

1  
(24)  
/  
2022

UNATC  
PRESS

[co : n : cept]

*The Swimmer and the Rubber Ring* / During the Pandemic time, **Vladimir Vechnyy** and his friends came up with the crazy idea to turn their kitchen into a swimming pool by filling it with water and even tried to put their cat into action, somewhere in the West Russia, Tver Oblast Region.

Suita coperților revistei este un proces de revizitare a istoriei artei prin intermediul unor imagini de cultură populară [readyfound], proiect editorial coordonat de **Maria Drăghici** începând cu *Concept* nr. 1(22)/2021.



**Editorial Board:**

Associate Professor PhD Mihaela Michaşilov, Lecturer PhD Irina Dogaru, PhD Ruxandra Vera Ştefan (Research Assistant), Professor Habil. PhD Bogdana Dărie, Associate Professor PhD Radu Apostol, Lecturer PhD Thomas Ciocşirescu, Radu Crăciun (Research Assistant), Liri Alienor Chapelain (Research Assistant), Associate Professor PhD Ioana Visalon (UGAL).

**Peer-reviewers:**

Professor PhD Leon Rubin (University of Essex UK, East 15 Acting School, Honorary Professor at GITIS, FRSA and FRAS, Dean of LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore), Dr. Kiki Seloni (Affiliate Research Fellow, Visitor Lecturer, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London, UK Artistic Director of The Makings of the Actor), Professor Habil. Anca-Doina Ciobotaru, PhD (UNAGE Iaşi), Associate Professor Habil. Ioana Petcu, PhD (UNAGE Iaşi), Professor Adrian Titieni, PhD (UNATC Bucharest), Associate Professor Habil. Claudiu Turcuş, PhD (UBB Cluj-Napoca), Associate Professor Habil. Otilia Huzum, PhD (West University, Timişoara), Professor Crenguţa-Lăcrămioara Bîzu, PhD (University of Bucharest), Professor Tania Filip, PhD (UNATC Bucharest), Associate Professor Victor Mihăilescu, PhD ("Dunărea de Jos" University Galaţi).

Editing & proofreading: Cornel Huţanu,  
Mihaela Bejuş, Ruxandra Vera Ştefan,  
Denisa Codiţă-Sîrbu, Mihai Florea.

DTP: **Corina Reza**  
Printed by INTERSIGMA

**Board:** Professor Adriana Marina Popovici, PhD  
Professor Ludmila Patlanjoglu, PhD  
Professor Habil. Liviu Lucaci, PhD  
Professor Habil. Doru Nițescu, PhD  
Professor Habil. Alexandru Sterian, PhD  
Professor Habil. Camelia Popa, PhD  
Professor Habil. Mihaela Sirbu, PhD  
Oana Boca-Stănescu, UNATC Press and  
Journals Coordinator

**Honorary Advisory Board:**

**Matei Vișniec** – Poète, auteur dramatique,  
prosauteur et journaliste roumano-français  
**Miruna Runcan** – Professor Habil. PhD at  
Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca  
**Gary Schwartz** – Director of The Spolin Players  
and Intuitive Learning Systems, USA  
**Stéphane Poliakov** – Maître de conférences,  
Département Théâtre, Université Paris 8  
**Joaquín Amores** – Director ESAD, Universidad  
Laboral, Gijón-Asturias-España  
**Luz Emilia Aguilar Zinser** – Crítica, editora,  
pedagoga y investigadora teatral, México  
**David Chambers** – Professor of Acting and  
Directing at the Yale School of Drama, USA  
**Eric Trules** – Associate Professor of Practice at  
the University of Southern California, USA  
**Adrian Ghicov** – Professor Habil. PhD,  
Universitatea Pedagogică de Stat Ion Creangă,  
Chișinău  
**Diana Cupșa** – Head of The Theatre and Dance  
MFA Design Program, Tulane University, USA

**Editor-in-chief:**

Associate Professor **Mihaela Bețiu**, PhD  
Coordinator of *Regional Identity  
and Cultural Specificity* Thematic Chapter:  
Associate Professor **Anca Ioniță**, PhD  
Deputy Editor: **Cornel Huțanu**  
Art & Design Editor:  
Researcher **Maria Drăghici**, PhD

The CONCEPT academic journal collaborates  
with The International Association of Theatre  
Critics (IATC – Theatre Studies).

THE CONCEPT ACADEMIC JOURNAL IS  
REVIEWED AND RATED BY **CNCS** AND  
IS INDEXED IN THE **CEEOL**, **SCIPPIO**  
AND **EBSCO** INTERNATIONAL DATABASES.

**YEAR 12 (XII)**  
ISSUE 1(24)/2022  
UNATC PRESS 2022  
**ISSN 2248-3756**  
**ISSN-L 2068-4444**



[co : n : cept]

**1(24)/2022**

# I RESEARCH

## ***Contemporary Theatre and Cinema: Regional Identity and Cultural Specificity***

02 Diana Nechit și Andrei C. Șerban

Macbeth, contemporanul nostru. Între parabola politică și imagistica medievală

18 Ilinca Stihî

Mythologizing the Political Gesture, a Vector of Myth Perpetuation in Contemporary Society. *The Dance of Reality* and Alejandro Jodorowsky

26 Imelda Manu-Jipa

Myth Carrying Matter and Its Scenographic Potential. The New Sacrality of Immediate Reality

36 Ioana Simion

Expressions of Emotions through the Colour Blue: Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris* and Andrei Zvyagintsev's *The Return*

45 Sorana Maier

The Contribution of the Romanian Cultural Societies of Sibiu in Shaping the Local Audience

## ***Theatre and Interdisciplinary Studies***

58 Despina Kosmopoulou

The Reception of the Myth of Alcestis in *Alcestis* of Euripides and in *Alcestis and Sweet Dreams* of Andreas Staikos

77 Ioana Păun

Cracking the Art Matrix. Is Instagram a Permissive Environment for Subversive Art?

90 Radu Crăciun

Shadows of Yorick

117 Elena Vlădăreanu

Sfârșitul epocii excepționalismului uman în spectacolul live

128 Simona Pop

From the Absurd Theatre of Samuel Beckett to the Figurative Aesthetics of Pop Art Culture

***Theatrical Pedagogy***

- 141 **Manuela-Florina Hozoc** Montessori, Freinet și jocurile teatrale la pacienții cu demență. Studiu de caz
- 167 **Vlad Bălan** Reclaiming the Natural Component through Theater Games
- 181 **Víctor Iván López Espíritu Santo** Héctor Mendoza, continuatorul metodei Stanislavski în Mexic
- 197 **Andra Pantea** Essential Stage Movement in Theatre Directing

***Cinematography and Media Studies***

- 215 **Radu-Cristian Pop** Recontextualizing the Iconography of War in Contemporary American Culture through the Narrative and Therapeutic Dimension of Immersive Interactive Media
- 228 **Tudora Crăciun** The Myth's Way Back into the Body. A Visual Analysis of the Anti-War Film
- 245 **Tudor Popescu** Average Shot Length in the Post-2000 Romanian Film. Comparison with Other Movements in European Cinema

**II BOOK REVIEW**

- 257 **Ana-Magdalena Petraru** The Greatest Elizabethan Playwright Revisited – *William Shakespeare* by Ioana Petcu
- 264 **Maria Zărnescu** The Diversity and Energy of the Eastern European Theatre
- 270 **Vasile Morar** Teatrul româno-canadian. Schimburi culturale și strategii manageriale
- 274 **Raúl Adalid y Luis de Tavira** Cómo nació el libro *Historias de actores*. Un recorrido por el mundo teatral y cinematográfico
- 286 **Nicolae Manda** Teatralitatea extinsă – o cale originală în teatrul actual

---

# III INTERVIEW

292 **Mihaela Michailov**

„Scriu plecând de la un subiect care îmi creează un impuls de violență și care mă revoltă” – Interviu cu autoarea și regizoarea Alexandra Badea

“I Write Starting from a Topic That Creates an Impulse of Violence and That Revolts Me” – Interview with author and director Alexandra Badea

---



# **I. RESEARCH**

## CONTEMPORARY THEATRE AND CINEMA: REGIONAL IDENTITY AND CULTURAL SPECIFICITY

# **MACBETH, CONTEMPORANUL NOSTRU. ÎNTRE PARABOLA POLITICĂ ȘI IMAGISTICA MEDIEVALĂ**

**DIANA NECHIT**

**ANDREI C. ȘERBAN**



"Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu, Romania  
*diana.nechit@ulbsibiu.ro*  
*andrei.serban@ulbsibiu.ro*

**Abstract:** The aim of this article is a brief analysis of three recent performances based on Shakespeare's play *Macbeth*, but also on Eugène Ionesco's modern rewriting of the famous tragedy. Starting from aspects related to witchcraft and occult practices existing in the text of the English playwright and inspired by the medieval imaginary, we will focus on how the directors Alessandro Serra, Botond Nagy and Silviu Purcărete try to adapt the Shakespearean dramaturgical core to the demands of various contexts in their representations. We will see that, although for certain directors the anthropological and pagan dimension of Shakespeare's play is essential, in the attempt to transform *Macbeth* into "our contemporary", most of the stage creators approach the demands of political parables, deeply anchored in our everyday life. This trend responds to the initiative of the great playwrights of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including Heiner Müller, whose modern rewritings revealed the striking actuality of the great canonical texts.

**Keywords:** *Macbeth*, Shakespeare, Eugène Ionesco, Alessandro Serra, Botond Nagy, Silviu Purcărete, witchcraft, politics.

**How to cite:** Nechit, D., Șerban, A.C. (2022). `Macbeth, contemporanul nostru. Între parabola politică și imagistica medievală`, *Concept* 1(24)/2022, pp. 2-17.

### **Introducere**

*Macbeth*, capodoperă a lui Shakespeare, nu încetează să atragă creatori de spectacol din cele mai variate zone și estetici ale reprezentației, dar și realizatori de film, dramaturgi și traducători, deopotrivă. Fidelitatea sau infidelitatea față de modelul original ține, în foarte mare măsură, de perioadele de creație, de modelele dramaturgice urmate, dar, indiferent de multitudinea adaptărilor pentru scenă, *Macbeth* ilustrează atât Binele, cât și Răul universal al naturii umane. Printre cei care s-au apropiat de mitul eroului scoțian regicid, împins de către soția sa, Lady Macbeth, să comită impardonabilul pentru a sfârși, în cele din urmă, ros de vină și de paranoia, până la căderea în nebunie și în moarte, îi putem aminti pe Orson Welles, Akira Kurosawa, Roman Polanski sau Frații Coen (pentru spațiul cinematografic), precum și H. Paul Kliss, Trevor Nunn sau mai recentii Silviu Purcărete, Alessandro Serra și Botond Nagy (pentru scenele de teatru). Dramaturgii nu au rămas nici ei insensibili la această metaforă a puterii și a nebuliei, iar printre cele mai semnificative adaptări sau rescrieri atât la nivel dramaturgic, cât și, mai ales, la nivelul contextualizării istorice și politice, rămân definitorii rescrierile lui Eugène Ionesco și Heiner Müller.

Povestea than-ului devotat regelui său, care este anunțat de profeția celor trei vrăjitoare că va urca pe tron, declanșează un ciclu al violenței care va provoca dezolare și moarte în regatul Scoției. Textul shakespearian este și o interogație filosofică despre raporturile dintre om și tentațiile sale. Chiar dacă cele trei vrăjitoare îi prezic lui Macbeth ascensiunea sa scelerată spre tron, alegerea de a urma sau nu profeția îi aparține doar lui. Shakespeare nu ezită să introducă ingredientul decisiv al ispitei feminine ca o restituire a metaforei biblice, pentru a reinterpretă mitul păcatului originar, conferind, în același timp, personajelor

feminine atribute diavolești. Ideea de magie este una dintre cele mai controversate în rândul criticilor, istoricilor sau antropologilor, dar Shakespeare nu o abordează asemenea inchișitorilor sau savanților din epocă, nu ca o controversă ce trebuie dezbătută, ci pornind de la reprezentațiile existente și de la ceea ce am putea numi surse literare sau paraliterare:

Există, într-adevăr, un anumit număr de arhetipuri sau de prototipuri mitice ale magiei, texte reprezentând magii sau vrăjitoarele în acțiune (în Antichitatea clasică, în Biblie, în folclor și în demonologia contemporană) pe care le regăsim în sursele efectiv utilizate sau, pur și simplu, accesibile lui Shakespeare și susceptibile de a fi fost integrate în scenele de magie din *Macbeth* (Larocque, 1998, p. 61).

După cum semnaleză François Larocque, noțiunea de magie se leagă de tot ceea ce privește manifestările vrăjitoriei în piesă, printre care le-am putea enumera pe cele legate de imaginile alăptării sau scena cazanului, imagini care trimit la viziunea unei maternități pervertite. Acestea derivă din miturile moștenite de la Homer, de la Seneca, dar și de la fondul de legende norvegiene și germanice, cum ar fi scena pădurii Birnam. Una dintre mizele reprezentărilor moderne ale piesei lui Shakespeare, fie că vorbim de registrul dramaturgic sau de cel spectacular, este de a vedea cum creatorii au ales sau nu să dizolve în creația lor acest fond vrăjitoresc. În articolul de față vom încerca să decantăm partea de magie/vrăjitorie, de fidelitate/infidelitate a adaptărilor și rescrierilor succesive față de modelul original shakespearian (Eugène Ionesco și Heiner Müller), aplicându-ne, de asemenea, asupra montărilor teatrale semnate de italianul Alessandro Serra și românul Botond Nagy. Nu în ultimul rând, ne propunem să ilustrăm câteva aspecte estetice specifice spectacolului *Macbeth* al lui Silviu Purcărete, bazat pe rescrierea ionesciană a piesei dramaturgului englez.

### **1. Elemente de magie și vrăjitorie în *Macbeth de Shakespeare***

În ciuda progresului social și cultural survenit odată cu epoca Renașterii, moștenirea medievală rămâne o prezență *insidioasă* în multiple manifestări literare. Christopher Marlowe, de exemplu, scrie în 1604 *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*, oferind celebrului personaj medieval o nouă identitate, în timp ce Ben Johnson introduce în piesele sale necromanți. Opera shakespeariană nu face excepție, dramaturgul inspirându-se, pe de o parte, din cronicile istorice redactate cu câteva secole înaintea epocii sale, în timp ce reciclează adesea în piesele sale elemente ce țin de patrimoniul medieval (superstiții, blesteme, ritualuri vrăjitoarești, personajele supranaturale etc.). Conflictul din *Visul unei nopți de vară* se petrece cu ocazia unei nopți cu valențe magice care, în perioada medievală, reprezenta un bun prilej pentru ca vrăjitoarele să-și pună în practică abilitățile.

Tot astfel, în *Furtuna* întâlnim personaje cu puteri magice, personaje mefistofelice extrem de similare prototipului diavolului măscărici creat de Marlowe. În *Romeo și Julieta* întâlnim licori magice careucid temporar persoanele care le consumă. Albert de Berzeviczy sintetizează foarte bine manifestările supranaturalului în opera lui Shakespeare,

care pot fi grupate, în funcție de natura lor. Prima categorie, cea mai comică dintre toate, este formată din figurile lumii zânelor imaginate de Shakespeare; a doua cuprinde tot ce se raportează la astrologie, la prevestiri superstițioase, la divinație, la farmece și la magie, în general; a treia cuprinde demonografia și vrăjitoria; a patra, în cele din urmă, cuprinde visele și aparițiile spectrelor (de Berzeviczy, 1915, pp. 22-23).

În ce privește *Macbeth*, termenul de „magie” este adesea invocat de majoritatea teoreticienilor, istoricilor teatrali și criticilor care văd în această piesă o reprezentare a Răului, „a statement of evil”, pentru a relua celebra formulă a lui L.C. Knights (1933, p. 34). În *Macbeth*, răul este resimțit și apare vizualizat pe fundalul unei Scoții medievale plină de eresuri. Cele trei vrăjitoare, fantomele, pădurea care merge, castelul tenebros – toate acestea contribuie la crearea unei atmosfere angoasante care prevestește suita de evenimente, descinderea într-un infern atât creștin, cât și păgân, homeric și dantesc. Sursele istorice menționează că, probabil, piesa a fost jucată pentru prima oară în prezența lui James I, care era preocupat de demonologie și ocultism: „Așa cum o demonstrează măștile scrise de către Ben Johnson, ale căror manuscrise cuprind numeroase *marginalia* și glose savante, o parte din plăcerea acestor spectacole de curte consta în descifrarea labirintului de arcanerudite” (Larocque, 1998, p. 62). Se poate presupune că Shakespeare, pentru a răspunde acestui gust particular, a realizat o adevărată muncă de cercetare în care a sintetizat întreaga materie de superstiții și fantasmagorii existente.

Astfel, Shakespeare concentrează elemente de folclor din legendele despre vrăjitoare, dar și reluarea sub forma unor deformări grotești a principalelor motive obsesive din piesă: maternitatea depravată, uciderea copilului, utilizarea anumitor motive animalice asociate răului și practicilor vrăjitoarești, concepția conform căreia „femeile cu barbă” erau considerate vrăjitoare etc. Pe lângă aceste manifestări ce aparțin unui imaginar folcloric, popular, din textul lui Shakespeare nu lipsesc nici aluziile literare și extra-literare. Astfel, referințele la Bellona, misterioasa zeiță romană a războiului, al cărei nume este pronunțat de Ross atunci când îl salută pe Macbeth cu strania denumire de „mândrul mire al Bellonei” (Shakespeare, 2016, p. 952), sunt preluate de la poetul Lucan și a sa operă *Farsalia*, în care sunt evocate imagini apocaliptice, prevestitoare de moarte și de haos, atât pentru lumea animală, cât și pentru cea umană. La acesta se mai adaugă

subtile referințe homerice, mai precis la vrăjitoarea Circe ipostaziată în *Odissea*, personaj asociat lui Lady Macbeth, în scena în care completează să le otrăvească pe gărzi. Ea îi cere soțului său ca, după ce Duncan adoarme, să le dea gărzilor „vin și-alte licori până când straja/Gândirii, amintirea, se topește” (Shakespeare, 2016, p. 972), fapt care le va induce un „somn porcesc” (Shakespeare, 2016, p. 973), aluzie fină la farmecele vrăjitoarei Circe care i-a preschimbat pe oamenii lui Ulise în animale. Totodată, cele trei vrăjitoare, inspirate de Nornele nordice, pe care Shakespeare le adaptează într-o cheie grotescă, se dedau unor practici inspirate din sabatul vrăjitoresc, obsedant pentru imaginarul medieval. Scena preparării poțiunii din cazan de la începutul Actului IV (Shakespeare, 2016, pp. 1021-1026) este mai mult decât relevantă, fiind izbitor de similară gravurilor semnate de Jacques de Gheyn II la finalul secolului al XVI-lea. Nu în ultimul rând, piesa shakespeareiană abundă de referințe care trimit clar la practicile de magie neagră: canibalism, otrăvire, folosirea de sânge și organe umane și animale pentru îndeplinirea unor ritualuri.

## **2. Rescrieri moderne ale lui Macbeth.**

### ***De la vrăjitorie la politic și comic***

a. În 1971, Heiner Müller scrie o traducere din *Macbeth*, care, în cele din urmă, va deveni o rescriere a piesei shakespeareiene. Deși prima intenție a proiectului a fost traducerea, textul având o mare fidelitate față de modelul original, atât sub aspectul limbii, fabulei, cât și al cronologiei, în cele din urmă, se transformă într-o adaptare. Müller retranscrie anumite pasaje aproape identic, dar introduce variațiuni și tăieturi în interiorul scenelor sau adaugă scene noi, condensează pe alocuri mai multe scene, respectând mereu cronologia și fabula impusă de către dramaturgul englez. Principala deosebire dintre cele două modele textuale este că adaptarea lui Müller conferă o orientare politică care clarifică o lectură modernă a piesei. De fapt, adaptarea sa e mai apropiată de o lectură pentru scenă, decât de o variațiune literară. Dramaturgul german își însușește o limbă plină de imagini, metaforică, barocă, violentă, pe care o modernizează printr-un limbaj crud și concis: astfel, folosește metaforele corporale pentru a reprezenta conceptele de război și istorie, operând o apropiere între hrană, moarte și sex. Jean-Pierre Morrel, care semnează traducerea franceză a piesei la Editions de Minuit (Müller, 1971), afirmă în prefața lucrării că majoritatea criticilor sunt de acord că Müller a acordat vizibilitate opriștilor, poporului, celor mulți.

O primă mutație estetică pe care o operează Müller se referă la înlocuirea conceptului de „destin” prin cel de „istorie”. Dimensiunea supranaturală, magică existentă la Shakespeare (prezența vrăjitoarelor, prevestirile destinului, natura monstruoasă, spectrele) este transformată la dramaturgul german într-una politică

și istorică. Triada vrăjitoarelor se transformă într-un fel de mesageri revoluționari ai poporului, textul lui Müller integrând poporul (țărani și soldații) ca făcând parte atât din poveste, cât și din istorie. Dacă piesa lui Shakespeare pune accent pe elita clasei dominante (regi, prinți, lorzi), Müller *repune* în drepturi poporul în ipostaza de victimă a puterii. Țărani morți de foame, puși în lanțuri pentru niște cauze nedrepte și infime, aruncați de vii în mlaștini pentru că nu mai sunt copaci liberi de care să fie spânzurați, în timp ce sunetul tobelor acoperă agonia lor, pentru ca aceia de la curte să nu-i audă, soldați morți pe câmpul de luptă, cadavrele lor în mormane îi servesc drept jilț regelui Duncan – toate acestea ne arată omniprezența unei violențe sângeroase care, nu de puține ori, i-a fost reproșată de către critica vremii lui Müller. Fiecare scenă imaginată de către dramaturg conține un episod de o cruzime explicită manifestată atât asupra oamenilor, cât și asupra animalelor, precum și la nivel verbal. Omniprezența cadavrelor sprijină violența limbajului care devine creator al unor viziuni violente. Müller problematizează istoria modernă după cel de-al doilea război mondial, violența pătrunzând în toate zonele și în toate relațiile umane. Victimele devin călăi, soldații se revoltă contra țăranilor, țărani ucid, la rândul lor, soldați, asasinii lui Banquo se ucid între ei. Astfel, Müller accentuează prin tușe groase, violente ceea ce Shakespeare lasă să se subînțeleagă. Dacă la cel din urmă se duce lupta dintre vechea orânduire reprezentată de lumea cavalerescă a regelui cel bun și noua orânduire reprezentată printr-o sete de putere monstruoasă și cinică, la Müller, Duncan este deja un rege violent, iar învingătorul lui Macbeth se dedă, la rândul său, la reglări de conturi sângeroase. Scenele de masă au, la fel ca la Shakespeare, o dimensiune alegorică și metaforică, dar Müller acordă poporului o putere nouă, și anume nevoia de analiză și de acțiune politică. La nivel dramaturgic, aceasta se realizează prin implicarea instanței lectorului/spectatorului lucid, care are dreptul de a interveni în această luare de decizie.

La Shakespeare, personajul lui Ross discută cu un bătrân care reprezintă arhetipul poporului înțelept, cu bun simț, despre presimțirile sumbre care au precedat moartea regelui și consecințele pe care aceste crime le provoacă. Astfel, Shakespeare aduce în tabăra celor dreți poporul (cei care știu să citească semnele naturii) și lorzii loiali (cei care înțeleg ordinea politică și respectă codul de onoare al cavalerilor). Müller, pe de altă parte, introduce noțiunea de luptă de clasă și de dialectică; mai precis, în scena X, ni se prezintă o femeie și un țăran care încearcă să recupereze cadavrul soțului femeii, pus în lanțuri și care comentează, cât se poate de pragmatic trista lor situație. Scena se termină după plecarea lorzilor, când țărani tăcuți ies din ascunzătoare și scot din lanțuri resturile leșurilor deja mâncate de câini. Triada vrăjitoarelor devine, la Müller, un sol al poporului, iar profetiile acestora se transformă într-un fel de lectură

istorico-politică. Dacă la Shakespeare momentul inițial declanșator al fabulei era reprezentat de vrăjitoarele care vorbeau despre o conspirație, piesa lui Müller începe cu consiliul de război ținut de regele Duncan, în care i se aduc vești de pe front, tonalitatea piesei situându-se, astfel, într-un univers uman, politic, războinic. Vrăjitoarele apar în piesa lui Müller, *ex-centrate*, în afara liniei frontului (nici soldat, nici țaran, nici bărbat, nici femeie), acestea participând la război ca într-un fel de act de terorism, de război de gherilă. Discursul lor ne aduce informații despre preocupările poporului: foamete, moarte, nedreptate, dar și informații despre putere. Elementul magic supranatural este mult diminuat, minimizat în piesa lui Müller, ritualurile vrăjitorești din piesa lui Shakespeare transformându-se într-un fel de acte de terorism, de rebeliune. Astfel, ele ard efigia regelui, oferă drept cadou noului rege Macbeth o mână de nou-născut sugrumat de către mama sa, un stomac de câine care a mâncat un țaran, un stindard din piele de om. Profețiile sunt interpretate într-un mod politic de către Müller; „niciun om ieșit/Prin sexul de femeie nu te-nvinge” (Shakespeare, 2016, p. 1027) se rezolvă la Müller prin faptul că ultimul adversar al lui Macbeth e născut prin cezariană. Ceea ce este semnul unui destin monstruos, dincolo de normă, la Müller este înlocuit prin detaliul că regele este învins de către o armată constituită din mai mulți bărbați decât poate naște o femeie: poporul.

b. *Macbett* de Eugène Ionesco, apărută în 1972, este o altă rescriere a piesei shakespeariene în care procedeul repetiției este pus în slujba manifestărilor destinului, pentru a crea efecte comice, dar și angoasante. Repetiția operează atât la nivelul personajelor care-și pierd, astfel, orice individualitate, dar și la nivel structural, producând perpetua alternanță a regimurilor autoritare și a tiraniilor în istorie. Eugène Ionesco vorbește despre acest text ca fiind o: „melodramă mai mult sau mai puțin comică, cu surprize” (Ionesco, 1972, p. 23), care îi permite autorului să transforme sumbra tragedie a lui Macbeth într-o farsă grotescă, într-o „parodie cu atmosferă de basm întunecat” (Călinescu, 2006, p. 313). Prin intermediul parodiei, dramaturgul iese din zona tragediei, pentru a se reinventa într-o comedie asemănătoare celor lui Jarry, în care repetițiile nu mai sunt manifestările unui destin fatalist, ci relevă forța devastatoare a setei de putere, împărtășită de toate generațiile politice ale umanității. Matei Călinescu amintește despre afinitățile piesei ionesciene cu stilul impus de Jarry, insistând asupra modului în care dramaturgul de origine română operează în substraturile textului o parabolă despre răul istoric.

*Macbett*-ul lui Ionesco adaugă bitextualității lui *Ubu* o a treia dimensiune, care dă parodiei o nouă aură de *gravitas*, transformând-o, dintr-un instrument inițial de provocare a râsului, într-unul de provocare la reflecție: asupra istoriei, asupra Răului în istorie (ca trădare, ca



violență ucigașă, ca sete de putere sau neînfrânat *libido dominandi*) și, finalmente, asupra literaturii de *gradul doi* și a posibilităților pe care le oferă manipulările textuale (Călinescu, 2006, p. 311).

*Macbett* este singura piesă în care Ionesco se dedă unui exercițiu de rescriere metodică a unei piese anterioare. Așa cum demonstrează Gérard Genette în *Palimpsestes*, este vorba de o parodie serioasă care nu ia în răspăr tragedia lui Shakespeare, ci îi radicalizează pesimismul, îndepărtând orice posibilitate a unei restaurări providențiale a ordinii (Genette, 1982, p. 504). Transpunerea tragediei shakespeariene în universul dramatic absurd al lui Ionesco generează un comic similar travestiului burlesc. Dacă politicul și violența erau cuvintele-cheie ale rescrierii lui Müller, la Ionesco derizoriul și absurdul se substituie filonului supranatural. Astfel, vrăjitoarele fac striptease până ce rămân în bikini și zboară pe o mătură cu motor, spectrele care reprezintă dinastia de Banco sunt înfățișate prin apelativul „Pieds Nickelés”<sup>1</sup>, realizarea profețiilor vrăjitoarelor se produce printr-o explicație abracadabrantă care-l prezintă pe Macol ca fiind „copilul lui Banco și al unei gazele pe care o vrăjitoare a transformat-o într-o femeie” (Ionesco, 1991, p. 1109)<sup>2</sup>. Unele dintre aceste modificări nu vizează decât să modernizeze elemente care își pierd, astfel, funcția dramatică și produc o suită de gaguri. Altele deformează manifestările supranaturale în profitul unui materialism și al unui oportunism universal. La nivelul personajelor regrupate în funcție de schema repetiției, Ionesco operează transformări profunde raportate la modelul original: personajele care reprezintă binele în *Macbeth* (Macduff și Fleance) sunt suprimate. Duncan nu mai întrupează conducătorul cel bun a cărui ucidere este, totodată, un regicid, un paricid și un sacrilegiu, rolul său fiind amplificat de către Ionesco pentru a releva temperamentul autoritar, laș și corupt. Ionesco adaugă listei personajelor sale și pe cele ale cuplului de trădători Glamiss și Candor, doar evocate de către Shakespeare, pentru a îmbogăți seria tiranilor și trădătorilor. Macbett și Banco apar sub forma unui personaj straniu cu două capete care seamănă atât de bine, încât Lady Duncan nu reușește să-i distingă. Asemănările frapante se produc și la nivelul personajelor feminine, producându-se o confuzie între uman și supranatural, în timp ce personajele masculine își pierd toată individualitatea, devenind incarnări ale unui viciu – și anume setea de putere.

### **3. Macbeth, Macbettu, Macbett. Trei identități contemporane**

Alegerea celor trei reprezentații ține mai degrabă de șansa de a fi văzut cele trei spectacole în condiții festivaliere recente, dar și de un gust personal

1 Termen folosit în Primul Război Mondial pentru a desemna persoanele care refuză să meargă.

2 Traducerea noastră după versiunea franceză.

pentru creația celor trei creatori, din estetici, contexte teatrale, dar și perioade de creație diferite. Din fericire, diferențele specifice dintre cele trei se pretează discursului nostru introductiv, și anume de a vedea cum se *maniază* intenția creatorului pe intenția operii, în cazul nostru pe *cuantificarea* nivelului de fidelitate față de modelul original shakespearian, mai ales în ceea ce privește componenta magică, vrăjitoarească, elementul de supranatural sau rezolvările scenice multiple, pentru a decanta acest filon într-o contextualizare care reprezintă de multe ori și o sumă a tendințelor actuale, dar și a (re)lecturilor succesive, făcute atât de dramaturgi, dar mai ales de către creatori. Dacă transcrierea lui Müller a suscitât controverse puternice în perioada în care a fost scrisă, 1971, în 1972 ea fiind interzisă de către cenzura din Republica Democrată Germană din motive de „pesimism istoric”, dramaturgul neacordând niciun fel de simpatie niciunui dintre personajele sale, absolut toți fiind descriși asemenea unor monștri însetați de putere, majoritatea montărilor au un numitor comun, și anume păstrarea, la nivelul construcției personajelor, a responsabilității față de crimele comise. Astfel, Jean-Claude Berutti, care a montat în 2010 la Comédie de Saint-Etienne, afirmă în Nota de intenție a reprezentației că:

Destinul, în versiunea lui Müller, joacă mai mult ca oricând rolul de tăvălug orb, dar eroii sunt iremediabil responsabili de actele lor... Dacă am ales această versiune este pentru că totul se desfășoară foarte rapid. Am dorit să fac un spectacol scurt care să nu-i lase spectatorului niciun moment de respiro...

Din cronicile spectacolului reiese că reprezentația s-a apropiat poate prea mult de zona *gore*, totul traducându-se printr-o atmosferă foarte sumbră și o doză bună de hemoglobină, reprezentația fiind percepută într-o estetică a șocului.

În paragrafele următoare vom analiza succint cele trei reprezentații contemporane, atât din perspectiva diferențelor specifice, dar mai ales a raportării lor la contextualizări diferite, tendință inerentă spectacolului contemporan.

a. Afirmat deja pe scena occidentală, Alessandro Serra face parte din categoria regizorilor pentru care abordarea repertoriului canonic devine, deopotrivă, o cercetare antropologică. Această permanentă căutare a sa, de descoperire a *culiselor* textelor teatrale este o constantă a unui stil pe care și l-a dezvoltat de-a lungul ultimilor 20 de ani, odată cu înființarea Companiei Teatropersona, dar și ca urmare a studiilor sale universitare în domeniul Antropologiei. Realizat în 2017, *Macbettu*, coproducție Sardenia Teatru și Compania Teatropersona, aduce o propunere vizionară și îndrăzneță care operează asupra limbajului și a gestualității și transpune modelul original shakespearian din Scoția în inima unui imaginar din regiunea sardă, Barbagia. Textul lui Shakespeare este interpretat în limba sardă doar de către actori bărbați care întruchipează deopotrivă rolurile masculine și feminine. Încă de la acest element, regizorul are în vedere

recuperarea uneia dintre tradițiile teatrului elisabetan (implicit, ale teatrului antic) și, prin urmare, utilizarea travestiului ca mijloc de transpunere scenică a anumitor secvențe dramatice. Reprezentația se bazează pe analogii surprinzătoare între atmosfera textului shakespeareian și ritualurile cu mască din Sardinia: sunetele produse, pieile de animale, coarnele, măștile, sângele, vinul, forța elementelor naturale – creează o dimensiune dionisiacă, la care se adaugă o precizie formală, coregrafică incredibilă.

Tributar esteticii ce privilegiază „spațiul gol”, Serra reduce la minimum recuzita scenică, operând un proces de decantare nu doar vizuală, ci și dialogică a textului shakespeareian, din care păstrează doar personajele esențiale, centrale fiind vrăjitoarele și cuplul Macbeth. Materialitatea scenică are răceala unui tăiș și ariditatea unui deșert. Întregul perimetru este acoperit de praf, metal și, în anumite episoade, de rocă, elemente sterpe care transfigurează în cheie simbolică moartea umanității, scena ideală pentru ca Macbeth să-și instaureze dictatura. Spațiul scenic străjuit de mese metalice care folosesc ca instrumente de percuzie, pentru producerea de efecte sonore, dar și ca obiecte de recuzită ce deserveșc, după caz, desfășurarea evenimentială a conflictului, este pe toată durata spectacolului redat în registru monocrom, cu o luminozitate slabă, ce conferă imaginii scenice aspectul unui clareobscur de pictură barocă. Alegerea cromatică este sugestivă, toate personajele, cu un aspect fie monahal, fie de doliu, ascund intenția regizorală de a apropia universul shakespeareian de cinetica socială a unui spațiu asemănător Siciliei profunde. Această localizare insinuată, însă nu declamată, modelează acțiunea și rostirea. Totul este trăit la extrem, strident, alert, în timp ce tăcerile, momentele de reflecție, episoadele statice sunt susținute de o încărcătură emoțională în forță, implozivă. Alertețea scenică are ceva din convoaiele funerare ale bocitoarelor siciliene și din fervoarea nevrotică a unor personaje de desene animate de la care actorii preiau nu numai motricitatea isterică, ci și schimonosiri ale vocii, alternanța registrelor grave și stridente, într-o ipostază la scară redusă a descinderilor carnavalești medievale. Emblematic în acest sens este personajul tripartit al vrăjitoarelor, interpretate ad litteram de „femei cu barbă”, pentru a relua apelativul lui Banco: „Sunteți femei,/Dar barba voastră lasă îndoială” (Shakespeare, 2016, p. 956).

Vrăjitoarele au un dublu rol în reprezentația semnată de Serra: dramaturgic, în sensul în care oferă conflictul central, și dinamic, intervenind pe scenă în momente de intermezzo pentru a contrapuncta în cheie grotescă amploarea tragică rezultată în urma actelor monstruoase conduse de cuplul Macbeth. Ele, de altfel, deschid spectacolul, intrând pe scenă în urma unor zgomote furtunoase emise de plăcile de metal din spatele scenei, iar primul gest pe care una dintre ele îl face este de a scuipa către public. Această acțiune poartă

o încărcătură magică, saliva fiind un element cu conotații vrăjitoarești prin care, mai târziu, vrăjitoarele îl vor *unge* pe alesul la tron. „Saliva e înfățișată ca o secreție înzestrată cu o putere magică sau supranaturală, având un dublu efect: ea reunește sau separă, vindecă sau nimicește, alină sau ultragiază” (Chevalier și Gheerbrant, 2009, p. 803). În frenezia vrăjitoarelor ce combină gagurile și elemente de ritual păgân, Macbeth este sărutat pe gură, lins pe mână, scuipat pe față ca un gest de recunoaștere a suveranității sale, ca un gest pe care, în folclor l-am decriptat ca pe o formă de a alunga deochiul. Din acest proces aparent hilar, infantil, de alungare a răului, nu putea lipsi elementul vestimentar care redă într-o cheie cât mai fidelă imaginea *vecchia*-ei din spațiul sicilian, sard – îmbrăcată complet în negru, cu batic, cu un mers cocârjat și cu un arsenal de obiecte specifice: mătura și nuiua, emblematice pentru imaginea vrăjitoarei medievale. Respectând stilul vestimentar, însă într-o cheie solemnă, personajul lui Lady Macbeth, la rândul său interpretată de un bărbat cu barbă și cu plete, de o frumusețe androgină, are un aspect mortuar, monahal, asemenea unui Rasputin plasat pe granița între o apariție christică și una demonică. Același personaj își va manifesta puterile vrăjitoarești adormind gărzile lui Duncan într-un mod care redă cu o fidelitate izbitoare textul shakespearian: ea îi cheamă pe gardieni, atinși parcă de o stare similară delirului licantronic, preschimbați în porci, pentru a-i hrăni cu sânge și pentru a-i arunca în acel „swinish sleep”. La fel de terifiant și magnetic este episodul morții sale, în care trupul său dezgolit levitează pentru câteva secunde deasupra scenei pentru a fi mai târziu înghițit de umbre, sărutându-l în prealabil pe mort într-un ritual de trecere, de un păgânism evident.

Poate cea mai mare calitate a acestui spectacol, dincolo de cele ce țin de registrul actoricesc și estetic, este găsirea, de către regizor, a acestui fond carnavalesc, antropologic, al Siciliei profunde, care i-a permis un transfer atât semiotic, cât și vizual, dinspre un determinism locativ foarte precis al operei lui Shakespeare, înspre un locativ mitic, atemporal, ce ține de zona unui fond cultural antropologic comun, în care elementele ce țin de zona supranaturalului primesc o aură de ceremonial, de ritual dionisiac, pe alocuri.

b. Cel mai recent spectacol semnat de Botond Nagy pentru secția germană a Teatrului Național „Radu Stanca” Sibiu (cu premiera în 1 aprilie 2022), *Macbeth* duce mai departe anumite mărci stilistice care, în lumina ultimelor sale creații încep să coaguleze o estetică specifică a tânărului regizor român. Astfel, spectacolul lui Nagy găsește și de această dată în resursele tehnologice un mediu propice dezvoltării conflictului scenic. Într-un mod similar spectacolului său *Nora* de la Cluj-Napoca, pe scena sibiană se află un perete transparent supradimensionat care împarte longitudinal scena în două perimetre adiacente, în timp ce funcționează deopotrivă ca un ecran, ca un „ochi al lui Dumnezeu”

ce surprinde stările angoasante ale personajelor sau detalii din cetatea distrusă de lăcomia lui Macbeth. Pe scenă se vor afla doar patru actori, iar această alegere este grăitoare pentru faptul că Nagy operează un decupaj drastic asupra textului original, concentrându-și atenția exclusiv asupra complotului conjugal. Regăsim, așadar, pe scenă cuplul central, Macbeth și Lady Macbeth, un personaj masculin proteic care îi ipostaziază succesiv pe Duncan, Banquo și Macduff și, nu în ultimul rând, un personaj mut, spectral care are un rol mai degrabă coregrafic, ritualic, ce prevestește degringolada și ne integrează în atmosfera gotică a universului scenic. Un astfel de personaj motivic, cu un rol periferic acțiunii scenice, îl mai întâlnim și în alte creații ale regizorului ca o întrupare insolită a corului, a voinței divine, a naratorului etc. În acest caz, personajul este o incarnare a morții, precum și un substitut al celor trei vrăjitoare care nu au o concretete scenică independentă. Însăși vestimentația sa îi certifică această valență simbolică mortuară: părul negru îi acoperă chipul, fiind îmbrăcat într-un costum de cioclu, din pieptul căruia irumpe o inflorescență de crini albi. Câteodată, flori de crin ies prin mânecele acestei siluete, asemenea unor tășuri de coasă în miniatură. Prin aceste mărci funeste, sunt anticipate momentele cheie ale desfășurării evenimentiale, culminând cu imaginile dezolante ale unui oraș distrus, proiectat pe ecran, pe care spectatorul va intui că sunt preluate dintr-un reportaj despre Ucraina. Prin acest gest, regizorul ne oferă o panoramă contemporană a politicii europene, Shakespeare devine încă o dată contemporanul nostru pentru a ne dovedi că istoria se repetă și că răul ideologic este mult mai aproape de noi decât am crede.

Fără a cădea într-o critică socială evidentă sau într-o parodie politică, Botond Nagy presară de-a lungul spectacolului anumite indicii care contribuie la o localizare mai precisă a cronotopului scenic. În prima parte a spectacolului, Macbeth se roagă în fața unui altar străjuit de o cruce, îmbrăcat în haine de *teenager* cu NYC. Aerul ușor infantil al personajului face din dorința sa de a conduce lumea, dorință încurajată îndeaproape de partenera sa, o ambiție prostească, hiperbolică. În mâinile acestui copil mare care vrea să pună cu orice preț mâna pe „jucăria” puterii, suveranitatea devine o armă infernală, un câmp de luptă care, pentru personajele masculine asemenea unor puști, devine terenul de joacă unde își dispută puterile. Astfel, personajul proteic Duncan/Banquo/Macduff este îmbrăcat într-un costum de scrimă, care devine ulterior un costum de golf, în timp ce Macbeth apare în ultima parte într-un costum de judo. Este greu, dar nu imposibil, de spus dacă acest ultim detaliu face o aluzie la un dictator contemporan, la rândul său specialist în arte marțiale, care este responsabil de bombardarea unei țări, în timp ce se roagă la simbolul suprem al creștinismului. Cu toate acestea, indiferent de gradul de speculație al spectatorului, un lucru este cert: reprezentația la care tocmai asistă se joacă într-o țară aflată în vecinătatea

unei țări distruse de setea de putere a unui conducător, având premiera la câteva luni de la începutul monstruosului atac. Acest sentiment insidios de imediatete joacă un rol esențial în receptarea spectacolului care ipostaziază pe scenă, în cele din urmă, o întreagă metaforă a distrugerii în masă: la scurt timp după ce vedem imaginile unei Ucraine bombardate, decorul se descompune, dispare de pe scenă, lăsând în urmă o perdea de fum prin care Lady Macbeth se strecoară pentru a interpreta live *Skyfall* de Adele, asemenea unui epilog apocaliptic. Acest element muzical încheie o orchestrație instrumentală apăsătoare, permanentă, care de-a lungul întregului spectacol a creat căi de acces înspre sufletele scelerate ale protagoniștilor. Scena rămâne în final goală și mută, asemenea unei ruine. Nu mai este (și poate nici nu a fost) loc pentru nicio vrăjitorie, ci doar pentru natura umană în cea mai crudă și mai dăunătoare manifestare a sa.

c. *Macbett* de Eugène Ionesco, în regia lui Silviu Purcărete, a avut premiera la Teatrul Maghiar de Stat din Cluj-Napoca în 13 octombrie 2021. Reprezentația reușește atât prin jocul actorilor, cât și prin elementele de scenografie și muzicale, să recreeze parodic cele două straturi textuale, și anume lumea ficțională shakespeariană și viziunea brechtian-cabaretistică a lui Ionesco. Silviu Purcărete este, în primul rând, un creator de universuri vizual-poetice, dar și de atmosferă, regizorul reușind și de data aceasta să îmbine multitudinea de planuri pe care textul și modelul său original le relevă. În planul vizual, lumina devine un personaj de sine-stătător cu ajutorul căruia sunt proiectate stări și emoții ce prefigurează onirismul și subconștientul personajelor. Aceasta este descompusă pe scenă într-un spectru larg, mergând de la alb rece, neutru, înspre albastru-verde. Respectând principiul repetitivității din textul ionescian, dar și un gust specific al regizorului, Purcărete ipostaziază scenic personaje colective monocrome și sincrone. Clovnul cu melon, un personaj ce trimite la imaginea vagabondului lui Chaplin, are în economia reprezentației și rolul dramaturgic de liant al acțiunilor scenice, fiind personajul care vinde „limonadă militară” sau acompaniază sonor acțiunile celorlalte personaje și devenind un martor sau un cronicar imparțial al evoluției istorice. Personajele colective ipostaziază figuri grotești cu capete însângerate ascunse în pungi de plastic, coroane de hârtie și tron miniatural. Acestea sunt realizate în tușe caricaturale din care nu lipsește o tendință evidentă spre ludic. Registrul muzical susține sincretismul vizual, iar, alături de compozițiile muzicale originale, reprezentația abundă de arii de operă, muzică de cabaret. Referințele culturale alternează, de asemenea, cu metafore vizuale deja emblematice ale esteticii lui Purcărete (pardesiurile lungi, bastoanele, valizele): omul cu melon fără cap care dansează cu omul cu plasa de fluturi pare a fi o sugestie la universul oniric al lui Magritte, iar desenele din sala tronului sugerează un univers dezolant, expresionist.

Spațiul scenic este construit pe o structură de mise-en-abîme – în primul plan, avem o clădire veche, dărăpănată; în cel de-al doilea, o cortină de teatru, de scenă italiană, care lasă să se întrevadă imaginea unui portret imens, supradimensionat, cel al dictatorului. Reprezentația reiterează imaginea istoriei tiraniilor și a masacrelor succesive care au marcat atât trecutul, cât și prezentul umanității. Absurdul războiului, repetarea hiperbolică a violenței sunt liniile de forță care apar dincolo de intenția parodică și carnavalescă a reprezentației lui Purcărete. Supranaturalul, determinismul magic este substituit de un carusel repetitiv și angoasant din care civilizația secolului XXI nu pare să-și găsească încă ieșirea, dar și de un show total în care istoria și ritualurile ei devin personaje principale. De asemenea, nu lipsește prezentarea ritualurilor sociale care punctează banalitatea și mediocritatea vieții marilor dictatori și ale maselor care îi secundează, relevantă pentru acest aspect fiind scena de tenis. Personajele feminine nu sunt nici ele exonerate de procedeul repetitivității – Lady Duncan devine, mai apoi, Lady Macbett și, alături de cameristele sale, reface triada vrăjitoarească din universul shakespearian. În realitate, în absurdul ionescian și în carnavalescul purcăretian, nu sunt altceva decât niște încurcă-lume, mediocre, banale și stridente. În iraționalul pe care-l implică ideea de dictatură, apelul la fantastic, la *ghinion* este, de fapt, un tampon compensator, o formă de declinare a oricărei implicări personale.

Ceremonialele vrăjitoarești din piesa originală, filtrate prin filonul absurd al lui Ionesco, sunt transformate în reprezentația lui Purcărete în protocoale ale dictaturii: conspiraționiștii se întâlnesc cu adulatorii, iar ambele părți par să sufere de un infantilism cronic, toate problemele fiind soluționate cu o infinită iresponsabilitate. Asemenea unor copii mari și teribili, personajele de pe scenă se joacă cu arme diverse, generând războaie și crime. O altă trăsătură comună a personajelor este caricatura: Duncan e fricos, fanfaron, egoist, iar Macbett pare o simplă variațiune a acestuia din urmă. Spectacolul lui Purcărete abundă de umor negru (personaje fără cap, sulite înfipite în trupuri, fantome, fanfaronada discursurilor politice, scene de protocol al simpatizanților politici), dar și de grotesc, farsă absurdă care întregesc ideea unei tendințe de teatralizare a absurdului setei de putere a dictatorilor, devenită cumva, în perioada contemporană, un substitut al unei poțiuni magice, generatoare de rău.

### Concluzii

Dacă vrăjitoria și toate practicile ocultismului au dispărut odată cu Inchiziția, atunci ele și-au găsit în perioada modernă un substitut poate mai puțin spectaculos, însă la fel de malefic: Răul ideologic. Tocmai din acest motiv, celebrii antagoniști ai operei shakespeariene nu au mai putut fi reabilitați în ultimul secol decât printr-un apel inevitabil la figurile marilor dictatori. Alături de Richard III, Macbeth este, de departe, figura care surprinde cel mai convingător mecanismul defectuos al ambiției politice și al puterii scăpate de sub control. Apropierea regizorilor de acest personaj monstruos este, prin urmare, un act premeditat de „luare a pulsului” a unei perioade în care istoria riscă să se repete în cele mai macabre manifestări ale sale. Totuși, este riscant să *reducem* esența piesei shakespeariene strict la exigențele unei metafore politice. Astfel, spectacolul semnat de Alessandro Serra ne apare în peisajul contemporan ca un act de *adaptare* culturală mai degrabă atipic a conflictului dramaturgic la un spațiu arhaic și o sensibilitate diferită, păstrând nealterat filonul păgân al piesei originale. La polul opus acestei inițiative se plasează mai numeroasele tentative de a vedea în Macbeth imaginea tiranului, profund alimentat de figurile reale ale diverșilor conducători trecuți și prezenți. În timp ce Silviu Purcărete marșează pe modernizările politice ale textelor canonice, oferind prin al său *Macbeth* o parodie amară atemporală a jocurilor de putere, Botond Nagy ne oferă poate cea mai recentă metamorfozare a personajului-dictator, în mijlocul unei Europe pe punctul de a fi devastată de ambițiile politice ale unui conducător megaloman.

### References:

1. Călinescu, M. (2006). *Eugène Ionesco: teme identitare și existențiale*. Iași: Junimea.
2. Chevalier, J., Gheerbrant, A. (2009). *Dicționar de simboluri*. Iași: Polirom.
3. de Berzeviczy, A. (1915). *Le Surnaturel dans le theatre de Shakespeare*. Paris: Fontemoing et Cie Editeurs.
4. Genette, G. (1982). *Palimpsestes*. Paris: Editions de Minuit.
5. Ionesco, E. (1972). 'Ionesco: les paranoïaques de la politique', in *Les nouvelles littéraires*, January.
6. Ionesco, E. (1991). *Théâtre complet*. Paris: Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade).
7. Knights, L.C. (1933). *How many children had Lady Macbeth? An Essay in the Theory and Practice of Shakespeare Criticism*. Cambridge.
8. Larocque, F. (1998). 'Mythe, magie et representation du mal: Macbeth', in Venette, G. (coord.). *Le Mal et ses masques*. Lyon: ENS Editions.
9. Müller, H. (1971). *Macbeth d'après Shakespeare*. Paris: Editions de Minuit.
10. Shakespeare, W. (2016). 'Macbeth'. Translated by Horia Gârbea, in Shakespeare, W., *Opere complete. Tragedii. Volumul V*. București: Academia Română.



**Performance references:**

1. *Macbettu* (2017). Directed by Alessandro Serra [Sardegna Teatro & Teatropersona].
2. *Macbeth* (2022). Directed by Botond Nagy [“Radu Stanca” National Theatre in Sibiu].
3. *Macbett* (2021). Directed by Silviu Purcărete [Hungarian Theatre of Cluj].

**Diana Nechit** is Associate Professor, PhD at the Department of Drama and Theatre Studies from the Faculty of Letters and Arts, “Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu. She has a PhD in French literature, with a thesis on the theatre of Bernard-Marie Koltès. Her areas of expertise focus on theatrical studies, the relationship between text and image, contemporary French dramaturgy, and French language for the performing arts. She writes reviews and studies on dramatic literature, theatre, and film, in numerous publications in the country. She translated contemporary French plays, having already published several texts in anthologies, but also texts to be performed on the stages of Romania.

**Andrei C. Șerban** is Assistant Professor, PhD at the Department of Drama and Theatre Studies from the Faculty of Letters and Arts, “Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu. He has published theatre and film chronicles, but also studies in national specialty journals. He is reviewer and jury member at The Monthly Film Festival in Glasgow. He moderated, on the occasion of some special screenings, meetings with film directors and with actors at ESTE Film Festival and TIFF Sibiu, being responsible for the section Neorealism and New Realisms, at the ASTRA Film Festival 2015.

# MYTHOLOGIZING THE POLITICAL GESTURE, A VECTOR OF MYTH PERPETUATION IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY.

*THE DANCE OF REALITY AND  
ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY*



**ILINCA STIHI**

UNATC "I.L. Caragiale", Bucharest, Romania  
*stihilina@gmail.com*

**Abstract:** An unusual common element of the secular society of the 20th century is the mythologization of the political gesture, in both the space of communist identity and the one in which different forms of Athenian democracy have been perpetuated until today. *The Dance of Reality* (2013), the film of Chilean director Alejandro Jodorowski captures and artistically transposes this mutation of community metaphysics from the area of religion to that of politics. By analysing two emblematic scenes from Jodorowski's film using concepts underlying Mircea Eliade's myth theory, the article aims to investigate the process by which contemporary society creates new mythical landmarks in the secular space, by mythologizing the political gesture with the help of mythologizing act storytelling.

**Keywords:** Alejandro Jodorowsky, myth, nations, mythologization of political gesture, sacred space, mythologizing act, contemporary society.

**How to cite:** Stihl, Ilinca (2022). 'Mythologizing the Political Gesture, a Vector of Myth Perpetuation in Contemporary Society'. *The Dance of Reality* and Alejandro Jodorowsky', *Concept* 1(24)/2022, pp. 18-25.

Surrealism, rarely addressed in contemporary cinema, is part of the essence of film as art. From the distant days of the silent film, the surrealist discourse entered into direct controversy with the obvious vocation of cinema to faithfully reproduce reality. Man Ray, Buñuel, Dalí, or Germaine Dulac challenged the visual syntax using poetry to *shatter* the ossified texture of life captured on film. With the improvement of cinematographic methods of filming and projection, especially after the discovery of sound film, cinema realism will almost completely banish any influence of the abstract arts. However, Surrealism will discover new ways to insert itself into cinematic construction and will target something other than the actual structure of language. Once Eisenstein postulated the rules of classical montage, since the industry had standardized the mode of expression and communication through cinema, any other interference was firmly eliminated. It seemed the end of the burst of creativity generated by this fascinating technical invention of the early 20th century. Somehow, however, surrealism has returned to cinema, and although it does so sporadically, it amends the inherently realistic visuality of the frame by managing to denounce its artificiality.

Modern cinematic surrealism relies on the effect of filmed theatre, that is, the set and *mise-en-scène* of theatrical origin are recorded as realistic elements by the camera. The visual aesthetics thus obtained is in perfect coherence with a society taken over by the daily political spectacle, which, beginning with the Bolshevik October Revolution, developed together with the cinema. Theatrical realities conveyed through film are the appearances of politicians, their speeches, and support demonstrations. The tribune, the placards and the collective character of the supporters organize a playful setting for any political demonstration. Everything is orchestrated around the rostrum where the hero of

the occasion delivers his speech seasoned with stage interpretation tricks – from studied gestures to intonation and rhythm – just like a professional actor in front of his audience. The purpose of this representation is not at all innocent, it aims to elude any other reality and, mainly, the vital one recognizable to the human senses. The intended and often achieved result is to keep groups of people in a kind of captivity in the fascination of the Spectacle.

The elimination of official religions from the leaders' tribune, under the pretext of secularization, brings on the history stage a new type of relationship between leaders and communities (in our case, nations), a relationship defined by the need to worship (specific to many) and by the obligation to make a legendary gesture (for those who will be chosen at the head of the many). We are witnessing a moment unique in definition and scope in the history of human societies when, out of a desire to escape the mystical attraction, community life becomes, in itself, the embodiment of the mythological act. A fresh voice was needed, although it belongs to a senior of the cinematographic art, coming from a culture of European origin, yet developed in distant lands; the vision that has the advantage of distance, but also the commitment of hot temper, was necessary; the presence of the film written and directed by the Chilean Alejandro Jodorowsky was mandatory in order to transpose the turmoil of Europe into a more comprehensive image and thus more clarifying for everything that *is happening to us*.

*The Dance of Reality* tells the story of a small Chilean businessman, a Jewish immigrant from Ukraine who, radicalized by communist ideology, submits his life and family to an existence with Christic resonances aimed at discovering a kind of communal metaphysics, a higher meaning of social life capable of bringing salvation to all people. Jaime first exerts his doctrinal fanaticism on the family, terrorizing his son and assaulting his wife. Then, he will follow his destiny in a larger context, at the peak of Chilean power, when he decides to assassinate the leader of the state but ends up being arrested and tortured. He will return home similarly to Odysseus, scarred to mutilation by the bloody game of power and survival.

*The Dance of Reality* has been heavily commented on as an autobiographical film, and the personal elements that Jodorowsky brought to the story have been extensively discussed in press articles. For this reason, many aspects, of disturbing depth, have been left in the shadows. The film is definitely an aesthetic manifesto of surrealism in modern cinema and a great political film.

From the very beginning of the film, the poor childhood home is ruled by the icon-painting of Comrade Stalin. When Jodorowsky chooses to brutally join the space of the church with that of the street, building in two emblematic sequences, impressive moments of collective ecstasy, *The Dance of Reality* becomes

more than an art film. It stands in what the *mythologizing act of storytelling means*, that is, the very creation of a mythical landmark, as Eliade explains:

... the church shares in an entirely different space from the buildings that surround it. Within the sacred precincts the profane world is transcended. On the most archaic levels of culture this possibility of transcendence is expressed by various *images of an opening*; here, in the sacred enclosure, communication with the gods is made possible; hence there must be a door to the world above, by which the gods can descend to earth and man can symbolically ascend to heaven. (...) this was the case in many religions; properly speaking, the temple constitutes an opening in the upward direction and ensures communication with the world of the gods. Every sacred space implies a hierophany, an irruption of the sacred that results in detaching a territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different (Eliade, 1959, pp. 25-26).

According to all the rules postulated by Eliade, the sacred space is for Jodorowsky the enclosure dedicated to ecstatic moments, but it is not limited to the church space, and spreads on the streets of the city infected by the fever of ideologies. Thus, the Chilean director emphasizes the surprising coherence between the secular manifestation of the sacred organized by religion and the invocation of the same sacred in the public space through political actions. We propose to study these two sequences, present in the film on the wandering route of the hero to assassinate the Chilean dictator. The first sequence is preceded, like a prologue, by the moment with obvious references to Christ's biography, in which our hero will learn a trade from an old carpenter. Although, prey to a paresis in both hands, he will manage to work on polishing the one hundred chairs needed for the church in the city. By teaching him his trade, the carpenter don Jose (the name is also not chosen by chance, Jose, Joseph in Spanish and Portuguese) also instils in him his own philosophy of life, marked by faith and generosity towards others. This Chilean Joseph will also lead him inside the church under the pretext of delivering the one hundred chairs, where Jaime will attend a religious service, atypical for the European viewer, regardless of him being Catholic, through the explosion of joy of the community in songs dedicated to glorifying God.

But what does this church of joy look like in Jodorowsky's representation? We are in a dilapidated building with peeling paint on the walls and broken stone tiles. From place to place, in the groves, where the icons should be, the space is covered by long curtains, down to the ground. The participants to the service are simple people, in modern attire, without any restrictive element of the many practiced by religions. Only the sign of the cross rises hugely in place of the altar and becomes the only Christian element. This church stripped of the insignia of its various factions speaks to the origins of Christianity and its primary purpose:

the invocation of divinity. Besides, the connection with metaphysics happens. Don Jose dies suddenly, right in the middle of the ritual. His death appears as a long-awaited sealing of the link between earth and heaven, as material evidence of the manifestation of the intensely sacred invoked in the place of worship. The priest is, as before, a true director of events. He translates for the community the meaning of what has happened and suggests the right attitude. Don Jose's death can be nothing but a new reason to rejoice and glorify God. Moreover, the whole sequence has a manifest theatricality. Cinematic frames are, shall we say, *utilitarian*. They do not comment, but only reproduce, sometimes even clumsily, the events. The *mise-en-scène* betrays a concept that goes beyond the limits of the frame, betrays the theatre, the monolithic composition, horizontally conforming to the two-dimensional frame of the stage.

Overwhelmed with emotion, Jaime exits the church only to find himself involved in another type of collective summoning. On the street is the Nazi crowd chanting anti-Semitic slogans instead of Slavic songs. Some notable differences can be seen between the two spaces. If there were no icons or sculptures in the place of worship, outside, the outer walls of the houses lining the street are loaded with the same poster promoting the face of the Nazi leader. In stark contrast, the group of believers has a motley appearance, with people wearing various outfits of everyday life, while the Nazi demonstrators are almost identical and uniformed in the insignia of the political ideology they support. Demonstrators wear masks. Faces covered in this way are depersonalized. They remain a *mass of maneuver* inflamed by promises of generic national supremacy promoted by the Nazi contingent flanking a vintage car disguised as a cardboard tank. This is how, in a few minutes, Jodorowsky invites the viewer to a meditation on the invocation of the sacred and how, once this practice is abandoned in the church premises, it mythologizes the very life of the fortress generating political currents with the force specific to religious radicalism.

***Political life in the 20th century, propagator of the mythical, legendary gesture***

Two political systems will face each other until the end of the 20th century in multiple forms of war, both alternatives to the monarchical system, a successful millennial political construct of religious states. The communist system and the democratic (capitalist) system are found in expressions full of pathos known to Europe since the time of the legendary ancient Greece. But before developing further the diverse and yet always the same ways in which myth re-finds its manifestation in post-monarchic human communities, a comprehensive definition of the very notion of myth is necessary. Mircea Eliade again provides

us with the necessary basis for the soundness of the demonstration. He records the following about the myth:

The myth relates a sacred history, that is, a primordial event that took place at the beginning of time, *ab initio*. But to relate a sacred history is equivalent to revealing a mystery. For the persons of the myth are not human beings; they are gods or culture heroes, and for this reason their *gesta* constitute mysteries; man could not know their acts if they were not revealed to him. The myth, then, is the history of what took place in *illo tempore*, the recital of what the gods or the semidivine beings did at the beginning of time. To tell a myth is to proclaim what happened *ab origine*. Once told, that is, revealed, the myth becomes apodictic truth. (Eliade, 1959, p. 95)

Human society, therefore, continues to prove *incapable* of refraining from generating sacredness at any stage of its evolution. The favourite resort for this creative reflex seems to be the intensity of the relationship between the rulers and the nation. Supported for millennia by the monarchical order, this permanently tense relationship was endorsed by the church, the king's partner and his first supporter. Even in contemporary history, we can see certain patterns that have perpetuated themselves.

In the communist space, the rulers claimed many of the attributes of the *gods*, assiduously building an image of supermen and consistently inspiring due fear before their divine superiority. In democratic regimes the analogies become more subtle, but not absent, and the popular hunger of adoration will pour upon institutions and, temporarily, upon certain individuals, deifying principles rather than human figures.

From the outside, the two social constructs have long seemed antagonistic. However, the collapse of the communist *bloc* which also meant the first direct dialogue between each other, instead of generating a series of conflictual interactions (which would have been natural when two opposite directions meet), created more of a state of confusion in both systems. Instead of clashing further, as they had done for most of the 20th century, they suddenly felt drawn to each other by an inexplicable common, shared feeling.

What could the explanation be? Precisely the political construct which appeals to the mythological analogy, thus offering a space of expression to the elements most deeply assimilated by the consciousness of human communities. Nothing unusual in the cumulative and by no means de-tensioning phenomenon that the opening of the communist space had on European socio-political life. Strangely, the great political thinkers did not predict this phenomenon, the expectations being obviously for an *inconsequential surrender* of the *Eastern bloc* and a satisfying relaxation of the victorious Western civilization. It does not

seem to have been anticipated and, implicitly, planned in any way to resolve the convergence of all the mythological inflammations in Eastern and Western European political life.

Even the performing arts, accustomed by their very vocation to take the pulse of the moment, did not predict what was happening in the subtle magma of societies. The Western European film was happy to support the triumph of democracy, and the Eastern European one the difficulties of the transition to democracy of the communist societies. None of this was going to happen. Democracies have been contaminated by the influences of communist ideology, and societies, both Eastern and Western, investing in intangible ideals of communal Eden, will plunge into scepticism or fragmentary fanaticism (on minor elements of political combat suddenly elevated to the rank of governing principles).

It is not the first time when the colonies, especially those established in the Americas, explain to Europe its own contradictions through the lenses of geographical distance and through the cultural reinterpretations in which they have thrived for centuries. Moreover, the uninterrupted contact with the traditions of the natives, who are closer to the human origin than the social convention, kept their instinct firm and as such offered them the chance to decipher the illusion when it encompasses the mankind and/or human communities providing to the imagination a deceptive incarnation, ready to make it reality.

They develop culturally closer to magical societies, the first coagulations of human groups that enjoy discovering the metaphysical explanation of life and death in close connection with the laws of nature that primarily govern man. In the lands of the Americas, the European remains a visitor, a researcher, roaming places previously named by other nations and loaded with their dreams or their enchantments. There the European relives his childhood building new nations with two ages, both belonging to the place they came from and the land they reached.

This is also why Jodorowsky's reflection on contemporary history is so valuable, on how, fascinated by itself, European society risks detaching itself from the flow of historicity and building in fantasy, in other words detaching itself from its story and stepping into the fairy tale. The dangerous magical ritual through which this evolutionary falsetto can happen is closely related to theatre, a game of reality capable of substituting it in the human mind, having its roots in primary religious practices ultimately destined for collective delirium, various exorcisms.

The theatre best represents us, as human beings, the *temptation to escape*, possibly forever in the universe that we alone know how to build for ourselves. The theatre calls forth in the individual the intuition of sacredness and is reproduced from now on in the newly secularized European societies by the



creative political spectacle of the political gesture with its historicizing purpose. It is certainly the reason why Jodorowsky chooses to approach in his film, *The Dance of Reality*, a cinematographic style imbued with theatricality. He thus offers a fair mirror to a century of experimental political scaffolding designed to discover the new path of history for a post-monarchical Europe.

*The Dance of Reality* as a whole is a film of bewildering complexity that the present contribution has not set out to explore in detail. But the key to *mythologizing politics* that Jodorowsky offers us as a key to the modern world is a major contribution worth noting. It is a revealing detail for the evolution of European societies at the beginning of the second millennium, the developed conflicts, and unanswered questions. For all this, the Chilean film is worth going through as a history lesson and an ominous look towards a European future of political theatre *iconostases*.

#### References:

1. Campagna, Federico (2018). *Technic and Magic: The Reconstruction of Reality*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
2. Eliade, Mircea (1959). *The Sacred and the Profane*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.
3. Gonzalez, Moldes Diego (2012). *Alejandro Jodorowsky*. Madrid: Ediciones Catedra.
4. Jodorowsky, Alejandro (2021). *Deconstructing the Jodoverse*. New York: Humanoids.
5. Mitry, Jean (1973). *Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma*. Paris: Éditions Universitaires
6. Susyk, A., Noheden, K. (2021). *Surrealism and Film after 1945: Absolutely Modern Mystery*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
7. Yacavone, Daniel (2014). *Film Worlds, A Philosophical Aesthetics of Cinema*. New York: Columbia University Press.

#### Filmography:

1. *The Dance of Reality* (2013). Directed by Alejandro Jodorowsky. Chile & France: Cámara One & Le Soleil Films.
2. *La Coquille et le Clergyman* (1928). Directed by Germaine Dulac. France: Delia Film.
3. *Un chien andalou* (1929). Directed by Luis Buñuel. France

**Ilinca Stihî** is a PhD student at the “I.L. Caragiale” University of Theatre and Film, Bucharest, in the field of film. Since 2005 she has been director of sound fiction at Radio Romania. For her fiction she has received international awards at prestigious festivals such as Prix Italia, Prix Marulic, Premios Ondas, New York Festival and Grand Prix Nova. She wrote the weekly film column for *Luceafărul* magazine. An author’s study on Dostoevsky’s work was published in the collective volume *Revisiting Dostoevsky, 200 Years Since His Birth* (2021). During her doctoral research, she focused on the new film aesthetics, holding conferences in Romania and abroad.

# MYTH CARRYING MATTER AND ITS SCENOGRAPHIC POTENTIAL.

THE NEW SACRALITY  
OF IMMEDIATE REALITY

**IMELDA MANU-JIPA**



UNATC "I.L. Caragiale", Bucharest, Romania  
*imelda.jipa@unatc.ro*

**Abstract:** The article traces the scenographic potential contained by the matter of objects, respectively non-objects used in emblematic manifestations such as the site-specific event, the installation and the experimental performance. These manifestations become the ideal mediums through which the artistic object manages to assimilate information from its distant past, inevitably also reflecting the force of the myth, which has nourished art for centuries.

**Keywords:** heterotopia, mirror, object, materiality, scenographic potential, myth.

**How to cite:** Manu-Jipa, Imelda (2022). 'Myth Carrying Matter and Its Scenographic Potential. The New Sacrality of Immediate Reality', *Concept* 1(24)/2022, pp. 26-35.

Currently, there is a rather fine line between different fields that use image expressiveness as the main language, and the new framework thus consolidated contains a magnetism which is to engage new visions of scenographic concepts, implicitly gaining new dimensions. This visual augmentation through materialities resorts to meanings which belong to *beyond scenography* concept (Hann, 2019, p. 7). This *extended ambient* (Krauss, 1977, p. 282) manages to activate the lifeblood of the original roots of perception in relation to the matter vibration and the overlays of content which it communicates to the viewer. Through art's dependence on its past and the energy it needs to breathe fantasy, it repositions itself, permanently gravitating around the shapes that brought it to life.

I will argue the recent values assimilated by the image through the concept proposed by Michel Foucault, *heterotopia*, which contains *multi-dimensional realities* that paradoxically manage to exist and signal complementary contents. This new imagined space is made possible through materialities such as the mirror surface, which trigger a beautiful conversation between the real and the imaginary – a dialectic about the object's existence or non-existence, about its meaning in different spaces: the theatre stage, the exhibition space, or the manifestations of land art.

The directions proposed by structuralist, anthropological and philosophical thinking, represented by the studies of the great theorists of the 20th century, will determine an essential transformation in the performance field. The new means of expression discovered by using these new directions will bring unexpected expressiveness to the surface. The analyses proposed by Roland Barthes, the study of archetypes suggested by Carl Gustav Jung, the anthropological studies led by Claude Lévi-Strauss or the theories of philosopher Michel Foucault bring into discussion new perspectives that will determine essential changes in the aesthetics field. The epoch's great shows will be restated following the route of the new analyses, applying the psychoanalytical filter and the clues offered by the new theories. Following these transformations, the physical or gestural theatre will be born, in which the show is no longer seen as a social necessity, but as an anticipation of future societies. The theatrical space is completely reconsidered, purged of everything that does not contain a genuine symbolic charge. The stage

design conveys through scenic simultaneities charged with a particular dynamism, by stripping the magic box and actively asking the viewer to decipher the creative act. The emerging image will constantly appeal to the senses altogether, all the while being perfected by the use of scientific information that quickly integrates into theatrical language.

*Heterotopia* is a concept defined by Michel Foucault carrying an immense mythical weight, with those fantastic stories that speak of the sacred origin of matter. Hence, we discover a potential distant past, through which man partially bequeathed events of his existence on earth, otherwise destined to be forgotten, to the present, as Lévi-Strauss testifies (2005, p. 18). We identify the fundamental human need to imagine worlds and to be in control of an infinite universe that is not defined by chaos, but by order, symbol and meaning. Through these stories, we become familiar with the sacred force contained in the object, a dimension easily assimilated by theatrical space through scenography.

Foucault uses the term heterotopia to describe spaces that have multiple layers of content and multiple unnatural relationships with notions that magically become visible in the real environment. This way, reality can contain several apparently incompatible ambiances in one, just like theatre does, with different spaces coexisting simultaneously on stage. A representation of an apparently utopian space or rather a parallel one, containing a significant amount of distortions that make it possible to perceive it as real.

Heterotopia has the ability to juxtapose several locations that are incompatible in one real place. Therefore, theater brings to the rectangle of the stage a whole sequence of places that are not related to each other; the same way, a cinema is a rectangular hall with a three-dimensional space projected onto a two-dimensional screen behind it. (Foucault, 1998, p. 181)

In his arguments, Foucault relies on epistemologist Gaston Bachelard's analysis of the space in which we live, which is not a huge void, but a place impregnated with the reflections of the experiences manifested in the past, which contain the dreams, desires and fears of humanity. This space contains that vibe of myth, with its fabulous stories and characters, with all the ancient beliefs about what the mystery of the universe actually meant.

The mirror is the example through which Foucault explains the connection between heterotopia and the bizarre reflection that belongs to a fantastic realm. Through this material that becomes the medium, an undeniable dialogue between real and unreal space is generated, through an inexhaustible transfer of meanings. By assimilating these pulsations, theater becomes a sanctuary that will permanently preserve its original sacredness, organically adapting to the new challenges of the present. (Foucault, 1998, p. 179)

The mirror is the example through which Foucault explains the connection between heterotopia and the bizarre reflection that belongs to a fantastic realm. Through this material that becomes the medium, an undeniable dialogue between real and unreal space is generated, through an inexhaustible transfer of meanings. By assimilating these pulsations, theatre becomes a sanctuary that will permanently preserve its original sacredness, organically adapting to the new challenges of the present.

