BECOMING A TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLER
FILM, THEATRE AND THE POSSIBILITY OF AUGMENTED REALITIES
Playing with Transmedia Performance in a (post) poststructuralist society

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LANGUAGE, STORY AND NARRATIVES
A MATTER OF PERCEPTION AND REPRESENTATION
Transmedia Spectacles and the Contemporary Sense of Reality

Talking About Language and the Contemporary Sense of Reality

SCENE 1: Bedroom. (Interior/day)

There is a small table by the window. Someone approaches, places a laptop on the table. Sits. Opens the computer. Clicks on the Internet browser -whichever it is-. And writes: "language"…

Immediately the first concept that appears is the one given by Wikipedia: “Language is the ability to acquire and use complex systems of communication, particularly the human ability to do so, and a language is any specific example of such a system” 1

Even when the use of Internet and media technology for my generation is the everyday reality, it is interesting, for me, going back in time through memory and remembering how it was to make a research without Google and its interfaces, without internet or even worst, without a proper computer. Broadly speaking, I could say that I was lucky to experience the quick change, and I am lucky now when having all this technology so on hand, and more over when I had and still have the opportunity to grow with it and all that it involves.

By sharing this though, I am sharing my reality -and certainly the reality of many other contemporaries- with you, the reader and eventually the spectator. Who may be identified with it, or may not. Who perhaps considers the technology as a wonderful extension of the human being or possibly, as “something” not so necessary to use. Who possibly like it or possibly hate it. Whatever the case, it would be non-sense to deny that technology -specially in this specific contemporary time- plays a key role in our communication habits as so the virtuality that entails, which, beyond being a tool has become a language in itself due to the use we have made of it.

As it happened with my generation and me, and, based on the idea that life is eclectic, it could be said that the same phenomenon, happened last century, first with the appearance of photography, later with the arrival of moving image and subsequently with the upcoming of cinema as a complex language construction. Not to mention what might happened centuries ago with the advent of theatre, when the storyteller gathered all his narrative tools and put them together in one, may be ‘more suitable space’, in order to diversify the possibilities to tell his/her story (also a complex language construction).

Steven Pinker in his book ‘The Language Instinct’ argues that humans are born with an innate capacity for language, a capacity “uncontroversially present in every one of us”\(^2\) that we naturally develop since the moment we discover the need for communication. He also suggests that, “In any natural history of the human species, language would stand out as the preeminent trait”\(^3\).

Pinker’s statement about our innate capacity of language brings to my mind memories from the early childhood of few kids I was in close contact with from the moment they were born. At their early state, it was almost impossible for me to understand their needs or requests, however no long after, they were perfectly capable to bring up life concepts, to make huge statements and of course to develop incredible stories told in countless ways as they discover and integrate new knowledge.

Language is recursive; therefore human beings -as language constructions and language constructors- are as well. “A recursive procedure is a procedure which is (partially) defined in terms of itself. Such circularity or self-reference is not necessarily vicious. Recursion can lead to infinite regress, although it need not”\(^4\).

\(^2\) (Pinker, 1994)
\(^3\) (Pinker, 1994)
\(^4\) (Hurford, 2004)
Thus, as children, we learn something, we make our own classification of that learning and we use it when needed, or when we consider it is appropriated to be included in our communicational discourse -regardless of the form this discourse takes-. Then, It makes sense for me when Huuser says that “The single distinctive feature of the human capacity for language is recursion” (Hauser et al., 2002).

As infants learning a language is an innate capacity, in my view, as adults, is a capability we keep, although in different levels and according to rational interests. In my particular case, I have experience this by getting involve in film; when, after a formal education in Product Design (rational learning of the objects language), by chance I ended up working as a production designer in filmmaking. Consequently, I experience the learning of cinematic language mostly by getting involved through practice, and making this practice part of my racional day by day.

As children, when they recognize, include and select new knowledge, and as in theatre or cinema from its early development, contemporary performance also starts to create and re-signified itself recursively while its own rules begin to appear. In this context, and being aware of the progressive spread of media in the contemporary society, it also emerges the inclusion of transmedia language as a tool to deliver a communicational message in performance. Thus, it tends to take resources from other related performances and artistic practices to develop new narrative experiences (new realities). It appropriates of and includes them in its own construction insofar as they appear. As well, the use of these resources is selected according to the particular demands of the piece or particular needs of the creator (recursivity and selection process).

The use of transmedia language in performance in order to tell a story, as a narrative choice, brings us to the concept of transmedia storytelling, which in its basic level suggests that these “are stories told across multiple media” and that they are “particular narrative structures that expand through both different languages (verbal, iconic, etc.) and media (cinema, comics, television, video games, etc.)”, being not just adaptation from one media to another.

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5 (Hurford, 2004)  
6 (Jenkins, 2006) p.46  
7 (Scolari., 2009) p. 586-606
Why Are We Tempted To Use Transmedia Storytelling in Performance pieces?: The Selection Process

“Languages are vast realities that transcend the political and historical entities that we call nations.” (Octavio Paz)\(^8\)

At the present time, the most significant stories tend to flow across multiple media platforms\(^9\) using multiple media resources; and us, at being immerse in this reality tempt to make use of all these belongings, which have become a sort of a common language for our generation, transcending any kind of borders since we are able to identify them and identify with them.

The continuous use of these platforms as an extended reality of our reality has made us being very used to navigate through cross media and to make hypertextual readings\(^10\). Where, we can connect infinite bits of information in context, to interpret or create the content needed, in other words, to create our own discourse.

‘Discourse is what constitutes our social world. So discourse is first and fundamentally the organizing of social reality’ (Chia, 2000, p. 517), and what is our contemporary reality so far but media and all it involves.

Language and therefore discourse varies depending on the social context and individual differences and “the aspect of social perception is crucial for the construction of meaning. Perceiving the world around us is part of a discursive interactive process depending on social relationships”\(^11\)

Social perception demonstrates how facts which we assume to be objective are affected by socially constructed values. Perceiving an event happens through observing, identifying and categorizing and by that we appraise the situation. The appraisal is the basis for the meaning we ascribe to it. Identifying and categorizing is considered as recognizing an appropriate category. Prior experiences form our categories as well as socially constructed components. Perception is highly dependent on context and prior knowledge.

