

Metaphor and Theatre

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Abstract: This paper aims to analyze how metaphor operates in the theatrical realm. Metaphor viewed from a linguistic point of view has a certain impact on theatre and is a consequence of looking at theatre as language. But viewed from a pragmatic point of view, beyond the linguistic aspect, as a model of thinking, metaphor becomes a cognitive tool. Between these two perspectives lies a wide range of ways in which theatrical metaphor intervenes in the scenic creation. At the same time, seen as a metaphor of life, theatre assumes, through a series of successive metaphors, a creative freedom which, however, can become anarchic and end up in what is called dead metaphor. For this reason, metaphor, from the point of view of theatre creators, must be assumed insofar as it is a conceptual tool, which has the ability to penetrate the various levels of reality in order to achieve a meaning concomitant with a sense of the scenic action. This may be the real freedom that the use of metaphor offers in theatre: the ability to achieve a meaning concomitant with a sense of the scenic action in the absence of the chain of cause and effect. Only in this way can metaphor remain an element of vitality in a living theatre.

Keywords: metaphor, theatricality, concrete image, abstract image, theatrum mundi

The relationship between metaphor and theatre has had and probably will always have a bright, enlightening, liberating shade and a foggy, blurry, in fact, abusive one. Imported from the philological and linguistic fields, the idea of metaphor preoccupies both the theatre practitioners and theatre theorists interested in semiosis that seem to detonate the meaning and aesthetic pleasure of letting yourself be caught up in the dynamic and protean texture of the scenic space. Metaphor, from the point of view of theatre, had, for example, a period, in the mid-twentieth century, when it was regarded as the perfect opposite of theatrical realism. As might be expected, theatrical realism

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was considered to be that aesthetic tendency in which events were copied on stage directly from social reality on the principle of *photographic imitation*, not just *imitation of action* as it appears in Aristotle.

The imagined conflict between realism and metaphor has preoccupied theatre researchers who have proposed various theoretical models of its reconciliation. One of the models seems to be that of Andrei Băleanu, who, from dogmatic-Marxist positions, sees, in his work *Realism and Metaphor in Theatre*, published in 1965 at Meridiane Publishing House in Bucharest, the possibility of a dialectical synthesis between realism and metaphor, as one of the commentators of his book observes: “Drawing conclusions, the critic opts for the judicious combination of *realism with metaphor*, within poetic realism. He also takes a stand against the frivolous application, for *fashion’s sake*, of the imperative *convention*. Naturalism and directorial tricks are unacceptable alike; the critic speaks out in favour of synthesis—veracity poetically transfigured in the name of a humanistic ideal. *Getting rid of the naturalistic grounds, but also of the deceptive temptations of directing for directing, modern theatre rediscovers—like every era for itself—realism*. It is ultimately a matter of dosage and balance, primarily a matter of the director’s cultivation and good taste”¹. From this we draw the following observations: (1) the presence of metaphor in the discourse about theatre derives from the aesthetics of *poetic realism*, (2) realism is no longer a branch of naturalism, but becomes autonomous, (3) theatrical convention becomes *poetically transfigured veracity*, therefore, reality no longer counts as truth, but veracity is sufficient, (4) the enemies of *poetic realism* are the director and the naturalistic perspective, therefore, the director is determined to become a poet by assuming the manipulation of metaphor, (5) one of the effective directorial tools in the stage operation of metaphor is the *good taste* of the director, (6) the director is on opposite positions towards the critic-ideologue.

From the Marxist-dialectical perspective, which survives even today in the Eastern European theatrical zone and tempts many theatre practitioners in Western European theatre, the theatrical metaphor is identified with the theatrical symbol. Basically, it is that aesthetic procedure through which *the*

¹ Mileteanu, Gheorghe, „Repere și coordonate contemporane”, *Teatrul*, an 11, nr. 5, 1966, pp. 89-94, p. 94

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presence of a symbol is materialized in a transient way. In short, the director must create, on stage, together with the entire artistic team, details and nuances that are considered to be loaded with metaphorical lyrical potential. A sophisticated proliferation of artistic expression is sought.

