
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Modern Theater between Invisibility and Visibility

Dr. Ilham EL MAJDOUBI

Hassan II University (UH2C), Faculty of Arts and Humanities (FLSHM), Morocco

Corresponding Author: Dr. Ilham EL MAJDOUBI, **E-mail:** ilhamelmajdoubi@gmail.com

| ABSTRACT

This article employs a theoretical framework that integrates gender, discourse analysis, and psychoanalysis to examine the metaphorical and metonymical construction of sexualities. The focus here is not on the reality of sexualities, but rather on their representation in modern theater. The study findings indicate that psychoanalysis is a valuable tool for interpreting dramatic works and the cultural frameworks underlying them. The psychoanalytic approach offers insights into the motivations and unconscious desires of both authors and characters. Theater has undergone a significant transformation, moving from a realm of shadows to one of light and elucidating the subtle interplay between personal desire and intellectual production. The transition from the state of invisibility to that of visibility on the stage signifies deeper transformations in societal attitudes. These changes have resulted in the acceptance of marginalized identities, particularly those of non-heterosexual orientations, and the evolution of the nature of representation itself.

| KEYWORDS

Modern Theater, Straight and Gay Aesthetics, Visibility and Invisibility

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 03 June 2024

PUBLISHED: 18 June 2024

DOI: 10.32996/jgcs.2024.4.2.1

1. Introduction

In contextualizing this study, we consider the relationship between visibility and invisibility in the context of modern theater, with a particular focus on the American pre-Stonewall era. This non-liberal context provides an illustrative background for examining the nuances of the relationship between power and discourse, desire and subtext. During this period, non-heterosexual orientations were legally criminalized, socially ostracized, and intellectually censored.

Consequently, it was a significant challenge for artists in the United States during the 1940s-60s, particularly during the McCarthy¹ era, to express their desires in a dramatic performance. To address such a topic was, of course, to challenge the taboo and to remove the obstacle of the unspoken. It is imperative to acknowledge that the theater was a public domain that was rigorously regulated by the norms of social etiquette and *decorum*:

¹ McCarthyism refers to the witch hunt conducted in the United States in the 1950s by Senator Joseph R. McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). The witch-hunt initially affected the federal administration. In November 1946, President Truman established a commission with the objective of investigating the loyalty of civil servants and identifying individuals with Communist and Fascist sympathies. The culmination of the McCarthy era occurred in February 1950, when Wisconsin Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy asserted that he possessed the identities of 205 individuals within the State Department who were, in his estimation, Communist sympathizers. The phenomenon dissipated in 1954 as rapidly as it had emerged. As cited by Stanislas Jeannesson in *La guerre froide* (Paris : La Découverte, 2002, pp. 108-109). For further reading, see André Kaspi, *Les Américains. Les Etats-Unis de 1607 à nos jours* (Paris : Seuil, 1986). Also refer to Marie-France Toinet, *La chasse aux sorcières : Le macCarthyisme 1947-1957* (Paris : Éditions Complexe, 1984).

Theatre has been a powerful institution. It has afforded the legitimacy that accompanies presentation in public; that is why it has often attracted censorship and sponsorship from the State, the Church, political organisations and big business².

Modern American playwrights have demonstrated a reluctance to compromise themselves, focusing instead on the connotations and resonances of sexuality. This is evident in their theater, where the climax of desire precludes its resolution. Desire is thus represented as an unfulfilled lack, condemned to constant renewal.

Before proceeding, it is essential to define the concept of desire. In classical thought, this elusive notion is simultaneously indicative of incompleteness and a yearning for wholeness. In its etymological sense, the term "desire" (*desiderium*) is derived from the idea of regret for a vanished star. The nostalgia that pervades modern theater is inextricably linked to this sense of bereavement. Plato had previously proposed that desire is a state of incompleteness. The absence of love, otherness, self-knowledge, and recognition are all examples of lack. In *Le Banquet*, the ambivalent nature of amorous desire is evoked through the myth of Eros. Desire is conceived from Penia and Poros, emblems of scarcity and abundance. Consequently, desire is the source of lack and must lead to eternal fulfillment.