The aspect of self-representation considers that people modify their behavior according to different social contexts (…) (Birgit Renzl, 2007)

\(^8\) (Paz, 1991) p 33-38.
\(^9\) (Jenkins, 2009) p. 46
\(^10\) Roland Barthes interpretation of Hipertext: “the networks [réseaux ] are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend as far as the eye can reach, they are indeterminable . . . ; the systems of meaning can take over this absolutely plural text, but their number is never closed, based as it is on the infinity of language” (emphasis in original; 5-6 [English translation]; 11-12 [French]). In (Landow, 1992)
\(^11\) (Birgit Renzl, 2007) p 44–53.
In this context, GOING BACK TO THE DISCOURSE and more specifically to the discourse in transmedia storytelling from a contemporary approach, I would like to quote Marianne Weems 12 from The Builders Association when she says that “the screen culture has become the dominant means of artistic expression and if you are going to be a functioning artist in the world today you have to grapple with what on some level”. 13

Accordingly, and thinking about “the world today” in a context of artistic production and reproduction, and, after having red Liveness from Philip Auslander (a book publish last decade (1999) where he questions the status of live performance in a culture dominated by mass media -referring specially to the Television Phenomena- and what could mean that to people at that time), I cannot escape to find some similarities within the perception of what happened back then and what is happening now with Internet, the eventual democratization of technology related to it and, of course the place that live performance occupy in our society. However, and even when this book was written not so long ago, I also consider that in many ways it is very far from what the contemporary reality is nowadays.

Thus, still when we live a present in the liveness of life, we also live a present in the liveness of virtuality. A sort of symbiotic connection that can hardly be separated one from the other. Insofar, what happens in real life is very connected to what we display or share in media, and also media is very connected to what we show in the real life (recoursiveness). This symbiosis transcends the political context to become a democratic common language 14 that almost all members of this society are learning as it creates, and that, in a way, seems to be very enjoyable. Almost everyone is excited about it.

In such a way, I would say that every single time a new technological advance appear we look for it, we examine it, we assess it, and we start thinking about what can we do with it. Immediately, we start evaluating our possibilities to create new realities, or extend the ones we live in. Then, technology become a tool and of course a part of our social and personal discourse which has to do with our own sense of need in the world we live. Consequently, like it or not, we come across this phenomenon in some level either as artists producing fiction or as regular people producing life (which as I considered are not so much separated, as I said before).

In this sense, “mediatization” in artistic practices, paraphrasing Frederic Jameson’s definition of the term is “the process whereby the traditional fine arts... come to consciousness of themselves as various media within a

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12 Marianne Weems is artistic director of The Builders Association and has directed all of their productions since the company began in 1994. In the past, she has worked with The Wooster Group, Susan Sontag, The V-Girls and many others. She teaches Graduate Directing in the School of Drama at Carnegie Mellon University, and serves on the board of Art Matters. She is the co-author of Art Matters: How The Culture Wars Changed America (NYU Press 2000), and is co-authoring a book on The Builders Association forthcoming from MIT Press.
13 Interview 2003 in (Giesekam, 2007) p.142
14 Referring to a language that is on hand to everyone. (See definition of democracy)
mediatic system” (Jameson 1991:162)\textsuperscript{15} being parallel forms that participate in the same cultural economy\textsuperscript{16} where, “what is mediatized is not [just - because it can be -]\textsuperscript{17} what comes off the daily press, out of the tube or on the radio: it is what is reinterpreted by the sign form, articulated into models and administered by the code” (Baudrillard 1981, 175-6) then “mediatization is not simply a neutral term describing products of the media but media as instrumental in a larger, socio-political process of bringing all discourses under the dominance of a single code” and this code, contemporary talking, seems to be – for me – the willing and openness to become storytellers through technology as members of an emerging society. A society that like as children when naturally learning a language, its framing and reframing its own context, and its own ways of creation, as a society, as part of a society and furthermore as individuals playing with their realities.

Again, the individual or collective configuration of these realities, in the liveness of real world, and in the fiction of performance, is a matter of perception, interpretation and representation.

We are, more than ever, producers of stories and, more than anything, explorers of narratives.

The Means

“In all forms of society there is one specific kind of production, which predominates over the rest, whose relation thus, assigns rank and influence to the others. It is a general illumination, which bathes all the other colours and modifies their particularity. It is a particular ether which determines the specific gravity of every being which has materialized within it. “(Marx’s Grundrisse)\textsuperscript{18}

As exposed before, it is a common place that in the contemporary culture the possibilities of life relay, most of the times, in the use of media, the technology related to it and the interaction we develop with and within it. Hence, media can be recognized as the dominant force of social reference and cultural production in our era. Transmedia “is, for instance, the referent that is at stake when social, cultural, and historical maps are redrawn so as to engage the complexity and diversity that constituted them in the first place”\textsuperscript{19} as a representation of our reality.

Under this appreciation, the generalized use of transmedia in performance representations -as in the ‘liveness of real life’- is widely justified, and “can usefully be rethought in turning to issues that might be qualified as

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\textsuperscript{15} (Auslander, 1999) p.5
\textsuperscript{16} (Auslander, 1999) p.5
\textsuperscript{17} My personal appreciation.
\textsuperscript{18} Quoted by Herber Blau’s essay on theatre and cinema (1982: 121) (Auslander, 1999) p1
\textsuperscript{19} (Brewer, 2006) p98
“referential”\(^{20}\) and of course as recursive. The phenomenon involves the employment of multiple media platforms for expressing a fictional world.\(^{21}\)

“(…) Work today focuses on the political and socio-symbolic character of representations and the ways they obscure or allow for a diversified and more complex referentiality.” \(^{22}\)

From the beginning of the 20\(^{th}\) century and after the advent of moving image many performance practitioners around the world have found in the inclusion of transmedia, -at that time a new resource- an interesting way to diversify the configuration of its productions. Since then and “in a variety of ways [...] the introduction (specially) of film or video into (classic performatic representations like) theatre (…) radically (has) alter(ed) approaches to miss en scène, dramaturgy, performance, modes of production, and spectatorship.” Thus, the configuration of hybrid spectacles had opened the door to challenge the conventional ways of representing and seeing a fictional reality.