The success of a director's work was assessed according to what we might call a *metaphormetre*, a conceptual tool for counting the amount of theatrical metaphors used in a performance, as we can read in an unfavourable review from 1965: “The performance takes place in a setting (Gh. Matei) that fails to materialize the metaphor, to correspond to the symbolic character of the play and to suggest that note of *strangeness*, of originality of ambience required by the text. D. Dinulescu’s direction gave the performance a rather didactic-schoolish aspect, an external pathos, devoid of poetry. The director did not spend enough fantasy to materialize in nuances and details the picturesque, sensitive world of the hero, a subjective world”². Thus, subjectivity seems to no longer animate the object. Subjectivity seems to be just a complex object. The object animates subjectivity. Such structuring of a metaphorical logical thread cannot be validated in experience. Theatrical metaphor thus seems to become illogical at the level of contingent reality, for, according to some statements: “Theatre completely changes the logic, the sequence of our emotions, overturns the law of causes and effects that habitually dominates our thoughts. Theatre has its own truths that have nothing to do with the everyday truths of our *reality*”³. Thus, theatrical metaphor becomes a kind of instrument for establishing a logic that works only on the scenic level.

Ultimately, beyond the excesses noted above, the discussion of theatrical metaphor remains a debate about *theatrical convention*. Going beyond how to substantiate theatrical convention, which is also an important aspect of theatrical practice, what is important to remember is that, in this context, theatrical metaphor cannot be used, in the name of creative freedom, as a motivation for any scenic inadequacy. Is the limit of the use of metaphor in theatre, respectively the limit of theatrical convention, necessarily and

2 Ducea, Valeria, „Nu vreți să veniți puțin? de Aziz Nesin”, *Teatrul*, an 10, nr. 11, 1965, pp. 70-72, p. 71

3 Evreinov, Nikolai, *Teatrul în viață*, traducere de Nicolae Manda, p. 132, la evreinov-teatrul-in-viata.pdf (unatc.ro), accessed: 08.03.2024

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obviously given by the degree of acceptance of convention or metaphorical meaning on the part of the spectator? Can the spectator accept anything depending on the skill by which the artistic information is provided? But under what conditions can metaphor find its well-deserved place in theatre? In order to try to formulate an answer to this last question, we should clarify what metaphor itself is. It has been defined in many ways and no final conclusion has yet been reached.

If in Aristotle “A metaphor is the application of a word that belongs to another thing: either from genus to species, species to genus, species to species, or by analogy”⁴, nowadays there are discussions about at least two types of metaphors that work differently. The difference can be marked by how metaphors place themselves in context: “Recent experimental research on a dataset of Italian literary metaphors has shown that, while in non-literary utterances context supports metaphor comprehension, literary metaphors are understood differently: context makes them *only slightly more predictable* and reduces familiarity with them”⁵. However, the tendency is to go beyond the rhetorical dimension and try to establish, for metaphor, an area of pragmatic efficiency. The paradigm under discussion concerns the negotiation between specificity and representativeness. The distinction between the two meanings can sometimes be extremely imprecise. In some cases, one can even speak of an equivalence and not of a distinction.

