



Utrecht University

**The Beyondness of Theatre: The Twenty-First-Century
Performances and Metamodernism**

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Can the theatre exist without costumes and sets? Yes, it can.

Can it exist without music to accompany the plot? Yes.

Can it exist without lighting effects? Of course.

And without a text? Yes; the history of the theatre confirms this.

But can the theatre exist without actors? I know of no example of this.

Can the theatre exist without an audience? At least one spectator is needed to make it a performance.

Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards A Poor Theatre* (1968)

Abstract

This thesis is contributing to the discourse on metamodernism by moving from the concept of *between* and reflecting on another the meta-dimension which is the notion of *beyond*. The discourse on metamodernism was started by Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker in 2010 where they focus on the *oscillation between* modernism and postmodernism, whereas this thesis utilises the concept of *beyond* to investigate in which aspects theatre have *gone beyond*, thus classifying itself as metamodern. The Greek origin of the prefix of ‘meta’ has several dimensions because it translates as *between*, *beyond* and *with*, therefore the thesis would like to explore the dimension of *beyond* which proves to be highly relevant in examining contemporary theatre. The beyondness of theatre represents a structural change in the theatre form that is connected to the ontological physicality and materiality of theatre. Therefore, performances that have *gone beyond* their boundaries in terms of materiality and physicality, and have changed their structure with regards to the time, space and agency of theatre will be considered metamodern. The thesis also acknowledges the paradoxical connotations the concept of *beyond* carries because this notion also implies an awareness of passing a border or leaving something behind. Thus, paradoxically, bypassing the boundaries can actually enhance the awareness of the boundary itself. After examining the literature on performance studies, I reflect on four aspects in which theatre has *gone beyond* and claim that the prominent metamodern traits are beyondness and hybridity while proposing some other potential research concepts. The thesis provides quite a broad overview of the beyondness of theatre by reflecting on the twentieth-century theatre because it is imperative to recognize the influence of the historical avant-garde upon contemporary theatre which eventually prompts this discussion on metamodern theatre.

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Introduction

The term ‘metamodernism’ was used for the first time in 2010 by the Dutch scholars Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker. Metamodernism is not a term that could be defined as a philosophical or art movement spanning for a specific time influenced by cultural trends and changes of the century. Instead, metamodernism should be perceived as a new concept that attempts to reflect and encompass the novelties and new characteristics in contemporary art. Therefore, the thesis contributes to the discourse on metamodernism by focusing on its meta-dimension of *beyond* rather than its current definition that concentrates on its meta-aspect of *between*. In order to do so, this thesis reflects on current debates and contemporary characteristics that have been becoming increasingly common in the domain of theatre.

In their first article “Notes on Metamodernism” (2010), Vermeulen and van den Akker emphasized on their reluctance in creating another ‘modernism’ term that would attempt to substitute postmodernism as so many have tried since the early 2000s. The Greek origin of the prefix of ‘meta’ has three meanings as stated, “according to the Greek-English Lexicon the prefix ‘meta’ refers to such notions as ‘with’, ‘between’, and ‘beyond’. We will use these connotations of “meta” in a similar, yet not indiscriminate fashion” (Vermeulen and van den Akker 2). However, their definition of metamodernism is an *oscillation between* modernism and postmodernism which immediately suggests that they focus more on the notion of *between* rather than *beyond*. According to Vermeulen and van den Akker, ontologically metamodernism “oscillates between the modern and the postmodern. It oscillates between a modern enthusiasm and a postmodern irony, between hope and melancholy, between naiveté and knowingness, empathy and apathy, unity and plurality,

totality and fragmentation, purity and ambiguity. Indeed, by oscillating to and fro or back and forth, the metamodern negotiates between the modern and the postmodern" (Vermeulen and van den Akker 5). To an extent, their metamodernism definition could be suitable for the times we are living in, considering that modern and postmodern thinking has continued to impact the twenty-first century. However, this definition of metamodernism is frequently and predominantly referred to in literary studies, whereas the research on metamodern theatre is significantly limited. Moreover, metamodernism is hardly related to theatre, even though there are enough reasons for one to examine in what aspects some contemporary performances can be perceived as metamodern, especially if one focuses on the concept of *beyondness*.

Thus, by contributing to the discourse on metamodern performances, the thesis concentrates on the notion of *beyond* rather than *between* to indicate the transformations in the theatre form. Performances that have *gone beyond* the boundaries of theatre should be considered metamodern theatre. However, paradoxically, when one refers to the beyondness of theatre, it immediately highlights the boundaries before this 'beyondness'. This paradox will be evident in the four aspects of the second chapter where the thesis explicates which type of contemporary performances have *gone beyond*, thus bringing the awareness of crossing this boundary. Moreover, the thesis will also emphasize that the beyondness of theatre is a process, therefore the first chapter will trace back its beyondness to the late nineteenth century until present days. The beyondness should be perceived as a process because it does not mean to neglect other forms of performances before the metamodern theatre because, without them, there would be no beyondness. Having stated that, the concept of *beyond* is used as a conceptual tool to demonstrate the transformations and traits of the metamodern performances in the twenty-first century. Sometimes the thesis refers to an

ontological change of theatre which should be understood as a change in the materiality and physicality in contemporary performance as their structure has changed in terms of time, space and agency. However, the emphasis of the thesis will be on the transformations in the structure of the theatre by reflecting on *going beyond* the physicality and materiality in some contemporary performances. By following and using the concept of *beyond*, which is also related to the notion of ‘theatre beyond theatre’, the thesis will examine the transformations in the theatre form which would classify some contemporary performances as being metamodern. It will also examine and redefine metamodern theatre and its characteristics.

By changing the emphasis of the concept of *between* to the notion of *beyond*, the thesis contributes to the discourse on metamodernism and provides a new perspective about what type of contemporary performances could be considered as being metamodern. It will provide a relevant definition of metamodern theatre that corresponds to the transformations in contemporary performances. By redefining metamodern performances, the thesis does not discredit or disregard any definitions about metamodern theatre so far, but rather contribute and expand to a discussion that has been hardly explored.

0.1. Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The methodology of the thesis constitutes doing a literature review with regards to the discourses on contemporary theatre and then deriving the most relevant theories and concepts to develop an argument. Moreover, it uses a theoretical framework for the sake of acquiring a critical understanding and analysis of contemporary performances. The notion of *beyond* is used as a conceptual tool to indicate the transformations in contemporary theatre. I also studied the discourses of contemporary performances in order to relate them to the discourse

on metamodern theatre. By studying this literature, I aimed to provide a different perspective to look at the metamodern theatre by stating that contemporary performances have *gone beyond* its boundaries due to the structural transformations that have occurred in the medium.

The first chapter will be dedicated to the historical and contextual background of the beyondness of theatre at the beginning of the twentieth century. It will reflect on the deviations of the theatre form which allowed the medium to slowly expand and experiment with its aesthetics by challenging the notion of theatre. Furthermore, when modern and postmodern performances are analysed, they will always be discussed from the perspective of the theatre form rather than their political or social implications that some performances carried throughout the twentieth century. With regards to literature, the chapter will depend on readings about the history of twentieth-century theatre and the book *Mapping Intermediality in Performance*, and more specifically the chapter by Klemens Gruber on “Early Intermediality: Archeological Glimpses”.

The second chapter will explore the characteristics and transformations of ‘theatre beyond theatre’ in the twenty-first century. The chapter will primarily consult the books *Performance in the Twenty-First Century: Theatres of Engagement* (2016) by Andy Lavender and *Digital Performance* (2007) by Steve Dixon as they heavily reflect on the distinguishing features of contemporary performances. Moreover, the chapter reflects on four aspects of the beyondness of theatre such as ‘theatre beyond performers’, ‘theatre beyond communal experience’, ‘theatre beyond the here and now’ and ‘theatre beyond scenic design’. Thereby, it elaborates on the continuous evolution and structural change of theatre that significantly challenged its materiality and physicality. By reflecting on virtual theatre and digital performances, the chapter pays attention to the impact of digital culture in the twenty-first-century theatre as technology has tremendously altered the contemporary form.

References will be made to the literature on metamodernism by Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker but not as extensively as in the next chapter. The notion of beyondness will be used as a conceptual tool to measure and demonstrate the structural changes in metamodern theatre.

The third chapter concentrates comprehensively on the definition about metamodern theatre and its traits. It strongly relies upon Andy Lavender's book, *Performance in the Twenty-First Century: Theatres of Engagement, Digital Performance* (2007) by Steve Dixon, *The Twenty-First Century Performance Reader* (2020) edited by Teresa Brayshaw, Anna Fenemore, Noel Witts and literature on metamodernism. Moreover, this chapter unfolds the arguments about the beyondness of theatre and metamodern performances while significantly connecting it to the second chapter. The concepts of beyondness and hybridity will be indicated as metamodern traits and other notions will be proposed for potential further research on this topic. It will also further elaborate on Lavender's argument about the connection between the concepts of *beyond* and *becoming*. The chapter follows his line of reasoning by reflecting on the concept of *becoming* by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to consolidate the connection of *beyond* with *hybridity*.

The fourth chapter concludes and redefines the idea of metamodern performances by outlining the main points established throughout the thesis.

Chapter 1: The Beyondness of Theatre in The Twentieth Century and Metamodernism

This chapter is quite brief as it focuses on the historical background of the beginnings of beyondness of theatre since the end of the nineteenth century, which subsequently leads to the current discussion about metamodern theatre. It will provide a quite broad overview of some changes and developments in theatre. The historical avant-garde has substantially influenced the contemporary theatre form, therefore it is imperative to reflect on these transformations as they are very much present today in contemporary theatre. For instance, the chapter touches upon the concept of ‘early intermediality’ where Klemens Gruber elaborates on the historical context of the twentieth-century theatre and the development of this concept in the historical avant-garde. Further in the thesis, the concept of intermediality will be proposed for a potential research to determine whether this concept can be considered a metamodern trait.