A mythological and spiritual dimension of desire is relevant to our reflection on androgyny, as it expands the concept of theatricality. In this context, the concept of desire is understood in its eroticized sense. Here, sexuality is liberated from its genital dimension, giving a new meaning to the body that involves the scrambling of gender markers, including clothing, gestures, and speech patterns. It is perceived as a distinctive language that engages the body and covers the language of bodies, gazes, and love. The term "desire" is more appropriate to us than "sexuality" because desire includes elements beyond the genital.

The act of suggesting rather than demonstrating, of pointing to desire rather than the sexual act, serves to enhance the desirability of the text. This absence of sexuality can be understood as an expression of the desire for presence. In order to arouse the spectator's curiosity, a dramatic work must maintain a state of desire through an absence. This is evidenced by characters who experience more frustration than satisfaction. The suspension of meaning allows the reader/viewer to search for a decoding key, a double entendre waiting to be unraveled. The plot suggests that the author is attempting to reveal a secret, yet ultimately fails to do so. Consequently, the mystery remains unresolved.

The metaphorical suggestion of sexuality in pre-Stonewall³ theater stimulates the spectator's imagination without diminishing the subversive charge of sexuality. The veiling of desire is imbued with greater significance than its overt presentation on stage. Similarly, the omission of a word or a name is often more revelatory than the designation of the thing itself. As Jean Anouilh observed, "Nothing is true except for what is not said."⁴ Sexual desire is a significant theme in early modern drama, functioning as a vital and seditious force.

Early modernist plays, particularly those created and produced during the McCarthy era, were meticulously crafted to align with the prevailing aesthetic standards of Broadway. The plays in question highlight the inherent tensions between the spoken and the unspoken. In this regard, they assume a social, ideological, and epistemological dimension that is worthy of close examination. Contextualizing this work within its historical and cultural milieu is a crucial step in comprehending its essence. This allows us to better assess the discursive and semiotic efforts of the playwright and the risks he took in his attempt to challenge American conformism before a Broadway audience.

The works of Tennessee Williams, as evidenced by plays such as *The Glass Menagerie*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Suddenly Last Summer*, *Sweet Bird of Youth*, and *Orpheus Descending*, as well as short stories, which represent the initial drafts of the plays, provide additional insight. These productions offer a philosophical and aesthetic richness derived from the tragic tension between two contradictory desires: the quest for freedom and the thirst for salvation. On the one hand, the characters present themselves as beings of desire; on the other, they attempt to conceal their sexuality beneath the veneer of convention. Consequently, the theme of desire generates ambiguity and is constructed around the principle of duality, or the dialectic of the hidden and the revealed.

² Alan Sinfield, *Out on Stage: Lesbian and Gay Theatre in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 1.

³ The Stonewall Inn bar in Greenwich Village, New York, witnessed a pivotal uprising in 1969, marking the symbolic starting point of the annual Gay Pride protests commemorating these events.

⁴ Jean Anouilh, *Antigone*, Paris, éditions de la Table Ronde, 1946, p. 71. My translation.

The underlying contradiction in Williams' work is a highly creative element. As Michael Paller notes:

Williams is engaging in what had been, from his earliest work, his principal dramatic strategy: to reveal a little while concealing a great deal more. There is a fundamental tension, in other words, found in Williams's best plays, between the need to reveal and the urge to conceal. However, far from being the serious flaw that some critics interpret it to be, this tension proved to be not only necessary, but positive⁵.

This duality can be attributed to Williams' sexual ambivalence, which can be explained by two main factors. The first factor is unconscious and can be interpreted as a reflection of the author's sense of guilt related to his position within an openly homophobic, puritanical, and patriarchal society. As Pierre Bourdieu elucidates, the gay individual is perpetually conflicted between the apprehension of being unmasked and the aspiration to be acknowledged by other homosexuals⁶. The other rationale is intrinsic to the author's aspiration to create theater that, while intended for a heterosexual audience, is not exclusive to them. This provides sexual minorities with the opportunity to self-identify.

Williams' ambivalence has given rise to a theatrical style in which everything is presented in a dualistic manner: characters, themes, motifs, and language. Regardless of their sexual orientation, characters are situated within an aesthetic of equivocation. The author positions them in the liminal, interstitial space of the "in-between," where they strive to reconcile opposing and complementary tendencies that are socially irreconcilable.