However, “In recent decades, theoretical discussions revolving around the concepts of metaphor and more specifically of allegory have highlighted the arbitrariness characterizing the relation between *proprium* and *figuratum*”⁶. The figurative, even though it has a dimension of its metaphorical interpretation, also contains a characteristic that pushes it towards figurative

4 Aristotle *Poetics*, Longinus *On the Sublime*, Demetrius *On Style*, edited and translated by Dorren C. Innes,

Cambridge & London, Harvard University Press, 1995, p. 105

5 Richter, Sandra, “Literal and Figurative Uses of the Picaro: Graded Saliency in Seventeenth-Century Picaresque Narrations”, *Theater as Metaphor*, Berlin/Boston, Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2019, pp. 45-64, p. 50

6 Küpper, Joachim, “The Conceptualization of the World as Stage in Calderón and Cervantes – Christian Didacticism and its Ironic Rebuttal”, *Theater as Metaphor*, Berlin/Boston, Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2019, pp. 101-115, p.106

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representation. The proprium, to the same extent, can be dimensioned not only as specificity, individualization, but also as something immediate, direct. Thus, the distinction can be accepted in the sense of translation through intermediation, that is, what is proper is not subject to equivalence, transformation into something else in view of displacement and then return to the initial state at the moment when the movement ceases and what is figurative undergoes metamorphosis.

Therefore, metaphor should not be understood outside the principle of displacement. In fact, the principle involves understanding metaphor not as establishing an identity between objects, but, because of the vector of motion, as establishing equivalence between relations between objects, as Aristotle argued: “I call *by analogy* cases where *b* is to *a* as *d* is to *c*: one will then speak of *d* instead of *b*, or *b* instead of *d*. Sometimes people add that to which the replaced term is related”⁷. At the same time, the various possibilities of establishing itself, its fragility, ubiquity, ability to inspire an idea and its ambivalence, make the metaphor difficult to define: “To attempt to talk about metaphor not in metaphorical terms (insofar as this is feasible) but in explicit terms, employing the semantic tools we have discussed in the preceding sections, is, therefore, to stick out one’s neck so far that one runs the risk of losing one’s head”⁸. In this case, can metaphor be the fundamental act of subjectivity? Imprinting the personal character of the way in which the image we refer to by a metaphor is presented cannot be the result of a mechanical process.

In fact, it is a comparison that customizes, individualizes, instead of generalizing or sharing. In doing so, it has an implicit paradoxical dimension. And if it loses its paradoxical specificity, or if it is not attained, at the moment of its elaboration, the metaphor can be missed. Metaphor could be that unconscious act of lucidity, if it can be accepted as valid, not just rhetorically, such a contradictory statement. Basically, we could talk about a double or even multiple state of metaphor. It seems to function as a convergence point, a crossroads where each path still retains its specificities before merging into

7 Aristotle, *op. cit.*, p. 105

8 Aarts, Jan M.G. and Joseph P. Calbert, *Metaphor and non-metaphor*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1979, p. 124

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one another. It has even been stated that: “Metaphor allows for the synthesis of different layers of knowledge and for the fusion of hypotheses and assumptions on the one hand and verified knowledge on the other into one connected whole. Metaphor’s ability to unite different meanings into integrated wholes implies a mechanism for adjusting facts. This mechanism is triggered by the very principle of fictitiousness and assumed likeness. The modus of likening enables metaphor to equate different phenomena and integrate the unknown into the structure of existing knowledge”⁹. It remains to be assessed, however, whether the metaphor remains to exist beyond the moment of encounter at the crossroads. Can the items being compared merge? Is it possible to be deceived by the absence of an element of comparison that is nevertheless implied, therefore present, in one way or another, and to consider that synthesis, the transition from one state to another, happens through their internal reorganization? In modernity, probably precisely because of its paradoxical state of establishment in reality, which can create the sensation of a structural merging of meanings, one can notice the tendency to define metaphor beyond its rhetorical-philological value. For example: “The metaphor is not just a matter of language, but of thought and reason. The language is secondary. The mapping is primary, in that it sanctions the use of source domain language and interface patterns for target domain concepts. The mapping is conventional, that is, it is a fixed part of our conceptual system, one of our conventional ways of conceptualizing”¹⁰. Beyond thinking it into a possible *carambole of comparisons*, it can be seen that metaphor is defined, in actuality, after all, as an instrument of creation, a way in which novelty is generated by human thinking. The very definition of metaphor thus seems to have departed from its ancient meaning, metamorphosing, in turn, into something new. However, at a closer look we notice that: “Finally, Aristotle distinguishes four kinds of metaphors. The first three, which concern genera and species, would today be classified as metonymies (and it is an open question whether metonymy should be classified as a kind of metaphor or