Moreover, the chapter also reflects on the structural changes that have affected the theatre form. The aspects that will be connected to the discourse on metamodernism with regards to the beyondness of theatre in the twentieth century are ‘theatre beyond melodrama’, ‘theatre beyond naturalism’ and ‘theatre beyond language and audience passivity’. Each of these aspects represents a structural change in the theatre form in the sense that they *go beyond* the traditional understanding of theatre and its conventions. Furthermore, the chapter is necessary because some contemporary performances could be considered metamodern solely due to the contribution of the historical avant-garde such as the elimination of text or the development of the audience role in theatre. For instance, the second chapter focuses on the twenty-first-century theatre and its aspect of individual and personal experience of the

audience, but this could have never happened if the communal experience during the historical avant-garde was not developed to the point of turning spectators into performers. There should be a high degree of communal experience (e.g. Jerzy Grotowski's theatre), meaning closeness and intimacy between spectators and actors for contemporary theatre to want its spectators to have a more intimate and personal experience. It follows a similar logic before the emergence of the modernisms because, before the historical avant-garde, theatre was immensely dependent on text. Therefore, the elimination of texts in performances was a response to the long tradition of theatre being dependent on texts. Hence, all the transformations of the historical avant-garde are still very much present in the contemporary theatre, but their execution and form has transformed and even *gone beyond* them. The notion of *beyond* is utilised as a conceptual tool that indicates the structural transformations and deviations in the theatre form.

Individuals like Konstantin Stanislavski, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Antonin Artaud, Bertolt Brecht, Peter Brook, Jerzy Grotowski, Samuel Beckett, Eugenio Barba and Augusto Boal are some of the eminent figures who changed the twentieth-century theatre. However, not all of them are mentioned in the following sections, but the ones who are, their work is examined from the perspective that contributes to the discussion about the beyondness of theatre and metamodernism.

1.1 Theatre Beyond Melodrama

To begin with, before the emergence of Naturalism or Realism, melodrama was one of the most popular forms of entertainment during the nineteenth century. In melodrama, music is a constant feature as it is used to increase the emotions of a character. Moreover, exaggerated

acting style, stock characters - characters based on stereotypes, almost never five acts, always a battle between good and evil, always a happy ending, breaking the fourth wall and multiple special effects such as explosions, earthquakes, fires or chases were characteristics of this form of theatre. Similar to other theatrical movements, melodrama reformed theatre as stated by Maureen Turim, “this redefinition of theatre apart from the classical tradition begins around 1770 and comes into full force by the turn of the nineteenth century. As we shall explore later, this shift is marked by three types of changes: transformations of form, reference, and audience” (307). This statement confirms that the theatre form has continuously evolved and altered, even before the emergence of modernisms. However, around the 1880s, Modernism as a movement began developing and breaking away from the traditional art forms. Thus, it was around that time the Modernist theatre started to make attempts to reform the stage by using naturalistic principles.

Naturalism was a representation of performances *going beyond* the familiar as they modernised and expanded the possibilities of what theatre can do, thus instigating other experimental reformations to follow. Émile Zola, a French novelist, was the one who proposed, formulated and contributed to developing the theatrical Naturalism. This form of theatre is different from melodrama in the sense that it drops the exaggerated stylised movements and stereotypical characters replacing it with a more realistic acting style that adheres well to the storyline and has more realistic and less lavish sets. Furthermore, Naturalism does not represent gods, otherworldly creatures or mythic periods because such elements are in contrast to the form of Naturalism. Naturalist plays still very much occupy the Western stage but as Christopher Innes claims, other forms have emerged that have challenged the total domination of Naturalist theatre.

However, limiting Naturalism to the era before 1920 gives an inaccurate picture. Naturalism is not simply a historical phenomenon. Although today there are competing forms of theatre (as indeed there were during the period from 1873 to 1906 when melodrama continued to hold the stage, and the Symbolist movement was also at its height with poetic mood plays by Maeterlinck, Hofmannsthal and W.B. Yeats), on a more general level the influence of Naturalism still pervades Western theatre (Innes 23).

Since Naturalist performances are still considered to pervade the Western stage, this demonstrates the significant influence of the modernisms in contemporary theatre. Therefore, considering the substantial influence of Naturalism in theatre, it is fair to claim that it paved the path for many avant-garde practitioners to further influence and change the form of theatre.

Two movements in particular influenced twentieth-century theatre and continue to inspire contemporary performance: symbolism and naturalism. These theatrical genres represented a starting point for the modernist avant-garde but also became a focus for the ire of the more antagonistic practitioners of the 1920s and 30s; one could accurately claim them as the first tentative steps of modernist experimentation and yet just as easily regard them as the final stand of nineteenth-century artistic methods of melodrama, the well-made play and a romantic sensibility (Warden 27).

Modernist theatre expanded the boundaries of theatre and allowed the medium to go *beyond* the melodrama, thus instigating and impacting multiple practitioners to experiment with the form in the following years, and subsequently influencing this century. Therefore, one could state that the Naturalist plays are the beginning of the 'theatre beyond theatre'

because they represented a new modernist form and perspective that opened the doors for numerous experimentations within the theatre form which also led to the current discussion on metamodern theatre.

1.2. Theatre Beyond Naturalism

Interestingly enough, Naturalism and Realism are not synonyms but very often are used interchangeably. Although it might be difficult to discern the differences between the terms, “Realism can be applied to any performance that attempts to present an image or reflection of the ‘real’, the world outside the theatre walls. Realism, therefore, could describe many forms. Brecht’s ideas, for example, are often referred to as ‘epic realism’. His work was by no means naturalistic in approach but one cannot but read Brecht’s playscripts as realist” (Warden 32). The statement indicates that Realist theatre is another form of theatre that demonstrates expansion within the medium. Additionally, Bertolt Brecht’s epic realist theatre mainly differs from Naturalism in terms of the direct address to the audience and turning it into critical thinkers rather than passive observers. This example of a critically alert audience is another component that indicates the slow process of theatre *going beyond* Naturalism. Moreover, “many of the key movers in Naturalism – Ibsen, Strindberg, Hauptmann and (in a different way) Chekhov – all seem to have found the restrictions of Naturalism too great and, as a consequence, allowed their ideas to move into other fields of drama” (Pitches 10). Despite its major influence on theatre, Naturalism could not represent the potential theatre holds.

Other means to *go beyond* Naturalism was the biomechanics training or the mechanics of theatre by Vsevolod Meyerhold as the emphasis was on the physicality of the performer

rather than the language. Due to his movement-centred, non-realistic, stylized and quite experimental acting training, Meyerhold's theatre was considered to be in opposition with the Stanislavski system. As declared, "Meyerhold was no lover of Naturalism as a style. Indeed he spent almost all of his career, after his time at the Moscow Art Theatre, promoting an anti-illusionary style of theatre" (Pitches 47). Moreover, Meyerhold's theatre differs from Naturalism in the motions of the actors as they are used to heighten the expression of their emotional representation. Similarly to Brecht's approach, Meyerhold's theatre aimed to keep its audience alert as stated that "rather than the slow build-up of tension – the incrementally structured rhythms of Naturalism – *commedia*, and by extension Meyerhold's theatre, could undergo sharp changes in atmosphere and collisions of ideas and of styles, all of which were designed to keep the audience alert and responsive" (Pitches 19). This aspect of keeping their audience alert can be found in numerous contemporary works including metamodern theatre. For instance, as mentioned, in the second chapter the thesis focuses on the beyondness of the communal experience where spectators are required to wear headphones for performances, thus making them significantly alert, critical and responsive to everything that surrounds them. This flexibility in the audience behaviour during a performance was developed in the twentieth century, where the spectators went through various experiences that made them accustomed to the diversity of the theatrical medium and eventually prepared them for the twenty-first-century innovations.

Furthermore, Antonin Artaud, another twentieth-century revolutionary, challenged the form of theatre by exposing its audience to *The Theatre of Cruelty*. He was also opposed to the Naturalist plays and searched for a new theatre that would break away from the traditional Western theatre form by assaulting the senses of its audience. As referred about Artaud, "he

vies for the move away from verisimilitude and stage realism and naturalism in performance” (Di Ponio 158). Moreover, *The Theatre of Cruelty* was in:

search for means, other than naturalistic-linguistic means, of communicating experience and insights’; its ‘attitude to the classics—not as peerless masterworks, but simply as material that could be reworked and rethought in very much the same way Shakespeare reworked and rethought Kyd, Holinshed, Boccaccio, and Marlowe. And what was characteristically Artaudian was the shared distaste and impatience the group’s directors felt towards prevailing theatre-trends (Marowitz 172).

Artaud’s theatre also challenged and reformed the traditional theatre experience by shocking its audience. Moreover, the historical avant-garde aimed to particularly redefine the role of the audience in theatre. The examples of Meyerhold and Artaud are enough to suffice the claim that Naturalism as a form was quite restrictive. There was a need for theatre to expand *beyond* its form as it stifled the development of theatrical performances alongside its many practitioners.

