

Bernard-Marie Koltès and the Metaphorical Presence of Time

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Abstract

*In Bernard-Marie Koltès' play *The Night Just Before The Forests* (1970), theatricality figuration appears as the elusive figure of loneliness, abandonment and rejection. The play elaborates on a dialogue in which there is a presence that is not seen, but only heard and felt. How can this voice give shape to memory, which is after all an abstract reality? And how does the spectator and/or reader visualize the one whose only presence is revealed by the voice of another? In other words, how can a presence be embodied in language, be a metaphor of experience? Temporality and space are fundamental to creating a presence. How do they present themselves in the work of Koltès? How does the author achieve the temporal element that eludes us all? Time slips through our fingers; there is only the urgency of the moment and the flight from which there is no escape. This communicatively effective interaction of different types of figurative devices appears as the Seen and the Unseen, leading to the complexity of Koltès' dialogue. The actor's ability to present himself through the text and have that text be the invisible presence, are the main aspects of this meditation. The effect of presence is evoked by the discursive figure of the language embodied in the theatre as the metaphor of experience itself. Drawing on previous work on the metaphor by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (*Metaphors we live by*, 1980) and the research on the effect of presence in theatre by Josette Féral, professor at L'École supérieure de théâtre in Montreal (Canada), this presentation seeks to deepen the interlacing between virtuality (text, language) and reality (actor, performance) in the play *The Night Just Before The Forests* by Bernard-Marie Koltès. What happens when an actor becomes the figurative image of language itself, the metaphor of resignation, inequity and solitude? The dialogue reaches its climax through the storytelling of the language, and is rendered more complex by the construction of a sensitive thought, serving literature, art and life.*

Keywords: contemporary theatre, concept, metaphor, speech, experience.

Introduction

The play is staged in a disused hangar near St-Henri in Montreal, historically known to have been, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the industrial capital of Canada. The location is certainly not fortuitous and contributes to the rather unusual experience that we are about to live. In this regard, Brigitte Haentjens, theatre director and founder of the Sibyllines theatre company in Montreal, once remarked, during an interview, that *The Night Just Before the Forests* (1977) could never be presented in a "normal" theatre and should be played in a location that corresponds to the true nature of the text. Undoubtedly, she was right, for entering the hangar is similar to stepping into the rebellious universe of Koltès, who considered the environment to be part of theatre itself. Inside the hangar, all seats are positioned in front of a corner edge of the wall that constitutes the few square metres of "the stage". At nine o'clock, from the courtyard, the actor strides confidently into view. Dressed entirely in black, with slightly accentuated features and wet hair, he positions himself, then stops a few seconds with his head down. The play then begins. The actor looks up and starts talking without interruption for the entire length of the 45 minute performance. There is no apparent effect other than a beam of light and the voice of the actor.

This is not conventional theatre where morality arises in the last act or experimental theatre where standards, arbitrarily broken down, burst through with their meaning. Neither reconciliation nor a ready-made theme, but rather questions, statements and conditions caused by the cerebral and emotional intuition of the staged text. The sixties marked a general crisis of representation and Koltès' writing was no exception. Henceforth, the text was no longer to be a pretext to represent, illustrate and demonstrate. Representation claims its autonomy as a guarantee of survival.

The text is therefore a poem that the author literally "throws in the face of the audience, to take or to leave, like the search for an impossible unitary space."¹

This is where the language of *The Night Just Before the Forests* is concerted into action which is based on the climate of the untimely storm. The end of the play, although voluntarily suspended by the author, occurs when the temperature floods the speech of the man who takes refuge behind the words "rain, rain, rain, rain" which put an end to the performance without, however, ending the challenge of the play which does not cease to continue... Thereby, space becomes, according to Josette Féral, professor at *L'École supérieure de théâtre* at the University of Quebec at Montreal, the place of a crossover of the subject while

like the body, space becomes an existential point of becoming non-existent as a framework and as a place. It does not surround the performance but, like the body, can no longer be distinguished. It *is* performance. Hence the assertion is made that any performance can only be made in a given area for which it is inextricably linked.²