9 Penskaya, Elena, “The Philosophical Narrative as a Semiotic Laboratory of Theatrical Language: The Case of Jean Paul in the Context of the Russian Reception” in *Theater as Metaphor*, Berlin/Boston, Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2019, pp. 169- 206, p. 172

10 Lakoff, George, “The contemporary theory of metaphor”, *Metaphor and Thought*, Edited by Andrew Ortony, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 202-251, p. 208

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rather as another figure of speech). Aristotle's last kind of metaphor defines metaphor as in today's sense. The majority of contemporary theories employ, in some sense, the notion of analogy or mapping—between two meanings, linguistic systems, semantic fields or domains of experience"¹¹. Therefore, metaphor works largely by means of the partial similarity between two elements compared. Of course, we should bear in mind that the elements compared are not evaluated by themselves, but by their manifestations, attributes that can be multiple. At the same time, there is a possibility that the act of comparing, in itself, does not compare only two elements, but, by the fact that one is implied, therefore hidden, several elements. At the same time, for some researchers, "It was assumed either that the metaphorical mode of expression is merely stylistic, rhetorical, or decorative, carrying no additional cognitive significance of a metaphor is *sui generis*, completely"¹². However, if metaphor does not change the intimate nature of the things and acts it compares, it can be seen that change occurs on another level. At the metaphor operator level. It is not the environment that changes. Neither does the operator. What changes is how the operator senses events in this environment. But not this effectively, but only as a route to follow: "As Goodman says in *Languages of Art*, all symbolic systems are denotative in the sense that they *make and remake* reality. To raise the question of the referential value of poetic language is to try to show how symbolic systems reorganize *the world in terms of works and works in terms of the world*. At that point the theory of metaphor tends to merge with that of models to the extent that a metaphor may be seen as a model for changing our way of looking at things, of perceiving the world"¹³. Thus, it can be understood in what sense "The aesthetic *attitude* is restless, searching, testing—is less attitude than action: creation and re-

11 Mácha, Jakub, "Metaphor in Analytic Philosophy and Cognitive Science", *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*, vol. 75, issue 4, 2019, pp. 2247-2286, p. 2250

12 Stern, Josef, "Metaphor, Semantics, and Context", *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, Edited by Raymond W. Gibbs Jr., Cambridge, University Press, 2008, pp. 262-279, p. 276

13 Ricoeur, Paul, "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling", *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1978, pp.143-159, p. 152

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creation”¹⁴. The meaning is that of the confrontation between what can be imagined and what can be perceived. A confrontation that is operated not to identify a winner between the imaginary and the perceptible, but to clarify the correspondences between psychic interiority and objective exteriority that make possible the placing in a real environment. Thus, creation as an aesthetic attitude achieved through metaphor causes changes both in the environment and in the psyche of the creator. If one of these two necessary conditions is not met, can we still speak about the creative act? Metaphor is thus treated as the most important conceptual tool of the creative person, be he an artist, engineer or named after any other kind of activity that will be undertaken by the person in question. The temptation to use metaphor to express oneself seems in this case to be explicable.