1.3. Theatre Beyond Text and Audience Passivity

More prominent metamorphoses occurred in the form of theatre with regards to text and audience interaction. Language has been one of the most essential components in theatre since the emergence of the ancient Greek drama even though the emphasis was more on the spoken word rather than its written language. However, going back to Antonin Artaud, he also aimed at overcoming the dominance of the written text in theatre. His theatre intended to shock people through image, sound, gesture and lighting. Artaud perceived the strong

attention on language in theatre as a threat, and in his manifesto, he expresses this frustration by stating

That is to say: instead of continuing to rely upon texts considered definitive and sacred, it is essential to put an end to the subjugation of the theater to the text, and to recover the notion of a kind of unique language half-way between gesture and thought (Artaud 89).

Abandoning the text in theatre was radical progress towards altering the form of theatre in the twentieth century and probably equals the abandoning of performers on stage in the twenty-first-century performances. Additionally, a figure that disregarded language coherency and logic was Samuel Beckett and his *Theatre of the Absurd* which reflected on the absurdity happening in the society during those times. Language distortion and fragmentation were some of the characteristics of the postmodern theatre that completely changed the perception of theatre as once was known. These features are still very much present in contemporary performances.

Another visionary that challenged the Western stage was Jerzy Grotowski with his *Poor Theatre*. Interestingly, his theatre could be in contrast to many contemporary performances that incorporate various media because Grotowski believed that the presence of the actor and the audience is enough alone to create theatre, thus anything added to this could be considered unnecessary. In addition to this, in the book *The Empty Space* (1968), Peter Brook reflects upon the same concept and argues that an actor only needs space and an audience to create theatre. However, Grotowski transformed the actor-audience relationship by not only breaking the fourth wall but also by encouraging actors and audience members to

engage with one another. Grotowski disregarded any separations between performers and audience, hence proposing a new form of theatre which *went beyond* the stage-auditorium conventions. As he argues

It is therefore necessary to abolish the distance between actor and audience by eliminating the stage, removing all frontiers. Let the most drastic scenes happen face to face with the spectator so that he is within arm's reach of the actor, can feel his breathing and smell the perspiration (Grotowski 41).

Such performances where the communal experience is at its highest could be one of the reasons why contemporary practitioners focus on the personal and intimate experience of the audiences. The historical avant-garde emphasized so heavily on the communal experience and the relationship between the actors and spectators that the shift in contemporary performances is understandable. Metamodern performances *go beyond* the communal experience by providing a more intimate one. Moreover, Grotowski not only redefined the actors-audience relationship but also analysed the only permanent component, this applies even to contemporary performances, that would never change despite the potential of theatre to *go beyond* itself - the presence of the audience. He states, “can the theatre exist without an audience? At least one spectator is needed to make it a performance. So we are left with the actor and the spectator. We can thus define the theatre as ‘what takes place between spectator and actor’. All the other things are supplementary” (Grotowski 32). This line of reasoning would be in contrast to many contemporary performances that employ various media or acquire hybrid qualities. Grotowski refers to them as ‘rich theatre’ as he claims that “the Rich Theatre depends on artistic kleptomania, drawing from other disciplines, constructing

hybrid-spectacles, conglomerates without backbone or integrity, yet presented as an organic artwork” (Grotowski 19). Interestingly, the concept of hybridity is argued as a metamodern trait because it is one of the most common characteristics in contemporary theatre, and it has allowed theatre to *go beyond* itself.

Moreover, one of the concepts that will be proposed for further research about the topic of metamodern theatre is intermediality, because it has attracted a lot of attention as early as the beginning of the twentieth century. One of the reasons why it would be proposed is because of its prominent presence in many contemporary works, similarly to hybridity. As declared that “today, intermediality has become the dominant cultural reality” (Gruber 247). However, Klemens Gruber reflects on the early traits of the concept of intermediality and defines it as inter-relationships between media. He perceives intermediality as a process starting from the early twentieth century to going through the developments of the different time periods until the immense influence of digital culture in contemporary theatre. As Gruber argues that

What seemed like an arbitrary, radical break with all artistic conventions was rather an encounter with the new conditions of the production of signs, with the industrialisation of the production and distribution of signs. Thus, intermediality in performance in digital culture might be seen as an extension – into an encounter with the digitisation of signs – of a process begun in the early twentieth century (247).

Reflecting upon the history of theatre is monumental because it represents how particular periods and their respective movements had changed the theatre form, thus influencing contemporary performances. There would be no metamodern theatre if there were

no modern or postmodern performances. There would be no beyondness if there were no other theatre forms *before* the beyondness.

Chapter 2: The Beyondness of Theatre in the Twenty-First Century

This chapter examines the notion of 'theatre beyond theatre' and the transformations in the twenty-first-century performances. It also investigates the strong influence of digital culture upon contemporary performances and its impact that has pushed theatre to *go beyond* itself. Therefore, the beyondness of theatre represents a structural change in how time, space and agency are structured by *going beyond* the physicality and materiality of performance. For instance, virtual performances *go beyond* their physical dimension and move to a virtual one. Thus, the physical 'here and now' transforms into a virtual 'here and now'.

The chapter provides four angles of the beyondness of theatre, namely 'theatre beyond theatre', 'theatre beyond communal experience', 'theatre beyond the here and now' and 'theatre beyond stage design'. More than a hundred years ago, theatre without actors would have been quite oxymoronic because the actors have always been considered as the most crucial element in performance which practically meant - no actors, no theatre. However, nowadays, performers are not an imperative component to make theatre. Thus, in a sense, theatre *goes beyond* the materiality and physicality of the performer's body and grants agency to a non-living matter. Moreover, theatre used to be a place where one can connect with other people and have a communal experience but nowadays, once again, theatre has *gone beyond* this point. Theatre-going has become quite an intimate and personal experience which, sometimes, can be even compared to the experience of watching a film. This experience also indicates that spectators are not dependent on the physical dimension of theatre, considering the numerous virtual and digital performances that provide quite a personal experience. The arts have reached a unique liberation where there are no particular rules to create art. The blurring of boundaries between different fields, the absence of performers and the

employment of technology completely taking over some performances are proof of this liberation.

With respect to literature, the chapter will extensively consult *Performance in the Twenty-First Century: Theatres of Engagement* (2016) by Andy Lavender and *Digital Performance* (2007) by Steve Dixon. In addition to this, the chapter also refers to other sources that contribute to the discussion about the beyondness of contemporary theatre by providing examples of specific works.

2.1. Theatre Beyond Performers

A current trend can be distinguished among contemporary performances, generating and instigating a fair amount of discourses in the field of theatre, namely the absence of the performers. For hundreds of years, the performer has been the one constant constituent to withhold any changes that occurred in theatre. However, nowadays, multiple performances no longer need or even perceive the absence of performers as a misconception or a threat to theatre. Such performances are normally referred to as ‘theatre without actors’, where the presence and agency of the actors are substituted with either inanimate matter or technology such as robots or human-like machines. In his PhD thesis, Pedro Manuel reflects on his initial idea about perceiving actors as a fundamental element in theatre but gradually liberates from this idea due to the technological advancements and transformations in theatre. “Furthermore, this view allowed the possibility to question the presence and agency of actors as being historically contingent practices, rather than as a given about theatre and as fundamental to its definition” (Manuel 16). Thus, Manuel structurally redefines the notion of agency in theatre by granting agency to inanimate matter. To consolidate this statement, he states that “through

new modes of acting and spectating, practices of theatre without actors rehearse distributions of artistic agency beyond the human actor, and acknowledge the presence of non-human and non-living matter as performative” (Manuel 79). This statement represents a change in the structure of agency because it claims that theatre goes 'beyond the human actor', thus granting agency to the non-living matter.

Interestingly, going back to the influence of the historical avant-garde, there was a twentieth-century performance that challenged theatre to *go beyond* itself by having no actors whatsoever, and that was *Breath* (1969) by Samuel Beckett. It is a one-minute play that showcases a big pile of rubbish instead of performers with voices being played and light cast onto it until the end of the performance. Manuel reflects on Beckett’s progressive and influential thinking about theatre claiming that “a significant author whose works challenge the acting and presence of performers is Samuel Beckett, credited to have claimed that ‘The best possible play is one in which there are no actors, only the text! I’m trying to find a way to write one’” (119). Moreover, “quite a few of Beckett’s plays entail issues of presence and absence of actors, where a privileging of text is followed by a reduction of the actor’s bodily presence, tending towards its disappearance, as for example in *Not I* (1972), and, notably, in *Breath* (1969)” (Manuel 119). Therefore, the argument here is not whether there were ever performances without actors before the twenty-first century as there easily could be proven otherwise. It aims to highlight the process of the beyondness of theatre and the influence of the twentieth-century theatre, enabling current discussions about theatre without performers and metamodern theatre.

If Peter Brook in his book *The Empty Space* (1968) reflected on the idea that to make theatre one only needs space and a performer, Heiner Goebbels, a German theatre director, teacher and composer, wrote a book *The Aesthetics of Absence* (2015) in which he reflects on

the absence of the performer. Goebbels provides an example of his piece *Stifters Dinge* (2007) which was titled as a performative installation without performers, performance without performers, musical theatre, a play with no actor or a no-man show. The enumeration of the titles demonstrates the difficulty in categorizing such performances, therefore a term such as metamodernism can be valuable as it represents the characteristics of the beyondness of theatre in the aspect of the absence of performers. Moreover, Goebbels elaborates that

Hence *Stifters Dinge* became a ‘no-man show’, in which curtains, lights, music and space – all the elements that usually prepare, support, illustrate and serve a theatrical performance and its performers, become (in a kind of justice long deferred) the protagonists, together with five pianos, metal plates, stones, water, fog, rain and ice (5) . . . In *Stifters Dinge* the performers are replaced by non-anthropomorphic machines and objects – elements such as curtains, water, fog, rain and ice – and elements of the mise-en-scène such as the curtains, the lighting and acousmatic voices (Goebbels 6).

