

Meandering together: New problems in landscape dramaturgy

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Today, dramaturgy is more than ever a vibrant artistic field, on the one hand constantly expanding and on the other, populated with various discourses and practices coming from other social and cultural spheres. Therefore, simultaneously with following how it spilled out of the drama play, theater stage, black box and even the performance in broadest artistic sense, we can follow how present day media, cinema, internet, management of labor, educational system, popular music, life styles, organization of perception and attention, as well as the financial crisis, protests, assemblies and self-organized communities that have appeared in Europe in the recent years have influenced dramaturgy. In this present article – whose scope doesn't allow me to analyze both processes in detail – I will focus on a point where these two streams intersect. There, where dramaturgy in performing arts reverberates with the surrounding context and by the same stroke invites us to think that context by observing performances, I see a tendency on contemporary European dance and performance scene(s) that I name 'landscape dramaturgy'. I am aware that the idea of landscape, with its wide horizons and empty spaces, seems just opposite to how we visualize our fast-changing, turbulent and supersaturated social environment. To certain extent it is, especially if we associate the landscape with pastoral idylls; yet to another one, the landscape may be exactly a sublimation of that environment, especially if we associate it with an indifferent 'thingness'¹ of the world around us. When I take both associations into account it appears that the landscape dramaturgy is an ambivalent, moreover a dialectic tendency in contemporary performing arts, which is itself tempting to me enough to look at it closer.

Landscape dramaturgy: a historical sketch

Landscape is not a genuinely new dramaturgical concept although the way it manifests on contemporary European scene(s) entirely belongs to our present-day social and cultural context. Thus, for the sake of a better understanding of what is new and particular in landscape dramaturgy today I would firstly sketch how and where it previously appeared.

Gertrude Stein is the first historical reference to be mentioned here. She formulated the concept of 'landscape play', whose most prominent examination is *Four Saints in Three Acts* (1928), written as libretto for the eponymous opera composed by Virgil Thomson, which premiered in 1934. One of the basic problems Stein attended to in her writing was the materiality of language once it ceases to be the means of communication. Concomitantly, in her plays and essays the landscape has anything to do neither with 'the natural landscape', as critically examined already at her time,² nor with the pastoral. Her artistic principles, methods and techniques closely relate to those of Cubist painting and avant-gardist collage and montage in cinema, visual arts and theater. An important credo of Stein's playwriting – which can shed light on how she came to the landscape play – is to abandon the linear plot, the story; instead, there is certain textual spacing out of imaginary situations, where relationships between the characters,

¹ This term recurrently raises extensive debate in philosophy, but here I would use it to lightly differentiate between objects and things as material, physical entities, where the former are already-yet modeled by human mind (language, history, standards etc.) and thus necessarily objects of knowledge, while the latter exist on their own, (still) unknown to and unnamed by anyone.

² Sauer, Carl O., "The Morphology of Landscape", in: Sauer, Carl O. (ed.) *University of California Publications in Geography – Volume 2 (1919-1928)*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1929, pp. 19-55
https://archive.org/stream/universityofc02univ/universityofc02univ_djvu.txt (accessed April 21, 2017)

actions and objects are first of all visual. In terms of dramaturgy, I am under the impression that Stein didn't approach the theater and drama as a time-based art, an art that unfolds in time, and by the landscape principle she made the time stand almost still and spread synchronically over the textual space. While speaking about the composition of *Four Saints*, Stein suggestively explained her view of the landscape in spatiotemporal terms: "A landscape if it ever did go away would have to go away to stay."³ Another credo of her landscape plays to be mentioned here is an elaboration of the character, which doesn't draw from the psychological depth of the human being and rather shapes the actor as a textual surface by help of dramaturgical tools such as repetition, multiplication and simultaneity. The textual composition of Stein's actors could be seen as a dissolution of the characters into the language, or, if we focus on the language itself, an emanation of the characters from the language. Be it as it may, Stein was precise about the outcomes of that composition when she said that: "In *Four Saint* I made the Saints the landscape",⁴ which is to say, not only the play.