“Film or video can provide extremely versatile means for practitioners to extend their approaches to scenography, dramaturgy and performance in ways that makes creative demands on spectators’ imaginations”. \(^{23}\)

Under this view (including transmedia recourses through history), performance explores like: the pioneers George Mélié, Piscator, Josef Svoboda (providing a two-dimensional\(^{24}\), but moving projected background for the performers, fantastic landscapes or amazing real ones) , or the more contemporary individuals and companies like Forkbeard Fantasy, The Wooster Group, The Builders association, Robert Lepage, \(^{25}\) Imitating the Dog, Mesmer and so much more (employing more sophisticated equipment for filming, editing and delivering, transform the metaphysical space dynamism through the interplay between the live performance and the filming setting) have tried to extend the possibilities of “the possible” on performance representations in all senses.

Exploring the possibilities of fictional representation as extended realities (in terms of narratives, and metanarratives able to tell and create a story), and by connecting these realities, ones to the others in multiple ways (as subordinates or as equal constitutive parts) at the same space, transmedia researches have offered the spectator new possibilities of decoding the communicational message displayed, challenging his/her perception. Furthermore they have offered the performers and the makers multiple alternatives of interactions at the moment of creating a story (selecting between multiple languages, facing the alternatives of metalanguage,

\(^{20}\) (Brewer, 2006) p98  
\(^{21}\) (Dena, 2009)  
\(^{22}\) (Brewer, 2006) p: 98  
\(^{23}\) (Giesekam, 2007) p.245  
\(^{24}\) (Giesekam, 2007) p.246  
\(^{25}\) Called and analysed in (Giesekam, 2007)
The Meaning

Our society is currently very concerned about what it wants to express. I might even say, it is more self-conscious than we think it is in regards to the "meanings" to be exhibited under its authorship or under the possibility of being mentioned somehow (may be because of the level of exposure faced specially in the "liveness of virtuality", which obviously is very connected with the "liveness of real life" and even when the message seems vague, silly, out of place or offensive); still, the risk to create stories and to broadcast them seems to be innate and pleasant or at least entertaining.

Everyone ended up being part of the game, so the performance practitioners, who plays an intentional and conscious roll as makers of fictional realities with particular meanings. The socio-cultural environment within the art piece takes place, is not much different in form, from the one of who doesn’t attempt to create a performance piece. Multiple actors, with multiple abilities, and multiple tools, inhabit it. They usually profess a willing to share, to explore, to experiment or to be involved somehow in the process of the piece, which is generally open to modifications. The production, then, is recognized as a collective living structure, and the words devising, collaborative, shared, and immersive and so on, become an active part of the current talking leaving a little aside (or avoiding) individual recognitions.

Today, and more than in the previous decade, the work in performing arts “leads towards a tendency to ‘assemble’ productions: to create ‘compositions’ of images, sounds, lights, actions and representations, with consequent impacts on how writers, directors, scenographers and performers work”. This tendency, treated under the idea that post-structuralism professes about the contemporary society, (that has been adopted by arts

26 (Giesekam, 2007) p.250
27 Just take a look on Facebook statistics: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook
28 (Giesekam, 2007) p.13
29 a) Post-structuralism is a system of literary and social analysis that flared up and vanished in France in the 1960s but that became anachronistically entrenched in British and American academe from the 1970s on. Based on the outmoded linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure and promoted by the idolized Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, and Michel Foucault, it absurdly asserts that we experience or process reality only through language and that, because language is inherently unstable, nothing can be known. By undermining meaning, history and personal will, post-structuralism has done incalculable damage to education and contemporary thought. In (Magazine, America by Sean Salai, S.J.)
   b) Lyotard (1988) argues that the ascendancy of one system of thought over another, marks (and thus can expose) the symbolic or actual violence done by the former to the latter. In Michel Foucault’s
Becoming A Transmedia Storyteller

in a sort of anachronistic way in the last decades –paraphrasing Camille Paglia\(^{30}\) leaves floating the idea of a ‘lack of meaning’ under the multiple possibilities of language and collectiveness of authorship.

Hence, by denying the author\(^{31}\), and exalting the reader (who, I agree, reads according to its own background and context, but, -in my view- furthermore moved by the storyteller’s capacity to deliver a message), it is also being denied the possibility of the self in regards to express its concerns about life, and to question its existence in all senses: as individual (with willing and needs) and as part of a cultural construction.

Particularly I consider the roll of the author in this contemporary society and moreover the roll of the artist as a performance creator, developer and practitioner is the one of ‘reframing meanings’ and questioning them from the most sincere point of view, the point of view that departs from his/her own concerns. The self-recognition of these concerns, might/would also leads to a sense of empathy and exploration with our immediate collaborators (acquiring a meaning of collective concern in its first stage), then, with other people who identify with this concerns (forming extended groups or relating with alike ones) and then with a much more universalized atmosphere.

By reframing the meanings, starting from a personal point of view, the creator(s) (performers, writer, directors, producers, etc.) plays with the idea of (if desired, or feel it) enacting ‘collective concerns’ giving them a voice from a very human point of view which, because of its nature, could make feel closer to the others involved (spectator/ audience/ participant). Then, to appropriate and display these meanings is portraying society issues at some level, not losing a personal voice and not avoiding the sense of collaboration, which is so present in the practice.