The concepts of time and space, according to Josette Féral, are fundamentals to understanding what she calls *effect of presence*; effect that cannot be dissociated from the body as a physical presence that reveals to a spectator the feeling that bodies and objects given to his senses are sharing his temporality and space. Our hypothesis takes the metaphorical structure of the play *The Night Just Before the Forests* as a pragmatic and intellectual experiment that promotes the understanding of a presence that eludes us all. Presence that can be primarily heard by the voice of a man that calls another man and secondarily by the reference of language to everyday life. Because performance cannot be entirely shared, the experience of loneliness and exclusion is represented by the figure of the absent man whose presence is revealed through the use of metaphor. The first glimpse of this is represented by the title *The Night Just Before the Forests* which relates to a temporal *and* spatial metaphor of a time yet to come and an ubiquitous space; the forests. Koltès casts doubt on their identity by revealing to us – throughout the monologue of the play – their true relevance, referring to the American occupation of Nicaragua in the 1970s under Somoza's government who lead the country into a sanguinary civil war in which resistant fighters had to hide in the forests *before* dying. This reference is not fortuitous and gives a mysterious and metaphorical continuity to the entire play while Koltès, with a sense of urgency, imbricates death into space, space in time while demonstrating that time is literally flying. He therefore raises, by extension, the possibility of designing death, *our* own death as an outside space, making the individual completely liable to the violence that surrounds him.

With his poetic way of writing, poetic way of writing, characterized by an epic breath, Koltès confines us within our own fears, the fear of ourselves, but mainly the fear of others that Donia Mounsef called the "political nihilism of the late twentieth century, that of the word beyond the separation of the couple-meaning, that of collective history and individual stories."³ The theatrical (stage performance and playwriting) invests language in speech as intrinsic to the action. Koltès explores the depths within us which widen the scope in which exclusion – especially interracial – operates. The contemporaneity of his theatre is corollary to his way of writing which proceeds by digression and diversion without having to name the object around which, explicitly, his play revolves. The most explicit example of this tortuous action arises with the first words of the play, when a man randomly intercepts another man (who is not present on stage), to whom he starts talking immediately. The initial purpose of the play is hidden under the appearance of a monologue that organizes and implements a number of signs within a role.⁴ This personification of the absence is magnified by Brigitte Haentjens' staging, which goes straight to the point and confirms the importance of the one who, though concealed, is fully involved in the exchange. Two solitudes are thus highlighted by Koltès: that of the man left behind, the tragic cry that haunts him, and that of the passerby, a stranger in his own way, widening the distance and feeding the mystery. Koltès casts doubt on his identity and thereby explores what's hidden behind occurrence.

¹ Patrice Pavis.1999. *Le Théâtre au croisement des cultures*. Paris: José Corti, p. 72.

² Josette Féral. 1985. « Performance et théâtralité : le sujet démystifié », in *Théâtralité, écriture et mise en scène*. Quebec: Hurtubise, coll. *Brèches*, p. 129. **I translate.**

³ Donia Mounsef. 2005. *Chair et révolte dans le théâtre de Bernard-Marie Koltès*. Paris: L'Harmattan, coll. *Univers Théâtral*, p.12.

⁴ Marie-Paule Sébastien.2009.*Bernard-Marie Koltès et l'espace théâtral*. Paris: L'Harmattan, coll. *Univers Théâtral*, p.115.