In Williams' overtly heterosexual plays, the homoerotic charge is a prominent feature. The works are unquestionably imbued with a homoerotic aura, which, depending on the viewer's sensibility, may be perceived to varying degrees. However, in consideration of the artist's androgynous ideal of sexual synthesis, we propose that it be viewed from the perspective of sexual ambiguity. For Williams, the dramaturgical experience is a method of deconstructing binary logic, transcending the confrontation of masculine and feminine principles, and moving from the logic of conflict to the poetics of the complementarity of polarities. Consequently, Williams' work tends towards plenitude, although the authentic fusion is literally and metaphorically deferred and, in fact, appears to be unattainable.

The construction of sexual desire in Williams' theater is not monolithic. From his plays emerges the idea that homosexuality can be found within heterosexuality, just as femininity can be found within masculinity. Although not immediately apparent, Williams' male characters are created as bisexual beings, whether by their own desires, those attributed to them, or those directed towards them. Accordingly, they become the object of masculine and feminine, homosexual and heterosexual desires. The sexual identity of these figures is situated at the nexus of homosexual, bisexual, and androgynous orientations. Michel Foucault's definition of homosexuality is particularly illuminating in this regard:

Homosexuality was constituted the day it was characterized...less by a type of sexual relationship than by a certain quality of sexual sensitivity, a certain way of inverting masculine and feminine within oneself. Homosexuality appeared as one of the figures of sexuality when it was reduced from the practice of sodomy to a kind of inner androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul⁷.

For Williams, homosexuality is an important source of contestation, challenging "not only the subordination of the feminine to the masculine, but also the hierarchy of sexualities,"⁸ in which forms of sexuality other than heterosexuality are considered "perverse...criminal, immoral, and destructive of civilization."⁹ As Georges-Michel Sarotte puts it, "For Herbert Marcuse, homosexuality symbolizes the great refusal, while Williams and his theater symbolize the great refusal of American society in the '40s and '50s."¹⁰

Williams does not focus on the carnal dimension of homosexuality, but rather on its symbolic function: the refusal of normality and the choice of marginality. As Monique Wittig observes, "Homosexuality is the desire for one's own gender. But it is also the

⁵ Michael Paller, *Gentlemen Callers: Tennessee Williams, Homosexuality, and Mid-Twentieth-Century Drama*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p. 11.

⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *La domination masculine*, Paris, Seuil, 1998, p. 130.

⁷ Michel Foucault, *La volonté de savoir. Histoire de la sexualité*, tome I, Paris, Gallimard, 1976, p. 59. My translation.

⁸ Daniel Borillo, *L'homophobie*, Presses Universitaires de France (*Que sais-je ?*), Paris, 2000, p. 22. My translation.

⁹ *Ibid.* My translation.

¹⁰ Georges-Michel Sarotte, editor, « Tennessee Williams ou l'intelligence du cœur », *Album Masques : Tennessee Williams*, Paris, Masques, 1979, p. 7. My translation.

desire for something else that is not connoted. This desire is resistance to the norm."¹¹ Beyond their sexual orientation, homosexuals reject the socially established values and strive for an undefined elsewhere. As such, the author and his marginalized beings hold our attention.

Williams' work is structured around an effort to represent the outcasts of pre-liberation American society. Having lived on the fringes of the system, the playwright positioned himself as a spokesman for the castaways. His portrayal of marginalization from the periphery lends credibility to his theater and poignant characters. In addressing the themes of sexuality and marginality, the mainstream and the underground, Williams was constrained by the norms of the American dramatic tradition, which placed limitations on the exploration of these taboo topics. The act of challenging the boundaries of conventional performance carries the risk of jeopardizing one's career. Therefore, the tension between the desire for transgression and the need for conformity is evident throughout his oeuvre.

Methodologically, Williams' work has been the subject of numerous academic publications. In light of the abundance of critical material available, it is tempting to inquire as to whether an alternative interpretation might offer a different perspective on the subject. For the purposes of this study, Queer Theory appears to be a convenient theoretical framework in many respects. On the one hand, it rejects the dichotomous categories of essentialism in favor of a more nuanced understanding of sexuality. This makes it an ideal framework for the author's hybrid plays. Conversely, it endeavors to elucidate the hitherto unspoken aspects of the canonical text. This enables the discernment of the conflicting latency of homoerotic desire that pervades the plays. The term "queer" is defined as "whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant,"¹² which allows for the exploration of the theme of marginality as being inextricably intertwined with that of desire.