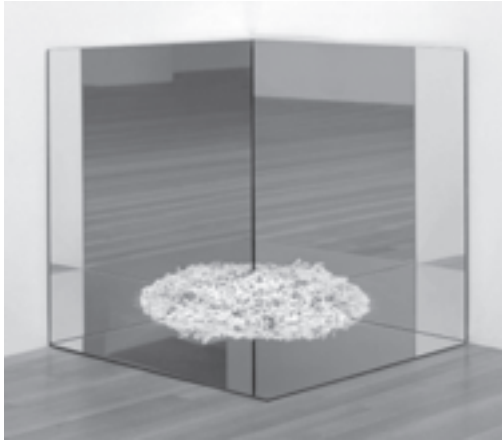
As a visual vehicle of symbols, the image is also the medium through which the code for representing the world is developed, as well as the object in which it materializes. That is why we discover different types of visuals that convey different messages: social, emotional, informal etc. All codes are decipherable in close connection to certain social practices, from images representing divinity to commercial behaviour, such as advertising images. Deciphering the code requires an aesthetic initiation and, in ideal conditions, the image puts aspects of a forgotten world under the microscope, like the non-sites created by Robert Smithson, such as *Spiral Jetty*, a sculpture made outside (Great Salt Lake of Utah, USA, 1970) or *Corner Mirror with Coral*, an installation set inside an exhibition space.

To me, an object is a product of thought, you know. It does not necessarily mean the existence of art. So I would say that objects are as real as angels are real. So I can't accept that as a category. Mainly, you're dealing with art, and my view of art springs from a dialectical position that deals, I think, with something that exists or doesn't exist. Those two areas, those two paths—the existent and the non-existent. (Robert Smithson in Norvell, 1969, p. 124)

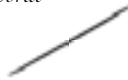
The works proposed by Robert Smithson are referred to (by him) as non-sites and integrate the idea of non-objects, with immense scenographic potential. The sculpture *Corner Mirror with Coral* proposes a concrete space, made of three mirror surfaces that reflect one by one the space around them, multiplying the reflections of the coral fragments and the perimeter of the room. As Foucault argues, by merging the real image with its reflection, Smithson creates the illusion of an object, a non-object. The coral extracted from its natural environment seems to be floating in the air, turning into an object of fantasy, as if detached from the surrealist paintings made by Magritte. The exposed material loses its immediate meaning, gaining a new dimension, a new meaning, which magically intertwines the object's real substance with its reflection, reshaping both reality and its meaning.

The whole idea relating to objects is something I find to be a pernicious myth. It's like believing in fairies or something, you know. It just doesn't exist. The mind is conditioned that way and needs the certainty of the mental construction of an object, but there is no object, like you would say that a painting by Kazimir Malevich is an object.

It explicitly tells you that it is a non-object. But in this case, there is not even a place to speak of. The place has been abolished by the very density of the material. However, insisting that something is an object seems to be based on the need to find a positive answer. And there is no answer there. It's just a question. (Smithson in Norvell, 2001, p. 130)



*Corner Mirror with Coral*  
(1969)



### ***The ideal mediums through which matter manifests***

The myth still makes itself noticed in the cultural space of the modern world, through the manifestations of various artists who discover a new sacredness beyond the immediate reality.

Joseph Beuys yet again speaks about the illusion of the object, using a mythical-metaphorical language, going beyond the limits of reality and fiction, managing to synthesize in his work concepts containing something that seemed impossible to integrate before. By making an impressive number of innovative performances that appeal to the magic of ritual, relying on the construction of an organic mask, which carries us from the physical plane to the spiritual one, Beuys conveys new information about the matter content.

Motivated by a utopian belief in the power that human creativity radiates into the universe and art's power to bring about revolutionary change, he envisioned the whole of society as a great work of art. Beuys believed each person could make their creative contribution to this grandiose project, if they are forced to enter a space that hides meanings. Beuys consciously exploits the mythical force which, through the theories he brings to light, becomes generative

of change. “When the image is no longer just illustrative, it becomes a metaphor or a living character.” (Picon-Vallin, 1998, p. 28)

The aesthetics proposed by him organized both raw materials, such as metal or wood, and materials of an organic nature, such as fat, blood, wax or animal hair, the so-called *shamanic* objects, discovering otherwise lost meanings in the exhibited objects. Believing that art plays an integral part of everyday life, Beuys tries to convey different emotions through unusual materialities, such as the fat used in the Fat Chair installation. A strange object that seems to breathe, reshaping itself through temperature changes induced in the exhibition space. A conversation between a trivial wooden chair, a lump of fat and a sloppily twisted wire. A bizarre juxtaposition that exudes a strange tension, inviting you to ask yourself endless questions about each exposed subject. It is not a comfortable chair. It is an object that we use every day when we eat or rest for a few minutes. A piece of furniture that we don't analyse, we just use. Because its shape indicates a minimum degree of comfort, the object conveys an essential piece of information about the rigidity of the position it imposes, imagining an intermediate, almost violent position of the human body in its failed attempt to relax. The chair cancels any activity and, in this context, as it is accompanied by a pile of fat, it becomes a violent *non-object*.



*Fat Chair (Fettstuhl)*  
Joseph Beuys (1964–1985)

Fat can mean a surplus of energy of the human body, or its inactivity. But for Beuys, fat represents the essence of the artistic spirit, a fascinating story that has not been properly checked, but which became his formative myth as an artist. The story actually refers to a trauma that Beuys experienced during the Second World War, when the plane he was piloting had been shot down in the Crimean Peninsula region. He managed to survive with the help of a tribe of Tatars, who applied a thick layer of animal fat on his body, then wrapped him in a blanket to keep his body warm, thus protecting him from freezing. After the war, Beuys turns this story into the myth of his transformation into a creator, alluding directly to the myth of Christ reborn. Fat became the saving substance and, through it, Beuys turned into the total artist that combined life and art through matter.

Thus Beuys seeks the truth in those primitive societies and in the methods through which they proposed purification, resorting to the purity of matter. The artist, who undeniably influences theater through his accomplished happenings, also touching the depths of the human being and bringing the problems of the individual and his identity in the creative process into discussion.

Another artist who searches for the roots contained in matter through the image, scenic this time, is the Italian director Romeo Castellucci. It constantly investigates that relationship between the scene, the object and its materiality which contains in itself a mythical force that the director manages to extract and transmit to the audience.

Castellucci's theatre, initially through Societas Raffaello Sanzio company, co-founded by him along with Claudia Castellucci, Chiara Guidi and Paolo Guidi, becomes the ideal place where the experiment manifests itself. It is the space where different fields of art intertwine in a perfect symbiosis. The image conceived in this way appears cut from a realm that has nothing to do with everyday life, but with the magic of imagination, permanently redefining the role of art in society.

In his first aesthetic shows, Castellucci approaches aesthetics that remind us of Joseph Beuys or Gilberto Zorio and Jannis Kounellis, exponents of the Arte Povera movement. Influenced by their creations, he will explore the meanings contained in matter, seeking to convey information about the origin of things and the new values it contains in the contemporary show. The new concept that the Cesena experimental theatre company Societas invoked will reshape the stage image, all the while destroying the meaning theatre had built based on the power of the word. A new philosophy is born, one which integrates a poetics of the theatrical image that this company proposed, in which the image becomes a scenic manifesto and an emblematic exponent of the new theatrical ritual. (Castellucci in Semenowicz, 2013, p. 6)





*Hey Girl!*  
(2006) Romeo Castellucci

The next period the Company experiments focuses on the theme of the ancient myths of Mesopotamia and the means of communication through symbols born before the Greek tragedy. It represents a return to pre-theatrical spectacular manifestations, to a pre-tragic thinking that used the purity of matter and the expressiveness of the body in relation to the stage. These are the concepts that will form the basis of the theatre proposed by Castellucci.

Created in 2006, *Hey Girl!* is a show that speaks to the consistency, flexibility and information of matter. A show that conveys information about the transformations of matter and life, like the fat used by Joseph Beuys. A certain type of coming into being through a viscous substance that comes close to the velvety texture of human skin, from which woman is born. The matter of the cocoon does not leave us, it continues to transform through a slow decomposition during the show unfolding, unfolding this character's life stages on stage. This becomes the initial mold in which Romeo Castellucci pours, one after the other, the personalities of mythical figures such as the Virgin Mary, Joan of Arc or Juliet, allowing us to further meditate on the transformations of life.

Therefore, the performative order, focusing the viewer's attention on the materiality of the performance, does not come into conflict with the order of idea in Castellucci's theatre. Tearing similarities apart is the foundation of montage that restores the image's prior power. Thus, iconoclasm does not contradict image; it is more of an attempt to introduce it under new conditions. It is an aesthetic project—an attempt to create a new language, aside from harmony and in an effort to look for cracks in the mimetic notion of representation. (Semenowicz, 2013, p. 35.)

The moment the setting dematerializes so as to enable a mechanism scene to happen, the object regains its importance. The latter's matter possesses a certain power to maintain cultural coordinates and raise questions about the individual's report to the outside world. In this particular context, texture is a good of action's time and space. A medium holding the ability to condensate social, cultural and philosophical phenomena, integrating the viewer into a symbol-clad space.

In scenographic art, a multitude of visions have dissolved over time in several directions: through the architectural field, through the avalanche of trends in painting, but also in the musical sphere, in performance, land art, film or the new realm of digital art. The new theatrical space expressiveness becomes unlimited in this context and, given the aforementioned blurring of the boundaries between fields, the manifestations of the artists involved gain more freedom to reformulate their new performative visions.

The three aforementioned artists' works help us step into an unknown realm that comes to life through materialities. The complexity of sensations and ideas is expressed by means of the objects' materiality, at the same time allowing the gaze to recognize the accurate dimension of the real or imaginary place (Yannis Kokkos in Banu, 2009, p. 25). Through the scenographic object, the scenic space becomes the medium through which fundamentally human experiences are transmitted. The scene transforms objects into symbols, and their matter gains back the depths of past meanings.

Humans are only just beginning to go back to discerning visual meaning as a primary mode – or method – of communicating in a context where there is more than one form or 'level' of perception. In this sense of overlapping visual correspondences, we can speak of multi-dimensional realities (Robert Wilson in Picon-Vallin, 2001, p. 54)

The aesthetic machinery created by overlapping multiple scenic realities turns into the main tool of transmitting essential information about the conceptual content. This is how a new universe is shaped, allowing us to experience the reality of life in a new manner, governed by unique experiences and feelings. The scenic image holds infinite power, in the sense that it can transfigure reality and equally preserve the elementary qualities of its initial model. „Theatre is rather a journey through the unknown, towards the unknown. What myself and those of a similar mind have tried to do over the years has been to hold high the scandal of the stage and to keep it constantly vibrating.” (Castellucci in Marshall, 2002)

An image creator will constantly call upon the memory of matter to perfect their creation, drawing along our experiences from the distant past. It is the artist's permanent struggle with symbols and their force to exist in the minds and souls of the viewers, where they are to be reflected. The sacred energy the

stage contains is not exhausted, but assimilated by the present age, through the sincerity of the artistic act it shows and the primary simplicity through which the stage space continues to convey stories.

### References:

1. Banu, George (2003). *Ultimul sfert de secol teatral. O panoramă subiectivă*. București: Paralela 45.
2. Banu, George (2009). *Yannis Kokkos, scenograful și cocostârcul*. București: Curtea Veche.
3. Bachelard, Gaston (1958). *The poetics of space*. Beacon Press.
4. FAVORINI, Attilio (2008). *Memory in Play: From Aeschylus to Sam Shepard*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
5. Foucault, Michel (1998). *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*. The New Press.
6. Hann, Rachel (2019). *Beyond Scenography*. Oxon and New York: Routledge.
7. Krauss, E. Rosalind (1977). *Passages in Modern Sculpture*. New York: Viking Adult.
8. Lévi-Strauss, Claude (2001). *Myth and Meaning*. Routledge Classics.
9. Melikoğlu, Esra (2013). *Trauma on the Contemporary English Stage: Kane, Ravenhill, Ridley*. Doctoral thesis. Istanbul.
10. Mills, Sara (2003). *Michel Foucault*. London: Routledge.
11. Norvell, Patricia (2001). *Recording Conceptual Art - Interview with Robert Smithson in early 1969*. University of California Press
12. Picon-Vallin, Beatrice (1998). *Les écrans sur la scène : tentations et résistances de la scène face aux images*. Lausanne: L'Âge d'homme.
13. Semenowicz, Dorota (2013). *The Theatre of Romeo Castellucci and Societas Raffaello Sanzio*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
14. Sontag, Susan (1967). *The Aesthetics of Silence*.
15. Sutton, John (1998). *Philosophy and Memory Traces: Descartes to Connectionism*. Cambridge University Press.


### Online references:

1. Marshall, Jonathan (2002). The Castellucci interview: The Angel of Art is Lucifer [Online]. Available at: <https://www.realtime.org.au/the-castellucci-interview-the-angel-of-art-is-lucifer/> (Accessed: 10 May 2022)

**Imelda Manu (Jipa)** is Lecturer PhD, theatre and event set designer. She graduated the UNATC Department of Scenography and defended her doctoral thesis entitled *Expressive States of the Image in Contemporary Theatre*. She has worked as a set designer with directors such as: Yuri Kordonsky, Cătălina Buzoianu, Gelu Colceag, Benjamin Walther, Radu Beligan, Ilinca Stihi, Anca-Maria Colțeanu, Cristian Juncu, Chris Simion, etc. She won the Award for best scenography for *Ultima ORĂ* at the Comedy Festival, and the Fajr International Theater Festival Award in Tehran for *Waiting for Godot* by S. Beckett. She participated with *The Lesson* by E. Ionescu and *The Beautiful Journey of the Panda Bears...* by M. Vișniec, directed by Cătălina Buzoianu at the festival organized by UNESCO-iT'i in New Delhi – India, University of Fine Arts, Nanyang – Singapore, National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA), Sydney – Australia, Chung-Ang University, Division of Performing Arts & Film, Seoul – South Korea, Academy of Theatre, Shanghai – China, Central Academy of Drama, Beijing – China (UNESCO Chair – Romania project). Courses: Stage technology, Plastic Workshop, Scenographic Art, Practice, creative workshop (UNATC BA).

**EXPRESSIONS OF EMOTIONS**  
THROUGH THE COLOUR BLUE:  
**ANDREI TARKOVSKY'S**  
*SOLARIS* **AND**  
**ANDREI ZVYAGINTSEV'S**  
*THE RETURN*

**IOANA SIMION**



UNATC "I.L. Caragiale", Bucharest, Romania  
*ioana.simion@student.unatc.ro*

**Abstract:** Russians are a very particular kind in cinematography. The way they express themselves will never resemble the West and it has a lot to do with visual choices. The way our souls perceive their work will always be related to the way our eyes register colours and textures, and those colours will be a second character to the story. There are many studies that believe that colours and emotions are directly linked, yet we need to face the fact that many of these correlations happen due to the hundreds of years of associations between a certain colour and a certain emotion. However uncertain this link may be, what remains a fact is that Russian and former USSR countries give birth to an expressionism of colour in their movies that is undisputable. In fact, in their films in many ways storytelling is so related to colours that sometimes we forget that other methods exist, and we let ourselves completely submerged in their *Blue*.

**Keywords:** colour blue, anguish, emotion, cross-cultural study, storytelling, soviet cinematography.

**How to cite:** Simion, Ioana (2022). 'Expressions of Emotions Through the Colour Blue: Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris* and Andrei Zvyagintsev's *The Return*', Concept 1 (24)/2022, pp. 36-44.

### ***Introduction***

In these troubled times we are experiencing at the moment<sup>3</sup> it is very difficult for one to admit out loud that one is a fan of Russian cinematography, or of Russian literature, or of Russian ice-skating, for that matter. In these troubled times it is easier to support any other cinematography. However, it is their cinematography that embodies the sense of loss and tragic more than anything or anyone else. I will never forget reading Chekov for the first time, just as I will never forget seeing *The Last Station*, an English-German production depicting the last days of Tolstoy's life. Even though it is an English-language film, which might seem a blasphemy in itself, the film splendidly captures that very Russian tragic sense that I mentioned before. There is no greater anguish expressed in literature or cinema than the Russian seem to evoke, and it is accomplished visually with the help of colours.

What does blue mean for each of us, and more specifically for the two Andrei: Tarkovsky and Zvyagintsev? What separates blue from all the other colours and why does it seem to be such a favourite of filmmakers? Is it the strictly a physics/chemistry issue or is it more a psychological one? Does blue's appeal find its roots in the wiring of our brains or in the ventricles of our souls? This article sets itself on the path of trying to answer a few (or all) of those questions and to bring an update on the subject colour-emotion. In this endeavour I have chosen two Russian films to analyse and to dissect visually in the hope that they will help answer those initial questions.

<sup>3</sup> At the time of writing this article, there is an ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022.

Cinema in particular is an extraordinary piece of human creation that combines arts, architecture, chemistry, physics, literature and music, and it succeed to do more than printed art since it appeals to more of our senses. An image that is moving is a completely different, life-changing visual experience than a static one. Maya civilization thought that blue had healing powers and was the colour of the divine entity, Christians picture heaven in white and blue, Orthodox believe that blue can be a safe guard against the devil. Representations of blue in printed art has always been quite explicit. When it comes to representations of blue in cinema, things become a tad more tangled. A blue moving image will have an accelerated effect as opposed to the static one, an effect guided and orchestrated by the perfect manipulator of emotions: the film director.

It was one of Tarkovsky's wishes that some of the film's scenes, particularly the black and white ones, be colourized in blue, once it was technologically possible. It was done so when the movie was released on Blu-ray (such a wonderful little coincidence there between the media format and the colour). *Solaris* (1972) is a film presenting the story of an astronaut sent to analyse why there are bizarre manifestations on the space station meant to orbit the homonym planet. There is a fine line with which Andrei Tarkovsky plays, the one between hallucinations and actual memories, along with the meaning of memory itself. The past and the visions of the main character, Kris Kelvin, are pictured in hues of blue, making it impossible for both the viewer and the characters to distinguish between the two. Gradually, hallucinations of his dead wife become Kelvin's new reality, melting the concept of visions into the one of reality by switching constantly between colour and black and white.

Andrei Zvyagintsev, on the other hand, has a more palpable approach to colour in his film *The Return* (2003). He presents the story of two young boys reunited with their father, who has been absent for the last 12 years. The three of them embark in a journey under the pretext of fishing to help bond, but shortly realize that there is little to do to bind the wounds of him leaving in the first place. There is a considerate amount of uncertainty here too, just as there is in *Solaris*. And just as Tarkovsky keeps both the viewer and the character in the dark, so does Zvyagintsev, who doesn't want to share what the father's intentions are or how the boys are feeling regarding his sudden return. Zvyagintsev surrounds them with water, during mostly cloudy days, in some scenes even bringing more water to the screen with rain. There are a lot of elements that the viewer needs to decode and interpret in their own way, but what seems relatively clear is that this story is about more the relationship between the two brothers and how they need to decide what type of person they wish to grow into, rather than the paternal relationship. Their father appears

in their lives to fast forward their evolution as humans, not to mend broken family ties. The boys' father has the same purpose as Kelvin's wife, a catalyst for Kelvin, and Andrei and Ivan respectively.

### ***Methodology***

For this research construct I have used analysis of texts from the field of psychology, sociology, art history and neuroscience. In addition, I have performed an analysis on the two works, processing framing, composition, and chromatic attributes. The result was structured in this article, along with a personal view on the psychological theory that links colours to emotions.

### ***Discussion***

We need to establish from the very beginning that there are multiple theories on this link between emotion and colour. Some studies claim that there is an irrefutable energy that a colour has and that imprints in our emotional being. In this sense, it seems that shades of blue, purple, green bring a sense of calm and relaxation, whereas orange and red put the brain in gear mode and start the engines of fight response. Furthermore, Dr. Melissa Hughes states:

Results from a 2009 study conducted by Ravi Mehta and Rui Zhu at the University of British Columbia confirmed the impact of red and blue on brain function. They found that if the task required vigilant attention such as memorization or comprehension, red is more effective. However, if the task requires creativity and imagination, the color blue opens neural pathways and enhances those cognitive processes. Color psychologists maintain that orange stimulates critical thinking and pink has a calming influence and reduces heart rate. Some teachers have experimented with this by covering students' desks with orange and pink paper during exams. (Hughes, 2017)

Out of the blue, green with envy, grey area, green thumb, black sheep, to paint the town red, feeling blue, to see red, they are all idioms in the English language that are already norm for expressing a certain emotion or feature. Not only are colours handier and more effective for people to express their affective spectrum, but they are also weapons used by various industries, from marketing and cinema. Most pharmaceutical companies adopt a blue or green logo to push us to forget the chemical component and make us think of nature and health, most food chains use red because it is supposed to encourage appetite, most anti-aging products will use a shade of purple because it is supposed to be linked to royalty, beauty and respect, most products that are partly poisonous have yellow or orange somewhere in their label to show caution. But just as marketing appeals primarily to the buyer as a being who has very little to say in the decision-making

process, the film industry appeals through colours to a different demographic. A film will not only use (or even abuse) colours as means of conveying emotions, but they will twist and turn them, they will change the paradigm and turn the viewer's world upside down. Yes, it is true that our brains tend to make automatic connections between blue and sad, between yellow and happy, red and mad, but there is a lot more than meets the eye. Despite the fact that blue has always been seen and portrayed as a 'cold' colour in visual arts, it is most recently believed that this was a misconception. Blue seems to be, according to some studies, the warmest colour, a bold statement backed-up by the example of fire, in which we do not see shades of red, but of blue. Blue is linked in numerous occasions with positive emotions in various countries around the globe and is the preferred colour for an impressive percentage of the population.

In such cases, visual colour perception may play a more important role than language. These associations might be rooted in repeated perceptual associations between a colour and an emotional situation, such as feeling joyful when the sun is shining or feeling good when looking at clear blue water. (Jonaskaite et al., 2020)

And it is precisely this new view on colour symbolism that nurtures the efforts of both directors chosen for this article, for this is particularly what they both did: play with old perceptions of the colour blue. Blue is for both Tarkovsky and Zvyagintsev means to express anguish and relief, pain and freedom. Furthermore, the majestic feature of both films is how they make use, how they manipulate the colour to best fit their story.

Blue is probably the most common colour in nature as a whole. After all, the Earth is called the Blue Planet. However, there is very little blue found as a pigment on Earth. Despite the fact that we see it in enormous quantities in oceans, seas and sky, blue is one of the rarest of natural colours, one of the forms of blue found in nature being the mineral lapis lazuli, a deep-blue rock that is very cherished and very rare. The rareness of blue in nature depends on two factors: one regards the way we see colours and the other one the structure of things and beings on Earth. The first one will refer to the physics behind the perception of colour:

Light's formal name is electromagnetic radiation. All light shares three properties. It can travel through a vacuum. It always moves at a constant speed, known as the speed of light, which is 300,000,000 meters (186,000 miles) per second in a vacuum. And the wavelength defines the type or color of light. Humans have evolved to sense a small part of the light spectrum. We know these wavelengths as "visible" light. Our eyes contain cells known as rods and cones. Pigments in those cells can interact with certain wavelengths (or photons) of light. When this happens, they create signals that travel to the brain. The



brain interprets the signals from different wavelengths (or photons) as different colors. The longest visible wavelengths are around 700 nanometres and appear red. The range of visible light ends around 400 nanometres. Those wavelengths appear violet. (Look, 2020).

Blue is at around 450 nanometres.

The other factor that makes blue so incredibly rare is the composition of matter on Earth. Bright colours in nature can mean either `don't eat me` or `look at me, I'm so good-looking`. One example is the poison dart frog, which has an extremely colourful body to alert other animals that it is useless to attack it or to eat it, given their high toxicity. Another example is the peafowl, especially the Asian one, a bird possessing an extravagant train of feathers that is used to court and attract the females of the species. In both cases, we could see the bright colours as a form of advertising, and it is fair to say that nature uses colours to draw attention to something and to communicate with other members of their ecosystem, which is what film directors often do. In our particular case, Zvyagintsev uses colour to accentuate the deep angst and sadness and to infuse us into a sense of mistrust and uneasiness. He, along with his cinematographer, Mikhail Kritchman, work hard not to allow us any moment of comfort or hope for a happy ending. They both struggle to find all shades of blue to make us *feel blue*, to make us wonder if/when the father will disappear again, if/when the boat will float away, if/when the real fight between the three male characters will begin. Tarkovsky, on the other hand, uses blue to transport us to the imaginary, in his case being the colour used primarily for memories and fantasies. However, Tarkovsky does not have a simple map for deciphering colour-schemes and colour-palettes, his use of colours is not conventional and ordinary, but he is *true-blue*<sup>4</sup> to making use of colours as a mean of storytelling.

While Stanley Kubrick in *2001: Space Odyssey* found his outer space aesthetics in bright colours, fluid interior design, Andrei Tarkovsky imagined for *Solaris* a different side, one made of cold and stark colours. Space is for Tarkovsky the opportunity to shift us through different colour conventions, always messing with the perception he imprinted before: the aircraft is presented in the colour palette of steel, but he inserts yellowish glows in the frame, deep red frames for the windows of the ship to contrast, permanently forcing the viewers to ask themselves which is the primary colour scheme of a certain scene. In *Solaris*, as opposed to *The Return*, we see Tarkovsky playing with the shades of blue and red. We can never say for sure that blue is in *Solaris* a visual manifestation of sadness and anxiety, because he switches so suddenly between red representing life to red representing danger. In one scene we see red to bring a bit of life to

4 True-blue is an American expression to mean that someone is loyal, committed

the stale steel ship, in another we see the Ocean of Solaris coloured in different shades of red and orange, not knowing what consistency, what temperature it is, whether it's as liquid as the Earth's ocean. In the Ocean of *Solaris*, we see uncertainty when we see red, in *The Return's* Sea we see uncertainty where we see the clear blue.

There are so many theories and opinions nowadays on the subject of family that we barely have time to read them all. There is the debate nature vs. nurture, which speaks of whether what makes a human being is the genetic luggage they come with or they are the product of their home and upbringing, there is conflict theory, which states that conflict is a normal part of life (inside a family or society), there is father complex, and many more. If there is one thing that is certain is the fact that dysfunctional families and troubled family ties make for an amazing raw material for films. And in this aspect, the Russians excel. Andrei Zvyagintsev's *The Return* is such an example. This film deals with the very delicate, yet somehow worn notion of the broken family, along with the subject of defective fatherhood. Zvyagintsev colorizes his entire film in perfect hues of blue, and if the entire tint wasn't enough, he adds insult to injury by placing a lot of the film near water. His entire film is as if we were shrouded in a wet cold blue wool blanket. As opposed, for example, to Wes Anderson's *The Royal Tenenbaums*, where the dysfunctions between father and sons are marked by hues of sienna and ochre and oranges, *The Return* is scarred with this blue, overwhelming shade that remains with the viewer well after the viewing. The two sons in *The Return* are, on the one hand, asking themselves how long their estranged father will remain around, and on the other hand resenting him for leaving in the first place. In fact, the blue in which Zvyagintsev dresses the movie is also a representation of how fluid the relationships between the three male characters are. Just as water, they flow, they clash and they stand still, they are not linear. What seems to surround both filmmakers analysed in this article is the ambiguity, the stubbornness to push the viewer to make all the assumptions, all the conclusions, all the deliberations by themselves. This is once again stated clearly by Andrei Zvyagintsev during an interview in 2004:

I'm afraid there is no clue. You either perceive it or not. There are things which are without answers, and there is nobody who can explain them. Either we feel them and sense them, or not. Sometimes we just give up and carry on. That's normal. I can't do much to help the members of the audience who don't understand certain things in the film. It would be like telling another person what that person is already seeing by himself. Art is not some sort of guideline for understanding. It's a thing unto itself. The most important thing for me is the image, not the thought. (in Abeel, 2004)

And perhaps as an extra tragic sense to the story comes the behind-the-scenes event of Vladimir Garin (the boy who played Andrei) drowning, not long after the film was shot. I would say this is simply so typically tragic for the Russians that I sometimes wonder if there is not something in the water there. The manner in which they speak their language, they eat bread, they love without a textbook, they live their pain and anguish, the manner in which they slam the glass on the table, they cover you in a blanket near the stove or sit in silence, all this makes their cinematography one to adore and yearn for.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this article was to find the reasons why our brains respond the way they do to the visual stimuli of the colour blue and to find a possible link between anguish and blue. After having analysed the two films in question and studies on the neuroscience of colours, I can state that blue is an expression of anguish only if the filmmaker decides it so. This study has observed the fact that, when it comes to cinematography, unlike pure psychology, there is a more powerful link between colours and emotions due to decades (or even centuries) of associations and conventions. There is a less strong connection between blue and sadness in cinematography (and visual arts in general) due to the fantastic feature of filmmakers to manipulate the viewer's emotions and previous chromatic memories. There is no direct link between blue and anguish for example, but there is a powerful story that can maneuver blue into expressing what it needs.

### **References:**

1. Ioannidou, Martha (2006). *Colour blue: visualising the eternal*. University Studio Press.
2. Jonauskaitė, D., Parraga, C.A., Quiblier, M., Mohr, C. (2020). Feeling blue or seeing red? Similar patterns of emotion associations with colour patches and colour terms. *i-Perception*, 11(1), Article 2041669520902484.
3. Pastoureau, Michel (2018). *Blue: The History of a Color*. Princeton University Press.

### **Online references:**

1. Abeel, Erica (2004). *Return of the Prodigal Father; Andrey Zvyagintsev Talks About "The Return"*, IndieWire [Online]. Available at: <https://www.indiewire.com/2004/02/return-of-the-prodigal-father-andrey-zvyagintsev-talks-about-the-return-79164/> (Accessed: 14 May 2022)
2. Hughes, Melissa (2017). *The Neuroscience of Color*, VariQuest [Online]. Available at: <https://info.variquest.com/blog/the-neuroscience-of-color> (Accessed: 14 May 2022)
3. Look, Jennifer (2020). *Understanding light and other forms of energy on the move*, Science News for Students [Online]. Available at: <https://www.sciencenewsforstudents.org/article/understanding-light-and-other-forms-of-energy-on-the-move> (Accessed: 14 May 2022)

**Filmography:**

1. *Solaris* (1972). Directed by Andrei Tarkovski. Russia: MosFilm.
2. *The Return* (2003). Directed by Andrei Zviagintsev. Russia: Ren Film.

**Ioana Simion** is a production designer who currently lives in Brussels, splitting her time between independent projects in interior design and working for the European Commission since 2019. She completed her doctoral studies at “I.L. Caragiale” National University of Theatre and Film, Bucharest, working on the research paper called *The Extreme Visual in Subcultural Cinema*.

# **THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE ROMANIAN CULTURAL SOCIETIES OF SIBIU IN SHAPING THE LOCAL AUDIENCE**

**SORANA MAIER**



Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Romania  
*sorana.maier@ulbsibiu.ro*

**Abstract:** Romanian societies, reunions or associations in Sibiu, established in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, contributed significantly to the education and training of the audience in this community. The present article highlights the role played by these institutions – Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People, Reunion of Romanian Apprentices of Sibiu, National Cultural Reunion of Romanian Craftsmen in Sibiu, The Music Reunion in Sibiu, in the build-up of an educated theatre audience. The pioneering activity carried out by these associations makes its effects felt today, leading to the informed and knowledgeable public of Radu Stanca National Theatre in Sibiu. This article argues the sustained activity of the Transylvanian cultural associations in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have created the foundations of a vibrant theatre community where one of the most important theatre events in Romania - Sibiu International Theatre Festival (FITS) – was born thirty years ago.

**Keywords:** theatre, performing arts, public, ASTRA, Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People, Reunion of Romanian Apprentices of Sibiu, National Cultural Reunion of Romanian Craftsmen in Sibiu.

**How to cite:** Maier, Sorana (2022). 'The Contribution of the Romanian Cultural Societies of Sibiu in Shaping the Local Audience', *Concept* 1(24)/2022, pp. 45-56.

Sibiu, a community with a well-defined cultural identity at national, European and even international level, has evolved in the last three decades towards a model of urban regeneration through culture. Major cultural events, such as, for example, the Sibiu International Theatre Festival, are associated with the cultural, but also economic and academic evolution of the city, due to the emulation they have created around them, due to the cultural events of great value that they have offered in their program, but also owing to the large audience they have attracted during each edition. Equally, the Radu Stanca National Theatre of Sibiu manages to attract a large audience with each of its performances and has developed what we call “cultural tourism” around phenomenon-creations, such as *Faust*, performance directed by Silviu Purcărete.

The following question naturally arises: Is the audience of these cultural events or institutions a special audience, and does its preference for manifestations in the field of performing arts has its origin strictly in the contemporary period? To what extent does the audience in Sibiu present a series of peculiarities that have their origin, in fact, in past moments of Sibiu and Transylvania? These are questions that have arisen during recent the research that we have carried out in order to define the contribution of the Romanian cultural societies in Sibiu towards the affirmation of a cultural and national identity through theatre. During these studies, we discovered that in the Romanian community in Sibiu there have been, since the nineteenth century, real concerns for an education of the audience, for attracting new audiences to the performing arts and for using theatre as a means of cultivation and education. On the other hand, the German

community in Sibiu has developed a theatre in German that has its origins in much more distant times, and, in Sibiu, the first building with a theatre purpose on the current territory of Romania was inaugurated in 1788 (Necula and Maier, 2018, p. 63).

The research hypothesis from which we started the present study argues that the way of manifestation of the audience in Sibiu, the way in which cultural and artistic events are perceived at local level, are marked and were generated by actions and events from the cultural and historical past of this community. The education of the audience was a long process, carried out over at least two centuries, on a foundation built also by the Romanian intellectuals in Sibiu, which had as main purpose the emancipation of the Romanian population through culture.

The present study aims to identify how the activity of societies and cultural associations in this geographical space has come to define the behaviour of the audience in Sibiu. The research method is historical research, especially the analysis of press and archival documents from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that refer to the concerns of Romanian cultural societies in Sibiu for the cultivation of the audience through theatre in particular, and through the performing arts in general.

### ***A delayed start***

The most important Romanian societies, reunions and associations in Transylvania during the Austro-Hungarian Empire activated in Sibiu, including: Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People (ASTRA) – since 1861, Reunion of the Romanian Apprentices of Sibiu – since 1867, Romanian Music Reunion in Sibiu – since 1878. These reunions and associations contributed to the education and emancipation of the Romanian population in the province and had a significant contribution to the enrichment of the cultural and artistic life in this geographical area.

The Romanian audience in Transylvania met the theatre in Romanian language only in the second half of the nineteenth century, through touring performances organized by the Romanian companies (Maier, 2020, pp. 61-68), during performances organized by amateurs, as well as through artistic manifestations prepared by the cultural societies in the province. The situation was no different in Sibiu, where theatre developed due to the efforts of the cultural reunions and associations that operated in this area.

The question arises to what extent the initiators of the theatre in Romanian language in Sibiu and Transylvania had to concern themselves with the education of the audience as well? The state of the audience in Transylvania

in the nineteenth century can be inferred from the accounts of some actors, directors, initiators of the theatrical movement in the province. Relevant for the theme of the present study is the account of Zaharia Bârsan<sup>5</sup>, who organized the first Romanian touring performances in Transylvania<sup>6</sup>, and which illustrates in his memoirs the image of a completely ignorant audience, often at a first contact with theatre. Given that the audience did not have a minimum exercise of presence in theatres, the organizers of the performances could not take into account a difficult dramatic repertoire, but rather a choice of plays that would facilitate a minimal education of the audience and the removal of the public perception that theatre had exclusively the role of amusing the spectators. Zaharia Bârsan describes in his writings several such episodes relevant for the state of the Transylvanian audience in the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century:

Between such circumstances, a theatrical tour through Transylvania with a more dramatic repertoire was an attempt, a bold endeavour. But I wanted to completely vanquish the idea that theatre is a comedy and that's why I started almost all of my performances with a serious play. What I had to endure! All too often the most subtle dramatic moments were destroyed by a roaring laughter. All too often in some roles I was afraid to do the right thing, lest the unusual audience start partying! (Bârsan, 1908, p. 8).

Given that the Transylvanian intellectuals were aware of the unsatisfactory state of the Romanian audience – and here we refer to the vast majority of the population, not to the few members of society who had frequent contact with the German-speaking theatres in Transylvania or even with the European ones – serious concerns were manifested for the improvement of this situation.

### ***Amateur companies, the basis for institutionalized theatre***

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the theatrical activity in the Romanian language in Sibiu was provided exclusively by the companies of amateurs established within the societies and reunions operating in the city.

The largest company of amateur actors was formed within the Reunion of Romanian Apprentices of Sibiu and was made up of the members of the Reunion,

---

<sup>5</sup> Zaharia Bârsan (1878-1948) was the first director of the National Theatre of Cluj, founded in 1919. He was an actor, writer, poet. He was a disciple of Constantin Nottara, and at the beginning of 1903 he organized the first touring performances in Transylvania. He was a scholar of the Society for Theatre Fund, with the help of which he studied in Berlin, Vienna and Florence.

<sup>6</sup> During the tour that Zaharia Bârsan made in the summer of 1906 in Braşov, Făgăraş, Sebeş, Sălişte; in Sibiu, despite the preparations, despite the promotion of the tour through posters, the theatre was empty, and the performances were canceled (Bârsan, 1908, p. 20)



craftsmen with preoccupations for the artistic area and talented reciters or even actors. Within this society Dumitru Axente stood out, typesetter-typographer and typography director, an amateur actor appreciated by the audience in Sibiu, who in time also took over the role of director of the ensemble of actors of the Reunion (Chirilă, 1946, p. 80.) The amateur actors of the Reunion, led by Dumitru Axente, organized two theatre performances annually, on the occasion of religious holidays, Christmas, Easter, Epiphany or Pentecost, during which they presented two or even three plays, some of them with complex casts, consisting even of 14 actors (Maier, 2022, p. 151).

In parallel with this theatrical activity that they constantly carried out throughout the entire activity of the Reunion, the craftsmen also organized a series of literary evenings. On the occasion of these events, initially organized exclusively for the members of the Reunion, the craftsmen also practiced their skills as actors by reciting poems, presenting fragments of Romanian literature, so in time they were able to play in the plays that the Reunion presented.

For its part, the ASTRA Association, encouraged at the beginning of the twentieth century the formation of amateur companies both in Sibiu and in the rural areas of Transylvania, and supported theatrical performances on the occasion of its general assemblies in the great centres of the province (Maier, 2022, p. 35) Subsequently, the association founded in 1923 a professional theatre company, made up of young graduates of the theatre or music schools in Bucharest.

### ***Artistic education of the audience***

The Romanian cultural reunions in Sibiu carried out an intense activity for the emancipation of the Romanian population through theatre, for the affirmation of the cultural and national unity of the Romanians in the province, but they were also preoccupied with achieving a theatrical education of the audience.

We identified such an initiative in the Reunion of Romanian Apprentices of Sibiu, which later became the Reunion of Romanian Craftsmen, which constantly organized theatrical performances since 1897. The reunion offered its members and even the public in Sibiu literary evenings, organized monthly, consisting of readings, recitals and small plays, but also theatrical performances with one, two or even three plays. In the first decades of activity, during the performances presented in the halls of the Saxon community in Sibiu or of those organized in the Municipal Theatre, the leaders of the Reunion had to educate each spectator separately. The members of the Reunion went through each row of the hall and even the lodges, in order to explain to everyone in the audience that during the performance it was not appropriate to chat, they offered indications on

how spectators had to react to the scenes presented, without excessive laughter, without overexpressing wonder, joy or mercy, because such manifestations could disturb both the spectators, as well as the audience (SJSAN, File no. VI, document No. 142).

In 1901, the Reunion presented in Sibiu *Wake not the Dead* by Ernst Raupach, translated and adapted by Teodor V. Păcățianu, trying to diversify the repertoire and to offer the audience dramas, not just comedies. The performance was well received by the Transylvanian press and by the audience that rewarded the amateur craftsmen-actors with long applause, but the inexperience of the audience was felt, the conclusion of the journalists being that “dramas are not yet for our audience; the undisciplined part laughed at the most tragic of scenes” (SJSAN, file no. II, document no. 51).

More than a decade away, in 1913, the situation was considerably improved as a result of the efforts that the leaders of the Reunion had made over the years for the education of the audience, the representatives of the middle class, of the craftsmen, already able to understand the importance of theatre for individual culture:

Our people now no longer say we go to the theatre to laugh, but we go to listen to what we are told and to draw the right teachings. Behold, that our Reunion with its theatres, with its conventions has so far contributed to the enlightenment, to the cultivation of the lower class of our people. Our theatre was and is a school, it is a bridge from the peasant and from the craftsman towards our own cultured class. It's the interest I was told the other day by some of our lower class men. [...] But what they said, although they are true, will not have a long span because the theatre offered by our craftsmen will make us read more, learn to speak beautifully, learn to cultivate our feelings and to be human as one should be. (SJSAN, file no. VI, document no. 142).

Cultural societies have managed from the very first years of their activity to offer a diverse repertoire, despite the lack of audience training. For example, ASTRA presented in Sibiu, in 1905, on the occasion of the inauguration of the first Romanian theatre stage in Transylvania, plays from the Romanian dramaturgy, such as *Fântâna Blandusiei* by Vasile Alecsandri. On the same occasion, however, a second evening with theatre performances was organized, dedicated to world drama, staging the drama *Of Dishonesty* by Gerolamo Rovetta (*Gazeta Transilvaniei*, 1905, p. 1). A similar situation can be found in the case of Astra in 1923, when during the first Romanian theatre season in Sibiu a repertoire composed of 10 plays was presented. Of these, four were from the Romanian dramaturgy: *Pe malul gărlui* by Dimitrie C. Ollănescu-Ascanio, *Nevasta lui Cerceluş* by Petre Locusteanu, *Cain* by Alexandru Sabaru, *Fountain of Blandusia* by Vasile

Alecsandri, and the remaining six plays were from the world drama: *Jeppe on the Hill* by Ludvig Holberg, *Scapin the Schemer* by Molière, *Bastard* by A. Bourande, *Civil Death* by Paolo Giacometti, *House of Clay* by Émile Fabre, *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* by Molière (Maier, 2019, p. 226).

The situation is similar regarding the Reunion of Romanian Apprentices of Sibiu, which has permanently alternated plays from the Romanian dramaturgy with those from the European literature. To illustrate the Reunion's concern for a diverse repertoire, the situation between 1897 and 1901 is relevant, when the craftsmen staged ten plays, most of which were plays from the local dramaturgy: *Vlăduțul mării* by Ioan Lupescu, *Rusaliile* by Vasile Alecsandri, *Nu te juca cu dracu* by Iacob Negruzzi, *Iorgu de la Sadagura sau Nepotu-i salba dracului* by Vasile Alecsandri, *Plăeșii dela Baia* by Nicolae Andriescu-Bogdan, *Tovarăși nedespărțiți sau Sfântul Dumitru* by Carol Scrob, *O jalobă în atmosferă* by Nicolae Andriescu-Bogdan, *Drumul de fier* by Vasile Alecsandri, *O căsnicie* by George C. Ursachi, *Ruga de la Chisetu* by Iosif Vulcan. Most of the repertoire was dedicated to Romanian works, but there was no lack of world drama: *Wake not the Dead* by Ernst Raupach, *Dangerous Neighbourhood* by August von Kotzebue, *Idil in the Countryside* by Juin and Flerx (Maier, 2022, p. 149.)

We can see that the Romanian societies and reunions in Sibiu were aware of the importance of the repertoire for the theatrical education of the audience. Despite the fact that the main concern of these reunions and societies was directed towards the awakening of the national consciousness and the achievement of cultural and national unity, they understood that their effort had to take into account the universality of theatre as well. It is further proof that an approach with a very precise and particular purpose, such as that of the Romanian societies in Sibiu, could not remain isolated and confined within the limits of a theatre made with the sole purpose of asserting the national identity, but went beyond the borders of this endeavour, demonstrating that art succeeds, from a certain level, in becoming universal. We found a mention of this aspect in the Transylvanian press, proof of the fact that the intellectuals of the time had a good perception of the role that theatre and art in general could play in the history of a nation: "Art has a national character. Nor is there art without national character. But no matter how national art may be, as soon as it rises to a higher level, elements common to all people develop in it." (*Telegraful Român*, 1882, pp. 361-362).

### ***Preoccupations after the Great Union***

In the period between the second half of the nineteenth century and the Great Union of 1 December 1918, the education of the Romanian public in Transylvania was strictly the responsibility of reunions, associations or cultural societies, in the absence of political and cultural rights and freedoms for the

Romanian community. After reunification, however, the cultural societies of Sibiu and Transylvania continued to contribute to the education of the audience in Sibiu, to promote the need for such education.

In 1921, when the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People added to its object of activity the cultural propaganda through theatre, its leaders supported the need for an artistic education of the audience, in addition to the national one, because “many companies from the old kingdom did not satisfy in terms of repertoire or dramatic art” (*Transilvania*, 1922, p. 456).

Another relevant aspect is the fact that in 1922, Nicolae Băilă, the artistic director of the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People and the director of the Astra Theatre Company, invoked the lack of theatrical education of the Romanian audience in Sibiu, disinterested in supporting the performing arts. Băilă supported the need to determine the Romanian society to value the artistic act at the expense of other recreational activities:

for our audience must first be weaned of luxury, of organizing expensive teas, to go more joyfully to a good theatre than to the dramas of cinema, etc., etc. And as bad habits and tricks are harder to unlearn, we must for a few years get to where one should already be. The beginning is hard and without sacrifices it can't be done. But the longer we delay, however, the sacrifices, which will have to be brought later, will be unmeasurable. (SJSAN, document no. 460/1922, f. 139).

We can identify in the lines of the Association's leader a good understanding of the importance that the education of the audience could have for the cultural life of a community, the fact that such an education was a long process, which had to be well prepared, and which was to only have visible results within a few years.

ASTRA was preoccupied with the training of a knowledgeable theatre audience not only in the big cities of Transylvania, but also in the small towns in the rural area. For example, during the General Assembly in Zalău, on 13 September 1926, the Central Committee of the Association requested that the artistic director develop a theatrical propaganda for the rural area, being “asked to visit villages, where artistic education would be done: theatre, declamations, choirs. [...] Let the peasantry be spiritually cultivated, urging emulation” (SJSAN, *Procese verbale*, III 61, *Procesele verbale ale Adunărilor generale ale „Astrei” 1920-1929*, f. 110).

The desire to create an informed, knowledgeable audience, able to appreciate the artistic act we have identified not only in the case of cultural societies that have developed theatrical activities throughout their existence, but also in other areas of the performing arts.

A mention referring to the Romanian Music Reunion in Sibiu refers directly to the express desire of those in charge of this society to achieve a musical education of the public through the organized events, and not to offer events that would occasion the audience moments of delight.

Opposed to the Romanian reunions of this kind, the Reunion of the Romanian Songs in Sibiu cultivates music not to produce momentary effects, which in most cases degenerates into musical frivolities, such as the works located and represented with much fuss by the choirs from Banat and elsewhere, but to improve the taste of the audience by reproducing the valuable works both in our national music, be it worldly – or ecclesiastical, but especially through the interpretation of the works of foreign authors, unknown to musical authorities. (Voileanu, 1905, pp. 21-22).

Naturally, the cultural societies in Sibiu were preoccupied with the cultivation and emancipation of the middle class of the society and especially of the peasants, but their approaches were not limited only to those social categories that did not have access to education, but extended to the cultured class, that of the intellectuals. Through articles published in *the Transylvania* journal, ASTRA promoted aesthetics and insisted on the need to enrich the knowledge of the cultural class in this field. Aesthetics was seen as a science of concern to nations considered to be truly cultivated, and beauty was regarded as a luxury intended for those belonging to the upper classes. “Who could argue that man could not live without looking at paintings and statues, without pursuing dramatic actions?” wrote Iosif Blaga (1904, p. 202). One could also live without the delight of the paintings of great artists or of some theatrical or musical performances, but “it is required of the cultivated man to be aware of everything that is happening inside him, with him, around him” (Blaga, 1904, p. 202). The aesthetics and education of a cultivated audience were also the subject of other articles published in the *Transylvania* journal of the ASTRA Association.

The public’s access to the cultural act was also frequently the subject of discussion. “Why shouldn’t the theatre, the museum, the exhibition, the concert be done for all? Why should only the one who has a lot of money be able to often go to the theatre and I repeat: why only the one who has a lot of money?” noted Emil Isac in a press article<sup>7</sup> (1926, p. 583).

7 Emil Isac (1886-1954), poet, professor and publicist, corresponding member of the Romanian Academy, inspector of arts and theatres in Transylvania, member of the ASTRA Association.

### *The effects of long-term efforts*

We find that cultural societies have undertaken actions to cultivate the audience from all walks of life, both peasants, craftsmen and intellectuals, and have carried out these activities simultaneously.

The Reunion of Romanian Craftsmen in Sibiu was preoccupied with the cultivation of industrialists, craftsmen and apprentices and their training as an informed audience, through literary evenings and theatrical performances prepared monthly and biannually.

On the other hand, the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People activated in the sense of cultivating peasants, but also increasing the knowledge of intellectuals.

The Romanian Music Reunion in Sibiu contributed to the diversification of the artistic education of the audience in Sibiu and to the promotion of universal creations in the musical field.

In the modern era, the public is attracted by artistic and cultural activities with a high degree of uniqueness, able to offer diverse experiences, but which highlight the feeling of local pride and stimulate the development of communities (Tomuş, 2013, p. 18). In Sibiu, the Sibiu International Theatre Festival was received, since its first edition, with an impressive openness, its success being explained “by the availability of the Sibiu audience in front of the quality artistic act” (Tomuş, 2013, p. 126).

We consider that it is precisely this openness of the Sibiu audience that can be explained through an education started a century before, through the approaches of the Romanian cultural societies in Sibiu. Even if it may seem that this contribution that the reunions and associations brought to the education of the audience, to the creation of a category of knowledgeable spectators was a minor one, in reality it created the premises of an education that was perpetuated over time, which was the basis for the training of an audience characterized by a vivid and constant interest in the artistic act.

To what extent can we identify a direct link between the intense and constant activity of the Romanian cultural societies in Sibiu to educate the audience and develop a theatrical culture and the current level of education of the audience in Sibiu and Transylvania? Even in the absence of direct evidence, we can conclude that the effort of these institutions to train the audience, starting from the basic elements of a theatrical education, is found in the way of manifestation of the audience. The cultural societies of Sibiu became aware of the need to carry out a theatrical education especially for the middle and lower class of the population, who were often at a first contact with theatre. Thus, their efforts for the training of an informed audience started with preoccupations for

the acquisition of basic elements, namely the behaviour in the performance hall and the way of reacting to the facts presented on stage. Basically, these societies initiated most of the Romanian community in Sibiu in the theatrical field, offering the basic elements of an artistic education. After this first step, the education of the audience continued through the presentation of performances, which gradually began to address various dramatic genres, introduced drama instead of comedy and began to promote the pedagogical role of theatre. The contribution that the societies, associations and reunions in Sibiu have made to raising the level of culture of the already trained audience, by promoting the notions of aesthetics, is also not to be neglected.

The education of the audience for and through theatre was not an isolated and random phenomenon, but a conscious action, programmed and prepared in detail by the Romanian cultural societies in Sibiu.

Re-valuing the steps taken by these institutions over a long period of time contributes to a better understanding of the behaviour of spectators and their particularities according to the different geographical and political areas to which they belong.

The efforts of the associations from Sibiu's past to raise the level of culture of the Romanian population, including the education of the peasants and the social categories that did not have access to education, represents the primary structure from which a community with a unique openness for the cultural act, for theatre and performing arts evolved, a community capable of managing and hosting some of the most worldwide appreciated manifestations in the field of performing arts.

#### References:

1. 'Cui să credem?'. (1882). *Telegraful Român*, an XXX, nr. 91, Sibiu, 7/19 August, pp. 361-362.
2. 'Serbările culturale din Sibiu'. (1905). *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, anul LXVIII, nr. 175, miercuri 10 (23) august 1905, p. 1.
3. 'Raportul general al comitetului central al „Asociațiunii pentru literatura română și cultura poporului român” asupra lucrărilor sale și a situației acestei instituțiuni în anul 1921'. (1922). *Transilvania* (Editura Asociațiunii), nr. 7-8, iulie-august, pp. 445-478.
4. Bârsan, Zaharie (1908). *Impresii de teatru din Ardeal*. Arad: Tipografia George Nichin.
5. Blaga, Iosif (1904). 'Principiile artei moderne', *Transilvania* (Editura Asociațiunii), nr. 6, noiembrie-decembrie, pp. 202-217.
6. Chirilă, Traian (1946). *Reuniunea Culturală Națională a Meseriașilor Români din Sibiu la 80 de ani*. Sibiu: Editura Reuniunii Culturale Naționale a Meseriașilor Români din Sibiu.
7. Isac, Emil (1926). 'Proaganda artistică', *Transilvania* (Editura Asociațiunii), nr. 11-12, nov-dec, pp. 581-593.
8. Maier, Sorana (2022). *Manifestările teatrale ale societăților culturale românești din Sibiu, expresie a identității naționale* (teză de doctorat). Universitatea „Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu.



9. Maier, Sorana (2019). *Teatrul românesc din Sibiu 1868-1948*. București: Editura Eikon.
10. Maier, Sorana (2020). 'Ab Initio. Turneele trupelor lui Mihail Pascaly și Matei Millo, primele spectacole de teatru românesc la Sibiu', *Jurnalul Artelor Spectacolului*, nr. 1, pp. 61-68.
11. Necula, Constantin și Maier, Sorana (2018). *Ipostazele unui oraș premiant. Sibiu – Capitala Premierelor*. București: Editura Eikon.
12. Serviciul Județean Sibiu al Arhivelor Naționale (SJSAN), *Fond ASTRA, Acte*, document no. 460/1922, f. 139.
13. Serviciul Județean Sibiu al Arhivelor Naționale (SJSAN), *Fond ASTRA, Procese verbale*, III 61, *Procese verbale ale Adun[ărilor] gen[erale] ale „Astrei” 1920-1929*, f. 110.
14. Serviciul Județean Sibiu al Arhivelor Naționale (SJSAN), *Fond Reuniunea Meseriașilor Români din Sibiu*, file no. VI, document no. 142
15. Serviciul Județean Sibiu al Arhivelor Naționale (SJSAN), *Fond Reuniunea Meseriașilor Români din Sibiu*, file no. II, document no. 51.
16. Serviciul Județean Sibiu al Arhivelor Naționale (SJSAN), *Fond Reuniunea Meseriașilor Români din Sibiu*, file no. VI, document no. 142.
17. Tomuș, Ion M. (2013). *O instituție culturală: Festivalul Internațional de Teatru de la Sibiu*. București: Editura Muzeului Național al Literaturii Române.
18. Voileanu, Mateiu (1905). *25 de ani din viața „Reuniunii române de muzică” din Sibiu*. Sibiu: Tipariul tipografiei arhidiecezane.

**Sorana Maier**, journalist and historian, associate professor of the “Lucian Blaga” University in Sibiu, with concerns and contributions related to the history of the Romanian theater in Sibiu, the history of culture and elites in Sibiu, the history of the Romanian press in Transylvania, the urban development of Sibiu in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Author and co-author of over 10 books, specialized articles and hundreds of articles in the *Tribuna* newspaper from Sibiu. She obtained the title of Doctor of Theater and Performing Arts with the work *Theatrical Manifestations of the Romanian Cultural Societies in Sibiu, an expression of national identity*.

Author of the volume *Teatrul românesc din Sibiu 1868-1948* (2019, Bucharest: Eikon, 363 p.) and co-author, among others, of the volumes: *Muzeul Asociațiunii – Rădăcinile admirării satului românesc* (2022, Eikon), *Asociațiunea ASTRA – recuperarea unei Memorii culturale, vol. 2 Președinții* (2021, Eikon), *Școala demnității feminine. Școala de Fete a Asociațiunii* (2021, Eikon), *Asociațiunea ASTRA – recuperarea unei Memorii culturale, I. Întemeietorii* (2020, Eikon), *Chipuri feminine sibiene din alte veacuri* (2019, Eikon).



# ***I. RESEARCH***

## THEATRE AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES



**THE RECEPTION OF THE  
MYTH OF ALCESTIS**  
IN *ALCESTIS* OF **EURIPIDES**  
AND IN *ALCESTIS AND SWEET  
DREAMS*  
OF **ANDREAS STAIKOS**

**DESPINA KOSMOPOULOU**



National Kapodistrian University of Athens &  
University of the Peloponnese, Greece  
*dkosmopoulou@gmail.com*



**Abstract:** This article attempts, through the theory of comparative literature and intertextuality, the interpretation of the reception of the myth of Alcestis by the ancient poet Euripides<sup>8</sup>, but also by the contemporary Andreas Staikos. The reconstruction and transcription of the material by each author, focuses mainly on the archetypal heroes, re-signifying and re-sketching the features of the heroes through their writing, and composing new themes and codes of theatrical writing. The structural and thematic elements of the two works are put under the microscope in order to clarify the differences and relevance at the writing level, based on the socio-political context of each author.

**Keywords:** Alcestis, intertextuality, comparative literature, reception, transcription.

**How to cite:** Kosmopoulou, Despina (2022) 'The Reception of The Myth of Alcestis in *Alcestis* of Euripides and in *Alcestis And Sweet Dreams* of Andreas Staikos', *Concept* 1(24)/2022, pp. 58-76.

## 1. Introduction

From 438 BC, when the satirical drama *Alcestis* was taught by Euripides (Easterling, 2018, p. 59), until 2012, when the theatrical work of Andreas Staikos<sup>9</sup> *Alcestis and sweet dreams* was published, the themes that occupied the theatrical creators were varied, with each era reflecting on the transcription of the myth. Euripides' works were largely characterized as prototypical at thematic level, as he dealt with issues such as war, social status, religion, women, with a radical mood for his time. In the homonymous satirical drama, Alcestis converses with the era of poetic writing and especially with Athens of the 5th century, with a dialectical relationship of the poet with his audience. After all, the works of

8 Το 2002 στην Ελλάδα είναι έτος Ευριπίδη υπό την αιγίδα του Ελληνικού οργανισμού Τουρισμού με πλούσιες δράσεις κυρίως στη Σαλαμίνα που ήταν η γενετειρά του. Θα διεξαχθεί μάλιστα Διεθνές Συνέδριο Αρχαίου Δράματος με τίτλο: " Το Θείο και η Πόλις στον Ευριπίδη" όπου η γραφούσα συμμετέχει στην οργανωτική και επιστημονική επιτροπή.

9 Ο Ανδρέας Στάικος είναι σημαντικός Έλληνας θεατρικός συγγραφέας, σκηνοθέτης, πεζογράφος και μεταφραστής. Γεννήθηκε στην Αθήνα. Πήρε πτυχίο Φιλολογίας από το Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης και το 1967 έφυγε για το Παρίσι όπου ξεκίνησε θεατρικές σπουδές. Εκεί σπούδασε στο Conservatoire National d' Art Dramatique και παρέμεινε μέχρι το 1981 γράφοντας και δουλεύοντας ως βοηθός σκηνοθέτη στο πλάι του μεγάλου σκηνοθέτη Αντουάν Βιτέζ. Από το Παρίσι εξάλλου έγινε γνωστό το πρώτο θεατρικό του έργο με τίτλο „Κλυταιμνήστρα”.

Η ιδιότυπη θεατρική γραφή του είναι αποτέλεσμα της δυναμικής των προβών με τους ηθοποιούς. Ο ίδιος έχει αναφέρει χαρακτηριστικά : "Η γραφή γεννούσε αυτομάτως τη σκηνοθεσία τους και η σκηνοθεσία γεννούσε αυτομάτως τη γραφή τους. Σύγχυση ή ταύτιση της γραφής και της σκηνοθεσίας." Έτσι τα έργα του ανεβαίνουν σχεδόν πάντα για πρώτη φορά στη σκηνή κάτω από τη δική του σκηνοθεσία.

Παράλληλα έχει μεταφράσει στα ελληνικά πληθώρα θεατρικών έργων Γάλλων κλασικών συγγραφέων όπως ο Λακλό, ο Μολιέρος, ο Μαριβώ, ο Λεσάζ, ο Λαρπύ, κ.α. και έχει εκδώσει δύο δημοφιλή μυθιστορήματα (Αισχροτάτη Εριέττα και Επικίνδυνες μαγειρικές).

Ασχολείται ενεργά με τη διδασκαλία τόσο σε ελληνικά πανεπιστήμια Υπήρξε επί μία δεκαετία διευθυντής του Εργαστηρίου Θεατρικής Μετάφρασης στο Κέντρο Λογοτεχνικής Μετάφρασης του Γαλλικού Ινστιτούτου Αθηνών και αργότερα συνεργάτης του Ευρωπαϊκού Κέντρου Λογοτεχνικής Μετάφρασης. Ενδεικτικά έργα του που έχουν μεταφραστεί σε πολλές γλώσσες: Κλυταιμνήστρα, 1843, .Δαίδαλος, Το μικρό δαχτυλάκι της Ολυμπιάδος,

Η Αυλαία πέφτει, Το μήλον της Μήλου κ.α

ancient tragedians were intended to be taught in the society of the time, usually with a critical tone. The reception of the myth of Alcestis from modern and contemporary drama is spotted in the work of Andreas Staikos *Alcestis and sweet dreams*. Andreas Staikos converses and rewrites the myth, using the game of transformations and focusing on the hero of the play with a comic mood in a grid of luck and upheavals. His ancient-themed work, with post-theatrical manifestations that constantly penetrate the dipole of “appearing” and “being”, is included in postmodern writing. The need for storytelling of events constitutes an element of human existence, with the study of ancient myths being sealed by mythology and the semiotic approach studying the methods by which myth narratives validate the human entity (Danesi, 2017, p. 159). The concept of myth in ancient Greece had the meaning of “the word, the speech or even the history of the gods”, with the myth finally taking on the meaning of telling stories with protagonists being gods, heroes or even extraterrestrial creatures and taking place in a metaphysical world in opposition to the notion of the real (Danesi, 2017, p. 163). In *Poetry*, Aristotle explains the reason why ancient tragedians used myths; because they were believable and plausible to the audience of the time (Ross, 1993, p. 401). Myth, according to Rolan Barthes, is a kind of discourse, which for mythology is a fragment of semiotics, the science of signs, based on the theory formulated by Saussure (Barthes, 2013, p. 101).

## 2. The myth of Alcestis

The pre-dramatic myth of Alcestis, before being transformed either into a tragedy (or rather a satirical drama)(Easterling, 2018, p. 59) or a work with postmodern writing, is drawn as a story from the popular tradition, well known to both the Athenian public of the time and earlier. The persons who constitute the myth are Admetus, king of Pherae in Thessaly, son of Feritas and Klymeni, Alcestis, daughter of Pelias and Anaxivia, the sons of the couple Evmilos, Ippasos and Perimilis, the god Apollo, the goddess Artemis and Death. The earlier reference to Admetus, Alcestis’s husband, is made by Homer, in a brief reference to him as the “son of Feritas” (Admetus, in *Iliad* B 763) and there may have been more information in the lost *Catalogue of Women* of Hesiod (Slater, 2013, p. 8).

Wilamowitz, in his work *I syllos von Epidaurus*, has shown that the myth of Alcestis is a continuation of the myth of Asclepius and Koronida located in the 3rd Pythionikos of Pindar (Ebeling, 1898, p. 66). The most popular version of the myth begins with Asclepius, son of the god Apollo, who was punished by Zeus, because he committed an insult when he brought to life one or more mortals. Apollo then killed the Cyclops, who were the ones who produced the lightnings. Apollo in turn was punished for the murder of the Cyclops and was forced to

serve someone for a whole year. So Apollo chose the king of Pherae, Admetus, in Thessaly, a rich bachelor with the obligation to protect the land grazed by the oxen that the king had in his possession. A year later, Admetus enjoyed the favor of Apollo, as the god made each cow give birth to twins in each litter. Admetus, when it was time for him to get married, fell in love with the daughter of Pelias, Alcestis. As Alcestis was claimed by several suitors, Pelias planned a seemingly impossible task to choose a groom for his daughter. He tied a wild boar and a lion to a chariot, which whoever managed to stand up and drive around, would win his daughter. The god Apollo contributed to the victory of Admetus, but on the day of the wedding snakes filled the room, because Admetus had not made sacrifices and libations in honor of the goddess Artemis. The sign of the snakes was a prophetic message that the king of Pherae had to die at a young age. Apollo, however, did not want Admetus to die and visited the gods, begging them to save his life and finally managing to reach an agreement. This agreement ruled that if a friend or family member voluntarily took the place of Admetus among the dead, he could continue to live (Kravaritou and Stamatopoulou, 2018, p. 129). In another version of the myth, the death of Admetus or of a close person of him was not a demand of Artemis, but was related to the revenge of Akastos, Alcestis's brother, for the slaughter of his father by his daughters, that is, the sisters of Akastos (Segal, 1992, p. 148). Following the myth from a universal point of view, when the news spread to Admetus, he himself was convinced that one of his elderly parents would replace him, while they themselves denied his expectations. At that point, Alcestis offered to take his place and was transported to the Underworld, surrounded by her friends and family. Admetus, during this period, realized his mistake and desired to reverse this decision. Hercules, being a regular visitor to the kingdom of Admetus, agreed to bring Alcestis back from the Underworld. When Hercules faced Death, he managed to win and led Alcestis's soul back to Admetus. The couple lived together for years, until they both went down to the Underworld (Dowden, 2016).

The above version is written in the *Library* of Pseudo-Apollodorus (1st – 2nd century AD)(Slater, 2013, p. 8), but it also refers to another version of the myth. In the second version, Hercules does not play any role in the ascension of Alcestis from the Underworld to earth, but it is noteworthy that the *Library* was written later than Euripides and the stories it contains are considered much older. The ascension of Alcestis to earth, in fact, is reported to occur by Persephone, an earlier popular form of the myth than the version with Hercules, but in the work of Euripides the version with Hercules is preferred instead of that with Persephone. In the version with Persephone, the spirit of Alcestis appears in front of Persephone in the Underworld, where the latter wonders which person

is the one who wants to take the place of Admetus in death. Persephone is then moved by Alcestis's faith and devotion to Admetus, so she orders Death to bring the queen back to life. Nevertheless, the version with the use of Hercules as a companion of Alcestis from the Underworld is considered to be predominant (Joshua, 2014). Euripides, after all, chooses Hercules and introduces him as a comic character, presenting his work in *The Great Dionysia* as a satirical drama and not as a tragedy (Easterling, 2018, p. 59). However, the version with Hercules as the person who brings Alcestis back to earth, includes the strict rule that only Alcestis can take the place of her husband in death. Admetus is informed about this, accepts the term, while his wife becomes more and more weak. The city then falls into deep mourning and Alcestis demands, in exchange for her sacrifice, that Admetus will not marry again, but he will keep her memory alive. The king then agrees and swears at the same time that he will never organize a celebration in the palace again, so Alcestis dies (Joshua, 2014). The sequel in both versions, with Hercules and Persephone, finds the same end with the prevailing version of the myth mentioned above.

The myth of Alcestis, however, had been taught to the Athenian public at least once before the widely known version of Euripides. Around one generation earlier, the tragedian Phrynichus presented Alcestis in *Dionysia* (Markantonatos, 2013, p. 90). Euripides borrowed elements from Phrynichus, such as the presence of Death on stage with a sword in his hand and the rescue of Alcestis by Hercules, but Phrynichus did not focus on Alcestis' desire to die for her husband (Markantonatos, 2013, p. 91). Evidence for the myth of Alcestis is also inherent in other tragedies, such as the *Iketides* and the *Eumenides* of Aeschylus. In *Iketides*, there is a hint about the period of slavery of Apollo and, in *Eumenides*, the chorus accuses Apollo of deceiving the Fates with fraud. Aeschylus emphasizes on the aspect of the story of the poisoning of the Fates, while Euripides in *Alcestis* avoids revealing Apollo's deception on them, but implies it in verses 12 and 33-34 (Ευριπίδης [μτφρ. Τσοκόπουλος], 2010, pp. 5-6). In Phrynichus' work, the treatment of Apollo by the Fates was probably designed in such a way as to bring greater relief to the opposition of the deities of time and the generosity of the gods of Olympus. In other words, by putting a Bacchic touch, the codes that regulate the relations between gods and humans are stopped. In fact, it is mentioned that in order to highlight the passion of the situation, Phrynichus gives an exaggeration to Apollo's offer to Admetus, who promises him immortality, not just a temporary cessation of his death. The choice of eternal life soothes the moral significance of Admetus' choice to sacrifice his wife, while at the same time Apollo's conflict with the older system of gods emerges. Even the deception of the Fates with the collaboration of Apollo, indicates the satirical character of Phrynichus's play.

Isichius of Alexandria mentions 5 words from the play that not only introduce Hercules in the play, but indicate his fierce fight with Death with a victorious result. Euripides, therefore, probably borrowed from Phrynichus the battle of Hercules with Death and it is immediately understood that Phrynichus related in an inventive way two seemingly unrelated mythical stories (Markantonatos, 2013, p. 93).

### **3. The reception of the same myth in different plays**

The transcription of the texts, either of the ancient Greek literature or of others, starts from the need of the creators to converse with their time on the basis of a primary material that acquires new breath, through the new theatrical writing that is transformed. It is a fact, as Blessios records in his work *Ancient Myths in Modern Greek Drama*, that writers in the post-war period appear particularly sensitive to the exploitation of earlier myths by providing their own approach (Μπλέσιος, 2001, p. 437). The conversion of a myth into a dramatic genre is a dynamic process, concerning the knowledge and influence of secondary entity sources, with Athenian tragedians transforming mainly fragments and composing elements of myths, while contemporary writers established aesthetics theories that contributed to the understanding of the interrelated relationship between tragedy and mythology (Μαρκαντωνάτος, 2008, p. 183). Based on Robert Jauss, the theory of reception has a dual role regarding the meaning of each work, which primarily concerns the text itself and then the horizon of expectations related to the space and time that each text is perceived by its audience.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, with an introductory element being something specific, every writer hopes for the subjective approach of each reader to ensure the timelessness of his creation.

#### **3.1 The work of Euripides**

The manipulation of the myth of Alcestis by Euripides, based on other authors also, is a point that needs special attention and analysis, as it is the cornerstone for understanding how the same point of origin (the myth) can lead in different destinations (authors' works). Euripides' writing and narrative skills are evident not only in the handling of the myth, but also in the way he connects different narrative elements, timeless conventions and situations, giving the public the opportunity to re-examine the myths of Alcestis and Hercules in terms of their interpretive content (Markantonatos, 2013, p. 94). Euripides chooses the transcription of the myth concerning the rescue of Alcestis, daughter of Pelias (verse 37)(Ευριπίδης [μτφρ. Τσοκόπουλος], 2010, p. 7), by Hercules and elaborately boxes the 12 labours of Hercules in a seemingly unrelated story

10 Τσατσούλης, «Αρχαϊκόμυθη Ελληνική Δραματουργία – Ανασημασιοδοτώντας την εθνική κληρονομιά».

focusing on Alcestis. Alcestis, as in the myth, has chosen to die in the place of her husband Admetus, as Admetus's parents, Ferris and Klymeni, refuse to die for him. Euripides in his work places Admetus arguing with his father, because the latter refuses to take his place in death and by this choice forces Alcestis to become the scapegoat herself and her children to mourn on stage, with Evmilos being the only speaker and the other two sons being dumb faces (verses 393-403)(Ευριπίδης [μτφρ. Τσοκόπουλος], 2010, p. 25). Euripides follows the myth of Alcestis with formal reverence and with a narrative respect quotes the elements of the myth, either from the point of view of the genealogical origin of the heroes or according to the chronological sequence of events, choosing though to focus on the version of the myth that Hercules is the one that saves Alcestis and not Persephone. In essence, the reference to the story of Hercules connects two legendary stories, the 12 labours of Hercules and the story of Alcestis, creating an explosive combination, posing a common denominator that their common component cannot be identified at first. However, the receiver's anxiety is alleviated, via the unique connection that the creator achieves. Then, Hercules' visit to the kingdom of Admetus may result in two interpretive extensions, which are worth separating. More specifically, the poet uses it to show the size of Admetus who, despite his fragmentation, accepts people to visit him. On the other hand, however, it functions as a distinctive precursor element for the salvation of Alcestis by Hercules.

In a second pass, approaching the play more structurally, the first point that is worth mentioning is, as it is understood, the title. The classic motif of Euripides is observed once again, by giving female names in his titles, thus highlighting the value of gender and giving a leading role to them. Impressive is his subsequent recognition as one of the anti-feminist poets. In any case, Euripides in this particular myth gives his own point of view, ignoring its previous versions (Markantonatos, 2013, p. 94). The poet does not focus on the 12 labours of Hercules, but gives the audience the authority to recall and connect the case of the labours of Hercules, which were known to the public of the 5th century BC. A particularly difficult task, addressed to a demanding audience, which Euripides already introduces in this process from the prologue through Apollo (verse 60) (Ευριπίδης [μτφρ. Τσοκόπουλος], 2010, p. 9). In more detail, at the point of the prologue, with Apollo's narration, it seems that Euripides has used the myth, according to which Zeus punished his son Asclepius with death by lightning, since due to his science he stopped the process of human death.