THE METAPHORICAL INCIDENCES OF THE CONCEPT

The wealth of images produced in *The Night Just Before the Forests* is linked to the rhetoric of Koltès' ability to show, in every word he writes, a human and intellectual sensibility. "Talking Koltès is what, in the words of Anne Ubersfeld, Koltèsian characters do. Their words and actions literally tell the world."⁵ *The Night Just Before the Forests* appears therefore, as a metaphorical text, not without any relation to allegory, in that it represents some of the ideas supported by the author himself. Adding sensitivity to complex concepts, Koltès' shareable approach makes theatre a place which combines reality and fiction, while leaving his audience an area of freedom to shape and implement its own truth. This is where the metaphors present in *The Night Just Before the Forests* are placed into action by the voice of the character speaking, who tries to interact with the other man who remains wordless and feeds the idea that communication involves a gift of self.

Between the lines of everyday life, exclusion exists as an event with no real beginning or predicative end. Koltès puts it in line with the general, that is to say the discriminatory and damaging aspects of society. It is through the elusive figure of the recipient, unseen and unheard, that Koltès attacks the French, and Westerners in general, for their outrageous indifference, narcissism, fear of others and exclusion that results from each of their actions. While the character of *The Night Just Before the Forests* is pouring out a flood of words to that "nervy guy" who remains impassive in the face of this deluge, could this metaphorical vision of the other make us see our own image? An image primarily of individuals profoundly stoic and expressionless against the loneliness of others? The play goes beyond the boundaries of simple theatrical representation to spend itself, in the meaning proposed by Roland Barthes⁶, as a neutral space to give all the space to language intimately imbricated into performance. This is where the metaphor of time is thus made manifest by the space where the text is played. In this regard, there can be no conceptual metaphor without a certain temporal pragmatics, from its experience to its textual representation. Experience, discontinuous and fragmented by nature, is represented in the play by the extent of the text-sentence, the textuality of language, a living metaphor that resolves like a flight against the clock in a cry, in the heart of the night...

Central to the play *The Night Just Before the Forests*, the monologue is a choice of great importance that marks the time that is consumed and dictates human relationships. Relationships whose value is often attributed, in Western societies, to greed and bargaining that make communication simple and selfless, unenforceable or even utopian. The fluidity of the monologue is imaged by the figure of the man who represents three time frames: first the present, that of his direct speech, then the past, with memories that he celebrates and shares with the stranger, and then, the future, when his cry represents a helping hand for a time yet to come. These three stages are grouped into a single discourse and are used to demonstrate the psychological complexity of the character that remains confined in a reality in which he can do almost nothing. For him, the future becomes a dream and the present, a perpetual state of repetitions where foreigners are always marginalized. Literature and theatre, under the guise of fiction, make visible the violent state of life and can, beyond public accusations and indictment, awaken the imagination of the reader and the public who may find in themselves the true relevance of the text.

Thus, when the character in the play says: "You were turning the corner of the street when I saw you, it's raining, you're not at your best when it's raining on your hair and clothes, but I did it anyway"⁷, his call is a guarantee of continuity and ensures his survival in a world where time is always behind us, pressing for action towards a future as uncertain as chimerical. The speech of the character is part of the space and time in such a way that the monologue appears as an invitation to find a room where both could be sheltered, dry off and spend the night, a simple and touching effusion of the soul looking for fellowship. The tragedy of the play is thus revealed by the loss of speech of the man who does not answer the call. The speaking character is a metonymic figure of exclusion through whom Koltès speaks of the "excluded", of the macrocosm of capitalist society in contrast to the ubiquitous moods of a man like any other. Koltès thus marks the opposition between the mass and the individual and returns the mirror to the reader and the proper, well-seated audience which, in the words of others, have everything they need to recognise themselves.

⁵ At the time Koltès wrote *The Night Just Before the Forests*, he was also very preoccupied by the rise in popularity of Jean-Marie Le Pen, president of the *Front national* (FN), an extreme right political group in France created in 1972.

⁶ Roland Barthes. 1984. *Le bruissement de la langue*. Paris: Seuil, coll. *Essais*, pp.61-67.

⁷ Bernard-Marie Koltès. 2004. *The Night Just Before the Forests, Sallinger, Quay West, In the Solitude of Cotton Fields, Plays:2*. Edited and Introduced by David Bradby and Maria M. Delgado. Published by Methuen Drama, London, p.3.