Then, the meaning at the moment of conceiving an idea (from the storyteller(s)) becomes an active part of the language, therefore a part of the narratives, conforming the fiction and the reality. And, even when -in the first instance- the reader creates an interpretation based on his/her particular perception of reality, the way the maker had decide to represent this concern will take an important role on the way the piece would be receive. In this context, I would say, there is more beyond the text\(^{32}\): “an opening up of

genealogies of modernist institutions, “discourses” (authoritative texts) and technologies of power such as the “gaze” and the “archive” are analyzed, to identify the systems of thought and techniques of discipline that underpin a regime of truth at a specific point in history (Foucault 1970, 1984). Deleuze and Guattari (1988) assess the nexus of power relations between objects, bodies and ideas that shape the limits on human action and the subject positions that these make possible. In: (Fox, 2014) (Fox, 2014), (La Perspectiva Mundial, Teoria Postmoderna, 2002-2015)

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30 University Professor of Humanities and Media Studies. PHD, Yale University (Paglia)
31 (Barthes, 1967)
32 (Stephens, 1991)
new possibilities” to create, to read and to evaluate our living social structures from a living social structure as it is the metaphysical performance space.

Performance is collaborative by definition, but the use of collaborative techniques to build performance texts has become increasingly nuanced in the past two decades. In the mid-twentieth century, collaborative performance processes were adopted by the avant-garde as a protest against authorship. In recent years, rhetoric and practice has shifted, and authorship itself is often based, in various ways, upon creative social relationships.

“Post-structuralism rejects notions of ‘social structures’ as stable and deterministic constructs. The postmodern turn in social theory is characterized by reflexivity and fragmentary and multivocal (…), a willingness to allow multiple voices to speak in these texts (including those of research ‘subjects’) and an emphasis on empowering the dispossessed or silenced in societies, also suggest it is (but) (…) denies any possibility of gaining definitive knowledge of social world.”

“Conceptions of validity and reliability are displaced by emphases on enabling, transgression of established values and power relations, and collapsing barriers between academic theory and social or political action.”

I consider the members of the contemporary culture -with its technological and media resources on hand- know what the current social world looks like, as the big picture, the main narrative. What they still need to keep discovering is what is inside, the fragments, the possible realities to explore and exploit and the most urgent to face. Those small narratives that interact ones with the others validating or denying realities, and that are so useful in the conception of a performance piece as a diversity of possibilities to appeal in order to critic our social and political behaviours through the production of a new story (either in the “real world” or in the “the fiction”)
WHAT IS TO BE AN EXPLORER OF NARRATIVES AND STORIES IN TRANSMEDIA PERFORMANCES

SELECTIONG THE FORM

Nothing of value from the last century has passed from the scene. Theorists ought to be busy relating this diverse abundance of performance activities to each other, saying what connects individual genres to other genres, what separates them, devising theories within and across a wide variety of performance forms, relating these various forms to their personal, social, historical, political, and ideological contexts.38

Meanwhile many theorists are looking for the possibility to understand, and in a way, to classify the contemporary language used in art representations, we, the artists are constructing and living it day by day. We are so exited (like children when learning a language) about the possibilities of connexion and use of the old and new forms of representation, as well as about the possibilities technology and media offers us in order to make these representations a different experience, that, I think, we don’t really have time to see them unconnected, or separated; instead, I might tell, we consider all as potential alternatives for the creation process.

However, and even when the great diversity of resources is highly tempting – that sometimes you would like to use them all- I consider, still, the process of selection in terms of form, content and delivery method is a very personal issue, and it depends on which part of the composition of this ‘contemporary language under construction’ we want to be part of.

Evidently this personal selection is made under the regular considerations we all know: previous background, own concerns, the place we come from, the feeling of the here and now, the self-recognition and identification as part of a group/community or as not part of one, sense of belonging and desire to belong, the willingness to collaborate or work individually, and so on. Then the context will influence the approach to the content (from its conception to its delivery and further more) but under a contemporary way of learning ‘the reality we want to create’ (the culture of the ‘do it yourself’ which – thanks to tech and media] empowers the creator by giving him/her the options of immediate exploration, appropriation, and collaboration at the same time).

In my particular case, the roll I would like to take in the construction of the contemporary language in performance is very linked to my previous approaches to film and theatre, live art genres that I had the opportunity to experience separately as a very defined component of the whole assemble (never as a main creator of the whole piece). Consequently, now, I would like to explore them a little bit more, from myself in a different role and contexts.

38 (Schechner, 2000)
and facing different kind of contents (following my personal interests and as part of the construction of my own discourse as an artist). As well, (during the course of the MA PDP) I have decided to investigate the possibilities they have at working together in interaction, and to play with their different elements and categories from the practice. In this regards, the practice I am attempting to embrace from now and in the future has the form of transmedia storytelling.39*

**FILM, THEATRE AND TRANSMEDIA PERFORMANCE: Between liveness and virtuality**

Every language is a world on its own, so it is the language of film, theatre, and of course the combined language of transmedia performance representations, where, “onstage screen increasingly become a means of playing across the interface between the material and the immaterial” 40 as parallel forms that participate in the same cultural economy. 41 (A characteristic of the poststructuralist understanding of reality and identity and one of the components of the developing contemporary society42)

But what is material and what is immaterial, what is liveness and virtuality in performance, and in which point they started to merge together to create a new way of representation.