The feminist/queer dialogical reading we propose also places emphasis on the epistemological and discursive aspects of Williams' theater. In particular, we are drawing on the ideas of Michel Foucault on discourse analysis, Eve K. Sedgwick on the epistemology of the closet¹³, and Judith Butler on gender as performance. These ideas are incorporated into a research tool that is consistent with the field of Gender and Queer Studies. This approach allows for a more nuanced comprehension of the manner in which Williams constructs his sexual discourse within the confines of language. Furthermore, it enables us to discern a desire to decenter, or de-marginalize non-normative sexuality beyond his apparent heterosexual discourse. This is not to be confused with acceptance; rather, it is to be understood as the artist's desire for sensitizing his audience to the danger of societal rejection. This social and cultural dynamic imbues Williams' work with a reflexive dimension.

A multitude of inquiries can be posed regarding the delineation of the place and function of desire, the body, and sexuality in Williams' theater. One might inquire as to the manner in which sexual difference is constructed or proscribed. To what extent does Williams' work align with the tenets of Queer Theory? How does his work subvert the status quo? What does it mean to be marginalized? The margin resists any attempt at delimitation.

"Marginal is that which evades all attempts at enclosure; that which is neither inside nor outside, but somewhere in between."¹⁴ Sarah Meneghello defines "center as the system (political, economic, institutional, and cultural), margins as the spaces that border it, and marginality as the 'off-off' that goes beyond these well-established limits."¹⁵ Riccarda Bignamini provides a more detailed definition:

The margin as a deviation from the center, or the norm; margins and marginality are established in relation to a reference model that would be that of normality, the one indicated by the norm. This is probably the most immediate definition and the most visible aspect of marginality. Faced with a grid recognized by society, anyone who deviates from it would be marginal...

¹¹ Monique Wittig, "Paradigm," George Stambolian and Elaine Marks, editors, *Homosexualities and French Literature: Cultural Contexts, Critical Texts*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1979, p. 114.

¹² David Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 62.

¹³ This term is short for "coming out of the closet."

¹⁴ Hélène Laplace-Claverie, « Le théâtre décadent à la fin du XIX^{ème} siècle », *Marginalités et Théâtres : pouvoir, spectateurs et dramaturgie*, sous la direction de Sylvie Jouanny, Paris XII-Val de-Marne, Librairie Nizet, 2003, p. 62. My translation.

¹⁵ Sarah Meneghello, « Le théâtre d'appartement », *Marginalités et Théâtres : pouvoir, spectateurs et dramaturgie*, op. cit., p. 35. My translation.

The margin as edge, frontier: this aspect underlines the spatial meaning of the word in question. The margin is also what lies at the limit, at the edge, like the margins of the page, like the edges of the plate. What lies at the margin can remain aloof, as a stranger, or tend to go beyond, to go beyond the border¹⁶.

In his article "Marges troubles : spectacles queer entre Broadway et off-off Broadway," Olivier Lemoine addresses the question of queer marginality in the theater, arguing that there is "an infinity of margins, an infinity of possibilities. In this respect, the margin is a true zone of creation, an ephemeral place of passage between the known and the unknown, the visible and the invisible."¹⁷ In his view, the closet and the margin are interrelated, anchored in space and time, in constant motion, and operating in binary mode:

The play of the closet door as it turns on its hinges both constrains and liberates the representation of homosexuality on the American stage in the twentieth century. The conceptual workings of the closet underscore the complex process of marginalization as it contains the folding and unfolding of a secret told through its silence. This tension provides the space for a double expression, that of theater, and a troubled one, that of queer. The closet can thus be seen as a privileged trope for the representation of the homosexual, played out in both space and time. In this respect, the closet merges with the margin, both inscribed in spatio-temporal coordinates that are neither purely hierarchical (the scales of value are unstable) nor purely chronological (the axis of time is not progressive). The double impasse of these two concepts, due to their binary operation, can nevertheless be distorted by repetition. These two topoi are phoenixes, constantly rising from the ashes, whose ephemeral glow illuminates the process of marginalization¹⁸.

In his *Ecrits sur le théâtre*, Michel Vinaver emphasizes the importance of marginality for the playwright as a position he occupies and an ideal he aspires to:

It is only by escaping any obligation to please, to entertain, to produce and be produced, to conform, to succeed in feeding his family, that the playwright can hope to occupy his place—which is in marginality—and can seek to fulfill his role—which is to provoke some jolt or crack in the established order¹⁹.