However, some researchers try to provide arguments for limiting the use of metaphor as much as possible precisely because of its poetic, imprecise dimension and probably its multifaceted relationship to the context in which it manifests itself. Thus “Its critics take the *meaning* of a metaphor to be something like the property it expresses in a context. But that is what I take to be the content of the metaphor in context. On my account, the meaning of a metaphor is the rule that determines its content for each context, that is, its character”¹⁵. Therefore, the relationship between metaphor and context can be understood either as almost non-existent, they are two separate entities that interact limitedly, or as indistinguishable from context, they are parts of the same entity that interact continuously. However, at least one shortcoming of this contextual dimension of metaphor can be delineated. In order for this relationship between metaphor and context to function, context must be considered as fully known. But metaphor can be an indication in context. Just that? What else can it be? Metaphor can be challenging. And it has an inconsistent definition. Metaphor is the proposal of an open definition. Metaphor can be asking for recognition of a characteristic, an attribute. Or several. Metaphor can be a point of convergence. Metaphor implies

14 Goodman, Nelson, *Languages of Art. An Approach to A Theory of Symbols*, Indianapolis, The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1968, p. 142

15 Stern, Josef, *Metaphor in Context*, Cambridge (MA), Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2000, p. 16

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generosity. Can metaphor be a redefinition? It sure can be a definition. Metaphor can be an exceptional state. But can it be a common one? Metaphor can be perceived as a double. The metaphor is based on infrastructure, scheme and refers to functionality. Metaphor can be suspected of designating a set of objects, relationships, phenomena. The personification seems involved in metaphorization. The intimate process of denomination seems involved in metaphor. Paronymy seems implied in metaphor. Metaphor can be a compressed meditation. The opportunity to engage in an act of reflection.

For example, Shakespeare gives us the metaphor: *Juliet is the sun*. Is this a failed metaphor? *Juliet is the moon* would clearly be a failed metaphor, for, as the Shakespearean line follows, the moon is merely the envious one to be killed by the *honourable sun*. There are successful metaphors and failed metaphors. But what if we weren't sure *Juliet is the sun* is a good metaphor? Pushing the argument to absurdity, it is noted that at the moment of Juliet's death, that is, the disappearance of the sun, in the play there is a flame burning in the night, in the cemetery. Light no longer comes from the sun, but from the flame. Therefore, the balance between the sun and Juliet is preserved even in this aspect. Now we could be sure that it is a successful metaphor in its ingenuous sense. Even more so, in *The Tempest*, Shakespeare uses the expression the *bigger light* to designate the sun. *The sun is the light. Juliet is the sun*. Therefore, *Juliet is the light*. Thus, it is seen that metaphor is not a simple equivalence, a mere synthesis, but a logical operation of equivalence.

The meaning of a metaphor does not limit itself to the simple synthesis of two terms in comparative relationship. The meaning of metaphor can be beyond what is said, in a submeaning. At the same time, it is not exclusive. The meaning of a metaphor can be multiple depending on the semantic mutations. A recent definition reads like this: "Metaphorical creation is based on an intuition that does not identify two entities, two elements or two objects, but a novel aspect of the experience with object A and the stereotypical image associated with signified B. This process goes through three metasemic operations or moments (Borcilă) each time: the diasemic moment, the endosemic moment and the episemic moment"¹⁶. For this reason, metaphors and their functioning must be somewhat supervised at a conscious level. The

16 Tomoiagă, Maria-Alexandrina, „Desemnarea metasemică a omului în limba română contemporană”, *Dacoromania*, serie nouă, 21, nr. 1, 2016, pp. 79–94, p. 87-88