The replacement of performers with inanimate matter and considering it ‘the protagonist’ is a moment in theatre where one can elaborate on how far and revolutionary the form of theatre has come to eliminate its human actors. Moreover, it also suggests that theatre *goes beyond* the materiality and physicality of the body of the human actor. When one refers to theatre, the concept of liveness has always been present in these discourses. For instance, Matthew Causey states that “the ontology of the performance (liveness), which exists before and after mediatization, has been altered within the space of technology” (6). It appears Causey refers to theatre as ontologically consisting of liveness. In contrast to this, Jordan Tannahill contributes to the discourse on this notion and states that “liveness can exist just as

readily in Shakespearean comedy or Chekhovian naturalism as it can in a textless, postdramatic performance piece. Ultimately, liveness is an embodied awareness of time, space, audience, and the potentiality of any given moment” (38). Therefore, liveness can be present in any performances whether they would be naturalist plays, postdramatic works or even metamodern performances, meaning theatre beyond human actors.

Nonetheless, the theatre beyond performers and the beyondness of theatre, in general, draws some paradoxical connotations. When one mentions beyondness, it also refers to something leaving behind, thus drawing the attention of what it was before the process of beyondness. Thus, when there are no actors in performances, this might highlight the presence of their absence. According to Ester Fuoco, rephrasing Josette Féral, everything is in the hands of the beholder, meaning everything depends on the spectator and whether they would acknowledge the absence of the actors.

If, as eloquently stated by Josette Féral, the effect of presence is the impression perceived by a spectator that the bodies and objects presented to his or her gaze (or hearing) are in the same space and time he or she inhabits, though the spectator knows that he or she is in reality alone, we can expand and transfer this process from the physical dimension of the scene to the reception of the figurations of presence in the absence of a body. In any case, this logic inevitably implies a radical shift of the observation point and aims to redefine the analytical strategies (Fuoco 112).

This statement highlights the idea of recognizing the absence of the presence of the performer's body on stage by *going beyond* the physical dimension of the scene and thinking about the presence of the performer without them being physically there. As Fuoco states, this transforms the observation point of the audience because instead of concentrating on

non-human matter, performances accentuate the absence of the performer which impels the audience to look for physical bodies on stage. As a result, because of the audience's adaptability to theatre's structure with regards to the physicality and agency, the focus can become the absence of bodies.

Digital culture has also influenced performerless theatre in numerous ways due to significant employment of technology in some contemporary performances. A very literal representation of a performance that demonstrates how technology has occupied the theatre stage is *Hello Hi There* (2012) by Annie Dorsen that stages two chatbots as live performers. The performance is about the infamous television debate between the philosopher Michel Foucault and linguist/activist Noam Chomsky. Dorsen claims herself that she indeed aimed to redefine theatre by creating performance without actors. As she states:

I began thinking about a theatre without human actors, in which that timeworn mirror becomes a glossy screen onto which human audiences project themselves, mediated by data, algorithms and interfaces. We would no longer see ourselves onstage, in other words; we would see an expression of computer-generated, human-ish processes. Our engagement with those processes could become an opportunity to re-think the categories that define theatre: the presence of the body, the organization and operation of time, the use of language as a carrier for thought (1).

Pedro Manuel also elaborates on the importance of such performances claiming that “Dorsen’s view is important because it proposes to acknowledge non-human and unrehearsed beings as performers. Furthermore, in specifying that her performance is a theatrical performance and must be seen as theatre, Dorsen invites a questioning of assumptions regarding the physical presence of actors and the relation of co-presence with the audience

beyond the disciplinary “constraints” of theatre” (48). These statements undoubtedly solidified the argument that theatre has *gone beyond* performers. Moreover, the instigation of such discourses is another sign of the change in the structure of theatre in how the agency is granted to non-human matter.

The last example of ‘theatre beyond performers’ is the *Super-Sargasso Sea* (2013) by Gabriel Lester (fig. 1, 2, 3). This performance is claimed to be “a fragmented and atmospheric exploration of the powerful narrative qualities of light and sound. On stage, a precise and methodical installation of objects and colored lights will invite the audience to a highly evocative theater play that involves no actors. Lester’s 20-minute performance will provide a dreamscape for the subconscious with sophisticated variations of tensions, suspense, and drama.” (“Gabriel Lester”). Interestingly enough, the lights and music are the narrative of the performance, they speak the language without saying anything. At the beginning of the performance, a door is being opened as if someone enters the space but, of course, no one appears as this is a no-man show. What plays out well in this performance is the aesthetically pleasing visuals which serve as a narrative of the performance, thus lowering the urge of the audience to look for the performer's physical bodies.

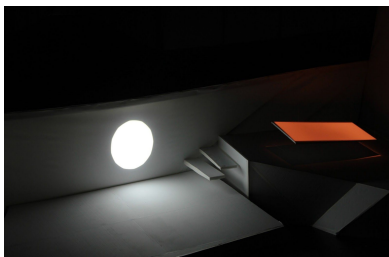


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

There are numerous more examples of 'theatre beyond performers' however, this section aimed to exemplify the beyondness and the diversity of the different performances. Nonetheless, the works that have been mentioned provide a new revolutionary perspective to perceive theatre because the change in the structure of theatre suggests a transformation that needs to be terminologically acknowledged. In other words, such performances should be considered a metamodern theatre.

2.2. Theatre Beyond Communal Experience

Theatre used to be a place where people gather to watch strangers on stage, pretending to be someone else. However, theatre can no longer be limited to this description. Nowadays, performances are perceived more as an event as Lavender states "however, if anything performance has more routinely, since 9/11, presented itself as event – of course not in the history-making sense, but in the extended ontological mode of eventness, something that in and of itself marks a moment and shapes an engagement" (83). This eventness can be felt in many mobile and site-specific performances where sometimes there are no actors, and technology becomes the navigator of the performance.

Technology is the most influential factor for the transformations in the contemporary theatre form. One can trace the development of the audience etiquette throughout the centuries starting from passivity into literally turning them into performers. The twentieth-century theatre intended for people to connect and perceive theatre as a safe place where everyone could be themselves, be vulnerable and most importantly create a connection among each other. In contrast, twenty-first-century performances provide quite an intimate and personal experience. The incorporation of new technologies in performances has led to

creating more individual-like experiences for the audience, thus making them feel as if they are the only ones attending. One of the most well-known companies that provides quite an immersive, intimate and personal audience experience is the theatre company Rimini Protokoll.

The performance *Remote X* (2013) by Rimini Protokoll is an experimental theatre project that unquestionably delivers an intimate experience while simultaneously feeling as if one is still part of a group. The premiere of the performance was in Berlin accordingly, it was named *Remote Berlin* and followed by other *Remote X* locations in different countries. The performance is both mobile and immersive, and heavily dependent on technology because its most essential component is headphones. These headphones are distributed to the audience before the start of the performance as they will guide them through using a synthetic voice across the city. The audience members make their individual decisions independently from the rest while at the same time remaining a group due to the developed algorithm that navigates them. The participation in the performance can be described as: “experiences like this throughout *Remote Berlin* seemed to propose that urban life is a kind of prerecorded performance in which human players perform a loop of digital instructions while harboring illusions of individuality” (Martin 14). This statement also hints towards the interconnectedness between the different aspects of ‘theatre beyond theatre’, because the performance could also classify as ‘theatre beyond performers’ due to the lack of actors. Moreover, allowing audiences to make their individual choices suggests that the performance grants agency to its spectators, which, of course, is a part of the participation element. The combination of indispensable wearing of headphones throughout the performance, making individual choices and performance mobile quality is a formidable example of how such works have changed the structure of theatre with regards to agency and space, transforming it

into an immersive and quite an intimate experience. Interestingly, the concept of mobility and technologies goes hand in hand since the technological inception as it stated that “audience mobility traces the origins of current mobile art practices, covering the story of early media experimentation and artists’ use of screen interfaces using various wire-free technologies” (Rieser 11). Rimini Protokoll is one of the companies that continuously challenges and transforms the form of theatre by providing its audience with immersive, mobile and intimate experience.

As established, headphones have become as essential in theatre as in our everyday lifestyle. However, there are different approaches to employing headphones in performances. For instance, another example of individual and intimate experience provided by the utilization of headphones is Simon McBurney’s performance *The Encounter* (2015). In contrast to *Remote X*, the performance is executed very conventionally in a theatre hall with a clear separation between the stage and the auditorium. *The Encounter* is a one-man show that is not only dependent on headphones, but also on all sorts of technologies which heightened the individual experience of the audience. Similarly to *Remote X*, the audience keeps their headphones on throughout the whole performance while McBurney plays with the perception of its audience. As it is stated:

The Encounter explores the specificity of ongoing theatre semiosis in a radical way. By modelling the communication via microphones and headphones, Complicite/ McBurney not only stresses the dominance of sonic—not visual—tissue but also reshapes the usual relations between members of the audience. The paradox of being alone (isolated from others by headphones) and the communal sense of forming the collective known as an audience (individual spectators are well aware that others are

following the same story) is made even stronger when McBurney introduces a degree of intimacy between himself and each spectator (Wiśniewski 213).