Several decades later landscape dramaturgy pierced through Robert Wilson's theater performances and operas.⁵ Not only that he directed *Four Saints* in 1996, Stein's interest in the materiality of language reappeared as the musicality of spoken text in Wilson's early works, while his architectural composition of theatre elements (music, text, set and lights, body, voice, movement), typical of his directing, can be well associated with Stein's spatial approach to what she herself referred to as "plays". Besides, Wilson himself pointed to the importance of Stein's landscape play for his poetics:

In the early sixties I began to read Gertrude Stein's work and I also heard the recordings of her speaking. That was actually before I began to work in the theater and it changed my way of thinking forever. I felt a creative dialogue with her, especially with her notion of seeing a play as a landscape. The architecture, the structure, the rhythms, the humor – they invited mental pictures.⁶

Although the influence is apparent, Wilson's elaboration of landscape dramaturgy has its specificities, among which I must point here at least to the following one. While Stein challenged communicative dimension of language and its logic, which had shown itself completely inadequate when faced with the weapons of mass destruction used for the first time during the World War I, Wilson's work took place in the late capitalist world of hyper-production of signs, in the mass media, marketing and advertising, Cold War politics and incorporation of the fashion and style into daily life of citizens-consumers. Concomitantly, Stein's landscape plays transformed the language as an ordinary means of communication in an alienated textuality – that is, an illogical, sometimes even reader-unfriendly spatial composition of its material components (words, sentences, punctuation marks etc.) – which (the language) was in that way given a chance to start all over again. In Wilson's landscape performances, however, we see a process of emptying out the meaning of the modern society's signs. Without the meaning they originally carried or promised to have, the signs got reduced to the material signifiers: visual and auditive stimuli spread out in slow and long-lasting moves across the stage. The landscape was

³ Albright, Daniel, *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and the Other Arts*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000, p. 333

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ It was also present in the work of The Living Theater and Richard Foreman, which I will leave aside here and mention briefly only Wilson's, as the most conspicuous. See Bay-Chang, Sarah, *Mama Dada: Gertrude Stein's Avant-Garde Theater*, Routledge, 2004.

⁶ Wilson, Robert, "4 Saints in Three Acts", 2002, <http://www.changeperformingarts.com/history/4Saints.html> (accessed April 24, 2017)

thus in Wilson an artistic concept expressive of the superficiality and preposterousness of the capitalist information and media environment, which for some carried a critical dimension and for others incited a pleasure of an undemanding consumption.

Hans-Thies Lehmann quite precisely captured this directorial and dramaturgical gesture when he wrote about a move from logos to landscape as what characterizes the dramaturgy in postdramatic theater and differentiates it from the dramatic one. In his text “From Logos to Landscape: Text in Contemporary Dramaturgy” Lehmann proposed to speak about ‘textual landscape’, a term with multifold references, including: the concept of espacement by Jacques Derrida, Stein’s notion of landscape play and “the rich diversity of new ways to work with text in the theatre [which] are closely connected to the dimension of the visual”⁷. The conceptual rationale for Lehmann’s proposition lies in his analysis of the legacy of Aristotle in drama(tic) theater. Therein the primary concern is the text, the drama play, which contains the architecture of the story, or in other words, its structure, narrative logic and the sensible order of events and actions (the *pragmata* of the myth). In that conception of the theater, the *mise-en-scene*, the *opsis* is there only to present the story to the eyes of the audience and is hence dependent on and secondary to the text. From that analysis, Lehmann concluded that drama(tic) theater was logocentric and that because of the logocentrism the *opsis* had been always seen as “the domain of the possibility of confusion, muddle of elements, sensuality without sense, loss of structure”⁸. The then new approach in dramaturgy that Lehmann conceptualized brought about a radical change in that hierarchy, since it was all about a celebration of the space, the body and the speech as physical aspects of living as human and communicating with other humans, which were not predetermined by abstract thoughts and narrative necessities. The strong emphasis on the sensorial, especially the visual brought one more reference to Lehmann’s notion of the textual landscape: visual dramaturgy as conceived by Knut Ove Arntzen. In Lehmann’s words, “visual dramaturgy is not a text-free and exclusively visually dominated practice, but signifies an *opsis*, without hierarchical dependence, connected to text as itself a spatial and architectonic quality, which I qualify as *postdramatic*.”⁹