The reception of the myth continues with his narration and his obligation to live next to Admetus, watching over his oxen (Κρεββατάς, 1998, p. 19). The labours of Hercules did not remain in the public consciousness only as punishments imposed by Hera, but also as labours that brought order and culture. The abduction



of Alcestis by Hercules from the hands of Death affirms the new morality and is a political act. This is in contrast to the act of Asclepius to bring the men from the Underworld regardless of their moral status, while Zeus establishes a new moral system with the release of his son Hercules from punishment, thus giving the possibility of a second chance to the virtuous (Markantonatos, 2013, p. 94). When Apollo, in the prologue, prophesies the rescue of Alcestis by Hercules, he indicates one of the most important pieces of the narrative puzzle, that is, that the story of Alcestis is inextricably linked to the 12 labours of Hercules. In particular, he speaks of the 8th labour of Hercules, the abduction of the wild horses of Diomedes (verse 67 and verses 476-506) (Ευριπίδης [μτφρ. Τσοκόπουλος], 2010, p. 9 και 27-29), and in fact, the rise of Alcestis from the Underworld as an event is almost in the middle of the labours of Hercules, between the 7th and the 8th. In addition, it is important to mention the battle of Hercules with Death at the tomb of Alcestis which is associated with the 12th and last labour of Hercules, his descent to Hades and the fight with the three-headed dog Cerberus, which he had to raise to earth. On his journey to the Underworld, he released Theseus and also tried to free Peirithos, the king of the Lapiths, but he did not succeed. It is understood, therefore, that the rescue of Theseus from the Underworld constitutes a mirror story in the rescue of Alcestis (Markantonatos, 2013, p. 86). After all, all the stories of Hercules are about the fight to the death, with exological elements from human civilization. The way Hercules deals with death in his labours is reminiscent of the way Alcestis stands in the face of the possibility of her death and sacrifice. The injection of the myth of Hercules into Alcestis, turns a typical story about the avoidance of destruction and death into a story where death is defeated, through the morality and the integrity of the character of Alcestis and the honesty of Hercules (Markantonatos, 2013, p. 89). Of course, the character of Admetus does not converge on the above, as he gives his place to his wife in death with relative ease.

From what is understood, the reception of the myth of Alcestis is proposed with the myth of Hercules going through the whole text and being used implicitly and in chronological order. Euripides takes into account the version of the myth that Hercules rescues Alcestis and exploits complex points of his character and conflicting aspects of him, giving a comic tone to the play, making it a satirical drama and not a pure tragedy. Hercules, through the eyes of Euripides, is presented on the one hand as a brave warrior and on the other as noisy and lover of entertainment, attributing the worshipping traditions of ancient Greece and highlighting the relationship of human destiny with the divine power and the variability of human existence (Markantonatos, 2013, p. 95). Although Hercules affirms the characteristics of his mythical identity, Euripides, as usual, deprives

him, deconstructs him with an anti-heroic spirit, without implying that he will not be the person who will bring Alcestis from the Underworld. The poet, in fact, places Hercules in the center, by putting him to present his achievements to Admetus, and through this narrative technique indirectly exposes the mythological tradition of Hercules, which is far greater than the history and the myth of Alcestis (Markantonatos, 2013, p. 124).

Apart from the connection of Hercules with the myth of Alcestis, there is also an underlying relationship between him and Apollo and Admetus. Euripides brings out in his work this connection with tensions, in order to introduce both the heroic achievements of Hercules and his dark aspects. In short, the demigod Hercules mirrors Admetus and Apollo with the trials that are enforced to each of them, that is, Admetus to sacrifice someone close to him and Apollo to suffer punishment by his father, Zeus (Markantonatos, 2013, p. 101). In addition, Hercules and Apollo are connected through an incident of violence that occurred in Delphi, which involved the altar of Apollo and finally had the intervention of Zeus, with the two brothers abandoning the battle between them. This story is the reversal of the story of Asclepius, which is referred to in the work of Euripides in verses 121-129 (Ευριπίδης [μτφρ. Τσοκόπουλος], 2010, p. 12). Zeus avoids blaming one of the two brothers and destroying the culprit with lightning, as he did to Asclepius. Hercules, therefore, enjoyed the favor of Zeus, and in Euripides' *Alcestis* was chosen to serve as a moral figure of Asclepius.

In the analogy of the legend of Hercules and the story of Admetus there is a reversal of patterns of violent behavior that end in destruction. The only difference lies in the fact that Hercules is the protagonist in stories of in-family violence, while in the story of Alcestis he is the savior of the family. The hospitality he accepts from Admetus and his stay in the city of Pherae resembles a similar incident related to the 4th labour of Hercules, in his hunt for the Erymanthios boar, where he himself did not comply with the etiquette of the good visitor. He forced his friend Centaur Folos to open a pot of wine that Dionysus had given him to keep and had given him the order to open it only when Hercules appeared. Finally, Folos opened the pot and the favor of Hercules' hospitality ended up in the unknowing self-destruction of Folos with the poisoned arrows from the death of Lernaean Hydra. Of course, one hospitality ends up in good, while the other in mortal (Markantonatos, 2013, p. 102).

Euripides brings the dark pessimism of Admetus on stage in conflict with the comic figure of Hercules, adding cynicism. Both attitudes of the two men are opposing in front of the calm attitude of Alcestis and her self-sacrifice (Markantonatos, 2013, p. 119). Of course, Alcestis mentions that some god has defined the future

(Lesky, 2010, p. 47), so it is a duty to follow it, since in ancient Greece the meaning of insult was of paramount importance. The profile of Admetus through the work of Euripides appears as of a man who is timid in the face of death, but it is a trick to validate the myth and to intensify the attitude of Alcestis towards death. Admetus with the word “treason” (“προδώς”) (verse 250)( Ευριπίδης [μτφρ. Τσοκόπουλος], 2010, p. 21) reveals that he betrays his wife, or in another interpretation that he abandons her (Lesky, 2010, pp. 38-39), while Alcestis asks him to take an oath not to marry another woman and get their children obtain a stepmother. The trick of covering the face, used by Euripides, serves dramatic purposes of intensity for when Alcestis reappears. When her silence is mentioned and that it will take three days for her to speak again, the purification that needs to take place is implied, as she came from the world of the dead (Lesky, 2010, p. 45).

Alcestis has been put in a space by Euripides who gives her her status. This space is Hades, where, despite her undoubted fear, she chooses to go in order to free her beloved. The space automatically takes on a dimension of heroism and courage that is inconsistent with the darkness and cowardice of Hades. This contrast intensifies the integrity of the love she feels and the pure element of her character (Κοσμοπούλου, 2018, pp. 182-183). She faithfully serves the exemplar of the ideal wife, acting educationally to the theatrical audience, as it is also one of the goals of this art. Of course, it must be taken into account in the reading of each work that the author goes through a dynamic process of shaping the original myth, based on his own character. One would say that he must be “on the cutting edge”, in order to maintain a balance between the mythological axes that he must serve and his own personal attitude, both in an aesthetic and in an ideological level. And all these being integrated in a perpetual under the light of the historical facts of the time of writing (Βασιλείου, 2012, pp. 19-22).

### **3.2 The ancient themed play of Andreas Staikos**

The reception of the myth of Alcestis by Andreas Staikos in his work *Alcestis and Sweet Dreams* concerns the use of intra-textual metatheatrical elements (Lehmann, 2006, p. 95) with the aim being more the parody and not the capturing of the tragedy of the heroes. Possibly, Euripides has laid the foundations, presenting his own work as a satirical drama and not as a pure tragedy of the time, and Staikos has only to use the reception of the myth of Alcestis by Euripides to communicate his themes to the contemporary audience. As Savvas Patsalidis puts it, can tragedy answer questions of a society which has the feeling that it has dealt extensively with any human subject? (Πατσάλιδης, 1997, p. 429) This is the basis of the transcription of myths, and especially of the ancient themed ones, by contemporary writers, who become co-creators of the ancient poets.

Initially, it would be useful to refer to the general theatrical writing of Andreas Staikos. His dramaturgy does not use realistic terms, but aims to explore theatricality and dramatic techniques, with his characters not being examined with psychological superpositions (Ziropoulou, 2013, p. 179). His theatrical writing contains repetitive thematic motifs that move between reality and illusion, usually building love stories with games of chance and misunderstandings, inspired by the technique of *marivaudage*. He uses, through the theater in the theater, the imitation of an act that ultimately concerns a game (Ziropoulou, 2013, p. 180).

The parody of Andreas Staikos on the myth of Alcestis lies in his theatrical writing with the verbal play he performs with the stereotypes, the ethnography of the Greek culture, the proverbs, the lyrics from songs, but also the isolation of his heroes and their introversion, as a result of which the communication and the action are stopped in order to capture more actively the irrational element that runs through his work. The title already prepares the reader for the verbal play, but perhaps it is a reference to the myth of Alcestis with her eventual rescue from the Underworld, as if she just closed her eyes for a while. The writer in the stage instructions often indicates a long pause, to express the lack of communication between the persons; an element that creates comedy through embarrassment. Its purpose is not to answer questions of the time, nor to promote the motif of the devoted wife who sacrifices, but to show the irony inherent in life, through love. When Admetus finally falls in love with Alcestis, it is already too late.

The play begins with a letter from heaven – as a divine intervention – that poses the dilemma to King Admetus of Pherae as to whether he or his wife will die in fifteen days. In essence, the author draws from the myth the place, with an unknown time besides the May 29<sup>th</sup>, and at first sight the persons and the main theme of the play, the sacrifice of Alcestis thanks to the love she holds for her husband. But this is a quick conclusion and is overturned by the fact that the letter comes from heaven by an unknown messenger – the messenger in the myth is Apollo. The second point is the explicit condition to be Admetus himself or his wife who will die and not any relative or friend, as it is written in the myth; but as in the myth, only by own desire and choice. Therefore, his wife will choose death and it will not be imposed on her, regardless of whether Staikos' Admetus "imposes" her death with a vital lie.

Staikos' Admetus is unmarried and in order to escape death, which is set for midnight on the 29<sup>th</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> of May, he organizes in a comic way a bride market-audition to choose his victim. At this point there is a reversal of the myth, since the myth projected the choice of Alcestis' husband organized by her father, with candidates who were expected to accomplish a mission. There exists no mission in this specific play and one would say that this is a modern perspective,

yet the bride market-audition is also opposed to modern perceptions of marriage. The potential victims are Smaro, Iopi and Alcestis. Smaro is daughter of a miller or, as she introduces herself, daughter of a flour industry owner (Στάικος, 2012, p. 14). Iopi, from Kalliopi, is a prostitute, as she herself mentions. And Alcestis, who is presented in the way she is presented by Euripides, but also by the myth; pure, innocent and holding true love for Admetus to the point that she consciously chooses her sacrifice, until of course the plot twist comes. Staikos uses stereotypical features, such as the choice of a woman by a man based on her hair, with the redhead Smaro mentioning to Alcestis her fear that Admetus will choose Iopi, because she has two hair colors, one brown and one blonde, and thus Admetus will never get bored. Besides, the way the king is presented indicates a man who is a lover of the female sex, who has fun at nights and acts only for his own interest; while he chooses Alcestis as his wife, he has the other two as mistresses. The social climber Smaro is the woman who will replace Alcestis after her death, and Iopi is the mistress who offers her company to Admetus because she considers him to be a better customer than the rest ones. Possibly Staikos wants to exculpate the negative figure of Admetus that has been presented in the myth, as he plays with the negative characteristics of people that are perceived as positive, since these make Admetus choose Smaro in the beginning. The more Admetus sees that Smaro is arrogant, hypocritical, narcissistic and coquettish, the more his desire for her increases, stating that she reaches perfection (Στάικος, 2012, p. 29). In addition, Smaro's reference to Admetus as Takis after his own request, and in fact because that is how his mother calls him, is a comic element, where Staikos uses a common name to decapitate the hero – as Euripides does more with the figure of Hercules – as well as to present Admetus in a stereotypical way, implying that he is attached to his mother. This is the only reference to Admetus-Takis' mother; that is, Admetus' parents are not projected as individuals who promote the action and push Alcestis to her sacrifice. The sacrifice concerns her and only her, with Admetus deceiving her that they will be sacrificed together to be saved from decay, like another Romeo and Juliet. Though, Admetus' intention is for only Alcestis to die and for himself to continue living. The revelation of his intentions comes from Iopi, who discovers that letter from heaven and reveals it with a gift to Alcestis. Alcestis then insists on hastening their sacrifice, a fact that is a strong element for Admetus to fall in love with her, due to her great devotion. Staikos' game of chance appears when Admetus takes the poison that was intended for Alcestis, confusing their glasses. Alcestis nevertheless insists on her eternal love for Admetus, as she reveals to Iopi, even though she knows that he deceived her.

### 3.3 Comparative approach of the two plays

In terms of intertextuality, the plays of Andreas Staikos and of Euripides have several similarities, but also differences that stem mainly from the audience addressed by each author and his view of the myth. The ancient poet borrowed from the myth the notion of the claim of a woman-trophy by the man, with starting point in the struggle for the claim being the father of Alcestis. Staikos deals with the conventional image of the man who has seemingly several qualities and has the ability to choose any woman he wishes. The game with the stereotypical expressions of female characters about beauty, wealth, and the hunt for marriage with a rich man, is reversed by Andreas Staikos; he brings to the fore an Alcestis who desires the salvation of Admetus, while gradually learning his truth. Euripides does not suggest any doubt by Alcestis about the sacrifice, especially since Admetus' parents are not sacrificed. Staikos, though, places the sacrifice from the beginning to be the central starting point of the marriage, shows the gradual turnaround of Admetus about Alcestis and Alcestis to remain faithful to her love for Admetus, even though she learns the truth about him. The rest of the characters are the supporting characters in promoting the action.

It is worth mentioning Tsatsoulis' comment regarding the oppositional comparison of the two plays. He records that the love for the idols that characterizes Staikos' plays is in fact the love for lies. Regarding the play *Alcestis and sweet dreams*, Andreas Staikos intends to restore the text of Euripides that he inadvertently skews, creating a situation that is just as known and familiar but at the same time original and new (Tsatsoulis, 2019, p. 333).

Euripides' Hercules is somehow replaced by Iopi, who saves Alcestis from death; with Iopi averting her death, while Hercules bringing her from the Underworld. Smaro, on the other hand, has a parallelism with the therapist of Admetus, since she has been appointed by Admetus to serve Alcestis and thus has a mirror role with Iopi, like the therapist has with Hercules. Smaro pities Iopi for her dress and profession, like the therapist does with Hercules for the way he appears in the palace during mourning. After all, both Iopi and Hercules point to the Dionysian side, besides the role of savior, with the pleasures and the fun side that they advocate for life.

In summary, it is worth noting that a comparison process does not imply the identification of similarities or differences between the presented facts, but is a dynamic process of identifying the facts that the author himself chose in order to render the myth, always in terms of his time, his thought and his own subjective perception of the multifaceted word "theater".

### 3.4 Semiotics and intertextuality in the work of Andreas Staikos

The term ‘intertextuality’ came from Julia Kristeva, who used this term in her works *Semiotics* (1969) and *Revolution of Poetic Speech* (1974), wishing to define the practice of transition from one system of signifiers to another; or, in a holistic writing level, the notion of the transformation of one text into another (Σιαφλέκης, 1989, p. 18). Ancient Greek tragedy is often found in contemporary works in a transformative form, either through direct reference or indirect, reconstructing the dramatic myth and creating the starting point for dialogue on a new form of text reception, highlighting its meanings that are unclear to the contemporary audience (Γκότσης et al, 2008, p. 7). The way a text is composed at the dialectical level, as well as the function of signs at the textual level, are studied in more depth by the science of Semiotics. Semiotics is based on some schematic diagrams, such as the *actantial model* (Figure 1) and the *semiotic square* (Figure 2) (Κοσμοπούλου, 2018, pp. 15-16), which are presented below:

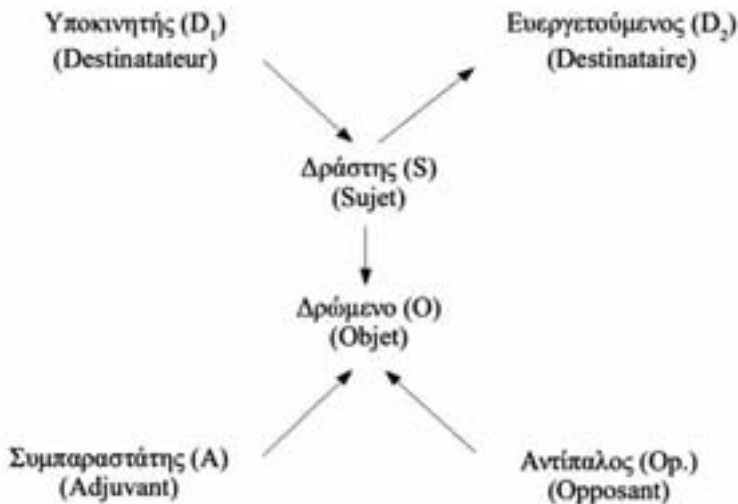


Figure 1: Actantial model

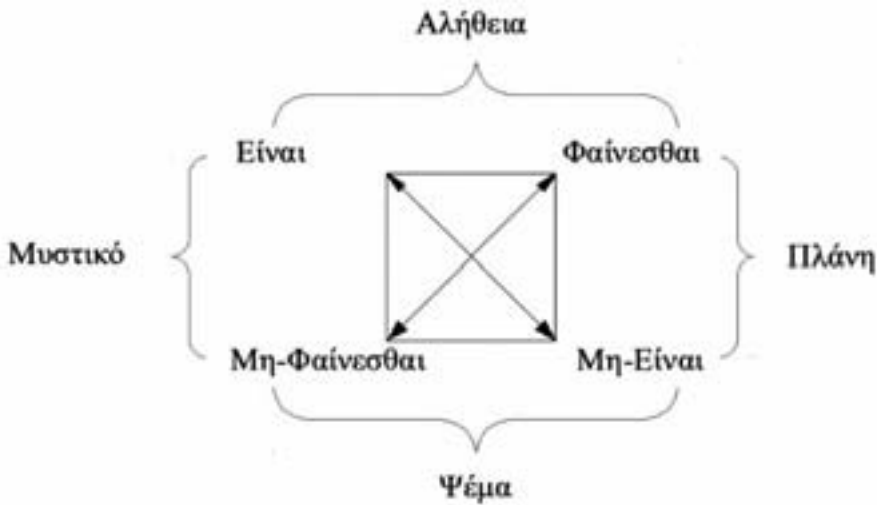


Figure 2: Semiotic square

With the actantial model, the Actor-Subject is studied in relation to the Event-Object and the person who benefits from the action of the Actor. The Helper is the assistant of the Actor in making the Event happen, while the Opponent is the contradictory force in order not to happen (Κοσμοπούλου, 2018, p. 19). The semiotic square indicates the relationship between *being* and *appearing*, with the truth including both meanings, the lie including their opposite pair, the secret including the combination of being and not appearing, and the deception including the combination of not being and appearing. In ancient tragedies, the way in which the heroes totter among deceptions, secrets and lies is often examined, based on the semiotic square (Κοσμοπούλου, 2020, p. 37), as observed in the work of Euripides, with Admetus being mistaken about the entity and the existence of his wife, a fact that is observed more actively in the modern version of the myth of Alcestis by Andreas Staikos. The research oriented view on the intertextual relationship of Euripides' Alcestis with the modern Alcestis of Andreas Staikos, is based on the idea that all works of any kind –poetry, theatrical writing or any other genre– converse and dialogue semantically, stylistically and at the level of motifs. The enlightenment of intertextuality in these two works will be attempted in relation to the above for the reception of the myth of Alcestis and the purpose that each author tried to serve.



In a first phase, the deconstruction of the work of Andreas Staikos will be attempted, based on the above diagrams. According to the actantial model, the Actor is Alcestis, the Event is her sacrifice, the Motivator is her love for Admetus and his salvation, the Benefactor is Admetus himself and Smaro, the Helper for her sacrifice to take place is again Admetus and Smaro, and the Opponent is Iopi who tries to stop the process of sacrifice. However, the semiotic square is complicated in the actantial model as follows: Admetus knows the whole truth in the beginning, that is, for what reason he will marry Alcestis, and deceives Alcestis, who thinks that he is marrying him because of love; Smaro keeps the secret, knowing that Admetus will marry her after the death of Alcestis; and Iopi discovers the truth and the real reason of the wedding ceremony. Though, afterwards, the truth belongs to Alcestis and Iopi, while now Admetus is the one in deception, who does not know that Alcestis has received the letter from Iopi and keeps this secret from Admetus, insisting and speeding up the process of sacrifice. And Admetus' deception continues until the end, when the couple's glasses are confused and Alcestis' sacrifice is stopped. After all, Andreas Staikos' theater is based on the reversal of the truth, with violation of the normative principles of the real dialogue, through false statements of the subject on stage, which, however, reveal the truth to the spectator (Τσατσούλης, 2007, p. 315).

Lina Rozi translates that if one observes the plot, he realizes that the Greek tragedy as a whole is an alloy of variations, additions and subtractions that interact on a mythological and morphological level. The interesting thing about this dynamic process is that a repetition of information can be observed, but they never reach their identification. Thus, an intertextual character could be attributed to the tragedy, not just incidentally or occasionally (Burian, 2010, p. 269).

#### **4. Conclusions – Discussion**

The reception of the myth of Alcestis, both in contemporary dramaturgy and at the level of ancient Greek tragedy, fulfils specific purposes of the authors, which are examined mainly at the level of reception of the audience and society. Euripides transcribes the myth, presenting an Alcestis - woman role model, who is devoted to her husband, until the last moment. Staikos, on the other hand, engages the characters in a game of plot twists to highlight the way love functions and the tricks people use in the face of it. The common point, however, is that both authors project the figure of Alcestis that is inherent in the myth, a woman with a dominant element of purity and devotion to her desires, even when she is deceived by situations and persons. Essentially, these are two different but, at the same time, similar approaches to the same myth.

Staikos, as is perhaps logical, was not entirely unaffected by the work of Euripides. Admetus in the work of Staikos is heroized again, emphasizing the hope of timelessness of the myth that lives through the 25 centuries of waiting. It would not be an exaggeration to describe him as selfish, for leading the unfortunate Alcestis on a journey of no return. Staikos, by giving this extent to the above hero, chooses to be indifferent to the characters of Apollo or Hercules from the work of Euripides. It is understood, therefore, that his selective tendency from the past has a certain deeper aim. It gives dimension to characters that 2012 can absorb and identify. The seasons change, and with them the perceptions of individuals, and therefore the stimuli. The selective tendency of Staikos is also evident from the clear description of all the events on a completely classical structure, which Euripides' tragedy lacks; the latter is characterized as more tolerant when it refers to its audience. In other words, it provides the stimulus and allows the audience to guide it, giving an ancient freedom that has been admired and praised throughout the centuries in its whole extent.

Therefore, it is possible that this influence gave another element of similarity that allows the comparison in the two works, with the common denominator being the myth of Alcestis. Their comparison through this short article is not intended to put the signs of the two works in apposition, but to offer the reading public the opportunity to evaluate the two works by highlighting those elements that reflect the topicality of the time they were written and the philosophy of their creator.

These differences and similarities are so interesting that they preserve the theater in life in the absolute sense. It may be about the same myth, but it's impressive how its different presentation places it in different eras and chronologies where the real common elements converse. It is "a myth, the people and the theater". One cannot know how the work of Staikos would be shaped, without the pre-existing work of Euripides. Nor, respectively, how the work of Euripides would be without its counterpart of Phrynichus. But it would not be very helpful, since the comparison, as mentioned above, is a dynamic process, even when it is not initially apparent that the specific works have a common basis. The only sure common denominator is the woman and the role she plays. She is the one who is responsible for the development and the plot is based on it. The role of woman in dramaturgy is deemed crucial for the specific approach of each work, giving the impression of a tragic person, whose feelings and life can interact with the experiences and thoughts of the author, in order to give a result that is both timely and timeless. The existence of woman within the ancient drama facilitates this coupling (Pόζη, 2007, pp. 156-189).

## References:

1. Βασιλείου, Αρετή (2012). *Επί Ξυρού Ακμής*. Αθήνα: Παπαζήσης.
2. Barthes, Roland (2013). *Mythologies*. Paris: Média Diffusion.
3. Burian, Peter (2010). «Πώς ένα μύθος γίνεται μύθος τραγωδίας.» Στον τόμο: *Οδηγός για την Αρχαία Ελληνική Τραγωδία, Από το Πανεπιστήμιο του Καίμπριτζ*, επιμ. Ρ. Ε. Easterling, μτφρ. Α. Ρόζη – Κ. Βαλάκας. Ηράκλειο: Πανεπιστημιακές Εκδόσεις Κρήτης, σ. 269.
4. Γκότσης, Γιάννης, και Ελένη Καλή, Φωτεινή Σακελλαροπούλου, Βασίλης Τάσσης, Δημήτρης Τσατσούλης (2008). *Από το αττικό δράμα στο σύγχρονο θέατρο: Μελέτες για την πρόληψη και την διακειμενικότητα*, επιμ. Δημήτρης Τσατσούλης. Αθήνα: Αιγόκερως.
5. Danesi, Marcel (2017). *Μηνύματα, Σημεία και Σημασίες: Ένα βασικό εργαλείο για τη Σημειωτική και τη Θεωρία της Επικοινωνίας*, μτφρ. Χαρά Κόκκινου, επιμ. Βασίλειος Δαλκαβούκης. Θεσσαλονίκη: University Studio Press.
6. Dowden, Ken (2016). "Alcestis." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Classics*. Ιστοσελίδα: <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.013.259> .
7. Easterling, P. E. (2018). *Οδηγός για την Αρχαία Ελληνική Τραγωδία. Από το Πανεπιστήμιο του Καίμπριτζ*, μτφρ.-επιμ. Λίνα Ρόζη και Κώστας Βαλάκας. Ηράκλειο: Πανεπιστημιακές Εκδόσεις Κρήτης.
8. Ebeling, Herman Louis (1898). "The Admetus of Euripides viewed in relation to the Admetus of tradition." In *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, vol. 29, 65-85. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, American Philological Association.
9. Ευριπίδης (1910). *Άλκηστις*, μτφρ. Γεώργιος Τσοκόπουλος. Αθήνα: Γεώργιος Δ. Φέξης.
10. Joshua, J. Mark (2014). "Alcestis." In *World History Encyclopedia*. Ιστοσελίδα: <https://www.ancient.eu/Alcestis/> .
11. Κοσμοπούλου, Δέσποινα Γ. (2020). *Θεατρική Γραφή και Θεωρία του Σημείου*. Επιμέλεια από Ζώη Μπενάρδο. Αθήνα: Δρόμων.
12. Κοσμοπούλου, Δέσποινα Γ. (2018). *Η Διαλεκτική του Χώρου και ο Εγκλεισμός στο Θέατρο: Μια Διαδρομή από το Θέατρο της Αρχαιότητας Μέχρι το Νέοτερο και Σύγχρονο Δράμα*. Αθήνα: Δρόμων.
13. Kravaritou, Sofia and Maria Stamatopoulou (2018). "From Alkestis to Archidike: Thessalian Attitudes to Death and the Afterlife." In *Round Trip to Hades in the Eastern Mediterranean Tradition*, ed. G. Ekroth & I. Nilsson, 124-162. Nederland: Brill.
14. Κρεββατάς, Δημήτρης (1998). *Οι τρεις μεγάλοι τραγικοί: Ευριπίδης – Σοφοκλής – Αισχύλος*. Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Καστανιώτη.
15. Lehmann, Hans-Thies (2006). *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. Karen Jurs-Munby. London and New York: Routledge.
16. Lesky, Albin (2010). *Η τραγική ποίηση των Αρχαίων Ελλήνων, Β' Τόμος*, μτφρ. Νίκος Χουρμουζιάδης. Αθήνα: Μ.Ι.Ε.Τ..
17. Markantonatos, Andreas (2013). *Euripides' "Alcestis": Narrative, Myth and Religion*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
18. Μαρκαντωνάτος, Ανδρέας (2008). «Αφηγηματολογία και Αρχαία Ελληνική Τραγωδία: Μια Προσέγγιση.» Στο *Αρχαία Ελληνική Τραγωδία: Θεωρία και Πράξη*, επιμ. Ανδρέας Μαρκαντωνάτος και Χρήστος Τσάγγαλης, 179-238. Αθήνα: Gutenberg.
19. Μπλέσιος, Αθανάσιος (2001). *Αρχαίοι Μύθοι στην Νεοελληνική Δραματολογία*. Αθήνα: Εκδόσεις Γρηγόρη.
20. Πατσολίδης, Σάββας (1997). *(Εν)τάσεις και (Δια)στάσεις: Η Ελληνική Τραγωδία και η Θεωρία του Εικοστού Αιώνα*. Αθήνα: Τυπωθήτω.

21. Ρόζη, Λίνα (2007). “Η μορφή της Ιοκάστης στη σύγχρονη γαλλόφωνη δραματουργία.” Στο *XIII Διεθνής συνάντηση αρχαίου δράματος 2007: «Η γυναίκα στο αρχαίο δράμα»*, Πρακτικά Συμποσίου, 167-190. Δελφοί: Ευρωπαϊκό Πολιτιστικό Κέντρο Δελφών.
22. Ross, David W. (1993). *Αριστοτέλης*. Μτφρ. Μαριλίζα Μήτσου. Αθήνα: Μ.Ι.Ε.Τ..
23. Segal, Charles (1992). “Euripides’ *Alcestis*: Female Death and Male Tears.” *Classical Antiquity*, vol.11, no.1: 142-158.
24. Σιαφλέκης, Ζαχαρίας Ι. (1989). «Επίδραση και Διακειμενικότητα στη συγκριτική έρευνα της λογοτεχνίας.» *Σύγκριση* 1: 15-20.
25. Slater, Niall W. (2013). *Euripides: Alcestis*. New York: Bloomsburry Academic.
26. Στάικος, Ανδρέας (2012). *Άλκηστις και όνειρα γλυκά*. Αθήνα: Κίχλη.
27. Τσατσούλης, Δημήτρης (2007). *Σημεία Γραφής – Κώδικες Σκηρής στο Σύγχρονο Ελληνικό Θέατρο*. Αθήνα: Νεφέλη.
28. Τσατσούλης, Δημήτρης. «Αρχαιόμυθη Ελληνική Δραματουργία – Άνωσημασιοδοτώντας την εθνική κληρονομιά.» Στο *The Greek Play Project*. Ιστοσελίδα: <http://www.greek-theatre.gr/public/gr/greekplay/index/reviewview/42> .
29. Tsatsoulis, Dimitris (2019). “Riletture dei moti antichi” («Ανδρέας Στάικος: Παραναγνώσεις αρχαίων μύθων»). Στο *Viaggio nel teatro greco contaporaneo, collezione Saggi e Critici* 04, 333-336. Atene – Grecia: ETPbooks.
30. Ziropoulou, Constantina (2013). “Andreas Staikos’ *Alcestis and Sweet Dreams*: The Dramatic Transformation of Euripides’ *Alcestis*\*.” *Logeion - A Journal of Ancient Theater*, vol. 3: 178-190. Heraklion: Crete University Press.

**Dr. Despina Kosmopoulou** was born in Athens and has graduated from the Faculty of Letters at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. She is a post-doctoral researcher in the Department of Theatre Studies of the National Kapodistrian University of Athens and the Department of Philology of the University of the Peloponnese. She is also an adjunct lecturer in the Department of Theatrical Studies of the Arts and Crafts School of the University of the Peloponnese. Despina Kosmopoulou examines theatre further through the philosophy proposed by Semiology. She is a member and researcher of the Centre for Ancient Rhetoric and Drama of the University of Peloponnese, member of the Hellenic Semiotics Society and member of the creative team of the Analogio Festival under the auspices of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports. She has written three books that are published by the *Dromon Publications*: *Pirandello and Genet, a ‘Meeting’ in the Tragic and the Absurd* (2017), *Space Dialectics and Enclosure to the Theater* (2018), *Theatrical Writing and Theory of Semiotics* (2020).

# **CRACKING THE ART MATRIX.** IS INSTAGRAM A PERMISSIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR SUBVERSIVE ART?

**IOANA PĂUN**

Fulbright Visiting Scholar 2021  
*ioana@ioanapaun.com*

**Abstract:** Focusing on Instagram artists, intuitive creators developing artwork that is not subscribed to mainstream systems of art production, and their online artistic personas, this paper contributes to the understanding of how social networks shape a new form of artistness and whether this emerging language has the potential to sidestep institutionalised art as well as the consumerism logic of Instagram. Employing qualitative Instagram profile analysis and interviews, 2 Instagram users with subversive art practices are at the core of this study that aims to determine the tactics they are using in order to be identified as social media subversive art makers. Online persona studies are a developing ground and this paper represents, all the more so, a novel investigation into the performance of online artistic personas and its impact on the artistic production of meaning. This paper tries to ultimately understand whether Instagram represents a medium that can be efficiently used for its nature in order to spread complex critical ideas through artistic language.

**Keywords:** Instagram, online performance, subversive art, online persona, activism.

**How to cite:** Păun, Ioana (2022). 'Cracking The Art Matrix. Is Instagram A Permissive Environment For Subversive Art?', *Concept* 1(24)/2022, pp. 77-89.

### ***Introduction***

This paper views Instagram as a digital stage for democratic expression, functioning on basic protocols that formally shape the content created and offering a limited combination of predefined communication tools that can be grouped under: image, video, text, sound, interaction gears. Instagram can be seen as a regulated and dynamic public terrain, where social activity is constructed under a culture of spectatorship and performativity. In this digital environment, clusters of practice and interest are constantly developing, ranging from fun to politics, music to gaming, nature to health. Users expose their realities, opinions, political ethos, bodies, ideals, intimacy, in a performative manner. They create an online persona that gets performed and defined constantly in an unprecedented level to this date.

Instagram emerged as a visual platform that was encouraging its users to publish personal photos and – later on – videos, media that can be edited with filters and organized by hashtags and geographical tagging. Originally launched for iOS in October 2010, Instagram rapidly gained popularity, with one million registered users in two months, 10 million in a year, and 1 billion as of June 2018. Instagram was originally distinguished by only allowing content to be framed in a square 1:1. The service subsequently added the ability to include multiple images and videos to a single post and a 'stories' feature allowing users to post photos and videos under a sequential feed lasting for 24 hours. Instagram 'stories' feature is used by half billion users daily and, together with its main competitor, Snapchat, generates an unprecedented archive of everyday life that changes the way people sense the private-public balance and their relation with performativity.

But just like any concept built on the logic of profit and consumerism, Instagram became a market. In 2021 it was one of the top digital platforms

used by businesses-to-consumer companies, offering advertising options that help companies turn each invested dollar in five times its worth. The art market adhered to Instagram especially for its unique properties that allows visual content to become available to a relatively big ecosphere and, thus, capitalise similarly to other business fields. The online art market has increased substantially from the past five years (by 72% [McAndrew, 2018]), with more than 71% of art collectors having purchased some form of art online last year. Instagram has the highest engagement rates of all the social media platforms, 48% of art buyers using Instagram (Hiscox, 2017). Museums' communication (Capriotti, 2010) has been redefined too, the relationship between museums and the public is changing towards more interactive and collaborative forms. Social media is increasingly being used directly to present or plan art. Digital participation deepens and democratizes artistic exchange with audiences (Walmsley, 2016), it has changed the role of the audience, and blurred boundaries of concepts such as "professional" and "public". The art market adhered to Instagram especially for its unique properties that allow visual content to become available to a relatively big ecosphere and, thus, capitalise similarly to other business fields.

Yet, an ecosystem like Instagram allows and, actually, triggers formulas of creation that are situated outside the capitalisation design of this platform. Instagram can be converted into a critical space, through subversive artefacts, born out of its logic in order to curve its regulatory, unifying, fast-pace, exhibitionistic ethos.

This paper looks at two creators that make artwork that is conceived and delivered only on Instagram, has a strong component of political subversion of any kind, is not recognised by any art institution and does not seek methods to ultimately be recognised. The relevance of these creators to the artworld comes from their ability to bypass institutionalised systems of art recognition and still gain momentum. Creators that generate artworks modelled especially on the frame allowed by Instagram are starting to emerge and they are not the ones that display their artistic portfolios out of the urge to gain opportunities and visibility, but the ones that use Instagram in a political-poetical manner.

A story that lasts for a few seconds in the middle of a rush of other stories, all fragments of our contemporary globalised lives, has the potential to disturb in the same way in which public art happening in a chaotic market has. It is important to know that Instagram, because it is a magnet for branding and marketing campaigns, is even more provocative for transgressive practitioners.

It is visible that Instagram is staying permeable to new usages that are going against it. This sort of public art doesn't get diluted on Instagram in the same way in which public art does, it does not get diluted when it happens in the physical public space. It remains there, de-institutionalised, addressed to an

attentive audience, that follows it especially for its paradoxical nature: it stands out inside this enormous market where brands, identities and profit are trying to stand out. The artistry born on Instagram, for the Instagram audience, appears from versatile creators, that love to play with social norms and tackle the culture of instant rewards, by creating confusion, frustration, consistency and, thus, slow down the addictive rush maintained by Instagram.

Diego Hernandez steals images with posh villas from Instagram and populates them with his own artworks and then reposts the new “pimped” villas back on the metaverse, in *Instopia* (LUX Responsible Culture, 2015), a project started in 2015. *Frankfurter Hauptschule* does a takeover<sup>11</sup> of Museums Quartier Instapage where they keep on announcing their own (fictional) expulsion from the museum. #freethenipple (Jacobs, 2019) is a movement that encroaches the censorship on Instagram when it comes to female nipples. These are a few examples of disruptive practices on Instagram, that are far from the practice of artists’ making art to promote their image and work, but instead employ Instagram as an environment that can be criticised.

This paper studies the tools, language, ethos, audience engagement of some subversive creators in order to draw conclusions of an emerging system of contemporary art production that turns systems of power, authority and legitimacy – critics, museums, theatres, cultural organisations – irrelevant. Whether these institutions will follow or not is a matter of curatorial vision. There are signs that some are looking more and more at other forms of engagement with their audiences and the digital realities of their public. For example, the Brooklyn Museum, inspired by James Surowiecki’s book *The Wisdom of Crowds* (2005), staged an exhibition titled ‘Click!’ (Hart, 2010), based on feedback from museum visitors and online voters that ranked entire artworks.

### ***Theoretical framework***

“Instagramism”, a term coined by Lev Manovich (2016), is the aesthetic of the new global digital youth classes that emerged in the early 2010s. It defines the quality of images used on Instagram, that combine photography and design and express a particular attitude of the author, recognizable only on Instagram as, by now, Instagram claims its own language and ethos. Not any painting, not any photo, not any video, collage, live monologue, music performance are Instagramisms.

*Cracking the Art Matrix* is, alternatively to Manovich’s study, looking at disruptive artwork that is not easily identifiable as having the qualities of Instagram

11 Instagram (8 April 2021) *We are deeply sorry about the recent incidences at Q21 involving members of @frankfurterhauptschule*, Q21 Instagram webpage, accessed 12 January 2022.



visual trends and, in return, questions the status-quo of Instagram. Art experience on social media has had a major shift and understanding the ways in which artists can use Instagram, in order to critically engage with contemporaneity, is crucial. While there is a body of work studying Instagram interactivity and engagement, the language used by contemporary artists to create art for Instagram is still a new research area, limited works in this field had been published, especially for assessing visual artworks. I found only two academic works, the first one focusing on marginal artists and the way they aim to gain visibility on Instagram in order to compensate their absence from mainstream legitimate art institutions, and the other one looks at audience engagement of artists employing Instagram.

The first paper, 'Five dimensions of online persona' (Moore, Barbour and Lee, 2017), is written by one of the most conclusive and innovative researchers on this emerging topic, Kim Barbour, and establishes key methodologies and concepts when designing her research, by looking at the online personas of eight Australian fringe practitioners with artistic expressions situated outside the establishment: tattoo, street art, spoken word and craftivism. "Drawing on sociological and cultural studies approaches to examine identity as performance, I reveal current artists' presentational practices using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis" states Barbour. Her research demonstrates that for those eight artists situated outside of the representative structures of art, the online persona draws on socio-cultural discourses of artistness in order to compensate their lack of support in managing their professional image.

The second study, 'Art in the Age of Social Media: Interaction Behaviour Analysis of Instagram Art Accounts' (Kang, Chen and Kang, 2019), published in 2019, used quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the interaction between artists and followers on Instagram and the features of the most-liked artworks. While engagement and preference are an important matter in the relation between artwork and audience, it is not a relevant indicator on the disruptive potential of art. Nevertheless, this recent study can give insight into the kind of interaction an artwork triggers into its audience and, thus, establish whether it can be seen as a vehicle for critical debate or not. One of the most gripping findings of this study is that not only that Instagram is the most preferred social media platform (91%) and the most used social media for art-related purposes (94%), but that the main motivations of using social media are to share artworks, selling artworks and know more artists.

Making art that does not primarily wish to sell or capitalise in one way or another, can be seen as an outlier within the global community of Instagram artists and this practice is harder to dissect and understand. Studying the dimension and the impact of subversive artists on Instagram needs a wide quantitative research,

while this paper aims to find the ethos and tactics of some of those who present this kind of art, aiming to support future research on subversive potential of social media as well as the practice of those creators and curators seeking to produce or to find inspiration in their fellow artists. I will present 2 Instagram accounts holding three different mediums of expression – collage and situationist photography and analyse the specificities and discourse of each of them.

***Pleasure activism and feminism from an Outside artist in Ireland***

@bleach.temple<sup>12</sup> is the personal account of an Instagram user not identifying herself necessarily and primarily as artist, that produces content based on contextual daily encounters or situations. She uses these daily events as set-ups for unusual, mind provoking photos that, frequently, have her at the centre, performing an action. She transformed her first shot of anti-Covid vaccine in a fashion shooting in which she designed, created and wore a dress made entirely of Covid face masks<sup>13</sup>. She modelled on the beach, out of sand, three glasses turned upside down, mimicking a famous trick named – in Romanian language – ‘alba-neagra’, and photographed herself as if performing the trick while realistically impossible to remove these sand glasses, a necessary and constant move in the trick<sup>14</sup>. She immersed herself in a bath tub, filled with seemingly hot water and boiled corn (Figure 1), wearing a bra made out of corn leaves and posing erotically and sensually holding two phallic-like corns in her hands<sup>15</sup>. These are only a few examples of @bleach.temple’s Instagram content, a demarche that has a critical take at nationalism, misogyny, nostalgia and consumerism. Intuitively, as I found out during our interview, @bleach.temple combines recognisable symbols of Romanian popular culture with capitalistic symbols and objects or with paradoxical ones. A big part of her Instagram persona is advocating for female sexual pleasure and for achieving this she places pleasure objects in common locations, mostly around domestic space<sup>16</sup>, uses them as festive symbols of celebration<sup>17</sup> (Figure 2) or everyday objects with non-pleasure function.

12 Instagram (2022) @bleach.temple, bleach.temple Instagram page, accessed on 14 January 2022.

13 Instagram (7 June 2021) PostModerna, bleach.temple Instagram page, accessed on 14 January 2022.

14 Instagram (12 June 2021) Asta are/ Asta n-are/ Care e câștigătoare/ #shellgame, bleach.temple Instagram page, accessed on 14 January 2022.

15 Instagram (4 July 2021) CornHub Live , bleach.temple Instagram page, accessed on 14 January 2022.

16 Instagram (20 June 2021) Greens to fill the void, bleach.temple Instagram page, accessed on 14 January 2022.

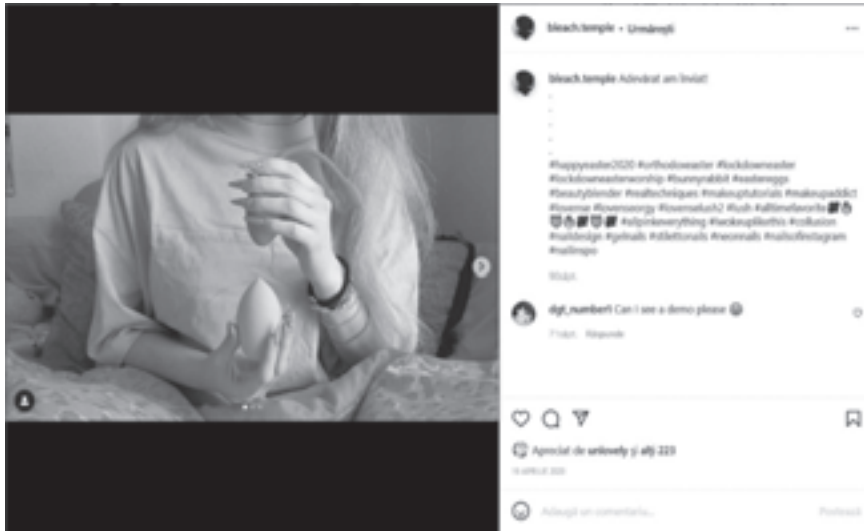
17 Instagram (19 April 2020) Adevarat am inviat, bleach.temple Instagram page, accessed on 14 January 2022.

This amalgam of visual streams can only be understood in the political context of its presence and of the community of followers that they are addressed to. As Instagram seems infinite and bubbles can completely not intersect with each other, any account should be understood inside the frame of its communication. @bleach.temple is communicating her discourse – pleasure activism, anti-capitalism, ironical take on national symbols and gender stereotypes, feminism – to a cohort that understands the references contained in the posts. Still, the content is not aligned to the stream of information her followers normally see in their daily Instagram feeds, this is why it stands out and gathers, as she told me in the interview, reactions that lead to conversations about the topics she posts-to-shock.



*Figure 1 @bleach.temple Instagram post with corn inside the bathtub*

The subversive nature and tactics of this account has some key features and can be identified, not limitative, as: ironical and self-ironical takes on serious symbols, be them national, religious, sexual in order to dilute their importance and unidimensional significances, unusual placement of everyday consumerist objects – pizza boxes, shoe boxes, wraps, brands, food – in paradoxical locations where they don't normally belong or would be encountered (such as a Prada bag in a pig farm) and manage to attract more attention on their absurd and limited relevance and utility or unusual placements of pleasure objects in very common spaces, hard to be spotted at first glance.



*Figure 2 @bleach.temple Easter post, captioned “I came to life”,  
paraphrasing the usual saying around Easter dinner in Romania*

### ***A collection of human unspoken feelings***

@geloconcepcion is the account of a Filipino photographer that has emigrated in the United States, in California more precisely, and on the day he wanted to quit photography, sometime in November 2019, and pursue another, better paid, path, he made – what was in his mind back then – a last attempt. He posted an Instagram call where he wrote an invitation for his followers to send him notes with “things they wanted to say but never did”. After receiving 30 notes, he started a collage using his archive of photos, in which he meticulously erased the face of the person photographed and handwrote the *notes* he has received. In two years, the number of notes he received jumped from 30 to 800 per week. Started in a moment of abandonment and resignation, the nature of the messages remained in this dark note. Remarks about loneliness, addiction, depression, longing, failures are posted weekly on the account in a collage that has the aesthetic nature of a fragile composition in which the intimate, private, socially condemnable yet very humane thoughts are surrounded by images of an America and of Americans that are anonymous and mundane.



Figure 3 @geloconcepcion,  
 "Things you wanted to say but never did"

His system of collecting notes from his followers consists in a Google Form where anyone can send their secret thought and Gelay, after analysing them carefully, selects 8-10 notes and creates the images where he will insert them, as handwritten text. In our interview he reflected on the striking emotional depth and troubling nature of these anonymous testimonials, as well as on his responsibility regarding the impact of his posts on the Instagram community. Knowing that his content has the potential to both shock and represent a relatable thought, he tries to balance the human nature, the human complicated psychology and existence, and constantly evaluates this impact through the comments and personal messages he receives. His empathic nature may come into conflict with the thought that he cannot intervene in the way people sending him notes may feel, even when these feelings are overwhelming. He doesn't contact them, comfort them nor step inside their lives, be it with a message or a contact for helplines.

His posts started from receiving around 1000 likes to more than 100.000 likes in less than 2 years, making publishing houses interested to edit a photo book with his collection of posts. Gelay refused this tempting proposal, since, as he puts it, these thoughts are not his and he cannot capitalize from them. His page is entirely outsourced and, recently, he asked for people to contribute with images as he finished his own photo stock. With this step, even more, Gelay capitulated his artistic content and embarked into a community process where he is just curating and giving shape to people's intimate feelings and thoughts.

What makes @geloconcepcion a subversive account is the depth and private nature of its content, that contrasts with most of Instagram direction of representations of happiness, success, vivacity, shine and glam. The aesthetics of this account is bleak, melancholic and powerfully disturbing. It can affect those watching it, but as he states, “people have the freedom to unfollow me”. This account is not only a reflection on mental health and its pervasiveness in our everyday lives, but an articulation of the things us, as humans, refuse to speak out or, even, accept. The effect of his effort is self-reflective and uncomfortable, some of the content can hit home for any Instagram user and disrupt the flow of everyday when confronted with things we, often and even more on social media, try to hide from the world. Publishing an Instagram carousel<sup>18</sup> with this kind of testimonials that slide one after another can represent a heavy impact on his followers’ sensitivity: “Please don’t replace me”, “I don’t know exactly what I want, but I know for sure that this is not it”, “I ruined a lot of things because of my own insecurities”, “I’m afraid I’ve only defined myself based on others’ perceptions of me”, “Everyone seems to be moving forward but me”, “The idea of not growing up to be the person I’ve created in my head is absolutely horrifying”, “Maybe I’m missing what could have been rather than what actually really happened”, “I’ve had body image issues since I was 12. Now, 14 years later I still don’t like how I look. I wish I could learn to love the body that gives me life.”, “I’m 57 and I live alone. I just realized that whenever I get home from work, I never really get to open my mouth and speak because I don’t have anyone to talk to. And to be completely honest, it makes me sad.”, “I’m tired, is this fine? Everyone always needs me, but there’s no one who can understand me. But I have to understand everyone. Is this fair?”<sup>19</sup>.

### ***Is Instagram a permissive environment for subversive art?***

Looking at these two examples, part of many Instagram art practices, and the tactics and language they use, it is noticeable that it is not difficult to start conceptualising art that aims to disrupt the everyday flow of images, ads and stories that runs in our eyes on social media. Their language is not the language we are used to in museum and galleries, they use the environment they are posted to and are adapted to it in order to fit, but at the same time have a twist that is not instant and fast burner. Instagram is not censoring this art as any subversive art adapts its content so that it doesn’t get easily spotted and condemned by the status quo.

18 Sehl K., Tien S. (June 4, 2021) ‘How to Create Beautiful Instagram Carousel Posts’ defines carousel as posts that allow you to include more than one image or video so you can tell a deeper story or showcase more of your products’, *Hooksuite*, accessed on 14 January 2022.

19 Instagram (8 January 2022) “Things you wanted to say but never did.”, geloconcepcion Instagram page, accessed on 14 January 2022.

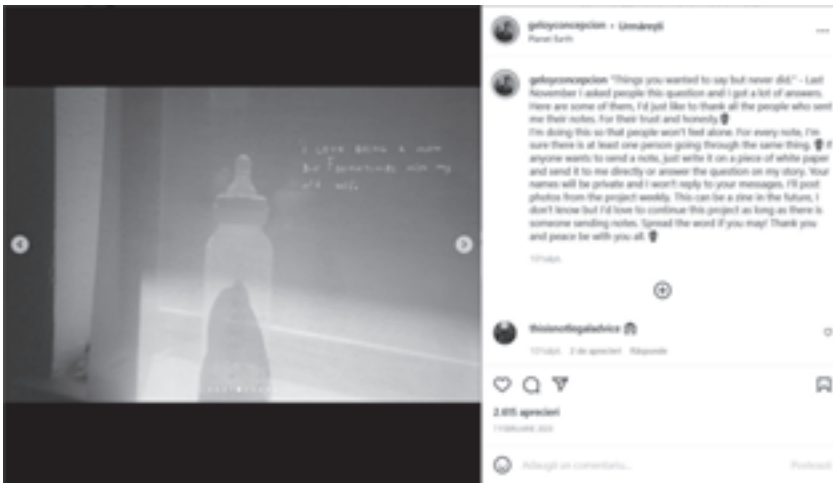


Figure 4: @geloconcepcion, 'I love being a mom but I sometimes miss my old self'

Since Instagram seems not to be threatened by this kind of content and has a thriving activity, one questions lies: can these acts of disruption shift some of the Instagram discourse regarding the topics they tackle? Is censorship still an indicator of a threat towards the status quo? Is Instagram an authority when it comes to being challenged or is it a more permissive medium that allows improvement and, even, strong criticism? And eventually, does Instagram fully regulate or does its communities represent the main norm when it comes to what is and what is not acceptable? Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, 69% of people reported that their Instagram use increased the most compared to other platforms (Gothivarekar, 2020). Some research has examined links between social media use and mental health, especially among young adults and adolescents. Overall, the findings have been mixed, as some studies have found weak or no associations between time spent on social media and multiple health indicators, including depressive symptoms. Other studies have found negative associations between social media use and mental health measures, such that increased social media use was correlated more strongly with depressive symptoms and poor self-esteem, particularly among adolescent girls (Kelly et al., 2018) and young women (Sherlock and Wagstaff, 2019). If we presume Instagram negatively impacts the lives of its users, could it be urgent for artists to reverse this trend and post content that offers an alternative to the performative representations of happiness and success Instagram is nurturing its users?

**References:**

1. Capriotti, P. (2010). 'Museums' communication in small-and medium-sized cities'. *Corp. Commun. Int. J.* 2010, 15, 281–298.
2. Hiscox (2017). *The Hiscox Online Art Trade Report 2017. A market yet to awaken?*. Hamilton, Bermuda: Hiscox.
3. Kang, X., Chen, W. and Kang, J. (2019). 'Art in the Age of Social Media: Interaction Behavior Analysis of Instagram Art Accounts', *informatics*, 2019, 6(4), 52.
4. Kelly, Y., Zilanawala, A., Booker, C., and Sacker, A. (2018). 'Social media use and adolescent mental health: findings from the UK millennium cohort study' *EclinicalMedicine* 6, 59–68.
5. McAndrew, C. (2018). *The Art Market 2018 An Art Basel & UBS Report*. Zurich: UBS.
6. Moore, C., Barbour, K. and Lee, K. (2017). 'Five dimensions of online persona', *Persona Studies*, 3(1):1-11.
7. Sherlock, M. and Wagstaff, D. L. (2019). 'Exploring the relationship between frequency of Instagram use, exposure to idealized images, and psychological well-being in women.' *Psychol. Pop. Media Cult.* 8, 482–490.
8. Surowiecki, J (2005). *The Wisdom of the Crowds*. New York: Anchor.
9. Walmsley, B. (2016). 'From arts marketing to audience enrichment: How digital engagement can deepen and democratize artistic exchange with audiences' *Poetics*, 58: 66–78.

**Online references:**

1. Gothivarekar, S. (2020). 'The State of Social Media Behavior in 2020' [Online]. Available at: <https://www.bazaarvoice.com/blog/the-state-of-social-media-behavior-in-2020-instagram-trends-facebook-tik-tok/> (Accessed: 14 February 2021).
2. Hart, H. (2010). 'Citizen Curators', *ARTnews* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/citizen-curators-364/> (Accessed: 6 January 2022).
3. Jacobs J. (2019). 'Will Instagram Ever 'Free the Nipple'?', *New York Times* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/22/arts/design/instagram-free-the-nipple.html> (Accessed: 12 January 2022).
4. LUX Responsible Culture (2015). 'Diango Hernández's disruptive Instagram art project', *LUX Responsible Culture* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.lux-mag.com/diango-hernandez-instopia/> (Accessed: 12 January 2022).
5. Manovich L. (2016). *Instagram and Contemporary Image* [Online document]. Available at: [http://manovich.net/content/04-projects/162-instagram-and-contemporary-image/instagram\\_book\\_manovich\\_2017.pdf](http://manovich.net/content/04-projects/162-instagram-and-contemporary-image/instagram_book_manovich_2017.pdf) (Accessed: 6 January 2022).
6. Sehl, K., Tien, S. (2021). 'How to Create Beautiful Instagram Carousel Posts', *Hootsuite* [Online]. Available at: <https://blog.hootsuite.com/instagram-carousel/> (Accessed: 14 January 2022).



**Ioana Păun** is a contemporary theatre director working and researching internationally, having graduated from Goldsmith, University of London. Her work explores the ways humans behave in ferocious political, economic and health circumstances. Her performances and ideas got support from contemporary performance art institutions such as le phénix | scène nationale Valenciennes, Theatre les Tanneurs, MuseumsQuartier, tranzit.org, Theatre Royal Stratford East, Europalia, Kunstraum Lakeside, CEC ArtsLink, Teatro Luna Chicago, Ashtar Theatre Palestine, Schauspielhaus Wien, Schaubühne Theatre, British Council, Onassio Centre in Athens, MNAC Bucharest. In 2017, Ioana created the Performance Programme at the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Bucharest, producing the work of over many emerging performance artists, mostly from Romania but also from Sweden, Bulgaria, Morocco and Poland. In 2021, she conducted an extended research on Persona Studies and marginal artists in collaboration with Stanford University, Pace and Bard College in USA through Fulbright scholarship.

# SHADOWS OF YORICK

**RADU CRĂCIUN**

UNATC "I.L. Caragiale", Bucharest, Romania  
*radu.craciun@unatc.ro*

**Abstract:** The article is centred on the figures of Richard Tarlton and his understudy, Robert Armin. It focuses on the social function of the fool in the Renaissance period and the liminality of the interchangeable social role of jesters and kings, as the jester becomes a carnivalesque king. The documentation sources are centred around Armin's chronicle of the so to speak court fools of his times, *Nest of Ninnies* (1608) and *Tarlton's Jestes* (1611) filtered through Bakhtin's motif of laughter as a conquering force against fear, and regeneration or rebirth through laughter. I intend to prove that Armin's personal documentation combined with Tarlton's legacy was crucial for the shaping of such deep characters as *King Lear's* Fool, the Clowns from *Hamlet*, Touchstone from *As You Like It* and Feste from *Twelfth Night*. Also, the study will try to provide a full account of the carnival motifs of regeneration that can be found throughout Armin's chronicle and *Tarlton's Jestes*, such as violence, sex, death and regeneration – as common features that link as a red thread the jests of fools depicted in these pages. The double act that follows the fool's 'lively act' of inversion, the king's fool/ the fool's king and the dialectics of substance and shadow, order and chaos will try to pin-point the general traits of the fool's social function, a process made harder by the fact that the fool normally resists these characterisations, since he is the ultimate disturber of apparent designs and/ or orderly structures. It might be tempting to limit the study to the political aspect of the discussion upon the fools' social function, yet this would be a completely different article in its own right, since the fool – viewed as a social figure – served a wide range of political purposes. Rather, for now at least, I will focus my study to the artistic merits of Armin's *Nest of Ninnies* and *Tarlton's Jestes* and the cultural context in which they belong and also the sources and influences that spawned them and of course, their off-springs.

**Keywords:** court jesters, fools, Renaissance, inversion, carnival, feast of fools, shadow archetype.

**How to cite:** Crăciun, Radu (2022). 'Shadows of Yorick', *Concept* 1(24)/2022, pp. 90-115.

"They say he goes in collours, as one strangely affected,  
and I goe in motley, making my own cloakebag ready."

Robert Armin, *A nest of Ninnies, Simply of themselves without Compund*

### ***The jester in context***

Few names of the Elizabethan stage are as much alluded as Richard Tarlton's. Queen Elizabeth's jester and a member of the most important theatre company of that era, The Queen's Men, he was so acclaimed as an actor that the Earl of Leicester, long after Tarlton's death, mistook Burbage for him. According to a variety of sources, authorities on the Elizabethan jester such as Fuller, Halliwell and Collier, Richard Tarlton was born in Conover. The year of his birth is uncertain, but the first written account of him that was kept to this day is linked to a ballad about a flood that occurred in the year 1570 in Bedfordshire, which he authored, we have reason to believe, around that same period as the flood depicted in it. The ballad, entitled *A very lamentable and wofull discourse of the fierce fluds whiche lately flowed in Bedfordshire, in Lincolnshire, and in many other places, with the great losses of sheep and other cattel, the 5. of October, 1570* gives us some grounds to believe that by that time he was a well-known writer of ballads. The next

literary account we have of him is his signature on the forefront of an *impromptu* play called *The Seven Deadly Sins* which he arranged and devised around 1583 (Halliwell, 2011, p. 5). What is interesting about this particular play is the fact that several actors which played in it – respectively, according to the original plat of the play, the actors Richard Burbage, Robert Cowley and William Sly – were later to be found in Shakespeare’s Lord Chamberlaine’s Men, which after the coronation of King James I, changed its name into King’s Men. The canvas of the play is very similar to the Italian *Commedia all’improvviso* in which the actors invented or were supposed to invent the dialogue for the occasion. It is worth mentioning that this form of devised theatre was rather the norm during that period (and I might add that this practice is as old as Theatre: from the ancient mime skits to the experiments conducted by Grotowski and Brook in the second half of the 20th Century and running throughout the theatre practice of the Renaissance). For instance, the manuscript of *Much Ado About Nothing*, printed in 1600, contains a peculiar blunder in the text of the fourth act, were the names Dogberry and Verges are replaced by the names of the actors Kempe and Cowley. As E.G. Craig believes, in his seminal article *Shakespeare’s Collaborators*, the common manner in which the text was written was similar to that of a *commedia all’improvviso* canvas and, if this method sounds familiar to that of the collaboratively devised theatre it is because it was exactly that.

The dramatic action would be outlined during rehearsals and then the actors would play the action in front of the public. The process enabled dramatic changes to the overall action of the canvas that could occur either during rehearsals, or, later on, after the performance was so to speak tested in front of an audience and scenes were changed, deleted or added. Another evidence of this practice is to be found in the two printed versions of the play *Hamlet*. The version of 1603 is, as far as literary value is concerned, rougher than the version of 1604, yet the dramatic situations from the 1603 version are far richer than those of the 1604 version, but the 1604 folio is more polished from a literary point of view (Craig, 1999, p. 144). In a way, the printed playbook is the edited transcript of an ambiantal recording of a conversation between two gangsters taken by the District Attorney’s Office. But it is just one sided, and without the proper decoding it falls as flat as the paper on which it is written. To recover the other facets, to decode the text, we must try to immerse ourselves in the room-tone, in the atmosphere of that exact space where the telephone conversation took-place and try to understand how the people that did the encoding thought.

If one were to make a *biopic* about Tarlton’s life it would unfortunately have to rely on a handful of scattered, albeit very original sources. The main events concerning his life have been written in a tract entitled *Tarltons Jestes, Drawn*

into three parts: *His Court Witty Jestes; His Sound City Jestes; His Country pretty Jestes; full of Delight, Wit, and honest Mirth* which was first published in 1611. Aside from this collection of anecdotes, rather than a proper biography, Tarlton is also the hero of a neiterworld travel genre booklet (rather a brochure)<sup>20</sup> published in 1590 with the title: *Tarltons Newes out of Purgatorie. Onleye such a jest as his Jigge, fit for Gentlemen to laugh at an houre, &c. Published by an old companion of his, Robin Goodfellow 4to.* In the book Tarlton leads the anonymous writer through Purgatory, analogous to the guiding figure of Dante's Vergil from the *Divine Comedy*. Even though most (if not all) the events depicted in the story concerning Tarlton's life are anecdotal, but they are that more interesting since, as D'Israeli points out in his *A Dissertation on Anecdotes*, "anecdotes are susceptible of a thousand novel turns" (Halliwell, 2011, p. 74). Moreover, analysing Lacan's metaphoric process, and using it as a grid for our research on this matter, metaphor occurs at the precise point when sense emerges from nonsense (2010, p. 61). Therefore, we can infer that Tarlton became a metaphor for the clown of that time; he started to signify the *idea* of jester, he became a meme for the court jester and the comedian, both on and off stage.

As far as anecdotal biography goes, Tarlton's destiny took a crucial turn due to a servant of the Earl of Leicester who, passing by with some business somewhere near Condoover bumped into Tarlton who was conveniently grazing his father's swines right in the way of the high official. Apparently, the Earl's servant was so pleased with his "happy unhappy answers" that he brought him to the Queen's court, where he became the jester of Queen Elizabeth. His level of education, as it is stated in the introductory note to *Tarlton News out of Purgatory* was very low. He was "only superficial seen in learning, having no more but a bare insight into the Latin tung". By 1583, he is listed among the Queen's players and a groom of the chamber. In addition to these accomplishments, Tarlton was a very well skilled fencer. He was appointed Master Fencer (the highest fencing degree of the time) in 1587. He died of plague on the 3rd of September 1588 and he was also buried the same day at St. Leonard's Cemetery in Shoreditch (Halliwell, 2011, p. X).

About his talent as an actor, he was well esteemed for his skills as a comedian, as well as for his improvisational talents. He generally performed at The Curtain theatre, in Shoreditch from 1575 onwards, but certainly he was an applauded actor before that date. Apparently, his ability to improvise reached such high levels of popularity that his name spawned a verb for improvising: *to*

20 Written in the style of Dante's *Divine Comedy* and many other, lesser known, publications of that time (*Visio Pauli, Tungdal's Vision, etc.*) which, in turn all spawned from *Peter's Apocalypse* (~200), a book which for the first time adapts the ancient, pre-Christian representations of hell to the Christian framework.

*tarltonize* (Halliwell, 2011, p. 28); through the process of metonymy Tarlton's name was transferred to the term used for *impromptu*; it's as if at that point Tarlton was to acting *extempore* what the couch is now for psychoanalysis; as various scholars point out, the clown of that time not only entered the stage at given intervals, but continually mixed with the crowd and attempted a punch at merriment through any means that would occur to him, and, more often than not, they were known to enter into a renaissance equivalent of a 'hip hop rhyme battle' involving themselves versus the boldest members of the audience. As one of his jests states, it was accustomed for the players to improvise on themes given out by members of the audience. So, a young and conceitful gentleman thought that he came up with a theme that will put Tarlton to a non-plus. Here are the lines he came up with: 'Methinkes it is a thing unfit,/ To see a gridiron turn the spit.' To which Tarlton replied as follows: 'Methinks it is a thing unfit,/ To see an asse have any wit.' The vexed gentlemen, unexpecting such a quick and fatal comeback left the roaring crowd completely and utterly humiliated (Halliwell, 2011, p. 28). As some of the biographical facts mentioned in the jests are supported by other accounts from diversified sources, we may have strong grounds to believe that their author was very well acquainted at least with the major events that took place in Tarlton's life.

We can trace the most important facts of his life according to the *Jests* and other testimonies as follows: first of all, he was the jester to Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth I – this is corroborated from every source available (Fuller, Heywood, etc.) and there are to accounts in *Tarlton's Jests* on the topic, one in which Tarlton it is said, played an inebriated man in front of the queen to cheer her up, and called for some more beer. Her Majesty commended him not to drink anymore, because it will only make an already beastly man act even more shameful. To which he responded: "Don't worry Your Highness, for your beer is a small one." (Halliwell, 2011, p. 5).

Secondly, he was one of the Queen's players. Anecdotes scattered throughout the *Jests* provide useful information about this. To this respect, there is one curious jest, one entitled *How Tarlton deceived a country wench*, that reminds us of Touchstone and Audrey's wedding episode in *As You Like It*. While travelling with the queen's players and lodging in a village, he laid his eyes on a simple girl there. So, he no more, no less professed that he came from London specially to marry her. The girl, being as I stated, fairly simple, and proud to have one of the queen's players so madly in love with her gave in to his advances and they spent the night together. The next day, as he promised her, they both went to church to get married. But little did she knew that the priest was another actor from the queen's players, proficiently disguised, Mr. Parson, a sort of real-life prototype for Oliver

Martext in *As You Like It*. As he got to the words ‘I, Richard, take thee...’, Tarlton stopped the ceremony because he remembered that he forgot to invite his fellow actors. So, he went to fetch them, as they were already on their way to Bristow and he already had a saddled horse waiting for him outside the church, and he did catch them on the way but never did he return. The anecdote doesn’t provide us with any information about the way in which Parson extracted him from the delicate situation. This story provides extremely useful evidence on the parentage line between Tarlton and the Armin era<sup>21</sup> fools in Shakespeare’s plays. We can see here the cynical Touchstone who will acquiesce to the demands of the flesh by exploiting Audrey’s naivety (Halliwell, 2011, p. 33).

Thirdly, directly connected to the afore-mentioned story, as we could see he had a great talent for improvising off-stage, he also had a great talent for improvising on-stage, as another one of his jests suggests (Halliwell, 2011, p. 24). While playing Derick the clown in ‘*The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*’ (circa 1580), Tarlton, always willing to please audiences, more than willingly agreed to replace another actor, who wasn’t able to fulfil his duty on stage that night and who was supposed to play the judge. Prior to Tarlton’s entrance as clown, the actor that played Henry the King was supposed to punch the judge in the ear. When the scene took place, Knel, who was playing Henry, as the anecdote informs us, hammed his performance and punched Tarlton as hard as he could in the jaw. Out goes the judge, in comes the clown who asks what happened. Another actor tells him that it was a pity he didn’t saw how prince Henry had terribly jabbed the judge right in the face. To which Tarlton responds, aside from the dramatic situation that the report of the prince striking a judge is so terrible that he can feel the burn on his own cheek.

On this episode I will want to make some comments. Proceeding thus, Tarlton offers the audience a double perspective, one that is more common to the carnivalesque performances, rather than with the so to speak *straight* theatrical performances. The technique, commonly known as the *verfremdung*, as Brecht coined the term, makes possible an ironical *double entendre* between the stage action and the audience, reminiscent of the carnival dramatical performances, in which the audiences were at once in the presence of the devil (or the clown) and the guild that was usually representing those characters (Prentki, 2012, p. 40). In this case we have the clown impersonating the judge, so we have an impostor, belonging to a different “guild”. The anecdote also gives us some precious information

---

21 I am referring through the usage of the umbrella term “Armin-era” to the period of time when Robert Armin, who was replacing William Kempe was an active member of the Chamberlain’s Men (in later years, following the coronation of James I as King known as King’s Men). The period of time stems roughly from 1595 to around 1609-10.

about how the audience reacted when Knel/ Henry hit The Judge/ Tarlton: "the audience laughed more because it was he". As Tarlton returns as the clown, or rather, as the public expects to see him, he reveals himself not only as a tragedian, involved into a *straight* performance of a serious role but, at the same time, as the clown (his on-stage persona) and an *extempore* master of ceremonies. Tarlton gives us three simultaneous performances, and in the process of doing so, turns a death-punishable offence into a laughing matter.

Another favourite theme of the anecdotal account of his life deals with the masculinity (or lack thereof it) of the main character. Obviously, by Renaissance standards, being a comedian had nothing to do with manly activities. Few things have changed even to this day. If we look, for example at the conflict in Ukraine, we see that one of the main talking points of the Kremlin controlled narrative against Volodymyr Zelenskyy is the fact that he is an actor.

Tarlton is therefore more of a Saukrates than an Alexander, despite the fact that he was appointed master of fencing by Queen Elizabeth herself. He was, as the story goes, "a lustful character" and therefore, had to be set as an example. More so, in perfect analogy with Saukrates, his wife would inflict the punishment, as she was "every now and then making him a cuckold". A curious and merry evidence is given out in this respect. A "crack-rope, a one that groans for the gallows, a hangdog, a rascal, a scoundrel" who meeting Tarlton on the streets of London addressed him in rhymes, saying "woe betide thee, Tarlton/ that ever wast thou borne;/ thy wife hath made the cuckold/ and thou must wear the horn". Tarlton, quick on his wit answered him also in verses "What if I be, boy,/ I'm ne're the worse;/ She keeps me like a gentlemen,/ with money in my purse".

The whole scene contains the core of merry paradox that is usually reminded of Heraclit's unity of opposites, and also with the quick switch to a different point of view that only the fool's detachment from the situation can provide. The boy, "the rascal, the scoundrel that groans for the gallows" can also be seen as Heraclitus' boy that leads along the stumbling drunkard, that is to say, the *psyche*. We have here a fine example of the abusive language of the Renaissance period, what Bakhtin calls *the language of the public market*. The little boy represents a collective character, and, to use Renaissance metaphors, a *mirror image* of the fool's hubris. One that degrades the fool, publicly, yet (as the fool does whenever he's questioning social norms) merrily. The *mirroring* is the crueller, since we know that Tarlton found out his wife was cheating on him after "he paid her a golden crown" to answer truthfully whether or not he is "a cuckold". His wife said nothing, so he asked for his golden crown back. To which she responded that she doesn't have to return it, since she didn't lie to him. Therefore, the young boy's interpellation of Tarlton is as unsubtle as the excrements that were thrown from the allegorical chariots



during the Feast of Fools at the bystanders. As a weird coincidence that adds metaphorical enforcement to this point of view, in 1702, a portrait of Tarlton's ended up adorning the entrance to a public toilet in London "which by long standing there, has contracted the colours of the neighbouring excrements."