In a binary logic, the figure of the homosexual is seen as a deviation from the heteronormative norm. Olivier Lemoine rightly notes this:

In an America still steeped in puritanism, the homosexual is a marginal figure par excellence, and his appearance on the scene is undeniably a staging of the marginal. Rather, it is a new representation of the representable²⁰.

Queer Theory illuminates the plays through a non-assimilationist approach that goes beyond merely identifying a homosexual dimension in the playwright, and looks at how he questions the relationship between masculine and feminine, homosexuality and heterosexuality. Williams does not idealistically juxtapose these different categories. The fact remains that he attempts to reconcile opposites, overcome contradictions, and blur the boundaries between the sexes in order to obscure gender hierarchies. This study aims to cast light on the plays with possible identifications, allowing us to see the spectrum of multiple identities the author offers us through his hybrid characters, and to explain the richness of his plural work.

Representing the unrepresentable is one way of analyzing implicit desire in the modern theater. Our study is concerned with the ways in which playwrights play the complex game of concealment and revelation. This veiled transparency is a sign of a taboo embedded in the collective imagination of McCarthyite America. Sedgwick's Closet Theory lifts a corner of the veil on the invisible and unspeakable underbelly of the characters to see how Williams placed himself in artistic and social jeopardy by staging forbidden male desire.

¹⁶ Maria Riccarda Bignamini, « Valère Novarina, auteur des marges ? », *Marginalités et Théâtres : pouvoir, spectateurs et dramaturgie*, pp. 72-73. My translation.

¹⁷ Olivier Lemoine, « Marges Troublées : spectacles queer entre Broadway et Off-off Broadway », *Marginalités et Théâtres : pouvoir, spectateurs et dramaturgie*, pp. 154-155. My translation.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 154. My translation.

¹⁹ Michel Vinaver, *Ecrits sur le théâtre*, Lausanne, éditions L'Aire, 1982, p. 118. My translation.

²⁰ Olivier Lemoine, « Marges Troublées : spectacles queer entre Broadway et off-off Broadway », p. 156. My translation.

Our study has allowed us to dissect the image of the self and the other and to conclude that fragmented identities are a constant of Williams' theater. The playwright problematizes social relations between the sexes and denounces the extreme rigidity and compartmentalization of identities. Laura Mulvey's Male Gaze Theory and Foucault's reflections on power relations helped us better understand how Williams attempts to resist the patriarchal system from within to influence dominant cultural perceptions. By subverting traditional stereotypes and playing with the system of social and symbolic representations, he tends to disrupt the androcentric construction of gender roles, thereby demonstrating their instability. He thus contributes to a shift in power in favor of marginalized individuals.

The myth of the androgynous remains an unattainable ideal, yet the quest for fullness represents a significant achievement in Williams' plays. The playwright frequently blurs the boundaries to achieve a form of hybridization between the sexes. He begins with a male/female subject and ends with a figure that transcends the boundaries of the sexes, underscoring the fluidity of identity and the inventiveness of the creative process. The social boundaries between the sexes are made permeable by, among other things, cross-dressing, which allows the characters to move from one category to another. The act of becoming a man or a woman entails the manipulation of appearances as a parody of truth. Williams' work is open to a multitude of interpretations due to its exploration of sexual indeterminacy.

Cultural constructions, such as the closet, which functions as a dramatic metaphor, are given complex theatrical expression as a way to reveal the verbal and nonverbal aspects of the plays. This leads us to argue that, since Freud posited a fundamental ground of bisexuality for every subject, one can affirm a form of universal bi-textuality that is repressed through different modes of representation, yet returns in unconscious aspects of textuality.

The unconscious aspects of textuality include silences, gaps, symbols, and double meanings, which can be understood as non-speaking symptoms. The symptom can be conceptualized as a form of speech that is expressed without the use of spoken language. Lacan postulates that symptoms can be entirely resolved through an analysis of language, since symptoms themselves are structured in a way analogous to language. He posits that a symptom is "language from which speech must be delivered."²¹ In a nutshell, the symptom is an indirect communication with the other that simultaneously avoids verbal expression.