In Maaïke Bleeker’s consideration of dramaturgy as a mode of looking at the Western European scenes in the 1980s and 1990s the idea of landscape reoccurred. Here it is used to describe the entire then new theater tendency, which was process-oriented and which contested the text as the main source of meaning of a theater performance:

‘Landscape,’ as a concept to describe the new theatre, indicates a ‘spacing out’ that involves both actual spaces and scenography, as well as the symbolic spaces opened up by discourse. Dramatic structure as a unifying framework gives way to what Lehmann in his *Postdramatisches Theater* (1999) terms ‘multiplication of frames.’ The performance text ‘spaces out’ and opens up visual and auditive spaces that call upon the spectator to synthesize the elements presented.¹⁰

Within the framework of that “theatre of landscape”, to use her own term, Bleeker noted that dramaturgical tools that had been used in dramatic theatre became obsolete and offered a brief but comprehensive analysis of the new dramaturgy. On a broader scale, it cannot be concerned with the theater piece performed on stage only; it must start thinking about the overall

⁷ Lehmann, Hans Thies, “From Logos to Landscape: Text in Contemporary Dramaturgy”, *Performance Research* 2:1, 1997, pp. 55-60, here: p. 59.

⁸ Ibid., p. 56.

⁹ Ibid., p. 59.

¹⁰ Bleeker, Maaïke, “Dramaturgy as a mode of looking”, *Women & Performance*, 13:2, 2003, pp. 163-172, here: p. 165.

organization of an event, which is a meeting point of the performance, the audience and the social context, an uncertain encounter where communication might happen and where meaning might be produced. For such a dramaturgical way of looking Bleeker proposed an operationalization of Hubert Damisch's notion 'the move'. The move is about inciting incidents, which comes into sight against the backdrop of numerous earlier moves (artworks, philosophical ideas, everyday experiences or historical events...), leading to

the development of an awareness of, on the one hand, (possible) relationships between these various moves that together make up the performance, and on the other hand, the relationship between these moves as they make up a performance and the multidimensional network of synchronic and diachronic relationships against which they appear to audience.¹¹

In the register of performance composition, the dramaturgical way of looking in the theatre of landscape, according to Maaïke Bleeker, could draw on the method of 'stratigraphy'. It is a concept developed by Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks, through which a performance is conceived in terms of layering, the layers being text, action, movement, sound and set design. The concept of stratigraphy paves the way towards the landscape dramaturgy of today and I would therefore leave this provisional historical overview here.

Landscape dramaturgy: a present-day outline

When I say 'landscape dramaturgy' I think in poetical prior to analytical terms. Therefore I don't induce that notion from the formal or structural analysis of a particular set of works and authors, nor do I have a clear and strong concept of dramaturgical model, which I am to apply to certain performances. It is rather about the fact that in recent years, due to my professional engagements I have been exposed to a great number of new European productions, by renowned artists as well as those just starting with performance making. And while attending these performances, I let myself enjoy them, be with them, get to know them... postponing the transformation of that experience into the professional engagement by the tools and notions with which I was already familiar. That is how I noticed a renewed interest in the landscape dramaturgy while attending the performances such as Mårten Spångberg's *La Substance, but in English* (2014), *The Internet* (2015) and *Natten* (2016), Doris Uhlich's *More than Naked* (2014) and *Boom Bodies* (2016), Isabelle Schäd's and Laurent Goldring's *Collective Jumps* (2014), Sebastian Matthias Groove *Space* series (2014-2016) and Anne Imhof's *Angst II* (2016). Then I recognized similar approaches in the first works of several new authors, such as Linda Blomqvist's *Cosmos the Beach* (2015), Sigrid Stigsdatter Mathiassen's *Coordinates* (2017) and Tea Teearu's *Monumental – The Fallen* (2017). Besides, I remember that some landscape thinking were present in Christine de Smedt's *Four Choreographic Portraits* (2011-2012), which I in different ways associate with Florentina Holzinger's and Vincent Riebeek's *Wellness* (2013) and *Schönheitsabend* (2015) and (La)Horde's dance-film *Novaciéries* (2015). Eventually, in how Ivana Müller creates stage of appearance in *Edges* (2016) and unfolds it in time I see a literary journey through a landscape. These performances do not form a new movement and the differences between them are bigger than what they share. Yet, there are certain similarities in how they organize our experience and situate the human as being-and-agent in the world, which I name 'landscape dramaturgy'.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 166.