*Richard Tarlton*, source:  
 National Portrait Gallery  
*Richard Tarlton*, by Silvester (Sylvester)  
 Harding, after Unknown artist  
 stipple engraving, published 1792  
<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw40913/>  
 Richard-Tarlton

### ***Interlude – Feast of Fools***

The Feast of Fools was celebrated in various European cathedrals shortly after Christmas. The inferior clergymen posed as their hierarchical superiors. The incensing of the church was done with the use of excrements, the clownly-bishops talked in Latin *gibberish*, eating blood-pudding instead of the sacraments and while performing the sacred litanies a donkey was brought into the church and responded with an \*insert donkey onomatopoeia\* instead of the usual *amen*. After the divine service was over, the mock-up bishops were loaded into a cart filled with excrements that was pulled on the city streets by the same donkey and excrements were thrown at people (Couliano, 1984, p. 162).

At a certain level, what the boy is doing is similar. He is degrading Tarlton, is serving the fool a taste of his own medicine. Of course, the language used is not so hard and things are made to seem more delicate than they probably were, but nevertheless, we are obviously faced with a case of moral degradation. It is worthy to note that the editor of the book censored two anecdotes for the sake of *pudoris causa*. The fools and little children don't censor themselves for the sake of

*pudoris causa*, but rather, they state things as they are. To take a step further into the metaphorical realm, if the little boy represents the *psyche*, and considering the fact that Tarlton's answer provides ground for regeneration, the cuckold is not only not taking offence, but more so, by shifting the focal point, he is able to see what is there to gain from this state of affairs; we can therefore infer, following the process of Lacan's **theory of transfer**, according to which the world is nothing else but a huge intersubjective exchange apparatus where everybody is playing simultaneously the part of the patient and the part of the analyst, that the fool shares this exact perspective of the world as a transfer apparatus – Tarlton knows, in other words, that he is both *mock*er and *mocked* – and seizes every opportunity to get the best out of it.

His attempts at gaining the upper hand switch from victimization to aggression. There are various examples of him being "angrily inward" or "angered at this so much" or of him "loath to rest thus put off" and in this study I have already cited at least three situations so far in which he makes use of this skill in the manner of an urban terrorist. On the other hand, in *Brief Discourse of Warre*, published in London around the year 1590, Roger Williams retells that outside the stage, like many comedians, Tarlton was not always in his cheerful mood. His behaviour is that of a malevolent child. This antisocial behaviour is at its most obvious when, for example, he plays a very elaborate practical joke on a fellow actor that was so drunk that he couldn't play in the performance. Tarlton "as mad angry" as the actor was "mad drunk" claps on his legs a huge pair of bolts, then carries the sound-asleep actor to the jail and asks the jailer to let the man sleep there. As the fellow actor woke up and found himself in shackles, imprisoned, without any recollection of the events from the previous night, he assumed that he committed a dreadful crime and started to cry out for the jailer to ask him what happened. The jest was so elaborate that not only the jailer came, but two other individuals that were very mysterious about the events that brought him there. The mysteriously looking individuals only reported to him that a young man like him should be ashamed for what he did and that he will surely hang. Tarlton finally arrives, behaving as a saviour and lets the man in on the fact that while drunk, he murdered someone. The ruse didn't stop there, though. In order to get the poor actor out of jail, Tarlton, the jailer and the two mysterious friends even organized a prison break for the victim of the practical joke.

The anecdote doesn't recount how they helped him escape from prison, it just tells us that "they got him out of prison by an escape". And, most importantly: *they never told him what truly happened*. We can guess as much as we want the motives for which the Queen's jester was up to this, but I think a specific answer would be out of our reach and useless, now. Nevertheless, we can suspect a sort of

antisocial super-ego (*sic!*) that was being fed through this behaviour. Again, the two characters, the boy and the fool, the *psyche* and the stumbling drunkard can provide us with a deeper ground for excavating the truth. The ego is represented as a little kid that needs an urgent confirmation of his magnificence. Providing an unexpected answer to a child puts the fool on a superior position, but in doing so, he is proven to be more childish than the child. But if we change perspective, we can safely assume that by conquering the *psyche*, the fool is conquering the ego. And by doing this, he is regenerated, he comes to a new life, to a new perspective. Even though he is "a cuckold", there is nothing that prevails him to enjoy the world. Through these sorts of exploits, the fool is seen as the figure who provides constant reminder of our animal nature and our imperfection. Whether we can achieve regeneration, or being reborn from our ashes, by simply becoming aware of our shortcomings is yet to be proved. So far, history, to quote Marx quoting Hegel, has a way of unwinding "first as a tragedy and then as farse".

Keeping up with the protestant propaganda efforts of the late 16th century, that was fighting back hard the popular common beliefs of pre-Christian paganism and Catholicism, the anecdotal Tarlton had a huge aversion for the Pope and black cats (as medium for evil spirits akin to the poltergeist). During his peregrinations through England, he was resting at an inn where the hostess asked him to help her find out who stole some pewter pots from the inn's tavern. As a jest, Tarlton promised her that he will conjure the devil and the devil will tell her who stole the pot. In the morning he and the hostess met alone in a room. Tarlton started a weird number of magic where he would be enacting a mocking conjuration ritual where he would draw pentagrams on the floor and babbling Latin gibberish. Suddenly a cat leaped on the windowsill, scaring Tarlton out of his wits. He was so scared in fact that on his rushed exit he pushed the hostess so hard that she fell and broke her hip. The witchcraft number that he stages in the inn was not at the time so rare. Black liturgies were performed for fun, and it was viewed as a casual amusement amongst the members of the ruling elites of that age, and not only. Contrary to pop culture belief, the "black liturgies" were not an invention of the French occultists of the 19th century. The first *per se* black liturgy was performed in Brescia around 1480, as a parody to the Christian liturgy (Couliano, 1984, p. 358).

As a matter of fact, Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* played along the lines of *make belief conjuring* that becomes real. At a particular performance in Exeter, an extra devil showed up on the stage in order to scare the actors, and at yet another performance, this time in London, the whole playhouse cracked loudly (Bartels and Smith, 2013, p. 16). This obviously follows the tradition of the old morality

plays, when the *diableries* took place both inside and outside the *per se* play. For instance, as late as the year 1500, gangs of "devils" ransacked the farmers in between morality performances and a few days after the festivities were over. Not to mention that while performing they were truly devoted to the character, protected by the mask and anonymity. Usually, the devils were played by poor people that came from distant regions specially to be hired as devils. The tradition is kept in Greece, in the island of Pathmos, where an orthodox morality play takes place during Easter Week.

As we saw earlier, during the Feast of Fools something similar was being staged in the cathedrals around Europe. The episode is extremely interesting from a wider perspective. Before the Feast of Fools was completely eradicated, and while the church was trying hard to ban it, the clergy members who were defending it stated that foolishness seems to be inherent in man and must be allowed to express itself freely at least once a year. During the Counter-Reformation, the feast was completely eradicated. And one reason for it being banned was because the catholic church could not allow their clergy to behave in the lines of the defamation pattern that they were using to attack their ideological enemies. The defamation pattern was used as a powerful weapon, and it traces back to immemorial times. I.P. Culianu provides a fair share of examples, some dating back to 1022, when the official Catholic Church purported rumours that the heretics from Orleans were using in their litanies names of devils, and they took part in cannibalistic feasts. The congregations of witches were called *synagogues*, an obvious allusion to another group to whom the church was attributing, *par excellence* sacrilegious activities, namely the Jews. In the 15th century, a Jewish "magician" was burned to the stake because he purportedly burned statuettes of the Virgin Mary and Christ and that he desecrated the one called Agnus Dei by crucifying a lamb that he afterwards fed to the dogs. King Philip the Beautiful and his secretary, Guillaume de Nogaret used at the trial against the Knights Templars a whole array of the finest and most popular elements of the defamation pattern of their time (Couliano, 1984, p. 359).

But Tarlton's jest is interesting if we take into consideration the fact that he was a Protestant. Asked once at what time would the devil be most busy his answer was "When the pope dies", because all the devils will be troubled to plague him, as he was in his lifetime plaguing those who raised against him. This subversive, revengeful spirit of his was still remembered 20 years after his death, when George Wilson notes in a treatise about cocks and cock fights entitled *The Commendation of Cokes and Cock-fighting* that at a cock-fight in Norwich there was a cock named Tarlton, because of the thundering noise that he made with his wings, which reminded people of Tarlton's drum. As Tarlton, the cock fought

many battles with "mighty and fierce adversaries" (Halliwell, 2011, p. 34). His combative spirit lives on, and as the cock, he takes every fight with the risk of losing everything. When fools ceased to be funny, they were no longer protected. As in the anecdote with the boy that tries to disgrace him publicly and he stands his ground, as in the one with the gentlemen that tried to put him to a *non-plus*, he stands his ground and is obliged to win. They don't have anything to lose, he has everything to lose, as far as status quo is concerned. And while their win over him will be short-lived, his defeat will follow him wherever he will go. In a way, by succeeding to keep his always challenged status quo Tarlton worked magic. And by converting every time the disadvantage to advantage, he lived up to the standard of comedy imposed by Rabelais, which Bakhtin conceptualized as *laughter as a regenerative force*.

The huge popularity which Tarlton most have surely enjoyed can also be extracted from the huge amount of allusions at his person, found in almost all the important writers of the time. For instance, Joseph Hall in the last book of his *Satires* (which consists of just a long satire in the form of an epilogue and summons up in a humorous way the effects of his satires) has the following verse, oozing with self-aware bitter irony: "O honour far beyond a brazen shrine,/ To sit with Tarlton on an ale post's sign!" Quoting Nash "the people began exceedingly to laugh when Tarlton first pepped out his head." Sir Richard Baker mentions him in *Chronicle (1653)* "to make their comedies complete, Richard Tarleton, who for that part called the Clowns part, never had his match, never will have."

### ***Dismembering the performer***

Tarlton is mentioned also in one of Poe's favourite books, Isaac D'Israeli's *Curiosities of Literature* (1841). His behaviour and quick temper almost got him in a lot of trouble with the Queen, as D'Israeli recounts. Tarlton was playing in front of Her Majesty a play that he devised alongside the actors in his troupe, when, all of a sudden, he pointed his finger to Sir Walter Raleigh and said, "see how the knave commands the Queen" to which jest the Queen just frowned. Carried away, "he reflected on the over-power and riches of the Earl of Leicester", a jest which was universally applauded by everybody present. The Queen seemed unconcerned about this, but after the performance she forbade Tarlton to come near her (Disraeli, 2018, p. 352). There is an interesting absurdist anecdote that links Sir William Raleigh and Tarlton. The quite cruel story, Halliwell informs us, circulated on the expense of Raleigh, who brought tobacco to England. How it got to be fixed down as one of Tarlton's jests can only be guessed. The story has the structure of a nowadays bar-joke (X walks into a bar). It depicts Tarlton

sitting in a tavern just as two inebriated gentlemen walk in. As they walk in, they find Tarlton who was serenely puffing his pipe "for the sake of fashion", as the author assures us. As they saw the vapours coming out from Tarlton's nose they started shouting "fire" and threw the content of the cup of wine that Tarlton was peacefully enjoying in his face, in order to put the fire out.

His nose was a sensible subject. We know from the surviving engravings of him that he had a flat nose. In the only anecdote that comes from the direct recollection of the unknown author of Tarlton's jest, if we are to believe him when he says: "I remember I was once at a play in the country, where Tarlton's use was, the play being done, everyone so pleased to throw up his theme." Here a short parenthesis must be made. According to Robert Preiss's study *Clowning and Actorship in Early modern Theater* the structure of the four-to-five-hour usual performance was as follows: "peeping and faces at the beginning, assorted merriments in the middle and themes in the end" (2014, p. 93) and after all these were concluded, the audience was entertained with the pipe and tabor jig. The *themes* were something akin to our modern days hip-hop *battles* or trap artists *beef* tracks. A member of the audience gave out the following verses, word by word, if we can trust the writer's infallible memory:

Tarlton, I am one of thy friends, and none of thy foes./ Then I prethee  
thee tell how cam'st by that flat nose;/ Had I been present at that time on those  
banks,/I would have laid my short sword over his long shankes.

Tarlton, "mad at this question, as it was his property sooner to take such a matter ill then well" replies, word by word, and, again, we rely solely on the same infallible memory:

Friend or foe, if thou wilt needs know,/ Mark me well:/ With parting dogs  
and bears, then, by the ears,/ This chance fell:/ But what of that? Though my  
nose be flat,/ My credit to save,/ Yet very well,/ I can by the smell,/ Scent an  
honest man from a knave (Halliwell, 2011, p. 29).

His deformity is a sensitive subject, the more that, by trying to humanize it, it makes a cleavage between the on-stage persona and the off-stage persona, subverting the performers authority and trying to substitute it to the man. To paraphrase Lacan's statement in his seminal *The Mirror Stage, the disfigured body*

(...) usually manifests itself [...] when the movement of the analysis encounters a certain level of aggressive disintegration in the individual [...] this form is [...] tangibly revealed at the organic level, in the lines of 'fragilization' that define the anatomy of phantasy, as exhibited in the schizoid and spasmodic symptoms of hysteria (2004, p. 5).

Tarlton, which, as I stated earlier, quoting Roger Williams's *A briefe discourse of Warre*, "was nobody outside his mirths". To be precise, in this cleavage, wherein

the vulnerability of the performer's everyday persona transfers its narrative to the performer's onstage persona a *schizopoesis* takes place and the nobody-outsider feeds his narrative into the somebody-insider. It is this *schizopoesis* that indicates that the "me-not-me" condition of acting, in Schechner's terminology, occurs.

Another interesting and striking aspect of this particular scene is the familiarity with the (in)famous Nose Monologue from *Cyrano de Bergerac*. The difference is that while Rostand's Cyrano keeps his cool and gives 18 examples of how that could have been said and elegantly dismisses the young man that so unfortunately provoked him, Tarlton loses his temper but not his ability to give a spontaneous answer, which probably is another way of getting there, as opposed to the controlled inner turmoil that Cyrano displays. He answers that the shape of his nose is a result of parting dogs and bears, an almost superhuman feat, worthy of Hercules. The demigod Heracles was no stranger to the clown profession himself, if we take into consideration the antique vase scenes depicting him sleeping drunk at the door of a hetairaia while an old procuress dumps over him the content of a chamber pot, or himself, armed with a chamber pot in the pursuit of some enemy. As for the parting bears and dogs, in *Kemps Nine Daies Wonder*, in that absurd dance marathon that he put himself up to, Kempe tells that the people of Norwich organised a bear fight for him, but he entered through the city to another gate, so they did it in vain. Therefore, bear and dog fights set up in the honour of the clowns at that time were not such an unseen sight, which gave Tarlton affirmation some weight, especially since we do not know much about his life prior to 1570.

The *nose motif* must be one of the most common grotesque motifs in the universal literature, and Tarlton explanation of his deformity, "by parting bears and dogs" immerses us in the ancient grotesque deformity of human features *via* animals. Tarlton description, real or not, is done in a theatrical manner, more so since it is done from the stage. The classical transgression between human and animal features as a means to explain his ill-shaped nose is a characteristic feature of the popular grotesque-realism. Bakhtin gives us an account about a treatise published in 1579 and written by the French medic Laurent Joubert, *Erreurs populaires et propos vulgaires touchant la médecine et le régime de santé*. In the 5th volume, Chapter IV he reviews the common popular belief that the size and the potency of the genital organs can be assessed by the size of the nose. In the grotesque popular interpretation of the Renaissance, the nose was substituted to the penis. Even carnival feasts were held to honour the biggest nose in the community, as Seebald Beham's 1534 woodcut of a kermis where a contest for the biggest nose was held depicts. As an obvious connection between the nose and the penis, in the foreground we see a group of large nosed men and a woman dancing, while in the right corner, a fool exposes its genitalia. So obviously, this attack at Tarlton's nose



had a deeper meaning then we would be inclined to think, since it was a direct hit at his manliness. Which justifies Tarlton's loss of temper and also his answer: "but it can smell a knave". It was a hit under the belt, therefore, the epithet (knave) was rightly chosen.



*Sebalð Beham, Kermis, 1580-1600; source: [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1883-1110-489](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1883-1110-489)*

Tarlton represented the charm of a spontaneous person, completely centred within itself and completely free as much as any answers regarding his behaviour are concerned, ungoverned by the same social and hierarchical restraints that everyone else had to respect, which could in a large way explain the universal applause to his joke. He brings about a new sort of pleasure. While playing at the Bull, in Bishop's Gate Street, one night, as he was kneeling to ask his father blessing for the long journey that awaited him, a gentleman from the audience threw an apple at him which hit him in the cheek. He responded in the usual *extempore* rhyming style: "Gentlemen, this fellow, with this face of mapple/ Instead of a pipin, hath thrown me an apple/ But as for an apple, he hath cast a crab;/ So, instead of an honest woman, God hath sent him a drab." The people laughed heartily because in the play Tarlton's wife was the queen. Again, we have here a multi-folded simultaneous performance. We have firstly the character that Tarlton is playing, we then have the clown at which the person in the audience threw the apple at, who is both at times the jester to Her Majesty the Queen and a subject of the Queen and finally, we have a man who is married to an unfaithful woman and, pardon my French, the "darb", who is allegedly the wife of the person who threw the apple. So, we have in this particular scene six folds of reality that are alluded at, simultaneously. The character who in the play is married with a queen and gets hit in the face with an apple, the *extempore* clown who adlibs the poem about the man married with a darb (which clearly was aimed at the person that threw the apple), the jester



and the subject of the Queen who, at the same time, is married to a notoriously unfaithful woman. It is here to be added that also the Queen's virginity was very controversial at the time when this joke was made. So, unpeeling all these layers, starting from the most obvious ones and getting to the more obscure ones, Tarlton utters, accidentally or not, a very deep and harsh critique aimed at the moral high standards set up by the ruling elite which were quietly agreed upon (albeit not really accepted) by the lower classes.

What was questioned was not just the alleged virginity of Queen Elizabeth, but also the rigidity of the social norms that were drawn up solely for the purpose of empowering the ruling class and maintaining a pre-established status quo (gained usually through the right of birth) for people that, when their livelihood was being threatened were very quick to judge those that threatened their position and also threw in their face their whole contempt, usually by demonizing the contender by means of stirring up moral panic. The Queen's virginity was just another case of the Emperor's new clothes, a ridiculous pretension of public dignity maintained not only by her but by everyone up the social ladder, from all privileged social castes, and this includes members of the emergent *petite bourgeoisie* going up the hierarchical ladder towards the religious and political leaders of the moment, in essence, those that are responsible for the organisation of the society's legal and moral norms, who in this particular case were embodied by one and the same person.

We are left with no other choice then taking for granted Azdak's words from Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1947) "the fool gives no man the pleasure of seeing human greatness". Various levels of irony ply throughout this scene, and with Tarlton's failure at keeping his cool he orchestrates an intricate design to reveal the contradiction and hypocrisies of his time, and, to some extent, our own. As D'Israeli recounts about the universal applauses that he was rewarded with when playing at the Queen's Court, so the laughter here is universal. The carnival laughter, according to Bakhtin is the laughter of all the people and it is universal in scope; it is directed at all and everyone, moreover, the entire world is seen in its drole relativity and the universal laughter is ambivalent, both triumphant and mocking, lively and deadly (1984, p. 12). The clown becomes in this case a proxy for the audience, but one that is disconnected from it, at that very moment. He reclaims self-ownership over himself as he is acting out of the play. He no longer belongs to the audience, to the play, to his civil life, he is no longer a subject. He is his own master, his own ruler, he now speaks for himself, but by doing this, by speaking for himself he is speaking for the self of everyone present. While this is going on, he plunges, if you will in the collective self, through this sacrificial act of self-exposure. The fool, or clown, is often

the performer most aware of the play's dramatic structure, since he is so often on and off the dramatic fiction he plays in. He plays with the conventions that simultaneously enable and limit the performance (Bartels and Smith, 2013, p. 116). This knowledge gives him the possibility to juggle with the intricate layers that make up the self and by doing this he manages, as a by-product of his action to awaken the awareness of the auditorium.

### ***Shadows of Tarlton***

Since sacrificing yourself is in every religious tradition a "spiritual death of the ego", we might say that Tarlton also played with death. In *Tarlton Jests* we find at least one anecdote that accounts for this. While at a dinner table where he dined with a gentleman that had the habit of concealing in his sleeve a *modicum* of whatever he had in the plate before him, Tarlton solemnly claimed that he is writing his last will and testament. First of all, he entrusts his soul to his Creator. As for his body, he would have it buried in the sleeve of the aforementioned gentlemen. As he said that he rolled the gentlemen's sleeve backwards and chunks of food started dropping everywhere. Here a bit, there a bit, while Tarlton was still shaking the gentlemen's arm and adding, in a crescendo: "this sleeve I mean, this sleeve" (Halliwell, 2011, p. 36). The second time he played with death was coincidentally also the last. It was on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 1588, the day of his death. According to his testament he left his son, Philip one penny and all his debts.

I, the said Richard Tarlton... have given, graunte, confirme, assigne and sett over unto my said sonne... all such debts and somes of money as now be... and hereof delivered one penny of lawfull money of England... to the use of Phillip Tarlton... (in Halliwell, 2011, p. IV).

No evidence of what became of his son Philip is to be found. This was Tarlton's final jest. Tarlton's death was deeply regretted by his contemporaries and we have a lot of elegies that were written for him in that period. One of those epitaphs links him to Armin and establishes the fact that Tarlton's style was established as a tradition among clowns:

Who taught me pleasant follies, can you tell? I was not taught and yet I did excel; /Tis hard to learne whitout a president, /Tis harder to make folly excellent; /Isawe, yet had no light to guide mine eyes, / I was extold for that which all despise. (Chrestoleros, *Seven books of Epigrammes written by T.B.*, 12mo, London, 1598, pg. 155. The initials T.B. stand for Thomas Bastard).

Tarlton was far more generous to his stage understudy, to whom he would be a mentor, Robert Armin, the comedian that embodied on stage for the first time now iconic characters such as Flute, from Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, or Feste, from the *Twelfth Night*, or the Jester from *King Lear*. Armin was,

so to speak, raised under the tutelage of Tarlton. Actually, the anecdote that gives this account is called "How Tarlton made Armin his adopted sonne, to succeed him". Armin, a goldsmith's apprentice, went to collect some money that was owed to his master from a tavern owned by Tarlton but administered by another person. Armin came and demanded for his master's money, but the administrator of the tavern, growing poorer and poorer couldn't pay up. Being a bit of a joker, according to the anecdotal account, Armin wrote a short poem, with a chalk on a wainscot of the tavern that went something like this: "O, world, why wilt thou lye? /Is this Charles the Great! That I deny. /Indeed, Charles the Great before, / But now Charles the less, being poore." (in Halliwell, 2011, p. 22). Tarlton saw Armin's poem and replied next to Armin's:

A wag thou art, none can prevent thee; / And thy desert shall content thee.  
/Let me divine. As I am, / So in time thou'lt be the same, / My adopted sonne  
therefore be, / To enjoy my clownes sute after me. (in Halliwell, 2011, p. 23).

Soon after that Tarlton took Armin under his tuition, as it was accustomed in that period, when all the prestigious comedians (and tragedians) had a disciple whom they taught to play, called an understudy. The understudies usually sustained female parts until their beard grew and then went on to play the roles that they trained for. It was also accustomed that the understudy would take over the master's roles after his death or parting from the group, so it is very likely that Armin probably took some of Tarlton's parts after his passing. Nash mentions him the same year as Shakespeare made his debut, 1592, as one of the "progeny of their father Elderton, (*sic!*) a famous time ballad writer of that period". Until May 17<sup>th</sup> 1603 we have no information about him, when his name figures on the list of the King's Men, amongst others such as Richard Burbage, Shakespeare and William Fletcher. William Kempe by the time must have surely left the company, since it would be extremely weird that an actor of such immense popularity would have been missed out from the list, by some accident. The retirement of Kempe from the company opened the opportunity for Armin to undertake some of the parts that Kempe used to play. Most certainly he took over from Kempe the part of Doggbery, since in the preliminary word to his play, *The Italian Tailor and his boy* (1609), he quotes one of Doggbery's lines, from act IV, scene 2: "I have been writ down an ass in my time", as if self-referential. As I have stated in the beginning of this article, due to printing blunder of *Much Ado About Nothing* that occurs in the 3<sup>rd</sup> act, instead of the names Doggbery and Verges the names Kempe and Cowley appear. It is not hard to imagine that after Kempe left The Lord Chamberlain's Men, somewhere around 1599-1600, Armin replaced him in the plays that were still in the company's repertoire.



Robert Armin's portrait on the cover front of his first folio play: *History of the two maids of Moreclacke*; by Unknown artist, woodcut, source National Portrait Gallery, <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw40025/Robert-Armin>

Even though one can arguably defend the fact that previous to Armin's arrival in the company the Shakespearean fools played by Kempe were aware of their folly, with somewhat ambiguous characters such as Falstaff or, more clearly, Bottom, his appearance breaths a new life into the Shakespearean fool. Kempe is Bottom or Falstaff in the same way that Feste or Touchstone, or Lear's Fool, or Hamlet's gravedigger is/are Armin. For Kempe's fools serve as a carnivalesque sub-plot in the stagings, as is the case with Cade's rebellion in *Henry IV*, when Cade appears with the Harlequin's lath sword (the slapstick) or the mechanicals staging from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In these cases, the attempts of the clowns to insert themselves in the play's plot are either painful (Cade is killed) or awkward. Kempe still pays tribute to the old tradition of merry, the carnival, where the clown knows that he embodies a utopian state of affairs that will usually end very bad for the Carnival's King. Shakespeare performs a dramatical *euthanasia* on them, but in real life they were severely beaten at the end of the Carnival. There are numerous examples of these bleak occurrences, starting with the Passions of Christ that followed his festive entrance to Jerusalem which ends in a gruesome crucifixion, to merrier examples furnished by the Medieval and Renaissance literature to that point.

The motif of the foolish Jesus is revived by Dario Fo in his sketch *The Fool Beneath the Cross*, where the Fool addresses Jesus on the cross telling him "they

call me Fool, but you beat me by a long chalk, Jesus.” (Fo, 2006, p. 109). Kempe’s clowns in a way share the same madness and the same destiny. They try to keep a distance from the main purposes that drive the *straight* characters of the play and instead they provide a utopian reality to that of the play. They have to pay for this dramatic betrayal. And if Kempe’s fools provide an escape from the real but get devoured by the fiction, Armin’s fools are followers of the real in order to avoid being devoured by the fiction. This is how the fool survives, and this is Armin’s contribution: his fools contain a degree of self-consciousness in order not to give themselves away. Their Carnival is discreet, their antics subtle. They no longer have to make grimaces, it is enough to wink. Armin’s fools lose their personality, they are just function. In the dramatical structure, the actor that plays the fool and the fool itself are juxtaposed, as if the actor has only the character’s function to wear as a mask. And that function is the specific way in which the fool perceives reality. Armin’s carnival is the discreet shadow of the carnival, and its fools function is made specific in the III<sup>rd</sup> act of *Twelfth Night*, when Viola describes Feste as “a fellow wise enough to play the fool” and in order to do that well “he must observe their mood on whom he jests, the quality of person and the time. [...] This is a practice as full of art as a wise man’s art: for folly that he wisely shows is fit”.

What Tarlton and Kempe lacked Armin supplied. They had mastered the technique, but they were to be taken aback by their personalities. There can be no compromise there, just absurd stubbornness. And we can see this in the scenes with Bottom and the mechanicals from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and more clearly in Kempe’s *Nine Daies Wonder*. One can get the impression in Kempe’s sole attempt at writing that he is taking Bottom to a field trip. The writing is so close to the way Bottom is, a nice guy deep down, that tries to make things work but fails painfully at it. For instance, in the dreary but honest account of him dancing the Morris dance from London to Norwich, he bumps into all sorts of mishaps. He disjoints his hip, but he carries on dancing; in another episode, some pickpockets that hang around him are caught doing their job amidst the crowd gathered to see him; he has to give a statement to the sheriff that he doesn’t know them; in another episode he misses the entrance to Norwich where people were gathered to great him and while dancing in the city market, he loses his tabor, but keeps on dancing without the music, afraid that the people will see that he stopped dancing and his whole effort would be in vain. This isn’t Bottom, this is Kempe in a normal day. Yet, Kempe isn’t able to step outside of himself and take notice that his mishaps are comic. He is like a candid yet naive child that retells his side of events in full honesty. Unlike Armin and closer in this respect to Tarlton – whose humour is cruel and sometimes bordering violence, thus becoming the agent of natural folly

– Kempe’s humour is mediated. His antics need their own time within the time of the play to be presented, for he is unable to adapt his style to the needs of the dramatical plot.

Even though Armin crafted his own style and developed the poetics of folly away from the improvisation realm towards his musical skills and a verbal wit integrated firmly within the thematical structure of the drama, he is still tributary to Tarlton as any disciple is to his master. Armin’s betrayal of the system paradoxically ensured its survival. But one must not forget that etymologically, tradition stems from betrayal (παραδίδωμι)<sup>22</sup> (Parker, 2007, p. 111). As far as any method is concerned, the hypothesis of regeneration through laughter is applied to the system itself. From a positivist perspective this should be the equivalent of the testing that the system undergoes, in order to prove itself as a valid one. Thus, the hypothesis works its way up to becoming a functional paradigm and Armin acts like an *epistemic* agent. Obviously, he is cut from a finer fabric than Kempe and Tarlton. His *Nest of Ninnies*, a tract about fools is of primary importance, first of all, because it is the only known tract of the time on the topic of Court jesters that survived to the present day, and second of all because it gives the contemporary reader the chance of experiencing a first-hand “tunnelling” with the actor that played and helped to bring into presence arguably the most important fools in dramatic literature, an unmediated access to a professional fool’s point of view on fools. As he states in the *preliminary* to his *Nest of Ninnies*:

I was admitted at Oxford to be of Christ Church while they of Al-soules gave ayme such as knew me remember my measures. I promised them to prove mad, and I think I am so, else I would not meddle with folly so deeply, but similis simile &c[ompany] (2010, p. 2).

Armin also wrote the preliminary for a book bearing the title *‘A brief Resolution of the right Religion touching the controversies that are now in England’* (1590). It is singularly to have the name of an actor, as Collier points out, related to such a topic, but nevertheless, the fact that he attended Oxford’s Christ’s College explains in a way his connection to these topics. Also, the *Nest of Ninnies* is filled

22 Παραδίδωμι – *paradidomi* in the lexicon on the New Testament literally means “to entrust, (to put) ahead of, to hand over (for use)” and it is used 119 times in the New Testament. For instance, In Luke 10:22, Jesus says: “All things have been handed over to me (*paredothē* | παρεδόθη) by my Father; also in Acts, 6:14, “for we have heard him say that this Jesus the Nazarene will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses handed down (*paredōken* | παρέδωκεν ) to us.” Also in John, 13:11, “For he knew who was about to betray (*paradidonta* | παραδιδόντα) him”; The dialectics of entrust (tradition) and betrayal are very important to the judeo-christian tradition, and they are made very clear by putting them together in the same sentence as opposite terms in Luke 22:22 “For the Son of Man goes according to what has been determined (*paredothē* | παρεδόθη), but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed (*paradidotai* | παραδιδόται)”. From this sentence stemmed what is now known as Judas’ paradox, since, if everything has been put forth ahead of his betrayal, how could he possibly be held accountable for his betrayal.

with moralizing conclusions that amend each story. The stories themselves are recounted to the World by a philosopher named Sotto (from the Latin *sotia*, foolishness), as one besotted, who “would wisely see into all men but himself, a fault general in most” (2010, p. 5). He is distinguishing between the artificial fool and the natural fool, and he also attempts to “rustle the chains” of those in power with a jab at social critique by holding responsible those that are `maintaining the foolery`, or the ones that are nursing the fools’ ridiculous pretensions. His analysis is multi-layered and his analytical process offers a detailed description of the soul’s “vanity fair”. The carnival is internalized, and its external images are projected inwardly, as metaphors of the self. One story concerning Jamy Cumbers, the jester of James I, and a “country wench” with whom Jamy had been infatuated for a long time and when he finally builds up the courage to solicit from her sexual favours, she gaslighted him so that he ended up spending the night under a bed which she “strawed with nettles”. In the morning the girl went to the King and told him everything. As the Chamberlain came to fetch the fool, he found him sleeping sound under the bed, on his own bed made of the nettles that the girl scattered under the bed. He woke Jamy up, commending him to get his horse and come back to the king’s court but the jester answered that he will not come because he is going to dig his grave. Which he did and a few hours later he indeed died, because, as Armin mercilessly infers, “even fools have a guess at wit sometimes, and the wisest could have done no more”.

Jamy Cumber’s story is made drawn pout to be, by the author, analogous with men’s desire that surpasses men’s ability to perform. He concludes that “such deeds” that meet with “backward lurches” often get stung in their own folly, “nettling the same lust with shame and disgrace”. This moreover signifies “adultery” in those people who go above their powers and are “whoring after strange Gods make their Religion drive them hackney to hell, and when shame takes them from the horse, they make their own graves and are buried in their own shame” (2010, p. 25-6).

What is remarkable here is that in the grotesque topography, the grave corresponds to the uterus and also to the entrance to hell. This failure of the fool to satisfy his lust and sexual desire paradoxically, through the fool’s death and burial obliges the Earth to give birth to a new life. As Armin continues his moral conclusions, the World, even though seriously shaken by Sotto’s blow, saw no remedy for this, but that “the flat fools should draw in her coach together” while “she sits in the boote and rides on”. The circle of life goes on. The irony is that even though he didn’t succeed in impregnating the maid, the fool succeeded in impregnating the Earth. And this sort of black humour characterizes all of Armin’s stage fools.



### *Shadows of Yorick*

Hamlet, in the graveyard scene comes face to face with the past tradition in the form of Yorick's skull. In a way, it is ironic that in his speech to the actors he is forbidding those who play the clown to do what he himself is doing.

Speak no more than is set down for them – for there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too, though in the meantime some necessary question of the play to be then considered. (III.2.38-43)

Scholars have linked this, until recent times, to his quarrel with Kempe and his departure from the company. We should be more moderate in this, as Hamlet himself is doing just what he advises the actors not to. We have some indicators of regret from Shakespeare's behalf upon this parting. Hamlet alludes to the old style of comedy tradition that Kempe and especially Tarlton, for, according to Prentki, his bones are disinterred by the gravedigger. (2012, p. 103).

During the graveyard scene Hamlet also faces the professional fool, in the person of Armin. The wit of Armin ensures that the foolery on display relates directly to the "to be or not to be" motif. Hamlet's folly confronts his predecessors, the bones of his jester, the "not to be", the Yorick/Tarlton binomial, and also the present, the "to be", in the person of the clown – apprentice and renewer – Armin. Hamlet marks Shakespeare older trials of trying to make the protagonist a fool, as in *Richard III*, where Richard reclaims the forgotten character of the Morality plays, The Vice. In Hamlet's case, the fool isn't a substituting instance, but a pillar, *helping the action out*. As in *King Lear*, the play starts with the breaking of the bonds, the inversion of the social hierarchy. By this time, we can infer that Shakespeare most have developed a taste for folly in high places. Carnival had made the notion of Fool as King a common meme during the Renaissance, but Shakespeare inverts the Carnival concept and investigates the concept in which a King could become a fool. Actually, he was not so far off, because one etymology for Carnival comes from the old German word *'karne'*, which meant *'God'*, or *'saint'*, and the word *'wal'*, which meant place. In other words, a place where gods roam, or the time when the gods descend on Earth. The lineage God – King – Fool is of no little interest, if we take into consideration the identification of Jesus with the Carnival's King, who at the end of the carnival was severely beaten, dispossessed, sort of speak, of his authority in a violent manner, by the participants. Also, during the reigns of Elizabeth I, and then King James I, in a tradition set up by Henry VIII, when the protestant reform brought with it a secularization of religion, which permeated every social strata. The coronation of Lear as King of fools is done by the fool itself: "thou hadst' little wit in thy bald crown when thou gav'st thy golden one away" (I.4. 159-60).



The Fool in relation to the king in *King Lear* sits on much firmer ground. For if the Fool was dressed in motley and his behaviour announces him of what he is, more so, Armin's cast in the role gave the audience a clue about the character in front of them. As for Lear, played by Burbage, the opposite would be the case, since his character renounces its status very early in the development of the action. Lear is not king Lear, Kent becomes Caius, Edgar is Poor Tom, Edmund becomes the favourite son while Goneril and Reagen become Lear's mothers. In this *maelstrom* of inversions, the only fixed identity is that of the fool. "I am a fool, thy art nothing". Lear's questioning of his identity – "Who is it that can tell me who I am?" – has a prompt reply from the fool, in the multi-layered manner that I have been referring to earlier: "Lear's shadow". At a first level, the dramatical logic of the play, Lear is his own shadow, since he has stripped himself of his own substance. Analogous to this situation is Marlowe's *Edward II* line that openly suggests the status of kings without their court as "perfect shadows in a sunshine day" (Marlowe, 1969, p. 508). Therefore, it makes perfect sense that only Lear's shadow can tell him who he is, since he has become his own shadow, bereft of substance. But, if we go even deeper, we find out that in Elizabethan stage-slang "shadow" was a term regularly applied to actors (Prentki, 2012, p. 116). Thus, the fool is both addressing actor and character, each pulling a different way. Lear, on one side is a man whose unsuccessful efforts to coexist both as king and shadow of a king, and the actor on the other side who cannot bring the role of the king at bay, not knowing how the shadow of a king would cope with the reality of the play. And at a third layer, we have the person of the King, as a permanent role and the shadow as the actor that tries to breathe life into this permanent role. Actors are nothing but a long succession of shadows, as spirits of the departed, in Dante's vision of the Inferno and the Purgatory who try to feel this substance, the character.

And this is the final inversion. As the shadow becomes the flesh and blood and bones while the substance becomes the idea, the concept, the part, the character. As Hamlet finds Yorick's skull, we are thrown from the reality of the play into our reality, where, mirrored, we see the faith that awaits all of us. Death, dressed in motely brings forth a certain sense of sinister. As Yorick's memory was kept by Hamlet, so Tarlton's was kept by Armin. But the paradox of the inversion between substance and shadow reveals itself as a dialectical relation between life and art. For if the shadow is the human and the substance is the art, we now immerse ourselves into this dramaturgical archaeology exercise for the sake of the shadows that breathe life into substance.

**References:**

1. Armin, R., Collier, J.P. (2010). *Fools and Jesters: With the reprint of Robert Armin's Nest of Ninnies. 1608*. UK: Milton Keynes, Bibliolife.
2. Bakhtin, Mikhail (1984). *Rabelais and His World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
3. Bartels, E., Smith, E. (2013). *Christopher Marlowe in Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
4. Couliano, I.P. (1984). *Éros et Magie à la Renaissance, 1484*. Paris: Fllamarion.
5. Craig, Edward Gordon (1999). *Craig on Theatre*. Edited by J. Michael Walton. London: Methuen Drama.
6. Disraeli, Isaac (2018). *Curiosities of Literature*, reprint of the 1837 edition, Sagwan Press.
7. Fo, Dario, *Mistero Buffo*, translated by Ron Jenkins (2006). Theater Communications Group, New York.
8. Halliwell, James (2011). *Orchard Tarlton's Jests, And News Out of Purgatory* with notes and some accounts of the life of Tarlton. London: printed for the Shakespeare Society, 1844, reprinted for Kessinger Legacy Reprints, printed in the USA, 2011.
9. Lacan, Jacques (2004). *The Mirror Stage as formative of the I Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience*, in *Écrits: a selection*. London: Norton & Company.
10. Marlowe, Christopher, *The Complete Plays*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Classics, 1969
11. Parker, John (2007). *The Aesthetics of the Antichrist – From Christian Drama to Christopher Marlowe*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
12. Preiss, Robert (2014). *Clowning and Authorship in Early modern Theater*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
13. Prentki, Tim (2012). *The Fool in European Theater; Stages of Folly*. USA: Palgrave Macmillan.

**Online references:**

1. Lacan, Jacques (2010) *Seminar V, The formations of the Unconscious, 1957 – 1958*, translated by Cormac Gallagher from unedited French typescripts, [Online document]. Available at: <http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Book-05-the-formation-of-the-unconscious.pdf>, (Accessed: 09 May 2022)

**Images:**

1. British Museum (n.d.). *Seebald Beham, Kermis, engraving, print made by Johann Theodor de Bry, 1580-1600* [Online image]. Available at: [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1883-1110-489](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1883-1110-489) (Accessed: 09 May 2022)
2. meoloe.blogspot.com (2021). *Franciscus Gybrechts, Vanitas, oil on canvas, c. 1672* [Online image]. Available at: <https://meoloe.blogspot.com/2021/06/memento-mori-renaissance-art.html> (Accessed: 09 May 2022)
3. National Portrait Gallery (n.d.). *Richard Tarlton, by Silvester (Sylvester) Harding, after Unknown artist stipple engraving, published 1792* [Online image]. Available at: <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw40913/Richard-Tarlton> (Accessed: 09 May 2022)
4. National Portrait Gallery (n.d.). *Robert Armin (woodcut), Unknown artist*, [Online image]. Available at: <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw40025/Robert-Armin> (Accessed: 09 May 2022)

**Radu Crăciun** is an independent researcher, a PhD graduate of the “I.L. Caragiale” National University of Theatre and Film (2019), with the PhD thesis, *The Fool’s Journey*, supervised by Prof. PhD Cristian Pepino. He was a lecturer at UNATC and at the Hyperion University in Bucharest. In UNATC, he assisted Prof. PhD Mihai-Gruia Sandu and also Professor PhD Ioan Brancu. He contributed, alongside Mihai-Gruia Sandu, at the Master’s performance *5 (Three) Farces Concerning Pantaloan*, awarded with the Special Jury Prize at the UNATC Graduate Gala (2016) and another Master’s performance consisting of excerpts taken out of the Commedia dell’Arte Masterclass, awarded the Special Jury Prize of the Student Theatre Nights (2017). In 2017, he was also awarded the prize for Best Debut Performance at the Comedy Festival in Galați. In 2021, he coordinated the performance *Magpies*, by Al. Kirîțescu, with the MA students from the Hyperion University, where he applied estrangement techniques of the 1920’s theatrical avant-garde which won a combined total of 8 prizes in two student theatre festivals, including the Special Jury Prize for directing in the Okaua Festival and the Audience Prize for Best Performance in the Student Theatre Nights Festival. He played various roles in theatre and film, among which, so far, the most notable is the one in *Sleep? Awake!*, d. Andrei Ștefănescu, Qualia Film, 2012. In 2021, he devised the screenplay *The Emperor’s New Clothes*, d. Ioana Petre, which premiered at the “Ion Creangă” Theatre. In 2022 he directed Strindberg’s *Dance of Death* at the “Apropo” Theater and *Till* at the “Ion Creangă” Theatre.



*Franciscus Byssbrecht,  
Vanitas;*  
source: <https://meoloe.blogspot.com/2021/06/memento-mori-renaissance-art.html>

SFÂRȘITUL EPOCII  
**EXCEPȚIONALISMULUI**  
**UMAN**  
ÎN **SPECTACOLUL LIVE**

**ELENA**  
**VLĂDĂREANU**



Excellence Center in Image Study (CESI), Bucharest, Romania  
*elena.vladareanu@drd.unibuc.ro*

**Abstract:** This article investigates the performances by Krõõt Juurak și Alex Bailey, named performances for pets, performances for cats and dogs. The difference from other performances labeled as performances for animals or interspecies performances consists not only in the way the two artists conceive their performances, but also in the way they approach the notion of audience. Designed and performed exclusively for dogs or cats, these shows question the supremacy of the Anthropocene and human exceptionalism in live performance and tend to minimize the differences between species in favour of their similarities. Animal studies and theories of posthumanism have given me the right tools to look at, understand and interpret the actions of Krõõt Juurak and Alex Bailey, for whom performance studies, often focused on the performer-spectator relationship or rather on the existence of an audience, do not seem to have yet a rich enough grid of reading.

**Keywords:** *Performances for pets*, performances for animals, interspecies performances, liveness, audience and public, language, body language, human animal vs non-human animal, zoösis, anthropocene, postumanism, animal studies, performance studies.

**How to cite:** Vlădăreanu, Elena (2022). 'Sfârșitul epocii excepționalismului uman în spectacolul *live*', *Concept* 1(24)/2022, pp. 117-127.

În acest articol discut despre *performance*-urile concepute și susținute de cuplul de artiști Krõõt Juurak și Alex Bailey și care sunt prezentate ca fiind *performances for pets*, spectacole pentru animale de companie, câini sau pisici. Deosebirea de alte spectacole care pot fi catalogate ca fiind *performances for animals* sau *interspecies performances* constă nu doar în felul în care cei doi artiști își concep spectacolele, ci și în felul în care abordează noțiunea de public. Gândite și prezentate exclusiv pentru câini sau pisici, aceste spectacole chestionează supremația antropocenului și a excepționalismului uman în ceea ce privește *performance*-urile live și tind să trateze diferențele dintre specii ca fiind lipsite de importanță, favorizându-le asemănările. *Animals studies* și teoriile *postumanismului* mi-au oferit instrumentele potrivite pentru a privi, înțelege și interpreta acțiunile lui Krõõt Juurak și Alex Bailey, pentru care studiile performative, concentrate deseori pe relația performer-spectator sau mai degrabă pe existența unei audiențe<sup>23</sup>, nu par să dețină încă o grilă de lectură suficient de ofertantă.

Cei doi performeri, un bărbat și o femeie, merg în patru labe pe podea, cu spinarea curbată ca a unei pisici și cu degetele mâinilor flexate în interior, ca și cum ar avea lăbuțe. Se așază pe spate și dau din picioare, ca două feline uriașe, cu chef de joacă. Revin la poziția „în patru labe“, își ascund capul între mâini și dau din fund. Adulmecă în jur, scot limba, se gudură. Într-o altă reprezentare, unul dintre performeri este ascuns în spatele unui perete, de unde își arată din când în

23 „... audiența și/ sau spectatorul constituie în mod fundamental teatrul și performance-ul, fiindu-le martor și, cel puțin parțial, contribuind la producerea înțeleșurilor lor“ (Allain și Harvey, 2006, p. 288), unde componența audienței este înțeleasă ca fiind umană.

când capul: ușor, fără zgomot, imperceptibil. Vânează. În altă parte, în spatele unei uși închise, scot zgomote ciudate, zgreptăne tocul ușii, schelălăie ca niște cățeluși abia născuți. Când ușa se deschide, încep amândoi să se târască în jurul unicului lor spectator activ, care li se alătură, un golden retriever. Uneori mârâie, hârâie, miaună. Krõõt Juurak și Alex Bailey concep și susțin *performance*-uri pentru animale de companie – câini și pisici – din 2014, iar acest proiect a crescut dintr-un altul al aceluiași cuplu de artiști, *Autodomestication*, în care puneau în discuție condițiile muncii creative la oameni și la ființele non-umane.

Oare pisicile ne iubesc la rândul lor? este întrebarea care punctează ritmic documentarul Netflix, *În mintea pisicilor* (r. Andy Mitchell, 2022). Preocuparea pentru ce e în mintea animalului de companie și pentru viața emoțională a acestuia nu este nouă. Dorința de a vorbi, deci de a avea un limbaj comun, și de a împărtăși sentimente într-un mod reciproc cu animalele de companie<sup>24</sup> stă la baza unei mari părți a culturii noastre, literare și vizuale, destinată nu doar copiilor și adolescenților. Tânjim să știm ce e în mintea animalelor, tânjim să fim iubiți de prietenul nostru non-uman. Istoria umanității nu poate fi despărțită de istoria relației om-animal. John Berger ne amintește că animalul a fost primul subiect pentru arta omului (în picturile rupestre), așa cum sângele lui a fost probabil prima culoare folosită și prima metaforă (1980, pp. 3-4). Totodată, ne spune Berger, domesticirea animalelor nu s-a supus mereu rațiunilor economice. Domesticirea pisicii nu s-a făcut pentru lapte sau carne, ci pentru că, dincolo de aspecte magice, ritualice, omul a simțit asemănarea și diferența profundă de acest *celălalt*. Atunci însă când ne imaginăm și punem în literatură sau film limbajul și emoțiile personajelor-animale o facem din punctul nostru de vedere, așa că animalele vorbesc și simt așa cum ne-am imagina noi că ar vorbi și ar simți: ca noi. Dar, probabil, așa cum ne atrage atenția Wittgenstein, și dacă ar vorbi, tot nu am înțelege ce ar spune. Animalele nu vorbesc pentru că pur și simplu nu folosesc limbajul decât poate în forme extrem de primitive. Pentru Wittgenstein, a numi acțiuni și obiecte – a da ordine, a întreba, a povesti, a sta de vorbă, a merge, a mânca, a bea, a ne juca – sunt „parte a istoriei noastre naturale“ (2013, p. 107). De aici poate incapacitatea noastră de a imagina pentru fauna care ne populează arta un limbaj diferit de limbajul uman, a cărui potențialitate să fie credibilă. Cărți ținând de genul *memoir*, precum *U de la Uliu* (MacDonald, 2021), sau de un gen hibrid, precum *Celelalte minți* (Godfrey-Smith, 2017), încearcă să meargă mai departe de ceea ce crede un om că ar simți animalul său de companie pentru el

24 „... pasiunea mea pentru animale este cu atât mai arzătoare, cu cât nu mi-a fost totdeauna răsplătită. Animalele nu mi-au înapoiat în lucrări științifice bune ceea ce eu le-am împărtășit într-o curată și tandră afecțiune“ (Racoviță, 2019, p. 7).

și, descriind cât mai fidel și cu cât mai multe detalii comportamentul acestuia – în cazurile de față, un uliu porumbar, respectiv o caracatiță – să ne facă să înțelegem, dacă nu modul de gândire al acestuia, atunci măcar ceva din ceea ce se întâmplă într-o relație dintre îmblânzit și îmblânzitor<sup>25</sup>. În altă parte (Wohlleben, 2017), lucrurile se tranșează prin ecuația empatiei: dacă această ființă, pe care o cunosc ca fiind non-umană, simte ca mine, atunci mă raportez la ea ca la o altă ființă<sup>26</sup>, față de care mă port cu grijă, o protejez, o înconjoar cu iubirea mea.

Animalele sunt prezente în literatură și le vedem în filme, dar doar în mod excepțional pe scenă. Artele performative se feresc de imprevizibilitatea adusă de prezența vie a unui animal, de felul în care acesta captează atenția publicului și de haosul iminent pe care îl poate produce<sup>27</sup>. Asta nu înseamnă că, de-a lungul timpului, artiștii nu și-au populat și dinamizat scenele cu animale. De multe ori, propunerile au fost excentrice – la Hermann Nitsch (și în general la acționiștii vienezi), care folosea sânge și pui morți în *show*-urile sale – sau provocatoare – la Rodrigo Garcia, în controversatul *Kill to Eat*, în care pregătește și gătește *live* un homar, spectacol care a stârnit protestele asociațiilor care luptă pentru drepturile animalelor –, dar altelei scopul prezenței animalelor pe scenă era tocmai să îi facă pe spectatori să mediteze la responsabilitate și exploatare, la identitate și limbaj.

Nu în ultimul rând,

(...) juxtapunerea performerilor umani și a celor animalii îi dau spectatorului ocazia de a observa îndeaproape ambele prezențe din scenă – comparându-le – înăuntrul ramei obiective pe care o oferă spectacolul. Caracterul live (liveness) al unui performance este accentuat și de riscul indus de imprevizibilitatea animalelor (Allain și Harvie, 2006, p. 271),

și sunt artiști care sunt interesați exact de zona aceasta de imprevizibil, cum este, de exemplu, Compania Societas Raffaello Sanzio din Italia, care lucrează deseori cu animale. Totuși, calul alb care deschide *Resurrection*<sup>28</sup>, propunerea lui Romeo Castellucci pentru *Simfonia nr. 2* de Gustav Mahler, este folosit mai degrabă metaforic decât denotativ, cu un rol dramaturgic minor: este o imagine a vitalității,

25 Dar înainte au fost memoriile șoimarilor, iar Hellen MacDonald își construiește cartea în mare măsură pe observațiile despre șoimărit culese din aceste cărți, unele vechi de sute de ani.

26 „Când știi că și copacii simt durerea, că au memorie și că părinții trăiesc împreună cu copiii, nu mai poți doborî trunchiuri la întâmplare și nici nu mai poți face ravagii în pădure cu utilaje de mare tonaj” (Wohlleben, 2017, p. 10).

27 ... „se spune că prezența animalelor pe scenă, ca și cea a copiilor, e mai bine să fie evitată, pentru că acestea au un comportament imprevizibil și dificil de controlat” (Allain și Harvie, 2006, p. 269).

28 *Resurrection* de Gustav Mahler, regia Romeo Castellucci, dirijor Esa-Pekka Salonen, spectacol care a deschis Festivalul de Artă Lirică Aix-En-Provence 2022, disponibil pe canalul ARTE, <https://www.arte.tv/en/videos/109365-000-A/resurrection-gustav-mahler/>, link accesat la 25 august 2022.



a speranței și a libertății, ca prefață a unui discurs vizual macabru: extragerea a zeci de cadavre, adulți, copii, bebeluși, din ceea ce pare a fi o groapă comună în care și-a găsit sfârșitul un grup de refugiați. Calul nu zăbovește prea mult pe scenă, dar suficient încât fantoma imaginii sale să rămână imprimată pe retina spectatorului cât timp ține spectacolul și mult timp după. Animalele sunt deseori prezente în spectacolele Companiei Societas Raffaello Sanzio și sunt prezente în preocupările lui Castellucci, care este creierul companiei. Un cimpanzeu, o căprioară, un pește, un cal „mare și negru“, un câine orb, un miel, un șarpe, „50 sau 100 de șoareci“, lilieci populează notițele lui Castellucci (Teatrul Companiei Societas Raffaello Sanzio, 2007, pp. 123-133), aducând cu sine – atât în spectacole, cât și în notițele unor posibile viitoare spectacole, cum sunt aceste *Disjecta Membra. Note din carnetul lui Romeo Castellucci* – nu doar o notă de stranietate, de alienare, așa cum aduc și copiii mici, băieții, trupurile albe, de care Castellucci este interesat vizual în aceeași măsură, ci și ceea ce am putea numi autenticitate. Într-un discurs în care refugiații morți sunt de fapt păpuși, într-un discurs în care oamenii interpretează de fapt niște roluri, prezența calului, a animalului viu în general (vezi și taurul în *Moses und Aron*<sup>29</sup>) ne amintește cu brutalitate că tot ce e în fața noastră e o iluzie, că viața și moartea există, dar în altă parte. Nu întâmplător, Kathleen Franck, într-un articol în care discută despre folosirea animalelor în spectacolul de teatru (2016), le plasează în seria mijloacelor brechtiene de distanțare.

Cu basset-ul Major Tom însă, care își întâmpină publicul alături de stăpâna și partenera sa de scenă, Victoria Melody<sup>30</sup>, ne apropiem de o altă discuție, cea despre drepturile animalelor, despre etica muncii și despre responsabilitatea omului față de animale, despre dreptul animalelor la demnitate. Când spectatorii sunt întâmpinați de Major Tom, se așteaptă cel puțin la niște giumbușlucuri al căror protagonist să fie actorul canin. Dar nu vor avea parte de nimic de acest fel, dimpotrivă. Major Tom nu va performa altceva decât ar face-o probabil în orice alt spațiu: dormitează, amușină picioarele unor spectatori, lovește puțin cu coada podeaua. Pentru a construi acest *one-woman show*, Victoria Melody a urmat un traseu al expunerii și exploatării, înscriindu-se în nenumărate concursuri de frumusețe și modelându-și corpul după cerințele fiecăruia, la fel cum a urmat partenerul ei de scenă, înscris la concursuri de frumusețe canină. Această abordare *interspecii* ne face să chestionăm supremația antropocenului în artele performative, așa cum teoriile postumane tind deja să-i conteste supremația în toate aspectele vieții. Umaniștii trebuie să accepte că oamenii nu sunt cele mai importante lucruri

29 *Moses und Aron* de Arnold Schönberg, regia Romeo Castellucci, regia muzicală Philippe Jordan, Opera Națională din Paris, 2015.

30 *Major Tom, creat și interpretat de Victoria Melody, dramaturgie de Paul Hudson, 2015.*

din univers – aceasta este prima afirmație din *Manifestul postuman* al lui Robert Pepperell (2018, p. 177). De altfel, dacă ar trebui să ne oprim la o singură trăsătură a postumanismului, atunci aceasta ar fi perspectiva etică; postumanismul, contrar a ceea ce s-ar putea crede, nu vestește moartea umanismului, ci doar ne invită să regândim teme și concepte și locul nostru în univers. Omul devine un mic punct de legătură într-o rețea; nu mai este loc aici de ironie, de a folosi animalul – ființa non-umană, celălalt – pentru a distra publicul sau pentru a-l lumina asupra unor adevăruri (așa cum sunt folosite animalele în fabule, de exemplu).

Prin ce se deosebește însă ce fac Krööt Juurak și Alex Bailey în artele performative de alte acțiuni etichetate ca fiind *performances for animals*? De foarte multe ori, animalele sunt folosite ca instrumente stilistice pentru a vorbi de fapt despre oameni și despre temerile, visurile lor, cum se întâmplă cu prezența calului la începutul spectacolului lui Castellucci. Teatrul, artele în general, nu și-au pus niciodată problema în mod real, poate doar retoric, a sensibilității animalelor. Când Rodrigo Garcia fierbe homarul de viu, el o face pentru că această acțiune servește teoriilor sale, fără însă a duce niciodată discuția în zona moralității, dacă este etic ca o ființă umană să folosească/ să ucidă în scopuri artistice o ființă non-umană. De aceea putem spune că la Juurak și Bailey abordarea relației om-animal – sau pentru a folosi vocabularul mai integrativ al specialiștilor în *animal studies*, ființă umană vs. ființă non-umană/ animal uman vs. animal non-uman – este radicală, acțiunile celor doi artiști arătându-se oamenilor în toată straniețatea lor, dar cultivând o anumită familiaritate față de grupul lor țintă. Pentru cei doi performeri, animalele sunt ceea ce sunt. Cei doi nu tratează animalele într-o manieră metaforică și nici nu vorbesc nici prin rol, interpretare sau prin interacțiunea cu publicul despre dramele lor sau despre dramele umane în general. Scopul lor principal rămâne acela de a-i oferi *celuilalt* divertisment. Unde noțiunea de *celălalt* depășește granițele rasiale și de gen, de clasă și de abilitate, punând sub semnul întrebării chiar diferența și frontiera dintre ființă umană-ființă non-umană.

Practica artistică a celor doi performeri, Krööt Juurak și Alex Bailey, este o contestație constantă a supremației speciei în ceea ce privește artele performative și o demonstrație persuasivă a importanței extinderii discuției despre cine-privește-pe-cine în cadrul performativ. Felul în care omul își privește animalul și, reciproc, animalul privește omul constituie tema de discuție a lui John Berger în articolul deja menționat. Pentru a înțelege schimbul de priviri dintre un om și un animal, Berger ne îndeamnă să gândim această relație vizuală prin prisma unui schimb de priviri între doi oameni. Între doi oameni există două abisuri, iar puntea dintre acestea o constituie limbajul, susține Berger (1991)<sup>31</sup>, iar când

31 În original: „Between two men the two abysses are, in principle, bridged by language“

spune limbaj se referă de fapt la tot ansamblul de cuvinte, gesturi, priviri la care un om apelează când intră în relație cu un altul și folosind acest limbaj – al cărui concept nu diferă de abordarea lui Wittgenstein – un om îl confirmă pe celălalt și îi confirmă prezența și existența. În relația dintre un om și un animal lipsește însă acest tip de confirmare (Berger, 1991), conturându-se însă distanța, excluderea, diferența. În viziunea celor doi artiști, această distanță nu trebuie să existe sau trebuie minimalizată. Un prim pas în această direcție este chiar acest schimb de roluri: ce-ar fi dacă am vedea lumea din punctul de vedere al lor, al animalelor, s-au întrebat Krööt Juurak și Alex Bailey, dorindu-și în același timp să extindă noțiunea de audiență *across species*<sup>32</sup>.

Discuțiile despre public și despre componența acestuia, despre cine, când și unde (se) merge la teatru nu încetează niciodată. Potrivit celor mai multe definiții, existența publicului constituie un element necesar al spectacolului și *performance*-ului teatral; actul performativ nu își poate îndeplini menirea dacă sensul lui nu este decriptat de cel puțin un spectator<sup>33</sup>. Atât teoreticienii artelor performative, cât și artiștii par a cădea de acord asupra unui fapt, că publicul este un grup de *persoane*. Calitatea de persoană a spectatorului pare a fi o condiție care nu suportă negociere. Dar discursul nonlexical și nonsemantic din *performance*-urile semnate de Krööt Juurak și Alex Bailey ne ajută să ne îndepărtăm de antropocen și să ne apropiem de o subiectivitate „care nu se bazează pe umanismul clasic și care evită cu atenție antropocentrismul“ (Braidotti, 2016, p. 79). O astfel de abordare, precum cea a acestui cuplu de artiști, contrazice excepționalismului omului în artele performative. Și asta nu pentru că pune animalul în centrul produsului artistic, așa cum a făcut-o ciroul până în anii ‘80, când acuzațiile de exploatare și de încălcare a drepturilor animalelor l-au transformat într-o artă a actorilor umani. Ci pentru că investește animalele cu dreptul de a avea parte de un timp liber de calitate, timpul liber ținând de o anumită interpretare a ideii de timp, care este strict umană.

Fiecare *performance* este unic, se desfășoară la locuința spectatorului și este precedat de o perioadă de documentare și cunoaștere. Krööt Juurak și Alex Bailey spun că petrec aproximativ 20 de minute cu viitorii spectatori și beneficiari, încercând să-i cunoască și să afle cât mai multe despre ei și despre relația pe care o au cu stăpânii lor. Aceste *performance*-uri au loc într-un cadru artistic, sunt anunțate pe platforma unui festival sau a unei galerii de artă, iar doritorii se pot înscrie; dintr-o așteptată filozofie anti-capitalistă și non-profit, artiștii nu percep tarife, dar pot fi plătiți dacă comandarii consideră de cuviință. *Performance*-urile pentru

32 <http://www.performancesforpets.net/info>, link accesat la 13.09.2022.

33 Vezi în acest sens discuția despre public, audiență, spectatori (Allain și Harvie, 2006, p. 288)

pisici sunt gândite diferit decât cele pentru câini și durează diferit. Privind aceste acțiuni performative *interspecii*, nu se poate spune că performerii interpretează niște roluri de câini, respectiv de pisici – corpurile lor încearcă să se apropie cât mai mult de corpul ființei non-umane pentru care interpretează. Vorbim de o nouă subiectivitate și de o nouă perspectivă a temei animaliere în artă: pentru acești doi artiști, ființa non-umană nu există „doar pentru a fi vorba despre ea, ci are dreptul ea însăși la o voce”<sup>34</sup> (Caesar, 2009, p. 113). *Celălalt* ca ființă non-umană este valorizat, iar ideea de *altă specie* este performată nu pentru public uman, ci pentru public non-uman: deși nu le este destinat, oamenii pot asista la spectacole. Una Chaudhuri propune termenul de *zooesis*, care să ne trimită la *poesis*-ul lui Platon, *mimesis*-ul lui Aristotel, dar și la *gynesis*-ul teoreticienei feministe, Alice Jardine.

Îmi doresc ca prin acest termen să subliniez felul în care animalul este pus în discurs și totodată împărtășesc prin el speranța progresistă a lui Jardine de a contribui astfel la valorizarea animalelor și la a ne ajuta pe noi să înțelegem că animalele sunt intrinseci unui nou și necesar mod de a gândi, a scrie, a vorbi. (Chaudhuri în Chaudhuri și Hughes, 2017, p. 6)

Absența limbajului verbal, așa cum îl înțelegem și îl folosim noi, accentul pus pe fizicalitate și pe corporalitate, utilizarea corpului într-un mod care contrazice poziția bipedă – acțiunile pe care le fac cei doi artiști, Krööt Juurak și Alex Bailey, sunt la orizontală, în poziții care mimează poziția corpului animalului –, toate aceste elemente contribuie la construirea unui discurs performativ despre limitele corpului uman, despre limitele limbajului, despre limitele identității noastre și ale înțelegerii pe care o avem față de animale și față de comportamentul acestora. La baza acestor acțiuni performative stă o atență observare a comportamentului viitorului lor spectator. Tot ceea ce fac cei doi performeri este de a răspunde, activ, la întrebări precum: ce îl face curios pe spectatorul nostru?, ce îi atrage atenția, ce îl face să caute?, ce îl face să amușine?, ce îl face să latre/ să toarcă/ să plece dintr-un punct A într-un punct B? Succesul unui astfel de *performance* nu se măsoară în aplauze sau în felicitări din partea audienței, ci prin gradul de participare activă a beneficiarului. Uneori, *show*-ul demarează greu, așa cum este *Performance for Anwalt*<sup>35</sup> și spectatorul trebuie atras în joc, inclusiv cu ceea ce pare o soluție de urgență: gustări. De altfel, pisicile sunt mult mai libere în relația cu cei doi performeri decât câinii, care par a aștepta tot timpul confirmare din partea stăpânilor pentru a interveni activ în actul performativ.

Binomul natural-cultural, așa cum a fost înțeles de-a lungul timpului – natural înseamnă escapism, spectacol distant, al doilea fiind perceput ca o

34 În original: „An animal exists not only to be spoken about but actually himself to speak“

35 <http://www.performancesforpets.net/library/2016/5/7/performance-for-anwalt>

intervenție artificială a omului, un construct (Chaudhuri în Chaudhuri și Hughes, 2017, p. 2) – este amenințat. Prin acțiunile performative propuse, cei doi artiști creează un sistem de oglinzi în care, simultan, se privesc și se oglindesc oameni și animale. Diferențele dintre specii tind să dispară, e mult mai important și mai productiv acum să vedem asemănarea dintre noi și *ceilalți*.

### References:

1. Allain, P., Harvie, J. (2006). *Ghidul Routledge de teatru și performance*. Traducere de Cristina Modreanu și Ilinca Tamara Todoruț. București: Nemira.
2. Berger, John (1991). *Why look at animals?*, in Berger, J. *About looking*. New York: Vintage Books.
3. Braidotti, Rosi (2016). *Postumanul*. Traducere de Ovidiu Anemțoaicei. București: Hecate.
4. Caesar, T.P. (2009). *Speaking of Animals. Essays on Dogs and Others*. Brill Academic Publisher.
5. Chaudhuri, U., Hughes, H. (eds.) (2017). *Animal Acts. Performing species today*. The University of Michigan Press.
6. Godfrey-Smith, Peter (2017). *Celelalte minți. Caracatița și evoluția vieții inteligente*. Traducere de Liviu Dascălu. București: Publica.
7. MacDonald, Hellen (2021). *U de la Uluu*. Traducere de Andreea Călin. București: Nemira.
8. Pepperell, Robert (2018). 'Manifestul postuman', trad. de Daniel Cinci, *Post/h/um. Jurnal de studii (post)umaniste*, vol. 4, 2018.
9. Racoviță, Emil (2019). *Spre Polul Sud*. București: Frontiera.
10. Wittgenstein, Ludwig (2013). *Cercetări filozofice*. Traducere de Mircea Dumitru și Mircea Flonta, în colaborare cu Adrian-Paul Iliescu. București: Humanitas.
11. Wohlleben, Peter (2015). *Viața secretă a copacilor. Cum comunică, ce simt. Descoperirea unei lumi ascunse*. Traducere de Dana Gheorghe. București: Publica.

### Online references:

1. Franck, Kathleen (2016). *L'animal au théâtre: réflexe antropocentrique au nécessité symbolique* [Online]. Available at: <https://kathleenfranck.wordpress.com/2016/06/01/animal-theatre-reflexe-anthropocentrique-necessite-symbolique/> (Accessed: 8 December 2022)
2. performancesforpets.net (2016). *Performance for Anwalt* [Online]. Available at: <http://www.performancesforpets.net/library/2016/5/7/performance-for-anwalt> (Accessed: 8 December 2022)
3. arte.tv (2022). *Resurrection - Gustav Mahler* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.arte.tv/en/videos/109365-000-A/resurrection-gustav-mahler/> (Accessed: 25 August 2022)

**Elena Vlădăreanu** is a writer and doctoral student in cultural studies at the Center of Excellence in Image Studies (CESI) with a research on (auto)biographies in contemporary theatre. She is a graduate of the Faculty of Letters (Romanian-French) within the University of Bucharest, following a thesis on the Romanian surrealists. She holds an MA in visual studies at CESI, following a research on the performativity of contemporary poetry.

She published several volumes of poems, theatre, prose and literature for children, and in the field of performing arts she worked with directors Robert Bălan, Bobi Pricop, Bogdan Mustață. Her most recent collaboration is on the choreographic performance *Ember* by Judith State, with Judith State, Istvan Teglas and Radu Dumitriu (to premier in October 2022, at WASP).

In 2018, she initiated, together with other writers and artists, the Zilele Sofia Nădejde project, whose aim is to promote literature and art signed by women. Since 2017, she is the co-producer of *Scena și ecranul*, a show on Radio Romania Cultural, where she analyses, through interviews and investigations, the theatre scene and the film industry in Romania and abroad.



*Krööt Juurak și Alex Bailey, Performances for Pets,*  
la Museumsquartier, Viena, în 2017.

Credit foto: Wynrich Zlomke, sursa: [https://brut-wien.at/en/Programme/Calendar/Programm-2017/2017\\_04\\_April-2017/2017\\_04\\_feedback\\_Alex-Bailey-Kroot-Juurak\\_Performances-for-Pets-Praesentation](https://brut-wien.at/en/Programme/Calendar/Programm-2017/2017_04_April-2017/2017_04_feedback_Alex-Bailey-Kroot-Juurak_Performances-for-Pets-Praesentation)



*Krөөt Juurak* și Alex Bailey performând pentru un motan, 2015.  
Sursa foto: <https://kr66t.wordpress.com/>



*Krөөt Juurak* și Alex Bailey, *Performance for Lumipallo*, 2016, captură foto.  
Sursa foto: <http://www.performancesforpets.net/library/2016/5/7/performance-for-lumipallo>

FROM THE ABSURD THEATRE  
OF **SAMUEL BECKETT**  
TO THE FIGURATIVE  
AESTHETICS  
OF **POP ART CULTURE**

**SIMONA POP**



L.S. Bulandra Municipal Theatre, Bucharest, Romania  
*pop.simona.ada@gmail.com*



**Abstract:** At the core of the Absurd Theatre lie the seeds of postmodernity. This article explains some of the possible features of the absurd that precede the emergence of new movements in Visual Arts. A contemporary reading of Beckett's plays viewed through the lens of pop culture could open new perspectives in approaching the work of this great playwright. An abyss of nothingness and a lack of horizons create the industrialization of the consumer society that postmodern humanity is forced to confront.

The seriality, the cloistered universe of the absurd theatre plays, the promise of an alienated happiness doubled by a decay and a desacralization of the hero-type character, foreshadow the aesthetic of the figurative arts in the pop culture. This cultural movement is represented and illustrated in this article by works of art signed by: Jasper Johns, Dmitri Vrubel, Claes Oldenburg, Arman and Robert Rauschenberg.

**Keywords:** Absurd Theatre, Samuel Beckett, New Realism and Pop Culture Art, Consumerism, Postmodernity and its self-understanding.

**How to cite:** Pop, Simona (2022). 'From the Absurd Theatre of Samuel Beckett to the Figurative Aesthetics of Pop Art Culture', *Concept* 1(24) pp. 128-139.

The premise that neo-dada and pop-art culture are inspired by a series of aesthetic concepts and ideas that were formulated in the drama of the avant-garde theatre of the mid-20th century should come as no surprise, since all new movements are in some way opposed to the previous ones. But it is interesting to follow factually, concretely, how this translation occurred through the critical-valourising method, text and image analysis, which led to the paradigm shift in the visual sphere, starting from the ideas that emerged in the elaboration of the Theatre of the Absurd texts.

Researchers (Emmanuel Jacquart, Stéphane Lupasco etc.) concluded that what the theatre of the absurd proposed as a vision in the context of the 1950s and 1960s was an acceptance of the human condition in the integrity of mystery and the lack of escape from the horizonless universe to which each individual is circumscribed.

What playwrights such as Eugène Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, Arthur Adamov, Jean Genet, Fernando Arrabal, Harold Pinter, or prose writers such as Sławomir Mrożek, Václav Havel, Günter Grass, Max Frisch, Friedrich Dürrenmatt or Peter Weiss, tried to achieve through their creations was precisely this opposition to avant-garde poetics that promoted oneirism, symbolism and attachment to poetic discourse, to texts adapted to the figurative stage, which had the structures of poems.

At the time of its dissemination, the theatre of the absurd was part of the "anti-literature" movement, which was based on an attitude diametrically opposed to that of the avant-garde. The language was revised, liberated from the tutelage of lyricism or alleged realism. Most of the traditional mechanisms used by playwrights before the advent of this type of theatre used to be hidden from

the audience. In the theatre of derision, conventions began to be ostentatiously displayed so that the depth of the grotesque and of the contradictions between the spoken word and the concrete portrayal of the characters became apparent to the spectator.