However, there is no truth implicitly injected into writing or meaning that is quickly revealed by the play, but rather suggestive statements that lead us to doubt our own nature and create a distance between the signified and its signifier, thereby referring to the idea that revolutionary art should, according to Barthes, allow a certain arbitrariness of signs. This is where Koltèsian writing, sticks, so to speak, in every sense. Thus, the critic Pascale-Anne Brault points out that Koltès' theatre "puts into perspective the impossibility of communication by opposing the post-Nietzschean tragic fate to the desert of failed communication with others."⁸ According to the author, the Koltès theatrical problematic is inherently linguistic and logical "[i]t is a theatre of desperate speech in which the characters try their hand at language, reinventing the illusory hope of existing for others, but they come up against the impenetrable logic of secrecy, opacity, loneliness."⁹

Metaphors We Live By

In their book *Metaphors We Live By*, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson address the metaphor based on the experience and cognitive effects it has on our daily practices. Defining metaphor as the systematicity of the concept, they illustrate by many examples its preponderance in the language and daily relationships we have with it. The metaphor produces an association between the abstract (concept, mental image) and the artificiality of reality, and is not radically opposed to pure science, in which it participates by its conceptual nature. In this regard, metaphors are not objective and can provide similarities, the most relevant of which are those we experience. Lakoff and Johnson agree with Objectivists on one essential point: "things in the world do play a role only through our experience of them. Our experience will (1) differ from culture to culture and (2) may depend on our understanding one kind of experience in terms of another, that is, our experience may be metaphorical in nature".¹⁰ According to Lakoff and Johnson, if many critics say that metaphor is a figure of speech unique to the literary arts, this division between the field of humanities and pure science cannot, here, be fully established. For as we have seen, the metaphor is more than just a figure of speech and, is used to structure our understanding of the world – our world – based upon our physical (outside space) and cultural (interior space) experiences.

The metaphor, therefore, requires a tacit relationship with the concept that defines itself in metaphorical terms. As one of the common expressions of our language, metaphorical statements forge our daily interactions with others. Despite the metaphorical sense of space and time, we would like to deepen two conceptual metaphors, which we think will enrich our understanding of the issues raised by the play *The Night Just Before the Forests*. The first metaphor, *Time is money*, helps to make apparent our relationship to temporality attributed to work, resulting from a gain synonymous with wealth, while the second, *Discussion is war*, involves our experience of space and territory, and undermines our conceptions of the duel and confrontation. This can be explained, according to Lakoff and Johnson, by the metaphorical structure of the concept, along with activity and language, themselves structured around the metaphor. Uniquely, the metaphorical concepts *Time is money* and *Discussion is war* clearly illustrate the exclusion of the character presented in *The Night Just Before the Forests*, based on concepts that orchestrate the Western capitalist societies which Koltès is not afraid to criticize through two metaphors that are based on experiential similarities.

Time is money

Cultural changes are caused by the introduction of new metaphorical concepts and the loss of old ones. In particular, the Westernization of cultures around the world is partly linked to the metaphor *Time is money*. Pursuing this logic, Koltès does not shrink from suggesting that there is a link between the degradation of individuals and the oppression of capitalist market societies. Using a general metaphorical concept, the linguistic expression *Time is money*, although not explicitly stated by the author, is nevertheless implied by the full-text sentence of *The Night Just Before the Forests*. The metaphor refers to Western conceptions of work as a saleable commodity associated with time that, in this age of mass consumption, is a valuable resource, while money constitutes the sinews of war. Koltès is not afraid to use the metaphor at the end of a one-way trade based on speech even though for him, the exchange does not necessarily presuppose the extortion of money. The play, however, allows one to assume the opposite although the man is asking for nothing more than a little love.

⁸ Pascale-Anne Brault. 1997. « Bernard-Marie Koltès: théâtre et vérité » in *Romance Notes*, vol. 38, no.1, p.104.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.109.