About mediatization, Fredic Jameson43, suggests that this is “the process whereby the traditional fine arts […] come to consciousness of themselves as various media within a mediatic system”. In regards to the particular case of the interaction between video (virtual) and theatre (live), this process “only become common in the last 25 years”44, however “the use of film and theatre extends back a century to very soon after the invention of cinema”.45

Although trough history film and theatre had been recursive and sometimes mutually dependent, the interaction between this two –and of course other

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39* Of course going back to cinema or theatre in its pure practices is also an option.
40 (Giesekam, 2007) p.250
41 (Auslander, 1999) p5
42 According to my understanding of contemporary culture
43 (Jameson 1991), 162
44 (Giesekam, 2007) p2
45 “Starts France in 1904 (…) Germany regularly uses it in the 20s (…) and many more experiments were made between the 30s and 60s, and “even in the 80s, apart from occasionally uses in the opera and the international tours of the Czech company Laterna Magica and other work by its scenography Joseph Svoboda few mainstream theatres employed film of video. Instead companies like the Wooster Group in the Us, Forced Entertainment and Forkbeard Fantasy in Britain, Robert Lapage’s Ex Machina in Canada, and Spain’s La Fura dels Baus, along with ocasional performance artist and experimental filmmakers who were explorer the interaction between live performance and video materials. (…)” However in the last decade it has become very popular: The Royal National Theatre uses almost often since 2003, as well as York Theatre Royal and the veteran socialist company Red Ladders. Leading companies in dance and physical theatre like DV8, Shobana Jeyasingh, (…) companies who make movies on stage in front of the spectator: the Dutch Company (…) which did an staging filming of the World War One, (…) the New York Company Big Art Group in 2003” and so much more. In (Giesekam, 2007)
media like television or computer generated images – “has frequently been marked by border disputes between their respective cultural guardians, as each medium has in turn remediated one or more of the others”⁴⁶. This defensive reaction, I think responds to a personal sense of full immersion, compromise, identification and in a way comfort of being inside a language practice (talking about the language of the theatrical or the one of the cinematic). Also has to do with the not so fast transitional historical moment⁴⁷ where these defenders developed. (The predominance of the specialisation and purism rather than the appropriation; classification over inclusion, complexity and systematic though; of course the not so broad exposure to technology – much more expensive, complex and less on hand than today- which limited in a way the massive experimentation and therefor the new understanding, without mention the natural fear to the unknown). And also a big concern towards the future of the spectator, which immerse in the virtuality ‘would lose his/her capacity of assimilation’.

“Early film modelled itself on theatrical practice (…) fades in, fades out, and parallel editing, had all been fully developed on stage before becoming the foundation of the new medium’s languages, at least in its narrative forms. Film is represented as a realm of the memory, repetition and displacement in time (…) theatre occurs only in the now, as a performance in the present. (…) In theatre arts, the audience is in direct contact with the performer at the moment of his ‘performance’. (…) Film allows spectators’ imaginatively to project themselves into a scene. Theatre is confined to a logical and continues use of the space; cinema has access to an analogical or discontinuous use of the space.”⁴⁸. Film has the capacity to create illusion and fantasy, theatre is limited by the special and temporal constrains of live performance. ⁴⁹

On my view a pre nostalgic sense of loss of the conscience of the ‘liveness of the reality’ lead the first part of the second half of the 20th century; the second part and the beginnings of the 2000s was characterized by the exponential immersion on virtuality. From then and on, I recognize a tendency of merging both in a degree that sometimes it’s hard to imagine one without the other; as well as, a desire for immediacy is present.

I consider transmedia performance had been taking advantage of this process reaching such a degree that the virtuality or transmedia resource became (and had been perceived) as part of the liveness. Reframing plays from different perspectives/angles, investigating more dynamically the metaphysical space, extending the reality of the piece somehow, supporting the dramaturgy or being the dramaturgy itself (metalanguage) and being the narrative of its own narrative (metanarrative), transmedia performances have given an alternative approach to the perception of liveness in fictional

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⁴⁶ In the best sense of the word, and not being pejorative.
⁴⁷ Many philosophical movements like postmodernism, structuralism, complexity and systems theory, where diversification of knowledge is a very important issue, consolidated in the second half of the 20th century.
⁴⁸ (Auslander, 1999) p11
⁴⁹ (Giesekam, 2007) p5
representations. “Staging the media in a context (...) offers the opportunity to intervene critically in the flow of media. Instead of seeing such work as inevitably overwhelming or seducing audiences, we might recognize its potential for encouraging more active and critical spectatorship”  

Overall, as a practitioner of the theatre, cinema and hybrid spectacles, I can tell I enjoy working with them in its most pure ways as when they got combined. Of course this decision will depend on my intentions as creator in regards to the communicational message of the text. As spectator in the other hand, the resolution of seeing one or the other is much more subjective (mood, thematic, risk on the representation, money, place, etc.). Anyhow, I find the three of them just equally wonderful to work, to watch, and so to take advantage of the possibilities they offer.

FRAMING AND REFRAMING THE LANGUAGES
The Possibility of Playing With Extended Realities

THE APPROACH TO TRANSMEDIA SPECTACLES: from being amazed to really thinking about it.

“Storytelling is an ancient form of entertainment that has influenced almost all other narrative forms. It is "not only entertainment, it is also thinking through human conflicts and contradictions".

As I mention before, we all, in a way attempt to be storytellers. In the case of the performance artist, this will become a little bit more serious and of course wide more conscious. We pass through and over the just entertainment willing, to try to make a point on ‘what’ we are delivering to the audience. In this sense, the use of transmedia in hybrid spectacles “can provide extremely versatile means for practitioners to extend their approach to scenography, dramaturgy and performance, in ways that makes creative demands on the spectators’ imagination”.

In transmedia spectacles, the “tendency of exploiting visual and performative aspects of theatre more perhaps than much text-based theatre and to often include more simultaneous material” especially trough video, film or CGI, empowers the creator with the capacity of providing images of the real and

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50 (Giesekam, 2007) p23
51 (Kuhns, 2005).
52 Entertainment is a form of activity that holds the attention and interest of an audience, or gives pleasure and delight. It can be an idea or a task, but is more likely to be one of the activities or events that have developed over thousands of years specifically for the purpose of keeping an audience’s attention. In: (Wikipedia_Entertainment)
53 (Giesekam, 2007) p245
subjective world outside the theatre introducing aspects of the outside world into the artificial world of the stage, often in a dynamic manner”.