I don't see it as an exclusively artistic invention. How artists like Doris Uhlich, Mårten Spångberg, Isabelle Schad, Sebastian Matthias, Christine de Smedt, Ivana Müller and (La)Horde, among others, dramaturgically approach their recent performances is embedded in the social, cultural and artistic contexts in which they make these performances. In the frame of the artworld I see resemblances and affinities between, on the one hand, landscape dramaturgy and post-internet art and on the other, landscape dramaturgy and slow cinema, although post-internet art and slow cinema look like very distant artistic practices and I don't see significant junctions between them. Besides, the recent trend of programming dance in museums has also left its mark on the dance scene and the landscape dramaturgy in performing arts could be seen as a remarkable echo of that trend. In addition, if I broaden my view I would associate landscape dramaturgy with the recent protests, assemblies and self-organized communities across neoliberal Europe, where new ways of gathering, relating, presence and co-presence have been probed. These connections and networks are dense and vast and in what follows I will tackle only a few points of intersections, the ones I find indispensable, while leaving the rest for some future writings.

Temporality as a visual composition: the logic of the internet

What landscape dramaturgy shares with post-internet art is the awareness of an immense influence of internet on how we spend time, engage creativity, structure knowledge, think and communicate and organize our perception and attention. That manifests but doesn't exhaust itself in the cases such as Spångberg's performance *The Internet*, La(Horde)'s 'post-internet dance' including the installation *Danse Post-Internet Dance* (2017) and the use of internet as the main means of communication and promotion and an important means of production both by Spångberg, Uhlich and Müller and post-internet artists Ryan Trecartin, Jesse Darling and Amalia Ulman.

Apart from these obvious, thematic and technical and technological connections, a dramaturgical junction here lies in how the visual logic of the internet, with its spatialization of thinking through hypertexts and hyperlinks and production and circulation of images as the new dominant means of communication, together with the instantaneousness of the communication on social media, appears both in post-internet artworks and contemporary dance and performance. I refer, for instance, to Schad choreographing *Collective Jumps* as a slide-show, where one live group picture morphs into the next one or to how characters in (La)Horde's *Novaciéries* gather, 'understand' each other and form a social group just by dancing 'jumpstyle'. In different media but still employing the instantaneous visual communication there are blogging-style day-to-day performances of self in Ulman's *Excellences and Perfections* (Instagram, 2014) and *The Scandalishious Project* (YouTube, 2008) by Ann Hirsch and Trecartin's movie *I-Be Area* (2007) where editing connects frames, sequences and scenes mostly by juxtaposing them in a succession that has a strong visual integrity although might look random if we focus on the meaning, the storyline. What I notice here as peculiar is that the dramaturgical problem of temporality, of time needed for communication to develop is treated as a matter of visual composition. The artists offer various solutions to that problem. In Spångberg's *The Internet*, dramaturgy reconstructs the internet browsing. Its temporality is not linear; it rather spreads through and across visually suggestive milieus, whose intelligibility doesn't count (only) on the semantic register. The performance is over there, on stage, clearly displayed and symbolically divided from the audience. What we follow is a network of situations in which a group of performers speak among themselves and the audience can hear hardly anything; they change their clothes, the purpose of which might remain opaque for us; their group dynamics change but it is not followed with the reactions of the performers, which could