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act of metaphORIZING and its result, the meaning, cannot be credited to function as a mechanism precisely because of the polysemy involved in the meaning of metaphor. Hence the imprecision of reading the metaphor. Metaphor rarely has an indicative level of interpretation. Most of the time, we can be wrong about the meaning of a metaphor and act accordingly. It is always when we formulate the meaning of a metaphor mechanically, without having the patience to judge its meaning. However, it seems that more than missing the meaning of a metaphor, in its use there is an even greater threat. For “while metaphors can be abused in many different ways, the most serious and interesting danger is that a given metaphor or its allegorical extension may be transformed into myth. Extreme caution must be used in formulating this danger, though, if the tension theory of metaphor is not to become self-refuting. Turbayne defines a myth as an extended metaphor whose apparent or face-value assertions are interpreted univocally. Myth, in other words, is a believed absurdity, believed because the absurdity goes unrecognized. Or, as Turbayne also suggests, myth results when the mask, lens filter, or construing subject is mistaken for or equated with the subject construed”¹⁷. Metaphor as a *believed absurdity*, not passed through the filter of interpretive, mechanically accepted reasoning, makes metaphor somehow perceived instinctively. We know there is an opinion that “Man possesses an instinct about which, despite his inexhaustible vitality, neither historians, nor psychologists, nor aestheticians have so far said a single word. I mean the instinct of transfiguration, the instinct to oppose images received from the outside arbitrary images created from within, the instinct to transmute the appearances offered by nature into something different, in short an instinct whose essence reveals itself in what I call theatricality”¹⁸. So, if we accept as describing an organic reality, the *instinct of transfiguration* must relate precisely to the use of metaphor as a conceptual tool. However, it should be pointed out that when arbitrary interior images are contrasted with images perceived from outside, one could identify a flagrant abuse of interpretation or forcefulness to find concordances. Why? Because the perceptual representation or image coming from the outside could be altered, to a greater or lesser degree, precisely by

17 Berggren, Douglas, “The Use and Abuse of Metaphor”, I, *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1962, pp. 237-258, p. 244

18 Evreinov, Nikolai., op. cit., p. 25

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perceptual dysfunctions. In this case, one would confront a subjective, arbitrary image with another subjective, altered image. One could easily notice the isolation in a self-sufficient interiority. Therefore, the very process of transfiguration defined in these terms is doubtful. For figuration itself, on these coordinates, can only be an abuse. It is a simple process of arbitrary conventionalization, outside of a referentiality. Nothing represents nothing. Anything represents anything. After all, it is a good example of the instrumentalisation of *believed absurdity*. And it has no excuse that “The man possessed by the magical mentality resorts to metaphors out of instinct of self-preservation, out of the interest of personal and collective security”¹⁹. Believing in an *instinct of transfiguration* defined in the above terms practically does not generate security, but precisely its opposite. It can be the main source of the manifestation of imbalances if we consider that “Metaphor is a fundamental part of our imagination and language”²⁰, exclusively. Metaphor can be much more than that.

In reality, some types of metaphors emerge precisely from the relationship of the external image, which describes the universe of the concrete, and of the inner image, which describes the universe of the abstract and not of the arbitrary. Lucian Blaga states: “The metaphor has two completely different sources, which do not allow any confusion. A source is the very constitution or spiritual structure of man, with that particular disagreement between concrete and abstraction. The second source is a way of being, which characterizes man in all the dimensional fullness of his spirit as a man: existence in mystery”²¹. Nonetheless, as long as it is not just a staged or dead metaphor, there is a possibility to find a type of metaphor that goes beyond the strictly linguistic framework of operation. This could solve the dilemma of whether metaphor is a strictly linguistic tool or a cognitive one. Some metaphors remain at the stage of linguistics, and others seem to go further. Even further from the cognitive level, to the ontological level. “At the other pole from the dead metaphors of the idiomatically repeated discourse,

19 Blaga, Lucian, *Trilogia culturii*, București, Humanitas, 2011, p. 352

20 Rasse, Carina, Alexander Onysko, Francesca M. M. Citron, “Conceptual metaphors in poetry interpretation: a psycholinguistic approach”, *Language and Cognition*, vol. 12, issue 2, 2019, pp. 310-342, p. 311

21 Blaga, Lucian, op. cit, p. 355

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beyond the metaphors, still *alive*, plasticizing-designational, the metaphors of the most radical type (*revelatory*, Blaga calls them) will not only never be domesticated as language, but also do not subsume, dutifully, to any process of adequacy to the expression of this or that *new* aspect of reality. On the contrary, they undermine signification (involving elements of language that are both semantically incompatible and equal *equationally*) and blow up designation precisely to fully configure meaning [...] they should give us insight into what Blaga calls the amphibism of our own consciousness and the possibility-probability that we humans are not from here (or, at least, not altogether)²². Among the various metaphors that find their way into language, imagination, symbol or even revelation, there are some that lead us in an unexpected way into the world of theatre.