The film ability of extending realities by “introducing other characters and places, helps create moments of fantasy or transformation, where the collision between the real world of the stage and the magic world of film become an attraction in its own right”\(^54\). Furthermore, the capacity it offers to [access] or to suggest something from the subjective experience of onstage characters as depictions of characters’ thoughts, dreams, fantasies [or situations] which intersect or interact directly with the performers’ onstage behaviour (by the use of many rhetorical devises such as camera angles and movements, pre-configured environments etc.) undercuts the attempts to drawn clear distinctions between the material and immaterial, the real and the virtual\(^55\) [inside the transmedia performance representation], making them, instead, to be integrated/simultaneous and extended realities to assimilate as the liveness itself portrayed in the fictional world of the performance metaphysical space. In other words, a “complex interactions between performance, text [dramaturgy], scenography and recorded material”\(^56\)

Going back to the process: For me the first approach to the use of video and CGI\(^57\) in theatre was under the concept of being [just] one of the other technical components of the play that collectively support the performance, mostly aesthetically, in a sense of co-presence and simultaneity and -taking Gisekam’s\(^58\) words- build around fairly traditional understanding of the role of text and the creation of character.

Under this category I can recall personal experiences in theatre pieces as spectator in my country [Ecuador] and in the US [which were both very beautiful to see], and some little experiments I made at collaborating with non-commercial performance projects as a production designer and as an actress. Moreover, and making reference to my current learning process, I would like to mention “Las Olas”. A performance piece created and developed as a devising/collaborative project in the first year of MA PDP\(^59\), where the use of video had mostly a scenographyc support for the piece rather than being an essential element in the dramaturgy.

**Scenography** is an area where initially one might discern the most continuity in practice, yet (...) more recent work has adopted a more radical approach [recurring to the use of media and technology]. (...) It is at its strongest when the dynamism comes from the interplay between the live performer and the filming setting.”\(^60\) (The subjective of explanatory use of POV shots, tracking, close ups, very straightforward in Svoboda’s work at the beginning and more

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\(^54\) Giesekam, 2007 p7-8
\(^55\) (Giesekam, 2007) p25-26
\(^56\) (Giesekam, 2007) p26
\(^57\) Computer Generated Imagery
\(^58\) (Giesekam, 2007) p8
\(^59\) Jerez de la Frontera and Lebrija, Andalucía-Spain, spring 2014
\(^60\) (Giesekam, 2007) p246
employed by contemporary companies like Forkbread Fantasy on *The Fall of the House of Usherettes*, or Lapage on Cocteau’s acrobatics in *Needles and Opium*). This use of video “contributes to suturing the spectator into the narrative” transporting him/her from one fictional scene to another fictional scene by shifting locations and atmospheres allowing interesting narrative leaps.

In “Las Olas”, we\(^{61}\) attempted to play with the dynamism of moving image scenographically by texturizing and shifting atmospheres and also with the film capacity to extend characters’ subjective realities in the fictional world of the play. And even when our role was to support the play mainly aesthetically we try to get involve as much as we could into the development of the story so the element we would chose for our narrative would match with the content and won’t be just images.\(^{62}\)

We embraced the whole metaphorical space with four projections over the moving scenography from the front, back and sides, so sometimes the overlapping of images and the movement of the surfaces created a surrealistic sensation. We tried to metaphorically generate a feeling of the time passing by, and also the idea of coming, going and staying.

The second narrative element we used was the film.

- First: in the siesta time, where, by using an already made short film (selection process over media elements) we tried to create a surrealistic environment that combined with the surrealistic live staging would offer a mentally immersive sensation to the audience.

- Second: we shot a scene that was thought to be projected simultaneously, and that attempted to evoke a flashback of one of the characters. We used elements from the cinematic language like camera movements and camera angle, lighting, colour’s connections, sound, and some more.

- Third: we shot a bed chat scene with two of the characters of the play one foreigner and one local (migration and settle down). We used them for the opening and the ending of the play. These two scenes located the play in a sort of memory time exposed by the two characters, as an extension of a reality for their memories. This additional moments on the play shifted, in a way, the use of the

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\(^{61}\) The video team: How Shuan (Andi) Chu [my fellow project partner, and good friend], Me Daniela Sánchez and Eunjung Kim [our classmate who does VideoArt]

\(^{62}\) In "Las Olas" we talked about, migration, the -comings and goings- and the wait –staying-. It was a journey in a square of an Andalusian village. At the beginning we decided to capture the essence of the town’s reality by shooting elements and textures that happened in the place during our stay, (water, sunsets, sunrise, people in their daily activities, the train, etc.) so the footage used in the play and sometimes\(^{64}\) would be recognized by the spectators. However and because of the living nature of the piece most of the footage was not used (occasionally the images were not appropriated anymore) and we used some free images from the web, we edited and we make them useful for the piece.

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theatrical and the cinematic classically defined\textsuperscript{63} in terms that, in the fiction of the play, the real was the two characters chatting about a memory before going to sleep—which was shown on video—and the memory itself was the whole live performance (generally the use of film is associated with the representation of flashbacks or memories and theatre to represent the real life).

Recursiveness and appropriation—again—helps the “virtual nature of the projected settings to contribute significantly to the spectator’s reading of the worlds depicted therein”\textsuperscript{64}.

Turning to the Dramaturgical approach of Transmedia Performance, and again, taking Giesekam’s call on staging the Screen it is evident that “There is a shift from film being initially employed as simply another tool for telling a story to it providing a means of commenting on a story being told, often through presenting further stories, events or information to supplement an onstage story. (…) Film and/or video contributes to a dramaturgy that moves away from telling stories of a conventional kind to tell ‘impossible’ stories or question the way stories and characters are constructed [where] (…) narrative use may (…) slippages to and for between media, or it may bring attention to the transitions and play with the different effects of performances that are live or mediated by film or video.”\textsuperscript{65}

Examples of this can be found in companies like The Wooster Group, Force Entertainment, Forkbread Fantasy, Mesmer, Robert Lapage and some others. They play with different audio-visual genres simultaneously or interwoven, sometimes ones against the others and occasionally “insinuating a metacommentary on theatre and media through how they handle genres”\textsuperscript{66} or contents.