In the chapter "Experiența Teatrului" ("The Experience of the Theatre"), an integral part of the volume *Note și contranote (Notes and Counter notes)*, Eugène Ionesco expressly asks critics to follow and appreciate this new kind of distancing in a fair way:

The value of theatre lies in thickening the effects [...] One must not hide the strings, but make them even more visible, deliberately obvious, go into the depths of the grotesque, into caricature, beyond the pale irony of the witty drawing-room comedies. Not drawing-room comedy, but farce, extreme parody charge. Humour, yes, but with the means of burlesque. (1992, p. 54)

This revolution of language at the level of conception is translated into directorial terms by the passage from the poetics of the word to that of the concrete metaphor of the scenic image. The poetics of theatre is no longer a poetics of language but becomes intrinsic to the visual plane itself. The archetypal situations depicted are translated through sequential associations, which refer to the experience of each spectator:

The writers of the absurd have demonstrated that the skill of theatre involves not only dealing with external reality, providing an accurate, concrete and photographic reconstruction of real life, but even, more interestingly, considering the vast field of inner reality – the fantasies, dreams, hallucinations, secret desires and fears of humanity. (Esslin, 1970, p. 223)

Thus, the emergence of the individual into the meaningless and orderless external universe in which he has been given to live is the starting point of the deep questioning of the self. This inner, metaphysical imbalance of the characters created by the authors who generated this literary movement is the very term for the *absurd*. In musical language it means "disharmonious", without clearly defined meaning or purpose.

The historical context of the 1960s undoubtedly influenced the emergence of this type of character: condemned to alienation, oppressed by social conventions and unable to communicate with his peers by establishing deep connections, emotional bonds – of friendship, solidarity, altruism. Humanity's disappointments and losses as a result of the Second World War, the nuclear threat, the setting up of the Communist regime and the Cold War have had obvious repercussions in the collective subconscious of humanity. The characters of this theatre, as proposed by Samuel Beckett, Arthur Adamov or Eugène Ionesco, are therefore involuntarily prefigured under these auspices and psycho-social coordinates.

However, in the syntax of the scenic discourse, the characters' maladjustment to the habitat in which they are cloistered is only a distinctive, characterological and reflective element of the spectator's consciousness, not the key to an existential drama or personal identification. The actor who appropriates the absurd character often exposes it, shows it through self-referential comments.

In fact, the concept of the theatre of illusion has been totally reconfigured by absurdist playwrights, mainly because of the importance given to form at the expense of the psychological realism that characterises naturalistic drama. In a certain sense, this attitude is similar to the attempts made by Bertolt Brecht who, by defining the concept of *verfremdungseffekt*<sup>36</sup>, succeeded in liberating theatre from traditional stage narrative and bringing before the spectator the mechanisms on which theatrical illusion finds its foundations. However, while Brechtian theatre aims at morality and social change, the theatre of the absurd works with a poetics of external imagery that can lucidly influence the psychological reality of each individual.

The same disarticulation at the level of scenic discourse, the visual purification of space imposed by the dramaturgical indications and the maladjusted, alienated character, lacking a horizon of salvation, also appears in Samuel Beckett's theatre. An abyss of nothingness singles out Samuel Beckett among authors belonging to the same trend.

Under the auspices of a radical agnosticism, Samuel Beckett uses silence as an existential void in his plays. There is no mystery or transcendental connection behind the words in his texts. The pauses or ellipses precisely indicated by the playwright in his creation have clearly defined purposes. They are not in opposition to dialogue or speech, to stage tirade, but exist only to dose the action or, conversely, to mark its absence.

As many writings and literary exegeses on Samuel Beckett's texts have pointed out, the play *Endgame* is one of the densest dramatic creations of its era for the 20th century theatre. That absolute austerity, the confinement determined by the stage space emptied of furniture, the mechanical play, the lack of ascending development of the main characters, Hamm and Clov – locked in boxed spaces, immobilised and brought into a state of peroration and permanent verbal confrontation – are key elements, defining his theatre. Words cannot be transformed into action, and the idea of going to sea seems to be the only solution

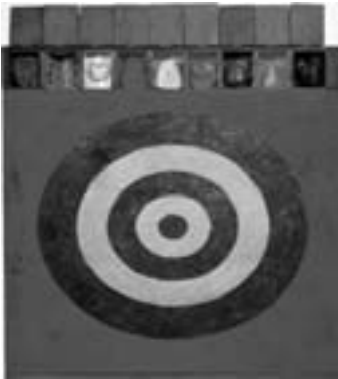
---

<sup>36</sup> A concept first introduced by Bertolt Brecht in his article "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting" (1936), in which he suggests to actors that the purpose of their acting is not to identify the spectator with the characters they are watching, but rather, the purpose of the stage play should be for the spectator to consciously accept or reject the characters' actions

the two protagonists have found at the moment to escape a continuous present, an *illo tempore*, which forces them to stagnate<sup>37</sup>. The pressure of the present, of "a day like any other", leads to the obliteration of the past, of loss in oblivion and alienation. The territory of nothingness and temporal emptiness becomes, in itself, a sign of the impossibility of living. Hamm, Clov, Nagg and Nell become the vessels of their own illusions. Nell's statement, "Nothing is funnier than unhappiness" (Beckett, 2000, p. 39), represents the essence of the desire to escape the cosmos of suffering through humour. This permanently failed attempt becomes visible on the physical plane by throwing and condemning the characters into the dustbin of the theatre and of the world.

The object-characters in *Endgame*, having reached a visible stage of poverty and degradation, can be assimilated to the idea of consumption, of the accumulation in the stage space of souls that have reached exhaustion and alienation. Less well known is the fact that Samuel Beckett collaborated on the set design for the play formed of eight short pieces, *Fizzles*, with the abstract pop expressionist visual artist Jasper Johns.

The work exhibited in 1968 at the São Paulo Art Biennial in 1967, entitled *Target with four faces*, by the American artist Jasper Johns, could be visually equated with the idea of the impossibility of escaping the cloistered world of Beckett's characters. The target is the encrypted message of an act of possible violence, of a threat in representation, but at the same time it is an abstract symbol. The figurative becomes a tool for focusing attention on a visual content that exerts a latent pressure. Like the dialogue between Hamm and Clov:



*Target with four faces – Jasper Johns*

HAMM: Have you not had enough?

CLOV: Yes! (*Pause.*) Of what?

HAMM: Of this... this... thing.

CLOV: I always had. (*Pause.*) Not you?

HAMM (*gloomily*): Then there's no reason for it to change.

CLOV: It may end. (*Pause.*) All life long the same questions, the same answers. (Beckett, 2000, p. 29)

<sup>37</sup> Clear references in the text to this idea: the grain sown by Clov that no longer grows, the waters that from the window appear to have waves of lead, etc.

The concentric circle seriality of Jasper Johns' target generates a lack of progression and vision over time. Although, on the surface, this seriality may represent the essence of a well-determined purpose, the target masks a confusion of expression and logic. The man-object, as well as the lack or invasion of stage space with such anthropomorphic appearances, are oppositions of the same intention introduced by Samuel Beckett in the texts intended for stage and performance versions that can be created on the basis of his dramaturgical work.

The individual whom the poverty of spectacular thought has deeply marked (...) enters right from the beginning into the order, in the service of the established order even though his personal intention could have been totally contrary to this outcome. In essence, he will conform to the language of the spectacle, the only language he is used to: the language he was taught to speak. No doubt he will want to show that he is also hostile to its rhetoric; he will, however, use its syntax. This is one of the most important aspects of the success achieved by dominating the performance. (Debord, 2011, p. 62)

In fact, Jasper Johns's works from the 1970s was characterised by a purity and simplicity of form. Therefore, like Beckett's texts (in which the material of the text is of prime importance), his works were also, at the time of their appearance on the American art market, manifestos of innovation in terms of the materiality of the artistic object and the de-substantialisation of its content.

A phenomenon that characterised the New Realism in painting and pop-art culture was that of poetic recycling of the urban, industrial and consumer reality. Therefore, the object-characters in *Endgame* are symbolically the expression of a world in danger of de-substantialisation. These cloistered characters, who have reached the edge of a world lacking orientation and spiritual content, aesthetically legitimise the consumer society of the 1960s.

The overconsumption and, by extension, the waste of words of Beckett's characters, their loquacity and physical imbalance are drawn from a kind of personal anamnesis. The characters exhaust themselves, seeking and failing themselves at every turn. Through intertextuality an ambiguous relationship is created with that of Shakespearean characters – "My kingdom for a nightman!" (Beckett, 2000, p. 43)<sup>38</sup>. The contribution of new, subsidiary meanings, which rest on iconic artistic formulas, disintegrating them, is for the theatre of the absurd the way to create its antitheatricality, but also the subtle form of exploring new realities. The abandonment of biographical characters and the hints of the existence of a fragment of easily recognisable characters, such as Hamlet, Richard III, accentuates the disintegration of the anecdotal and can be equated in the

38 Alluding to Richard III's famous line, Act. V, scene IV, "My kingdom for a horse!".

avant-garde pop-art movement with the process of mass production that emerged in the visual imaginary and the iconoclasm resulting from the integration of the process of illustration into painting and the figurative arts.

The cancellation of the uniqueness of Beckett's characters through the ostentation or stereotyping of their physical features returns them to the stage of simple animated clichés of emblematic characters, which in the visual arts has degenerated into a simple showcasing: "To create a rift between the visual of the auditorium and the visual of the stage, to make the individual disappear in order to use human material. To create an investigative scene. The human material appears, but it is equal in value to the performance with the object and the decor" (Légere, 1996, p. 117).

The lack of depth and profundity of Beckett's character is doubled by a painful physical infirmity, a premature ageing: a powerless tyrant in a wheelchair, a servant who cannot sit down, etc. Any attempt at illusion, hope or desire, is annihilated by the own image of a grotesque and formless self. Beckett's character is a form emptied of interiority that reacts violently, impulsively, mechanically and betrays its disembodiedness in its deformed physiognomy and disharmonious character. Like photographs touched by the patina of time, Hamm and Clov's projections are well-preserved but decaying:

The strength of the images comes from the fact that they are material realities in themselves, rich repositories of information left behind by the source that generated them, powerful capacities to invert reality precisely because they turn it into a shadow. Images are more real than one could ever suspect. And precisely because they are an unlimited resource, one that cannot be drained by consumerist waste, there is good reason to apply a conservation remedy. (Sontag, 2014, p. 186)

Parallels of the visual planes in *Endgame* with well-known works by leading exponents of pop-art culture can also be imagined by reference to the content of the most tender, endearing and poetic moment in the fabric of the Beckettian text, namely the scene in which the two old men, Nagg and Nell, try to kiss, but the two garbage crates in which they are forced to live prevent their physical proximity:

NELL: What is it, my pet? (*Pause.*) Time for love?

NAGG: Were you asleep?

NELL: Oh no!

NAGG: Kiss me.

NELL: We can't.

NAGG: Try. (*Their heads strain towards each other, fail to meet, fall apart again.*)

NELL: Why this farce, day after day? (Beckett, 2000, p. 36)

The aspiration for love and happiness is not allowed to the two old men, and their attempts, although they take place daily, fail every time. A manifesto of the kiss in pop-art culture is Russian artist Dmitry Vruble's well-known work on Berlin's East Wall, *My God, Help Me to Survive This Deadly Love*, often referred to as *The Fraternal Kiss*.



*Fraternal Kiss – Dmitry Vruble*



*Giant Fagends – Claes Oldenburg*

This graffiti reproduces the historic moment of the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the formation of the German Democratic Republic in 1979. The kiss between the two leading political figures of the time: Leonid Brezhnev and Eric Honecker, became a source of media scandal at the time of its creation. As a representative of mass culture, Dmitri Vruble clearly wanted to reproduce such a moment in the centre of a cosmopolitan city like Berlin. In Samuel Beckett's case, the antiquated existentialism of his theatre is betrayed by the repetitiveness and failure of the kiss.

The idea of the trashcans-characters, Nagg and Nell, the object that has become an integral part of the character's physical body to the point of confusion and metamorphosis with it, can make reference to the cigarette butts piled up in the ashtray imagined by Claes Oldenburg, *Giant Fagends* (1967). The progressive extinction of a world takes place through the degradation of matter. The accumulation of objects makes it possible for them to coexist only through exclusion, like Beckett's characters:

CLOV: Why do you keep me?

HAMM: There's no one else.

CLOV: There's nowhere else. (*Pause*)

HAMM: You're leaving me all the same.

CLOV: I'm trying. (Beckett, 2000, p. 30)





*Infinity of Typewriters + Infinity of Monkeys + Infinity of Time = Hamlet (Arman)*

Hamm's nihilism cannot be authentic precisely because it is repetitive. Seriality is inevitable – "HAMM: The end is in the beginning and yet you go on" (Beckett, 2000, p. 78). Moving forward is only an illusion, and the individual undergoes a continuous and automatic recycling. Happiness in Beckett's texts is similar to that in contemporary, industrialised society, it is confused with the asymptomatic nature of collective joy. This phenomenon has been defined by Abraham Moles as the *absence of alienation*. In his view, all objects that appear as stereotypes in works of art are messengers of kitsch, of alienation and, at the same time, tributes to the idea of general happiness.

If kitsch is not art, it is at least the aesthetic mode of everyday life, which refuses transcendence and settles in the sphere of the majority, in the middle ground, in the most likely system of distribution. Kitsch, we could say, is like happiness, we need it every day. (Moles, 1980, p. 218)

In *Endgame*, the idea of infinity arises because of the suspension in a time that flows repetitively, not linearly. A message of such temporal suspension and the alienation caused by it can be seen in Arman's work *Infinity of Typewriters + Infinity of Monkeys + Infinity of Time = Hamlet* (1962) in which an accumulation of typewriters inside a wooden box are immortalised. In the original, British



version of the text, Hamm's line, "Our revels now are ended" (Becket, 2006, p. 93), is an element of intertextuality that refers to Prospero's monologue in W. Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in Act IV, Scene I (1958, p. 113). Interestingly, the Romanian translations of Hamm's line allude to the motif of sleep and dream, the ontological argument for the emergence of theatre.

In fact, the very name of the character Hamm has been interpreted by critics as an element reminiscent of the Hamletian hero.

Hamm, the character who was the hardest for Beckett to create – in his most difficult play, on which he worked exhausted of powers for a long time – is a hero, even if his author wanted him to be the exact opposite. Hamm has the property of characters that, like Hamlet, defeat their author. Beckett put so much into him – quotes, thoughts, ideas, sorrows, doubt, fear, horror, malice, bitterness – that he ended up creating a monster in a wheelchair who made up for it in the same way Hamlet made up for it against Shakespeare. (Saiu, 2009, pp. 48-49)

So, just as Arman desacralises the object, Beckett adopts the same procedure with the character. He immortalises it, evoking its decay. The practice of destroying the legendary, heroic, iconic aura of a character/object aims to nullify its value, to destroy it.

The spectator, like the admirer of a work of art, is ultimately a consumer who receives his status in relation to the work he receives. The allegory of the accumulation of objects, the deconstructions and cut-outs that Arman uses as working procedures, represents a revolt against mass consumption, the materialistic dimension to which the life of the individual in modern society is in danger of being limited.

In Samuel Beckett's absurd world nothing is what it seems. There is a distortion of voices coming out of Hamm.

Hamm is an imperfect totality of the Beckettian universe. A character with a body like a ruin, but with the vocation of an author. His biography retraces the trajectory of human history and retains the shattering fiascos of art, reason and religion. The play is not a parable, but Hamm is. (Saiu, 2009, p. 36)

Hamm's shaken and disjointed interiority can be likened to the work *Port of Entry* (1999) by the American-born artist Robert Rauschenberg. The eclecticism of the work, due to the distorted use of photographs and seemingly incompatible techniques, such as superimposing media photographs with digital technology or simple ink in a collage version, gives it an encrypted structure. Art critic Richard Lacayo says: "every time you see anyone doing anything that isn't supposed to be art—and calling it art—Rauschenberg is there" (in Sterrett and Roberts, 2009). The vitality and theatricality of Hamm's character come from the same kind of paradoxical vibe. The desire to short-circuit the narrative brings new meaning and becomes in itself a tool.



*Robert Rauschenberg – Port of Entry*

Samuel Beckett's anti-mimetic theatre is a universe lived in the minds and souls of the characters. A dilated image of the author's own consciousness. Philosophical speculations on the scale of Jean Paul Sartre's existentialism can be glimpsed in Hamm's actions. One example is the action of groping the walls and the realisation that "Beyond is the... other hell" (Beckett, 2000, p. 45) which may refer to the line in Jean Paul Sartre's *No Exit* "Hell is other people" (Sartre, 2007, p. 142). This new figurative stage of Samuel Beckett's dramatic writing is translated in theatrical key by the author's lack of identification with his characters. Beckett has the profound dimension of the work born on the plane of his imagination, but visually translated in an extremely concrete and purged way in form.

There is something unsettling in this Beckettian projection of an art of non-expression. And at the same time something revealing about Samuel Beckett's own intention as an artist. An artist condemned to expression like the existentialist man condemned to freedom. An artist incapable of expressing himself, aware of this incapacity and who, in endless monologues, does nothing but express. Beckett's literature is such an expression of the inability to express. (Balotă, 1971, p. 497)

In conclusion, perhaps what neo-dada and pop-art culture, through visual artists such as Jasper Johns, Dmitri Vrubel, Claes Oldenburg, Arman or Robert Rauschenberg, manages to bring back to the present is a glimpse of the absurd universe of Beckettian theatre. The mortification of the present event by the endless continuum becomes unbearable. Yet it manages to move forward. The end of the play could have ended with the first line or not... there's nothing to be done...

**References:**

1. Balotă, Nicolae (1971). *Lupta cu absurdul*. Bucharest: Univers.
2. Beckett, Samuel (2006). *The Complete Dramatic Works*. London: Faber and Faber.
3. Beckett, Samuel (2000). *Sfârșit de Partidă*. Cluj: Puck, Biblioteca Apostrof.
4. Esslin, Martin (1970). *Brief Chronicles. Essays on Modern Theatre*. London: Maurice Temple Smith.
5. Debord, Guy (2011). *Comentarii asupra societății spectacolului*. Bucharest: Rao.
6. Ionesco, Eugène (1992). *Note și contranote*. Bucharest: Humanitas.
7. Lègere, Fernand (1996). *Fonctions de la peinture*. Paris: Gallimard.
8. Moles, Abraham (1980). *Psibologia Kitsch-ului: Arta fericirii*. Bucharest: Meridiane.
9. Saiu, Octavian (2009). *Beckett. Pur și simplu*. Vol. II. Bucharest: Paideia.
10. Sartre, Jean Paul (2007). *Cu ușile închise*. Bucharest: Rao.
11. Shakespeare, William (1958). *Furtuna*. Bucharest: ESPLA.
12. Sontag, Susan (2014). *Despre fotografie*. Bucharest: Vellant.

**Online references:**

4. Sterrett, J., Roberts, S. (2009). *One on One: Jill Sterrett on Robert Rauschenberg*, sfmoma.org [Online]. Available at: <https://openspace.sfmoma.org/2009/08/sterrett-on-rauschenberg> (Accessed: 02 December 2022)

**Simona Pop** is a doctoral student at the Lucian Blaga University in Sibiu, actress of the L.S. Bulandra Municipal Theatre in Bucharest and the "Sică Alexandrescu" Theatre in Brașov. A graduate of the Performance, Multimedia, Society (SMS) MA within the Excellence Center in Image Study of the University of Bucharest, Simona is interested in approaching the theatrical imaginary from a postmodern deconstructive perspective and is currently working on her doctoral thesis entitled *Paradigms of Modern Theatre – From Surrealism to the Image Theatre – Perspective on a Theatre of the Future*.

# *I. RESEARCH*

## THEATRICAL PEDAGOGY

# **MONTESORI, FREINET ȘI JOCURILE TEATRALE LA PACIENȚII CU DEMENTĂ. STUDIU DE CAZ**

**MANUELA-FLORINA HOZOC**

University of Bucharest, Romania  
*hozoc.rd.manuela-florina.m20@sfpe.unibuc.ro*

**Abstract:** Dementia does not only affect the individual, but also has an impact on his family, on the community to which he belongs. Drug therapy is necessary, but not enough. Socialization, involvement in activities adapted to the deficit and concerns of the patient lead to increased self-esteem. The case study tracked the effects of Montessori activities, Freinet techniques, and theatrical games on temporospatial orientation, attention, memory, and behaviour in a neurodegenerative disordered patient. The paper is the starting point for future research.

**Keywords:** patients with dementia, temporo-spatial disorientation, behavioural disorders, Montessori pedagogy, Freinet techniques, theatre techniques, theatre games, role play, case study.

**How to cite:** Hozoc, Florina (2022). 'Montessori, Freinet și jocurile teatrale la pacienții cu demență. Studiu de caz', *Concept* 1(24)/2022, pp. 141-166.

„Au continuat să trăiască astfel într-o lume fugară, deocamdată ținută în cuvinte, dar care n-avea să întârzie să le scape fără întoarcere de îndată ce vor fi uitat însuși înțelesul scrierii.”

*Un veac de singurătate* – Gabriel Garcia Marquez

Uitarea este considerată firească în cazul vârstnicilor, acesta fiind și motivul pentru care pacienții cu demență sunt diagnosticați tardiv, fiind aduși către terapie de familie după un episod de dezorientare temporo-spațială sau tulburări comportamentale.

OMS susține că în întreaga lume există peste 55 de milioane de pacienți cu demență și în fiecare an mai sunt diagnosticate încă 10 milioane de cazuri noi. „Demența are implicații sociale și economice semnificative în ceea ce privește costurile directe de îngrijire medicală și socială și costurile îngrijirii informale.” (WHO, 2021) Pentru că numărul pacienților cu demență este în creștere, așa cum susține OMS, putem afirma că aceasta nu este doar o problemă medicală, ci are impact și asupra familiilor acestora, având ecou în comunitatea din care fac parte și implicit asupra societății.

Ținând cont de toate acestea, s-a considerat oportună demararea unei cercetări privind intervenția pedagogică ca metodă adjuvantă în tratamentul pacienților cu demență.

Pornind de la principiul centrării pe copil și nevoile acestuia, Asociația Internațională Montessori a creat în 2014 un grup consultativ destinat pacienților vârstnici, având ca scop creșterea autonomiei, oferirea sentimentului de utilitate și a respectului de sine.

În acest sens, de exemplu, Hella Klein arăta într-un mod impresionant cum materialele convenționale dezvoltate pentru copii pot fi prelucrate sau modificate și prezentate astfel încât chiar și bătrânii care suferă de demență și/sau deficiențe motorii să lucreze bine cu ele, să aibă experiența de autoeficacitate și să aibă un sentiment de realizare. (Schumacher, 2019, p. 104)

Pentru cercetarea de față, au fost alese activitățile cu carduri și o activitate imaginată pe aceste principii.

În pedagogia Freinet, care se bazează pe încredere, sprijin și cooperare, fiind de asemenea dezvoltată autonomia, una dintre tehnicile care poate fi utilizată și în activitatea vârstnicilor o reprezintă tehnica jurnalului sub forma unei corespondențe cu familia. În condițiile vârstnicilor cu demență aflați în centre de specialitate se pot crea atât gazeta, cât și ziarul grupului.

Arta teatrală poate ameliora încrederea de sine, poate îmbunătăți relațiile dintre pacienți și îngrijitorii acestora, dar și funcțiile cognitive, așa cum a fost demonstrat în unele studii desfășurate în SUA, UK, Suedia. Pe de altă parte, există opinii medicale care susțin că, de fapt, în cazul pacienților cu demență se recurge la imaginație prin practicarea jocurilor de improvizație. În cazul de față, la finalul cercetării, pacienta implicată a avut o calitate a vieții mai bună, deoarece, prin intermediul jocurilor de improvizație, și-a învins anxietatea și a socializat.

## **Cadrul teoretic. Concepte de bază**

### ***Concepte de bază privind demența***

Criteriile de diagnostic pentru tulburarea neurocognitivă majoră conform DSM V-TM includ:

- A. Evidența unui declin cognitiv semnificativ față de un nivel anterior de performanță în una sau mai multe domenii cognitive (atenție complexă, funcție executivă, învățare și memorare, perceptual-motor sau cogniție socială) bazată pe:
  1. Îngrijorări ale persoanei, ale unui informator informat sau ale clinicianului care constată că este un declin cognitiv semnificativ al funcției cognitive; și
  2. O afectare substanțială în performanța cognitivă, de preferat de documentat prin testare neuropsihologică standardizată sau, în absența sa, o altă evaluare clinică cuantificabilă.
- B. Deficitele cognitive interferează cu independența din activitățile zilnice (minim, necesită asistență în instrumentarea complexă a activităților zilnice, cum ar fi plata facturilor sau administrarea medicației).
- C. Deficitele cognitive nu apar exclusiv în contextul deliriumului.
- D. Deficitele cognitive nu pot fi mai bine explicate de o altă tulburare mentală (de exemplu tulburarea depresivă majoră, schizofrenia).

Se specifică natura procesului degenerativ.

În diagnosticare, mai este necesară specificarea dacă este cu sau fără tulburări comportamentale, respectiv cu simptome psihotice, agitație, apatie sau altele. Este notată și severitatea ușoară (dificultăți în instrumentarea activităților zilnice – activități casnice, utilizarea banilor), moderată (dificultăți în activitățile zilnice de bază – mâncatul, îmbrăcatul) și severă, în care pacientul e complet dependent.

În cazul tulburării cognitive ușoare, deficiturile cognitive nu interferează cu capacitatea de independență în activitățile zilnice, acestea fiind realizate prin strategii compensatorii sau cu un efort substanțial din partea subiectului.

Evoluția unui pacient cu demență este diferită, pe de o parte în funcție de tipul acesteia, iar pe de altă parte pentru că fiecare persoană are propriul bagaj genetic, comorbidități medicale, educație, nivel socioeconomic și mediu familial specifice. Principalele simptome sunt dezorientarea temporală și spațială, uitarea substantivelor proprii, apoi a celor comune, dificultăți în denumirea persoanelor, obiectelor uzuale, nerecunoașterea facială, pierderea abilităților în utilizarea telefonului, a telecomenzii, afirmații sau discursuri repetitive, tulburări de comportament sau retragere socială. Pe măsură ce boala avansează, se pot asocia halucinații, idei delirante, comportament disruptiv, dificultăți în păstrarea autonomiei sau pierderea acesteia.

De ce unii pacienți dezvoltă un declin cognitiv mai ușor? Se pare că răspunsul ar fi dat de rezerva cognitivă. „Adică, în ciuda disfuncției neuronale, indivizii cu niveluri mai mari de rezervă cognitivă pot să nu prezinte simptome comportamentale de demență la fel de devreme sau la fel de semnificativ ca cei cu rezervă cognitivă mai mică.” (Kempler și Goral, 2008) Aceasta pare să fie influențată de activitățile vârstnicilor.

Rezerva cerebrală este un concept cantitativ. S-a sugerat că ar reprezenta o rezervă, „creierul putând tolera pur și simplu mai multe patologii înainte de a atinge un prag critic pentru apariția simptomelor clinice” (Stern, 2012).

Când patologia AD este ușoară, indivizii cu niveluri mai scăzute de rezervă ar putea părea deja a fi clinic demenț, în timp ce cei cu rezervă mai mare pot părea clinic normali. La niveluri mai înalte de patologie, ambele grupuri ar putea părea a fi clinic demenț. Totuși, cei cu rezervă mai mare vor părea a fi mai puțin severi din punct de vedere clinic decât cei cu rezervă mai mică. (Stern, 2012)

În funcție de natura procesului degenerativ, pacienții pot beneficia de medicație specifică. De exemplu, în cazul celor cu boală Alzheimer – de inhibitorii de colinesterază (Donepezil, Rivastigmina, Galantamina) și antagonistul NMDARs (Memantina). În afara tratamentului medicamentos, ar fi util ca acești bolnavi să beneficieze de un stil de viață sănătos, de terapie ocupațională sau de alte forme de terapie care să îi stimuleze cognitiv și emoțional.



### ***Pedagogia Montessori***

Pornind de la ideea autonomiei, această pedagogie centrată pe nevoile copilului încurajează adaptarea și respectarea regulilor comunității. „Pentru Maria Montessori, libertatea devine o condiție și o metodă de formare. În ființa umană – scrie pedagogul invocat – zace o pornire naturală către creștere, pentru autotransformare.” (Cucos, 2017, p. 220)

Principiile pedagogiei Montessori permit implicarea persoanei în activitate. Și în cazul vârstnicului, activitatea trebuie să aibă un sens pentru a-i trezi interesul. Aceasta presupune să-i cunoaștem istoricul, educația, preocupările. Dacă ne îndreptăm atenția doar asupra problemelor și deficiențelor lui, pacientul nu va progresa. Dimpotrivă, este necesară focusarea pe capacitățile pe care le are. Nu impunem activitatea, ci îl abordăm politicos, invitându-l. În situația în care acesta refuză, nu insistăm, îi respectăm răspunsul și îl întrebăm dacă preferă o altă activitate, un alt domeniu. La introducerea unui material nou, încercăm să-i stărnim curiozitatea, fără a fi insistenți. Posibilitatea de a alege îi oferă oportunitatea creșterii stimei de sine.

Există diverse cercetări privind utilizarea mâinilor, gestică, forța de prindere, mâna dominantă și memoria. Asocierea gesturilor cu vorbirea crește eficiența celei din urmă ca instrument de amintire. Pe de altă parte, gesturile folosite în realizarea acțiunii îmbunătățesc memoria (Wagner Cook, KuangYi Yip, și Goldin-Meadow, 2010). Coordonarea ochi-mână influențează toate activitățile noastre zilnice, fiind implicate arii corticale frontale și parietale. Legăturile între cele din urmă și zona occipitală dorso-laterală sunt răspunzătoare de atenția vizuală.

Spațiul de lucru este recomandat să fie delimitat, iar mediul în care se desfășoară activitățile să fie liniștit, fără a distrage subiecții.

### ***Tehnicile Freinet***

Tehnica textului liber a fost prima introdusă de către Celestine Freinet. Pedagogul utiliza termenul de tehnici și nu acela de metode, deoarece considera că tehnicile evoluează. Textul liber trece printr-un veritabil proces până a ajunge în ziarul școlii care reflectă esența acestei pedagogii: descoperire, libertate creatoare, învățare și munca în echipă (cooperarea).

Textul liber este tipărit și împărțit, „socializat”, în timp ce activitatea de scriere uzuală nu va ieși niciodată din caietul elevului. Profesorul își pierde rolul celui care dă instrucțiuni, oferind copilului statutul de autor și dându-i șansa spre conștientizarea unei puteri. Textul liber poate fi liber doar în măsura în care există și alte situații de scriere în clasă cum ar fi proiecte individuale sau colective, scrieri științifice sau în ateliere de scriere. Important este să apară dorința de a scrie și nu neapărat aceea de a face ceva. Pentru aceasta este necesară provocarea

unor situații, evenimente, ieșiri care să determine nevoia de a comunica prin scriere, astfel informațiile, experiențele putând ajunge la cât mai multe persoane (Chabrun, 2021).

Pornind de la principiul tatonării experimentale din pedagogia Freinet, și în cazul vârstnicilor este nevoie de aceeași „simplitate” și dorință de a descoperi reminiscentele domeniilor de interes. În cazul demențelor, pacienții își pierd dorința de a se mai implica în activități care înainte le făceau plăcere, devin dezinteresați, retrăgându-se treptat din acestea. Este nevoie de o bună cunoaștere a acestora, a istoricului lor, astfel încât să fie ajutați, observație făcută și în cercetarea de față în care s-a constatat că pacienta își dorea să se implice în domenii artistice (goblen). Acordarea acestei libertăți a generat plăcere în cazul pacientei care a mai simțit nevoia de „ghidare”, alegând astfel teme din viața curentă. Teamă de a nu greși, de a nu se face de râs în fața celorlalți adulți, a fost înlăturată prin validare permanentă. Corectarea textelor nu a fost făcută, tocmai pentru a nu o descuraja. La fel ca în pedagogia Freinet, pacienta nu au fost lăsată să repete stereotip aceleași experiențe, pentru că aceasta nu ar fi condus la un progres. Nu s-a intervenit autoritar, ci dirijat, facilitând punți de legătură între teme știute și unele noi. Este posibil ca, în condiții normale, dacă cercetarea noastră s-ar fi desfășurat fără distanțare socială și fără necesitatea unor restricții, dacă s-ar fi putut organiza activități de grup, pacienții să se fi stimulat și susținut reciproc, cooperând și creând astfel atmosfera unei clase Freinet.

Scrisul de mână este o funcție cognitivă complexă care ne dezvoltă memoria, fiind implicate zone ale ambelor emisfere cerebrale, hipocamp, sistem limbic, trunchi cerebral, cerebel, măduva spinării. Unele studii arată că în boala Alzheimer, tulburările de exprimare scrisă ar fi generate de două tipuri de mecanisme, unele centrale – disfuncții la nivelul intersecției parieto-temporale stângi și altele periferice – ce implică perturbări ale regiunilor temporale și frontale ale ambelor emisfere (Eusctache și Lambert, 1996).

Luarea deciziilor în pedagogia Freinet se face prin intermediul consiliului de clasă, la care profesorul trebuie să se conformeze. În cazul aplicării acestor tehnici în cămine de vârstnici se poate crea un asemenea consiliu, acordând astfel importanță părerii acestora în alegerea materialelor. Respectându-se acest principiu și în cercetarea de față, pacienta a decis ce lucrări să prezinte.

În cercetarea actuală au fost adaptate jurnalul școlar la jurnalul pacientului, respectiv ziarul școlar la „Revista mea”.

### ***Jocurile teatrale***

Jocul nu înseamnă joacă, presupune reguli, convenție colectivă, dar și feedback care poate conduce la modificarea unor atitudini și comportamente. Fără a face apel la critică, oferind libertatea totală de exprimare, declanșează spontaneitate, lăsând să cadă barierele propriului Eu.

Jocurile reprezintă un bun prilej de a observa persoana, de a-i analiza reacțiile, comportamentul. După cum preciza Viola Spolin, jocurile trebuie adaptate experienței de viață a persoanei pe care avem datoria să o recunoaștem. Doar așa putem face prezentarea exercițiilor, modul în care adresăm întrebări și oferim probleme spre rezolvare. Așa cum scrie Neva L. Boyd: „Ca și teatrul adevărat, jocul elimină ceea ce e irelevant și aduce evenimentele unei secvențe la o formă atât de simplificată, de condensată, ce concentrează în timp și spațiu esența experienței de viață” (în Spolin, 2014, p. 117).

Tehnicile teatrale nu sunt instrumente rigide. Ele se pot adapta, importantă fiind comunicarea. Viola Spolin afirmă că „tehnicele teatrului, sunt de fapt, tehnici ale comunicării” (2014, p. 24). Ele constau în jocuri și exerciții ce mobilizează expresia corporală și toate procesele psihice. Tehnicile teatrale includ exerciții de respirație, de dicție, jocuri ce antrenează atenția, memoria, imaginația, respectiv jocul de rol, de improvizație și jocul dramatic.

McConachie a studiat importanța neuronilor oglindă în relația actori-spectatori. Acești neuroni sunt responsabili de transmiterea emoțiilor pozitive și negative.

Descoperirea neuronilor oglindă a avut un efect profund asupra domeniului cogniției sociale. Există acum dovezi că neuronii oglindă sunt prezenți în tot sistemul motor, inclusiv cortexul premotor ventral și dorsal și cortexul motor primar, precum și în diferite regiuni ale cortexului parietal. Rolul/rolurile funcțional(e) al neuronilor oglindă și dacă neuronii oglindă apar ca urmare a unei adaptări funcționale și/sau a învățării asociative în timpul dezvoltării sunt întrebări importante care rămân încă de rezolvat. Răspunzând la aceste întrebări, va trebui să știm mai multe despre conectivitatea neuronilor oglindă și biologia lor comparativă la diferite specii. (Kilner și Lemon, 2013)

Alte studii imagistice au arătat o activare simultană a acestor tipuri de neuroni cu cei din sistemul limbic și insulă în timpul imitării emoțiilor (De Bellis, 2020).

Teatrul ca tehnică de intervenție psihologică răspunde psihologiei jungiene (conștientizarea propriilor conflicte de sine), celei comportamentale cognitive (crearea de sens, memorie, creativitate) și umaniste (permiterea sinelui în rezolvarea de situații noi, pe care individul nu le-a experimentat). Teatrul poate fi aplicat ca tehnică de intervenție și jocul teatral ca instrument în ameliorarea unor simptome ale demenței, cum ar fi scăderea atenției, a memoriei de fixare, diminuarea comunicării, retragerea socială, anxietatea.

### ***Jocurile teatrale în demență***

Persoanele cu demență pot suferi de apatie, respectiv de lipsă de interes pentru ceea ce se întâmplă în jurul lor, nu comunică, nu interacționează. Chiar dacă în jur sunt persoane dragi, membri ai familiei, lipsa interesului pentru comunicare alterează și mai mult funcțiile cognitive. Cei cu forme ușoare, mai puțin dependenți, pot fi anxioși, trăind cu teama de a nu greși, a nu se rătăci sau pot fi depresivi, conștienți fiind de deficitul cognitiv, preocupați de evoluția bolii și lipsiți de expectanțe.

În cazul pacienților cu demență ar trebui să fie luate în considerare următoarele aspecte: grupul creat să fie format din maximum 6-7 membri, necesitatea unei persoane pregătite să ajute persoanele cu dificultăți motorii, dar care să și fie un bun observator al procesului, cum reacționează fiecare membru, dacă are nevoie de repetarea indicațiilor, să fie stabilite clar obiectivele terapeutului, pacientului și asistentului, să se țină cont de gradul de severitate al bolii și de problemele individuale, instrucțiunile legate de locul de desfășurare să fie clare, este recomandabil ca întâlnirea să se organizeze după micul dejun (nu dimineața devreme), să fie păstrat același spațiu, respectiv aceeași oră de 1-2 ori/săptămână. Pentru cazurile ușoare și moderate, fără comorbidități severe, se poate începe cu exerciții fizice pentru a le mobiliza, jocuri ce vizează orientarea lor temporală, relaționarea – de exemplu, să facă cunoștință într-un alt mod, să-și exprime experiența personală și creativitatea și, nu în ultimul rând, spiritualitatea. Pentru cazurile dependente de un însoțitor, instrucțiunile trebuie să fie simple, exercițiile și jocurile mai concrete. În cazul pacienților cu demență ar fi recomandat să se păstreze o ordine, primele fiind exercițiile de personificare, urmate de utilizarea obiectelor și abia în final jocul de rol și improvizația (Lee și Adams, 2011).

Din dorința de a evalua aceste rezultate, în 2008 Dalia Gottlieb-Tanaka și Hilary Lee au creat scala CEEA – Creative Expressive Abilities Assessment. Ea indică schimbările care se produc în abilitățile pacienților cu demență care participă la diverse programe artistice, nu doar la cele de teatru.

„Programele care încorporează tehnici de improvizație se bazează pe punctele forte rămase și pun accent pe imaginație, mai degrabă decât pe memorie”, spune Daniel C. Potts, MD, FAAN, neurolog curant la Centrul Medical Tuscaloosa VA din Alabama. Participanții tind să fie mai implicați și mai puțin apatici, cu mai puține tulburări de comportament, spune el. „Programele de improvizație pot construi relații și comunitate în timp ce rescriu «narațiunea tragediei» a demenței.” (Lehman, 2019)

Metoda Veder originală sub forma teatrului de sufragerie jucată de actori a fost dezvoltată în 2007 și a contribuit la ameliorarea calității vieții pacienților cu demență din centrele de îngrijire. Rememorarea amintirilor are un rol important,

deoarece se simt din nou confortabil, se regăsesc pe ei înșiși. Acești pacienți păstrează memoria de lungă durată o perioadă mai lungă, iar abordarea lor cu poezii, cântece, istorisiri din perioada în care erau mai tineri pare să-i ajute și în creșterea stimei de sine. Metoda se bazează pe contact și coordonare unu la unu. Metoda de contact Veder combină reminiscența, programarea neuro-lingvistică, validarea cu comunicarea teatrală, muzicală și poetică (Veder, 2015).

UNATC „I.L. Caragiale” din București a demarat proiectul STAD<sup>39</sup> – *Social Transmission of Cognitive and Emotional States in the Care of Alzheimer’s Disease Patients*, derulat de centrul CINETic (sub coordonarea conf. univ. dr. Alexandru Berceanu) investigând modul în care interacțiunile sociale repetate și amintirile autobiografice pot ameliora memoria și starea pacientului cu demență Alzheimer.

În cercetarea de față, alegerea jocurilor teatrale a ținut cont de ipotezele lucrării.

Ajungând la memorie, am descoperit o extremă și formidabilă pierdere a memoriei recente – astfel încât orice i se spunea, i se arăta sau i se dădea, putea uita în câteva secunde. Mi-am pus ceasul, cravata și ochelarii pe birou, le-am acoperit și i-am cerut să le țină minte. Apoi, după ce am pălăvrăgit vreun minut, l-am întrebat ce anume acoperisem. Nu și-a amintit nici unul din obiecte și nici măcar că-i cerusem să le țină minte. Am repetat testul, punându-l de această dată să scrie numele celor trei obiecte, a uitat iarăși și când i-am arătat hârtia cu scrisul lui pe ea, a rămas uluit și a zis că nu-și amintea să fi scris ceva, deși a recunoscut că era scrisul lui, apoi a prins un „ecou” slab al faptului că scrisese ceva. (Sacks, 2021, p. 48)

Au fost selectate ca instrumente două tehnici teatrale diferite:

- S-au utilizat *jocurile teatrale* – „Tava cu obiecte”, „Cutia cu amintiri”, „Oglinda” și
- *Jocul de rol*.

Evaluările au fost făcute la finalul fiecărui joc, fără a critica, de către ambii participanți: subiect și investigator. Scopul acestora a fost de a avea un feedback constructiv, menit să rezolve problemele care au existat și de a elimina teama de a greși a jucătorilor.

Activitățile au fost realizate într-un climat prietenos, liniștit, astfel încât comunicarea să fie cât mai autentică.

39 STAD – Contagiunea socială a stărilor cognitive și emoționale în procesul de îngrijire a pacienților cu Alzheimer, EEA-RO-NO-2018-0606 (Contract Nr. 7, 31 mai 2019) derulat de UNATC „I.L. Caragiale” și Kavli Institute for System Neuroscience, NTNU, Trondheim, Norvegia. Director de proiect: conf. univ. dr. Alexandru Berceanu (<https://www.stadproject.eu/team/>) (<https://cinetic.arts.ro/en/met-2/>) și MD/PhD Ioana Carcea ([www.carcealab.com](http://www.carcealab.com)).

## **Metodologia cercetării**

### **Tipul cercetării**

Cercetarea a fost experimentală. S-au urmărit cu atenție efectele terapeutice ale aplicării unor elemente din pedagogiile Montessori și Freinet, dar și ale jocurilor teatrale la o pacientă cu demență formă ușoară spre moderată.

### **Designul cercetării**

#### ***Scopul și obiectivele cercetării***

##### **Scopul cercetării**

Această cercetare de caz își propune să investigheze influența unor activități Montessori, Freinet și a jocurilor teatrale asupra funcțiilor cognitive ale unui subiect cu demență formă ușoară și în ce măsură acestea ar putea fi adaptate unor asemenea pacienți.

##### **Obiectiv general și obiective specifice**

Cercetarea are ca obiectiv general să determine dacă utilizarea metodelor Montessori, Freinet și a jocurilor teatrale contribuie la ameliorarea funcțiilor cognitive ale unei paciente cu demență, să faciliteze interacțiunea socială contribuind la diminuarea deficitului, iar ca obiective specifice să determine dacă acestea au impact și în ceea ce privește orientarea temporo-spațială, încrederea în sine, autonomia, să identifice factorii care pot influența rezultatele, să identifice care din aceste metode sunt mai ușor de implementat atât în familie, cât și în unități medicale ambulatorii, precum și măsura în care se pot dezvolta programe de activitate în afara terapierii ocupaționale care să includă elemente din alternativele pedagogice la această categorie de pacienți.

#### ***Ipotezele cercetării***

**Ipoteza 1** Presupunem că utilizarea unor metode și tehnici Montessori, Freinet și a jocurilor teatrale contribuie la ameliorarea funcțiilor cognitive ale pacienților cu demență în forme ușoare și moderate.

**Ipoteza 2** Presupunem că există diferențe semnificative privind autonomia, orientarea temporo-spațială și relațiile interpersonale înainte și după aplicarea activităților și jocurilor teatrale.

### ***Strategia cercetării***

#### *Locul desfășurării*

Locul de desfășurare a fost cabinetul medical în care se acordă consultații, în București. Mediul a fost liniștit, prietenos, confortabil, menit ca activitatea clinică să poată decurge în cele mai bune condiții, fără a distraga subiectul. Consultațiile s-au acordat pe bază de programare, tocmai pentru a respecta timpul necesar pentru fiecare pacient și a respecta normele impuse în condiții de pandemie Covid-19.

#### *Perioada de cercetare*

Cercetarea s-a desfășurat pe parcursul a 24 de săptămâni, instrumentele fiind aplicate timp de 20 de săptămâni.

### ***Alegerea cazului, argumentări și explicații***

Criteriile de alegere a cazului au fost:

1. Subiect indiferent de vârstă și sex.
2. Subiect deplasabil.
3. Subiect diagnosticat cu demență formă ușoară sau moderată conform criteriilor de diagnostic DSM V TR.
4. Subiect evaluat psihiatric și psihologic.
5. Subiect care să poată face dovada unui istoric medical, incluzând bilete de externare, analize de laborator, examen cranian computer tomograf sau rezonanță magnetică nucleară.
6. Subiect școlarizat, pentru acuratețea evaluărilor.
7. Subiect care are în preajmă cel puțin un membru al familiei sau un însoțitor.
8. Subiect care nu beneficiază de terapie ocupațională.
9. Subiect care manifestă complianță.
10. Subiect care se poate prezenta periodic pentru reevaluare clinică și monitorizare.

### ***Obținerea consimțământul informat***

Pacienta a semnat consimțământul informat în care este specificat faptul că datele de identificare sunt strict confidențiale.

## DESCRIEREA CAZULUI



**SEX:** feminin

**VÂRSTA:** 82 ani

**STATUS ACTUAL:** văduvă

**LOCUIEȘTE:** singură, dar are o persoană de companie care vine zilnic.

Nepotul locuiește în apropiere.

**STUDII:** postliceale

**DOMENII DE INTERES:** beletristică, lucrează goblen.

**ANTECEDENTE PERSONALE FIZIOLOGICE:** pensionată la limită de vârstă.

**ANTECEDENTE PERSONALE PATOLOGICE:** traumatism cranio-celebral (2016), hematom cerebral operat (2016), fibrilație atrială, boală cardiacă ischemică, hipertensiune arterială, insuficiență cardiacă.

**ANTECEDENTE HEREDOCOLATERALE:** nesemnificative.

**EVENIMENTE RECENTE SEMNIFICATIVE:** pierderea soțului în urmă cu doi ani.

**MEDICAȚIE PENTRU ALTE AFECȚIUNI:** specifice comorbidităților, inclusiv anticoagulant.

**CT/RMN CEREBRAL:** câteva minuscule zone hipodense, ovalare, net conturate, situate în nucleii bazali bilateral (AVC lacunare, aspectul fiind similar cu cel din 2016), moderată atrofie cortico-fronto-temporală, simetrică.

## Metodele și instrumentele cercetării

### Metodele de colectare a datelor

Datele utilizate în cercetarea de față provin atât din surse principale, cât și secundare, de exemplu aparținători, studii, cercetări. Aceste metode de colectare au fost combinate.

### Metoda experimentală

Ca primă metodă de cercetare, s-a optat pentru metoda experimentală, având ca obiectiv verificarea unei relații de cauzalitate între aplicarea unor elemente din pedagogia Montessori, tehnici Freinet, jocuri teatrale și ameliorarea atenției, memoriei, gândirii, creșterii interacțiunii sociale și a stimei de sine la pacienta selectată pentru studiul de caz.

Pentru observarea acestor schimbări au fost stabilite întâlniri periodice pe parcursul celor 20 de săptămâni. Întâlnirile au fost lunare. La fiecare întâlnire s-au utilizat carduri Montessori cu imagini, cutia cu sinonime, omonime, antonime, paronime și jocurile teatrale – „Oglinda”, „Tava cu obiecte”, „Cutia



cu amintiri” și jocul de rol. Pacienta a continuat să lucreze acasă cu însoțitorul în intervalul dintre două evaluări. Au completat jurnalul pacientului și au lucrat pentru revista grupului. Însoțitorul a continuat să folosească jocurile teatrale așa cum a fost instruit la întâlnirile de la cabinet. Au fost aplicate testul ceasului, scale nominale pentru funcțiile cognitive – atenție, memorie, gândire și pentru fiecare comportament, precum și chestionarul.

### ***Metoda biografică – anamneza***

Se bazează pe culegerea de informații privind istoricul pacientei, date demografice, respectiv vârsta, sexul, localitatea în care locuiește, studii, statusul marital, domenii de interes, hobby-uri, istoricul medical – antecedentele personale patologice, antecedente heredocolaterale, evenimente recente, investigații imagistice, date privind debutul deteriorării cognitive care a determinat includerea în cercetare și legate de tratamentul actual.

Colectarea datelor s-a făcut în mod direct de la pacient, dar și indirect de la un membru al familiei/însoțitor dacă nu a putut furniza informațiile necesare, apoi acestea au fost înregistrate în fișa pacientului.

### ***Metoda observațională***

Este o metodă utilizată frecvent în cercetare, având avantajul că este mai ușor de aplicat, cu mențiunea că observația obiectivului urmărit trebuie să fie exactă și înregistrată imediat, furnizând date calitative. Deoarece utilizarea acestei metode are dezavantajul că nu poate controla variabilele, în cercetarea de față a fost selectată o pacientă cu care se stabilise anterior o alianță terapeutică. De asemenea, aceasta a fost însoțită de un membru al familiei, tocmai pentru ca aceasta să se simtă cât mai securizată și confortabil emoțional. Mediul în care a fost observată pacienta, așa cum s-a menționat anterior, era liniștit, prietenos, confortabil, menit ca activitatea clinică să poată decurge în cele mai bune condiții, fără a o distrage.

Durata observării a fost de 90 de minute în cazul evaluării la cabinet. Observarea a fost de tip participativ și structurat.

Etapele desfășurării observării:

1. S-a stabilit scopul observării.
2. S-au stabilit itemii grilei de observație.
3. S-au stabilit locul în care se va desfășura observația: cabinetul medical și domiciliul pacientului.
4. Durata observației: 90 de minute.
5. Observarea a fost participativă, cercetătorul fiind observatorul.

6. Notarea imediată a observațiilor pentru evitarea unor eventuale distorsțiuni sau omisiuni.
7. A fost cules un număr optim de observații care să permită prelucrarea statistică.  
Datele au fost consemnate în fișa de observare a pacientului pe baza observației directe.

### ***Metoda anchetei pe bază de chestionar***

A fost utilizată atât în scopul monitorizării, cât și pentru colectarea datelor din surse secundare prin completarea chestionarului de activitate a pacientului, transmis fie pe telefon, fie pe email de către persoana care îl supraveghează sau de un membru al familiei care locuiește cu acesta.

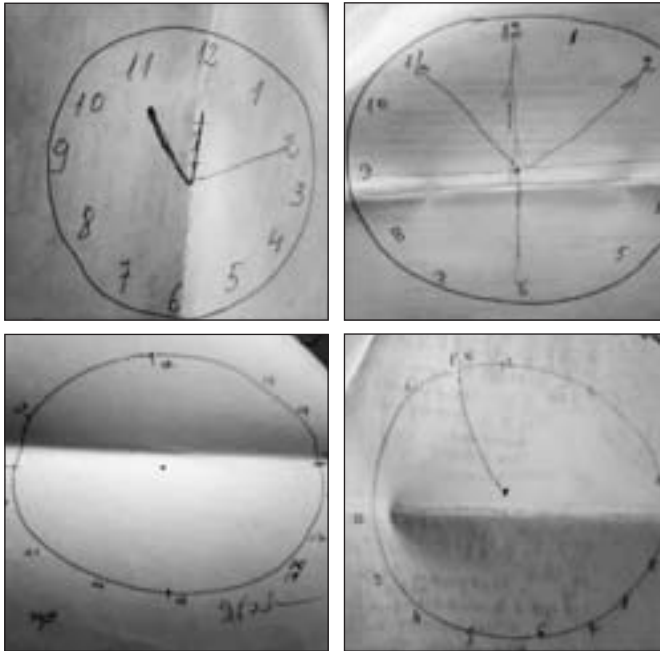
### ***Metoda analizei portofoliului***

Portofoliul este realizat în sistemul educațional cu scopul de a demonstra progresul elevului, fiind o metodă de evaluare. Făcând o paralelă cu pacienții, putem considera că în urma realizării unor lucrări cum ar fi o pictură, un colaj, o machetă, un ierbar, pacientul își dovedește capacitatea de a fi util, de a le arăta celorlalți talentele pe care le are, fapt ce-i crește stima de sine. Analiza este de aspect calitativ și face referire la modul de desfășurare al sarcinilor pe termen lung.

## **Instrumente**

### ***Test ceas***

Testul ceasului imaginat de Suderland a rămas un test de screening frecvent utilizat în practica psihiatrică, fiind ușor de aplicat. Acesta evaluează abilitățile vizual-spațiale, de urmărire a instrucțiunilor, înțelegerea limbajului, atenția, concentrarea, memoria verbală de lucru, praxia, coordonarea și planificarea. Are limitări în depistarea formelor ușoare ale demenței, dar are avantajul aplicării indiferent de cultură sau la pacienții afazici. Persoana examinată trebuie să stabilească pe un cadran de cerc desenat de examinator reperele (fiecare oră și limbile ceasului) pentru ora 11 și 10 minute. Rezultatele obținute reflectă funcționarea unor părți ale creierului precum lobii parietali drept și stâng posterior, lobul temporal median, lobul drept occipital, jumătatea mediană a girusului frontal (Chaves Mendes-Santos et al., 2015). Studiile au demonstrat o bună corelație a acestuia cu scala MMSE.



*Exemple test ceas în cazul unor subiecți cu demență.*

Scalele și chestionarul create pentru această cercetare, au fost următoarele:

**Scala nominală pentru  
comportament**

**Scala pentru  
funcțiile cognitive în  
activitățile Montessori**

Cotarea răspunsurilor se va face în felul următor:

Da=1. Nu=0

Da=2, Parțial=1, Nu=0

Departament	DA	NU	SCOR
Atitudinea deschisă a subiectului față de sarcina de lucru			
Utilizează corect pașii în efectuarea activității			
Necesită sprijin, adresează întrebări			
Duce activitatea până la capăt			
Strânge materialele de lucru			
Comportament disruptiv			
TOTAL			

	DA	PARȚIAL	NU	SCOR
Preferă anumite activități				
Urmărește cu atenție cardurile pentru activități				
Înțelege semnificația imaginilor				
Recunoaște literele, înțelege limbajul scris				
Înțelege semnificația clasificării				
Ține minte sarcina de lucru				
Susține sarcina de lucru				
Poate face asocieri, caută soluții				
Se autocorectează				
TOTAL				

**Grila de observare**

Intervenții pedagogice	Complianță		Observații privitoare la pacient
	Da	Nu	
Carduri Montessori cu imagini			Ex. Preferă un anumit tip de carduri, ezită să lucreze cu altele. Motivația
Jurnalul Pacientului			Ex. Dorește să participe la crearea revistei, dar afirmă că se plictisește să scrie zilnic.
Activități teatrale			Ex. Preferă să participe doar la activitățile teatrale. În timpul jocului de rol dezvoltă o situație apăsătoare.

### ***Chestionar pentru monitorizarea activității pacientului între evaluări***

**Cotarea:** Zilnic = 4, Deseori = 3, Uneori = 2, Foarte rar = 1, Deloc = 0

1. Pacientul a dorit să lucreze din proprie inițiativă?
  2. A avut o atitudine deschisă?
  3. A preferat un anumit tip de activitate?
  4. A solicitat ajutor?
  5. A renunțat ușor la activități?
  6. A finalizat corect activitatea?
  7. A alocat timp zilnic activităților?
  8. Așteaptă validare?
  9. A amânat activitatea?
  10. Și-a arătat disponibilitatea și pentru alt tip de activități?
  11. A mai făcut și altceva în cursul zilei sau a stat retras?
  12. Observați o îmbunătățire a orientării temporo-spațiale a pacientului?
  13. A avut episoade în care să nu-și recunoască membrii familiei?
  14. A început să aibă inițiativă?
  15. Inițiază discuții?
  16. Dorește să iasă la plimbare?
  17. Apreciați că a devenit mai comunicativ?
  18. Ați observat factori care îl influențează?
  19. Dacă da, printre aceștia este atitudinea aparținătorului/însoțitorului?
  20. Este autonom în privința igienei personale?
- Au fost de asemenea urmăriți itemi din scala MMSE-2, achiziționată de la TestCentral.

### **Instrumente teatrale**

Ca instrumente de lucru pentru jocurile teatrale, au fost utilizate „Tava cu obiecte”, „Cutia cu amintiri”, „Oglinda” și Jocul de rol.

Înainte de fiecare joc i s-a explicat pacientei punctul de concentrare și care sunt regulile, fără a insista prea mult pe „cum”, așa cum sublinia și Viola Spolin. De asemenea, nu i s-a precizat ce dorim să obținem prin aplicarea acestor jocuri.

***Tava cu obiecte***

Este un joc de improvizație, **de observație**, care se poate juca în perechi.

Are ca **scop** observarea și recunoașterea obiectelor, denumirea lor în scris și dezvoltarea memorării.

**Punctul de concentrare:** memorarea obiectelor aflate pe tavă.

**Mod de desfășurare:** Una din persoane se ocupă de organizare, cealaltă are rol de observator. Cel din urmă are la dispoziție un minut pentru a privi tava, după care obiectele sunt acoperite sau îndepărtate. Trebuie să noteze apoi pe o coală de hârtie obiectele pe care și le amintește. Dacă își dorește să repete exercițiul, putem înlocui o parte din obiecte.

Implică atenția și memoria de scurtă durată.

**Observații:** În cazul pacientei cu care s-a lucrat în această cercetare, timpul de observare a fost crescut la 3 minute, iar numărul obiectelor a fost de cinci. Pentru confortul acestora, ambele persoane au notat pe coli ce și-au amintit.

Consolidarea unor amintiri pe termen scurt depinde de atenție și de semnificația personală, de nivelul de excitare al persoanei. Dacă o persoană este distrasă, informațiile se pierd rapid. În general sunt puține amintiri consolidate pe termen scurt. Tocmai de aceea mediul de desfășurare a jocului a fost unul liniștit, cunoscut.

În cercetarea de față s-a observat și o afectare a memoriei semantice, pacienta făcea asocieri logice, dar descria o micuță icoană prin mățăanii, uneori, în loc de pix, preciza „obiectul de scris” etc.

Recomandarea a fost ca, dacă pacientul memorează corect toate obiectele, două din acestea să fie înlocuite.

A existat recomandarea ca jocul să fie repetat acasă cu aparținătorul.

***Cutia cu amintiri***

Joc de improvizație care se poate realiza în grup sau în perechi, în funcție de situație. În cazul grupului, unul din participanți extrage un obiect și povestește ceea ce își amintește legat de acesta, apoi ceilalți sunt invitați să spună dacă au amintiri similare sau diferite. În cazul desfășurării în perechi, așa cum a fost cazul în această cercetare, durata jocului a fost de 10 minute.

**Scopul:** „Recuperarea” unor amintiri poate trezi emoții, dar și o creștere a stimei de sine, reducerea anxietății și a preocupărilor pentru deficitul cognitiv.

**Punctul de concentrare:** rememorarea unei amintiri corelate cu tema biletului.

**Mod de desfășurare:** Într-o cutie sunt introduse fie fotografiile mai vechi aduse de pacient sau aparținător, fie un obiect legat de activitatea sa, un articol colecționat sau o carte poștală veche etc. Dacă nu există această posibilitate, se

pot folosi câteva bilete pe care să noteze evenimente importante din viața unei persoane, de exemplu familia, primii ani de școală, prima iubire, nașterea unui copil etc. Pacientul extrage un bilet și este lăsat să aibă rolul de povestitor. Poate fi prilejul inițierii unei conversații și a creării unei stări confortabile de familiaritate,

**Observații:** Au fost alese teme cu încărcătură emoțională. De exemplu, după extragerea biletului pe care era notat cuvântul „copilărie”, pacienta a devenit nostalgică și a evocat momente plăcute din copilăria sa. În timpul povestirii s-a observat că devenise mai stăpână pe sine și zâmbea.

### ***Oglinda***

Este un joc de improvizație care se poate desfășura în perechi sau în grup.

**Scopul:** îmbunătățirea capacității de observare, a atenției, coordonării motorii, dar și a empatiei.

**Punctul de concentrare:** oglindirea fidelă a mișcărilor partenerului de joc.

**Mod de desfășurare:** Este un joc care se poate adapta nevoilor grupului și are patru etape. În prima etapă se formează perechi, persoanele stând față în față. Coordonatorul îi roagă să-și imagineze că sunt despărțiți de o oglindă, astfel încât mișcărilor lor, care trebuie să fie cât mai ample, să fie identice și sincrone. Jocul este inițiat de unul din cei doi, apoi se inversează rolurile. În următoarea etapă, dacă mișcărilor sunt executate corect, oricare din parteneri poate iniția mișcarea, fără a mai fi nevoie de intervenția coordonatorului, apoi perechile se pot mișca în spațiu, păstrând oglinda între ei. Se poate recurge și la schimbarea partenerului. În ultima etapă, organizarea se face în grupuri de câte patru, în care doi dintre ei formează oglinda, ceilalți doi sunt inițial observatori încercând să înțeleagă mișcarea, apoi să o preia întocmai.

Indicațiile au fost date pacientei, să reflecte ceea ce vede, nu ceea ce crede. Au fost schimbate rolurile. Pacienta a inițiat mișcarea, iar investigatorul a reflectat-o.

Este un exercițiu în care neuronii oglindă sunt activați în toate etapele observației, în cea în care creierul reia și reelaborează, apoi activarea lobului frontal care reassemblează acțiunea ce a fost fragmentată într-o nouă secvență (De Bellis, 2020).

În cazul în care este propus un joc, iar unul din participanți în loc să lucreze asupra propriei probleme este atent la alte persoane, moderatorul oprește activitatea grupului și poate propune „Oglinda”, așa cum recomandă Viola Spolin. Acesta îl va ajuta să înțeleagă că imitarea, chiar dacă nu este un lucru rău, se face doar la unele jocuri.

**Observații:** În cercetarea de față, datorită restricțiilor sanitare, nu a existat posibilitatea realizării grupurilor, motiv pentru care s-a lucrat fie în pereche cu însoțitorul, fie cu investigatorul. Datorită limitărilor motorii ale pacientei, exercițiile au fost adaptate și s-au realizat stând pe scaun, folosind mișcări ale capului, gâtului, brațelor. S-au observat dificultăți de înțelegere a exercițiului, respectiv a mișcărilor dreapta-stânga în oglindă, la vizita 1, coordonarea fiind mai dificilă. Activitatea a fost reluată cu blândețe, fără critică, lăsând pacientul să descopere mișcarea. Schimbările de mișcare au fost făcute fără întreruperea cursivității.

### **Jocul de rol**

Jocul de rol stimulează emoțiile, vocabularul, imaginația, abilitățile sociale.

În cazul vârstnicului cu demență, jocul de rol își poate găsi eficiența sugerând roluri legate de activități limitate ale acestuia, rolul unui cumpărător la piață, al pacientului care merge la farmacie, o discuție telefonică. Scopul este ca acesta să fie „pregătit” pentru situații cu care se poate confrunta mai des.

Jocul de rol ne poate ajuta să descoperim comportamente, reacții, mecanisme de apărare pe care le au aparținătorii sau însoțitorul, dacă i se solicită acest lucru pacientului, ceea ce ne ajută să înțelegem cum îl putem ajuta sau unde este cazul să se recomande o altă abordare din partea acestora. Cu ajutorul acestuia, pacientul poate scăpa de temeri. Printre diverse roluri, pacienta EV a avut ca sarcină rolul poștașului. Cu două săptămâni înaintea evaluării dezvoltase o teamă legată de acesta pentru că nu îl mai recunoștea. S-a reactualizat scena, descriind în detaliu cum acesta își schimbase fizionomia, îi vorbea la persoana a doua singular, iar pisica își schimbase comportamentul. Interpretările erau dominante și îi generau anxietate.

A fost discutată scena pentru a înțelege ce anume o speriasc. Au fost analizate secvențele, comportamentele, reacțiile și sentimentele trăite. Pacienta s-a detensionat și s-a simțit mai liniștită.



**Materiale:**

Materialele utilizate au fost de la Editura Gama, iar cel cu sinonime, omonime, antonime și paronime a fost creat de investigator.

### Materiale pe principii Montessori

Cardurile Ceasul

Originea alimentelor, Pământ, aer, apă, sinonime, omonime, antonime, paronime



Material pentru fracții

Alte materiale propuse:

Învăț să citesc

Învăț să povestesc



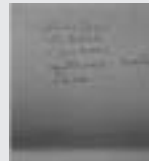
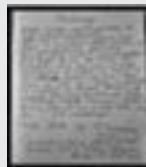
### Materiale

Freinet

Jocuri teatrale

Jurnalul

Revista mea



## Analiza și interpretarea datelor

### Grila de observare

Vizita 1		Vizita 2		Vizitele 3, 4, 5		
Observații	Comportament	Comportament	Comportament	Observații	Comportament	Observații
	Da / Nu	Da / Nu	Da / Nu	Da / Nu	Da / Nu	Da / Nu
Comportament în vizită	Da	Nu	Da	Nu	Da	Nu
Comportament în vizită	Da	Nu	Da	Nu	Da	Nu
Comportament în vizită	Da	Nu	Da	Nu	Da	Nu
Comportament în vizită	Da	Nu	Da	Nu	Da	Nu

La vizitele 3, 4 și 5, subiectul EV este compliant în privința tuturor activităților. Lucrează constant, fără să i se amintească.

### Evoluția scorurilor la testul ceasului

Pacienta a înregistrat la primele vizite erori vizual-spațiale, nu a notat toate cifrele, nu a respectat ordinea lor, iar distanța dintre ele nu este egală. La vizita 5 a reprezentat corect ceasul, cifrele sunt la distanțe egale, iar limbile ceasului sunt poziționate corect.

### Evoluția atenției, memoriei și orientării temporo-spațiale

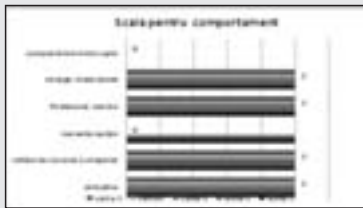
S-a observat că de la a treia vizită pacienta s-a concentrat mai bine pe sarcini. În ceea ce privește atenția involuntară a fost chiar ușor crescută la începutul cercetării, posibil și în contextul în care pacienta era ușor anxioasă, a scăzut ușor la a treia vizită, ca apoi să revină la normal în ultimele două vizite.

Se observă în diagramă o evoluție a corelării memoriei cu atenția, prima ameliorându-se la ultimele vizite.

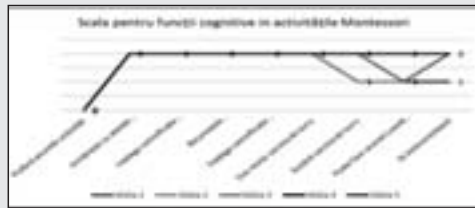
Se observă în diagramă o îmbunătățire treptată a orientării temporo-spațiale.

- La primele două vizite, pacienta era parțial orientată temporo-spațial.
- Orientarea spațială s-a ameliorat parțial de la vizita 2.
- La vizita 3 s-au notat ameliorări ale atenției voluntare și ale memoriei de fixare, dar și hipoprosexie involuntară.
- Pacienta a avut coerență ideoverbală pe tot parcursul cercetării. La scrierea corectă a propoziției s-a ținut cont de respectarea cerinței, respectiv dacă aceasta conține subiect și predicat, de scrierea corectă a cuvintelor, ortografie și punctuație.

### Scalele pentru comportament și pentru funcții cognitive în activitățile Montessori

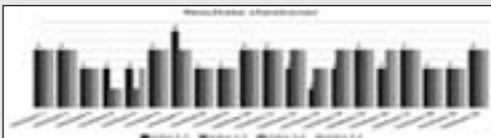


1. Pacienta nu a avut un comportament disruptiv la niciuna din vizite, s-a menținut atitudinea deschisă.
2. La primele două vizite a necesitat sprijin, repetarea sarcinilor, dar a finalizat activitățile cu carduri
3. A utilizat corect toate etapele și a strâns materialele de lucru

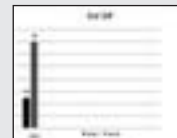


1. Pacienta a lucrat cu toate tipurile de carduri.
2. Le-a urmărit cu atenție.
3. A înțeles semnificația imaginilor.
4. A ținut minte sarcina de lucru.
5. Dacă la prima vizită a avut nevoie de repetarea unor sarcini, pacienta a înțeles apoi cum se utilizează cardurile și s-a autocorectat.
6. S-a remarcat orientarea spre găsierea de soluții mai ales la ultimele vizite.

### Chestionarul pentru aparținător, scor GAF



- ⇒ A așteptat doar uneori validare. A fost desori comunicativă și nu a stat retrasă.
- ⇒ A renunțat uneori la activități, pe unele le-a amânat, dar ce a lucrat, le-a finalizat corect.
- ⇒ A fost observată o îmbunătățire a orientării temporo-spațiale.
- ⇒ S-a observat o creștere a inițiativei până la finalul cercetării.



60-41 Deficiență psihică medie

**Observații în cadrul jocurilor teatrale**

1. Unul din jocuri („Oglinda”) a fost adaptat condiției generale a pacientei. Acesta i s-a părut mai puțin interesant.
2. Jucătorii au avut o atitudine deschisă, au făcut eforturi să urmărească punctul de concentrare, au colaborat.
3. Investigatorul a sesizat o teamă de a nu greși, care s-a estompat abia după a doua vizită.
4. La jocul „Tava cu obiecte” s-a observat un progres între prima și ultima vizită, pacienta reținând corect obiectele.
5. „Cutia cu amintiri” a ajutat-o să reactualizeze amintiri încărcate emoțional, în concordanță cu tema notată pe bilet, i-au oferit o mai mare încredere în sine, „demonstrând” că își amintește lucruri încă din copilărie.
6. Jocul de rol a permis dezvoltarea unor situații anxiogene, a raporturilor cu alte persoane cu care pacienta avea contact și rezolvarea acestora prin discuții.

**Concluzii și considerații finale**

1. Verificarea primei ipoteze s-a făcut prin coroborarea rezultatelor obținute prin aplicarea scalelor pe parcursul vizitelor de evaluare. S-a observat că în urma activităților Montessori, a unor jocuri teatrale, a jurnalului și revistei din tehnicile Freinet, atenția voluntară a avut ușoare oscilații, dar s-a îmbunătățit. Memoria de fixare s-a ameliorat. Pacienta a fost coerentă pe tot parcursul cercetării și a făcut asocieri logice.
2. S-a confirmat parțial și cea de a doua ipoteză conform căreia prin aplicarea unor activități Montessori, Freinet și a jocurilor teatrale orientarea temporo-spațială se ameliorează; dacă la primele vizite au fost înregistrate erori vizual-spațiale, la testul ceasului la ultima vizită s-a remarcat progresul evident.
3. În ceea ce privește comportamentul, s-a observat că pacienta a avut o atitudine deschisă, a menținut ordinea, a finalizat sarcinile.
4. S-a putut remarca o mai mare relaxare și o diminuare a anxietății în plan clinic.
5. Nu s-a putut aprecia o îmbunătățire a relațiilor sociale în contextul pandemiei.
6. Printre factorii observați că au influențat evoluția pacientei au fost: aderența terapeutică, activitatea zilnică, implicarea în problemele casnice, atitudinea, implicarea, suportul și intervenția promptă a membrilor familiei.
7. Pot fi luate în discuție și rezervele cerebrală și cognitivă, deoarece pacienta a continuat să citească, să aibă diverse activități, să rezolve jocuri logice sau să coasă goblen, să socializeze.

8. Aplicarea jocurilor teatrale a permis crearea unui climat de încredere, constructiv pentru pacientă, o creștere a încrederii în sine.
9. Acest aspect ar trebui luat în considerare de către aparținători sau persoanele ce se ocupă de asemenea pacienți, putând fi instruiți în ateliere de teatru.
10. Funcționarea globală a pacientei s-a îmbunătățit ușor.
11. Rezultatele obținute în urma cercetării pot fi extinse la grupe mai mari de subiecți, astfel încât această categorie de pacienți să poată beneficia în afara terapiei medicamentoase și de **intervenții pedagogice și jocuri teatrale ca metode terapeutice**.
12. Acest gen de activități se pot desfășura atât acasă împreună cu aparținătorii, dar și în centre pentru vârstnici sau în ateliere de lucru în cadrul unor clinici. Lucrarea de față se dorește un punct de plecare pentru o viitoare cercetare.