Following the same thought, another performance that emphasizes the individual experience of the spectator is *No Man's Land* (2013) by Dries Verhoeven. Similar to *Remote X*, this performance requires the audience to wear headphones while they are walking around the city. However, the difference between them is that in *No Man's Land* each audience member is accompanied by an immigrant or a refugee. As Andy Lavender claims:

Dries Verhoeven's *No Man's Land* is also for 20 spectators (indeed, auditors), whom it also asks to don headphones. These are connected to MP3 players. . . the voiceover that you hear is the same for all spectators simultaneously, and is a merged account of the experiences and musings of a group of immigrants who contributed to the process of creating the piece. Each spectator is taken on an individual journey through the surrounding streets by an immigrant or refugee, the latter acting as a guide and, in effect, standing in as a witness for her or his community (8).

Once again, there is a paradox in the beyondness of theatre and its aspect of communal experience. The utilisation of the headphones enhances the awareness of the audience members feeling isolated by the collective. However, they are also aware that others are experiencing the same, but they rarely think or even notice the rest of the group because they are so immersed in the performance itself. It follows the same logic as being aware of the absence of the performer. Therefore, it should be acknowledged that the concept of beyondness also brings awareness to the changes in theatre or what is 'left behind'. The formation of a group when going to any theatrical performance is unavoidable, but its

execution and experience could be not related to a communal experience at all. Employing headphones in theatre can also suggest *going beyond* the physical dimension in terms of not having physical contact and rejecting the physical world due to the isolation that the headphones create between the spectators. Wearing headphones is self-isolating and allows one to live in the world provided by these headphones and forget about the physicality and materiality of this world, meaning neglecting the presence of their fellow spectators. Thus, one can claim that many contemporary performances now provide intimate experience because they play with the endless possibilities that the new technologies offer. For instance, virtual theatre is another type of personal experience that represents a change in the structure of physical time and space in theatre due to its dependency on technology and the Internet. As stated with regards to a virtual theatre, “the production and the largely (though not universally) negative reaction it provoked from audiences and critics, bring into sharp focus a number of fundamental issues and debates confronting virtual theater and performance. . . . Opponents fiercely contest that there is a mismatch of media and a corruption of theater’s purity as a live form” (Dixon 26). The reference of “theater’s purity” and touching upon “fundamental issues” refers to a fundamental transformation and implying an essentialist perspective about theatre, whereas this thesis states that the changes in contemporary theatre are structural ones because they alter the structure of the materiality and physicality of the space and time. However, such performances do change theatre spectatorship by providing a more personal and intimate experience and transforming them into virtual spectators.

These few examples demonstrate that the intimate experience is foregrounded in some contemporary performances due to significant employment and dependence on technology. The beyondness of theatre here is expressed in the transformations of the theatre form that have shifted the shared and mutual experience between audiences to a sometimes entirely

intimate and personal. As Lavender claims about the twenty-first-century performances, “new forms of interaction are facilitated between creator, performer, spectator and event, and personal experience is often foregrounded” (4). Therefore, it is fair to claim that the mobile, immersive and virtual performances have the potential to classify as metamodern due to the change of theatre spectatorship.

2.3. Theatre Beyond the ‘Here And Now’

This section is dedicated to performances that *go beyond* the physicality and materiality of the ‘here and now’ and move towards the twenty-first-century technological revolution, namely virtual theatre and digital performances. The twentieth century opened up numerous debates about the similarities and differences between film and theatre, and the most evident is that film is recorded and edited, whereas theatre relies on the concept of the 'here and now'. However, some digital and virtual performances move *beyond* the physical experience of the 'here and now', consequently changing the structure of time and space in theatre. Steve Dixon, a British actor and academic, has written multiple articles on digital and virtual theatre and states that “we are equally unequivocal that the conjunction of performance and new media has and does bring about genuinely new stylistic and aesthetic modes, and unique and unprecedented performance experiences, genres, and ontologies” (5). Moreover, in his book, *Digital Performance* (2007), digital performance is defined quite broadly stating that it includes all performances where computer technology is included. As indicated it

includes live theater, dance, and performance art that incorporates projections that have been digitally created or manipulated; robotic and virtual reality performances;

installations and theatrical works that use computer sensing/ activating equipment or telematic techniques; and performative works and activities that are accessed through the computer screen, including cybertheater events, MUDs, MOOs, and virtual worlds, computer games, CD-ROMs, and performative net.art works (Dixon 3).

Digital performances, just as other aspects of ‘theatre beyond theatre’, have become more frequent due to the development of new technologies which pushed the boundaries of theatre to expand. This expansion has influenced the ontological physicality and materiality of theatre to change because it has transformed how time and space are structured because everything depends on technology and the Internet rather than the physicality of the theatre stage. Therefore, one can claim that theatre has *gone beyond* the ‘here and now’ because it *goes beyond* the physical dimension of the ‘here and now’ and moves to a virtual one.

As stated, the Internet has also become an inseparable feature of the virtual theatre. For instance, Stelarc, a performance artist whose works concentrate on expanding the capabilities of the human body, created the internet performance *RE-WIRED/RE-MIXED: Event for Dismembered Body* (2015). In this performance, every audience member in the world who has access to the Internet could be able to join the performance and even participate in making involuntary movements to the artist’s hand. Stelarc describes this piece as “an internet enabled performance that explored the physiological and aesthetic experience of a fragmented, de-synchronized, distracted and involuntary body – wired and under surveillance online. . . . The body was also augmented by a 7 degree-of-freedom exoskeleton enabling anyone anywhere to program involuntary movement of his right arm, using an online interface” (RE-WIRED/RE-MIXED). Moreover, Dixon adds about another similar performance that the “performance artist Stelarc wired his body up to the Internet and was

thrown around like a rag doll by audience members in other countries who manipulated him using touchscreen computers, and donned advanced robot prosthetics to enter a “cyborg reality” (2). However, this performance is a formidable example of theatre *going beyond* the physical dimension of the ‘here and now’, as the ‘here’ becomes a virtual location and the physical presence of the audience is not the same place as it would be in a theatre setting. The website HTML link becomes the virtual meeting point of the audience. Moreover, the ‘now’ is a bit more complicated because the virtual spectators can alter the body movements of the performer, thus the action must be happening almost at the same moment but in different time zones across the world. Nonetheless, since this is happening over the Internet, it can seldom occur in the same second as it depends on the speed of the Internet and other factors. Therefore, if the spectators are not in the same space physically together with the performer, it would be difficult to claim that it is happening right now at this very millisecond. Hence, such performances acquire the concept of a ‘virtual here and now’. Moreover, it is stated that “it is only in the virtual domains of art and theatre, where the ontological values of all the actants are less fixed” (Eckersall 126). Without a doubt, there is an ontological change when referring to the virtual theatre but this transformation is rooted in the structure of the physicality and materiality of theatre. When Eckersall states that the ‘ontological values are less fixed’, it should be understood from the perspective of theatre no longer depending on its materiality and physicality. Therefore, *RE-WIRED/RE-MIXED: Event for Dismembered Body* is a great example of a performance that has *gone beyond* the notion of the material and physical ‘here and now’ and moved into the virtual dimension. This is a metamodern performance at its best.

Interestingly, Andy Lavender reflects on the engagement of virtual spectatorship and declares that their engagement remains constant. For instance,

The spectators present at the ground might be thought to have some bearing on the match, as their concentration and audible response may incrementally affect the nature of the play. For the virtual spectators no such influence can obtain. This doesn't change the intensity of the engagement, however. We would say the same of sports matches that have taken place in other times and places, mediated through the radio or television. Fans are invested, and take enjoyment in respective moments of discovery and revelation, howsoever they are conveyed (176).

Therefore, this also consolidates that audiences can be as invested in virtual theatre as they would be if they physically attended a performance. The change of how time and space are structured by *going beyond* the physical quality of 'here and now' and moving into the virtual dimension is an excellent example of metamodern theatre.

2.4. Theatre Beyond Scenic Design

Nowadays, there are barely any performances that employ no video recordings, live cameras, projectors or virtual reality simulations. Theatre has expanded into many directions as "performance happens in more types of theatres than ever before, and in many other places than in theatres. Playwriting is countered by many approaches to scripting and devising shows. Acting is just one of myriad ways of performing. Design is extended into scenography. Audiences are transformed into spectators, witnesses, observers, voyeurs and the rest" (Kershaw and Nicholson 1). The statement demonstrates the countless transformations of the different aspects of theatre which ultimately influenced the current discussion about 'theatre beyond theatre' and metamodern performances. Thus, this section

will be dedicated to the VR scenography and the transition of scenic design to expanded scenography.

The main reason one can claim theatre has *gone beyond* the materiality and physicality of scenic design is the emergence of virtual scenography. The first time VR scenography appeared in theatre was in the 1990s as a way to visualize sets before building them. The Institute for the Exploration of Virtual Realities (ieVR) at the University of Kansas has already created productions with live actors on stage in a VR environment. Steve Dixon elaborates further by declaring that “ieVR use VR technology as their prime scenographic medium in order to achieve a sense of immersion” (384). Moreover, in 1999 Mark Reaney, the Professor in the Department of Theatre at the University of Kansas and a pioneer in the use of computer graphics in theatre design, also published an article on the project and was “dedicated to exploring the uses of computer technology in performance and computer-generated images (CGI) as a scenographic medium” at the University Theatre at Kansas University (Reaney 183). Immersion and engagement seem to be fundamental and one of the main reasons for a large number of productions to opt for VR scenography as Reaney declares that “the concept of immersion is central to both the art of the theatre and the new computer field of virtual reality or VR. It is a concept that unites the two areas, making VR a powerful new tool in scenography. Conversely, theatrical practices may prove to be worthy of emulation in designing virtual environments” (183). Since the publication of this article, the ieVR has produced multiple VR productions that demonstrate development in the VR scenography as some of their contemporary performances use new real-time computer graphics technology in live performances.

