

## **Reenacting the Past. Visual Displays Through Literature and Theater:**

**Guido Gozzano and Milo Rau**

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### **Abstract**

The contribution focuses on the representation of moving images (silent movies and digital displays) in early 20th century literature and theater in the 2000s.

Starting from the point of view of an Italian writer of the first decade of the 20th century, Guido Gozzano, a line is drawn to contemporary theater and one of its most impactful and innovative components, Milo Rau.

Gozzano (1883-1916) lived in Turin when the city was the capital of the newborn cinema: that is why his claims about the intermedial relationship between words and moving images can be placed at the beginning of the discourse on this topic. In his texts and articles, Gozzano reflects on the pros and cons of the new medium compared to literature, and argues its ability to simplify artistic expression. Moreover, he himself contributes to the making of some films: Gozzano's movie script *San Francesco d'Assisi* is considered in the analysis, observed through the poles of literature and history.

A century later, Rau (1977) creates new interactions on the stage, by placing moving images juxtaposed with the actors' words and performance. Rau's theater incorporates digital displays in his dramatic structure: the play *Orestes in Mosul* (2019) is considered to highlight how the intermediality between the digital and the stage is used to multiply narratives and open new perspectives on history and literature, instead of simplifying reality as Gozzano imagined.

Based on the divergences existing between the works of the two artists, the analysis will show the changing use of visual displays by other media. The display has shifted from being a neutral analogue tool for literary and historical revivals with memorial intentions, to a critical digital tool for contemporary "re-enactment", namely, meant as a form of reworking and re-acting the past and literature that may produce effects on the future.

### **Keywords**

Literature, Theater, Displays, Moving-images, Re-enactment

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## **Bio**

**Marta Pizzagalli** is PhD student at the Istituto di studi italiani of Università della Svizzera italiana. She attended an artistic-literary *curriculum* at the Università della Svizzera italiana (Lugano and Mendrisio) and specialised in Comparative Literature at the Université de Lausanne with the supervision of Prof. Ute Heidmann (Spécialisation en Langues et littératures européennes comparées). Her interests focus on comparative literatures and the interaction between literature and other media; her research project, conducted under the direction of Marco Maggi, concerns visual media in Guido Gozzano's works.

## **Recent publications:**

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