give us a key to the rationale of the changes. It all resembles the experiences of time while searching for something on internet for hours: finding an article that leads to a blog, reading poetry and then losing the track, opening the poem in a new window and leaving it in the background, then going back back back to one of the previous pages, opening a forum where a fierce debate is going on and you are a total outsider having no clue about what is happening since you jumped in at the 78th page of the discussion, getting out and checking google images, while you listen to the music from one of the opened tabs. What happens with the human perception of time in the course of that search is connected with the confusion about the chronological time itself, where before, now and after, which get a new, visual dimension, become vague, if not inappropriate.

Attention and attending: Spending time with

From another angle, the visual and spatial treatment of time described above can be seen as a new precondition of audience's attending, watching and listening, comparable with the experience of attending an exhibition in the gallery or the museum. Furthermore, the audience's attending in landscape dramaturgy, which on the one hand comes from the similar mindsets from which post-internet art and slow cinema originate, could be seen as the most direct echo of programming dance and performance in the museum in contemporary dance and performance. It could be summed up in the expression 'spending time with'. That is to say, a focused attention is usually not needed and the audience is more often invited to be with an artwork, free to jump in and get out, without a fear that they will get lost as would be the case if they would miss one step in the causal narrative chain. This dramaturgy of audience's attention and attending could be seen as undemanding, easy-going and in the last instance pretty pleasing. However, for me, it also indicates a concern about how to navigate through the world that is not there for us and, eventually, imply ourselves in it. My experience of attending *Natten* might help explaining why I don't hasten to criticize this approach.¹²

Natten takes place in an open space (not divided into the theatre stage and the auditorium seating), with audience sitting on cushions and blankets around the stage. The performance runs almost the whole night, in a dark and mysterious atmosphere where everything was slow or slowed down. To be a member of that audience meant to be almost left alone with each other, together and alone, together with the piece and alone. There was one moment which was organized differently. It was 'a time to sleep', when the dancers were sitting on the floor and singing repetitively a very slow and gentle kind of folk song (Ásgeir's "Going Home"), which sounded like a lullaby. Most of us really fell asleep, and it was the only collective moment, the moment when the audience behaved as a group. Otherwise the visitors organized their 'spacetime' individually. When I looked around, I saw a man sitting next to me leaned against the wall, let his smartphone rest on his lap, and took a nap. Two others, further on his left, were sitting in the same position while staring at the stage. A young woman on my right was reading the book *Natten*, which accompanies the performance. How can she read in the dark? I wondered. A former-hippie, middle-age couple in front of me brought some beer and lay on the floor in the spooning position... I also didn't follow the performance with my eyes wide open all the time. For a while I would be curious to follow a dancer leaving the group and going to his 'station' on the stage, where he would take a sip of water and read from a notebook. I would then lose interest and look around. Very often I would follow one particular performer (Hana Lee Erdman). I tried to understand why I was always able to recognize her in that half-dark and I

¹² I wrote extensively about *Natten* in Vujanović, Ana, "Sputnik *Natten*", *Oslo International Theatre Festival – a program booklet*, Black Box theater: Oslo, 2017, pp. 4-5.

caught my thought: she was the one who embodied the very thought of the piece. But what was the thought of *Natten*? ...I would observe Hana Erdman again: she dances as if she leaves the traces of former movements visible like long-exposed photographs. Then I would briefly comment on that to my girlfriend sitting next to me and we would start chatting on some unrelated topic. Then I would go back to the video, where the image of fog was lingering over the screen. Or once I just closed my eyes and enjoyed listening to Prince's "Purple Rain"...