To illustrate the aforementioned notion of bi-textuality, we can argue that Williams' plays present multiple forms of desire and identification. The concept of desire should not be limited to a purely carnal understanding. As Lacan elucidates in his second seminar, "Desire is a relation of being to lack. This lack is the lack of being properly speaking. It isn't the lack of this or that, but lack of being whereby the being exists."²² In this context, desire can be seen as a fundamental aspect of key philosophical problems such as the concept of selfhood. From a Lacanian perspective, the poetics of desire contributes to the creation of a complex aesthetic experience in Williams' theater. The psychoanalytic approach, whether Lacanian or Freudian, offers a deeper understanding of Postmodern Theory and a more refined appreciation of the semiotic and discursive convolutions of the playwright's writing.

The methodological framework of our study is derived from the broader field of psychoanalysis. Building on theories that decode unconscious representations and bring them into the light of consciousness, we have attempted to comprehend theater through the lens of Freudian and Lacanian analysis. The fundamental tenet of both psychoanalysts is that the unconscious exerts a dynamic influence on language, culture, and thought. This suggests that the author's unconscious directly influences the composition of the text. In *The Tempest*, Act 4, Scene 1, Shakespeare has Prospero say, "We are such stuff as dreams are made of." This simultaneously references our status as humans and as actors in "the great theater of the world." This is an example of the connection between dreams, life, and theater. Freud's discovery of the unconscious marked a significant shift in our understanding of human nature and human universals. This shift turned literature into a tool for analysis.

In addition to Sigmund Freud, it is also important to consider Carl Jung's perspective on theater. Jung was Freud's most prominent protégé, but they eventually branched off due to irreconcilable differences in how each man viewed the psyche. In 1912, Jung wrote to Freud, citing Nietzsche's figure of Zarathustra at the end of Book I of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: "One repays a teacher badly if one always remains a pupil only."²³ The initial divergence between the two thinkers pertained to the pivotal role of sexuality in

²¹ Lacan, *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006) p. 223.

²² Jacques Lacan (1954–1955): *Seminar II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. S. Tomaselli. Norton & Co., 1991, p. 223.

²³ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra. A Book for All and None*, Edited by Adrian Del Caro and Robert B. Pippin, Translated by Adrian Del Caro, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 59.

psychoanalysis. Freud posited that the human behavior is driven by repressed sexual desires, whereas Jung argued that Freud's emphasis on the libido obscured other significant forces in the unconscious.

Lacan advanced the field of psychoanalysis by integrating insights from Freud's biology and linguistics. His understanding of the science of linguistics, pioneered by Saussure in the 20th century, gave him a distinct advantage over his predecessor. As Lacan declared on his only trip to South America in July 1980, "It is up to you to be Lacanian, if you wish. I am Freudian."²⁴ Freud's scientific approach to psychoanalysis is distinct from both Lacan's linguistic approach, which is based on discourse analysis, and Jung's analytic psychology.

To capture the enigmatic nature of the text, it is not necessary to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the author's biography. The text is regarded as a self-contained entity, containing all the necessary elements for its interpretation. Derrida's assertion that nothing is outside the text implies that the objective is to identify and construct meaning through the deciphering of manifest and latent cues within the text.

Derrida and Lacan hold distinct yet complementary views of textuality and subjectivity. Derrida postulates that the unconscious operates continuously in language, thereby conceptualizing text as psyche. In contrast, Lacan asserts that the unconscious is structured like a language, interpreting psyche as text. Derrida goes so far as to claim that the entirety of the world can be considered a text, that is, the entirety of our environment can be regarded as a text that is subjected to the methods of literary analysis, such as deconstruction. Lacan proposes that subjectivity and desire are constituted through discourse in interaction with others, and may be viewed as a linguistic and cultural construct. The subject is structurally deficient due to the lack inherent in signification and language.

Cognitive neuroscience is also relevant to our analysis of theatrical productions. This relatively new methodology in the field of criticism seeks to understand the workings of the mind and has demonstrated that neuroscience findings can well inform and disentangle psychological theories. Psychoanalysis is often considered unscientific by scientists, and in order to establish its legitimacy, collaboration with a scientific discipline such as neuroscience would be beneficial. Freud was a pioneering neuroscientist prior to his transition to full-time psychology. It can therefore be argued that psychoanalysis is a science in the process of becoming, despite Freud's view that it was a scientifically validated theory.