¹⁰ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. [1980], 2003. University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, p.154.

However, the silence of the stranger instills a power relationship between exploiter/exploited and dominant/dominated couples. This interpretation exposes the profound individualism of our society, in which everything is orchestrated with a view to potential profit. Otherwise, why *invest* oneself?

Amongst the marginalized milieu of street gangs, where prostitutes mix with pimps, the character who speaks cannot connect with the one he intercepts. The price of this exchange is certainly no coincidence in this era of every man for himself. The metaphor is precisely this underlying part of the speech in which the speaker listens in silence... This fact, recognized by all, is presented with great accuracy in the play while Koltès speaks, by extension, about human relationships in modern society conditioned by money. The metaphor *Time is money* can be understood by virtue of its experience in the real world. If we are able to consider time as a finite resource, it is that we recognize the monetary value attributed to working hours. Being paid on time, having a schedule, counting the hours, working overtime, completing a time sheet, etc. are examples in which the metaphor goes beyond language by the addition of a tangible experience.

The same applies to the metaphor *Discussion is war*; it is only after having had the experience that the subject is able to understand the metaphorical value of the statement. Some cultures may not consider discussion to be a warlike relationship and feel it is natural to want to defend their territory while defending their ideas. In this case, the metaphor *Discussion is war* does not apply and is revealed to be false. The meaning varies according to the metaphors and cultural practices that are true in virtue of each culture's metaphorical experience. The metaphor is therefore not purely linguistic, since the sentences that contain metaphors generally correspond to situations perceived in real life. To describe experiential shape, Lakoff and Johnson talk about *gestalt*, a German term whose etymology refers to the notion of "form". Experiential *gestalts* are ways of organizing experience. We will come back to *gestalt* in more depth with the second metaphor. Needless to say, time is an exploitable resource that provokes the envy of and the desire for prosperity. However, as Lakoff and Johnson point out, the metaphor *Time is money* is not literal, which results from the fact that it is not used in our normal concepts and goes beyond the literal field.

On the other hand, *Time is money* is part of a comprehensive system of concepts we use in our daily lives that do not refer directly to a customary linguistic expression, but rather to certain day-to-day actions. This is where the metaphor leads and structures our experience and allows us to capture its conceptual value. Without subscribing to a dominant lexical field, the metaphor of exclusion is twofold: first verbal, as the passerby's non-speech results in a refusal, and then physical, as the character talks to himself to counter his loneliness and strangeness. He is chased and forced into exclusion because he is a stranger, but especially because he is a *rat* (a slang term Koltès uses to describe an Arab). It is important to remember that the 1970s marked the revival of the Arab-Israeli conflict, whose link with *The Night Just Before the Forests* is certainly no coincidence as it was written in 1977 while armed conflict was taking place. Koltès seems to demonstrate a degree zero, so neutral that the individual, overwhelmed by history and political speculation, becomes aware of his non-value. And, it is in flight that it finds its full freedom, movement and existence, represented verbally in real time by the address of the speaker, whose intent is not to beg for money but rather for love, for friendship, for a simple presence. The following example is highly suggestive:

[...] Comrade ! , that I dare to take your arm : comrade !, that I dare to approach you : comrade, give us a light, **it won't cost you anything**, comrade, shitty rain, shitty wind, this fucking crossroads, it's not good to stroll around here tonight, for you same as for me, but I don't have a fag, it wasn't to smoke when I said : a light, comrade, it was, comrade, to tell you : fuck this place, fuck the same old shit of hanging around here as well, your clothes soaking wet, risking who knows what sickness, **I'm not asking for a cigarette either**, comrade, I don't even smoke, me stopping you like **this won't cost you anything**, no need for a light, nor a fag, comrade, nor money (please to go away !, spending another hundred francs isn't going to kill me tonight), and I've got enough to get us coffee, **I'm paying**, comrade, rather than hanging around here in this strange light, and that's why **it won't cost you anything me coming up to people, but in the end, it doesn't cost 'em anything** [...] ¹¹

What at first glance might have been perceived as the request of a pimp or a prostitute trying to find a good deal becomes a cry of love.

