

The Crossroad of Identities in Wajdi Mouawad's 'Littoral': A Rhizomatic Approach of Identity Reconstruction through Theatre and Performance

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Abstract : 'Littoral' is an original voice in Québécois theatre, spanning the cultural gaps that can exist between the playwrights' native Lebanon, North America, Quebec, and Europe. Littoral is a 'crossroad' of cultures and themes, a 'bridge' connecting cultures and languages. It represents a new form of theatrical writing that combines the verbal, the vocal and the pantomimic, calling upon the stage to question the real, to engage characters in a quest, in a journey of mourning, of reconstructing identity and a collective memory despite ruins and wars. A theatre of witness, a theatre denouncing irrationality of racism and war, a theatre 'performing' the symptoms of the stress disorders of characters passing from resistance and anger to reconciliation and giving voice to the silenced victims, these are some of the pillars that this play has to offer. In this corrida between life and death, the identity seems like a work-in-progress that is shaped in the presence of the Self and the Other. This trajectory will lead to re-open widely the door to questions, interrogations, and reflections to show how this play is at the nexus of contemporary preoccupations of the 21st century: the importance of memory, the search for meaning, the pursuit of the infinite. It also shows how a play can create bridges between languages, cultures, societies, and movements. To what extent does it mediate between the words and the silence, and how does it burn the bridges or the gaps between the textual and the performative while investigating the power of intermediality to confront racism and segregation. It also underlines the centrality of confrontation between cultures, languages, writing and representation techniques to challenge the characters in their quest to restructure their shattered, but yet intertwined identities. The goal of this theatre would then be to invite everyone involved in the process of a journey of self-discovery away from their comfort zone. Everyone will have to explore the liminal space, to read in between the lines of the written text as well as in between the text and the performance to explore the gaps and the tensions that exist between what is said, and what is played, between the 'parole' and the performative body.

Keywords : identity, memory, performance, testimony, trauma

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