### References:

1. American Psychiatric Association (2013). 'Neurocognitive Disorders', in *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders Fifth edition DSM- 5*. Washington DC: American Psychiatric Publishing, pp. 591-644.
2. Association AG&D (2019). *Alzheimer autrement: 100 activités pour plus de vie ! La méthode Montessori au service des personnes âgées*. Strasbourg: ESF.
3. Bețiu, Mihaela (2018). *Elemente de analiză a procesului scenic*. București: UNATC PRESS.
4. Chabrun, C. (2021). *Entrer en Pédagogie Freinet*. Clamecy: Libertia.
5. Chaves Mendes-Santos, L., Mograbi, D., Spenciere, B., Charchat-Fichman, H. (2015). 'Specific algorithm method of scoring the Clock Drawing Test applied in cognitively normal elderly', *Dementia e Neuropsychologia* June 9(2), pp. 128-135.
6. Cojar, Ion (1998). *O poetică a artei actorului*. Ediția a III-a. București: Editura Paideia în colaborare cu Unitext.
7. Cucuș, C. (2017). *Istoria pedagogiei*. București: Polirom.
8. Eusctache, F., Lambert, J. (1996). 'Neuro-cognitive models of spelling and Alzheimer disease: mutual clarification', *Revue Neurologique (Paris)*, pp. 658-668.
9. Kempler, D., Goral, M. (2008). 'Language and Dementia; Neuropsychological Aspects', *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, Volume 28, March, pp. 73-90.
10. Kilner, J., Lemon, R. (2013). 'What We Know Currently about Mirror Neurons'. *Current Biology*, Volume 23, Issue 23, December, pp. 1057-1062.
11. Lee, H., Adams, T. (2011). *Creative Approaches in Dementia Care*. New York: Red Globe Press.
12. Sacks, O. (2021). *Omul care își confundă soția cu o pălărie*. București: Humanitas.
13. Schumacher, E. (2019). *Pedagogia Montessori: Înțelegere, aplicare și experimentare*. București: Didactica Publishing House.
14. Spolin, Viola (2014). *Improvizație pentru teatru*. Ediția prescurtată (ediția integrală 2008), Traducere de Mihaela Bețiu. București: UNATC Press.
15. Stern, Y. (2012). 'Cognitive reserve in ageing and Alzheimer's disease', *The Lancet Neurology*, Volume 11, Issue 11, November, pp. 1006-1012.
16. Wagner Cook, S., KuangYi Yip, T., Goldin-Meadow, S. (2010). 'Gesturing makes memories that last'. *Journal of Memory and Language*, Volume 63, Issue 4, November, pp. 465-475.

**Online references:**

1. De Bellis, G. (2020). *Theatre and Neuroscience (part 2)*; The Camelot Institute of Human Interactions [Online]. Available at: <https://www.thecamelotinstitute.com/post/theatre-and-neuroscience-part-2> (Accessed: 4 January 2022)
2. Lehman, C. (2019). *How Improvisational Techniques Help Engage Dementia Patients*; Brain & Life [Online]. Available at: <https://www.brainandlife.org/articles/how-improvisational-techniques-help-engage-dementia-patients/> (Accessed: 13 December 2021)
3. Theater Veder (2015). *Veder Method by Theater Veder – long version*; youtube [Online]. Available at: <https://youtu.be/u6wUXbUIemM> (Accessed: 13 December 2021)
4. WHO (2021). *Dementia*; World Health Organization [Online]. Available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/dementia> (Accessed: 13 January 2021)

**Manuela Florina Hozoc** is a graduate of Carol Davila University of Medicine and Pharmacy from Bucharest (1991). After completing the residency at the “Prof. Dr. Al. Obregia” Clinical Psychiatry Hospital and taking the specialist doctor exam in 1995, followed by the primary care physician’s exam in 2000, she was confirmed psychiatrist primary doctor. She was substitute assistant at the Psychoneurology Department of the Faculty of Psychology, Titu Maiorescu University (1996), specialist doctor at the Floreasca Emergency Hospital (until October 1997). University assistant at the Carol Davila University of Medicine and Pharmacy from Bucharest (1997-2000). Since December 2000, she carries out her activity in the specialized outpatient clinic at the Pajura Medical Center, in an individual office, and from 2018 at the Hope Clinic. Also concerned with research, between 1997 and 1999, she was co-investigator in 2 international multicenter studies on depressive disorders and dementia with behavioral disorders, followed by a position of clinical research assistant in Quintiles Romania (2000-2002). She has participated to numerous courses, national and international symposia, conferences and congresses, and has graduated the Master of Alternative Pedagogies and Theatre Art in Education, University of Bucharest-UNATC, class of 2022.

# RECLAIMING THE NATURAL COMPONENT THROUGH THEATER GAMES

**VLAD BĂLAN**

Ovidius University of Constanța, Romania  
*vladcbalan@gmail.com*

**Abstract:** One of the most important objectives of the methodology of the "I.L. Caragiale" National University of Theatre and Film for the 1<sup>st</sup> year Acting Department is "reclaiming of the natural component", as it was initially formulated by Professor Ion Cojar, which involves the taking back in possession of a human potential unaltered by the norms of society, free from fears and anxieties, available for the act of creation. The research seeks to demonstrate that theater games are the main tool that facilitate this process, the student retracing under guidance the same stages of play from the first years of life. To support this idea, a parallel will be drawn between the theater games which the student meets in class work at the National University of Theatre and Film (UNATC) and the games played instinctively in early childhood. The main idea of this approach is that theater games are not only a tool for learning, but rather for re-gaining skills, for re-learning and re-discovery.

**Keywords:** reclaiming the natural component, learning through play, theater games, childhood games, theatre pedagogy, improvisation.

**How to cite:** Bălan, Vlad (2022). 'Reclaiming the Natural Component through Theater Games', *Concept* 1(24)/2022, pp. 167-180.

### ***Introduction***

A student actor at the „I.L. Caragiale” National University of Theatre and Film, Theatre Faculty, makes first contact with the actual study of their profession via Theater games. Over the first semester of year I, students from the Acting department come across a large variety of improvisation games and exercises. Although most of them come from easily identified sources, such as Viola Spolin’s manual, *Improvisation for the Theater* (first published in 1963), Augusto Boal’s work, *Games for Actors and Non-actors* (first published in 1992), John Wright, *Why Do We Laugh at the Theater* (first published in 2006) etc., there are also games of uncertain origin, games whose structure the acting teacher adapts based on the needs of each student and each working group, in accordance to the study goals from the analytical curriculum.

According to the analytical curriculum, the first semester goals are: developing specific skills, preparing the acting student for organic involvement by gifting them with working tools (Problem, Focus Point, Objective), involvement, availability, and creativity within the group, reclaiming the natural component through behavioural truth.

By specific skills we are here to understand a fine tuning of the actor’s instrument (body, voice, means) for the requirements of this profession. This is done via exercises for corporeality, gesture, mind-voice coordination, etc. The gifting of working tools is done, initially, also through theater games. Basically, playful structures facilitate an understanding of the working principles of the art of acting and the theatrical theory by experiential means, according to Viola Spolin: „Do not teach. Expose students to the theatrical environment through games, and they will find their own way” (2008, p. 53). The *Exposure* exercise outlined by Viola Spolin is a staple of this category of games:



Divide the total group into halves. Send one half to stand in a single line across the stage, while the other remains in the audience.; Each group – audience and stage - is to observe the other. Coach: “You look at us. We’ll look at you.” Those on stage will soon become uncomfortable. Some will giggle and shift from foot to foot, others will freeze in position or try to appear nonchalant. [...] When each person on stage has shown some degree of discomfort, give the group that is standing a task to accomplish. Counting is a useful activity, since it requires focus: tell them to count the floorboards or the seats in the auditorium. [...] Keep them counting until their discomfort is gone and they show bodily relaxation. Then their bodies have a natural look, although at first they continue to show signs of years of held muscles.

When the initial discomfort has disappeared and they have become absorbed in what they are doing, reverse the groups. (2008, p. 57)

Through this exercise, students personally discover what it feels like to be watched, to be exposed, and they discover the self-sabotage process taking place in the human being when put in front of one or more viewers, the abundance of physiological sensations that floods us. In the next stage, when the student is counting physical objects, the feelings in their stomach, shoulders, the shaky hands are no more, as they have something real to do, they focus their attention on an exterior point instead of themselves. Having a Point of concentration and a Purpose, they forget about the pressure of being watched and regain their functions. Thus, terms like Point of concentration and Purpose are introduced, in direct correlation with a living experience, which was had just now, this very moment.

The availability and creativity of the group is trained through exercises challenging the group to get to a state of interdependence. Games where they all have to carry a tray with a glass full to the brim, or where they have to run an obstacle course while holding hands and wearing blind folds, these are just a few examples of such exercises. Thus, through group challenges, the classmates stand a chance to create a safe framework in which the students feel free to create.

The last and probably the most important purpose formulated by the analytical curriculum is reclaiming the natural component and the behavioural truth. The notion of „reclaiming the natural component” was initially formulated by Ion Cojar, the mentor of the current generation of teachers at UNATC and the one who outlined his own method in his book *A Poetics of Acting*. He states:

Training is a delicate process of recovering the human wholeness, of the whole individual potential, a formative collection of new habits, typical of an activity which requires physical and spiritual performance, of surpassing limits of the common human (Cojar, 1998, p. 33).

As such, reclaiming the natural component is, in Cojar’s view, getting into contact with the being unaltered by society and the educational system, a being that includes all the possibilities of becoming.

The conclusion this article pursues is that this process of reclaiming, of accessing this unaltered „me” is done by the actual playing of theater games and not through theory. Through the theater game, certain resources from early childhood are reawakened, and so, through a series of regressions, the acting student may get in touch with a forgotten „me”. This article sets out to demonstrate that theater games are often similar in structure and requirements with the games a child comes into contact with in his first years of life, and even with those he plays instinctively. Practicing these playful structures leads the acting students toward the reawakening of their resources.

This hypothesis will be researched by analysing the functions of games in the child’s cognitive development, by describing the types of games a child plays, and then by describing the categories of exercises the acting student experiments during the first semester of year I and highlighting the matches. This research will turn both to theoretical sources such as specialty studies (theatre, psychology), and to the description of practical experiences (describing games and how they are guided by the teacher).

### ***The function of games in early childhood***

The first theory on the function of games in the child’s evolution comes from Karl Groos. In his research *The Play of Animals*, Groos talks about the influence of games in physical and mental development. „The animal does not play because it is young. It has its youth because during this time it must play.” (1898, p. XX) The author observes similarities between the play of animals and situations it later encounters: the fight for supremacy, the difficulties of obtaining food, even mating. Thus, the idea of the *pre-exercise appears*. According to Groos, through games, animals practice functions they will later need. Through practice, the muscles and neural pathways grow together, so that the animal, having reached adulthood, can face the numerous difficult situations in its life. Groos is the first to signal the fact that games are an activity closely tied to a biological necessity. Up until that point, games were seen as a marginal activity, with no purpose other than recreation. To give just one example, here is how Plato defines games:

Here is one thing that involves no utility, no truth, no value for comparison, nor is it harmful in any way; it can best be assessed by its grace (*chari*) and the pleasure it offers. Such satisfaction, involving neither material gain nor loss, is what games are: *paidia* (apud Solomon, 2003, p. 48).

One may see that Plato’s definition puts games outside the realm of utility and truth, its sole purpose being to offer some satisfaction. All game theories put forth before Groos’ research placed games in a peripheral area of human behaviour. Even though Groos’ theory is perfectly applicable to animals, in the

case of human games the situation is far more complex. Elkonin notices how „K. Groos makes a grave error when he directly transfers, with no reservations, the biological sense of games from animals to humans” (1980, p. 75). It is easy to see that not all children’s games train biological functions. Perhaps a game of Catch readies the child for a „fight or flight” situation, but risk games such as War seem to train no such function.

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries numerous psychological theories have been put forth on the function of games in the child’s evolution. Many of them were influenced by Groos’ theory. Another set were influenced by Sigmund Freud. To Freud, games are a means of defusing certain compulsions that the child cannot enact. By noticing how a child plays with a bobbin after a negative interaction with his mother, Freud concludes that the bobbing becomes a projection of the mother during play. „We often find that children repeat in their games what they are most impressed with in life, and the deeds they can react to in order to gain control of the situation.” (apud Elkonin, 1980, p. 104) Among the theories about the negative compulsion evacuation function through games we mention the one by Anna Freud and later, Melania Klein. Klein is the first to treat games as material from which a therapist can gather information on the patient.

The first modern theory on the function of games in child development comes from Jean Piaget. In his work *Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood* (first published in 1945), he identifies three stages of games, which occur in the child’s first years of life. The ages of games as outlined by Piaget are:

- *Practice games*
- *Symbolic games*
- *Rule games*

*Practice games* appear during the baby’s first months of life. These are months when the baby starts to make the difference between subject and object, between themselves and the surrounding environment. „At first, the subject and object are one and the same, and primitive consciousness cannot make the difference between the role played by one or the other.” (Piaget, 2000, p. 13). During his first weeks of life, a new-born thinks he is one with the universe. He thinks he is the bed mother puts him to sleep in, as well as the mother who smiles and the noises he hears. The trauma of otherness (becoming aware that he is a singular individuality) takes place over several months. It is not a revelation taking place all at once.

Piaget notices two complementary processes taking shape in the baby’s behaviour at this time: imitation and practice games. “This is what games are, at first, the complement and opposite of imitation.” (2000, p. 89) Imitation involves an automatic reproduction of an exterior move. For instance, the mother smiles,

and the baby smiles back. The baby isn't aware that he is smiling, as he doesn't yet make the difference between himself and the mother. He thinks he is smiling when the mother smiles, and the body mimetically reproduces the mother's smile. Piaget notices that the two processes described serve a double function: to assimilate and to assuage the trauma the new-born is experiencing. By bodily play, the baby better navigates the terrible dawning of the notion that he is not the entire universe, but just a small and limited being. "This is how games mitigate the traumatic impact of otherness." (Ciccone, 2010, p. 200)

Also, by making such bodily moves (practice games), the baby exercises his muscles, which will be very necessary during the following months, when he will begin to roll over, then crawl, then moving on all fours, and then walking on two legs.

Practice games are the imitation of certain moves for the pleasure they offer. For instance, the child will wave his hands in a certain way, touch his forehead with the outer palm, move his head in a certain way, etc. The moves have no other motivation but the soothing they offer. The baby simply feels better by making such moves. They also serve a biological function stated by Karl Groos in his work. Subconsciously, the baby is training his muscles, which will be necessary in a few months, for crawling and then walking. As the child undergoes physical and neural development, bodily games change. For instance, the child practices various types of walking, coordinates his voice with certain moves, starts to make series of moves. Bodily games are constantly accompanied by the pleasure the child derives from having caused something. "What the child likes is not so much the result per se, but the fact that he produced that result." (Château, 1967, p. 16)

Thus, through bodily play the child proclaims his autonomy, takes hold of his own body, develops and discovers it all at once. Body games also include running, walking through imaginary environments (where the child pretends the floor is lava or that it's raining etc.). Also, it is accompanied by ritual lines that the child repeats compulsively for the pleasure they offer. Counting before games (an dan te) or various correlation games between kinetic and vocal inputs (I fall upward, I fall downward) are such examples. "The child is serious, because through the success of the game he asserts his being, proclaims his force and autonomy." (Château, 1967, p. 30)

*Symbolic games* appear later, around the age of 1. They involve using objects with other functions than their real ones. They draw play material from the surrounding reality, which they transform through their imagination. The metamorphosis thus keeps into account the shape of the real item. For instance, a child will never turn a chair into a gun. The symbolic imagination begins with certain attributes of reality. Reality is not denied but rearranged into a

new paradigm. Thus, the couch becomes a tank, the carpet becomes the sea, the stick a bayonet and the table a train car. The symbolic game is built on the following principle: the macro universe is reduced to a micro universe. Château draws similarities between symbolic game and children's drawings. Just like little children draw a complex house by reducing it to a simple scheme (a square with a triangle on top), so the symbolic game turns an unfathomable reality into a simple structure. Also, negative compulsions are released through symbolic games. Just like in Freud's example of the bobbin, we may notice that little children often behave in a tyrannical manner with their toys. "The game allows a substituent satisfaction of desires." (Marcelli, 2003, p. 220).

In another couple of years, around 4-5 years of age, children start to take to *rule games*. Rule games are then present until adult age. Together with rule games, play action enters a new phase, that of competition. Playing thus becomes the framework in which children can fight for supremacy. The game, unlike real life, gives them that framework where victory comes to the one who deserves it. Thus, as Château points out, games create hierarchy. Each game brings its own hierarchy.

All theories about the function of the game in the child's development subsequent to *Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood* took its ideas over and further. For instance, Sue Jennings takes Piaget's functional stages and renames them as follows: bodily games, projective games, role play.

„*Bodily*: birth-12 months (everything is experienced through the body);

*Projection*: 13 months-3 years (exploration of toys and environments beyond the body);

*Role play*: 3-7 years old (roles and stories are developed into a dramatic play).” (Jennings, 2012, p. 4)

Sue Jennings outlines the theory, adopted over the past years by more and more psychologists, according to which the emotional foundation upon which any human being is built is set in the first seven years of life. According to the author and the theories of modern psychology, any new experience a person goes through triggers the emotional mechanisms obtained during this period. Thus, any new procurement, any learning process is done within the acquired playful structure. "Playing produces introspection, creates the Ego, the psychic matter." (Ciccone, 2010, p. 200)

Thus, one may infer that any new situation, in our case a different reality (that of being watched) will throw the student actor into a position similar to his first years of life, and the theater game, as natural games developed in childhood, will similarly accompany them in their process of assimilation and trauma soothing.

### ***The Theater Game – a reclaiming tool***

As I was saying before, the first game Viola Spolin describes in *Improvisation for the Theater* is „Exposure”. Any teacher who guided their student in class through this exercise can attest to the fact that all who went through the experience of being watched by their colleagues described the feeling as unpleasant, cringing, almost traumatic. Many students speak of a process of self-sabotage. Faced with an audience, they have the feeling they are “askew”, that their clothing is improper, that they are breathing “badly”, that they *are* “badly”. It can be no doubt that Viola Spolin placed “Exposure” before other exercises by no accident at all. More than any explanation, it shows students that being watched is a particular condition, an altogether different paradigm in which the student, in a way, must re-learn to exist. Also, Stanislavsky likens the beginner actor to a child who must relearn all basic processes: “This is why, on stage, it is mandatory to learn to walk again, sit, stand, lie down” (Stanislavsky, 2013, p. 183). Next, through comparisons, we will attempt to demonstrate that the relearning Stanislavsky speaks of takes place by reawakening certain resources from early childhood, and that theater games are designed as to lead the student to the rediscovery of a process they naturally undertook during their first years of life. Thus, reclaiming the natural component is done by recovering certain parts from the infantile ego.

A more thorough look at the actual games first year students come into contact with is necessary for our demonstration. They will be put into groups based on the objective requirements. In order to notice the similarities to early childhood games, it is necessary to actually draw up the play structures taught. As previously stated, the aim will not be to identify the source of the game, as that is the object of another research (although part of them or their variations can easily be found in the works of various theoreticians and theatre practitioners, such as Viola Spolin, Peter Brook, Augusto Boal, Michael Chekhov, John Wright etc.), rather to understand their structure and pedagogic goals in sight.

A first category is represented by *exercises involving random walks*. “Random walks” require students to move in a clearly outlined space, with the same tempo (most often putting the same foot forward at once), in a controlled posture (straight back, organic walking – hand to opposite leg), without bumping into one another. Starting from this simple requirement, new commands are added. For instance, the students might be required to walk while being led by various focal points such as the head, the nose, the chest, the pelvis. The similarity is obvious to the bodily games described by Jean Piaget and Sue Jennings, respectively. As Jean Château points out, children experiment with various types of walking. The only difference is that they experiment walking styles instinctively, while the acting student is coordinated by a teacher. The actual purpose of this kind of

“random walk” exercises is to become aware of bodily possibilities, according to the analytical curriculum (developing specific skills). Thus, one might conclude that we are dealing with a real awareness of moving across space and even a rediscovery – reclaim.

Another variation of random walking is through imaginary surfaces – the series of exercises Viola Spolin calls *Space Substance*. Students are required to imagine they are crossing various environments such as ice, hot sand, a sticky substance etc. In the case of this category of exercises, a similarity is noticed to the bodily exercises described by Piaget. Students must relate to the new substance experienced in a concrete, direct manner. In other words, as Mihaela Bețiu, the translator of Viola Spolin in Romanian, pointed out, the substance is more like invisible than imaginary<sup>40</sup>. Like Peter Brook, Spolin believed in the actor’s capacity to make the invisible visible:

Every actor becomes a broadcast-reception instrument, capable of expanding beyond their body and the immediate surrounding environment. As water surrounds and supports sea life, the invisible substance surrounds and supports us. [...] When the invisible becomes visible, the magic of theater is born! (Spolin, 2014, p. 77)

Children strongly believe they can make the invisible visible. If you explain to a child that he forgot to work with the “imaginary” cloak, he will answer: it is not imaginary, it really exists, but you can’t see it.

Another category of bodily games are *impulse games*. There are multiple examples of this type, and part of them have unclear origins („Dârli-Da”, „Hep”, „Samurai”, „Pește Mare Pește Mic”). Whatever the rules, all impulse games have the same structure. One or more impulses move around the circle, and students must always pay attention to the impulse. A quality of presence is developed. A simple moment of carelessness is enough for the impulse to go astray. Also, the speed at which the impulse is passed on must gradually increase. Changing the speed of the impulse at once, whether a player passes the impulse on too fast or too slow, is fined by elimination from the game. One might notice a very similar structure to children’s games such as „Pic-Pic” or „Oranges”. Impulse games also train gesture-vocal coordination through simple ritual formulas. Of course, there is more complexity, but, largely, the game structure is similar. So, again, we’re talking about a reclaiming process more than an actual learning process.

A final category of bodily games are *Coordination games*. The representative exercise for this category is “Step code”, which many UNATC „I.L. Caragiale”

---

<sup>40</sup> Viola Spolin defines *Imagination* as “subjective; an invention; pertaining to the intellect, not the intuition” (Spolin, 2014, p 137).



teachers include in the partial exam for Theater Games. The structure of the exercises is variable and easy to understand. The most known ones are „8, 7, 6” with a decreasing count and turning around, and „10-10” without turning around, moving front to back and a decreasing count. A sequence of steps is done to a particular rhythm, gradually decreasing from 10 to 1. The structure may vary, as the group or the teacher desires, by differently combining the descending sequences with the ascending ones. In this case we may also notice the ritual structure implemented for the pleasure it offers. The resemblance is amazing to children’s games where a child obsessively repeats a series of movements, purely for the pleasure it offers. Like children, students enjoy the game and often obsessively the step code or play impulse games for hours. It is clear that more than the working principle introduced by the game (focus on the partner, coordination, attention), the benefit of theater games is bringing the actor student back to a child-like state. Enthusiasm and fun (according to Viola Spolin) is an element that accompanies the entire game playing process. Thus, it is clear that Cojar’s idea of reclaiming/recovering those unaltered resources is accomplished through bodily games. Step codes can be seen as an incorporated stage when students can be given new combinations of numbers, directions and modes of walking and can solve them spontaneously and synchronously.

Another category of theater games are *symbolic games*. Viola Spolin’s object metamorphosis exercise is representative for this class of play structures. An object of a certain shape is chosen – for instance, a book. Students are invited to “transform” it into something else by interacting with the book. For example, by taking the book to their eyes as if filming, the book becomes a photo / video camera. The attending colleagues are asked to guess what the object has become. Of course, a multitude of exercises operating with dramatic convention derive from here. Sequences can be invented with symbolically used objects, spaces can be created, etc. One can see that Viola Spolin’s exercise, through its structure, accesses a game stage described by Piaget and Sue Jennings, respectively – “the symbolic game”/ “the projective game”. In the symbolic/projective stage, the child imagines that a lot of objects in the external environment have another quality than what they really have. For example, the stick becomes a sword and the bed a bunker. What is initially naturally undergone by the child in their first years of life is now guided by the acting teacher, in order to be relived, rediscovered in the first steps toward becoming a professional. Again, theater games become the main tool for recovery and reawakening of atrophied functions. At this stage also one cannot speak of actually learning something new, but more like the rediscovery of something. “Bring me ten children and I will tell them this is their new home – you’ll see what their imaginations can produce.” (Stanislavsky, 2013, p. 104)



A final category of games students practice in the first semester are *improvisation exercises on given topics*. One such example is silent improvisation, in preparation for A-B exercises (line-line), Action vs. Activity exercises, Action-Reaction exercises. They also recreate a certain way of thinking pertaining to early childhood. Sue Jennings calls rule games role play. She points out that a child's emotional education is done by making transitions from one role to another. This, in a rule game, the entire journey becomes clear, which is why she calls it role play. Still, a lot of transitions from one role to the other happen in the interaction between mother and child, even from the very first interactions, when the mother turns her own emotional impulses into loving contact. The role play is, for this reason, named by Jennings *neuro-dramatic play*. „Neuro-dramatic play is the sensorial, rhythmic and dramatic game that takes place between the mother and the unborn child, and between the mother and the newborn child.” (2012, p. 2) At this point, role play takes place through substituent replacements. For instance, if the mother is upset with the baby, she pretends to eat him, turning her negative compulsion into an emotional bond.

All throughout his evolution over the first few years of life, the idea of role generates the child's play, as emphasized by Elkonin a few years before. „So, one may assume that the role and operations related to playing it are the building block of the game.” (1980, p. 26) Still, this process is only crystallized through role play, so rule games. Rule games are, essentially, a role taking game. The first rule games are similar to the improvisations proposed as part of the teaching activity at UNATC „I.L. Caragiale”. The first role play a child experiments are also the first social games they play together. Thus, they take the form of imposed improvisation, marked by specific actions. For example, two kids play cops and robbers according to a previously established script, such as “I am the thief, you are the cop, we fight and at the end you catch me”. The rule game is the most advanced form of role play because the role can be completely assimilated, opening a way to a potential becoming, according to Jennings. For instance, a child who plays football very well might later become a football player. So, we see that all improvisation theater games have a structure similar to the first role plays. In improvisation theater games, the generation of an authentic path in direct relationship with the partner is required, aiming for a particular goal. Moreover, occasions abound where the teacher gives students the example of a child playing mother and father or baker and customer, in order to help them understand the type of involvement necessary in improvisation. “The child is serious, because, through the success of the game, they reassert their being, proclaim their strength and autonomy.” (Château, 1967, p. 30)

Other bodily games that students come in contact with are *bodily awareness exercises*, where they are first required to relax on their back, and then to tense up and then relax again certain parts of their body, like the left arm, fist, right leg, etc. The tensing up later becomes repetitive movement, which students are required to observe. Again, we find powerful elements that refer to the toddler Piaget describes, who, in their first months of life make repetitive movements in order to mitigate the otherness trauma. There are plenty of other bodily games examples, involving the breaking down of a movement into a repetitive sequence, which the students are invited to first carry out individually and then as a group. *Mirroring games* can also be included in this category<sup>41</sup>. They all turn to the newborn's adaptation mechanism during the first few months of life.

### **Conclusions**

This article has attempted to demonstrate, through specific examples, the fact that games are the main instrument through which one may reclaim the natural component. We have tried, by identifying similarities between theater games and the first forms of playing in the baby's life, to highlight the fact that reclaiming the natural component is not an act of learning per se, but one of recovery, reacquaintance, rediscovery.

Over the first part we analysed the functions the game during the first years of human development. Starting from the research of Jean Piaget, the first modern theory of the game as a method of becoming, the three stages/ages of the child's play were noticed, corresponding to the phases of cognitive development. The reason why Piaget's research, also called the theory of cognitive development and later developed by Sue Jennings, was adopted as a model is that, it contains the two previous thinking models on the function of play: *the biological theory* developed by Karl Groos, and the *psychoanalytical* one, initially formulated by Sigmund Freud. Another reason is that a large number of modern psychotherapists such as Ciccone, Marcelli, Sue Jennings have drawn up their own theories, based on the research of Piaget, and based their work on it rather totally disagreeing with it.

In the second part, game categories were analysed for games 1<sup>st</sup> year students come into contact with. Similarities were spotted in comparison with games the child approaches instinctively over the first years of evolution, in an attempt to demonstrate that the main way to reclaim the natural component is via theater games. Thus, through the games that an acting teacher coordinates, the students find a part of *Who* they really are (by activating game memory from early childhood) and cognitive, physical and emotional skills from their first part of life are to be recovered here, reactivated, additionally put through training.

41 See *Mirroring Games Series* (Spolin, 2014, p. 55)

So, beyond the practical and theoretical skills that theater games help practice, beyond an introduction into professional ethics regarding group work, an essential requisite of art of theatre, their main function is *to experience reiterating a forgotten Me, upon whose awakening depends the actual skill of approaching experiences specific to the actor's art.*

Also, we find that the potential of theater games is far from being fully tapped and that they can contribute much more than they do now in the process of becoming a professional, and in the inherent quests that are show rehearsals. „A game generates many superior activities, if not all superior activities – arts, sciences, work, etc.” (Château, 1967, p. 146)

### References:

1. Belmont, Judith (2015). *101 activități de grup*. București: Trei.
2. Benga, Oana (2012). *Jocuri terapeutice*. Cluj-Napoca: ASCR.
3. Boal, Augusto (2005). *Jocuri pentru actori și non-actori*. București: Fundația Concept.
4. Caillois, Roger (1975). *Eseuri despre imaginație*. București: Univers.
5. Château, Jean (1967). *Copilul și jocul*. București: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică.
6. Checkov, Michael (2017). *Gânduri pentru actori. Despre tehnica actoriei*. București: Nemira.
7. Cojar, Ion (1998). *O poetică a artei actorului*. Ediția a III-a. București: Paideia & Unitext.
8. Darie, Bogdana (2018). *Arta actorului. Complex atitudinal în analiza interdisciplinară*. București: UNATC PRESS.
9. Donellan, Declan (2006). *Actorul și ȋnta*. București: Unitext.
10. Elkonin, Daniil Borisovici (1980). *Psibologia jucătorului*. București: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică.
11. Groos, Karl (1898). *The play of animals*. New York: D. Appleton and Company.
12. Huizinga, Johan (1998). *Homo ludens*. București: Humanitas.
13. Jennings, Sue (1999). *Introduction to developmental playtherapy*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
14. Jennings, Sue (2006). *Creative Play with Children at Risk*. Brackley: Speechmark Publishing Ltd.
15. Jennings, Sue (2012). *Neuro-dramatic-play and trauma*. Penang, Malaysia: B Braun Medical Industries.
16. Johnstone, Keith (1987). *IMPRO Improvisation and the Theatre*. New York: Routledge.
17. Kaduson, H., Schaffer, C. (2015). *101 tehnici favorite ale terapiei prin joc*. București: Trei.
18. Marcelli, Daniel (2003). *Tratat de psihopatologie a copilului*. București: Editura Fundației Generația.
19. Napier, Mick (2004). *Improvise: Scene from the inside out*. Portsmouth NH: Heinemann Drama.
20. Piaget, Jean (2000). *Play, dreams and imitations in childhood*. London and New York: Routledge.
21. Rousillon, R., Ciccone, A. (2010). *Manual de psihologie și psihopatie generală*. București: Editura Fundației Generația.
22. Solomon, Marcus (2003). *Jocul ca libertate*. București: Scripta.

23. Spolin, Viola (2008, ed. integrală). *Improvizație pentru teatru*. Traducere Mihaela Bețiu. București: UNATC Press.
24. Spolin, Viola (2014, ed. prescurtată). *Improvizație pentru teatru*. Traducere și editare Mihaela Bețiu. București: UNATC Press.
25. Stanislavski, Konstantin (2013). *Munca actorului cu sine însuși*. București: Nemira.
26. West, Janet (1996). *Child Centred Play Therapy – Second edition*. London: Hodder Education.

**Vlad Bălan** graduated from the doctoral school of the "I.L. Caragiale" National University of Theatre and Film in 2021. In the last year of his master's degree and his four years of doctorate, he was an assistant at the Acting Department, BA level, class of Associate Professor Andreea Vulpe. In parallel, he worked as a trainer at numerous teen festivals such as ID Fest, T4T, Aplauze. He was also a teacher for *Școala de Bine*, a project initiated by the Act Theatre, which aimed to bring non-formal education to disadvantaged schools and high schools, with over 200 beneficiaries. At the Ioanid School, he was a theatre teacher, working with children from primary, secondary and high school. Currently, he is an actor at the Nottara Theatre in Bucharest, actor and director alongside the Unteatru team, associated teaching staff at the Ovidius University of Constanța.

# **HÉCTOR MENDOZA,** CONTINUATORUL METODEI LUI **STANISLAVSKI** ÎN MEXIC

**VÍCTOR IVÁN LOPEZ**  
**ESPIRITU SANTO**

Greengates School México  
*vlopez@greengates.edu.mx*

**Abstract:** The aim of this article is to understand the methodology of the Mexican theatre teacher Héctor Mendoza. Theatre pedagogy had a vast development during the 20th century and the legacy of Konstantin Stanislavski had repercussions in various parts of the world where followers of the Russian teacher continued their research. It was in Mexico where Seki Sano, an exiled Japanese teacher, created a realist theatre school. His student Héctor Mendoza Franco gave continuity to these teachings and created a system that would have repercussions for posterity. As a trainer of countless generations, among his disciples we find directors Luis de Tavira, Germán Castillo or Ignacio Escárcega, and actors and actresses such as Ofelia Medina, Julieta Egurrola, Blanca Guerra, Sergio Jiménez, Margarita Sanz, José Alonso, Héctor Bonilla and Humberto Zurita. During his professional career Mendoza developed an acting methodology inspired by Konstantin Stanislavski, which he presented in five works: *Actuar o no*, *La guerra pedagógico*, *Creator principium*, *El burlador de Tirso* and *El mejor cazador*, which premiered in 2005. He was the author of more than 45 plays and director of more than 70 productions.

**Keywords:** Héctor Mendoza, theatre, acting, theatre pedagogy, character development, Konstantin Stanislavski, acting technique, Mexico.

**How to cite:** López Espiritu Santo, Víctor Iván (2022). 'Héctor Mendoza, continuatorul metodei Stanislavski în Mexic', *Concept* 1(24), pp. 181-196.

### **Introducere**

Héctor Mendoza Franco<sup>42</sup> a fost o figură centrală în dezvoltarea teatrului mexican din a doua jumătate a secolului al XX-lea, prin contribuția sa ca regizor, prin dezvoltarea unei pedagogii a actorului și prin dramaturgia sau reflecțiile sale asupra teatrului. A studiat Literatură spaniolă și Teatru la Facultatea de Litere și Filosofie din cadrul Universității Naționale Autonome din Mexic (UNAM). În 1954, a fost numit Șef al Departamentului de teatru universitar din cadrul Direcției de difuzare culturală a UNAM. Din 1957 până în 1959, Fundația Rockefeller i-a finanțat șederea la New York, unde a studiat la Universitatea Yale și la Studioul Lee Strasberg, ambele fiind momente decisive în cariera sa. În 1973 este ales Șef al Departamentului de teatru din UNAM, pe care l-a restructurat, transformându-l într-un spațiu de excelență în formarea actorilor, printr-un limbaj teatral reînnoit. Ca dramaturg, a câștigat mai multe premii pentru contribuția sa la dezvoltarea dramaturgiei naționale. A fost director de scenă din 1957 până la moartea sa. În lucrările sale, *Creator principium* din 1995 și *El mejor cazador* din 2005, și-a expus metoda de predare a actoriei (Aguilar, 2007, p. 137). Pentru a înțelege evoluția sa, este important să definim trei mișcări care au apărut în paralel cu începuturile maestrului Mendoza, la care acesta a colaborat. În primul rând, importantă a fost legătura și munca sa împreună cu regizorul și profesorul

42 N. în 1932, în orașul Apaseo el Grande din Guanajuato; d. în 2010 la Ciudad de México. [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/H%C3%A9ctor\\_Mendoza](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/H%C3%A9ctor_Mendoza)

japonez **Seki Sano**<sup>43</sup>, cu care a creat mișcarea teatrală *Poesía en Voz Alta* (*Poezia în voce înaltă*) (Unger, 2006, pp. 11-12), o mișcare ce a precedat Teatrul Universitar și înființarea *Centrului Universitar de Teatru de la UNAM*. În 1939, Seki Sano a ajuns în Mexic și a revitalizat teatrul de aici, ceea ce i-a făcut pe mexicani să-l numească „părintele teatrului modern mexican”. A întemeiat Școala de Artă Dramatică și a pus în scenă opere ale unor autori apropiați de „Teatrul de Artă”. Fiind fost student al lui Stanislavski și Meyerhold, descendent direct așadar, viziunea sa teatrală a inspirat o regenerare totală a teatrului mexican.

Mendoza, la rândul său, a fost studentul și asistentul lui Seki Sano, de la care a preluat stilul și pedagogia acestuia, creându-și în cele din urmă un sistem propriu. Școala lui Seki Sano, continuată ulterior de cea a lui Héctor Mendoza, a preluat de la Stanislavski atitudinea generală a actorului în scenă și utilizarea memoriei emoționale. Bornele metodei sale au fost următoarele: 1. Concentrarea asupra simțurilor și a libertății musculare, 2. Justificarea scenică, 3. Seriozitatea scenică, 4. Memoria senzorială, 5. Improvizația, 6. Pantomima, 7. Relațiile dintre actori, 8. Antrenamentul vocii și antrenamentul fizic (Barba și Savarese, 2018, p. 348).

Ludwik Margules, regizor polonez stabilit în Mexic și creator teatral important al secolului al XX-lea, sublinia următoarele:

Seki Sano m-a învățat să disting adevărul de minciună, a adus sistemul stanislavskian în Mexic, ceea ce a fost foarte important pentru teatrul mexican, a introdus o linie de lucru și logica teatrului realist, un fel de mise en scène pe scena mexicană; cel mai apropiat elev al său, fără îndoială, a fost Héctor Mendoza, care și-a construit punerea în scenă pe un cult al poeziei, pe valorile plastice ale esteticii și a răspuns unei viziuni a unui teatru modern, în care scena și spațiul scenic aveau o înălțime și o suflare proprie. (Obregón, 2004, p. 25)

Ca student la Facultatea de Filologie și Litere Spaniole din cadrul Universității Naționale Autonome din Mexic (UNAM), Héctor Mendoza a putut să se apropie de un grup de intelectuali și creatori mexicani care au avut ideea de a forma o serie de cicluri de spectacole avangardiste pentru regenerarea teatrală în Mexicul de la mijlocul secolului al XX-lea. *Poesía en Voz Alta*<sup>44</sup> a fost un grup

43 Exodul, diaspora și exilul au reprezentat unele dintre motoarele teatrului din secolul al XX-lea. Cel mai bun exemplu pentru înțelegerea modului în care călătoresc tehnicile teatrale îl oferă japonezul **Seki Sano** (1905-1966). Acesta a venit în exil, în Mexic, în 1939, după ce a călătorit în întreaga lume. A colaborat cu Stanislavski și Meyerhold, căruia i-a fost student și asistent între 1934 și 1937. Prima etapă a odiseii sale l-a purtat în Statele Unite, Anglia, Franța și Germania. La New York, a predat teatru, la Berlin a frecventat grupurile „agitprop” și cabaretele politice, unde l-a întâlnit pe Piscator, Reinhardt și Brecht. În Mexic, pedagogul japonez a creat o școală de artă teatrală, cu clase teoretice și practice bazate pe învățăturile profesorilor săi ruși, inspirându-se din biomecanica lui Meyerhold, din sistemul lui Stanislavski și din metodele lui Vahtangov.

44 *Poesía en Voz Alta* a fost primul grup de teatru contemporan din Mexic care a experimentat spectacole de avangardă și a generat un model pentru noul teatru mexican. O mișcare teatrală de această natură a dus la apariția unei generații de actori, regizori și dramaturgi care au avut o mare influență asupra devenirii

de avangardă apărut între 1956 și 1963. Printre fondatorii săi s-au numărat Juan José Arreola<sup>45</sup> și poetul Octavio Paz<sup>46</sup>, care avea să fie distins cu Premiul Nobel pentru Literatură, precum și artiști plastici ca Juan Soriano<sup>47</sup> sau Leonora Carrington<sup>48</sup>. În spectacolele lui Mendoza din această perioadă, limbajul era un element central. Regizorii din *Poesía en Voz Alta* au pus teatrul mexican din acei ani pe aceeași linie de gândire cu teatrul european și cu cea mai bună expresie a teatrului american, introducând un limbaj modern. Au început să caute și să reconstruiască limbajul teatral, renunțând la acea viziune arhaică spaniolă pe care teatrul mexican o avea. „Héctor Mendoza a insistat mult și pentru ruperea convenționalului, căutând în mentalitatea tinerei generații lucruri simple”. (Obregón, 2004, p. 25) Asistentul de regie al lui Héctor Mendoza din aceea perioadă, regizorul José Luis Ibáñez, declara: „Héctor Mendoza a însemnat o întregă panoramă, o lume care și-a arătat spiritul personal și a fost capabilă să abordeze multe tipuri de experiențe. I-am fost asistent și am învățat multe fiind alături de el”. (Crestani, 2008, p. 20) Principalele contribuții ale *Poesía en Voz Alta* pentru teatrul mexican sunt motivația de a experimenta diverse stiluri teatrale, toate formele teatralității sau divertismentului popular, precum și o recunoaștere a valorilor plastice și literare ale scenei și credința în posibilitatea dezvoltării.

---

teatrului mexican contemporan. Ideea acestui proiect a apărut ca o necesitate de a revitaliza teatrul din Mexic, de a se rupe de vechiul teatru spaniol, rigid și declamativ, care nu avea profunzime în sensul teatrului naturalist.

45 Juan José Arreola Zúñiga (1918-2001), scriitor și redactor mexican. Capodopera sa *Confabulario* a fost publicată în 1952 și a primit Premiul Jalisco pentru literatură. A publicat ediția *Bestiaria*, care a completat seria începută în 1958, a primit Premiul național de litere din Mexico City, iar în 1992 Premiul Juan Rulfo, care va fi urmat de premiul Alfonso Reyes și Ramón López Velarde.

46 Octavio Irineo Paz Lozano (1914-1998), poet, eseist, dramaturg și diplomat mexican. A fost distins cu Premiul Nobel pentru Literatură în 1990 și Premiul Cervantes în 1981. Este considerat unul dintre cei mai influenți scriitori ai secolului XX și unul dintre cei mai mari poeți hispanici din toate timpurile.

47 Juan Francisco Rodríguez Montoya (1920-2006), cunoscut sub numele de Juan Soriano, a fost un artist plastic mexican, numit „El Mozart de la Pintura Mexicana”.

48 Dame Leonora Carrington (1917-2011), artistă mexicană de origine britanică, pictor suprarealist și romancier. A trăit cea mai mare parte a vieții sale în México City și a fost unul dintre ultimii participanți la mișcarea suprarealistă din anii '30. A fost membru fondator al Mișcării de Eliberare a Femeilor din Mexic în anii '70.





*Poesía en Voz Alta* (1956) – Teatro el Caballito, UNAM, México  
<https://casadellago.unam.mx/archivopva/ediciones/1956/>

***El Centro Universitario de Teatro***<sup>49</sup> (Centrul Universitar al Teatrului sau CUT, al UNAM a însemnat un punct de pornire pentru dezvoltarea lui Héctor Mendoza ca profesor de actorie. Centrul Universitar al Teatrului s-a născut ca un răspuns la două moduri de a concepe arta interpretării în Mexic: pe de o parte, licența în arta teatrală de la Facultatea de Filosofie și Litere a UNAM, care nu-i antrena pe actori cu o pregătire practică solidă, și, pe de altă parte, Școala de Artă Teatrală (acum Școala Națională de Artă Teatrală), care, datorită cadrelor didactice ce au condus-o, reprezenta conceptul formalist pe care Centrul Universitar al Teatrului a dorit să-l elimine, acest centru devenind școală de elită în pregătirea practică a actorilor din Mexic, un loc de discuție, un spațiu în mișcare, care s-a născut pentru a explora condiția umană prin arta actorului, ridicând cercetarea teatrală la înălțimea celor mai bune instituții de teatru din lume (Olguín, 2007, p. 66).

<sup>49</sup> *Centrul Universitar al Teatrului* a fost înființat acum 60 de ani (<https://www.cut.unam.mx/>). Fondatorul, directorul de scenă și pedagogul teatral Héctor Azar, a început ceea ce astăzi este o legendă – Centrul de conferințe și cursuri, fără o structură stabilă și o viziune academică pe termen lung. *Centrul Universitar al Teatrului* a traversat primul deceniu la întâmplare. Mexicul avea nevoie de o școală modernă, de un centru de cercetare pentru avangardă și pentru a explora teatrul universitar. Héctor Mendoza, după o perioadă pe care a petrecut-o la Școala Națională de Artă Teatrală, a condus *Centrul Universitar al Teatrului*, iar acesta a fost rezultatul unei întregi mișcări teatrale ce s-a petrecut în Universitatea Națională Autonomă din Mexic.



Fațada clădirii Centrului  
Universitar al Teatrului (CUT),  
școala creată de Héctor Mendoza,  
care face parte din Centrul Cultural  
Universitar al UNAM, Mexic  
(<http://oferta.unam.mx/cut.html>)



Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM)  
(<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1250/>)



Héctor Mendoza în Studioul său; 2008, Mexic

### ***Sistemul de lucru cu actorii***

Héctor Mendoza reprezintă o unitate de măsură, o referință istorică cu care este inaugurată modernitatea teatrală în Mexic. „El a fost impulsul inovator care a emanat dintr-un torent puternic de multipli afluenți divergenți ai acelei inspirații originale, a știut să invadeze totul și să transforme”. (De Tavira și Mendoza, 2007, pp. 138-145) Teatralitatea lui a părăsit canalul obișnuit al suprafeței, pentru a sonda adâncimile în care se aflau ascunse cele mai misterioase enigme ale scenei, „fiind capabil să formuleze întrebări decisive despre actualitatea teatrului” (De Tavira și Mendoza, 2007, pp. 138-145). Odată cu el, teatrul mexican a devenit o instanță respectată de toți: un *continuum* al pasiunii și al rigorii, Mendoza realizând o unitate inseparabilă între dramaturgie, punere în scenă și pedagogia teatrală. Pentru Mendoza, capacitatea de a descoperi mai multe posibilități teatrale a presupus o investigație a formei dramatice, care părea pierdută în unitatea acțiunii și în unicitatea personajului, pentru a ajunge apoi la descoperirea acelei dramei care etapizează transformarea eroului, criza evenimentului, cu scopul de a discerne între autenticitate și neautenticitate, între esență și inocența căutării teatrale. Impulsul lui creator a constatat într-o interogare continuă, într-un joc transcendent de întrebări cu privire la natura teatrului, provocându-l pe actor să-și creeze personajele din interior, oferindu-le formă pe traseul consecvenței cu sine și cu datele furnizate de text, alcătuiindu-le întotdeauna din adevăr și autenticitate umană.

Mendoza a fost creatorul unui curent care a propus o estetică teatrală mexicană modernă și critică, fiind un oponent al modelelor și manierismelor

avangardei pe care el însuși a sprijinit-o. El a formulat conceptul de *vividura* (*trăire scenică*) pentru a clarifica principiul recurent al experienței stanislavskiene și pentru a clarifica diferența substanțială care distinge memoria emoțională a actorului de experiența personajului. Teoria sa propune un parcurs în cunoașterea ființei umane, este sursa unui parcurs spiritual în care teatrul mexican este considerat un cadru mistic (De Tavira și Mendoza, 2007, pp. 138-145).

Mendoza nu a scris niciun tratat sau manual în care să-și fi expus progresia logică a pedagogiei sale (precum au făcut-o Stanislavski și mare parte dintre urmașii săi, profesoara americană Viola Spolin sau profesorul român Ion Cojar<sup>50</sup>), dar, asemenea lui Molière, și-a exprimat crezul artistic și și-a descris metoda referitoare la construcția personajelor și la principiile artei actorului prin intermediul unor opere dramatice precum *Hamlet*, *por exemplu*, *Creator principium*, *Actuar o no* sau *El mejor cazador* – lucrări care fac afirmații și lansează diverse provocări. Ceea ce a oferit el a fost o metodă de a descoperi și învăța consecvența conflictuală a condiției dramatice și consecințele evidente în verbalizarea spontană. Celebra sa definiție se bazează pe conceptul de *stimul fictiv*. „Ce este un stimul fictiv? Ce este o ficțiune? Un moment nereal al realității, adică un moment de aparență. Ficțiunea constă, așadar, în realizarea unui personaj pe care îl atribuim realității.” (De Tavira, 2011, pp. 12-17)

Piesa *El mejor cazador* (*Cel mai bun vânător*), este elocventă pentru a analiza metodologia sa în procesul de creare a unui personaj. Aici regăsim atât abordarea sa teoretică asupra artei actorului, construirea imaginii „sinelui”, cât și abordarea practică a relațiilor dintre personaje. Această operă este străbătută de paradoxul din sintagma: „cel mai bun vânător este liber.” Discuția teoretică pornește de la libertatea pe care actorul (vânător) trebuie să o aibă, de la momentul abordării textului dramatic până la reprezentarea lui pe scenă. Libertatea actorului se referă la gama largă de posibilități în fața cărora trebuie să ia decizii importante pentru a atribui personajelor sale diverse caracteristici morale și fizice. Această abordare a adus o contribuție reală metodei artei actorului, pentru că a dat interpretării concretețe și calitate umană organică (Mendoza, 2006).

Mendoza își împărtășește gândirea și metodologia de lucru prin vocea personajelor sale, asemenea lui Platon în *Dialoguri*, lui Molière în *Improvizație la Versailles* sau lui Stanislavski în *Munca actorului cu sine însuși*. Astfel este vocea personajului principal Mauro, din *El mejor cazador*. Mendoza își împarte lucrarea în două părți – în prima, Mauro joacă rolul profesorului de actorie, iar cursanții săi caută să identifice ce definește un anume caracter: „**Fausto**: Tipurile sunt

50 Ion Cojar (1931-2009), regizor român, actor de film, director al Teatrului Național din București și profesor universitar la UNATC „I.L. Caragiale” București.

ușor de definit, printr-un defect sau calitate predominante în ele, sau orice altceva, care ne face să le plasăm cu ușurință într-un grup general de ființe umane; dar sunt mai dezumanizate” (Mendoza, 2006).

Mendoza explică care este diferența dintre *caracter (sau personaj)* și *tip (personajul prototip)*. În piesă, studenții au rolul de a analiza teoretic metoda sa, de a verifica practic reflecțiile și descoperirile sale întru crearea personajului. Personajul Mauro le cere lui Fausto și Valerio să pregătească pentru a doua zi o scenă din opera *Cuernos don friolera* (din 1930) a autorului spaniol Don Ramón Maríadel Valle-Inclán<sup>51</sup>, ținând cont de metoda de lucru deprinsă. El le spune studenților săi că trebuie „să privim exercițiul altor colegi cu ochi critici, mai degrabă decât să îndrăznim să facem vreo judecată de valoare, așa că voi întreba, ce au încercat să lucreze acești doi colegi?” (Mendoza, 2006). Pentru Mendoza, personajele sunt realiste, indiferent de tonul pe care actorul dorește să-l dea și, prin urmare, caracterele și tipologiile trebuie să fie create dintr-o pornire realistă, urmând principiul „ca în viață”<sup>52</sup>. Exemplu:

**Mauro:** Tipologiile sunt condensate, personalitățile lor sunt schematice, chiar liniare, iar personajele pe care nu le găsim niciodată în realitatea noastră de zi cu zi trebuie adaptate realității actorului. Oricât de elementari am fi în caracterul nostru, fiecare dintre noi are mai multe atribute și unele sunt contradictorii între ele. *Tipul* e doar o ființă imaginară fictivă, bidimensională. *Personajele* sunt, ca și noi, ființe umane, în realitatea pe care o trăim... Trebuie să simțim complexitatea personajelor, tridimensionale, pentru a ne face apariția ca ființe vii... Suntem un model, personajele trebuie îmbunătățite și acest lucru este realismul. (Mendoza, 2006)

Atunci când actorul pornește greșit în crearea personajului, Mendoza explică ceea ce trebuie să facă pentru a-l reface corect. **Mauro:** „Ceea ce i-a lipsit pentru a converti personajul de la tip la caracter este în mare măsură credința pentru a face acest lucru. [...]” (Mendoza, 2006)

51 Ramón María Valle Peña (1866-1931), cunoscut și sub numele de Ramón del Valle-Inclán sau Ramón Maríadel Valle-Inclán, dramaturg, poet și romancier spaniol, care a făcut parte din curentul literar al modernismului. Este considerat unul dintre autorii cheie ai literaturii spaniole din secolul al XX-lea.

52 Maestrul Ion Cojar, fondator al teoriei moderne a artei actorului în România, spunea: “Un subiect literar încheie în el o infinitate de alte teme și subiecte posibile, dar acestea devin realități doar în măsura în care actorul le dezvăluie jucând corect. [...] Cel mai important lucru pe care actorul îl are de îndeplinit pe scenă este să transforme situațiile convenționale propuse de autor în realități psihologice obiective. Iar aceasta nu e posibil fără asumare totală, fără o autentică procesualitate psihologică. Ideile și filozofia se nasc și se comunică prin psihologie, prin procese psihice.” (1998, p. 78)

Mendoza afirmă că personajul este realist, iar tipul nu este, și că actorul nu ar trebui să judece personajul pe care trebuie să-l joace, deoarece se distanțează automat de dorita identificare cu el.

**Mauro:** Noi, actorii, ne putem identifica cu personajul numai atunci când nu-l judecăm. Același lucru care ni se întâmplă nouă în viața reală se va întâmpla cu ființele umane care tind să ne judece pe noi... Chiar și atunci când facem cele mai grave greșeli, ne punem, în mod automat, în situația de a căuta o justificare și a fi în acord cu conștiința noastră. (Mendoza, 2006)

Mauro detaliază opinia lui Mendoza despre felul în care actorul poate să-și cunoască mai bine personajul analizându-l din perspectiva celorlalți.

**Mauro:** Ne cunoaștem perfect, dar numai prin ochii altora. Acesta este elementul principal în relațiile umane. Cu cât avem mai multe relații, cu atât vom dobândi un caleidoscop mai vast de opinii despre personalitatea noastră, deoarece fiecare relație ne va dezvălui un sine special și diferit, care va veni să se alăture celui alt sine. (Mendoza, 2006)

**Mauro:** Fiind cu mama ta, ești fiul mamei tale, bun sau rău, deoarece asta e ceea ce mama ta îți permite să știi că ești pentru ea. Când ești cu prietena ta, ești prietenul prietenei tale și devii ceea ce îți spune ea că ești.... adică o oglindă a celui alt. Dar când ești cu un prieten cu care ai o anumită rivalitate, ești total diferit, deoarece, dacă te-ai comporta cu el așa cum te-ai comporta cu mama sau cu prietena ta, ar fi periculos pentru relația dintre voi doi și nu vei ști care dintre cei trei ești tu. (Mendoza, 2006)

Pentru Mendoza, un actor reușește să-și creeze personajul atunci când îi înțelege caracterul și a înțeles piesa în mod concludent numai atunci când s-a identificat cu personajul său.

**Mauro:** Munca noastră nu este nimic mai mult decât povestea mai multor relații. Ar trebui să vedem în fiecare scenă modul în care relația noastră cu personajul cu care ne întâlnim alternează treptat. Dacă respectăm această traiectorie, nu ne vom pierde niciodată. (Mendoza, 2006)

În a doua parte a piesei sale, Mendoza prezintă ceea ce el numește *linia de gândire*, felul în care actorul exprimă gândul care nu e formulat direct și pe care trebuie să-l facă vizibil publicului. Regizorul subliniază că, pentru a realiza un act cu valoare artistică, actorul trebuie să lucreze cu cele două niveluri de gândire regăsite în text și subtext, dar să folosească și un al treilea nivel, oferit de zona inconștientului. Nivelul inconștient al gândirii personajului trebuie stârnit când acesta acționează în condițiile date de autorul dramatic, exact ca în sistemul stanislavskian, iar actorul devine conștient de noile descoperiri și le utilizează în procesul de creație a rolului.

Când actorul devine un personaj, cei doi – actor și personaj – sunt unul singur. Mendoza concluzionează că problema de bază pentru construirea completă a personajului este, dincolo de text și subtext, dincolo de gândurile și emoțiile evidente și de cele ascunse, lucrul cu inconștientul lui. Pe parcursul piesei, urmărind intrigile în care sunt implicate personajele, autorul ne dezvăluie procesul de lucru cu studenții săi. Mendoza a folosit piesa de teatru ca o strategie de predare a artei actorului. El subliniază faptul că actorul trebuie să aibă un obicei bine înrădăcinat – acela de a reflecta și a studia profund, pentru a da viață scenică fiecăruia dintre personajele sale.

Școala experimentală de teatru creată de Mendoza înțelege arta actorului ca pe un proces organic și autentic. Sunt personaje care sunt departe de actor, iar altele mai apropiate, misiunea sa fiind însă de a le cuprinde pe toate într-un întreg, pentru a le putea întruchipa, spre a le oferi valoare riguros artistică. Mendoza a susținut ideea că rigoarea actorului nu este martiriu, nici suferință, ci disciplină asumată. El a vrut să-i antreneze pe cei mai buni actori din Mexic la nivelul celor care au lucrat cu Stanislavski, cu Lee Strasberg sau Sanford Meisner.



Héctor Mendoza predând Arta actorului la UNAM  
<https://www.jornada.com.mx/2011/03/24/fotos/a12a1cul-1.jpg>



### ***Concepția asupra construcției rolurilor***

Conform metodei Mendoza, orice fel de interpretare actoricească trebuie să fie plină de adevăr și autenticitate, chiar dacă textul propus aparține unui curent literar care diferă de realism. Dacă actorul nu își asumă pe scenă personajul și nu caută asemănarea cu viața (în spiritul *principiului verosimilității*), interpretarea sa nu trece rampa spre spectator. Mendoza le cere actorilor o înțelegere complexă a textului, înainte de a începe munca la orice nouă montare, și iată aici o asemănare puternică cu tehnica profesorului român Ion Cojar.

Mendoza cere actorilor creativitate, o imaginație bine antrenată, pentru a putea înțelege caracterul personajului pe care îl interpretează, în baza unei cunoașteri profunde a textului. Aceasta este baza pentru orice pornire scenică, indispensabilă pentru a găsi caracteristicile personajului și ale lumii sale, folosind celebrele întrebări: *Cine sunt?*, *De unde vin?*, *Unde mă duc?* Iar analiza nu urmărește doar caracterul propriului său personaj, ci și pe cele cu care acesta are o relație directă sau indirectă.

Această muncă era realizată de Mendoza împreună cu actorii/studentii săi în etapa pe care a numit-o „lucrul la masă”, pentru a explora apoi în profunzime fiecare acțiune a propriului personaj. Pentru Mendoza era inutilă orice exagerare fizică, inclusiv în momentul parcurgerii și memorării textului, deoarece acesta era pentru el doar un pretext, în viziunea lui cel mai important lucru pentru actor fiind procesul său de gândire și ce se întâmplă când el se află într-o anumită circumstanță, căutând să rezolve o situație. Mendoza a fost fidel atenției și accentului pus de Stanislavski pe procesele mentale, cât și pe cele senzoriale, iar autori precum Ibsen sau Cehov îi ofereau întru totul condiții pentru această abordare și situații care îi dau actorului o multitudine de ipoteze în construcția caracterelor.

Utilizând metoda lui Mendoza pentru construcția rolurilor ibseniene, vom alege spre analiză trei dintre cele mai reprezentative personaje – Dr. Stockmann din *Un dușman al poporului*, Krogstad din *O casă de păpuși* și Oswald din *Strigoii* – care arată o complexitate solidă în acțiunile lor. Stockmann este un idealist și un luptător, care își dorește ca adevărul să triumfe, medicul orașului fiind un bărbat de vârstă adultă și cu un spirit proeminent. Krogstad este un bărbat care, după ce a adunat frustrări teribile de-a lungul multor ani, caută ca adevărul să iasă la lumină pentru a-și curăța numele murdărit de o greșeală din trecut, iar Oswald este un tânăr chinuit de boală, care a fugit de trecutul său, iar la întoarcerea acasă caută să-l înfrunte, declarându-și fricile și nesiguranțele care îl vor conduce către propria moarte. Aceste personaje necesită o bază interpretativă solidă pentru a fi transpuse scenic deoarece reprezintă circumstanțe umane de mare complexitate.





[http://elemblob.blob.core.windows.net/media/mendoza-hector5db75d82794b2\\_500h.jpg](http://elemblob.blob.core.windows.net/media/mendoza-hector5db75d82794b2_500h.jpg)

Mendoza le cere actorilor să își găsească propria cale, să caute în bagajul personal al fiecăruia acțiuni care să le permită să se apropie de personaj, să caute ceea ce îi apropie de caracterul respectiv. Stockmann este medic, iar actorul care îl va interpreta va trebui să știe cât mai multe despre această profesie, despre acțiunile efective pe care un medic le face, dar și despre ce presupunea această profesie la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea. La fel, Krogstad sau Owsald, la rândul lor, ar trebui să fie un administrator bancar din regatul Suediei și Norvegiei în condițiile secolului respectiv sau un student idealist care se întoarce din Europa de Vest, unde a deprins obiceiuri, idealuri și mentalități noi. Mendoza prefera ca actorii săi să cerceteze singuri rolurile, ghidați de el ca regizor/profesor de actorie în toate detaliile și faptele ce declanșează circumstanțele dramatice. Mendoza a început o căutare experimentală, cercetând în drame o combinație între tradiție și inovație cu care a inaugurat în Mexic un nou curent, pe care l-a denumit *Post-poesía en voz alta* (Castillo, 1989, p. 3).

Această pornire a influențat activitatea lui de regizor și profesor de actorie, îndemnând actorii să deconstruiască textele pentru a genera o *cale spre adevăr*. Mendoza nu era niciodată interesat de rezultat, ci doar de proces, deoarece, dacă procesul este cultivat cu disciplină și minuție, rezultatul este cel bun pentru actor și spectator totodată. El a crezut că trebuie căutate acele puncte specifice pentru a-l face pe actor să înțeleagă că arta sa este un mijloc prin care putem vedea o altă latură a lucrurilor. În accepția lui, performanța presupune „*una inspiración personal y directa a la vida*”/„*o inspirație personală și directă pentru viață*”, iar în actorie cel mai important lucru este a te gestiona, cu libertate absolută, într-un cadru extrem de ferm numit

structură (Quintanilla, 2006, p. 10). Poate că personajele ibseniene trebuie gândite, din perspectiva lui Mendoza, ca niște caractere în situații dificile, dar nu din punct de vedere tragic, ci uman, cu probleme emoționale care le afectează viața. Pentru Mendoza, un artist trebuie să fie inconfortabil, imprevizibil și surprinzător pentru ceilalți, surpriza fiind, de fapt, adevăratul rezultat al unei căutări teatrale.

### **Concluzii**

Mendoza a pus accentul pe faptul că personajele reprezintă oglinda vieții în sine și, prin urmare, actorul nu se poate îndepărta de circumstanțele reale ale vieții, premisa lui fiind că „sarcina actorului nu poate fi formulată ca producând «emoție»” (De Tavira, 2010, p. 17), pentru că ar fi echivalent cu pleonasmul care spune să acționeze și să reacționeze: „Frământă-te cu adevărat de ceva care este inevitabil. Acțiunea scenică constă în altceva: este o faptă, o acțiune care vine din a fi Aici și Acum, la ora situației fictive, fără a putea preveni consecințele acesteia” (De Tavira, 2010, p. 17).

Actorul trebuie să lucreze pentru a dezvolta emoția personajului său prin stimulii care îl încarcă cu emoțiile adecvate pentru interpretare. Din acest motiv, cunoașterea emoțiilor și descifrarea inteligenței emoționale a personajelor unui text dramatic devine o lucrare definitorie pentru creația actoricească. Ce presupune emoția scenică? În teatru, „sufletul este adevăratul protagonist” (De Tavira, 2010, p. 17), iar el este întruchipat în procesul de acțiune, în modificările stărilor sufletești. Pentru Mendoza, starea sufletească, analizată până la ultima sa consecință, va reprezenta ceva mai mult, deoarece odată cu el începe calea spre un pliu al intimității, către o parte sfâșiată a gândirii și a spiritului, plină de nevoi și dorințe. Un artist de valoare este preocupat să-și încarce percepțiile despre lume cu un sens, este un mare observator al naturii, nu poate doar să se distanțeze, ci trebuie să efectueze un proces de traducere în sens propriu, prin care să-și pună amprenta asupra sentimentelor, care sunt motivul tuturor evenimentelor umane.

Atunci când actorul lucrează într-un mod riscant, pe traseul cel mai dificil al performanței, întrebările se vor înmulți și vor fi mai dificile, dar și posibilitățile de aprofundare vor crește. Pe această cale vor apărea atmosfera, densitatea, gravitația, elementele naturale ale unei relații complexe. Simțul performanței, bazat pe logică și abilitatea de a relaționa, reprezintă construcția perfectă a unei povești încărcate cu detalii ce par poate neinteresante la prima vedere, dar care își iau treptat locul și capătă un sens aparte prin interpretare. Emoțiile au punctul de plecare în procesualitatea creativă, sunt cu totul unice și nu pot fi niciodată la fel la o altă ființă umană. (Quintanilla, 2010, pp. 36-38).

Héctor Mendoza a creat un **alfabet teatral** și a structurat o nouă formulă creativă pentru actor. Psihologia personajelor sale încearcă să descopere

bolile sufletești și preocupările umane, iar nașterea personajelor este văzută în semnificația pe care o are frumusețea umană ascunsă în cele mai întunecate dualități – fiindcă personaje cu astfel de dualități reprezintă în modul cel mai elocvent caracterul omului contemporan.

### References:

1. Aguilar Zincer, Luz Emilia (2007). *Voces de lo efímero, La puesta en escena en los teatros de la universidad*. Ciudad de México: Ed. UNAM.
2. Barba, E., Savarese, N. (2018). *Cele cinci continente ale teatrului, Fapte și legende din cultura materială a actorului*. București: Ed. Nemira.
3. Bețiu, Mihaela (2018). *Elemente de analiză a procesului scenic*. București: UNATC PRESS.
4. Castillo, Julio (1989). *Catálogo de obra*. México: Conaculta / INBA.
5. Cojar, Ion (1998). *O poetică a artei actorului*. Ediția a III-a. București: Paideia & UNITEXT.
6. Crestani, Antonio (2008). *Memorias de José Luis Ibáñez*. México: Ed. Milagro-Conaculta.
7. Darie, Bogdana (2018). *Arta actorului. Complex atitudinal în analiza interdisciplinară*. București: UNATC Press.
8. De Tavira Luis (2010) *Interpretar es crear. Cuadernos de Ensayo Teatral*. México: Ed. Paso de Gato.
9. De Tavira, L., Mendoza, H. (2007). *Medio siglo de teatro. Voces de lo efímero, La puesta en escena en los teatros de la universidad*. Ciudad de México: Ed. UNAM.
10. Ibsen, Henrik (1954). *Teatro Completo*. Traducción y notas de Else Wasteson, completada por M. Winaerts y Germán Gómez de la Mata, revisión y prólogo de Germán Gómez de la Mata. Madrid: Ed. Aguilar.
11. Mendoza, Héctor (2006). *El mejor cazador. La guerra pedagógica*. México, CDMX: Ed. Milagro-Conaculta.
12. Obregón, Rodolfo (2004). *Memorias de Ludwik Margules*. México: Ed. Milagro-Conaculta.
13. Olguin, David (2007). *Voces de lo efímero, La puesta en escena en los teatros de la universidad*. Ciudad de México: Ed. UNAM.
14. Quintanilla, Raúl (2010). *Estructura de la ficción, el estado de ánimo. Cuadernos de Ensayo Teatral*. México: Ed. Paso de Gato.
15. Torres Garza, Elsa Elia (2010). *Kierkegaard dramaturgo, el teatro y las mujeres. Una lectura kierkegaardiana en la dramaturgia de Henrik Ibsen*. Tesis de posgrado en filosofía. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, UNAM, Ciudad de México.
16. Unger, Roni (2006). *Poesía en Voz Alta*. México: Ed. INBA-UNAM.

### Online references:

1. Academia de Artes (n.d.). `Héctor Mendoza, Academico Honorario` [Online]. Available at: <https://academiadeartes.org.mx/miembros/mendoza-hector/> (Accessed: 03 May 2022)
2. Cartelera Teatral (2020). `Héctor Mendoza: maestro de maestros` [Online]. Available at: <https://carteleraдетeatro.mx/2020/hector-mendoza-maestro-de-maestros/> (Accessed: 14 May 2022)

3. De Tavira, Luis (2011). `Héctor Mendoza, In memoriam, la sonrisa del maestro` [Online]. Available at: <https://www.revistadelauniversidad.mx/articulos/49125bc2-b035-4edf-a4d9-61325cb3a869/hector-mendoza-in-memori-iam-la-sonrisa-del-maestro> (Accessed: 14 May 2022)
4. INBA (2020). `Héctor Mendoza, dramaturgo que cambio la forma de hacer teatro`, Bolentín INBAL No. 691 [Online]. Available at: <https://inba.gob.mx/prensa/14357/h-eacutector-mendoza-dramaturgo-que-cambi-oacute-la-forma-de-hacer-teatro> (Accessed: 09 May 2022)
5. La Jornada Semanal (2013). `Un Ibsen desconocido, por Victor Grovas Hajj` [Online]. Available at: <https://www.jornada.com.mx/2013/08/11/sem-victor.html> (Accessed: 14 May 2022)

Mexican PhD student **Víctor Iván López Espíritu Santo** is an actor and acting teacher. He graduated from the “I.L. Caragiale” National University of Theatre and Film in Bucharest, Romania, with a BA in acting, and an MA in Performing arts and is currently about to finish his PhD studies with a thesis entitled *Methods of Development of the Masculine Characters of Ibsen and Their Emotional Intelligence*. In 2011 he obtained a scholarship to study in Romania, he studied theatre studies and participated in various professional theatre plays and theatre tours throughout the country, but also directed several theatrical performances in Mexico. In addition to being an actor, he has collaborated as a cultural manager in festivals and in various cultural agencies, such as the Finnish Embassy in Bucharest or the Sibiu International Theatre Festival. As a teacher, his educational work consists of courses or workshops for schools and companies, classes in theatre, acting, Spanish language and culture, Humanities or Social Sciences, both in Mexico, Romania or Spain, working with children, adolescents and adults.

# **ESSENTIAL STAGE MOVEMENT** IN THEATRE DIRECTING

**ANDRA PANTEA**

West University of Timișoara, Romania  
*andra.pantea@e-uit.ro*

**Abstract:** The following study represents an incursion into the main directorial trends of stage movement in the performing arts. Starting with Andrea Perrucci and up to Anne Bogart the way in which the concept of stage movement is perceived evolves in different directions. The main operating methods used in the development of stage movement within the artistic creative workshop of the concept that is performing arts can be found within oneself (the physicalization of thought, imagination, stimuli, the “what if” question) and on the outside (physical reaction, topography, slow motion effect). The directorial approaches proposed for the creation of a character from a technical point of view are different but not without use as they do not exclude each other, instead they morph according to the needs of the person during the creative process.

**Keywords:** stage movement, stage thinking, situation, what if, physicalization, impulse, scenic time, stage rhythm, significant gesture, facial expression, mirror neurons, actor/choreographer training, imagination, the invisible made visible, slow-motion, stillness, body expressiveness, physical theatre.

**How to cite:** Pantea, Andra (2022). ‘Essential Stage Movement in Theatre Directing’, *Concept* 1(24), pp. 197-213.

In European theatre, stage movement and the expression transmitted using the body, has been a debate since its conception. Actors in the Ancient theatre written by the great Greek playwrights wore masks on stage (according to the gender of the characters and also according to the characters themselves) and *cothurni* with the purpose of making the actors look more imposing.

The plays based on elaborate stage movements are what we call *physical theatre*. Stage movement is generated by a *precise impulse* (Cozma, 2016, p. 67) of a trained body and can become through what it transmits a state of mind, an emotion, a thought (Cozma, 2016, pp. 56-57). This spectacular genre, that of the physical theatre, focuses mainly on the human body as the main element of the artistic creative process, and using the body’s movements tries to convey a story. The story is told in a physical form, without words, where movement and gestures are at the forefront. Within this spectacular genre we can find various examples of physical theatre such as: Noh Theatre, dance-theatre, mime and clown theatre. The possibilities of the physical theatre are endless.