¹¹ Bernard-Marie Koltès, *op.cit.* p. 5. **Author's boldface.**

Because, in Koltès, as Anne Ubersfeld says, "the act of speech, which would be an economic demand for money, for material satisfaction, always camouflages another."¹² Let's examine now the second conceptual metaphor *Discussion is war*.

Discussion is war

Being a reader of Karl Marx, Koltès is clearly on the side of workers, although he does not embrace engaged political discourse. The structural metaphor *Discussion is war* is complex and meaningful and, helps develop the conceptual aspect of many statements that abound in our lives. It is important to remember that the functioning of the metaphor is not objective and always refers to the subject confronted with a particular phenomenon. While verbal expression is central to community life, conversation is not always a positive tool for completing the exchange. Koltès demonstrates this by making speech a weapon against others, but ultimately against ourselves. Speech heard in *The Night Just Before the Forests* reveals the character's vulnerability and, failing to allow dialogue, it serves to tear open the cleavage that separates people from each other. The speaking character of the play, breathless, as though drugged by a burning desire to speak, takes refuge behind the words that betray his state and his person. Thus, the reader becomes the audience for whom the person is speaking. The metaphorical vision of the other, like all those to whom the speech is projected, is rich with meaning here: it is the pledge of the impassivity of beings in the face of others. Koltès raises, in the following excerpt, the animosity that exists between foreigners (the Arab) and the French.

I don't like things that remind you you're a foreigner, still, I'm a bit of one myself, you can probably see that, I'm not really from around here – you could definitely see it, anyway, with those stupid twats down here grouped around behind me, while I was washing my willy – could make you believe that they're all that stupid, the French, can't imagine 'cos they've never seen anyone wash his willy before, whereas for us, it's an old custom, my dad taught it to me, we still do it at home, and I still do it after I've taken a piss, so I'm washing it, as usual, in the downstairs sink, sensing the twats standing around behind my back, I pretend like I don't understand, a total foreigner, who wouldn't understand a word of French coming from those twats, and I heard them as I was washing it: – what's he up to, the funny foreigner? – he's giving his willy a drink – how can he do that, give his willy a drink? – like I didn't understand anything of what they were saying, and so, I kept on giving it a drink, to give those French twats something to talk about, grouped behind my back around the downstairs sink, [...].¹³

Here, the structural metaphors allow us to go beyond simply guiding the concepts so that we can refer to them and quantify them, etc. As with metaphors and ontological orientation, conceptual metaphors also allow us to use a highly structured concept to structure another. *Discussion is war* is based on such systematic correlations within our experience, that is to say, war, a complex concept that characterizes the discussion and corresponds to an experiment. It is in imposing the gestalt conversation about the events that occur when we talk and listen that we are committed, according to Lakoff and Johnson, to a particular type of experience, namely a conversation. And it's when we perceive the dimensions of our experience as being consistent with the gestalt war that we realize that we are part of another type of experience, a discussion. And since the war gestalt implies, as discussed above, a ploy, then defense is required. The following passage renders the besieging state in which the character of *The Night Just Before the Forests* gravitates, and confines him in a symbolically "armed" conflict between state institutions and the ordinary citizen, foreign and relegated to the role of an enemy who must counter the offensive and defend himself:

[...] I have this idea, for people like you and me who don't have any money, no job, and I'm not really looking for one any more – it is that at work, outsiders like us, with nothing in our pockets, we don't weigh much, if a slight gust of wind came along it would blow us away [...] my idea, it's kind of – it's not a religion, it's not a load of crap they rattle on about without changing anything, it's not political, especially not about a party or anything [...] no, my idea, it's not that at all, don't you worry, comrade: it's self-defence, totally, only for our defence, 'cos that's what we need most of all, to defend ourselves, don't you think?¹⁴

¹² Anne Ubersfeld. 1999. *Bernard-Marie Koltès*. Paris: Actes Sud, p. 163.