I can easily compare that experience with my experience of watching Lisandro Alonso's movie *Freedom* (2001). Where Alonso is even more radical is that whereas Spångberg plays with the nighttime, the time when the unexpected might happen, in *Freedom* a (work)day of a woodworker is unfolding before our eyes and it is certain that 'nothing will happen'. In both cases, however, there is a generosity regarding the demands from the audience, which is by that very gesture given responsibility for their own perception, reception and experience. That is the tie I find intriguing. Not only that slow cinema is usually accused by its critics for being boring and hence elitist – that is, only for sophisticated and patient audience – I also remember that after watching *Natten* some people said that they "didn't get much from the performance." In my attempt to understand that impression, the explanation that came to my mind is that you in fact got what you gave. If you were mostly busy with checking Facebook – and nobody on the stage prevented you from doing that – of course you didn't get a lot from the performance. So, this might be the state of affairs with *Natten* – and similar goes with *Freedom* – you yourself didn't pay attention to what was happening on the stage, and there was *some-thing* always happening there, and as a consequence you simply didn't get that 'thing'. This is eventually a far-reaching proposal, this invitation to give your attention to something that doesn't require it, and then go home with 'some-thing' that filled your attention or with 'no-thing'. The landscape dramaturgy is thus as demanding as it is pleasing, and when it comes to audience's attention and attending I see it is a call to find your own pace of being with an artwork and decide for yourself if you are to exercise contemplation, consumption or absentmindedness. Similarly to how we attend an exhibition; not only when pictures and sculptures are exposed but also even when video pieces take much more time to be seen in their entirety.

Dramaturgy as the organization of experience

At this point I would like to return to Bleeker's theses on the stratigraphy as a dramaturgical tool of landscape theatre. When she wrote about it, 15 years ago, it suited well postdramatic theatre of the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s, while in the performances I refer to here I have noticed a modification of stratigraphy, originating from a changed understanding of what the main components of a performance are. The change goes from thinking in semiotic categories of 'the texts of performance' (verbal text, set design, music, lights etc.) toward thinking about affects and experience as the main performance tissue. Therefore, whereas stratigraphy implies semantic layers and their coordination and superimposition, landscape dramaturgy today implies organization of experience.

In *Natten*, for instance, there is a slow, irregularly curling dramaturgy, which manifests in a non-narrative composition of the event, which progresses somewhere, then goes back to an earlier point, and from that point continues in a new direction. These points – a dance material (Birgit Åkesson's solos), a tune (Samuel Barber's "Te deum"), or a group formation (two trios) – although changed when they reappear, pop up as what we know, like loose and brief anchors for our perception, but only to fail us in the next moment by not continuing in the way we expect. And we do expect a continuation in a certain direction on the ground of what was previously seen emerging from that point. Namely, we are looking for patterns which can systematize our experience. But it doesn't happen, and *Natten* seems to revisit and erase its traces all the time. Its

dramaturgy of an experience on the verge of language resembles the messy squiggle of a spring that curves and swirls throughout a sheet of paper, all the time losing and finding itself again...

Another approach that I find striking is the dramaturgy of Ulich's *More than Naked*. Instead of working with performance texts and their layering, it operates in only one, solely experiential register: the relationship between the common and the singular, as examined by human bodies moving / dancing on music. Philosophically speaking, the performance doesn't take the individual as primordial and it brings us back to the passages from the common to the singular: therefore the flesh has a priority over the body and the body over the identity. In dramaturgical terms, the basic premise here is the body as what we humans have in common and the performance then unfolds the experiences of 20 performers actualizing that generic feature differently in singular interplays between their bodies and movements (on the same music). The dramaturgical specificity is that the process never progresses further – the techno music beats emphasize that impression – and Ulich doesn't offer a unification, conflict or revolutionary gathering of all these bodies that meet on stage. The political side of that to and fro dramaturgy is that it shifts away from assigning an identity to the naked body (by help of abstract qualities such as fat, slim, fast, short, skillful) toward how humans move and exist in the body, whereby leaving the space for the actual bodies to determine their singular ways of moving. What is here important for a basic outline of a political dimension of the dramaturgical concern with the experience is that the group in *More than Naked* is not a result of the interaction between performers as individuals, but of individuals belonging to the common. This is where we should look for the social imaginary of this particular shared experience and where the experience, in general, shows its prefigurative political power.