Taking into consideration that the word “drama” means in Greek *action*, (Pavis, 2012, p. 125), the stage compels us to move in action. Stage movement represents a purpose of the action, the anchoring in the situation on stage. The predefined ritual that is the stage movement symbolizes the shift from one form of being to another, because of the constant changes that happen during the plays. The perception of time is altered when we look at objects in motion “according to the length of time that they are in motion” (Schafer, 2003, p. 19). Within the theory of movement (Schafer, 2003, p. 20), we can find *space, time, tension* and *the body weight* as main elements used to create movement. The time spent on stage during

the creative moments of a role or a certain situation is very hard to estimate from an actor's point of view while it is happening. When we find ourselves anchored in a stage situation or within our creative workshop the perception of time passed as far as duration is concerned becomes very difficult to estimate. In order for us to be aware of the time that has been spent we need to detach ourselves from the situation. Time is also a creative directorial construct when creating a play. Through *the rhythm* in which the actors move on stage the actual stage movement is created. When you are fixed in a moment, whether in play or daily life, time becomes quite subtle. Within an improvisation play or show, the actor is quite aware of the passing of time: "Time, the most difficult element to keep track of by improvisation actors when they work, can be their worst enemy" (Muscalu, 2019, p. 30). When talking about stage time from a creative point of view John Wright argues that: "We articulate meaning through the time spent on stage and we choose the right moment for a reply or an action through deviations, stops or changes in the rhythm." (Wright, 2016, p. 237) A good timing and control of movement can create powerful moments on stage.

Paul Ekman studies emotions while focusing on expressions and physiology (Ekman, 2011, p. 14). He classified emotions into seven different categories: sadness, surprise, fear, anger, disgust and contempt, happiness. By doing this he managed to identify and describe facial micro-expressions for each individual emotion. Through the study of people from different cultures he has noticed that body language and the expression of emotions are universal and are linked to biological evolution and are not a social or cultural aspect that we learn. Consequently, no matter where one is born, people express the same emotional palette. Theatre can be understood by the audience even if it is in a foreign language. Regardless of the language, those who watch understand the emotions that the actors convey because of the fact that they are universal for all people.

Joseph Messinger, in the description of his book *The interpretation of gesture* (2013) states that 7% of any form of communication is verbal, 38% is paraverbal (tone of one's voice, subtext) and 55% of communication is done through body language. Body language can transcend language itself, "every part of the body corresponds to an essential psycho-behavioural trait. The complex body postures that we can adopt can be translated using the symbolic meanings of the parts of the body that are involved in that posture" (Messinger, 2013, p. 21).



Emotions explained by Dr. Paul Ekman

Through body language and facial expressions, the spectators, no matter where they are from, can decipher what is happening on stage, thus theatre becomes a universal language. To better understand the communication process between actor and spectator, we can explain the act from a scientific point of view because there are certain aspects that change at brain level. Scientific studies show that *mirror neurons* allow for an emotional transfer: “Maria Alessandra Umilta argues that, because of mirror neurons, we are not just simple witnesses to the behaviour of others, we also borrow it, thus the observer and the observed share the same mind-body system during their interaction” (Umilta in Boldaşu, 2019, p. 19). The play becomes for the audience an involuntary communication (Boldaşu, 2019, p. 19) in which the observer’s brain reacts through empathy throughout the entire duration.

David McNeill (2005, p. 14) divides the concept of *gesture* according to the way it is used in: body gestures (a gesture that uses a common movement of the



body that is also accompanied by speech), speech gestures (gestures that replace parts of our speech), well known gesture (gestures such as the thumbs up for OK) and the last category are the gestures that are linked to pantomime (gestures that tell a story through body language). There are also gestures as a communication method – *gesture language*. The gestures that are expressed by our body are linked to our speech, its rhythm and also which geographic region we find ourselves in.

In 1699, Andrea Perrucci (1651-1704) notes for the first time in his book *A Treatise on Acting, From Memory and by Improvisation* (1982) the importance of the actor's body in the performing arts. Among the rules of acting mentioned by the author we must point out “rule number 11 – About the appropriate movement of the actor” (Perrucci, 1982, p. 95) which even at that time indicated the importance stage movement expressed through body language: “gestures a silent speech, sometimes it can express a silent act or a gesture, more so than speech itself” (Perrucci, 1982, p. 96). Even before Stanislavski, Perrucci, through his theory, transforms gesture and body movement into a psychological principle: “The hand should start its movement with a specific purpose and it should end in the same way” (1982, p. 96), anticipating the situational questions and wishing for a genuine theatrical representation. Taking responsibility for the gestures on stage is part of the character preparation: “When gesturing, do it in the image and likeness of the natural” (Perrucci, 1982, p. 96).

Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938), through the acting method he developed, wished to see actors play roles on stage in a credible way by using their emotions and physical actions. Stanislavski saw stage movement as being triggered by a move from within that transforms thought into action. “Art itself is born from the moment that the line that continues to unravel appears, the line of sound, of speech, of drawing, of movement”. (Stanislavski, 2021a, p. 36) The system he devised in his book *An Actor Prepares* (1926), the translation that introduced his method to the English speaking world, is based on two principles: the development of the character's inner being within the actor and the outside shell which is created through the relationship between the actor and the character (Stanislavski, 1958, p. 480). The interior-exterior stage scenes are triggered by *the magical “what if”* which “gives the impulse for the later development of the creative process of that role” (Stanislavski, 2021a, p. 115). Using his imagination and memory while living the action through this “what if” put forward by Stanislavski, the actor is invited into the performing reality of the convention. In those moments the actor is fully aware of the fact that he is on stage: “You will never love yourself on stage. You always act as yourself, a man who is an artist. You can never escape yourself” (Stanislavski, 2021a, p. 385). The actor plays with time through the way he speeds up or slows down the tempo of an action: “where

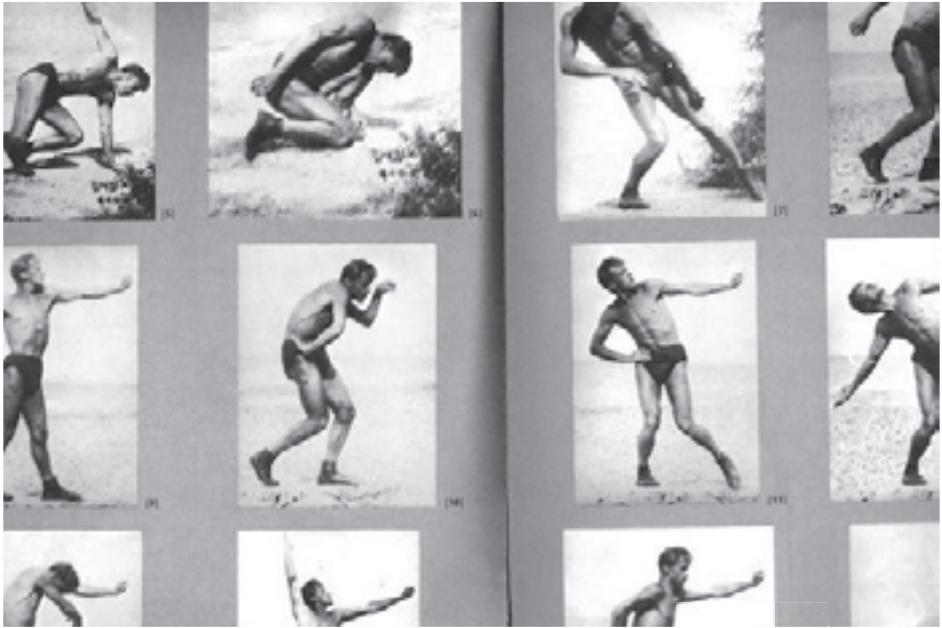
there is life there is action, where there is action there is movement, where there is movement there is tempo and where we find tempo, there we find rhythm.” Thus, in Stanislavski’s view “measure is the criterion of time... Measure is all time” (2021b, p. 211). Stanislavski’s system is the base of Meyerhold’s influence towards the idea that the exterior approach is a last composition solution: “if we cannot go from the inside out, then we will go from the outside in. Thus, we will use the organic connection between the body and the soul” (Stanislavski, 2021a, p. 465). Even Peter Brook took inspiration from Stanislavski regarding the performing art’s role of exposing the *invisible*: “there is an invisible world that must be made visible” (Brook, 2012, pp. 72-73). For the author of *An Actor Prepares* the importance of making imagination visible on stage is essential: “This art of ours has an exceptional importance: that of transforming the *invisible* creative life of the artist into something *visible*” (Stanislavski, 2021b, p. 10).

According to Gordon Craig (1872-1966), who opposed the current stage play promoted by naturalistic ideology, acting must be above personal and nervous sensibilities. Just like Denis Diderot (in his book *Paradox of the Actor*, 1830) he is of the opinion that the actors on stage should not be sensitive to the emotions of the characters played but rather have a lack of emotions in acting, expressed by symbolic gestures, going to the idea of a *super puppet actor* (Craig in Petrescu, 1971, p. 82). The actor, through his play, in order not to be a slave to the emotions on stage, should be understood by suggestion, not by incarnation and thus Craig pleads for the release of the actor (2012, pp. 71-93).

Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874-1940) believed that theatre is for everyone, and anyone can do theatre. According to the way two people talk, an observer through “plastic that does not correspond to words” (Meyerhold, 2015, p. 41) can understand their relationship. For him: “gestures, skills, looks, silence determine the truth of the relationship between people. Words don’t say everything yet” (Meyerhold, 2015, p. 42). He began his study of motion through the fixed form of physicalization of prototypes addressed in the Commedia dell’Arte. In 1922 he publicly presented his system of practical exercises (Braun, 2016, p. 225) designed for actors and called it biomechanics which was intended to be a study of time and movement (time-and-motion) that became at that time the training of actors.

Excitability is the ability to realize in feelings, movements and words a task which is prescribed externally. The manifestation of excitability – The co-ordinated manifestations of excitability together constitute the actor’s performance. Each separate manifestation comprises an acting cycle. Each acting cycle comprises three invariable stages: intention realization and reaction.

(Braun, 2016, p. 247)



*Meyerhold – biomechanics poses*

<https://thedramateacher.com/meyerholds-biomechanics-for-theatre/>

The first stage, that of intention is the conscious realisation of the requirement that comes from outside the performer, the realisation is through the individual movement of the limbs/mimetic reflex or *movement of the entire body in space* (Braun, 2016, p. 247) and the reaction that means the transition to a new cycle. The physical training of the actors was focused on understanding the moving body and included gymnastics, ballet, juggling, trying to physically exploit as many aspects of development as possible. It is important to note that the people Meyerhold worked with had a background in theatre. His developed *Biomechanics* system is explained by its maker as follows: “the whole body participates in each of our movements” (in Picon-Vallin, 2012, p. 94) and includes the division into segments that must be repeated until they become fluent. A movement also includes the pre-action movement, in other words the *contraction boom*: “Meyerhold further observed that there are three basic parts to every action: the preparation for the action, the action itself, and the precise end of the action” (Potter, 2016, p. 25). The movements become circular/cyclic, so the last movement of a separated segment of movement becomes the beginning of the next gestural sequence.

This approach to the acting game in which by acting physically you get to feel emotions on stage, is the opposite of the Stanislavskian one because he sees the actor's body as an extension of what is inside him. The concept of biomechanics is to train the actor: "Biomechanics is training. It's not something that can be transferred to the stage" (Meyerhold, 2015, p. 121).

In the spectacular vision (2014, pp. 20-21) of Tadeusz Kantor (1915-1990) regarding the movement of actors on stage, we notice that along with the action of the text in a theatre performance, there must also be the action of the stage. Concerned with scenography, he conceives the stage as a continuous place of metamorphosis and personification, from the animation of objects to the actor who becomes an animated model. The actor's play must be constructed in such a way that he is not emotionally involved in his opinion, thus reaching a greater or lesser degree of illusion on stage: "the actor's body and movement should justify every surface, every shape and line of the construction stage" (Kantor, 2014, p. 22). The actor becomes objectified, the actor-mannequin creates the impression that he is inanimate among other lifeless mannequins. In *Dead Class* (Kantor, Cricot 2, 1975) with the actors among the mannequins/dolls, the stage image is formed, influenced by the specific angle of the paintings, or the characters come to life emerging from the picture like in *Today Is My Birthday* (Kantor, Cricot 2, self-portrait performance that premiered after his death). We can see the influence of the practice of painting in Kantor's directing art. The stage becomes an empty canvas on which the situations are painted, sometimes the actions being framed exactly as in a painting. The movement of the actors being executed exactly as if the characters were aware in the stage picture that they are being watched by the spectators and making precise exaggerated movements with an assumed unnatural (*I Shall Never return*, Cricot 2).



*The Dead Class*, Premiere, Kantor, 1975

copyright <https://www.cricoteka.pl/pl/the-dead-class-premiere/>

Michael Chekhov (1891-1955) began his acting *lessons* by emphasising the importance of psychological and physical balance and the need for connection in stage practice: “Our bodies can be our best friends or our most feared enemies” (Chekhov, 2017, p. 15). He sought the *stage truth* through the *psychological gesture* that he interprets as the inner life expressed through the actor’s physical instrument, the body. Another essential component of creation in the technique proposed by Michael Chekhov is the imagination, the continuous dialogue we have with us and the projections we make inside towards the external reality. The actor makes the psychic experience physical. *The atmosphere* (Chekhov, 2017, pp. 71-79) of a scene can change the acting game, it captures the actor, makes him discover every time he performs the new nuances of the character played as long as he leaves an availability for outside influence.



*Michael Chekhov: The Psychophysical gesture and Imagination*  
<https://www.google.com>

Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) proposes a form of theatre that addresses primarily the senses and not the reason (hence the lack of a language based on words) to return to the ceremony, myth, magic beyond psychological realism. He wants the actor of his theatre to communicate through gestures and physical incorporation, not only through oral text: “Dialogue – in its written and spoken form – does not belong specifically to the stage, it belongs to the book... the stage is a physical and concrete place which requires to be filled, and that must be allowed to speak in its concrete language” (Artaud, 2018, p. 41). Artaud makes a comparison between Eastern and Western theatre (Artaud, 2018, p. 77), being deeply impressed by Balinese theatre. He perceives this spectacular form as free from the textual part of a representation, but as a physical embodiment, a return to the language before the spoken and articulated one. He explains Western theatre as starting from literature, not from myth and sacred. The ideal language of theatre from his point of view was one encountered in a

meeting point between gesture and thought (Artaud, 2018, p. 99). He wanted the spectators to be shocked and surprised and designed the *Theatre of Cruelty* to make them confront their own fears, to make them a lively and participating audience through the scenes of cruelty in which all their senses are stimulated. This form is intended to be more intense and powerful than life as an experience for the spectator.

Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999) wants the actor to remove the opposition of the body in physical expression by training in his theatre, which he calls *Laboratory*. He does not intend to create a teaching-learning system but only training. The end result would be to eliminate the difference between the internal impulse and the external reaction:

The impulse and the action work together: the body disappears, it burns away and the spectator will see only the series of visible impulses. Thus, we adopt the negative method – which does not mean a set of means, but an elimination of blockages (Grotowski, 2009, p. 10).

Thus, the actor becoming aware of his own body manages to control it, resorting to an inductive technique by elimination or what Grotowski would call the *holy actor* or the liberated actor, not by accumulating sets of clichés, tricks to create a role. The *poor theatre* proposed by Grotowski is made by eliminating the smoke and mirrors that create spectacular art, from makeup, lighting to the false bellies used by the actors and relying only on what the actors can build using their own bodies. The make-up in the *poor theatre* is created from the grimace mask of the actor's facial muscles using only his body. According to Grotowski, the actor's body is the first to be trained, his reactions, and then he begins the exercises for vocal expression.

Peter Brook (1925-2022) talks about the importance of training the actor's body: "An untrained body is like a discordant musical instrument, its box is full of unpleasant and useless sounds" (Brook, 2012, p. 35). For him, the most important ability of an actor is to incorporate the emotions (Brook, 2012, p. 86) that are not his but of the characters that he naturally plays in the convention of the stage (which has the ability to make it seem natural). Peter Brook tells us about the gestures of the actors made on stage that only when they are loaded with meaning and purpose become authentic. The stage is seen as an empty space by Brook, a space that can be transformed. This metamorphosis makes the actor, who populates it with his imagination and the way he behaves, to convey to the audience the story of where the character is. The actor's play focuses on the imaginary that becomes visible to the audience. By imagining that the actor is in a certain space, and acting and then reacting, the audience becomes complicit, and the connection is created, the audience believes the

likelihood of the scene and the stage convention is fully accepted. Theatre transcends the language and creates a code that the spectator receives only when it is loaded with meaning and with the presence of the actor (Brook, 2012, pp. 90-91). The presence of the actor on stage is important, he must “be there and then” (Brook, 2012, p. 90). When it is fulfilled, even as a silence inside him, the invisible theatre materialising through the sacred becomes visible. Theatre in his vision means action on stage.

Eugenio Barba (1936-) deals by means of theatrical anthropology with the study of “pre-expressive stage behaviour that underlies different genres, styles, roles and personal or collective traditions” (2003, p. 30). The *sats* impulse (“momentum, preparation... to be ready to... the moment when I’m about to act”) (Barba, 2003, p. 72) or waiting tense with slightly bent knees present in Asian theatre and in the technique of athletes (boxing, tennis, fencing, etc.) becomes a basic posture for acting as Barba remarks (2003, p. 26). The thinking is what is expressed through the actor’s body: “our sculpted body inside expands” (Barba, 2003, p. 84). The level that the actor must reach to be able to notice in the viewer this availability to create together, in complicity, is called by Barba the level of pre-expressiveness. It has two components: balance in action and the dynamics of the oppositions between different parts of the body, because the paradox, explains Barba, is that even while standing still the actor moves the spectator. The training of the actors within the Odin Theatre has evolved from group training to the development of individual training (Watson, 1988, p. 50) that Barba considers to be more effective because everyone has their own pace of development. The problem with training would be that the movements performed are not to become mechanical because that would mean to be *lifeless* on stage (Watson, 1988, pp. 49-60).

Robert Wilson (1941-) classifies the actor’s movement on stage by dividing it into curved-spiral movement, which consists of lines with right angles, and which can be born from the combination of the two types of movement, horizontally and vertically. The scene thus becomes a kind of moving painting with geometric shapes. The time on stage in his vision is of plastic origin and can be stretched, compressed. The director moulds the movement through differently approached rhythms that create a different rhythm of time than the one of everyday life.





*Rhinoceri* (2014) by *Eugène Ionesco*, Directed by *Robert Wilson*,  
"Marin Sorescu" National Theater, Craiova, Romania;  
Performed in Romanian; photo by Julian Mommert  
<https://robertwilson.com/rhinoceros>

Robert Wilson developed the concept of motion while standing still (Paul Kaiser, 1993): as we stand on stage we create scenes similar to those in the visual arts or become statues without being static. Even when we stand still, movement exists, because being alive means movement. Walking on stage needs to be re-learned. He explains how, when we learn to walk, we do so for fear of falling. If we break down the idea of movement, we notice the weight moving from one leg to another and in this attempt to maintain balance even the way we walk inspires the anxiety of losing our balance and falling that we carry with us from an early age. But we have to learn to step on stage. Once we mechanically learn to walk on stage we can overcome mechanisation. Walking on stage is artificial, when we accept that the scene is artificial, we become natural and freedom is born in the conception of Robert Wilson. His slow-paced performances give the actor, just like in the Stanislavskian plays, a depth of play in the exposed emotion. The actors feel deeply and thus the spectator does not miss any acting experience. The play is far from reality as a stretch of movement in chronological time and resembles the rhythm of a slow motion. This process is used in film technique to sometimes emphasise a certain action or in a parodic sense to create the effect of cinematic hyperbole with an effect on the viewer to arouse laughter. Due to the slow pace, the drama created on stage reverberates through the tension created in the spectator



without any ambiguity of situations. Through this procedure, the situations do not leave room for another interpretation, they become clear and taken to the extreme saturation of the spectator, become explicit by themselves. His performances become a form of trance for the spectator in which the time on stage and that of the spectator have another dimension. Hans Lehmann comments on the actor's body in Wilson's aesthetic as a decomposition of movement through the slow motion process used to such an extent that the actor's body becomes an *appearance* (2009, pp. 287-288), the actions remaining recognizable but performed in such a way that they seem unseen. In order for the stage movement to be complete, we also need stillness, sometimes the lack of movement becomes stronger for the receiver than its opposite. This pause is also called *the fixed point*, which tells us that something important is happening on stage or marks the beginning/end of a sequence: "We use fixed points instinctively in all nonverbal communications... in theatre we are more aware that we are manipulating meaning" (Wright, 2016, p. 238).

David Mamet (1947-) simplifies the acting game with short and clear instructions: "Never ask the actor or student to do something more complicated than opening a window" (2013, p. 38). For him, a performance must be as clear as a child explaining to a newcomer to playground the rules of the game (Mamet, 2013, p. 138). He teaches us a lesson about stage movement, saying that you are not allowed to move as an actor on stage when a character speaks or when someone, even the audience, laughs (Mamet, 2013, pp. 78-79). It is advisable to remain in a relaxed stillness, as it is not necessary to try by any means to physically cover a verbal pause. He considers it essential for an actor to physically train his body. By training the body of an actor we get "faith in his own ability to move and sit still, graceful and relaxed" (Mamet, 2013, p. 85). In his method of play, the actor must identify what each character of the play wants and act accordingly by physically manifesting (Mamet, 1997, p. 74). For him, "acting is a physical art" (Mamet, 1997, p. 80) resembling dancing and singing. The actor on stage reacts, he does not play (react-act). He tells us that the actor must look into the eyes and tell the truth on stage.

Anne Bogart and Tina Landau develop a practice-based working method for stage movement in *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition* (2006). The two directors approach the stage movement and the role of the characters from the outside, in other words the training is physical in the beginning. The movement they created is named *Viewpoints* and is divided into several categories: *Viewpoints of Time* (Bogart and Landau, 2006, pp. 8-13) that include – *Tempo* (how fast or slow the movement is performed on stage), *Duration* (how long a movement or set of movements lasts as a stretch), *Kinaesthetic Response* *Repetition* (the repetition of a sequence, which in turn is divided into Internal

repetition and External Repetition); the second category is represented by *Viewpoints of Space – Shape* (movement as representation, lines and curves or combined; after being placed in the stage space they can be *stationary* or *moving through space*), *Gesture* (*Behavioural gesture* that is divided into *Private Gesture* which are those gestures that we make only in intimacy and *Public Gesture*, that we make when we are looked at), *Expressive Gesture* (represents an inner state or emotion, memory), *Architecture* (the stage movement takes place in a space created by the set designer, solid mass or anything of solid consistency, walls, windows, texture or the texture of Light objects, and the shadows on the stage), *Colour* and *Sound* (the ambient sound of the scenery produced by the actor’s movement). To make the movement on stage even clearer, a plan of the scene and the movement of the actor are drawn through arrows and movement points. The development of the idea of *Topography* that includes the movement scheme of the characters on stage is very useful in developing a character sheet and memorising the movement on stage. The concept of Topography or painting on the floor is defined as “the design we create in movement through space” (Bogart and Landau, 2006, p. 11). Thus, the actor knows exactly the movement in space. If photography is painting with light, then performing arts become the painting of the elements in the spatial-temporal movement presented in front of the spectator. With the help of this method inspired by choreography we can develop the body expressiveness specific to the performing arts and we can overcome the language barrier and start training in a common language.

### **Conclusion**

The stage has always been a place of movement in which the bodies of those present conveyed stories to the spectators. The imaginary line that separates the audience from the spectator is all we need for a performance to unfold as the *Empty Space* (Brook, 2014), but also capable actors teach us:

Through his body, the actor can build play spaces where they do not exist, he can connect with people whose language he does not speak, he can integrate into a new group and, above all, he can understand others, and thus serve the purpose of his art. (Boldaşu, 2019, p. 34)

As forms of the expression of movement we can identify a realistic-psychological one developed by Stanislavski, Grotowski or Peter Brook, or the movement that invites reflection developed by Bob Wilson. Another form of stage movement or a continuous metamorphosis of the character, where the purpose of the movement is sometimes misleading or creating illusion is worked on in *Le Cirque invisible* (2005) by Victoria Chaplin and Jean-Baptiste Thierrée, which originally has the form of physical comedy, burlesque, slapstick that we find in creators like Charlie Chaplin, Rowan Atkinson or the characters created by Laurel

and Hardy, Benny Hill. A stereotype of the movement is also the clown character with his countless possibilities for stage creation. The stage clown embraces the freedom of movement and through his physicality aimed at arousing laughter conveys a message that is perhaps harder to digest:” Through the clown, heavy, political, social, educational messages are expressed more easily. The body of the clown is free, it can be any size, and because of its playful side, the clown can talk about anything” (Boldaşu, 2019, p. 59).

Regardless of the proposed poetics, the great theatre creators, starting with Andrea Perrucci and Bob Wilson, wanted the convention that was created for the movement on stage to be plausible, no matter how artificial, for the audience and the actor to capture the audience. Inviting the audience to either reflect or to be complicit, the actor juggles time, being aware of the paradox of being unaware of its passage as duration at the time of the action and being anchored in the present stage. Mircea Eliade observes that the present is the one that defines the ritual, even if it is re-represented in the ceremonies: “Every regular holiday means finding the same sacred time that was manifested at the holiday of the previous year or a century ago” (2007, pp. 54-55). As well as a participant in the performance, the actor is least aware of the interval elapsed in the moments of stage presence.

Whether we call it *sats*, *energy*, *rhythm*, *focus*, *impulse* depending on the context in which it is found in the writing of great theatre practitioners, we all talk about the same thing that *moves* the actor on stage and makes the audience constantly interested in life on stage. The revelations experienced by European theatre directors at the sight of Oriental performances based on the interpretation of signs change the theatrical expression of the actor by rethinking the concept of movement and stage action. Thus, performing art definitely comes out under the influence of the power of the word as a priority in stage creations, becoming an art of the present stage, not of literature. Returning to the origins of European theatre and ritual sacredness, the contemporary performance finds *dance* as a form of plasticity of the actor’s movement on stage.

To better understand the movement on stage in the current context of the development of a performance or in an artistic creation workshop, it is essential to know the directions proposed by the creators of different currents and to research their experience. *The more clearly students are exposed to movement training at the beginning of the work period, the faster the threshold of the stage language is exceeded.* The study of great practitioners and theoreticians is necessary to find the method that makes us feel comfortable in the approach on stage, to discover our own creative path. They can be used according to the directorial, choreographic requirements and options etc. Inspired by the methods proposed by the established authors, we can discover new ways of conceiving stage movement in theatre.

**References:**

1. Artaud, Antonin (2018). *Teatrul și dublul său*. București: Tracus Arte.
2. Barba, Eugenio (2003). *O canoe de hârtie tratat de antropologie teatrală*. București: Unitext.
3. Bețiu, Mihaela (2018). *Elemente de analiză a procesului scenic*. București: UNATC PRESS.
4. Braun, Edward (2016). *Meyerhold On Theatre*. Norfolk: Bloomsbury.
5. Brook, Peter (2012). *Fără secrete gânduri despre actorie și teatru*. București: Nemira.
6. Brook, Peter (2014). *Spațiul gol*. București: Nemira.
7. Bogart, A., Tina L. (2006). *The Viewpoints Book: A Practical Guide to Viewpoints and Composition*, 2nd edition. New York: Theatre Communications Group.
8. Boldășu, Romina (2019). *Despre expresivitate corporală în arta actorului*. București: UNATC Press.
9. Chekhov, Michael (2017). *Gânduri despre actor. Despre tehnica actoriei*. București: Nemira.
10. Cozma, Diana (2016). *Dansul efemer al acțiunilor actorului*. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.
11. Craig, Edward Gordon (2012). *Despre arta teatrului*. București: Editura Cheiron.
12. Diderot, Denis (2010). *Paradox despre actor. Dialoguri despre fiul natural*. București: Editura Nemira.
13. Ekman, Paul (2011). *Emoții date pe față*. București: Editura Trei.
14. Eliade, Mircea (2007). *Sacral și profanul*. București: Editura Humanitas.
15. Grotowski, Jerzy (2009). *Spre un teatru sărac*. București: Cheiron.
16. Kantor, Tadeusz (2014). *Scrieri despre teatru*, București: Cheiron.
17. Lehmann, Hans-Thies (2009). *Teatrul postdramatic*. București: Unitext.
18. Mamet, David (2013). *Teatrul*. București: Curtea Veche.
19. Mamet, David (1997). *True and False: Heresy and Common Sense for the Actor*. New York: Pantheon Books.
20. McNeill, David (2005). *Gesture and Thought*. Chicago: The University of Chicago.
21. Messinger, Joseph (2013). *Dicționar ilustrat al gesturilor*. București: Litera.
22. Messinger, Joseph (2010). *Interpretarea gesturilor*. București: Litera.
23. Meyerhold, Vsevolod Emilievici (2015). *Despre Teatru*. București: Cheiron.
24. Meyerhold, Vsevolod, Emilievici (2015). *Reconstrucția teatrului*. București: Cheiron.
25. Muscalu, Dragoș (2019). *Improv: Noțiuni de bază și exerciții*. București: UNATC Press.
26. Pavis, Patrice (2012). *Dicționar de teatru*. Iași: Fides.
27. Perrucci, Andrea (1982). *Despre arta reprezentației dinainte gândite și despre improvizație*. București: Meridiane.
28. Petrescu, Camil (1971). *Modalitatea estetică a teatrului*. București: Editura enciclopedică română.
29. Picon-Vallin, Beatrice (2012). *Vsevolod Meyerhold*. Timișoara: Atent.
30. Potter, Nicole (2016). *Movement for Actors*, 2nd edition. New-York: Allworth Press.
31. Schafer, Claudia (2003). *Limbajul corpului*. București: Niculescu.
32. Stanislavski, Konstantin (2021a). *Munca actorului cu sine însuși*. Vol. I, 3rd edition. București: Nemira.
33. Stanislavski, Konstantin (2021b). *Munca actorului cu sine însuși*. Vol II, 3rd edition, București: Nemira.
34. Stanislavski, Konstantin (1958). *Viața mea în artă*. București: Cartea Rusă.
35. Watson, Ian (1988). 'Eastern and Western Influences on Performer Training at Eugenio Barba's Odin Teatret', *Asian Theatre Journal*, vol. 5, no. 1, University of Hawai'i Press, 1988, pp. 49–60.
36. Wright, John (2016). *De ce râdem la teatru? O explorare practică a comediei fizice*, București: Nemira.

**Filmography:**

1. *Visionary of Theater, 1995-1997* (2003) Directed by Paul Kaiser.

**Performance references:**

1. *Dead Class* (1975). Directed by Tadeusz Kantor. Cricot 2.
2. *Today is my birthday* (1991). Directed by Tadeusz Kantor. Cricot 2.

**Images:**

1. cricoteka.pl (1975). *The Dead Class*, Premiere, Kantor, 1975 [Online image]. Available at: <https://www.cricoteka.pl/pl/the-dead-class-premiere/> (Accessed: 14 May 2022)
2. Mommert, Julian (2014). *Rinocerii*, Marin Sorescu National Theatre Craiova [image].
3. thedramateacher.com (2022). *Meyerhold – biomechanics poses* [Online image]. Available at: <https://thedramateacher.com/meyerholds-biomechanics-for-theatre/> (Accessed: 14 May 2022)
4. weheartit.com (2012). *Emotions explained by Paul Ekman* [Online image]. Available at: <https://weheartit.com/entry/29625467> (Accessed: 14 May 2022)

**Andra Pantea** is a graduate in theatre directing (BA in 2014 and MA in 2016 – Faculty of Theatre and Film, Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca), acting (BA in 2010 – Faculty of Music and Theatre, West University of Timișoara) and photography (BA in 2010 – Faculty of Arts and Design, West University of Timișoara). She worked as a teacher, play adaptation, actor and theatre director. She is currently a PhD student with a research focusing on *Directing Technique of Time Flow Symbolized in Theatre Scene*, and Associate teacher at the Faculty of Music and Theatre at the West University of Timișoara. For her Bachelor's Degree she directed the play *Canicula* by Antoaneta Zaharia which is still in the repertoire of the Mihai Eminescu National Theatre in Timișoara. Another directed play worth mentioning is *The Wizard of Oz*, a children orientated musical adapted after Frank Baum at The Merlin Children and Youth Theater in Timișoara.

# *I. RESEARCH*

## CINEMATOGRAPHY AND MEDIA STUDIES



**RECONTEXTUALIZING  
THE ICONOGRAPHY OF WAR  
IN CONTEMPORARY  
AMERICAN CULTURE  
THROUGH THE NARRATIVE  
AND THERAPEUTIC  
DIMENSION OF IMMERSIVE  
INTERACTIVE MEDIA**

**RADU-CRISTIAN POP**

UNATC "I.L. Caragiale", Bucharest, Romania  
*radu.pop@unatc.ro*



**Abstract:** The article represents an exploration of the various approaches to the themes of war in contemporary American popular culture, with an emphasis on the relationship between fiction and reality. In a media landscape that has been saturated with spectacle and violence, the reality of war tends to become minimized as iconography or genre, even while attempting a meditative approach on the subject. These themes are often explored within new immersive media – namely video games and VR experiences – both with the goal of entertainment, this aspect raising certain concerns about glossing over the consequences of the bombastic actions portrayed, and within military systems, with training and therapeutic applications. A particular interest is shown towards the cauterizing properties of deconstructing such a traumatic subject matter, for soldiers and veterans on one hand and for the general audience on the other, the latter having to face the social, economic, and emotional effects of contemporary war.

**Keywords:** War, American culture, cinema, new media, realism, immersion.

**How to cite:** Pop, Radu-Cristian (2022). `Recontextualizing the Iconography of War in Contemporary American Culture through the Narrative and Therapeutic Dimension of Immersive Interactive Media`, *Concept* 1(24)/2022, pp. 215-227.

### ***Introduction***

The following article aims to probe and analyze the relation between the audience and the realistic representation of war in contemporary media – especially cinema and video games, which find a midpoint in the still fresh medium of VR – from the perspective of the duality of realism and fiction. The premise of this study is that recontextualizing real situations, with ample social and personal impact, such as war, within immersive media experiences, contributes to the formation of a state of self-reflexive trance, therapeutically dissociative, permitting the categorizing and processing of harsh realities, traumatic elements or negative feelings. American culture and society have been, along the ages, extremely preoccupied and prolific with regards to illustrating and analyzing warfare – both the real and the fictional or mythologized. Therefore, both the academic resources and the media references shall come primarily – but not exclusively – from the USA, which can be seen as a contemporary epicenter of war culture.

The constant collaboration between Hollywood and the Department of Defense even has its own name – the military-entertainment complex, a logical yet ominous continuation of the term military-industrial complex, used by President Dwight Eisenhower in his 1961 Farewell Address, marking the end of his second term in office<sup>53</sup>. During the Cold War, Eisenhower would warn the public opinion about the risks of the proliferation of the influence of an economic and political conglomerate based on the industries of war. The major social impact that Eisenhower foresaw – which seems to have become a reality, solidified further by

<sup>53</sup> Available online at: <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/president-dwight-d-eisenhowers-farewell-address#transcript> (Last access: 09.06.2022)



the military actions and foreign policies of the USA in the post-9/11 period – concerns not only the civil society and the political class, but also the cultural sphere. This fact is further exacerbated by the ubiquity of military subject matter in American blockbuster films of the last decades. In response to this demand, the need arose for movie and video game studios to obtain authentic military equipment, forcing them to risk straying the media products towards propaganda for the sake of authenticity. Video games are especially targeted by this specter of militarization, promising their audience authentic warfare experiences strengthened by the allure of active participation.

Methodologically, it is necessary to define the relevant terminology pertaining to technical and aesthetic aspects of the contemporary media paradigm, starting with a term that is vital and frequently used in the discussion of interactive experiences – immersion. This notion of the sensory and intellectual submerging of the user – or player-spectator – in the fictional world of the piece of media discussed contributes to the elevation of the content to an almost mystical degree, akin to a trance on the edge between reality and fiction.

This article is concerned with defining a set of common coordinates for certain immersive experiences using as subject matter a very common topic for contemporary media – war fiction. Far from an exhaustive study on this very diverse and ideologically charged genre, the goal of this analysis is to identify instances of the iconography of war that are relevant to the concept of immersion within the discussed pieces of media, and to discuss them from the perspective of the sense of otherness instilled by the experience and the relationship between reality, cultural context and authorial vision. We will also discuss possible applications of these systemized relationships with the reality of war, particularly VR therapy for soldiers and veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. The same functional and methodological coordinates of this type of therapy, transferred onto the experience of regular players of military video games, reveal a special motivation for the attraction that war-themed games elicit in the general audience – the integration of the reality of war within a normal daily experience, through immersive fiction, with the goal of addressing certain fears and anxieties towards contemporary issues.

### ***Immersion and the substitution of reality***

In a virtual medium, the credibility of objects and the actions of characters, at least on a sensory level, is facilitated by the flooding of the senses through controlled stimuli – the VR headset literally obstructs the eyes and ears of the spectator or the player. This is a version – greatly amplified, but very similar methodologically – of the concept of *game feel*, defined by Steven Swink (2009, p. 13) as a part of the generalized toolset of video game design:

When players say “It feels like I’m really there,” “It’s like I’m in the game” and “The world looks and feels realistic,” they’re experiencing game feel as an extension of the senses. The game world becomes real because the senses are directly overwritten by feedback from the game.

On the other hand, our brain is extremely familiar with the intimate nature of those stimuli that it receives unmediated from nature, and the potential dissonance between our expectations with regards to an object and the technical limitations of its representation in VR is a sore spot that has been analyzed by both the theoreticians and the technicians of virtual reality. A certain dose of unlikeliness will always exist within a VR experience, albeit solely because of the equipment that serves an intermediary. Still, many theoreticians argue the fact that this evidence of fakery or unreality is inherent to the medium and is actually one of its strong suits, even strengthening the credibility of the fictional universe.

Janet Murray (2019, p. 99) defines this effect of submerging the spectator in a new world, known in video game parlance as immersion, thus:

We seek the same feeling from a psychologically immersive experience that we do from a plunge in the ocean or swimming pool: the sensation of being surrounded by a completely other reality, as different as water is from air, that takes over all of our attention, our whole perceptual apparatus.

Replacing the signals, we receive through our sense is but the first step towards complete submersion of the spectator or player in a created world. These signals must follow a series of coordinates with which the newcomer to that world should be accustomed. In her volume *Hamlet on the Holodeck*, Murray explores the relationship between the physical, real world and the fictional world of the game or the VR piece, which can be deciphered by analyzing the sets of symbols and stimuli that the interactive experience utilizes to offer a holistic emotion in a credible context. The spectator’s point of view and personal experience, in tandem with the intention and methodology of the designer or, rather, the storyteller, set the rules of this exchange and the precise spot where the border between these two worlds is traced. Murray (2016, p. 120) observes, regarding this relationship between worlds: “as an aesthetic value, a design goal for the interactor’s experience, immersion requires consistency and detail, and most of all a careful regulation of the boundary between the imaginary and the real”.

Certainly, the place where the distinction is made is vital for the veracity of the experience. Immersion is an almost mystical state, augmenting the feelings and sensations of the one living the experience in a context tailor-made for this purpose and understood as such by individuals in the audience. Immersive digital experiences do not differ all that much – apart from technologically of course – from a story told by a masterful orator, who can transpose the audience

in an almost religious state. Although in these experiences, this transposition is frequently strengthened by a social factor – for instance, a congregation united by shared beliefs – in the case of a VR experience, the intimacy of this immersion is underlined and amplified by depriving the spectator of sensorial contact with other people or the real world. A dose of intimacy is inherent to any immersive experience, be it a video game, a musical piece, a film or an electrifying spoken story. Still, during these deep dives within both the artistic piece and the corners of the self, the senses are not entirely fooled, maintaining the clarity of the person’s contact with a fictional or custom-built universe – or, at least, a universe that is detached from immediate and verifiable reality – which, as Murray (2016, p. 100) remarks, contributes, despite expectations, to the strength of the illusion:

In order to sustain such powerful immersive trances, then, we have to do something inherently paradoxical: we have to keep the virtual world “real” by keeping it “not there”. We have to keep it balanced squarely on the enchanted threshold without letting it collapse onto either side.

The otherness of fantasy worlds, especially those with an interactive component, is a fact that is never completely dissolved, and this is what allows a degree of emotional experimentation in the spectator or player that is akin to therapy – confronting dilemmas or complicated feelings in an environment that retains the sensory aroma of reality without the weight of its permanence, a controlled environment.

The recognition of an object or a situation as “real” is a very different area of study and interest than what constitutes the so-called “objective” reality of our conscious experience. According to Jesper Juul (2019), the verisimilitude of VR has a series of limitations that are inherent to its position in the contemporary media landscape, it being ultimately a technology-based medium custom built to deliver products that are eminently fictional.

Virtual reality is not, and is not becoming, indistinguishable from regular reality, and that is the point. There are many promises that technological progress is making VR indistinguishable from “the real thing”. Yet in actuality, VR, like all human art, is selective in the way it represents, and this makes a virtual reality object more readable, more predictable, more easily perceived as part of causal chains than regular objects.

This process of selecting content and perspectives is a cornerstone of design for any artistic experience that relies – acknowledged or not – on *mimesis*, from literature to visual arts and film. The interplay between the extensive descriptions and the symbolic and metaphoric language of a work such as James Joyce’s novel *Ulysses* (1920) doesn’t just aim to portray a day in the life of Leopold Bloom in an astonishing amount of detail for the sake of fidelity, but rather has

a goal in the selection and filtering of these minutiae both through the subjective sensory perspective of the protagonist and the equally subjective viewpoint of the author, to which it adds a metaphysical, mythological dimension meant to reorder the events, stimuli and concepts approached, using as fuel the previous cultural experiences that the reader and author share between themselves. A literary work starts from the baseline of the readers' complete sensory deprivation in the new world that it creates, reinventing and translating it through vocabulary, by building images, sounds, smells and tastes that, when carefully curated and blended, aim to immerse the reader in a world that is both new and recognizable or digestible in its internal logic, which is then placed in a cultural context with the role of symbolic translation.

A piece of cinema that is emblematic for this notion of immersion is Steven Spielberg's seminal film *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), especially the opening sequence, picturing the Normandy landings. The aesthetic choices – the chaotic camera moves, filling the screen with particles of sand and blood, the gory details of mutilated bodies, the infernal racket – are meant to simulate the point of view of a concrete observer on that beach. Recreating a real event with as much visceral fidelity as possible was meant by Spielberg as a tribute to the veterans of the Second World War, and for this purpose, the verisimilitude of the experience had to surpass the audience's expectations, getting as close as possible to an exact impression of the armed violence on that fateful day. Some of the most interesting reactions to the experience of viewing this sequence belonged to the veterans themselves, confronted through the film with their own authentic experience. Military veteran Roy Gass mentioned in an interview with CBS correspondent Sean Comey (1998) that "I was really happy the screen was there to block out the bullets". Richard Winter, a decorated veteran – and the real-life reference for the protagonist of the also Spielberg-produced miniseries *Band of Brothers* (2001) – said in an interview for the LA Times (1998) that "It's hard to talk to someone who wasn't there. It's not just the memories. They don't know what questions to ask". That level of specific detail represents an enormous contribution to the authenticity of the experience, while the otherness of the screen – or of the written page, or of the VR headset – provides that dose of fiction or acceptable imitation that keeps the experience within the realm of realism and not reality.

***Provocative and therapeutic fiction –  
virtual reality and video games***

Media products – through their aesthetic language, the inherent otherness of the perspective and the possibilities made available through their technical foundation – can have an enormous amount of power over the spectator’s emotions, and this power, distilled into the previously described element of immersion, may be used with a therapeutic purpose. Especially in treating PTSD, an immersive VR experience can be used as part of prolonged exposure therapy – a form of phobia and post-traumatic stress therapy that implies long-term contact with the source of the trauma or anxiety, in a controlled environment, under the guidance of specialists.

One of the labs using VR technologies and digital simulations both for the training of soldiers and for treating PTSD is the Institute for Creative Technologies (ICT), part of the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, founded by Richard Lindheim, a former producer for the science-fiction series *Star Trek*. Citing him in an article about one of the simulators developed by the ICT, Dan Leopard (2010, p. 132) describes the original mission statement of the department founded by Lindheim as already under the sign of fiction: “the Pentagon originally approached him to create a military simulation system saying, ‘We’ve been thinking of what the ICT should do. Very simple, why don’t you develop the holodeck from Star Trek’”. Although the applications of the developed simulators are as concrete as possible, the way in which these systems are still perceived by the unspecialized public grants them that fantastical status; that leverage towards immersion in a constructed reality is present, in this case, ever since the project phase for the experience, under the guise of a “very simple” science fiction device.

Albert „Skip” Rizzo is one of the most prolific researchers and therapists in the field of virtual reality as a therapeutic tool and has been, for a long period, associated with the ICT. Emboldened by the success of experiments using VR equipment for prolonged exposure therapy, such as *Virtual Vietnam* in 1997, Rizzo developed a number of VR experiences that were meant to reintroduce the victims of terrorist attacks (as is the case for the *Virtual World Trade Center* program) or soldiers returned from service back into their traumatic moments, using this exposure and recollection in order to stimulate and guide them in processing their emotional load. The procedure, as described by Rizzo (2015, p. 262), has the great advantage for clinicians of using “the latest advances in human–computer interaction to deliver consistent, controllable, and immersive trauma-relevant stimulus environments that do not rely exclusively on the variable nature and ultimately hidden world of a client’s imagination.” The quantity and nature of the memory’s details is controlled by the therapist not merely indirectly, verbally,

through suggestion, but by direct intervention, mediated by digital platforms, in an experience design process not unlike video game design. Strengthening this comparison, one of the most well-known and successful programs developed by Rizzo, *Virtual Iraq*, is based on a modified version of the popular military video game *Full Spectrum Warrior* (2004), itself originating as a simulator for the Armed Forces developed by the same ICT, adapted for the general market afterwards.<sup>54</sup> Much alike *Full Spectrum Warrior*, the *ArmA* series of video games – developed by Bohemia Interactive, a company whose main activity is, much like the ICT, developing simulations used in military exercises – is part of this category of military simulators, offering a large amount of details regarding the realistic experience of a squad of soldiers in real warfare situations and, thus, a very particularly authentic experience, destined for a passionate audience with a keen interest in military technology. In the same vein are the *SOCOM* series, developed with the direct involvement of the American Navy Seals, and the *America's Army* series, developed and distributed free of charge by the US Army, as a recruitment and initial training tool for young people aiming to enroll in the Armed Forces.

The attraction that armed conflict elicits in the video game audience is undeniable, confirmed by the resounding commercial success of military video game series like *Battlefield* and especially *Call of Duty*. Although both series started with a World War II setting – with *Battlefield 1942* (2002) and *Call of Duty* (2003) – focusing, with the guiding precedent of *Saving Private Ryan*, on a sanitized version of the soldiers' suffering in theaters of war, the next installments tried to vary the formula in order to separate themselves from the countless military video games set in the same era. The peak of the cultural relevance of the *Call of Duty* series was the fourth title of the series, *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare* (2007), set in fictional – but very plausible – version of the conflict in the Middle East, released during the American military incursions in Iraq and Afghanistan. This change of setting can be seen as an opportunity to meditate on the nature and the price of those conflicts, as much for the countries acting as a backdrop for these military fantasies as for America itself. Still, the drive to shock is undeniable, undoubtedly doubled by a financial motivation, a mechanism that is very familiar to the video game market through successful precedents such as the *Mortal Kombat* and *Grand Theft Auto* series, who are constantly followed by media scandals.

One of the missions in the game *Modern Warfare*, called *Death from Above*, takes place from the perspective of a control screen for a military assault drone. Just like its real-world counterpart, the monochrome screen in the game shows

---

<sup>54</sup> According to an interview of Rizzo for *The New Yorker*, may 2008, available online at: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2008/05/19/virtual-iraq> (Last access: 09.06.2022)

considerably less detail than the rest of the video game, making enemies and allies stand out from the background as vague white silhouettes, basic mechanical targets for the invulnerable player, whose sole mission is discerning between the friends that need to be protected and the foes that need to be killed. The nonchalance with which the player acts, based on these simple decisions, is emphasized by the radio chatter of their crew mates, offering indications and relaxed congratulations to the player, occasionally making jokes at the victims' expense. After the mission ends, the story continues in a different place, from a different perspective. Although the repercussions of the mission can be inferred by an educated and attentive audience, the lack of their explicit acknowledgement is a decision that is meant to file off the harshness of these events for an audience that's not interested in such subjects. Even more so as a result of such distillations of their purpose, games like the ones in the *Call of Duty* series earn their criticism for minimizing the real suffering on the war fronts in favor of macho stories and closed-circuit ludic interactions, prioritizing the player's pleasure above all else.

At the other end of the spectrum, we have *Spec Ops: The Line* (2012), a story based on the novel *Heart of Darkness* (1899) by Joseph Conrad, brought to the silver screen as one of the most significant anti-war movies, Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979). The goal of the game is an attempt to deconstruct the themes and iconography of American warfare in mainstream culture – specifically the Vietnam war and the conflicts in the Middle East –, focusing particularly on the consequences of the action that are glossed over or hidden by games like *Modern Warfare* – much like the mainstream media during the Vietnam war in the US. In a scene that is very similar to the previously described mission, Walker, the protagonist of *Spec Ops: The Line*, controls a white phosphorus mortar through a screen, using it to clear a path to the objective through enemy-controlled territory. Although the targets are again indistinct white dots, this time around we can see the character's reflection on the surface of the screen, superimposing the image of the aggressor directly onto the image of the acts committed. After an interaction that's very similar to the *Call of Duty* mission, Walker and his squad pass through the bombarded area, where they discover that many of the white dots that were hit were civilians, among them a mother holding her child, both bodies charred. This image haunts Walker, along with the countless atrocities he sees himself forced to commit in order to reach that nebulous objective.

Even though the gameplay loop in the game is intentionally very similar to recent titles in the same genre, the whole story of the video game analyses the motivations and consequences of these interactions and the acts of aggression and cruelty – that would be simply used as set-pieces or action sequences in other video games – with an emphasis on the moral and mental price that the



protagonists pay for the accomplishment of their mission. Walt Williams (2012), the writer of *Spec Ops: The Line* said, in an interview for GamingBolt:

“War is hell” isn’t just a saying. It’s true. You’d probably find it difficult to find someone who disagrees with the statement. And yet, we have allowed war to exist strictly as entertainment within video games. No other medium treats war strictly as a spectacle.

The self-referential ambition of this game to analyze the treatment of military themes in media proved however to not be a financial success, despite the enormous critical and academic praise. *Spec Ops: The Line* sold 0.42 million copies, according to *VGChartz.com*, compared to the 19.8 million copies sold by *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare* or the almost 31 million sales of the most successful installment of the series, *Call of Duty: Black Ops* (2010), according to *Statista.com*.

One of the theories meant to justify this large-scale usage of war – and, implicitly, violence – as an entertainment media product is catharsis theory, described by Asbjørn Grønstad (2008, p. 32) thus: “Those who subscribe to a theory of catharsis hold that the experience of watching fictional violence can be emotionally and morally beneficial, since it contributes to a purging of destructive impulses in the viewer.” Despite its coherence, this theory is not unanimously accepted as a universal explanation for this attraction. Nina Huntemann, based on discussions with players of these games, builds an alternative perspective, in which these consumers use the stimulation of aggression in order to actively respond to moral dilemmas and negative feelings. Within the simulations of armed conflicts, they do not superimpose the necessarily reductionist worldview of fictional scenarios onto the real world, but instead use it in a way similar to prolonged exposure therapy, in order to quench the anxieties that real and current wars – especially in post-9/11 America – elicit in a civilian audience, caught in the middle of a continuous mediatic and ideological war against the ineffable specter of international terrorism:

While players clearly do not wholly accept the ideology about militarism embedded in these games, they do not wholly reject it either. Instead, players use the sanitized fantasy, uncomplicated by ethical questions and the gory details of warfare, to calm the terror inside. [...] The clear-cut missions, infallible technology and visible enemies offer the player simplicity that does not reflect the confusing reality, another important appeal of wargames. (Huntemann, 2010, p. 232)

Therefore, immersion in such a subject, adjacent to reality, tailored by the producers and storytellers with clarity in mind – both narrative and mechanical – displays the potential of positive effects for people without agency in the armed conflicts that happen during their lifetime, serving as a platform through which



they can express – and, thus, address – the feelings they are struggling with. These experiences and the ones of the soldiers going through PTSD therapy with the aid of VR are far from being identical, but the parallels between them help us towards fully understanding the recontextualizing power that immersive media have.

### **Conclusion**

Processing a harsh reality, such as the experience of war, is a significant task, even more so in the case of actors in theaters of war – veterans or soldiers that took part in real-life combat, suffering from trauma on this account. In this article, we have probed one of the therapeutic possibilities that current technology can offer to these individuals, through virtual reality, analyzing the mechanics of this methodology – the notion of immersion – and underlining the presence of these mechanics in many other pieces of media that are available to a mainstream audience – military films and video games which, as is the case of the relationship between *Virtual Iraq* and *Full Spectrum Warrior*, are capable of going full circle, the game that derived from a military simulator becomes itself the basis for another military-use program.

The mythology and iconography of war, which these products use as a basis, is not meant to only be deciphered intimately by soldiers and veterans who, unlike an average consumer, have the resources and the vocabulary of authentic experience. This specter of militarism looms constantly over American culture, maybe most obviously through its iconography in cinema and video games, fields that also birthed some of the most potent meditations on this subject matter. Immersive experiences such as video games and VR programs can present the audience with the opportunity to process this intimate relationship with this ever-present specter, in a controlled environment, devoid of the real repercussions of armed violence, through technically mediated stories. As Murray (2016, p. 100) remarks:

A good story [gives us] something safely outside ourselves (because it is made up by someone else) upon which we can project our feelings. Stories evoke our deepest fears and desires because they inhabit this magical borderland.

From this liminal sphere, where the safety of observation can be blended productively with sensory stimulation, there can sprout the beginning of a creative deconstruction of feelings or ideas, a first step towards healing or self-actualization.

**References:**

1. Grønstad, Asbjørn (2008). *Transfigurations: Violence, Death and Masculinity in American Cinema*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
2. Huntemann, Nina B. (2010). 'Playing with Fear: Catharsis and Resistance in Military-Themed Video Games', in Huntemann, N.B., Payne, M.T. (eds.) *Joystick Soldiers: The Politics of Play in Military Video Games*. New York: Routledge.
3. Juul, Jesper (2019). 'Virtual Reality: Fictional all the Way Down (and that's OK)'. *Disputatio journal*. Available at: <https://www.jesperjuul.net/text/fictionalalltheway/> (Accessed: 09 June 2022)
4. Leopard, Dan (2010). 'Mobilizing Affect: The Politics of Performative Realism in Military New Media', in Huntemann, N.B., Payne, M.T. (eds.) *Joystick Soldiers: The Politics of Play in Military Video Games*. New York: Routledge
5. Murray, Janet H. (2016). *Hamlet on the Holodeck. The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*. New York: The Free Press. eBook.
6. Rizzo, A. et al (2015). *Virtual Reality Exposure for PTSD Due to Military Combat and Terrorist Attacks*. *J Contemp Psychother* 45.
7. Swink, Steve (2009). *Game Feel - A Game Designer's Guide to Virtual Sensation*. Burlington, MA: Morgan Kaufman.

**Online references**

1. CBS (1998). "'Ryan' Too Real For Some Vets", *CBS News* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ryan-too-real-for-some-vets/> (Accessed: 09 June 2022)
2. Garland, Jordan (2012). 'Aftermath: crossing The Line with Walt Williams', *GamingBolt* [Online]. Available at: <https://gamingbolt.com/aftermath-crossing-the-line-with-walt-williams> (Accessed: 09 June 2022)
3. Halpern, Sue (2008). 'Virtual Iraq', *The New Yorker* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2008/05/19/virtual-iraq> (Accessed: 09 June 2022)
4. Wallace, Amy (1998). 'Ryan' Ends Vets' Years of Silence', *LA Times* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1998-aug-06-mn-10608-story.html> (Accessed: 09 June 2022)
5. vgchartz.com (n.d.) *Spec Ops: The Line (X360)* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.vgchartz.com/game/41815/spec-ops-the-line/> (Accessed: 09 June 2022)
6. Statista (2022). *All time unit sales of selected games in the Call of Duty franchise worldwide as of October 2019* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/321374/global-all-time-unit-sales-call-of-duty-games/> (Accessed: 09 June 2022)
7. National Archives (2022). *President Dwight D. Eisenhower's Farewell Address (1961)* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/president-dwight-d-eisenhowers-farewell-address#transcript> (Accessed: 09 June 2022)

**Filmography:**

1. *Apocalypse Now* (1979). Directed by Francis Ford Coppola [Film]. American Zoetrope.
2. *Band of Brothers* (2001). HBO, September 9.
3. *Saving Private Ryan* (1998). Directed by Steven Spielberg [Film]. Dreamworks Pictures. Paramount Pictures. Amblin Entertainment.

**Ludography:**

1. *Battlefield 1942* (2002). Electronic Arts.
2. *Call of Duty* (2003). Activision.
3. *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare* (2007). Activision.
4. *Call of Duty: Black Ops* (2010). Activision.
5. *Full Spectrum Warrior* (2004). THQ.
6. *Spec Ops: The Line* (2012). 2K Games.

**Radu-Cristian Pop**, PhD student with the Doctoral School of the "I.L. Caragiale" National University of Theatre and Film in Bucharest, Cinema and Media department, has a foundation as an illustrator and animator, with a vast professional portfolio in the practical sphere of these artistic media, active as a partner and founding member of *Worksheep Studio*. He is also an associate teacher in the Animation and Interactivity department of the Film Faculty of UNATC, working for the Digital Animation Laboratory in the CINETic Center and a trainer for the most recent editions of an intensive workshop for animation called *Animation Worksheep*.

# **THE MYTH'S WAY BACK INTO THE BODY.**

## A VISUAL ANALYSIS OF THE ANTI-WAR FILM

**TUDORA CRĂCIUN**



Faculty of Philosophy Doctoral School, University of Bucharest, Romania  
*doraminodoraa@gmail.com*

**Abstract:** In this article, I will analyse from a psychological and philosophical point of view many sequences from the film *Come and See* by Elem Klimov. I will extract from each of them the parts that define their essence and construct a biunivocal correspondence between their cinematic representation and myths and archetypes (the myth of return, the myth of birth, the myth of the totem, the myth of the rescuer, the trauma of abandonment). Next, my analysis will focus on understanding the protagonist's unconscious confrontation with the collective trauma of war. I will present the connection between the methods that director Klimov used and the emotional intensity that the film's characters experienced and their refractory capacity towards the viewer. Coupled with an aesthetic analysis, I will offer a possible algorithm for deconstructing history and reconstructing different identities. An important part will be devoted to psychological observations on the main character and the unusual way in which the process of his maturation takes place. At the same time, I will delineate the vague areas in which personal history becomes the great history and the individual becomes only an instrument of its unfolding.

**Keywords:** Elem Klimov, collective trauma, myth, war, archetype, aggression.

**How to cite:** Crăciun, Tudora (2022). 'The Myth's Way Back into the Body. A Visual Analysis of the Anti-War Film', *Concept* 1(24)/2022, pp. 228-244.

### **Introduction**

*Come and See* is a Soviet film directed by Elem Klimov in 1985 whose screenplay written by Klimov and Ales Adamovich is based on the book *I Am from the Fiery Village*, co-authored by Adamovich. The English translation has altered the original meaning of the Russian expression *Idi i smotri* whose Romanian equivalent is *Du-te și vezi* as opposed to the meaning that would be obtained by going through the English translation, namely *Vino și vezi*. On the one hand, the original Russian version makes an obvious biblical reference, juxtaposing the hyperrealistic image of war with the detailed atmosphere in *John's Revelation*<sup>55</sup>. However, this apparent antagonism between the exhortations *go* and *come* suggests two issues: the first of an ontological nature, showing us the uniqueness of space and the impossibility of exiting it (whether we come or go, we will be in the same space), and the second of a psychological nature, inviting us to discover inner

55 "1. And I saw when the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four beasts say with a voice like thunder, Come and see. 2. And I looked, and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon him had a bow; and to him was given a crown, and he went forth as a conqueror to conquer. 3. And when he opened the second seal, I heard, saying, by the second being, Come and see. 4. And another horse came forth, red as fire; and to him that sat upon him was given to take peace from the earth, that men might kill one another; and a great sword was given to him. 5. And when he opened the third seal, I heard the third being saying: Come and see. And I looked, and behold a black horse, and he that sat upon him had a scale in his hand. 6. And I heard, in the midst of the four beings, as it were a voice saying: A measure of wheat a dinar, and three measures of barley a dinar. But of oil and wine thou shalt not touch. 7. And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth creature saying: Come and see. 8. And I looked, and behold, a yellow horse, and the name of him that sat on him was: Death; and hell followed him: and power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to slay with sword, and with famine, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth." (St. John the Theologian, n.d.)

otherness at the same time as that of outer identity - *come* implying participation with, and *go* indicating the bearing on one's own of the knowledge of the outside, i.e. war, which reminds us of the Heideggerian concept of *throwing man into the World* (Heidegger, 2002).



*Idi smotri* (1972).  
 Directed by *Elem Klimov* [Film].  
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0091251/>

Although the film apparently has many realistic elements that place us in Belarus during World War II, it goes beyond that and seeks to explain a wider mechanism. The images are of a war of becoming the protagonist, of coming of age and, in fact, of every man. The process of maturation is achieved through the concept of war as History mirrors, continues and dilutes itself in the life of each of us, and War, paradoxically, offers the simulation of the collective and makes the individual escape alive from personal war. It is war that fights against loneliness, ultimately generating loneliness. It is interesting to note the perpetual interchange between the series of major historical events and the micro histories of the participants, which are an illustrative example to Aristotle's theory of generation and annihilation (Aristotle, 2010).

### ***Is Come and See an anti-war film?***

A first step in answering the previous question would be to consider aggression as a universal given and to establish its relationship to social-political organisation. Everything could be rephrased in the following question: do political concepts trigger aggression or does aggression lead to a political concept that ends in war?

The personal mythology specific to childhood is confused to the point of identification with Soviet propaganda enhanced by the Nazi danger. Flyora, a 14-year-old boy, is at the centre of these events and his unstratified consciousness still produces numerous reversals of normal perception. He is the victim of three different types of aggression: the first is a vicious underpinning of his personality caused by the intrusive propaganda of the Soviet totalitarian state,

the second is war itself as a phenomenon of armed interaction, and the third, the most material, is the danger of being killed by the Nazis. Throughout the film we wonder how much of its essence can be deduced from its behaviour and whether there is an inalienable part of it. Can we consider it a canonical transition or a sudden entry into the strictness and discipline engendered by dictatorial wartime state policies?

### ***Collective trauma***

From the outset, we can note two related observations. The first relates to the ancestral cult of war, of violent conflict, and the second relates to its perpetuation through multiplicity and continuity. Thus, young people are shaped by the mechanism of fears and wounds to generate the enthusiasm to participate in armed conflict, and this mechanism is not an institutionalised one, but in fact one that is the consequence of collective trauma. Overlying this framework is the discrepancy between the hierarchical, fixed and precise structure of the military apparatus and the unpredictability of war. Thus, the extremely rigid orders that correspond to a fictional unfolding of the war become useless in the face of frequent changes in the reality of the front. For the soldiers, this only feeds their thirst for violence by trying to circumvent the meaninglessness through a form of extreme aggression that becomes their benchmark. Flyora becomes the typical exponent of the outcome of these causes.

The great strength of this production is that it melts the boundary between our opinions as viewers and the emotions of the protagonist. Basically, it makes us fall from the ideational plane of rational revulsion towards war to a more sensory, emotional one through perpetual deduction. This is made possible by the use of a film technique that forces us to be the ones who feel the greatest impact of the lines and sounds, i.e. to be in the place of the receiver in the film and not just an observer. The challenge initially posed by the film is even about how to conceive an epistemology of war: thus, while we initially have the intuition that we can only have Knowledge through books, documents or the collective mind, by the end we are suggested that war is the kind of element that can only be known from the inside out and not the other way around.

Another initial reflective theme resulting from the first part of the film is Flyora's ontic grounding and one's personal attempt to decry how much of one's innermost forges are original, unique, pure or are the effect of the environmental, social and biological conditions to which one invariably subordinates oneself. All of these are metonymically represented by the strong but lacking in rational and layered arguments desire to go to war. One possible explanation for the boy's positive mood about war would be the age-induced inability to have a vectorial

dimension, i.e. to be himself Origin. According to Presocratic theory, Origin *comes from the front* (Vlăduțescu, 1998), so Flyora will be able to determine himself only after the maturation process catalysed by the war, which will also have a backward effect in time and he will become what he was.

### ***The myth of return***

Stillness, desolation, clarity, smothering, dust, heat, living and lots of hiding – these are the coordinates that make up the skeleton of the first part of the film. The pressing, defiant stillness that comes from an attempt to mimic normality reinforces our conviction that an inevitable drama is about to unfold. Only in the strangeness of the familiar can a credible tragedy grow and develop. We are conditioned not to tolerate the lack of change, so in this unfamiliar environment we seek to invent huge problems and then be in constant search of tailor-made solutions. And we can do this peacefully since failure is impossible with the knowledge that somewhere on that yellow hill where childhood rests, the problem we created is and is not. This is where our de-bonding struggle to experience two contradictory hypostases of ourselves begins: the torment of joy and the joy of torment, and the fact that they are glued together makes us unable to choose.

In the first frame, someone is talking, we don't see his face and he is critically contemplating the children's play towards him, his annoyance seems to come from the fact that hiding the children from him makes him look into a mirror and remember that he is also hiding from the reality of war. So, in the face of war and behind it we are all children. Speaking directly to the camera we are visited by the old man's warning *Play, play, they will find you anywhere*. So, they are no longer just the Nazis, not even just other people, but they are those from beyond, those from beyond the edge who come to leave us without our selves. After this warning the children's play becomes a satire of the world of grown men and a parody of their sequential way of understanding the world: the first child comes out of his hiding place, dressed thickly, his voice finished, imitating the weight of a grown man attacking the demands of the old man, fed up with him.

The successive rotation of the foreground of the camera, first towards the children, then towards the old man, but also towards the spectators, is transposed filmically in the dissolution of the essence of the characters: the old man scolds the children who in turn scold the old man, and we see all this objectively while we too are scolded, beneath this triad hiding repulsion and anger towards the German invaders who, besides occupying their territory, seem to steal their lives, to alter their specificity. There is always a countertransferral relationship, a role reversal between us and the film's characters. The frames shifted in certain lines make us the judgmental ones about aggressive actions on our part, or the ones



seeking to escape suffering. Our identity doubles, we are both those presented as the invading enemy and those who are invaded.

The aggregation and crisis of finding a weapon becomes the first mark of collective thinking, that without a weapon you cannot become a soldier fighting for your country. The act of looking for a weapon in lands where people have been killed, further emphasizes the collective influence to continue what others have started. Unearthing the true artifacts that were not represented by the weapons, but by the purposes of the dead.

The seemingly quasi-static setting of the field in which the children seem merely material dots is tantamount to demonstrating that each small, dusty child, low to the ground, is in fact a whole field itself, and the field is a huge, breathing old child. The children's acute desire to sink into the earth stems from a premonition, not of inevitable death, but of the myth of an eternal return to a planetary womb that could only be found in the earth, next to the remains of ancestors. They bury themselves in the earth and are born happy that they have managed this time to remain unnoticed.

Finding a rifle becomes more than just a mechanical instrument, it marks an event of great significance. From a Nietzschean analysis, we can equate the embodiment of the gun with a Zarathustrian contact (Nietzsche, 2012) producing his transformation from human to superhuman soldier. The weapon thus acquires organicity and becomes inseparable from the fulfilment of its destiny. From another perspective, the Absolute Spirit that is self-conscious through the unfolding of History has a brief moment of incarnation in Flyora, illuminating his destiny. The last perspective of this situation shows its importance by cancelling a collective predestination (which transcends the biological framework), without affecting its outcome, but in a more fundamental way by transforming it into a personal decision, he is now the binder through which the self falls into the Common. The despair at the moment of departure is not only evident from Flyora's mother's heavy monologue. A greater impact on the viewer is made by the slow, hypnotic alternation from one leg of her body to the other, simulating a baby's rocking motion. In her and her son's case, however, it was a belated rocking, leading not to sleep but to death.

***“Let the noble anger grow”***

If at the beginning the whole camera space emphasizes the action on the ground and the interaction of the characters with the earth, throughout the journey with Flyora's wagon to the front, the sky is followed. This choice symbolically marks the boy's longing not so much for heroic death, but for what comes after it, namely rebirth. The haste with which he contemplates this is generated by a certain characteristic of the war that he already feels, the

condensation of time, in Marin Preda's terms: *Time had no patience* (1955). The inner heaviness is figured by the ill-fitting clothes, the rifle etc. The clothing also comes from a dead man, which represents the assumption of the being of the big dead man. The strangeness comes only when one of the soldiers tells him that he has found more suitable clothes from a living man, the ability *to be suitable* being dependent on life, i.e. death.

Passing a nurse makes him stop and look more closely, sensing danger, but is interrupted by *Keep going, keep going, child*. This line has a whole history in the collective imagination and takes many forms. In cinema, its emblematic version is *Run, Forest, run!*, in literature the embryonic form of this line is found in the repeated exhortations to the hero in the midst of trying not to go back to somewhere or not to perform a process repeatedly. The most illustrative example is in *Youth without Old Age and Life without Death*<sup>56</sup>, in which Prince Charming is warned not to go to the Valley of Sorrow because there he will find death. The basis for this is the mythological vein, specifically the Orpheus myth which tells how Orpheus<sup>57</sup> fails in his attempt to retrieve his wife from Hades' inferno because, lacking confidence, he breaks the deal at one point, stops walking and looks back, making sure Eurydice follows him, leading to her irrevocable loss. The line is not just for this moment, but is ubiquitous to the child's life.

The monotony of the frames is broken by a scene cut from commedia dell'arte<sup>58</sup>, its ingredients, some burlesque, carnival-like: good cheer, partying, a painted cow, a small cannon, all culminating in a final shot before a final war.

The third coming-of-age situation for Flyora is a tense moment, his obedience to a first order given by his superiors. He doesn't shoot anyone who comes

56 "When the masters of the house accompanied him, they gave him permission to go through all the places around, wherever he pleased; but in one valley, which they showed him, they told him not to go, for it would not be good for him; and they told him that the valley was called the Valley of Weeping... You have passed, you wretch, into the Valley of Weeping! they said to him, in a fright." (Ispirescu, 1985)

57 "Distraught with grief, Orpheus asks the gods for help to restore his beloved. But heaven is silent. Orpheus then decides to go to the land of shadows himself and, after many adventures, overcoming all obstacles with his enchanted lyre, arrives at the dreaded Hades. Hades, enchanted by the beauty of his music and lyrics, is won over and promises to let Eurydice follow him into the world of the living, on the sole condition that he, Orpheus, goes before her and does not look back at Eurydice until they have left the world of shadows. Nearing the exit, Orpheus fears that Eurydice has lost her way and turns his head, but all he can see is his beloved, arms outstretched to him, slipping back into Hell. In his impatience, Orpheus has forgotten that they both belong in the upper world, and the moment he steps into the upper world, he turns to her to see her. Eurydice disappeared a second time, this time forever." (Mitru, n.d.)

58 The actors of the commedia dell'arte, despite the lack of strict scripts, always knew how to improvise, how to appeal to everyone, and not only to the intellect, but also to hearing and seeing, i.e. to immediate perception, as entertainment. Extraordinary jugglers and mimes, virtuoso singers with their mouths or very different instruments, exceptional dancers and acrobats, the actors mastered their souls and bodies, their voices, bringing out the wonders of their performances, their signs alongside movement, music and voice, the costumes forming the symbols so telling of their art. (Wikipedia, 2022b)

at him without saying the password, demonstrating his inability to be in faithful touch with reality and able to meet the rigors of frontline discipline. Essentially, he refuses to take on the task of killing and the only way he can do it is by perpetual procrastination. His reluctance also stems from the confusion that is aroused firstly by his lack of appreciation of life, and secondly by the multivalence of any man, namely the distance from comrade to adversary and vice versa being however small.



*Idi smotri* (1972).  
Directed by *Elem Klimov* [Film].  
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0091251/>

The washing of the pot with boiling water refers to a concrete visualization of the inner tension of what a man's life on the battlefield represents, a tension that the boy has to understand in the new situations he has to be part of. The child carries with him an extraordinary unease about what is going on around him, executing orders, but is almost transparent.

The action of the girl who comes and throws flowers on him has a symbolic charge and refers to the moment when women bring flowers to the grave of the man who met his end on the battlefield. Now we have a warm body, from an earth still warmed by fire and bombardment, a body still alive but destroyed by war. The frame of the washing of the cauldron is interrupted by the frame in which a large piece of flesh is removed from it, what remains of the men who died in the field, from whom we eat and carry on the desire to defend in their name and that of the country, we revive them through us, we perpetuate the struggle.

In the preparations for departure there is a time when the child has to change shoes with someone else who would be more able to use the new equipment. In the apparent macro-accuracy of moving to the front, he chaotically sets off alone, trying to keep up with his regiment, and steps on a nest of eggs, which seem ready to hatch – confirmed when he turns his gaze and sees among the remains of the nest a crushed skull. His first kill, on innocent, unbelieving beings, makes him aware of the gravity of the disaster caused by the war.