¹³ Bernard-Marie Koltès, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

¹⁴ Bernard-Marie Koltès, *op.cit.*, p.6.

What is this idea that protects us? Speech, expression, resistance? Koltès shows the desire of his character not to be led by laws and institutions and to break free by creating an international (and utopian) union of which he would be the chief architect. This transposition of the power of the other self is the representation of the author's desire for a better distribution of wealth. The regime of trade unions, the police and the military are alienating and mechanically automatic to the subject, who no longer finds any trace of his own unique identity when it is condemned to conform to the mold dictated by the magnates of French business. Koltès touches the key issues related to the power relations that govern and lead our lives. All of his work "questions the proliferation of Justice through injustice."¹⁵

As Lakoff and Johnson point out, it is important to distinguish between, on the one hand, the experience itself and, on the other, the concepts we use to structure it, that is to say multidimensional gestalts such as Conversation and Discussion. And, because the concept is developed according to certain natural dimensions (e.g. participants, parties, steps, etc.), it shows how these dimensions are interrelated, since it is by conceptualizing experiences that we are able to identify the "significant" aspects of an experience, those which allow us to categorize, understand and remember. According to Lakoff and Johnson, if we say we had a discussion yesterday, it will be true to the extent that our concept of Discussion matches at all levels, in each of its dimensions, what we really felt yesterday as participants. Thus, *Discussion is war* is a metaphor because we are dealing with two fundamentally different types of activities. First, the discussion is based on speech and not on physical combat. In the metaphor *Discussion is war* the gestalt Conversation is developed through correlations with the elements defined in the gestalt War. Thus an activity, the exchange of words, is apprehended with another, that of physical combat. Therefore, a metaphor is successful, according to Lakoff and Johnson, when it reaches its goal, namely the understanding of an aspect of the concept. In other words, the metaphors *Time is money* and *Discussion is war* are effective metaphors because they are related to our perception and conception of our experience.

Therefore, *The Night Just Before the Forests* allows us to relate to experience through its literary and performance mediations. This certainly adds a dimension of conceptual depth to the play as the past scrolls by and the present stagnates. Exclusion is correlated with speech as an act of treason, and non-speech with a desire not to be betrayed, that is to say not to expend energy in the exchange. Orality as a space of movement is suitable to clarify the metaphor that discussion or talk is war, since each word, with its *raison d'être* in the lyricism of the text, is literally marched by the actor into the audience's/reader's ears.

The rhythm of speech is a key element of the play. Written in one sentence, it is a grammatical and syntactical choice that strengthens the fleeting nature of time in which there is no escape. It is in this that the play gives rise to orality and the importance of rhythm and speech as the place of multiple temporalities. Indeed, the two metaphors *Time is money* and *Discussion is war* have in common that they package, as outlined in Lakoff and Johnson, a form of conflictual exchange between two people. Whether to maintain a territory or one's identity, to extend one's power over the enemy or simply to assert an idea, everything quickly becomes a game where it is essential to protect one's position. This demonstrates that conceptual metaphors promote understanding of certain complex, hard to define ideas such as fear and exclusion. From our experiences of everyday life the metaphor allows, as we have seen, the individual to interact with the evocative power of language. Metaphor does not belong only to the sciences or the analytical arts, and is much closer to our lives than many critics who have written on the subject would have us believe. Since metaphor understood as a metaphorical concept can only be based on physical and cultural experience, it is never given to the subject other than by fragments of self and world, and can never only be given, objectively, by language. In conclusion, if not alive, metaphors at the very least make us live.

¹⁵ Stéphane Patrice. 2008. *Koltès subvertif*. Paris: Descartes & Cie, coll. *Essais*, p.28.

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