As established, the notions ‘immersive’ or ‘immersion’ are predominantly associated with technology and especially with VR environments. For instance, “‘immersive’ was

initially used primarily in the context of developments in technology, and in particular to VR environments where the spectator is instantly “immersed” in a virtual/fictional world” (Biggin 21). In addition to this, Dixon reflects on ieVR productions and how virtual scenography is being operated by stating that

As in all ieVR productions, movement and navigation through the VR backgrounds was rendered in real time, operated live by an offstage technician known as a VED (Virtual Environment Driver). The VED uses a mouse or joystick to move through the simulated spaces or to change the backgrounds in relation to the movements of the onstage actors or developing dramatic action. Two further projection screens displaying 3D still images were placed at a 45-degree angle at either side of the main screen to enhance the sense of immersion (385).

Therefore, some contemporary performances not only use virtual reality technology as a tool to design sets but also utilising virtual reality as the main scenographic medium. Once again, theatre proves that it *goes beyond* its materiality and physicality by depending on VR as a main scenographic medium. Moreover, ‘theatre beyond scenic design’ could express itself not only in the VR scenography but also in the transition from set design to expanded scenography. Rachel Hann, a lecturer in scenography at the University of Surrey, wrote the book *Beyond Scenography* (2019). In this book, she reflects on the beyondness of scenography and the influence of Hans-Thies Lehmann about theatre beyond drama, namely *Postdramatic Theatre*. “The title is influenced by Hans-Thies Lehmann’s usage of ‘beyond’ in his argument for postdramatic theatre, where the ‘adjective ‘postdramatic’ denotes a theatre that feels bound to operate beyond drama, at a time ‘after’ the authority of the dramatic paradigm in theatre” (Hann 1). With regards to Lehmann's argument, this thesis

follows the same line of thought as it claims that contemporary performances have *gone beyond* its boundaries, hence they should be titled metamodern theatre. However, Hann declares that

I employ the notion of ‘scenographics’ as a collective term for how the methods of costume, stage geography, light and sound orientate interventional encounters of place. . . . My adoption of scenographics stresses the inherent plurality and multiplicities that sustain a scenographic encounter. Consequently, scenographic traits result from a combination of orientating stimuli that exceed strict ontologies of empiricism (4).

The statement suggests that due to the transition of scenic design towards scenography, the scenic medium has become more inherently plural and multiplied. This plurality and multiplicity can be an effect of the hybridity in the medium. Hence, Hann proposes a new expanded scenography as a result of its interdisciplinary qualities. Moreover, she claims that “the notion of a scenography that exists beyond the crafts of scene painting and set construction challenges the orthodoxies of theatrical design. The allied practices of set design or scenic art are rendered historic” (Hann 7). She makes another point about the transformation in the scenography by declaring that it *went beyond* ‘the crafts of scene painting’ which demonstrates that scenic design has *gone beyond* its materiality and physicality and its ‘orthodoxies of theatrical design’. Hann also reflects on the very observations of this thesis by stating that

The call for a theatre beyond theatre became a familiar trope within experimental practice and theory. The expanded remit of scenography echoes how the idea of

theatre was transformed in the last century – with the increase in site-specific practices or performer-less theatres, as well as the formation of performance theory, challenging previous positions on what constituted theatre-making (Hann 8).

This statement solidifies the interconnectedness between all aspects of ‘theatre beyond theatre’, such as ‘theatre beyond performers’, ‘theatre beyond communal experience’ or ‘theatre beyond the here and now’ where scenography sometimes compensates for their transformations. Theatre beyond scenic design manifests itself as *going beyond* the physicality and materiality of scenic design and *going beyond* the orthodoxies of theatrical design. Moreover, virtual scenography changes the structure of theatre in terms of space. Scenography nowadays has become quite multiplied and flexible because, in mobile and site-specific practices or performances with no actors, scenography has to compensate as the whole performances depend on it. Therefore, this aspect classifies as being a metamodern theatre.

Chapter 3: Twenty-first-century Performances and Metamodernism

This chapter reflects on the definition of metamodernism from the perspective of this thesis. As stated, the Greek prefix ‘meta’ translates as *beyond*, *between* and *with*. Therefore, the starting point of the thesis is the contribution to the discourse on metamodernism with regards to theatre by reflecting on the meta-dimension of *beyond* rather than *between* as it was used by Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker in their first article on metamodernism, “Notes on Metamodernism” (2010). By reflecting on the concept of *beyond*, the thesis examines the aspects of theatre which have *gone beyond* such as ‘theatre beyond performers’, ‘theatre beyond communal experience’, ‘theatre beyond the here and now’ and ‘theatre beyond scenic design’ to explicate the transformations in contemporary theatre. The concept of beyondness corresponds perfectly with the current changes in theatre which have altered how time, space and agency are structured in the medium. The examples of these changes were demonstrated in the second chapter in four aspects. Moreover, even though metamodern performances may refer to a beyondness that transcends modern and postmodern theatre, and even imply *going beyond* itself, it will always remain dependent on itself because there would be no question of *going beyond* if there are no boundaries because *going beyond* also indicates leaving something behind. Hence, paradoxically, bypassing the boundary can enhance the awareness of the boundary. For instance, this paradox was highlighted in the second chapter where the audience is focusing on the absence of the performers’ bodies or the audience’s isolation by the headphones which heightens their personal experience, thus making them feel more isolated. Moreover, the virtual theatre can also emphasize the fact that performances are not happening in the physical time and space of ‘here and now’ but rather in a virtual dimension. Therefore, the thesis also reflected on the historical avant-garde

because without the modern and postmodern theatre, there would be no metamodern performances. The beyondness of theatre should be perceived as a process.

In addition to this, to a certain extent, the thesis follows Lehmann's reasoning with regards to the formation of the groundbreaking concept of *Postdramatic Theatre*. He adds that “*postdramatic theatre, again and most definitely, does not mean a theatre that exists ‘beyond’ drama, without any relation to it. It should rather be understood as the unfolding and blossoming of a potential of disintegration, dismantling and deconstruction within drama itself*” (Lehmann 44). In a similar manner, the thesis claims that metamodern theatre does not argue that all contemporary performances are metamodern or it attempts to disregard/discredit any reflections on metamodern theatre so far. On the contrary, it aims to expand the discourse on metamodern performances and represent the ‘unfolding’ and ‘blossoming’ of contemporary theatre by reflecting on its current structural transformations. Nonetheless, the chapter elaborates on some metamodern traits of the twenty-first-century theatre such as beyondness and hybridity, and proposes several other notions for potential research possibilities. Overall, the chapter is dedicated to laying out the arguments about the ‘theatre beyond theatre’ and its connection to metamodernism.

3.1. Metamodernism

Although it was indicated in the introduction section, it is imperative to emphasize on the meaning of the prefix of meta, therefore “according to the Greek-English Lexicon the prefix ‘meta’ refers to such notions as ‘with’, ‘between’, and ‘beyond’” (Vermeulen and van den Akker 2). Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker in “Notes on Metamodernism” (2010) define metamodernism as an *oscillation between* modernism and postmodernism

which suggests that they lean towards the concept of *between* when defining metamodernism. For instance, they “argue that this modernism is characterized by the oscillation between a typically modern commitment and a markedly postmodern detachment” (Vermeulen and van den Akker 2). However, considering the structural changes in the theatre form that have ontologically transformed theatre with regards to its materiality and physicality, this definition appears quite limiting within the domain of theatre. Moreover, not only is the definition limiting, but also the research on metamodern theatre is significantly limited because there are barely any publications that aim to define or focus on what metamodern theatre is. Theatre as a medium is continuously expanding, therefore there are enough good reasons for one to reflect on contemporary theatre and determine what the metamodern traits are. The lack of research might imply that the definition of metamodernism is not suitable for theatre because based on this *oscillation* and *betweenness* of modernism and postmodernism, it is quite difficult to define metamodern theatre. Moreover, it would be quite arduous to determine the *betweenness* of modern and postmodern traits in contemporary performances because this *oscillation* could have been happening ever since the emergence of postmodernism. The most publications on the topic of metamodernism appear to be in literary studies because, in this domain, modern and postmodern traits can be easily traced.

Therefore, by following the origin of the prefix ‘meta’, the thesis focused on the concept of *beyond* which is another perspective from which metamodernism can be analysed. Considering the changes in contemporary theatre which demonstrate a beyondness in several aspects of theatre, metamodern performances should be defined by the idea of ‘theatre beyond theatre’. By perceiving metamodern performances from the perspective of beyondness, the thesis proves that the term metamodern theatre corresponds with the relevant transformations in contemporary performances. For instance, the second chapter extensively

reflects on the beyondness of human-actors, the beyondness of the physical ‘here and now’ or the beyondness of the materiality of scenic design which demonstrate the structural changes in time, space and agency in the twenty-first-century theatre. Thus, since the research on theatre is rather limited, the most effective way to establish the characteristics of metamodern performance is to analyse the transformations in the form which solidified the beyondness of contemporary theatre. Moreover, it is also imperative to highlight that the interpretation by Vermeulen and van den Akker is quite fluid and indefinite as they claimed in the article that they are opening a debate rather than producing a scientific paper. “It should be read as an invitation for debate rather than an extending of a dogma” (Vermeulen and van den Akker 2). Thus, this statement consolidates even further the idea that theatre is not expected to follow this definition. Furthermore, it demonstrates that Vermeulen and van den Akker are starting a discourse and inviting others to contribute to the discussion of metamodernism rather than simply falling into the dogma.

