertake dramatic action. According to Hackler (1983, p. 25), as in other works from the initial phase of his dramaturgy, Maeterlinck (1890) conceives a play whose musical character seems to overlap with the visual/theatrical purpose. It's a kind of paradox since theater was conceived as an art to be seen. In his first attempt to trespass the limits imposed by the absence of sight, the First Blind Man does nothing but get up and grope. Soon afterwards, when he tries to take a step, he stumbles, falls, and says: "There is something between us [...]".[5] (Maeterlinck, 1890, p. 78, our translation) Between him and his "interlocutor" an immeasurable barrier is solidified, built by the blindness that defines the extension of the world to the limit of the gesture, in the motionless body. The play is visually inscribed through events in which the inability to see defines the extreme of the situation.

Hackler also quotes the analysis by Max Dvořák[6] (1874-1921) of the painting *The Fall of the Blind Man* (*Der blindensturz*, 1568), by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525-1569):

> [...] Nature is indifferent [...] Somewhere some poor blind people were victims of an accident... Nobody will pay attention [...] But what could seem like a chance, a unique event, temporally and spatially limited, it embodies the fate from which no one can escape and to which all of humanity is blindly][7] (Dvorák apud Hackler, 1983, p. 29).

Bruegel allowed himself to be provoked by the parable of contamination written by the evangelist Matthew (15:1-20), from which he questions the attitude

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[5] From original French: ll y a quelque chose entre nous [...]

[6] Austrian historian, born Czech, one of the most important names of the Vienna School of Art History.

[7] From Portuguese original [...] A natureza é indiferente... Em algum lugar alguns pobres cegos foram vítimas de um acidente [...] ninguém vai dar atenção [...], mas o que podia parecer um acaso, um acontecimento único, temporal e espacialmente limitado, incorpora o destino do qual ninguém consegue escapar e ao qual a humanidade inteira é cegamente submissa [Figura 110]. (Dvorák apud Hackler, 1983, p. 29)

of the blind who, guided by other blind people, run the risk of falling into the next abyss. In the version presented by Bruegel's painting, the first blind man who was guiding his fellow travelers has just fallen and will inevitably take the others with him. The environment includes a church in the background. Could he be saying that not even being close to God will prevent the fall of human beings who cannot see their own path and continue to follow a dead guide?

Maeterlinck, in turn, incarcerates *The Blind* to the isolation of a darkened island and brings a dog which appears on stage, able to see and choose its way, its place in the world. The human being, however, is trapped in impotence and ignorance. Hackler suggests correspondences between Symbolist theater and the Theater of the Absurd, or rather between Maeterlinck and Beckett, underline what he calls the artistic principle of contraction, characterized by the exclusion of everything that is not essential to the situation. He also emphasizes the passivity and highlights Maeterlinck's 'strategic dialectic', which paints humanity immersed in the mortal isolation of an infinite void, whose destiny is death. As Hackler defines it, there is a terrible and precise portrait of what the modern human being has become, as seen in *Waiting for Godot*, in which one does not recognize a person and, if there are names like Estragron and Vladimir (Tudella, 2013), you can incorporate a certain tragicomic variation of Pozzo and Bozzo. Is postmodern humanity the expression of the most refined excellence? Do traces of isolation, passivity, ignorance, deformation, brutalization, romanticization, and imbalance suggest the disappearance of culture and, subsequently, of the human species?

Conclusive aspects

Anyone can **illuminate** a situation in any way they consider suitable. However, if we investigate dramaturgy as a visual problematization, a question arises: what lighting can interact with the verbal images created by Maeterlinck? Or is it worth disregarding this issue and **drawing your own light**, achieving the quasi-divine power of **creation**, taking the risk of trying to invent something that already exists, that is already found in dramaturgy? On the other hand, even when the lighting designer exercises freedom to carefully analyze the verbal images created by

Maeterlinck, when creating the situation, each artist must include his or her own **mark** – or *kharakter*, in Greek. This mark will be effective if the lighting designer introduces visually relevant variables in the interaction with the logos of each theatrical work.

Even in the face of an extreme situation that occurs in the depths of the night, in a forest where blind men and women depend on a corpse to stay alive, there is a strong presence that is there to see the events: the spectator. The theatrical praxis is inscribed by the visual force of a situation in which, being the only one who can see, the spectator gains immense power. Such power will only be affected by light and lighting, through the theatrical image in all its expressions: sound, musical, verbal, visual, mental, or physicalized on the action.

Instead of imposing settled conclusions and fixing a discourse, it seems possible to suggest opening the perspective, involving the entire body to include the heart and mind in seeing theater as a profound human expression and visual communication. This suggests not just emotion, but also feeling, not just sensation, but also perception (inserting neuroscientific understanding),

Attention and investigation of theatre, with the interaction of the intricacies of theoretical thinking with visual praxis, can promote the education of artists, contributing to the simplicity of theatrical art, freed from the imposition of idiosyncrasies that erase the theater's interest in discussing the human condition.

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