



ARTICOLO

### *“Popular” and “Highbrow” in the Theatre. Cultural Interaction and Osmosis between the Genres\**

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Popular/Folk theatre

The term “popular theatre” denotes a cultural creation the specific features of which remain constant and characteristic of this theatrical category (Grammatas 2006: 239-241) despite any changes that might have taken place over the times. Its basic source of origin is the “ritual”, which, though not identical, relates to the concepts of “ritual” and “custom”, and is often used interchangeably in international bibliography (Puchner 1985: 40). Beyond any particular conceptual analyses, “folk theatre” is understood as “dramatized rite” (Kakouri 1980: 59-104), which is “acted” and “realised” in combination with the concept of “performability”, connected both to the meaning itself (actors, action) as well as its usage on the part of the attending conscience (audience). In this meaning, the “popular activities” includes the genetic/anthropological as well as the social/functional code of communication, combined with its mimetic and folkloristic content, thus denoting “a semiotic system of social actions following a certain typical order, binding (and/or obligatory) for the community, intensifying the feeling of ‘us’ and symbolising the common identity” (Puchner 1998: 34-40). In the category of “popular ritual” various forms of mimetic actions carrying a symbolic meaning can be classed together. They may include dialogue or not, they may include “roles” corresponding to more or less real, allegorical or symbolic data, with contents connected to fertility/welfare or purely entertaining, related to the carnival disguise and the festivities of Clean Monday, first day of Lent in the Greek Orthodox calendar (Grammatas 2006: 10, 2010: 22-30). Their development has resulted in the “folk theatre”, as this has been recorded and expressed in various geographical locations and historic periods (Puchner 1989). Naturally, it is not always possible to differentiate or strictly classify the theatrical forms in folk culture as this would be opposing the very

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character of folkloristic creations, which, through variation and polymorphy, improvisation and orality, interconnect with a dynamic development and reform of its original kernel. This is why customs and expressions of the archaic, ancient, traditional or newer cultural environment are interwoven, without any bindings restrictions, thus constituting faces and forms of what is collectively known as “popular theatre” such as the performing ritual event of “*The twelve days of Christmas*” or the “*Carnival*” (Grammatas 2006: 261-272). Moreover, a vast category of “artistic” theatre is inductively also classed as “popular”, given the fact that it deliberately makes use of features that traditionally belong to “popular theatre”. These features include the following: initially the absence of a written text, which is self explained given its time and place of origin, that is, the time of oral culture and the mnemonic recording of the play through oral tradition (Kiourtsakis 1983). This also connects to the way the play is presented. It is a collective creation since there is no individual named creator, but orality has created a stratigraphic type of developmental creation, which is the product of the collective expression of the specific group (Kiourtsakis 1983: 51). But, even if the name of the writer was or became known (as for instance is the case of some popular theatre plays, named “*omiliae*” from Zakynthos, such as “*The shepherd girl’s love*” by Al. Geladas), the popular character of the play remains undisputed, since the creator’s individuality is merely part of the common, collective conscience of the community to which the creator belongs and within which he is assimilated (Alexiadis 1990). The need for an absolute reference of the creative conscience to the expectations and interests of the group the work is addressed at obliges the creator to bring about changes to the existing oral material, which he uses suitably reformed and adapted to the specific social environment, so that there is adequate correspondence between the meaning derived from the text and the quests of the audience it addresses. The change brought about on the traditional form and the new correspondence between signifier and signified allows for the expression of personal views of the particular creator, who, through the common code of communication, makes it possible for the play to develop stratigraphically, adding to the existing forms, bringing about changes, reforming and renovating the dimensions of its original version, actively contributing to the formation or the concept of “tradition”. As for their contents, the works in this category, irrespective of the fact that they may be dramas or comedies, irrespective of their aesthetic virtues or weaknesses or their theatricality, they do possess some common features which