In theatre, metaphor, in order not to self-destruct, should be directed towards the perception of a phenomenon, an action or the temporal dimension of displacement, and not towards replacing an object with another object, or the image of an object with the image of another object, or replacing the object with its image or the image of another object. In theatrical metaphor, the term replaced is replaced provisionally and not permanently. Here, in theatre, metaphor creates the perception of distance between similarities and pseudo-similarities and is not strictly based on identifying similarities between objects. In theatre, metaphor creates a relationship between the social and the individual in which the individual remains able to present himself as surprised in the course of achieving a goal. For “The theatre, which reveals the tragic dimension of the human existential condition, aims to transpose in stage language the metamorphoses of the actual individual who, in essence, is in a continuous search for a sense of life”²³. In theatre, we expect something revealing, meaningful, and clarifying from every metaphor. In theatre, any metaphor gives us the feeling that we are realizing a truth that we have always known, but ignored. Metaphor urges, in theatre, to behave with the designated object differently than it is according to the label placed on it. This behaviour, contextualization, puts strain on the appearance of the object. If the appearance

22 Vîlcu, Cornel Dumitru, „Borcilă”, *Dacoromania*, serie nouă, 27, nr. 2, 2022, pp. 119-134, p. 132

23 Cozma, Diana, “A Theatre of Cruelty Nowadays”, *Hermeneia*, nr. 31, 2023, pp. 73-83, p. 82

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is consistent with the object, the revealing act occurs. If the appearance is not consistent with the object, evidence of what the appearance hides occurs. In theatre, metaphor implies a tension between action and object of action. In theatre, metaphor has not only a linguistic meaning or a physiognomic-symbolic meaning or a pragmatic one. In theatre, metaphor is a comparative-revealing act. In theatre, metaphor is a test. The object's ability to perform its own attributes is tested. How? Being subject to attributes that are not its own. Metaphor in theatre is a device by which a process of analysis on the part of the spectator is necessarily determined.

In conclusion, beyond the operational aspects of its instrumentalization, the relevance of metaphor for theatre lies in the very idea that theatre itself is a metaphor for life: "It is not astonishing that a corresponding reverse conclusion—prohibited by the basic laws of logic, but productive in the realm of rhetoric—emerged: namely, that pragmatic (*real*) life is, in the final analysis, similar or even identical to a theatrical performance"²⁴. The strictly rhetorical aspect of this metaphor caused a lot of uproar among theatre people and attempts were made to overcome this understanding of the reality of theatre. "As a result, we can state that *As You Like It* offers two ways to understand the *theatrum mundi* metaphor: as a metaphysical comment on the ephemerality of the world and as a secularized description of the theatricality of social life, not least the intrigues at court."²⁵ The attempt to replace the concept of *theatrum mundi*, as obsolete, with that of *theatricality*, which, in turn, turns out to be a metaphor, and is as it is claimed a non-metaphorical description of reality, from which derives the instinct of transfiguration, that is, the need of the human individual to change only on the basis of his own boredom, has proved unproductive. But, of course, the very metaphor of *theatre is like life* seems today a distortion of the meaning: *the theatre work of art must be alive*. This seems to be the understanding of the metaphor of *theatrum mundi*.

24 Penskaya, Elena, and Joachim Küpper, "Introduction", *Theater as Metaphor*, Berlin/Boston, Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2019, pp. 1-10, p. 1

25 Mosch, Jan, "Dressed for life's short comedy: Desengaño and connivere libenter as Ethical Paradigms in William Shakespeare's Plays", *Theater as Metaphor*, Berlin/Boston, Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2019, pp. 77-100, p. 79

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