In conclusion, it is crucial to emphasize the pivotal role of psychoanalysis in elucidating not only literary works but also the theoretical framework that underlies them. William Todd Schultz posits that theories, predominantly in the domains of psychology and psychiatry, originate from the theoreticians' intrinsic desire to comprehend themselves:

We tend to think of theory development as emerging out of an objective, scientific attitude. Wrong. All theory is autobiography. The person the theorist really wants to understand, more than anyone, is himself²⁵.

The evolution of theater has been marked by a shift from the realm of shadows to that of light, from invisibility to visibility. This transition raises the question of whether this transformation implies a change in the nature of theater and the larger world itself.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

²⁴ Jacques Lacan, "Opening of the Caracas International Meeting," July 12, 1980. My translation.

²⁵ Schultz, William Todd. "Why Freud and Jung Broke Up." *Psychology Today*, 19 May 2009, www.psychologytoday.com/blog/genius-and-madness/200905/why-freud-and-jung-broke. Accessed 5 June 2024.

References

- [1] Anouilh, J. (1946). *Antigone*. Éditions de la Table Ronde.
- [2] Bourdieu, P. (1998). *La domination masculine*. Seuil.
- [3] Borillo, D. (2000). *L'homophobie*. Presses Universitaires de France (Que sais-je ?).
- [4] Foucault, M. (1976). *La volonté de savoir. Histoire de la sexualité, tome I*. Gallimard.
- [5] Halperin, D. (1995). *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*. Oxford University Press.
- [6] Jeannesson, S. (2002). *La guerre froide*. La Découverte.
- [7] Kaspi, A. (1986). *Les Américains. Les Etats-Unis de 1607 à nos jours*. Seuil.
- [8] Lacan, J. (2006). *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*. Translated by Bruce Fink, W.W. Norton & Co., 2006.
- [9] Lacan, J. (1991). *Seminar II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*. Translated by S. Tomaselli, Norton & Co.
- [10] Lemoine, O. (2003). Marges Troublées: spectacles queer entre Broadway et off-off Broadway. *Marginalités et Théâtres: pouvoir, spectateurs et dramaturgie*, edited by Sylvie Jouanny, Paris XII-Val de-Marne, Librairie Nizet, 2003.
- [11] Laplace-Claverie, H. (2003). Le théâtre décadent à la fin du XIXème siècle. *Marginalités et Théâtres: pouvoir, spectateurs et dramaturgie*, edited by Sylvie Jouanny, Paris XII-Val de-Marne, Librairie Nizet.
- [12] Meneghello, S. (2003). Le théâtre d'appartement. *Marginalités et Théâtres: pouvoir, spectateurs et dramaturgie*, edited by Sylvie Jouanny, Paris XII-Val de-Marne, Librairie Nizet.
- [13] Nietzsche, F. (2006). *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*. Edited by Adrian Del Caro and Robert B. Pippin, translated by Adrian Del Caro, Cambridge University Press.
- [14] Toinet, M.-F. (1984). *La chasse aux sorcières: Le maccarthysme 1947-1957*. Éditions Complexe.
- [15] Paller, M. (2005). *Gentlemen Callers: Tennessee Williams, Homosexuality, and Mid-Twentieth-Century Drama*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- [16] Riccarda Bignamini, M. (2003). Valère Novarina, auteur des marges? *Marginalités et Théâtres: pouvoir, spectateurs et dramaturgie*, edited by Sylvie Jouanny, Paris XII-Val de-Marne, Librairie Nizet.
- [17] Sarotte, G.-M. (1979). Tennessee Williams ou l'intelligence du cœur. *Album Masques: Tennessee Williams*, Masques.
- [18] Sinfield, A. (1999). *Out on Stage: Lesbian and Gay Theatre in the Twentieth Century*. Yale University Press.
- [19] Schultz, W T (2024). "Why Freud and Jung Broke Up." *Psychology Today*, 19 May 2009, www.psychologytoday.com/blog/genius-and-madness/200905/why-freud-and-jung-broke. Accessed 5 June 2024.
- [20] Vinaver, M. (1982). *Écrits sur le théâtre*. Éditions L'Aire.
- [21] Wittig, M. (1979). Paradigm. *Homosexualities and French Literature: Cultural Contexts, Critical Texts*, edited by George Stambolian and Elaine Marks, Cornell University Press.