are commonly recognised and accepted, as they are products of collective processes and address the specific group. They all share a simplified dramatic plot and speech, which facilitates memorising, intense feelings and emotions, concepts understood by a limited but homogeny expectations horizon, timeless and universal meanings and a style suitable for the certain community (Kakouri 1975: 41). In no way does this mean that this can be a reason for underestimating the genre, in relation to what is called “artistic”, and it can not be supported that the genre belongs to a “lower” culture compared to a “higher” one. On the contrary, it is widely accepted that folk culture and the popular theatre, to which we particularly refer, constitutes a different but equal form of expression to what is called “highbrow” in the theatre. Equally important, on the other hand, are the differences regarding the stage act and the codes of communication between stage and stalls, actors and audience. Firstly the presence of improvisation and the principal role it plays in the art of acting can be observed as being of great importance. Due to the absence of a written text and the contextually expressed will of the writer (through dialogues, monologues and instructions), which determines acting and outlines the frame of the developments in the stage act, the expressive capabilities of the actors in the popular theatre are enlarged and are given complete freedom of movement. Considering the fact that the actors are not professionals (with very few exceptions, such as in *Commedia dell’Arte*), but amateurs who are not competent in acting techniques, it is understood that improvisation becomes omnipotent (not always working in favour of the aesthetic outcome) and it becomes a structural element of the popular theatre. One more feature of the genre is the absence of theatrical illusion, which is the very essence of the artistic theatre. This means that during the theatrical performance, the actor on stage functions simultaneously as an acting person/theatrical role as well as a physical person/social role, without aiming at the first overtaking the second (as in the artistic theatre). The same happens to the viewer attending the spectacle, who recognises the real face of the actor in the face of the stage hero, addressing them as in everyday life, as if the “theatrical convention” were not there at all and there were no distance whatsoever between stage and stalls. This way the illusion is nullified and the principle governing theatrical communication is upset (Kakouri 1975: 403-409). As a result, the two levels, the real and the theatrical, intermix and became mutually interchangeable. The actors can easily “exit” their roles and address the audience not as acting persons/play heroes, but



as everyday life people, who can address individually or collectively to one or a number of members of the attending audience from their incidental advantageous position on stage. This way, the bidirectional, constantly reinforced communicative schema functioning in the theatre becomes even more collaborative, more interactive, thus more direct and functional, so that it meets the needs of the audience. "Through this process the act performed on stage becomes easily recognised and readable, can be identified and defined directly, so that a message corresponding to social reality can be derived from the theatrical representation" (Grammatas 2004: 267), allowing the secularisation of the theatrical action fantasy, which is perceived by the viewers as a process of "*innocent complicity*" in any social criticism taking place on stage (Bakhtine 1970). There are also differences between the popular and the artistic theatre in terms of place and time. As both the origin and the references of the popular theatre are identified in the conscience of the community the spectacle is addressed at, there is no distinction between those acting on stage (actors) and those attending the action (viewers) and therefore there is no necessity for any type of distinction, nor any particular characteristics to make the spectacle work. There is no permanent and stable stage structure to contain the performance, nor is there any demanding equipment and technical infrastructure to enable the action to develop. Costumes are simple and symbolic and visual decoration is minimal so that the spectacle is aesthetically deprived. However, the aim of the theatrical form is not to evoke artistic delight but emotions, it aims at energising and provides catharsis to those participating under any capacity and in any sort of manner. On account of this the theatrical space and the stage are not permanent but incidental and changeable, depending on the given circumstances. Anyway, they have to possess those typical characteristics featuring a gathering or cultural event of the community, which means presenting no hindrance to access, large comfortable dimensions, good visibility and acoustics. These general prerequisites can be found in a number of different outdoor or semi-outdoor spaces, such as squares, crossroads, abandoned buildings, yard of private or public buildings, which can wonderfully lend themselves to presentations of popular theatre. Time also keeps some sense of "special" and "exceptional" as it used to be in the primitive ritual, combined almost exclusively with the Carnival period or some other with a particular significance for the local community, such as jubilees and important dates of religious, social or historical importance. It is always during such periods that popular theatre



performances take place, thus meeting the expectations of the audience. If at the end of our analysis we attempt to widen the parameters toward the part of the viewers, that is, the “natural” receivers of the specific genre, we can say that it is addressed at a homogenous, closed society, the members of which possess common or similar perceptions, attitudes, aesthetics and behaviours. This common manner between stage and stalls evokes directness in communication and an absolute participation, turning the genre into an exceptional form of interactive spectacle, a multi-dynamic system of cultural creation and expressions, with no qualitative differentiation, but completely embodied in all the others with which the community acts and exists. This homeopathic principle and homogenising dimension is the determining factor of the genre which makes it special on a social, ideological and aesthetic level.