How to be together and the problem of the perspective

The last issue of present-day landscape dramaturgy I would tackle here is that if it is about organization of experience, which leaves the space in which a performance is happening usually semantically vague, then the questions of how to be together in that underdetermined area becomes urgent. After contemporary performing arts in Europe in principle rejected the sovereignty of author's view as the perspective that configures the whole space, today's landscape dramaturgy doesn't incline toward an objective view of a descriptive geographer either.¹³ In what I have seen in recent years throughout Europe I can identify two different tactics.

One is shifting personal views, which destabilizes a clearly displayed ground and scatters it in a multiplicity of perspectives and particles, such as in *Groove Space*. In these performances the audience and performers share the space, and the audience look for the performance around. Usually they don't manage to see all the materials created by performers because other people are around and obstruct their gaze or the scenes are happening simultaneously. Due to shaping the audience as a mass of individuals who all have the right to their personal view while there is still a whole that no one can properly see, I'd consider these and similar performances a symptomatology of neoliberal social configuration expressed in the vocabulary of plurality. This dramaturgical tactic is inherited from postmodernism and is now intertwined with social networking and the experience of daily life of urban smart mobs. It thus comes as no surprise that shifting personal views can be also found in Ulman's *Excellences and Perfections* and Hirsch's *The Scandalishious Project*, both performances expanded in abundance of Instagram and YouTube posts and clips, leaving them open for everyone's personal access and interpretation through followers' comments.

¹³ Sauer, "The Morphology of Landscape"

In more radical cases, landscape dramaturgy proposes the other tactic: to experiment with cancellation of the personal view on a shared space altogether. This could be seen in Spångberg's performances, in Uhlich's *More than Naked* or *Boom Bodies* and other works that give an impression of not being composed and meant to be watched by anyone in particular. If I move to the cinema, that tactic will become more apparent since the film cannot but to create the view. So, what we see on stage as an attempt at non-hierarchical and impersonal total view has its dramaturgical counterpart in the off-center frame, vista, *mise-en-cadre* and frame-sequence of Belà Tarr's, Apichatpong Weerasethakul's and Tsai Ming-liang's 'slow films'. Banners with brands and logos, painting canvas, performers, clothes and objects are scattered through the space of *La Substance*. Similarly to the dancing bodies in *More than Naked* and *Boom Bodies* they are all present on the stage all the time, but look unaware of and disinterested in being watched. This produces an effect of the undetermined – if not equal – importance and value of everything that is there. (Again, like in the internet or at the gallery and museum.) In a similar fashion, hospital scenes with comatose men, building site with bulldozer working or the scene in the canteen in Apichatpong's *Cemetery of Splendor* (2015) are created by long shots and distant views, and in many frames we see crucial actors appearing on the margins, while others – like a hen with chicks – are taking space of the frame, not because they feature in the narrative action but because they are part of the life the narrative speaks about. In his *Mekong Hotel* (2012) the scenes where we can see this impersonal – maybe we can also call it 'anonymous' – view are the ones with two lovers in the hotel room or the film's ending with a 6-minute long take of a river. These are long shots, which are so emptied of excitement and action that we totally lose the author's wink "Look at this or that" and instead must look at everything appearing on the screen. In Ivana Müller's *Egdes* this impersonalization that contests the hierarchy of assembling whatever is there on stage reaches its final instance. The performance starts with an empty stage over which fog is hovering. The introductory dialogue of two interlocutors, which we hear from the off, goes like this:

JB: Last night I had a dream.

A: Really?

JB: Yes.

A: And what was happening in your dream?

JB: Well, I was dreaming I was inside of a painting.

A: How strange.

JB: Yes. It was one of those paintings with many details, many people, many animals, also with objects, houses, trees...

