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Final Reflections

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As the editor of *TRI*, as well as one of the participants in the collective research project presented here, I want to add a few words in closing this issue of the journal rather than writing an editorial. In thinking about the future we are not only addressing the notions of emergence and futurity as they are constructed, configured and established within the aesthetic fields of theatre, performance and the arts. We are also – and not only implicitly – thinking about the future of the humanistic disciplines within our societies and our academic institutions, and in particular about the future possibilities of the younger generation of scholars who have decided to devote their own future to the study and research of these fields, developing their individual talents and creativity. It is unnecessary to reiterate that we are in the middle (and I hope this is not just the beginning) of an extremely severe crisis of these fields resulting from economic constraints as well as inherent suspicions towards the arts in particular. And without the necessary institutional and governmental support the humanities as well as our cultures will become impoverished beyond recognition.

But our project – Poetics and Politics of the Future – intentionally contains more than these aesthetic and academic–institutional dimensions. It embraces ideological and political issues as well. The arts do not only formulate our reactions and responses to the failures and achievements of the past, performing history from aesthetic and ethical perspectives, trying to understand and reckon with the failures of the past and examining the role of the individual within more inclusive social contexts. Through their unique rhetorical and aesthetic strategies in a world dominated by 'market forces', the arts also point at the political and social possibilities of the future, challenging us to take a position. From my own Israeli perspective this is particularly problematic and even painful in view of the (when writing this) recent disproportionate and extreme uses of force and violence against the Palestinian population in Gaza. Such actions will not lead to a viable future of coexistence for the two peoples.

I think of performance as an expression of a wish which can also, and sometimes unexpectedly, become a threat. The wish and the threat – utopia and dystopia – are the inseparable Siamese twins of performance. In presenting such polar figurations of futurity and by employing the appropriate aesthetic means, as many of the examples discussed here do, this performative couple can no doubt ignite and even influence our public debates. Since the wish and the threat are also one of the basic components of the human condition, they are political in the most radical and fundamental sense of this word.

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