### Highbrow Theatre

Another theatrical genre with completely different structural, morphological and conceptual particularities can be classed as “artistic” or “bourgeois” theatre. To begin with, the text itself is not the result of an oral tradition but the result of written speech, the fruit of a conscientious process by a named author, who contextualises and records mnemonically his thoughts and desires, according to a subjective and objective, known and elusive data, relating to the author’s self, the era and the genre he is involved in. In this manner, the work can belong to any aesthetic trend or school, have any kind of content and express a variety of ideological views, it can have traditional or modern characteristics, be more or less acceptable and recognisable by the audience it is aimed at. In his creative course of writing his work, the author functions initially as a reader and critic of the sources of the historical and literary past. This process leads him to constructing his personal myth and to the crystallisation of his artistically reformed views, in connection to a wider system of references and correlations to the personal of collective historical and cultural past. Hence, a personal, individually structured and codified literary universe is built up, as a composition of signifiers and signified, via the writing processes and the specific or elusive choices of the creator, on the level of genre, aesthetics and ideology. As such, it does not in any way vindicate or possess any exclusiveness or uniqueness, since any other contemporary or forthcoming creator can make use of



the common literary background at will, in a different way and a different composition, so as to create a different work, which still takes its meaning in the common frame of reference.

More than the text, the differences between popular and artistic theatre can be observed on the level of the stage act. In the case currently under observation, the stage version of the text occurs with the mediation of a factor completely absent in the popular theatre. This factor is the director as a mediator and bridge builder between the author's message and the perceptions of the viewer, in a way that the final artistic result is a product of common creation and an *a posteriori* intervention of the director. He is the one who will consider the expectations as well as the capabilities of the particular audience of the performance and will make or the necessary correcting interventions in the original text, transforming the original picture of the "inscribed" or "potential" viewer the author had in mind at the moment of writing into a picture of a "real" viewer, that is the one present in the theatre hall at the particular place and time. Similar differences can be observed on the level of acting and general stage presence of the actors as well as the the way the secondary codes of theatrical communication function. The actors in artistic theatre are professionals in the field, with special training and obeying the principles and rules derived from the art of acting; they completely abandon their social role and acquire their theatrical one, transforming themselves into "acting persons" of the particular stage spectacle. The "actors" in popular theatre are amateurs with the same intentions and the same objectives, that is their stage transformation based on "acting", without possessing the knowledge of the art, the relevant education, the equipment or any technical infrastructure. Still they present a spectacle which is artistically inferior to the expectations and demands of the audience. In contrast, the actors in artistic theatre exactly because they possess all the above (at least in theory), they are able to produce an aesthetically complete result and meets the demands of the audience. At times following the director's orders and suggestions and at other times obeying their own talent and intuition, they go ahead with realising the demands of their stage role according to some general principles and values of universal acceptance, such as those of Stanislavskij, Brecht, Grotowski and other great teachers of the art of acting, still enforcing models and principles which restrict their spontaneity and limit their free expression, which is a characteristic of the actors in popular theatre. Considering the commitments derived from the existence of the written text and the definite instructions given by the author, it



can be understood that improvisation and immediate physical expression are considerably restricted, resulting in a completely different way of acting in the popular and the artistic theatre. More important is the difference noticed in the performance and communication codes of the popular and the “bourgeois” theatre, in relation to the existence or not of the theatrical illusion, which governs the theatre. As mentioned earlier, in the case of the popular theatre, such a thing does not occur; this is why the acting persons on stage simultaneously and in parallel function as theatrical and social roles, which nullifies the distinction between stage and stalls, in favour of a continual communicative current moving on the level of the real and not the illusionary. The exact opposite can be observed in the artistic theatre. The function of the theatrical illusion is the conscientious observance of the mutual promises of the theatrical convention between actors and viewers, that is, the awareness of both parts of the fact that they take as real what is but illusionary, by constantly lying, and this very fact constitutes the particularity of the genre. One more difference between the two genres is the parameter of place and time. Whereas in the “folk” theatre there is no permanent place and time where and when the spectacle occurs. It may be indoors or outdoors, a building purposefully built to welcome stage acts, or refurbished so it can meet such needs. It can be in the city centre, in the suburbs or the outskirts, it can be an archaeological structure of great historical significance or a contemporary construction in an outdoor space of smaller or larger capacity, with more or fewer facilities for both the actors and the audience. In any case, it does have a suitable stage which can meet the needs of a live spectacle, so that it can contribute to unhindered communication between actors and audience. The time in which the theatrical performance occurs is also determined in a way which forms the audience expectations accordingly (official opening, *matinée*, post-midnight performance. Within these specific occurrences of the objective reality mentioned above, communication of the audience with the spectacle takes place and the kind of theatre called “artistic” is energised.