Interestingly enough, multiple terms have surfaced since the beginning of the 2000s that attempted to define the era we are living in, but none of them stuck. Vermeulen and van den Akker state that “most of these conceptions of the contemporary discourse are structured around technological advances” (3). They reflect on terms such as digimodernism, automodernism, altermodernism, pseudomodernism, post-postmodernism and declare that the essence of these terms lies the emergence of technological advancements which is utterly understandable considering the immense influence of technology in theatre. The thesis demonstrates and emphasizes the technological influence upon the theatrical medium by stating that its structure in the time, space and agency has changed by *going beyond* its materiality and physicality. For instance, the second chapter indicated that there are transformations in theatre that entirely depend on technology which subsequently eliminates

the physical and material aspects of theatre such as the scenic design being substituted by VR environments or digital and virtual performances that *go beyond* the physical dimension of the 'here and now'. In addition to this, Dixon elaborates on the apparent transformations in theatre cannot go unnoticed, especially the technological influence that has completely reinvented the medium. He claims that "other leading digital commentators give credence to the argument through their understandings of how techniques, processes, bodies, objects, and spaces have not only been transformed but have brought about entirely new ontologies" (Dixon 658). This statement also solidifies that idea of a structural change in time, space and agency in contemporary theatre which can be connected to the ontology of theatre but it should be perceived from the perspective of the materiality and physicality in theatre. In other words, the ontological change should be the changes in the structure of theatre that *go beyond* its material and physical dimensions. Thus, since contemporary theatre has transformed to the point of *going beyond* itself, then how should one refer to such performances? Well, they acquire the title of being a metamodern theatre.

3.2. What is Metamodern Theatre in the Twenty-first Century

The questions that the thesis aims to answer are - What is metamodern theatre? How can one define metamodern theatre? What are the characteristics of the metamodern performances? However, this section will also aim to answer the question - Do Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker perceive metamodern theatre as an oscillation between modernism and postmodernism? Perhaps defining modern and postmodern performances was less challenging as these movements were reactions or responses to the artistic forms and

conventions before them, and there was enough space for experimentation within the arts. Whereas metamodernism is not a movement, it is not a reaction to postmodernism and, as a matter of fact, it is a representation of theatre *going beyond* its boundaries. Nowadays, contemporary performances are not rebelling against movements but rather embracing the past, and even *going beyond* it.

Although the research on metamodern theatre is quite limited, there are four articles devoted to metamodern performances written between 2012-2014 on the official website on metamodernism, *Notes on Metamodernism*, a platform for academics, writers and artists to reflect on the metamodern characteristics within the arts, architecture, literature, film/TV, theatre, economy and politics. One of the articles focuses on the theatre-maker Jan Lauwers who formed the international, multilingual and multidisciplinary theatre collective Needcompany in 1986. In the article, “A Living Archive: The Performance Territory as Social Interstice” (2014) by Amani Maihoub, the focus of the metamodern characteristics is on the content of the performance rather than the form. For instance, Maihoub analyses the performance *Isabella’s Room* (2004) where the “emphasis is on the relational dimensions of the interdependent individual and group, human and object encounters—as provoked and managed through forms, patterns and functions of sociability in symbolic time and space—in *Isabella’s Room*” (Maihoub). Furthermore, the author reflects on the performance as ‘social interstice’ which demonstrates identifying metamodern theatre by focusing on its internal themes and plot development, although this is also a part of the theatre form, it could be quite limiting and indefinable to be regarded as metamodern theatre. She claims that her “approach is oriented toward a recognition of performance as experience. It accounts for the performative turn of the 1960s in Western art and society and is thereby set against the backdrop of broader social and cultural processes—a new appreciation of the aesthetic

encounter as an ephemeral social event in its own right" (Maihoub). Another reference is made to the postdramatic concept of 'politics of perception, aesthetics of responsibility' by Lehmann, and quoted the following statement by him:

Instead of the deceptively comforting duality of here and there, inside and outside, it can move the mutual implication of actors and spectators in the theatrical production of images into the centre and thus make visible the broken thread between personal experience and perception. Such an experience would be not only aesthetic but therein at the same time ethico-political (Lehmann 185).

Although the audience experience and the plot are still considered part of the theatre form, the article might be suggesting that the socio-political themes in the performance could be potentially considered as metamodern theatre? Moreover, there is no direct reference towards metamodernism in this article whatsoever. Even the term 'metamodernism' was not mentioned in the article which makes it almost next to impossible for the reader to understand how this performance is metamodern. Perhaps the only possible and even a very remote connection to the metamodern features with respect to this thesis argument could be that the multilingual and multimedia aspects of this theatre company.

Furthermore, another article published on the same website about metamodernism refers to performance as a 'metamodernist play'. It is about the performance *The Life and Loves of a Nobody*, a Sheffield Theatres and Third Angel co-production, that focuses on the story of Rachell. In contrast to the previous article that did not touch upon the topic of metamodern theatre, Alison Gibbons, the author of this article, refers to the postmodern features of the play stating that "judging the play on its first half, it would be easy to see *The*

Life and Loves of a Nobody as a throwback to the postmodern theatre of the 1990s, with its props and staging apparatus clearly visible to the audience and the absence of the main character Rachel who never appears on stage.” In addition to this, Gibbons claims:

while in-yer-face theatre may have been angry, it revelled too overtly in the structures it claimed to find offensive to adequately critique them. Postmodern in-yer-face theatre does, though, provide a useful antecedent to Third Angel’s *The Life and Loves of a Nobody*, but crucially one that it surpasses. In other words, while Third Angel might be drawing on discursive theatrical strategies that are decidedly postmodern, we can in fact position *The Life and Loves of a Nobody* as distinctly metamodern.

Interestingly enough, this statement implies that the performance 'surpassed' or *went beyond* the familiar in-yer-face postmodern theatre, therefore one can claim the performance is metamodern. Moreover, Gibbons implies that metamodern performances are a theatre that has *gone beyond* its boundaries and norms in certain aspects (in this case in-yer-face theatre), and even *beyond* postmodernism. However, the article continues in the similar manner that was applied in the previous example, namely focusing on the political, social and cultural problems. “Telling an everyday story of an ordinary social life is not, however, enough to build an argument for *The Life and Loves of a Nobody* as a metamodernist play. So what else makes it metamodern? To answer this, we must consider the second half of the play” (Gibbons). For the second half of the performance, the audience decides how to end the play as stated, “we are told, we will decide what happens to Rachel. We are in control of her destiny – will we choose to make her dreams come true by granting her the fame she’s always longed for” (Gibbons)? Afterwards, Gibbons declares that there are two ways that

could classify this play as metamodern, and one of them is the reframing of the audience. The other one has some meta-theatre features about the audience being aware of itself for being an audience to the Rachell's audition. With respect to the first argument, Gibbons proves that the reframing or reinventing the spectatorship should be considered a metamodern feature because it *goes beyond* by granting the audience more agency than they would usually have. Thus, this definition is the closest it will get with the reasoning of this thesis. The article concludes that

The Life and Loves of a Nobody is metamodernist then in the way in which it focuses on the individual and the social, in its critique of contemporary culture, and in its relational positioning of the audience: the audience is positioned as part of the play's narrative, the play raises questions (ethical, social and political) for the audience rather than delivering a didactic message, and it shows up the audience's involvement within the culture it critiques (Gibbons).

The only part this thesis would agree on with respect to the article by Gibbons, is mainly the reframing of the audience and partially the *going beyond* or 'surpassing' the postmodern in-her-face theatre because both aspects indicate a crossing of a boundary or a beyondness of the medium. Both articles seem to follow the Vermeulen and van den Akker definition about metamodernism oscillating between modern and postmodern theatre because they both touch upon some of their characteristics, but the definition of metamodern theatre remained indeterminate. Moreover, in the conclusion of the second article by Gibbons, the reframing of the audience appears to be tightly connected with the meta-theatre features, thus making it unclear whether she considered the reframing of the audience to serve the

meta-theatre characteristics or this type of spectatorship alone should be considered as metamodern characteristics. From the perspective of this thesis, the performance could classify as metamodern because it *goes beyond* the traditional understanding of theatre spectatorship by granting them more agency than they would usually have. Hence, in this case, Gibbons leans towards the concept of *beyondness* of theatre rather than the *betweenness* of modern and postmodern theatre. However, the first article did not reflect on the term metamodernism whatsoever, while the second one was not explicit enough in its arguments and conclusion. Therefore, these articles do not help one to understand what is metamodern theatre by following the definition of Vermeulen and van den Akker. Whereas, this thesis analyses contemporary performances by acknowledging the alterations in the theatre form and then determines how such performances can be defined as metamodern based on these transformations. Thus, the term metamodernism fits perfectly with the idea of 'theatre beyond theatre' because it proves how *beyond* theatre have gone and in which aspects.

3.3. Metamodern Traits: Hybridity and Beyond

This section will reflect on the inherent metamodern characteristics of hybridity and beyond. The concept of beyondness should also be perceived as an umbrella term because it is predominantly used to measure and indicate the expansion of the structural changes in theatre, and the notion of hybridity happens to be a prominent attribute causing some of these transformations. The concept of hybridity has been scrutinized immensely over the last decades but in this context, it will reflect and be connected to the aspects that have been discussed in the second chapter. As “hybridity is very useful as a concept for discussing

postdramatic, digital and immersive performance, and indeed a wide array of work in popular culture” (Lavender 59).