A: Mmh mmh... And how was it?

JB: It was good. It was very ... lively. A lot was going on. Except that very soon I realized that I was... invisible...

A: Mmh... Invisible to whom? To those who were in the painting with you or to those who were looking at the painting?

JB: Actually, for both.

At the end, I would claim that both of these dramaturgical tactics – multiplication of personal views and experiments with impersonal views – are about democratization of organizing the social. This proposition becomes even more complex when other than human agents come into play. And in these performances they often do. Because of that the question of being together in today's landscape dramaturgy goes beyond the social-political matters of democracy and opens up a debate on human existential condition, which is never only social. Explained this way, the cancellation of personal view seems to be more radical than

multiplication of personal views because it is an experiment with suspension of perspectival order that structures the landscape from the position of the first person singular. I cannot bring this discussion far here, but I must mention that it doesn't address the set design and *mise-en-scene* only. In optic terms this suspension manifests in the spaces, things and bodies present on stage in their actual sizes, shapes, proportions and disproportions, instead of as they appear in our impression – where the objects in the first plane appear bigger than those in the third plane, for instance – as it is the case in classical theatre scenography that adopts the perspective. In epistemic terms, it is about the “perspective configuration as a model of thought”, as Hubert Damisch would say.¹⁴ As such, it was challenged already in early 20th century by cubism, futurism, suprematism and neoplasticism,¹⁵ and today a perspective configuration as a model of thought might be even completely inadequate, in optic, political and philosophical terms. In the performances I discuss here I notice a distrust in that organization of the world, which results in attempts at creating the landscape in its thingness in which the only way to situate ourselves as audience is to enter as one of the components of that unstructured world, to meander through it together with performers and other audience members. In these terms *Mekong Hotel's* ending with a vista of a river comes with a far-reaching proposal: ‘sharing view’. According to Karl Schoonover, what is at stake in that shot is an intertwining of a view of a couple, who we see in a preceding shot on a balcony looking at the river, and, after we forget about them since they never appear again, our own gaze, left to hover over the river:

The shot's variegated temporality confronts the viewer with a tension between individual and collective registers of looking: an assortment of differently paced micro-events and seemingly inconsequential actions make looking seem both individualistic (distraction is decidedly personal) and communal (sharing a durational observation with other humans onscreen and off).¹⁶

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In closing the article, I would remark that the concept of landscape was in the 20th century theatre and performance connected with an intention of spacing out, where the surface replaced the dept, embedded in the logocentric tradition of human expression. Thereby the visual – with its surfaces, layers, strata and architectonic elements – became the main domain of performance where the meaning was disintegrated and opened to intertextuality, including co-creation with audience. The recent trend of landscape dramaturgy, however, seems to attend to another problem: the problem of the perspective as a problem of inhabiting that surface together. It might be that the previous artistic experiments – along with wider social and cultural processes in the field of information and communication theory and technology as well as the ‘affective turn’ – succeeded in proving that the meaning is not a condensed unit of human rationality that you can carry around, from context to context, period to period, medium to medium, which can all express it. Concomitantly, it might be that once the visual becomes the default domain wherein the meaning, the sensory and the affective meet, the problem of perspective becomes unavoidable. The recognition of the perspective as a still predominant model of thinking the world, resulting both in anthropocentrism and individualism, as well as experiments in meandering through the spaces of cognition, affection and sensation configured by shared views

¹⁴ Damisch, Hubert, *The Origin of the Perspective*, Cambridge Mass: The MIT Press, 1995, p. xiii.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 28-30.

¹⁶ Schoonover, Karl, “Slowness as Intimacy in Apichatpong’s *Mekong Hotel*”, in *media res*, 2012 <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/imr/2012/12/04/slowness-intimacy-apichatpong-s-mekong-hotel> (accessed 24 April, 2017)

are for me the most important contributions the landscape dramaturgy brings both to the contemporary performing arts and a wider social imaginary. This present article was only my preliminary attempt to understand it and unleash its rays.

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