Cultural interaction of the popular/folk and the highbrow theatre

Though the features and the existing differences mentioned above lead to a differentiated framing of these two different communication systems which formulate the performing arts and visualise



potential or existing aspects or the real, it is concluded that their course in history has not been completely separate and independent from one another. That is, one's development has not occurred in the absence of the other, and despite their qualitative or quantitative fluctuations in their historical course, despite any tidal effects and interrelations that can be observed, there has always been a constant dialogue between them, obvious or elusive, which allows and justifies the view of an osmosis and an interaction which will be discussed below. To adopt this view and to attempt a comparison involves a different gaze toward the concept called "theatre". According to this gaze, it is not just a structured well-framed composition of aesthetic/artistic and psycho/social data based on the concepts of illusion and the role, but it is an intercultural system of interactive communication, based equally on the dynamic "convention" and "signification" energised during its presence as spectacle. In this meaning, any categorisation and classification according to genre (tragedy, comedy, drama), according to aesthetics (classicism, romanticism, realism) according to social criteria (proletarian drama, urban drama), according to time/national criteria (Elizabethan theatre, Spanish theatre of "siglo d'oro", American theatre), or any other criteria, though not meaningless or useless, can only serve as methodological tools, allowing for systematic study from the certain viewpoint every time. This way, distinguishing between popular and artistic theatre, though not void and replaced, can just be seen as one parameter of a more holistic way of seeing the theatre as a phenomenon of universal reference and recognition. Firstly, it must be pointed out that there is interaction between the two concepts and for this to occur there must be some kind of communication and bilateral tribute, which can stimulate a chain of new continually occurring contacts, which design a spiral development for both genres. And despite the fact that such a relationship can be considered as one-way and feasible, at least from the viewpoint of incorporating the folk into the artistic and making good use of it, the opposite is not obvious, which makes our presupposition about osmosis considerably doubtful. For this seeming contradiction to be overcome and understand the effect of their bilateral communication, we have to escape the single dimensional approach of the concept called "theatre", which is the traditional way of seeing it as a literary text and adopt a different approach, seeing it as a complex cultural creation and as a cultural phenomenon, where the text is only one of its parameters (not always the most interesting or the most essential). Because, as widely accepted, the concepts of "writing" and "text"





in the theatre are not identified solely with the written, monumental work of the author, which in itself remains unchanged through time. On the contrary, they have a much broader meaning, including the very stage representation, as this is realised via the actor's body, which is subsequently transformed in a three-dimensional field for the transmission of the author's speech. On this level, topics, motives and structures can be traced in the text, which may belong to the one or the other form, the popular and the artistic, or may possess mainly features belonging to the other. If we start our research from the very first time when drama appeared in Ancient Greece, we can easily observe that both tragedy and comedy, exceptional products of the human intellect as they are, as genres and forms particularly expressing the concept of the "classical" signifying the course of civilisation to the very day thus undoubtedly belonging to "high art", they essentially derive and are founded on a different form of theatrical expression with intense sense of the popular. It is the worship of the god Dionysus, that is the primitive ritual (*dromenon*), the pre-theatrical rites through which the primitive communities could communicate at the time of the first steps of human civilisation. It was via those rituals, either in their distinguished religious form or their comic and funny one, the phallic customs that accompanied them and the various forms they took that the tragedy and the comedy were created a lot later in the Athens of the historical times. Consequently, the incorporation and adoption of popular or popular-like elements in the artistic theatre first appeared from the very beginning of the theatre, which justifies the approach attempted here. Still, the same can be observed in the Middle Ages and it is possible to pinpoint the starting point of the artistic Renaissance theatre, both drama and comedy, in the structure of the popular spectacle (Burke 1978, Radcliffe – Umstead 1969). As it is known, the Medieval Mysteries, which appear in Europe in the late Middle Ages (10<sup>th</sup> c.), are but the dramatisation of religious content spectacles derived mainly from the (*sacre rappresentazioni*) and the lives of the various saints (*miracles*). These in turn, to a great extent, are related to the folk oral tradition and the fairy tales as well as the widely circulating "popular pamphlets" widely accepted by the lower (Purvis 1962, Hardison 1969). One such typical example is the "*rappresentazione di Stella*", which was the model for Theodoros Montzeleze, the author from the island of Zakynthos (Zante) when he wrote his *Eugena*. The same "sacred representation" is based on medieval popular tales (The "*Koutsohera*" fairy tale) (Pefanis 2005: 122-124), which was brought to the Hellenic world by