Lavender recognizes the notion of hybridity as a kind of beyondness by perceiving *beyond* and *becoming* as terms with similar meaning based on Deleuze and Guattari's definition of *becoming*. Interestingly, throughout the thesis, when the term *becoming* was used, it was a reference to the transformations occurring in theatre. Moreover, Lavender states “I consider hybridity as a signal feature of contemporary cultural production. Hybridity suggests both a becoming and a beyond: here, the emergence of cross-disciplinary formations” (5). With this statement, he solidifies the interdependence between the notions of *hybridity*, *becoming* and *beyond*. Furthermore, the connection between the concepts of *becoming* and *beyond* is that in order for something to *go beyond*, it ultimately *becomes* some other version of itself. Thus, in terms of beyondness in theatre, hybridity expresses itself as inevitably *going beyond* the boundaries of theatre, thus making theatre to *become* another version of itself.

In addition to this, Lavender reflects on the connection between *beyond* and *becoming* by claiming that he takes “this functional reach, this *going beyond*, to be part of the hybridity that is claimed by the respective practitioners. We see here not only the mixing of media, but a mediality that makes for something that we might call ‘theatre-plus’” (61). The idea of ‘theatre-plus’ is another synonym for ‘theatre beyond theatre’ indicating the expansion and change in the structure of theatre. Moreover, Lavender also reflects that hybridization is a process which corresponds with the line of thought of this thesis, namely perceiving the beyondness of theatre as a process that have started in the twentieth century until present times. As stated

In both its literal and metaphorical meanings, the term ‘hybrid’ gestures towards a becoming, and a beyond. The ‘becoming’ is processual, and involves new states or arrangements, enabled by mixity – what Hannerz calls ‘an organization of diversity’ (1996: 106).¹³ The ‘beyond’ is contextual, and concerns the way in which artistic formations refigure the particular scene that they inherit and inhabit. Hybridization creates a new scenario (Lavender 65).

This statement indicates that hybridity invites new structures or ‘new states’, therefore one can claim that it causes structural changes in theatre. Moreover, *hybridity* and *becoming* highlight the processual aspect of creating. Thus far, the arguments represent a significant connection between the concepts of *beyondness* and *hybridity* which solidifies that hybridization is a prominent characteristic in metamodern performances. In the *Emancipated Spectator* (2009), Jacques Rancière states that “the idea of a hybridization of artistic means appropriate to the postmodern reality of a constant exchange of roles and identities, the real and the virtual, the organic and mechanical and information-technology prostheses” (21). Moreover, “Rancière articulates a notable trend: the apparent hybridity of processes, forms and media in twenty-first-century performance” (Lavender 59). These statements further emphasize the permanent existence of hybridization which have emerged during postmodernism, blossomed in the twenty-first century and eventually became an inherent attribute to the metamodern theatre. Moreover, with regards to Indian theatre, in an interview Deepan Sivaraman claims his performances to be ‘contemporary hybrid’. He states that

The kind of theatre I make offers an alternative way of experiencing theatre as a form that I would like to call a contemporary hybrid and is structurally often fragmented in nature. . . . When I call my work ‘contemporary hybrid’ what I really mean is that at

one level it attempts to push the strict boundaries of theatre as a language engaging with various other art forms and technology and at the same time it also often reflects upon or is inspired by the ritual theatre, folklore and various cultures that have been practiced in contemporary India (Brayshaw xx).

Moreover, he states he will continue to use the term ‘contemporary hybrid’ for whatever future ongoing changes or *beyondness* occur in theatre because *hybridity* has become a permanent characteristic of contemporary theatre. For instance, “it has already evolved a model that is ‘contemporary hybrid’ in nature and the on-going theatre development or change is a continuation of that” (Brayshaw 484). Therefore, it is evident that hybridity has become an inherent attribute in the twenty-first-century metamodern theatre. This concept should be considered a metamodern characteristic due its strong connection to the notion of beyondness and presence in numerous contemporary performances. Since the thesis focused on the several aspects of the beyondness of theatre which also touched upon the notions of intermediality and immersion, these concepts can be proposed for potential research topics on metamodern theatre and its traits. They should be analyzed and examined from the perspective of the technological influence upon contemporary theatre.

3.4. Metamodernism and The Beyondness of Theatre

Finally, this section will further elaborate on the metamodern performances and theatre beyond theatre. The thesis defines the metamodern characteristics by observing and analysing the transformations in contemporary performances. There are changes in how time, space and agency are structured in contemporary performances that *go beyond* the materiality and

physicality of theatre. For instance, the thesis reflected on the dimensions of ‘theatre beyond performers’, ‘theatre beyond the here and now’, ‘theatre beyond scenic design’ and ‘theatre beyond communal experience’ where performances demonstrate a beyondness in the physical dimension by moving into a virtual one. Moreover, ‘theatre beyond performers’ demonstrates a shift of agency moved from human actors towards non-living matter which is another change in the structure of theatre. Even in this aspect, ‘theatre beyond performers’, performances *go beyond* the physicality of the human bodies by completely eliminating their presence. Thus, the beyondness of metamodern theatre expresses itself as being structurally different in terms of how time, space and agency are organized.

Moreover, as stated, the notion of beyondness does bring paradoxical connotations because it brings awareness of passing a border or boundaries, thus leaving something behind. As it was evident in the second chapter, all of the transformations in metamodern theatre highlight what it was before this theatre, thus metamodern theatre does not aim to neglect those boundaries because without these boundaries there would be no beyondness of theatre. Metamodern theatre remains significantly dependent on itself. Nonetheless, it is also obvious that the form of theatre has altered, and Lavender confirms it by stating that “we have moved not only beyond postmodernism and the postdramatic, but perhaps even beyond theatre itself, as performance suffuses cultural production and is itself suffused with effects of encounter, experience and actuality” (6). The times are changing, so is theatre. “In the twenty-first century, new technologies with the potential to create equally profound changes in theatre’s style, theatre’s relationship with its spectators, and the production, distribution and reception practices that determine theatre’s influence in the social field are emerging” (Hadley 2). The purpose of theatre has always been to create a connection between itself and the audience. Perhaps the only prominent characteristic as Grotowski claimed would be the

presence of the audience, whether it would be physical or virtual, because, without their presence, there would be unquestionably no theatre.

Chapter 4: Conclusion and Discussion

This thesis introduced a new perspective to look at metamodern performances. It contributed to the discussion of metamodernism by moving from the concept of *between* to the notion of *beyond* which they both represent the origin of the Greek prefix ‘meta’. The reasons that allowed me to investigate this topic is the openness of Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker because they invite others to contribute to the discourse by stating that their definition of metamodernism should not be perceived as dogma. The other reason is the limited research on theatre which consolidated the fact that this definition might not be applicable to every domain. Therefore, being a theatre scholar I perceived transformations in contemporary performances that *go beyond* their boundaries due to the significant employment of technology. The beyondness of the twenty-first-century theatre needs to be terminologically acknowledged, hence the term metamodernism perfectly signifies the transformations of contemporary performances.

Metamodern theatre is a result of the changes in how time, space and agency are structured by *going beyond* the physicality and materiality of theatre. For instance, a change of structure in agency can be found in the elimination of human actors because this agency is now granted to non-living matter. The performances in the section ‘theatre beyond performers’ such as *Stifters Dinge* by Heiner Goebbels, *Hello Hi There* by Annie Dorsen and *Super-Sargasso Sea* by Gabriel Lester demonstrate not only a diversity of aesthetics in theatre without actors but also performances *going beyond* the physicality of the performer’s body. Moreover, being part of the participative element, granting agency to the audience is another structural change in theatre because they are given the freedom to make their individual decisions throughout the performance such as in the example of *Remote X* by

Rimini Protokoll. 'Theatre beyond communal experience' also highlighted the personal and intimate experience provided by headphones in the performances *The Encounter* by Simon McBurney and *No Man's Land* by Dries Verhoeven. The similar component of all three performances is the indispensable wearing of headphones which allows the audience to *go beyond* the physical and material dimension of everything that surrounds them and is not related to the performance, including the rest of their fellow spectators. This section also touches upon virtual theatre which is tightly connected to the idea of *going beyond* the physical dimension and changing the theatre spectatorship by turning the audience into virtual spectators, thus *going beyond* the communal experience. The third aspect the thesis reflects on is 'theatre beyond the here and now', where contemporary performances *go beyond* the physical dimension of the 'here and now' and enter into the virtual one. The internet performance *RE-WIRED/RE-MIXED: Event for Dismembered Body* by Stelarc is a formidable example of how theatre has *gone beyond* physicality/materiality and moved to virtuality, consequently changing the structure of time and space in theatre. The last aspect is 'theatre beyond scenic design' and follows similar reasoning as the virtual spectators and the virtual 'here and now' because it concentrates on *going beyond* the physicality of scenic design and moves into the VR scenography. Virtual scenography changes the structure of theatre in terms of space. Moreover, the book *Beyond Scenography* (2019) by Rachel Hann considerably contributes to the discourse because it reflects on the transition of the scenic design to the notion of expanded scenography. Hence, due to these factors and structural changes this thesis claims these performances should be considered a metamodern theatre.

The prominent traits of metamodern theatre are the concepts of *hybridity* and *beyond* because of their connection between each other, and mainly because *hybridity* has caused many of the transformations that were mentioned as being part of the beyondness of theatre.

The concepts of *intermediality* and *immersion* can be potential metamodern traits, therefore the thesis would like to propose them as notions for further research. They should be analysed from the perspective of the technological influence upon contemporary theatre.

This thesis should also be perceived as opening a debate about performances that *go beyond* certain aspects of theatre. I examined four aspects in which I consider contemporary theatre *goes beyond* but there could be more perspectives that could classify as being metamodern theatre. After all, if there is something that theatre has proven, it is its continuous evolution and transformation.

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