Additionally, since their representations demand a self-reflective play between the performers and the use of media elements in order to create the content, generally the construction of the characters’ identities “adopt a presentational style of performance which acknowledge the fact of performing and the presence of the audience [which I consider is especially useful at the moment of the miss en scène], establishing a complicitous relationship in which the audience shares the challenges they face in working with the mediated imagery”\textsuperscript{67}. Which means, they delivery brings attention to the transmedia elements involved in the performance since they are the mean and the meaning of the piece, and by extending the realities in the

\textsuperscript{63}This is not something new in hybrid performances, (In this respect (Giesekam, 2007), p247) mentions the work of Laterna Magika on Graffiti, the Builders Association’s Super Vision, The Station House Opera’s Roadmental Sweetbread and also the Wooster Group’s 1&9), however in my learning process of transmedia language possibilities was the first time I play with something like this and later I feel conscious about it.

\textsuperscript{64}(Giesekam, 2007), p247

\textsuperscript{65}(Giesekam, 2007) p247

\textsuperscript{66}(Giesekam, 2007) p248

\textsuperscript{67}(Giesekam, 2007) p249
fictional world they “invite spectators to treat with a critical playfulness the place screen-based media have in their lives”.

Back in London and with a sensation of not having worked enough with film in a closer relationship with the dramaturgy, I decided to explore the possibilities to create a play where film and theatre work together in a more symbiotic way; from the conception of the story to the delivery of the communicational message through the narrative. In this regard, I would attempt to use film as the departing point to create the story and its language would be the way of transmitting it to the audience in a live performance. Following this willing, and the natural flow on learning a language -as devising and collaborative projects- the plays ‘She Says’ and ‘She Who Holds The Camera’ were produced.

‘She Says’ is a play that was born following a personal concern about female perspectives toward sex, the ways this perspectives were portrayed in the society and the mode this treatment was assimilated by women. In these terms, we (Bethany Sumner –at the research stage of the play–, Haw Shuan [Andi] Chu and myself) started to investigate how women were pictured in cinema, following the concept that film is a way of depicting cultures.

After a long research and flow of information, and having passing by Noir Cinema, the Women liberation in the 60s and 70s, pornography; Western, South American, and Asian representations of femininity, women director’s styles, male directors’ views and so on, we ended up selecting scenes from some films that contain divers points of view in regards to the thematic we attempted to develop.

In our desire to create a discourse trough transmedia storytelling using film elements we decided to deconstruct some scenes of the chosen films and collaging them by selecting some concepts in terms of narrative, aesthetics and story (script or main idea). Thus:

- We took the watermelons from ‘Wayward Cloud’ which was present as a representation of women sexuality and that we appropriate to represent the discovery of femininity in the two short films we shot (which attempted to show a dark and a shiny face of being a teenager, as a metaphor of the two sides of the sisters, and using the ‘forest’ dialogue between the sisters in ‘Fat Girl’) and that we showed simultaneously as an extension of the memory of the two adult sisters (who also were eating and smoking the watermelon in the stage) and

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68 We ended up with four characters: from "Fat Girl": Clair (The fat girl grown up) and Rossana (based on the older sister from ‘Fat Girl’ and the main character of ‘La Belle noiseuse’ and Rossana from ‘Between Marx and a Naked Woman’), Judy (based on Lolita and Nymphomaniac) and Lucia (based on Lucia from ‘Sex and Lucia’ and ‘The ages of Lulu’)  
the link they created when the young Judy (character based on ‘Lolita’ and ‘Nymphomaniac’) joined them in the train cabin.

- We took the ‘lollypop’ from Lolita and merge it with the concept of the ‘candies’ nymphomaniac’s scene in the train where a man look at her eating the sweets before getting a blowjob. We shot a scene where Judy was licking the lollypop in a sort of innocent but tease way (trying to represent how we think men look at women in this kind of situation from a pseudo naïf perspective –the one on Judy, a young teenager-) and we showed it in order to contrast Judies monologue (about preconceived ideas people had towards young generation) also simultaneously, so we would have to different ways of seeing the characters (another attempt to extend a reality playing with the voyeuristic situation of the audience when watching a movie).
- We kept using moving images as scenography. Since the play occurs (fictionally talking) in a train cabin, all the projections happened in the two windows in the back. The recurrent images we used when we wanted the focus on the live performers (which were the same as in the videos) were landscapes from cities and countryside, the ones we normally see on a train journey. We wanted to create the sensation of a loop in time.

Even when the skills we got from this play were incredibly useful for the next step, it was hard to produce all this material without losing the focus on the thematic (taking a posture was very complicated). With this first approach as creators and talking on behind myself, I was very enthusiastic on using all the possible resources (almost like a kid) both technological and dramaturgic to produce the piece with a transmedia style.

As part of my construction of this new language this situation helped me out to think about my capacities and limitations but especially about the suitability on the use of the resources on hand. A critical edition process is needed to make a piece more coherent.

“The interweaving of seemingly disparate text and actions and the abstracted mimicry of the film action was all made more coherent by Jim Findlay’s set which exemplified superbly the company’s Meyerholdian approach to sets as theatre machines” 71

Whereas narrative represents the story as it is manipulated by the discourse, metanarrative speaks about the narrative and exists as a function of the discourse. 72 Under this concept and, wanting to play a bit more with cinema and its possibility of extending realities as mid and meaning of the story in transmedia spectacles we (Haw Shuan and I) decide to go a step...
forward from ‘She Says’ and we produce ‘She Who Holds the Camera’, our second piece.

Although we worked together in all the process we decided to devise our responsibilities in the piece so we will organize better the material and the process of constructing the story would be more fluid and efficient, and the message we wanted to deliver more clearly and focus. Thus the content would be more understandable for the audience. My focus then was in the performers and their relationship with the content on the movies.

Our thematic was: Women perspectives towards sex and murder. And what we talk about was the way women judge each other. We explored self-judgement as women, the ways they judge their own characters being a character, the way they as characters judged the other characters from the movies based on what they would immediately saw, and levels of empathy and rejection they develop between them during the process.