Agapios Landos with his work “*Sinners’ Salvation*” published in Venice in 1641 (Vitti 1995). The particular tale cycle can be traced in the 11<sup>th</sup> c. Northern England (Pefanis G. 2005: 35). It can thus be concluded that the Medieval Mysteries are the basis of the modern European theatre. From them the Religious Drama was developed, such as Abraham’s Sacrifice in Italian *Il Sacrificio di Abrahamo* by Feo Belcari, in French *Abraham sacrificiant* by Théodore le Beze and its Greek version by Vitsentzos Kornaros. They all have a clear popular origin (Le Hir 1974, Hardison 1961, Prosser 1961). The same can be said about the comic theatre, as it appeared and occurred on a European level with Carlo Goldoni in Italy and Molière in France. It is known that these two playwrights based their work on the existing tradition of the popular theatre, as it had been formulated and developed through the Commedia dell’Arte, which in its turn was the final stage of development of the popular farce of the *giullari* and the comic carnival customs in the medieval period (Lea 1962, Pandolfi 1957-61). Intermediary and representative works between the artistic and the popular are the works of Goldoni and Molière, who initially follow the first. Molière is the company manager and actor himself and presents plays based on the Commedia dell’Arte, whereas his first comic farces are mainly based on the spectacles of the Commedia. The same is true for Goldoni, who, obliged to make a living, writes under contract more and more plays every week so that he can meet the needs of the Venetian theatres and the entertainment of the audience basing his work on his own familiar tradition. He produced a great number of especially one-act comedies, which were but written form of the Commedia scenes, a little extended. It was only years later that he matured and was able to present *The Boors (I Rusteghi)* in 1760, a landmark which displaced the traditional popular comic theatre in favour of a new personal creation by far overdoing the simplistic typology of the Commedia attempting the first timid steps toward the yet incomplete sketch of theatrical characters. One more characteristic case is the dramatisation of lamenting songs and generally the folk traditional culture in the Greek theatre in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> c. and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. At a period which was extremely critical for the formation of the national identity, when Hellenism turns to folk culture via the new Ethnographic Studies in an effort to discover its own cultural roots, its historical continuity and cohesion, the popular theatre, the folk songs, the rites and customs of the Greek provinces, which had remained intact from any European or other influences, appear to be the one only authentic source in the creative quests combining the historic



past with the present and guaranteeing the timeless continuity of Hellenism (Grammatas 2002: 72-75). This is why playwrights turn to these sources and make excellent use of the legends and fairy tales, customs and features existing primarily or secondarily revised in texts of both the oral and the written tradition. In this framework playwrights start dramatising and exploiting the folk culture as it can be represented directly or indirectly by *Galateia* (1872) by Spyridon Vasiliadis, (Dimaki-Zora 2002: 645-698), *Vourkolakas (The Vampire)* (1895) by Argyris Eftaliotis, *To dahtilidi tis manas (Mother's ring)* (1896) by Yannis Kampisis, *Trisevgeni* (1903) by Kostis Palamas, *O Protomastoras (The master mason)* (1909) by Nikos Kazantzakis. (Pefanis 1998: 92-109). These are just some representative samples of the relationship between popular and artistic theatre. The influences are traced as being one-way, from "below" to "above", that is from the popular, which is a cultural system emitting messages, to the artistic, which is the system accepting, adopting and using elements of the other. For the communication to be classed as bilateral and for osmosis to occur, which we presuppose, we have to discover similar instances occurring the other way round, that is, instances where the artistic theatre and the intellectual production at large happens to have acted as a "transmitter" and the popular theatre as a "receiver". This is what we will try to do in the rest of our research. Once more, the popular theatre of the Ionian Islands, (well known as *omiliae*), will serve as our field of reference, as they happen to be the most typical case of incorporation of elements from the literary artistic theatrical production into the popular. The *omiliae*, historically were born at the time when the local theatrical tradition met the carnival customs of Venice, which arrived on the islands and got established there after the end of the previously practised medieval customs, the so-called *giostra*, and were impregnated with the work of Cretan Literature, brought to the island by Cretan refugees, after the conquest of Handakas by Turks, in 1669 (Grammatas 2006: 246-249). *Abraham's sacrifice*, *Apollonios' passion* and especially *Erotokritos* and *Erofilo* are the works turned into *omiliae* and go on stage as outdoor spectacles during the Carnival period (Fotopoulos 1977: 58-76). This transformation was the result of direct and elusive mechanisms and techniques constituting the dynamics of oral tradition and the experiential character of the pictorial spectacle. The original works get shortened, long narratives are done away with, literary elements are omitted and replaced by popular wisdom generalisations relevant to popular speech (Puchner 1983: 173-235). Emotional features are kept and get enriched, so that the