We chose then, four characters from three movies from male directors: Jeanne from ‘Last Tango in Paris’ (1972) by Bernardo Bertolucci, Wong Chia Chi from ‘Lust, Caution’ (2008) by Ang Lee and Roxie and Velma from ‘Chicago’ (2002) from Rob Marshall (we liked the idea of having two different female characters from one movie with different approaches to accomplish the same objective).

The way we attempted to come up with the story was from the interaction of the actresses with the content on the movies as characters. So we deconstructed the movies. We classify the scenes by topics:

The presentation of the character: performers would identify them from the big picture: physical aspects and behaviour) so they can be that character. In this stage we attempt to construct the character based on how we, and the performers saw it in the movie. Following the precept of having ‘an actress (our actress), playing the role of another actress playing a role, in the movie’. [E.g. Abby playing Katherine Zeta Johns playing Velma in Chicago]. We worked individually most of the times, expecting that when they get together in the metaphysical space they arrive as the characters of the movie, so it would be easier for the other actresses recognize them as so and make connections with the movie.

The second set of chooses was sex. We started showing the ‘happy sex’, we let them talk and after we played the bad sex, a collage of scenes with hard content in terms of violence and visual exposition. There were many moments of silence, so many others of questioning to the other characters based on personal moral appreciations. The improvisation often mentioned what was depicted in the movie (from a defensive point, and also form an accusative one) as the most immediate truth on the fictional reality. A situation that oblige them to take a posture towards their selves as characters and as women. This was a recognition time, they really talked about what was happening to them (as fictional characters from those movies and their appreciation of themselves from outside the movies when they had the opportunity to see what they have been doing).
The third part was the murder ["you should’ve killed him, I did it"]; "I don’t know what to do now, I don’t think the police would come"; "he deserved it"; "he had to do it"; "I didn’t think my friends would be killed too"). Here the sense of empathy between characters personally and according to similar situations was stronger. The sense of mirroring in the screen, the sensation of being the extension of the thoughts of those characters (where the live characters were helping them to say what they cannot in the film); the action in that fiction of the movie and reaction in fiction of the stage and vice versa also were exploring. Even when most of the times we try to make them play with the screen in content and visuality, I think in it felt more fluid in the last weeks before the show.
So many interesting things were told in the rehearsal process, as well as many exciting interactions happened naturally between the screen and the live performers, we had gathered again a lot of material which needed to be edited. We create the main structure of the piece, in five acts (introduction, turning point, development, climax and ending), with the actions we wanted to happen in those bits. Then, we gave the material to a writer (Carolyn Defrin) who put the ideas together and based on the dialogues that came from our actresses made a script. Even when we didn’t have so much time to rehearse properly with the script the previous preparation helped, and since the play built itself progressively, in a collaborative way and obviously extremely linked to the movie, it was not so difficult to relate the content and the form on the mise en scène (Andi’s main concern).
For the miss en scène we decided to have four screens (3m high), creating a square metaphysical space where between the screens the characters from the movies can get together to have a rest before coming back to their repetitive world (since they cannot do anything different in the movie), a sort of only place where they can talk about themselves from their own perspective, not as a representation of someone else idea (obviously in the fiction because they were in a way following our ideas as makers).

Thus, we played ‘Chicago’ scenes one in front of the other and placed the audience in front of the screen respectively, also one group facing the other. So they can see each other watching the scenes, a voyeuristic approach, taking from film language in regards to spectators. Our idea was making them feel self-conscious at knowing that they were being observed when watching sex (we managed very explicit sex and violence content). In the other two screens we projected ‘Last tango in Paris’ and ‘Lust Caution’ respectively. We played with timing, mimesis, we made the characters come out and in from the screen based on the camera angles and POV, we re-edit the images so they would be accurate with the structure and with the content we attempted to show.73

73 You will find more detail about this in How Shuan (Andi) Chu’s Dissertation.

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Finally, and following the natural concerns that my process on learning the transmedia language brings, I felt the need of experimenting with a more personal type of work. Where the contact with the audience was more present and the transmedia would offer an environmental immersive experience as well as the performer approach. I attempted then to create two simultaneous extended realities to the reality I was enacting in the metaphysical space. The first one was recalling a memory, mostly represented by sound, the second one was meant to represent my thoughts at the moment of the performance and to extend my presence in the stage. For this I used two side images that were almost all the time present during the performance in a sort of judgemental attitude and that also had a sort of philosophical dialogue between them. And the reality in liveness which was me cooking a very awkward meal based on raw meat for 12 people in a dinner table.
In ‘M.E.A.T.T.’, after having worked with my ‘fears and disgust to touch meat’ face it and serving it to the audience in the performance, I was attempting to have a much honest personal approach to the process of creating content in a transmedia piece (as creator, performer and producer). My main objective was to deliver a more engaging communicational message to audience in a way that our mutual interaction would become in one hand enjoyable and participative, but at the same time impressive and questioning.

Personally I truly believe that the responsibility towards the engagement of the public with the piece, (after talking about the spectator’s personal preferences, background and attitude to the world), falls on the selection of the reality we as artist/creators/ makers decide to portrait and work with, and, of course has to do with our own commitment. Thus I consider a personal exploration is mandatory, so we can work over personal questions, so our engagement will be higher, and our broadcast more sincere and enjoyable.

I could think that may be this would be one of the next steps of exploration in my leaning process. However I cannot assure that since my transmedia language construction follows its own natural paths and because I don’t know which other technological tool would come across my way. Hopefully the upcoming media and tech possibilities won’t be a distraction on my way and instead, this willing of experimentation through them helps me to deliver a more accurate message.

As well, my desire as a new transmedia storyteller is that, through the self-reflexion and concerns’ appropriation I could be capable of better focusing my work, so I will create my own recognizable voice/discourse as a performance artist.

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74 The name of my latest short piece: Meeting Everyone Around The Table
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BECOMING A TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLER

FILM, THEATRE AND THE POSSIBILITY OF AUGMENTED REALITIES
Playing with Transmedia Performance in a (post) poststructuralist society

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