resulting spectacle is completely differentiated (often even titles change, such as *Erofilo* which becomes *Panaratos*) (Zoras 1975: 435-445, Konstas 1966: 1539-49, Polimerou-Kamilaki 1976-77: 225-251). A similar case is that of *Hasis* by Dimitrios Gouzelis, another example of Ionian comedy, who, though originally coming from the proceeding tradition of the *omiliae* and considered by a number of scholars as a form of *multi-act omila* (Protopapa-Bouboulidou 1953: 353-361), in its turn acts as a model and becomes the starting point for many other works of purely popular character, such as the “*Anekdoti Omilia*” (*Unpublished Omilia*) by Dionysios Loukisas featuring Lourentzos Andriolas (1798) and “*Kakava*” by N. Karatzas (1834). These plays are modelled upon the artistic theatre and are the best representatives if the dynamic interaction between the two systems (popular-artistic and *vice versa*), in the centre of which stands *Hasis*. One more example from the island of Zakynthos (Zante) is the transcription of the dramatic romance *O agapitikos t̄s voskopoulas* (*The shephard girl's lover*) by Dim. Koromilas into an *omilia* by A. Geladas, keeping the same title. The incorporation of elements from the artistic into the popular as far as the text and the structure are concerned, which is our point in the present section, can come to a conclusion by mentioning the Agiasos folk theatre from the island of Lesvos. The plays presented in the Carnival period, compiled by the writers of laughter (Antonis Minas) they include literary elements to a great extent. These playwrights can be both aware or unaware of the fact that they incorporate these elements, which they derive from literary and other texts (Grammatas 2006: 72-89, Koutskoudis 2009). In conclusion, the concepts of popular and artistic theatre are complimentary and coexist in an unstable and fluctuating balance, which sometimes favours the one and at other times the other, in a constant man-of-war mutually identified and redefined. The extent of the exchange and influence depends on factors such as the variability of communication, the degree of manipulation and control of the message, the absorption of the challenges and the purposefulness of the reception of the message. These factors act as feedback mechanisms of the bilateral communication schema being analysed here, since “transmitter” and “receiver”, though distinctively existing, they alternate roles, so that a static recording of influences and loans is not possible. What can be observed is the osmotic type of relationship they have. In the tide of mutual dependencies and influences, the theatre acquires its form as intercultural and diachronic complex phenomenon of interactive communication.



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### Abstract – ITA

Le categorie di “teatro popolare” e “teatro d'arte” si riferiscono a due ambiti culturali differenti, distinti non soltanto da caratteristiche estetiche di base, ma anche dai loro ruoli e dalle ricadute sociali. Ciascuno comporta specifici riferimenti e tecniche, contesti di spazio e di tempo deputati, strategie di comunicazione sia tra gli artisti, sia tra questi stessi e il pubblico. Ciononostante, malgrado la storica competizione tra cultura bassa e alta, il loro rapporto è sempre stato osmotico e complementare; reciproche influenze hanno costituito un equilibrio in perenne slittamento, nel teatro (e nella cultura) occidentale sin dalle origini rituali. L'autore presenta alcuni esempi, per convalidare tale approccio come prospettiva metodologica negli studi storiografici.

### Abstract – EN

Categories such “popular” and “artistic” theatre refer to two different cultural fields, which are distinguished not only by their primary aesthetical features, but also by their social roles as well as consequences. Each one of them involves peculiar techniques and references, setting in space and time and strategies of communication, both among the artists and between them and the audience. Nevertheless, despite an historical competition involving low and highbrow culture, the relationship between these two fields is valued as osmotic and complementary; mutual influences have been constituting an ever-shifting balance in Western theatre (and culture) since its ritual origins. The author eventually exposes some examples in order to validate such approach as a methodologic perspective in Western historical Theatre Studies.

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