In the cracking of the eggs, a visible transformation will occur in him and he will identify with the shape of the wrinkles that will appear on his face. The profound impact is that Flyora unconsciously tramples and destroys himself, his family and his village in the same way that the war outside had done. His interaction with the land undergoes a metamorphosis, as in his march he comes *to struggle* with a swamp that keeps him close to the ground, makes him self-destructive, transposing himself into the image of unborn children towards whom he now feels no guilt and considers himself more of a hero. He cancels their existence and saves them in the most radical form from the perpetual and thorny suffering of participation in the conflagration.

His exit from the swamp is simultaneous with his entry into the forest and his encounter with Gloscha, a girl who seems more mature than him and who comes to embody the sublime of destruction, the creative capacity for chaos, psychosis, hallucination. The first interaction between the two is under the sign of lability and Flyora's introduction into her psychological sphere of influence. With the bombardment, their inner tensions also explode, giving way the next day to a strange distance between them and their selves.

The ternary appearance of the stork has multiple meanings. The first has a very obvious nationalistic side, the stork being a national symbol of Belarus. On the other hand, we know about Himmler's<sup>59</sup> plan to use storks from 1942 to spread propaganda material in favour of Nazi Germany. Incidentally, it is no coincidence that this bird, with its apparently protective attitude, never flies. Drawing on ancient Egyptian tradition<sup>60</sup>, the stork is a symbol of personality and also has a locative dimension for the spirit of the deceased. Thus, it is suggested that dead soldiers still protect combatants in battle, which is in keeping with its status as a national symbol. If we recall the scene of Flyora's destruction of a bird's nest, we can speculate that the stork is experiencing a veritable Stockholm syndrome<sup>61</sup> trying to protect to the point of sacrifice

59 In 1942, Heinrich Himmler sought to use storks to carry Nazi propaganda leaflets in order to gain support for Africans in South Africa.

60 The white stork, because of its large size, predation on pests and because it nests close to humans, has had an important impact on culture and folklore. In ancient Egypt, it was associated with *ba*, 'the soul', whose hieroglyph was. The Hebrew word for this stork is "חַסִּידָה" (*chasidah*) and is derived from "חָסֵד" (*chesed*), "kindness, mercy", in keeping with the belief that the bird is known to be helpful to other members of its species. Greek and Roman mythologies describe storks as models of piety for their parents, who do not die of old age but fly to islands and take on the appearance of human beings. (Wikipedia, 2022a)

61 Stockholm syndrome describes the behaviour of an abducted or captive victim (e.g. a child) who, over time, begins to sympathize with the abductor (e.g. with the parent with whom they live). Captives begin to identify with their captors as a defensive mechanism out of fear of violence. Small signs of kindness from the abductor are amplified, as in a captive situation, lack of perspective is impossible. Escape attempts are also perceived as a threat, since in an escape attempt, there is a high risk that the abductee (e.g. the child) will be harmed and injured.

the aggressors. The technique of muffling the sounds we expect to hear and replacing them with jazz passages produces a dissonance between the sounds we naturally expect to hear and the artificially and methodically introduced rhythms. Transgression is meant to take us from the externally produced sound to the internal artificiality with which they want to smother reality. The same process is used in animation productions and circus performances in an attempt to work with the most indivisible parts of our perceptual apparatus.

His journey is hallucinatory, both for us and for him, it becomes an initiatory one. Lost from his regiment, lacking even the coordination he originally had, Flyora decides to walk home with Glosa. Once there, we can hear the loud buzz of flies and the image of the sisters' puppets lined up as if in a firing squad is emblematic. The state of delusion is also maintained by finding some hot food in the oven of the house and makes Flyora ignore the total absence of family members. The order, the stillness and the strange property of life to be remnant lead our intuition to believe, apparently without good reason, that a massacre has taken place.

For a few minutes, all that follows are incremental actions of the inexplicable. Flyora gives his almost physical helplessness a contest, manifested for example when he doesn't see the pile of corpses behind the house right in front of him. As in any crisis situation, the boy wants to take a reverse time trip that ends up wallowing in spatiality. The wallow being both that in the swamp (its viscerality refers to the earth's womb in which all are born and die) and that in the difficulty of choosing the route to a ghost destination where his parents would have taken refuge. The hinge in the boy's logic comes from the tacit assumption that the imminence of death is discreet, that it is, even in war, the exception. Then it becomes clear that we have proof of a place where his family could have been saved.

### ***Myth of birth***

An important metacharacter is the swamp, which we will briefly analyse. The swamp is the ancestral fecund pattern of the world, i.e. it takes the organic form of all beings that have died, it does not swim in mud, it swims in the organs and flesh of the dead. The swamp is red, it is the congealed blood of the dead. Glosa and Flyora's movement through the swamp is a gripping one. Their screams cannot be heard, we only see the micro facial expressions and chaotic movements they make out of a desire to escape. Everything is weighed down by the abundant presence of muffled war sounds. Although it is quiet, we are not spared the presence of their cries, the silence is generated by the suffering inside the man who no longer has the intention of externalising himself, but only to endure until the moment of escape. In relation to the swamp, the shotgun undergoes an alchemical process and highlights its presumption as a phallic

symbol as the *great placenta* of the swamp is forcibly and desperately cut away by the boy with the shotgun – it is the imaginary cutting away of a first birth of the world and the rebirth from it as an escape. Terrified of Flyora's madness, Gloscha can't take it anymore and tells him the truth that his family is dead. In desperation he throws her into the mud, to endure the cruel reality he tends to kill the only source of rationality, if Gloscha dies, so does the truth about his family.



*Idi i smotri* (1972).  
Directed by *Elem Klimov* [Film].  
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0091251/>

Burdened with hellish chaos, the character who appears seems to be an almost biblical saviour, treads on a watery moat, but without drowning in it, he appears as if he is treading water. Driven mad with horror, he makes the break between delirium and reality and pulls them out of the hallucinatory morass they seem to have been in for quite some time.

On his journey he comes across a group of survivors from his home village. It is an emblematic moment, this movement of always returning to the origin, in his case – the village and the people he knows, and then being able to go further and further away. The celebration of the interaction between him and the villagers has something of the festivity of a remembrance that is his, his family's, his pre-war life, his country, his childhood.

The reappearance of the old man comes to close the cycle of the apparent curse he had formulated at the beginning of the film. His warning suggested from the beginning that disobeying the boy, more specifically digging up the dead, would lead to the loss of free will and placing him in a spiral of predestination, so he would have to continue their destiny, war, life and death. Flyora's perception of war is like his general perception of happiness, in that he sees all its consequences, all its horrors, but he always misses the moment of transformation, the moment when they occur; it begins to seem hallucinatory that things were ever otherwise and that the war brought about their change just as we can honestly speak of happiness only in recollection and never in the present. There is a reversal of

qualities and now the becoming normal in war seems to produce its atrocities, thus externalising the grotesque attribute of war, becoming merely a consequence of its installation on the ordinary.

In shock, the boy begins his own flight to nowhere, accomplishing this through a total temporal deconstruction accomplished through the instrumentation of two legendary vehicles. The first derives from the Christian tradition which assumes our material, bodily genesis as coming from the earth, and the second is itself a ground on which the first comes, namely the belief that the earth in its fecund state is a primordial, mitochondrial mother who gives birth to us but also sustains our subsequent life. In practical terms, Flyora unites legendary realities with his present state of shock by violently digging a hole in the ground, the same ground in which he was born, in which he searches for weapons, in which his slain soldiers were buried, was the only spatial landmark that not only stopped his existence, but also nullified it, thus altering both past and future. We can also observe the presence of a saviour complex, a certain Christ-like reference, Flyora irrationally feeling guilty for the war and guilty for Death. His physical as well as mental helplessness caused by his age makes him cut short rational paths and identify with the scapegoat. The women who mourn his death prefigure the selfishness of the people in the community who are constantly evading small, individual dramas and refuse a total knowledge or perspective. Thus, they would be able to repeatedly give birth to Flyora even at the risk of always giving birth to him dead.

### ***The primordial imaginary – Totem***

Suddenly, all the villagers begin to have a coordinated action to make a statue, a totem. The presence of numerous enemies around them increases their nervousness so they act against our intuition and want, through this statue, to achieve a phenomenon of reversal, of the passage from the Multiple to the One. All the soldiers become one, and this totem is the caricatured image of the Nazi in their altered vision of hate and fear. The trauma of war causes them to pay heightened attention to the facial elements of the totem, and the result is an installation that bears a striking resemblance to Hitler. In doing so, their hatred is spared as the construction of the totem empties the depicted character of humanity, and they can subject the statue to any torment as it is the image of a man's image, reflected in the terror it produces.

### ***The trauma of abandonment – loss of identity***

Flyora's departure with other comrades-in-arms on a pilgrimage with the statue through neighbouring villages marks the beginning of tragic events. They come under attack from enemy aircraft and only Flyora and Roubelj survive.



Arriving in the first village in a chaotic effort, they steal a peasant's cow but are soon surprised by an artillery attack in the forest. Importantly, live ammunition was used during the filming and the death of the cow also takes place in real life. The dynamic framing of the cow's eyes<sup>62</sup>, looking up at the sun that becomes a shell, and the sounds she makes, have the effect of greatly sensitising the viewer. As in most situations, Flyora is again left alone in a succession of journeys that he begins and never manages to finish.

Aiming to hide from the Germans, the boy formally integrates into a peasant's family, losing his identity, he becomes one by one the peasant's dead son or grandson. Under Nazi occupation, the whole settlement is a scene of a total and absurd spectacle, a voice from a megaphone ordering the villagers where to sit and taking care to tell them the story of what will happen next. There is a terrible contrast between the crypt-like atmosphere inside the houses and the forced celebration outside. As the two atmospheres seem heterogeneous, it takes the stylistic artifice of breaking a window to condemn everyone in the house to collective joy. The whole performative structure is intended as entertainment for the commander of the regiment occupying the village. Among the absurd and parodic demands of the megaphone voice are washing, festive dressing, mock joy etc.

For the German group that arrives in this village everything is seen as a reason for amusement, including a simulated medical check on a dead man brought by them as a warning to anyone who violates the orders of the German commander and country.

A picture of a cruel massacre is then depicted, as the villagers are forced to leave their children in the village church, which is later burnt down, and machine-gun fire is fired at it. The scenes seem a syncretism between the writings of François Rabelais and the paintings of Pieter Bruegel. The music blaring from the Major's car and the obsessive appearance of a plane, which seems to exist only in the boy's mind, internalize the whole action, so that each dead child increments his perpetual death.

### ***The myth of the saviour***

In a confusing twist of fate, Flyora wakes up in a forest and remembers where he had hidden his gun in the village. He goes to retrieve it and "repairs" it using a leucoplast. The fact that he considers this repair to be essential and does it

---

62 "The eye or the gaze is always linked to transcendence, a fact that both universal mythology and psychoanalysis have noted. A philosopher like Alquié grasps this essence of transcendence which serves as the basis of visual perception: 'Everything is visual perception, and who would not understand that visual perception is only possible from a distance? The very essence of human vision introduces a certain separation into visual knowledge...'" (Durand, 1998, p. 149).



with methods specific to a man proves once again the humanisation of his weapon in full connection with the mechanisation of his own person. He turns himself into a cog of the great war machine, and his rifle becomes an indeterminate human hybrid, a death-creating waxing of man. The altered perception of reality is also suggested by the boy's obsession with repetition and uniformity, so that all women become Glosa, all the words they say or don't say are her words (*to love, to have children*). But the overlap of people in his psyche seems to cross this threshold, suggesting that Glosa, the old man, the imaginary plane become One.

Towards the end, the propaganda component of the film appears, namely the emphasis is on the noble character of the Soviet soldiers and their respect for the procedures and rules of war when they take prisoner some German soldiers. The obvious contrast is drawn between the formalism with which the Soviet soldiers act in condemning the Germans to death as opposed to the pleasure, amusement, sadism with which the Nazis killed the civilian population.

Before leaving – a child who, like Flyora, carries a suitcase full of bullets and a new rifle, symbolising the continuation of the cycle of war. A pivotal scene that occurs in the film's denouement is the end of the boy's attempts at self-annihilation, this is now made possible by projecting himself into contemporary history, achieved through the use of successive overlaps in myths that have unfolded throughout his journey to the front line. The boy uses his rifle, which he is only now fully integrating, and fires it repeatedly at the image of Hitler in a fallen painting. In terms of imagery, with each shot, the director places images of the lives of the German people and of Hitler's life, especially the damage he created. The last image depicts Hitler as a child, and this produces a magnetic closeness between his status and Flyora's, and this similarity triggers a self-preservation instinct that makes him find himself in the dilemma of not knowing whether he wants to kill Hitler from himself or kill his self from Hitler.

### **Conclusions**

The Russian film *Come and See* is considered the only real anti-war film in the entire Russian cinema. The film is made in such a way that you don't ever feel eager to keep any memory of watching it, you are truly removed from what is the accuracy of the idea of war as an event in which one country defends itself against another. The filmmaking mechanism meant to provoke despair and raise the hardest questions about the true nature of humans.

The realism of the film is far beyond our expectations, any viewer who has never lived through a war can truly feel a part of the experience. Besides, the film doesn't have a lot of actual war sequences as they are shown in other films or documentaries, we don't see people fighting each other, rather we see the real pain

that people have to endure and especially children going to war. The quality of the film lies precisely in its direct and unvarnished presentation of the traumatic events of war. The film presents a metaphysical awareness of linear horror and constant fear.

All sequences of great intensity are captured by the camera in such a way that we are complicit and even characters in the film. We are made to witness it all, watching from up close as the flesh drips off the characters. We are the ones filming and participating directly in the events, we are also the ones who, subjected to the aftermath, are forced to wonder if we are complicit in the rivalry or intensely experiencing the terrifying emotion of those we see destroyed before us.

Throughout the film, the director has used real ammunition, he has tried to bring the state of war into our psyche by using ideas as realistically as possible. The most realistic reproduction of the states of those in the war was to be realistic when the actors truly understood the fear.

Everything is filmed in daylight, letting you feel the real passage of time. We're not watching a film, where we can clearly see everything around us, we're in it and, like those involved, we find it hard to walk, see, hear or recognise what's around us. The director throws us, along with the actors, into a world that many people only know historically, but not sensory-emotionally. It creates in the audience's psyche the reality of war.

There is no real violence displayed, but there are reactions to the horror, to the violence, to the consequences of aggression that are left without cinematic explanation. The violence is not followed by any visual explanation, the images are interrupted, leaving the experience to be prolonged to the point of madness.

The themes used in the film are the early maturation of the child, the human race towards the end in time of war as recognition of life itself (the end giving meaning to life). It is a kind of understanding of what life and existence is all about. The child does not seek to find out how to escape from the terrifying events he is going through, he wants to understand existence in its own sense under the traumatic aspect.

Another important theme in the film is the child soldier. The use of children as soldiers forces the unconsciousness of the human being<sup>63</sup>, in the situation and need to resort to murder, to the definitive cancellation of emotion, the cancellation

---

63 "Archetypes are training systems for action and at the same time images and emotions. They are inherited with the structure of the brain, representing its psychic aspect. They represent, on the one hand, a very strong instinctive conservatism, while, on the other hand, they are the most effective possible means of instinctual adaptation. They are thus essentially the chthonic side of the psyche... that part by which the psyche is attached to nature." (Romanian Association of Analytical Psychology, n.d.)

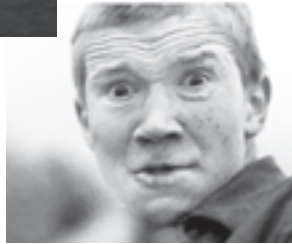
of feelings and the ability of a human being to be human. The child protagonist begins to age unnaturally fast under the horror of war.

His coming of age implies a clichéd image of what it means to be old, grey and without much power to live. For the child, reality becomes unreal, non-existent, we don't know if he is capable of recognising what is going on around him or has gone mad. He is in a delirium of existence.

Every frame, music and camera close-up are evidence of the viewer's projection into the film and into each of the film's characters, actively participating in all the absolute brutality of the consequences of war. The reality that Klimov presents about the war and its victims is disturbing, adding with different frames an endless experience of this trauma. It is a cycle of trauma (Jung, 2014)<sup>64</sup> that we will experience whether we have experienced war ourselves or not.



*Idi i smotri* (1972).  
Directed by **Elem Klimov** [Film].  
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0091251/>



<sup>64</sup> The collective unconscious – as far as we can say anything about it – seems to be composed of mythological motifs or primordial images, and therefore the myths of all peoples are their exponents. In fact, all mythology could be considered a kind of projection of the collective unconscious. Therefore, we can study the collective unconscious in two ways: through mythology or through the analysis of the individual. Archetypes were models in the collective unconscious. They were innate responses to stimuli found in all human societies for thousands of years, such as babies, elders, heroes and virgins. Jung was struck by the resemblance between the images in dreams as reported by his patients and the images in the journals of medieval alchemists. The alchemists had been a pre-scientific version of the chemists. The alchemists had been most famous for their attempts to turn various substances, such as lead and antimony, into gold, but they also carried out many impressive demonstrations. They could make liquids change colour, explode or turn into solids only if the ingredients were mixed or heated correctly. All this seemed like magic in the Middle Ages. Some alchemists kept dream diaries, illustrating them with flamboyant, mysterious drawings of supernatural creatures and mystical symbols. Jung borrowed an alchemist's diary from a library the same week he dreamt about a book filled with obscure symbols. Opening the borrowed book, Jung saw pages filled with fantastic symbols similar to those in his dream. From that moment on, Jung was drawn to alchemy. He explored the books of ancient alchemists to look for clues about obscure symbolism and occult practices.

**References:**

1. Aristotle (2010). *Despre generare și nimicire*. București: Polirom.
2. Deleuze, Gilles (2012). *Cinema I Imaginea-mișcare*. Traducere de Ștefania și Ioan Pop-Curșeu, postfață Bogdan Ghiu. Cluj-Napoca: Tact.
3. Durand, Gilbert (1998). *Structurile Antropologice ale Imaginarului*. București: Univers Enciclopedic.
4. Gorzo, Andrei (2019). *Viața, moartea și iar viața criticii de film*. Iași: Polirom.
5. Heidegger, Martin (2002). *Ființă și timp*. București: Humanitas.
6. Ispirescu, Petre (1985). *Tinerete fără Bătrânețe și Viață fără de Moarte*. București: Minerva.
7. Jung, Carl Gustav (2014). *Opere Complete. Vol. 9/1: Arbetipurile și inconștientul colectiv*. București: Editura Trei.
8. Morizot, B., Zhong Mengual, E. (2021). *Estetica Întâlnirii, enigma artei contemporane*. Timișoara: Contrasens.
9. Nietzsche, Friedrich (2012). *Așa grăit-a Zarathustra*. București: Humanitas.
10. Preda, Marin (1955). *Morometii*. Editura de Stat pentru Literatură și Artă.
11. Vlăduțescu, Gheorghe (1998). *Ontologie și metafizică la greci: Presocraticii*. București: Paideia.

**Online references:**

1. Asociația Română de Psihologie Analitică [Romanian Association of Analytical Psychology] (n.d.). *Concepte jungiene. Lexicon jungian* [Online]. Available at: <http://psihoterapieanalitica.ro/ro/despre/jung-si-terapia-analitica/> (Accessed: 9 June 2022)
2. IMDB (2022). *Come and See* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0091251/> (Accessed: 5 May 2022)
3. Mitru, Alexandru (n.d.). *Legendele Olimpului. Versiune electronică realizată după edițiile 1978-1985*. [Online document]. Available at: [https://www.academia.edu/9736149/Legendele\\_Olimpului\\_Alexandru\\_Mitru](https://www.academia.edu/9736149/Legendele_Olimpului_Alexandru_Mitru) (Accessed: 9 June 2022)
4. Sfântului Ioan Teologul (n.d.). *Apocalipsa, capitolul 6* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.bibliortodoxa.ro/carte.php?id=4&cap=6> (Accessed: 20 February 2022)
5. Wikipedia (2022a). *Barza albă* [Online]. Available at: [https://ro.frwiki.wiki/wiki/Cigogne\\_blanche#Oiseau\\_symbolique\\_et\\_de\\_bon\\_augure](https://ro.frwiki.wiki/wiki/Cigogne_blanche#Oiseau_symbolique_et_de_bon_augure) (Accessed: 5 May 2022)
6. Wikipedia (2022b). *Commedia dell'arte* [Online]. Available at: [https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commedia\\_dell%27arte](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commedia_dell%27arte) (Accessed: 5 May 2022)

**Filmography:**

1. *Idi i smotri* (1972). Directed by Elem Klimov [Film]. USSR: Belarusfilm & Mosfilm

**Tudora Crăciun** attended, at undergraduate level, the Faculty of Social Sciences, majoring in Philosophy, at the University of Craiova (2018), finishing with a thesis entitled *The Concept of Aggression in Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis*, followed by an MA in Applied Philosophy in Organizations and Business Environment – Faculty of Social Sciences, majoring in Philosophy, with a thesis entitled *The Body in David Cronenberg's Cinematic Imagination* (2020). She is currently a PhD student at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Bucharest, with a thesis on the transfiguration of the body in contemporary art. Among her works presented in conferences organized by the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Craiova, we list: “Gestures and emotional expressions in art (painting)” (conference *Cultural identity and multiculturalism*, Râncea Summer School, 2018); “Eros and Thanatos to Sigmund Freud” (conference *A comparative look at Eros and Thanatos*, Straja Winter School, 2019); “The Madness in David Cronenberg's Cinematography” (conference *What is madness? Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Mental Disorders*, Straja Winter School, 2nd edition, 2020).

---

**AVERAGE SHOT LENGTH  
IN THE POST-2000  
ROMANIAN FILM.  
COMPARISON WITH  
OTHER MOVEMENTS IN  
EUROPEAN CINEMA**

**TUDOR POPESCU**

UNATC "I.L. Caragiale", Bucharest, Romania  
*tudor.popescu@unatc.ro*

**Abstract:** Since the 1930s films have become faster and faster in regard to pacing and as a consequence their Average Shot Length has become shorter and shorter. Average Shot Length indicates the average duration of a shot in a certain film. In order to calculate it, the total film run time was divided to the number of shots. The objective of this article is to compare a sample of the Romanian New Wave with other samples from similar movements. These include the Italian neorealism or Dogme 95 and also the works of Michelangelo Antonioni. The intention is to find out how similar their editing rhythm is. Comparing these arthouse movements to data from more mainstream Hollywood films proves that there are big differences related to ASL. In order to make these comparisons data from the Cinematics database (cinematics.tv) will be used, as well as own calculations based on the method described in the article.

**Keywords:** Average Shot Length (ASL – number of shots in relation with the movie length), Romanian New Wave, Italian neorealism, Dogme 95, Michelangelo Antonioni.

**How to cite:** Popescu, Tudor (2022). 'Average Shot Length in the Post-2000 Romanian Film. Comparison with Other Movements in European Cinema', *Concept* 1(24), pp. 245-254.

### ***Average Shot Length***

It is an unquestionable finding that the pacing of films has accelerated from decade to decade. Films are edited more and more alertly, as an adaptation of screen time to social time and the speed of daily life. This trend is valid on average for all genres of film, but it is not supported when we refer exclusively to the film d'auteur. The perception of the cinema spectator is influenced by many factors, from personal taste, to education, to the interaction of the individual with the means of transmission of the modern era. And perhaps the most important factor is the contact with the entire multitude of mass transmission of information methods – from the analog era (books, newspapers, mail and the first forms of radio and television) to the digital explosion and the global network that gave rise to the phenomenon of social media. The latter being, therefore, a culmination of mass audio-visual exposure, in which the universal currency is the time that each viewer can invest in a particular product. As a result, as a general rule today: shorter usually means more desirable.

But how can one measure the rhythm of a film? By calculating the Average Shot Length for each film, we can have an overview of the inner rhythm. This calculation is carried out by identifying the number of cuts in a film and relating it to the total length of the projection. Imagining against all reason that the film in question would have all the shots of the same duration, then the value resulting from the previous calculation would indicate exactly this shot length thus balancing the difference between sequence shots and the more cropped sequences that constitute the entirety of a film. The international terminology for this calculation is *Average Shot Length* (ASL).

James Cutting's study on the evolution of Hollywood film shows that the ASL has been steadily declining since the late 1920s. This trend starts from an average of about 12 seconds and reaches up to 2.5 seconds towards the

end of the study. But why does this trend start only then and not from the beginning of cinema? *Celovek s'kino aparatom/Man with a Movie Camera* (Dziga Vertov, 1929) has a 2.3-second ASL, very close to the Hollywood standard calculated by James Cutting. The Russian directors of the beginning of the century used juxtapositioning of shots, mainly for propaganda purposes, and pushed the parameters of editing to extreme values. All this was carried out in the absence of the film sound. With the advent of the latter, a new dimension of message transmission was discovered, with superior efficiency. Shortly after the appearance of the first *talkie* (film with synchronized lines), *The Jazz Singer* (Alan Crosland, 1927) we experienced the steepest deceleration of the rhythm of the film editing, probably unrepeatably in history.

In the writings of Roger Ebert, as well as Marcel Martin, David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, there are common analyses of the ASL of films. The Cinemetrics website (cinemetrics.tv) is the largest freely accessible database on film ASLs, where we can even find calculations grouped by the categories of shots in the analyzed films. For some of the films cited below this database will be used as the source of the figures. For the rest of the films, own calculations will be used according to the method described below.

Normally, the calculation of the ASL is done through an arduous process that can generate human error – by writing down each cut as the film is scrolled through, which requires a long time and rechecks for the accuracy of the data. For efficiency purposes, I chose to use an automatic cut detection module included in the famous *Black Magic DaVinci Resolve Studio* postproduction software. The version used was 17.2. Being an automated process, false detections of cuts as well as cuts that were not detected resulted, so I decided to refine the results by manually going through the films and solving these errors. False detections were generally caused by sudden changes in the lighting of the shot in situations such as a light ignition in the frame, a shot, the appearance of a *flare*, or even shots with strobe light. On the other hand, the use of dissolves or *fades* in a film „fooled” the detection algorithm, resulting in fewer frames than in reality. The calculated values obtained were rounded to the first decimal place.

### ***The Romanian New Wave***

The Romanian New Wave (NCR) makes its debut ignoring the general trends of shortening the ASL described above. NCR is a movement in cinema that begins in 2001, with the film *Marfa și banii/ Stuff and Dough* (Cristi Puiu, 2001). Aesthetically, NCR films are characterized by an austere, realist and often minimalist approach. Very long shots are favored and often the shooting is *hand-held*. Thematically, NCR films most often center on ordinary people and study the social and psychological effects of the transition from communism to an early form of capitalism.

In order to be able to compare the ASL between NCR and other cinema movements, we have selected the top 10 films unanimously accepted as belonging to this movement, in the order of their appearance. The following ASLs result: *Marfa și banii/ Stuff and Dough* (Cristi Puiu, 2001) – ASL 21.9, *Moartea domnului Lăzărescu/ The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* (Cristi Puiu, 2005) – ASL 84.7, *Hârtia va fi albastră/ The Paper Will Be Blue* (Radu Muntean, 2006) – ASL 49.1, *A fost sau n-a fost?/ 12:08 East of Bucharest* (Corneliu Porumboiu, 2006) – ASL 37.1, *4 luni, 3 săptămâni și 2 zile/ 4 weeks, 3 months and 2 days* (Cristian Mungiu, 2007) – ASL 88.5, *Boogie* (Radu Muntean, 2008) – ASL 187.3, *Polițist, Adjectiv/ Police, adjective* (Corneliu Porumboiu, 2009) – ASL 72.9, *Cea mai fericită fată din lume/ The Happiest Girl in the World* (Radu Jude, 2009) – ASL 64.1, *Felicia, înainte de toate/ First of All, Felicia* (Răzvan Rădulescu, Melissa de Raaf, 2009) – ASL 92.2, *Mărți, după Crăciun/ Tuesday, After Christmas* (Radu Muntean, 2010) – ASL 171.6.

The ASL average of these 10 titles is 86.9 seconds. The above calculations are part of a detailed study regarding ASL in the post-2000 Romanian film to be published separately, including the titles successful in festivals, as well as those with successful audiences.

### ***Italian neorealism***

Italian neorealism was born in the 1940s. The stylistic paradigm in which neo-realistic films find themselves stems largely from the political and social context of the moment.

In 20 years of fascism, free speech of any kind had been stifled, especially in the cinematic field – following Lenin's model, namely that of manipulating the masses through propaganda films, in parallel with a production of edulcorated entertainment films. With Italian neorealism, filmmakers brought to people imperfect, uncensored, sometimes tragic subjects, images and feelings. This movement addressed poverty, social unrest, the events in the life of the ordinary man and, of course, the recent historical events, marked by the Second World War.

Neorealism directors manage to transform common life situations into real emotional performances, by lifting the barriers of prejudice or rigid morality and by awakening feelings of empathy towards simple but sincere characters or conflicts. The expression used by Vittorio de Sica, referring to his neorealist films, was of *reality transposed into the world of poetry* (in his volume *Miracolo a Milano* of 1969).

Some of the characteristics of this movement, related to the logistical part of the creation of a film, were, in large part, the result of the post-war economic and social context in which film directors faced a lack of budgets and even the lack of film sets, since all film studios, including Cinecittà, the great studio founded by Benito Mussolini to execute propaganda productions, had been destroyed



by bombing. Therefore, filmmakers resorted to various methods to cope with difficult circumstances, and these methods turned into emblematic elements of the movement; for example, filming outside, most often on the street – in the absence of a set – and hiring amateurs instead of professional actors. Also, most of the time artificial lights, specially designed, were not used, but natural light, and as a style of editing it was opted for long shots and a minimalist editing.

Another important feature is that the dialogues between the characters were not always limited to the rigors of a script, but could be improvised, towards a free and sometimes informal register.

Peter Bondanella wrote in his book, *A History of Italian Cinema*, that the films of Rossellini, De Sica and Visconti, although they do not reflect a coherent programmatic style, are accurately described by film historians as d'auteur works – films bearing the unmistakable signature of the individual style or thematic preoccupations of a single director.

The influence of this movement on cinema is undoubtedly a substantial one. From nouvelle vague, cinéma vérité and film noir, to Martin Scorsese's productions and films by contemporary indie directors (Chloe Zhao, Eliza Hittman, etc.), all cinema cultural movements have, at certain times, paid homage to Italian neorealism. But the reason for the inclusion of this movement in this work is the major influence it had on the Romanian New Wave at a stylistic level, especially through the aesthetic valences of the sequence shots, emblematic in the construction of these films.

We selected the first 10 films unanimously accepted as belonging to this movement, in order of their appearance, and the following ASLs resulted: *Ossessione/Obsession* (Luchino Visconti, 1943) – ASL 17.2, *Roma città aperta/Rome, Open City* (Roberto Rossellini, 1945) – ASL 9.8, *Sciucchià/Shoeshine* (Vittorio De Sica, 1946) – ASL 7.6, *Paisà/Paisan* (Roberto Rossellini, 1946) – ASL 8.7, *Il sole sorge ancora/Outcry* (Aldo Vergano, 1946) – ASL 7.7, *Ladri di biciclette/Bicycle Thieves* (Vittorio De Sica, 1948) – ASL 22.9, *La terra trema* (Luchino Visconti, 1948) – ASL 17.9, *Stromboli, terra di Dio/Stromboli, Land of God* (Roberto Rossellini, 1950) – ASL 10.9, *Bellissima/Beautiful* (Luchino Visconti, 1951) – ASL 21.2, *Umberto D.* (Vittorio De Sica, 1952) – ASL 7.2.

We obtained the ASL data from the Cinematics database. For a few of the films we found several different ASL calculations so we used their arithmetic mean: *Ossessione* (17.1, 18 and 16.5), *Bicycle Thieves* (6.2, 9.5, 7.2), *Bellissima* (20.4, 22), *Umberto D.* (8.6, 7.8, 7.4, 7.8).

*Paisà* (Roberto Rossellini, 1946) is composed of 6 episodes, each written by another screenwriter contracted by Rossellini. One of the episodes is written by Federico Fellini himself. To calculate the ASL of this film we calculated the

average between the distinct measurements on Cinemetrics (Episode 1 – ASL 8.7, Episode 2 – ASL 6.6, Episode 3 – ASL 10, Episode 4 – ASL 9.5, Episode 5 – ASL 10.3, Episode 6 – ASL 6.8)

The ASL average for the sample of the 10 films representative for Italian neorealism is 13.1.

### ***Dogme 95***

Dogme 95 is an avant-garde film movement that took place predominantly between 1995 and 2005. The movement was initiated by Danish directors Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg, who created *the Dogme 95 Manifesto* and the *Vows of Chastity* (Krause, 2007). They set out a set of rules to create films based on the traditional values of cinema narrative, limiting the use of modern technology and excluding the use of special effects. The two were later joined by directors Kristian Levring and Søren Kragh-Jacobsen, forming the Dogme 95 Collective.

The first Dogme film (Dogme #1) was *Festen/The Celebration* (Thomas Vinterberg, 1998). It won the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival that year. Lars von Trier's film *Idioterne/The Idiots* premiered at Cannes in the same edition but was less successful. After the two, other directors also made films based on the principles of Dogme 95. 35 films made between 1998 and 2005 are considered to be part of the Dogme 95 movement.

Dogme 95 has remained in the history of cinema as one of the essential movements and has had an enormous influence on all filmmakers working on a low budget.

If we superimpose the dominant stylistics in the NCR on the Dogme 95 rules we can find a series of definite correspondences. The most visible are: the preponderance of filming in the location (the first rule of Dogme), the exclusion of non-diegetic music, or the predominantly *hand-held* operation of the camera.

Then, at the thematic level both Dogme and NCR refuse or at least depart from the genre film. Spectacular effects – car chases, explosions, firearms – are also avoided.

Finally, both the Dogme 95 films and the NCR films deviate very little or not at all from the principles enunciated in Aristotle's *Poetics* regarding the dramaturgy that must be governed by unity of action, unity of place and unity of time.

For the Dogme 95 selection, the top 10 fiction films as listed by the creators were chosen. I did not include in the selection the number 8 film, *Fuckland* (José Luis Marqués, 2000) because this is a documentary-type film, and the number 9 film, *Babylon* (Vladan Zdravkovic, 2001), because it was never finished.

ASL calculations are as follows: *Festen/The Celebration* (Thomas Vinterberg, 1998) – ASL 6.6, *Idioterne/The Idiots* (Lars von Trier, 1998) – ASL 7.2, *Mifunes Sidste Sang/Mifune's Last Song* (Søren Kragh – Jacobsen, 1999) – ASL 4.8, *The King*

*Is Alive* (Kristian Levring, 2000) – ASL 2.8, *Lovers* (Jean-Marc Barr, 1999) – ASL 28, *Julien Donkey-Boy* (Harmony Korine, 1999) – ASL 6.6, *Interview* (Daniel H. Byun, 2000) – ASL 15.9, *Chetzemoka's Curse* (Collective of Directors, 2001) – ASL 27.4, *Diapason* (Antonio Domenici, 2001) – ASL 9.7, *Italiensk for Begyndere/ Italian for Beginners* (Lone Scherfig, 2000) – ASL 4.4. (*Chetzemoka's Curse* is signed by a group of directors including Rick Schmidt, Maya Berthoud, Morgan Schmidt-Feng, Dave Nold, Lawrence E. Pado, Marlon Schmidt and Chris Tow.)

For the *Festen*, *Idiots* and *Julien Donkey-Boy* films the ASL calculations from the Cinemetrics database were used, and for the remaining 7 films the ASL was calculated according to the method described in the beginning of the article. The average ASL of these 10 movies is 11.3 seconds.

### ***Michelangelo Antonioni***

Antonioni made his debut in 1943 as a short film director with the documentary *Gente del Po/People of the Po Valley*, and then, 7 years later, began his feature film series with *Cronaca di un Amore/Story of a Love Affair* (1950). *I Vinti/The Vanquished* (1953), *La Signora Senza Camelie/The Lady Without Camelias* (1953), *Le Amiche/The girlfriends* (1955), *Il Grido/The Cry* (1957), and in 1960, *L'Avventura/The Adventure*, the first film in the *trilogy on modernity and its shortcomings* (Holden, 2006), followed by *La Notte/The Night* (1961) and *L'Eclisse/The Eclipse* (1962). After *Il Deserto Rosso/Red Desert* (1964) followed a second trilogy, the one in English, which included the films *Blow-up* (1966), *Zabriskie Point* (1969), *Professione: reporter/The Passenger* (1975).

Michelangelo Antonioni is one of the most influential film directors of the post-war period. Opening the way to a modern world – which for us has already become far too familiar – his films dared to challenge their original audiences, with complex structural strategies and courageous psychological conflicts. Few spectators experienced such a relentless dissection, not only of human emotions and anxiety, but also of the power of adaptation of man in an era of uncertainty. (Gariff, 2012)

Although Antonioni does not use a directorial technique or imagery in itself, his films are distinguished by an ambiguity of the story and the absence of verbal communication of the facts themselves, precisely because the action takes place in the mental processes of the protagonists rather than in the concrete presentation of the events.

In his book, *Architetture della visione* (2007), Michelangelo Antonioni states the following:

In this way, the technique I use (which, in fact, for me is instinctive – I do not engage in a special project to shoot in a certain way) seems to me to be very closely related to the interest I give to filming the characters until the

most hidden thoughts come to light. I self-delusion, thinking that by following them everywhere with the camera, I will make them talk. But I think it's much more cinematic to try to capture a person's thoughts through a common visual reaction, rather than enclosing them in a sentence of verbal, didactic form.

This is also why his frames end up being up to 7 minutes long, like the sequence before the last one in *The Passenger*. In the same film, in a preliminary editing version, there is another sequence that did not reach the final version, also because it was very long. About that sequence, the director recalls:

Thinking now, it is clear to me that I was unconsciously trying to render [the shot] a movement similar to that of our imagination, when it strives to give life to images that do not belong to us but that, little by little, we acquire. We color them, we give them sound – glimmers of color and sound – just like with memories. Or to dreams, which are laconic and out of place, in terms of their content, but very rich in sensations and thoughts. (Antonioni, 2007)

Even though Antonioni's remarks related to a certain sequence from a certain point in the film, this atmosphere is found in several of his creations. For example, some shots in *Blow-up* convey a dream-like state, in which the cognitive, rational part is in the secondary plane, while the ambience and sensory side are more intensely perceived.

Due to the characteristics mentioned above, as well as the declared influence on some NCR directors, such as Corneliu Porumboiu, I chose to compare the ASL of Antonioni's films in relation to the selection of films of the Romanian New Wave in this study.

For the comparative study most of Michelangelo Antonioni's films were selected, using the data from the Cinemetrics database, as follows:

*Cronaca di un amore* (1950) – ASL 32.5, *La signora senza camelie* (1953) – ASL 57, *Le Amiche* (1955) – ASL 26.7, *Il Grido* (1957) – ASL 19.8, *L'avventura* (1960) – ASL 17.9, *La Notte* (1961) – ASL 15.8, *L'Eclisse* (1962) – ASL 11.9, *Il deserto rosso* (1964) – ASL 10.4, *Blow-Up* (1966) – ASL 10.8, *Žabriskie Point* (1970) – ASL 8.1, *Professione: Reporter* (1975) – ASL 18.2, *Identificazione di una donna/Identification of a Woman* (1982) – ASL 13.9.

For some of the films I found several ASL results so I calculated their arithmetic mean: *Cronaca di un amore* (32.2, 32.7), *La signora senza camelie* (56.1, 55.6, 59.4), *Le Amiche* (26.6, 26.7), *Il Grido* (19.4, 20.2), *L'avventura* (17.8, 17.9, 18), *Il deserto rosso* (10.2, 10.1, 10.6, 10.7), *Blow-Up* (11.3, 11, 10.6, 10.2), *Žabriskie Point* (8.1, 7.9, 8.3), *Professione: Reporter* (17.8, 18.6).

The average ASL for these 12 movies is 20.3 seconds.

### Conclusions

Resuming the ASL averages for each sample above, for the Romanian New Wave we have an average of 86.9 seconds, for Italian neorealism 13.1 seconds, for Dogme 95 11.3 seconds, and for Michelangelo Antonioni's films we have an ASL average of 20.3 seconds. At the beginning of the article, I remembered the general tendency of films as a genre average to intensify their editing pace. All these movements have as an average ASL values higher than the time period corresponding to the study of James Cutting. The closest to the average of those years is Italian neorealism. In this case, we are dealing with a comparison between NCR and selections of films that long precede the Romanian New Wave or that end up intersecting tangentially as is the case with Dogme 95. The difference in ASL averages between NCR and the rest of the selections is particularly large, showing the extreme character in terms of film editing of NCR and places it in a countermovement of the times.

Other findings from this research: NCR is not rooted in terms of the pacing of editing in Italian neorealism. It has in common with this movement, the choice of themes and subjects regarding ordinary people put in difficult situations in relation to society and themselves. NCR has no roots in terms of the pacing of editing in Dogme 95. From this movement it borrows the systematic removal of special effects, non-diegetic music and the freedom of camera movements. NCR has no roots in terms of the pacing of editing in Michelangelo Antonioni's films. However, his influence is recognizable in the frequent presence of periods of silence on screen, as well as in the minimalist play of the actors.

### References:

1. Antonioni, Michelangelo (2007). *The Architecture Of vision, Writings e³ Interviews on cinema*. University of Chicago Press
2. De Sica, Vittorio (1969). *Miracle in Milan*. Penguin Baltimore Maryland
3. Gariff, David (2012). *The Psychological Landscapes of Michelangelo Antonioni (1912–2007) A Centenary Tribute*. National Gallery of Art.
4. Holden, Stephan (2006). *Antonioni's Nothingness and Beauty*. The New York Times.
5. Krause, Stefanie (2007). *The Implementing of the 'Vow of Chastity' in Jan Dunn's "Gypo"*. GRIN.
6. Peter Bondanella (2009). *A History Of Italian Cinema*. New York: Continuum International Pub. Group

### Online references:

1. Tasteofcinema.com. (2014). *15 Essential Films for An Introduction To The Romanian New Wave*. [online] Available at: <http://www.tasteofcinema.com/2014/15-essential-films-for-an-introduction-to-the-romanian-new-wave/> (Accessed: 15 February 2022).
2. Movements in film. *Dogme95 Films: A complete list*. [online] Available at: <https://www.movementsinfilmm.com/blog/dogme95-films-1995-2005> (Accessed: 15 February 2022).

3. Wired.com (2014) *Data From a Century of Cinema Reveals How Movies Have Evolved* [online] Available at: <https://www.wired.com/2014/09/cinema-is-evolving/> (Accessed: 15 February 2022).

**Tudor Popescu** graduated with a BA and MA degree in Film Editing at the “I.L. Caragiale” National University of Theatre and Film, in Bucharest, where he also completed his doctoral studies in cinema. He has edited over 10 feature films since 2015. Since 2015 he also holds classes in the Multimedia Department at the “I.L. Caragiale” National University of Theatre and Film.

# ***II. BOOK REVIEW***





# THE GREATEST ELIZABETHAN PLAYWRIGHT REVISITED – **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE** BY IOANA PETCU

William Shakespeare  
Performantica  
2022, (paperback, 151 pp)  
ISBN: 9786066858618  
by Ioana Petcu (Author)

## ANA-MAGDALENA PETRARU

"Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University &  
"George Enescu" National University of Arts, Iași, Romania  
*alina.petraru@gmail.com*

---

**Abstract:** The present volume is a revisit of the great Elizabethan playwright whose immortality in the world of letters and performance is an undeniable fact. Ioana Petcu's collection of essays tackles his most important plays under all their aspects, inviting the reader to see all the movies and performances available, as well as the ones to be released, with a critical eye. Moreover, one is compelled to go back to the reading of the plays, either in original or translation for the Barthesian pleasure of the text and (re)discovery of facts that have perhaps been forgotten.

**Keywords:** staging and screening Shakespeare, Romanian and international performances, philological drama studies.

**How to cite:** Petraru, Ana-Magdalena (2022). 'The Greatest Elizabethan Playwright Revisited – *William Shakespeare* by Ioana Petcu', *Concept* 1(24)/2022, pp. 257-262.

Ioana Petcu's book is a selection of nine essays on the great Elizabethan playwright, bringing into play performances of his tragedies (*Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, King Lear, Romeo and Juliet, Richard III*) and comedies (*The Taming of the Shrew, A Midsummer's Night Dream, The Tempest*).

In the preface, signed by the senior researcher Gabriela Haja from the Romanian Academy, Iași branch, we are asked whether we enjoy Shakespeare, a rhetorical question to which we will find answers in this volume since the perspective of a Romanian lecturer from the Faculty of Theatre, "George Enescu" University of Arts is more than a hermeneutical lesson, addressing philologists less and actors, along with researchers of drama studies, more (pp. 5-6).

The author also invites us to reflect on Shakespeare and his writings demystifying the romantic misconception according to which we might imagine him drafting his plays at candlelight, unaffordable those days. We could, however, admire his portrait as depicted by Chandos, an unconventional male figure with an earring, a regular actor who stood by his company (The Chamberlain's Men, later on called The King's Men) and tried to make a living from writing, as well (p. 7). Remembered as 'the sweet swan of Avon' (Ben Jonson) and 'a tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide' (Robert Green) (p. 8), his reception would take a separate chapter in literature (p. 9) and is not the topic of the current volume. Theoretically speaking, one could argue that he challenged genres due to the blurred edges between tragedy and comedy that hybridlike mingle in his work (since he introduced comic scenes in tragedies and bitterness in comedies) (p. 11). The plays in the volume are tackled following the model provided by Ion Zamfirescu in the third volume on the history of theatre, starting with *Richard III*, continuing with his great tragedies and ending with comedies, considered in their chronological and thematical dimension (pp. 12-13).

The essay on *Richard III* has, as motto, a quote from Saramago's *Blindness*, "I don't think we did go blind, I think we are blind, Blind but seeing, Blind people who can see, but do not see." (1999, p. 120), stressing the importance of the

main character against the background of the Wars of the Roses. Labelled as “a negative human hyperbole” by Zoe Dumitrescu Buşulegna (p. 15), and a “sublime performance of human evil” by Leon Leviţchi (*ibidem*), Ioana Petcu argues that he is a paradox, a creation and victim of turbulent times, of an off-centred and non-rational London; however, he is not the only blindman, figuratively speaking, but all Londoners are (especially the Tower people). King Richard elicits disapproval and fascinates through his irony and hypocrisy, similarly to Don Jonson’s Volpone and Moliere’s Tartuffe (p. 16). The play is analysed considering Steinbeck’s *Winter of Our Discontent* as a main theme, the Romanian specialist arguing that the king is aware of his singularity (*I am I*), thus preceding the theatre of the absurd, well before the 20<sup>th</sup> century (as assessed by Romanian criticism though Romul Munteanu) (p. 22). Recent rewritings such as Matei Vişniec’s *Richard III Will Not Take Place or Scenes from the Life of Meyerhold* (2005) or the older *Cousin Shakespeare* by Marin Sorescu in which Richard III plays a secondary role. (p. 25)

In *Waiting for... Hamlet*, the second essay of the book, the author tries to decipher the first lines of the play, as so many others before her, in an existentialist and ontological stance (p. 26). Hamlet is a Treplev of an “unweeded garden” (p. 29) who needs the truth and is willing to do anything to uncover it; we are dealing with a character that makes room for 17<sup>th</sup> century cartesianism, foreshadowing the *cogito* triad (*ibidem*). As Shakespeare character’s shows us, theatre is supposed to mirror the world as the directors of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century will show (Stanislavski); some will provide a distorted image (Meyerhold, Vahtangov), will keep a distance from it (Brecht) or turn this image into an experiment (the avant-garde theatre) (p. 34).

*Romeo and Juliet as a Spring Awakening* has as motto a quote from the Prologue of the play, “Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean” (p. 37) and is prefigured in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, in the tragic story between Pyramus and Thisbe, to be enriched by Renaissance Italy before Shakespeare (p. 38). The intricacies in the play where everyone seems to mock the Montague and Capulet families, in a world with an overlap between Monday and Thursday, are compared to the fate of Ionesco’s Mr. and Mrs. Smith whose clock gets the hour wrong (p. 39). The two statues that the families would rise to commemorate the death of their only children are an opportunity for critics to engage in art criticism; thus, Monique Borie analysed the link between the body in sculpture and the flesh, intrinsically connecting movement and inertia, life and death (p. 43).

In *Othello, Ego, Alter-Ego and Iago*, the Romanian lecturer underlines the fact that the play has enjoyed tremendous popularity outside theatrical performance, as well, being adapted for opera (with the libretto signed by Arrigo Boito and the musical composition by Giuseppe Verdi), ballet (with choreographies by Serge Lifar in 1960, John Neumeier in 1985 and Lar Lubovitch in 1997) and cinema

(movies directed by Franco Zeffirelli in 1986, Oliver Parker in 1995 and Tim Blake Nelson in 2001). The tragedy led to outstanding acting such as Laurence Olivier's (who played Othello in 1965) or Ian McKellen's (as the 1989 Iago), to name but a few (p. 49). In trying to account for the literary celebrity of the tragedy in which a Maur strangles his wife and then commits suicide, critics have explored its various themes; from Othello's splitting between self and alterity to postcolonial theories (Jyotsna Singh), the shame that guides the characters (Ewan Fernie) and Harold Bloom's controversial ideas on the effects of frigidity and impotence around which the tragedy is centred (p. 50), the play testifies to Eco's concept of *opera aperta* due to its inexhaustible interpretations.

*Macbeth*, the shortest of the tragedies is tackled in *When Some Laugh in Their Sleep* and has as motto, a quote from act IV, scene 2: "But cruel are the times when we are traitors/ And do not know ourselves" (p. 59). Considered a study of philosophy and psychology of evil (Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor), a tragedy of ambiguity and paradox (Wilbur Sanders) built on obvious contrast and a strong claustrophobic sensation (Graham Bradshaw) (p. 61), this is a Jacobean play devoted to James I of England, hence the references to Edward the Confessor, portrayed in a positive manner; the content subscribes to the monarch preferences since sorcery and mystery were his favourite topics when he financed theatre. Listed second based on the public's preferences after *Hamlet* six hundred years from Shakespeare's birth (*Time Out*, 2016) (p. 60), it was also enriched by film industry who released successful productions: Justin Kurzel's in 2015 (starring Michael Fassbender and Marion Cotillard) or Kit Monkman's in 2018 (starring Mark Rowley and Akia Henry) and the most recent, Joel Coen's in 2021 (starring Denzel Washington and Frances McDormand). Among the international stagings, at Barbican Theatre, London, the director Adrian Noble laid particular emphasis on the theme of corruption and human error in 1993, whereas the national ones could not ignore Silviu Purcărete's collage *Ubu Rex with Scenes from Macbeth* from the National Theatre of Craiova in 1991 or Mihai Măniuțiu's 2007 one, among others (pp. 60-61). Sleep, a recurrent theme in Shakespeare's plays (natural for positive heroes and unnatural in negative characters tortured by its absence), translates into Macbeth's insomnia since night dominates the whole play (pp. 64-65), the lecturer concluding that *The Tragedy of Macbeth* is a dream's dream (p. 76).

*King Lear or About Nothing* opens with Anthony Hopkins's thoughts who was 80 when he last played Hamlet and a quote from Andrei Șerban who pictured Romanian actors fit to act in the play (p. 77). To a beginner in the study of Shakespeare, Holinshed's chronicles are recommended, along with a collection of English poems, *The True Chronicle History of King Leir* and an episode from Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* that inspired the playwright (p. 78). Interpretation stances

revolve around contrasting pairs (madness – reason), nature, old age and eyesight to shed light on the dysfunctional relationship between parents and children, implying sacrifice and suffering mainly of the former for the latter. Lear is Shakespeare's *Job*, tragedy itself, irrespective of the age of the staging or screening (in Richard Eyre's movie, for instance, the main character is a modern old man who throws himself in the supermarket cart because he has nothing to lose) (p. 87). According to Leon Levitchi, unlike Timon of Athens, King Lear evolves from a moral viewpoint and his way of thinking improves (p. 88), acknowledging his condition of an old man that ended in poverty, illness and is despised by everyone. Apart from the offence brought to monarchy, this may be one of the reasons that led to Nahum Tate's happy ending of the play, and its rewriting to please the public between 1681-1843, i.e., Lear getting the throne back and Cordelia marrying Edgar (p. 93).

In *The Taming of the Shrew – A Performance of the Subtext*, the author elicits from her readers, rhetorically speaking, whether this is an atypical love story or a repetitive scene of the endless conflict between women and men or a farce in which servants trick their masters (p. 94). The text is quite misogynistic in itself, portraying barbaric characters of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and, in their staging, Romanian directors attempted at portraying the therapeutic transfer of behaviour that the couple Petruchio and Katherina had on each other (p. 95). Inspired by Arabian Nights, an English ballad, *A merry jest of a shrewd and curst wife lapped in morel's skin for her good behaviour*, and *I Suppositi* by Ariosto (1509), as well as the old Latin comedy and *Commedia dell'Arte*, the play is sometimes surrealist in its lack of verisimilitude (p. 96) and invites to anthropological reflection in a historical and cultural context (p. 107).

*Looking at the Nightmare through a Crack in the Wall – A Midsummer's Night Dream* overviews the fantasy choreographies that the play inspired, in shining decora with puffy objects, silk clothing and fluid movement of dancers that seemed translucent as in George Balanchine's and has been screened since the 1930s, either in classic adaptations (1935, 1999) or modern ones starring tattooed characters of today's world (2017). Escaping the cliché of romantic comedy that takes place in a fairy world, the work induces a conjunction point between reality and fantasy with an overlapped psychoanalytical dimension, given the political and social context (p. 108). Without it, August Strindberg's *A Dream Play* and Luigi Pirandello's *Tonight We Improvise* will not be the same (p. 108). There are various layers of communication in the text and

the audience situated in the performance space reconfigures the theatre audience's responses. Like a prism, the theatre audience takes the refracted or double consciousness inherent in the apparent failures of Bottom and company and reintegrates them into a unified consciousness, a single, embracing view of everything represented on stage. (O'Neill, 1997, p. 19)

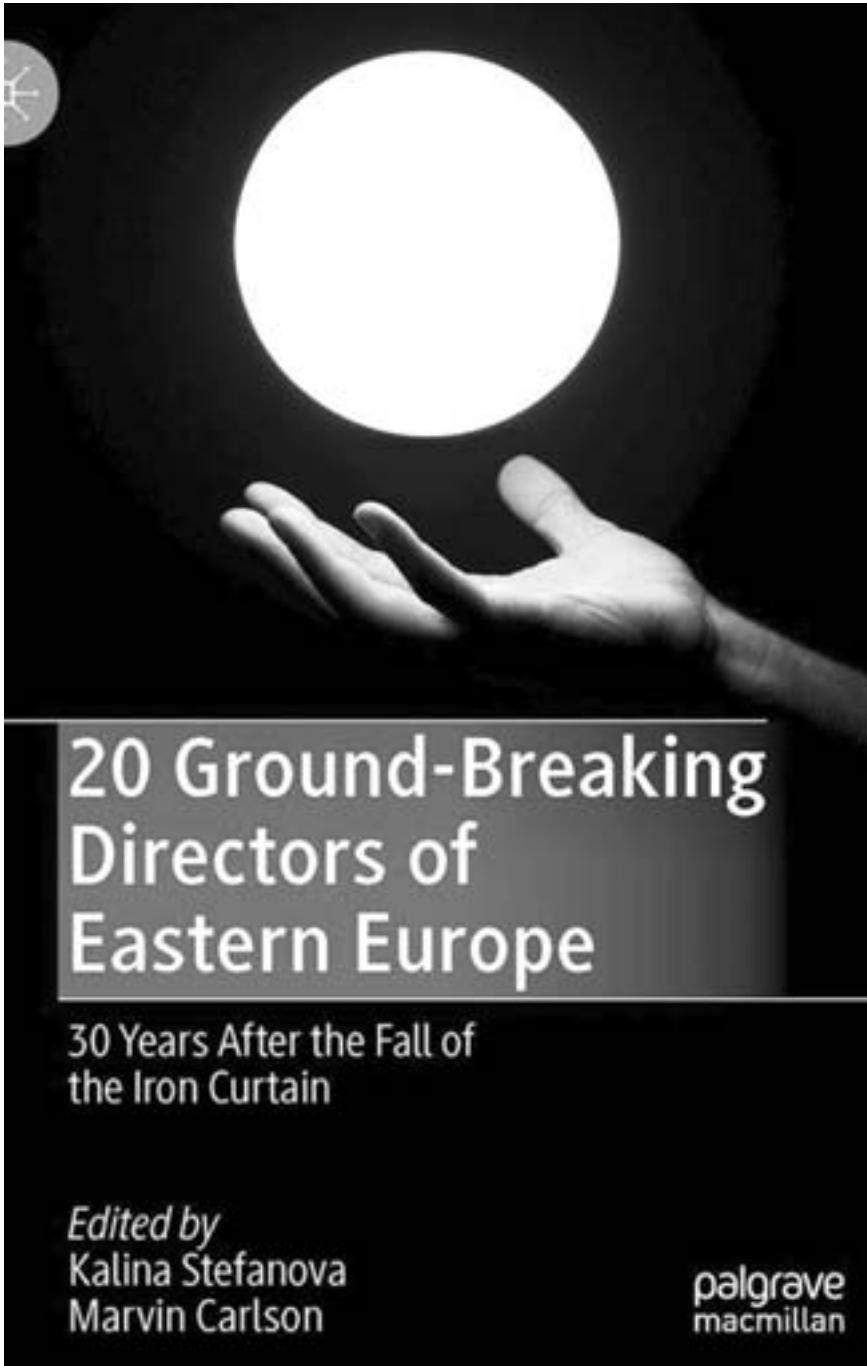
A parallel is drawn between Pirandello's *The Mountain Giants* where actors and characters exit the scene and theatrical art and its Thanatos spirit find a home; analogously, the death of the characters in the performance, Pyramus and Thisbe prepare the scene for the world of ghosts, leaving room for Puck's epilogue (p. 120).

*The Tempest as a Winter of Discontent on an Island* discusses Shakespeare's comedy that respects the rule of three unities, unlike many of his other plays. Its role is that of a will, legacy for posterity and many critics superimposed Prospero's voice on Shakespeare. However, recent critics (cf. Robert Egan, 1972) feel that the magician is a tragedy actor as Lear or Hamlet (p. 123). Mostly employed by postcolonial theory due to the influence exerted by the white European man on colonies, a quote by Miranda from the text (act IV, scene 1) can be also encountered in Huxley's dystopia, *A Brave New World* (p. 124). Rewritings pertaining to intercultural, feminist or gender studies show that the Elizabethan playwright is connected to the problems of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries as far as domination, power abuse, inequity, lack of morality or stigmatisation are concerned (e.g., Aimé Césaire's *Une Tempête*, 1969; Fernandez Retamar's *Caliban*, 1971; Michelle Cliff's feminist essay, *Caliban's Daughter*, 1991) (p. 134). On Romanian stages, Liviu Ciulei's variant (first released at Bulanda Theatre in 1978, then at The Guthrie Theatre, Minneapolis in 1981) and Cătălina Buzoianu's are worth mentioning and discussed by the Romanian lecturer (pp. 141-142). In an almost baroque edifice (p. 135), deformity is a sign of alterity, and the monster becomes a victim in the colonisers' imagery which leads to a stereotypical mentality and stigmatisation (p. 128).

Conclusions are drawn in *Shakespeare or the Impossible Separation* and depart from a quote from Jorge Luis Borges's *Shakespeare's Memory*; the author argues that we understand Shakespeare differently at different ages, hence the various editions to reach the public, especially abroad. The current book is merely an attempt to grasp the performances of his plays, with a bird's-eye view on the movie adaptations in a non-biased way related to personal preference (pp. 142-143). It is, therefore, a must read for everyone interested in Shakespeare's theatre, its screening and staging at national and international level.

#### References:

1. O'Neill, Michael (1997). 'Audiences of "A Midsummer's Night Dream"', *Shakespeare Bulletin*, The John Hopkins University Press.
1. Saramago, Jose (1999). *Blindness*. Translated into English by professor Juan Sager. First Harvest Edition.



# THE DIVERSITY AND ENERGY OF THE **EASTERN EUROPEAN** **THEATRE**

20 Ground-Breaking Directors of Eastern Europe  
30 Years after the Fall of the Iron Curtain  
Palgrave Macmillan  
2021, (paperback, 311 pp)  
ISBN: 9783030529345  
eBook ISBN: 9783030529352  
Kalina Stefanova, Marvin Carlson (Editors)

**MARIA ZĂRNESCU**



UNATC "I.L. Caragiale", Bucharest, Romania  
*maria.zarnescu@unatc.ro*



**Abstract:** In theatre, the twentieth century undoubtedly belongs to the directors, especially European, both as practitioners and theorists. In its last decades however, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, a kind of pole migration took place. After so many years of censorship, it's the turn of Eastern Europe to show its best in theatre. This book presents a subjective-editorial selection of twenty directors who have risen to international stardom thanks to their "ground-breaking" productions that speak to audiences far beyond local borders. It offers informative and in-depth portraits of these artists, written by critics, scholars, and researchers, who shed light on the directors' signature styles, with examples of their emblematic productions. In the last two chapters, the selected directors discuss their artistic family trees, as well as the main stakes theatre faces today. From Romania, the editors selected three names: Andrei Șerban, Silviu Purcărete and Gianina Cărbunariu.

**Keywords:** East European theatre directors, Andrei Șerban, Silviu Purcărete, Gianina Cărbunariu.

**How to cite:** Zărnescu, Maria (2022). 'The Diversity and Energy of the Eastern European Theatre', *Concept* 1(24)/2022, pp. 264-268.

"I read a book one day and my whole life was changed", confesses Turkish Nobel Prize winner Orhan Pamuk at the beginning of his novel *The New Life* (1994). The writer described

how the energy of the book overtook his soul so strongly, that he felt as if his body was separating from the chair where he sat reading. At the same time, with his every particle, he remained anchored there, feeling the effect of the book not only on his soul, but on everything that made him what he was (p. v).

With such a paraphrase editor Kalina Stefanova chooses to start her confession regarding the composing of the book ***20 Ground-Breaking Directors of Eastern Europe. 30 Years after the Fall of the Iron Curtain***, published in 2021, at the notorious Palgrave Macmillan in Great Britain.

Stefanova argues in the foreword entitled *The Life-Changing Theatre of Eastern Europe*:

This is exactly how I felt watching many productions by the directors included in our book. Their impact was so powerful that it was as if light was surging from the stage, its incandescence dazzling my intellect, but also endowing it with brilliant lucidity (p. v).

Theatre critic and Full Professor of Theatre Studies and Theatre Arts at the National Academy for Theatre and Film Arts in Sofia (Bulgaria), Dr. Stefanova is the author/ editor of sixteen books on theatre and criticism, many of them reviewed internationally, a few translated and launched in New York and London. The volume *East European Theatre after the Iron Curtain* (Routledge, 2010) is just one proof of her growing interest in the geographical, social and political space where she came from, where she has travelled and seen hundreds of performances.

As a result, the new book dedicated to theatre directors comes as no surprise. In her editorial mission she is accompanied by Marvin Carlson, theatre, drama and performance studies scholar. He is a Distinguished Professor of Theatre, Comparative Literature and Middle Eastern Studies and holder of the Sidney E. Cohn Chair at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

The selection of the twenty names belongs to them. The editors underlined that they didn't want a sort of "one to one" representation of the Eastern European countries.

The aim of the book is not to present a detailed analysis of the theatre in each and every country of the region... The directors included here have been major catalysts for a change in the face of Eastern European theatre at large during the last three decades – this is the main criterion of selection (p. xviii).

Consequently, a general picture of the theatre emerges from the book. The directors were obviously selected for their substantial influence on the European theatre as well. Their names have been drawing audiences in their countries, at the international festivals circuit and in theatres beyond national borders.

The twenty directors come from Lithuania, the late Eimuntas Nekrošius, but also Rimas Tuminas and Oskaras Koršunovas; from Latvia, the controversial Alvis Hermanis; from Poland – an impressive presence – Grzegorz Bral, Grzegorz Jarzyna, Jan Klata, Krystian Lupa, Krzysztof Warlikowski; from Hungary, Béla Pintér and Árpád Schilling; from Bulgaria, also directing on Romanian stages, Alexander Morfov; and the list goes on up to the Romanian names, Andrei Șerban, Silviu Purcărete and Gianina Cărbunariu.

"Ground-breaking" is a difficult to translate epithet in Romanian, and probably in other languages as well. Prof. Carlson, the co-editor, offers an alternative: "innovative", which may be

a key term, since closely connected with the concept of the modern director, especially in Europe, has been the idea of innovation, of taking art of the theatre in often surprising new directions... The leading directors of Eastern Europe have for decades been particularly noted for expanding the boundaries of our theatrical experience (p. xxii).

Not by chance, many of them won the Europa Theatre Prize, an award offered by the European Commission to a personality who has contributed to the realisation of cultural events that promote understanding and the exchange of knowledge between nations. In 1990, an additional award – Europe Prize New Theatrical Realities – was established looking at innovation in theatre.

The book offers informative and in-depth portraits of twenty of these directors, written by leading critics, scholars and researchers, who shed light on the artists' signature styles with examples of their emblematic productions, and

outline the reasons for their impact. In addition, in two chapters the selected directors themselves discuss their artistic family tree, as well as the main stakes theatre faces today. The book may be of interest to theatre scholars, students, anybody engaged with theatre on a global scale, and – why not – to any theatre lover.

It is said that theatre is the literature of those who cannot read. The great merit of this volume is the power of words to create images, not just directors' portraits, but also the re-creation of their performances through words to images. Thus, above the critical, objective discourse, the director's subjective eye is doubled by the personal eye of the critic, of the theatre historian. As a result, a subjective map of the Eastern European theatre today is traced.

The questioned directors' answers regarding their assumed artistic ancestry are savoury. Who'd they include in such a family tree? With the exception of Nekrošius, who left us too early (in 2018), all responded to the question. In their typical style. For example, Lithuanian Koršunovas puts his conational Nekrošius first, then Harms, Artaud, Grotowski, Kantor – perhaps a predictable outcome. But less predictable is Bulgarian Morfov's declaration: "I've never been inspired by theatre." But he recognizes the formative role of the following: "classicism, the paradox, irony, anti-classicism, dreams, hatred and love, egotism, altruism, empathy, misanthropy, and the feeling of how important and unnecessary I am in this world!" (p. 271) His portrait and the interview were made by Prof. Kalina Stefanova.

In Romania, those invited to contribute to the book come from academic schools. Professor Ion M. Tomuș, from the "Lucian Blaga" University in Sibiu composed Andrei Șerban's portrait: *The Search for "New Forms"*. The author confesses the strong impression left by two productions included in the International Theatre Festival Sibiu 2007, when the city was among the European Capitals of Culture: *The Seagull* directed by Șerban, and *Faust* directed by Silviu Purcărete. The story starts here, in order to discover the "character", presented since the '60s, in a somehow open-to-culture Romania, follows his career in the United States, his return with *The Ancient Trilogy* at the National Theatre in Bucharest and his manager position, then, in the last decades, his productions all over the country. Professor Tomuș is not afraid to declare that, in spite of his international route, Andrei Șerban "spiritually belongs to Eastern Europe, with all its peculiarities and specific problems." And his "permanent search for and concern with texts' interpretation is similar to the way all great characters in his productions are searching for their inner truths." (p. 204).

Director Silviu Purcărete, as *The Master of Rich Theatre*, is portrayed in words by Associate Professor Octavian Saiu, from the "I.L. Caragiale" National University of Theatre and Film in Bucharest. The author starts from the huge notoriety of *Faust*, the production of the National Theatre in Sibiu, not only

the best-known Purcărete performance, but maybe the best-known Romanian production all over the world, due to its longevity and also to its presence at the International Edinburgh Festival. The analysis continues on his great performances, most of them staged at the National Theatre in Craiova: *Ubu Rex*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Phaedra*, *The Danaids*, *The Tempest*. The conclusion is similar to the previous one: “because of this impurity of selfhood permeating his theatre, Purcărete is a Romanian, Eastern European director before being a global one. And indeed, it is for the very same reason that he is not only global, but truly universal.” (pp. 182-183).

Among the selected twenty *ground-breaking directors of Eastern Europe* we find Gianina Cărbunariu, whose portrait I was invited to write. I’ve identified in her structure of “character” a possible descent from the English “angry young men” of the last century. She embraces the mission of re-shaping Romanian theatre through a new way of writing, using the stage to convey comments, and oppose the state and society. Her performances originate from contemporary themes, inspired by present-day topics or by recent history. Her documentation process is followed by improvisation with actors, resulting in a fictional script where real-life elements are sometimes integrated. “Every fiction is EXPERIENCE-DOCUMENTARY-IMAGINATION” (pp. 17-18), emphasises Cărbunariu. The expression “the playwright director” belongs to her. Starting from the beginnings of the dramAcum group and reaching the management of the Youth Theatre in Piatra Neamţ, Gianina Cărbunariu never betrayed her ideals. Her work with young actors, the presence at the famous Festival d’Avignon, the numerous translations of her plays into different languages, the aesthetics of her performances are just some of the artistic features included in the article. “It seems that Gianina Cărbunariu has found the alchemical secret through which she has discovered the philosopher’s stone of twenty-first-century theatre.” (p. 29).

For the final chapter, the directors included in the book were asked to try to define the issues that contemporary theatre faces today, especially in its relationship with the offstage realities. Polish director Jan Klata sincerely answers: “I don’t know, but I keep trying to find that out.” (p. 283) It is also the conclusion reached by the editors and authors of the present volume. The book “shouts” for a sequel. Eastern European theatre still has a lot to say and to be told of.



**Simona HODOȘ**

**TEATRUL ROMÂNNO-CANADIAN**  
Schimburi culturale  
și strategii manageriale



Artele spectacolului

# TEATRUL ROMÂNNO-CANADIAN SCHIMBURI CULTURALE ȘI STRATEGII MANAGERIALE

Teatrul româno-canadian  
Schimburi culturale și strategii manageriale  
Universitaria Craiova  
2022, (paperback, 347 pp)  
ISBN: 9786061418343  
eBook ISBN: 9783030529352  
Simona Hodoș (Author)

**VASILE MORAR**  
Professor Emeritus of University of Bucharest



University of Bucharest, Romania  
*vasilemorali@yahoo.com*

**Abstract:** The author's activity represents the first major and in-depth attempt to cover a necessary acquaintance with a major cultural reality: the togetherness, understanding, distancing of people from everywhere through theatre. Simona Hodoș combined and articulated methods in order to research the theatrical phenomenon in Canada and Romania (monographs, reports, statistical studies, scientific or cultural articles, photographs, comments, critical notes, conversations, documentary visits, personal experience) linking all of them, especially for the last decade and a half, to the way the "managerial perspective" has evolved and has been applied.

**Keywords:** cultural management, cultural exchange, ROCADE Association, Romanian-Canadian theatre, International Shakespeare Festival, Robert Lepage.

**How to cite:** Morar, Vasile (2022). 'Teatrul româno-canadian. Schimburi culturale și strategii manageriale', *Concept* 1(24)/2022, pp. 270-272.

Obiectul prezentei lucrări (desprinsă din teza de doctorat a autoarei, coordonator științific prof. univ. dr. Ludmila Patlanjoglu) este clar conturat și cu precizie definit: o cercetare exhaustivă a teatrului din cele două țări, îndeosebi în ultima sută de ani, cu un accent al analizei și documentării asupra chipului în care schimbările culturale din lumea dinamică a contemporaneității au impus teatrului din România și Canada, în tot acest răstimp, găsirea de soluții generale sau specifice, în sfera strategiilor manageriale.

Activitatea autoarei reprezintă prima încercare, amplă și profundă, menită să acopere o necesară cunoaștere a unei realități culturale majore: apropierea, înțelegerea, dezmărginirea oamenilor de pretutindeni prin teatru. Simona Hodoș a combinat și articulat între ele metode pentru a cerceta fenomenul teatral în Canada și România (monografii, rapoarte, studii statistice, articole științifice sau din zona culturală, fotografii, comentarii, note critice, convorbiri, vizite de documentare, experiența personală) legându-le pe toate, mai ales pentru ultimul deceniu și jumătate, de felul în care a evoluat și a fost aplicată „perspectiva managerială”.

Pentru ca acest proces să se bucure de un real succes, scriitoarei nu i-a trebuit decât să aibă celelalte calități (perseverență, răbdare, spirit analitic și de sinteză, capacitate de a stabili conexiuni cauzale, interes permanent pentru fenomenul studiat în componentele sale esențiale sau de detaliu, dar și competența interpersonală pentru a relaționa cu personalități artistice atât de diverse) pentru a structura conținuturile rezultate într-un întreg coerent și consistent logic. În convingerea autoarei, fenomenele culturale ca și cele economice și politice – iar relațiile culturale româno-canadiene, implică toate aceste paliere – nu pot fi benefice în mod maximal dacă sunt lăsate doar pe seama „soluțiilor individuale”. Ele trebuie să intre în matrice de analiză și de găsire a soluțiilor din zestrea de metode și tehnici din cadrul disciplinelor management și marketing.

Regăsim o parte consistentă de analiză teoretică referitoare la natura activității de management și marketing în structura tipurilor de decizii din societatea contemporană, reprezentând un bun exemplu de aplicare a principiilor marketingului și managementului chiar la studiile empirice din Canada și România, generând strategii de marketing nediferențiat, diferențiat, concentrat, personalizat.

Identitatea diasporei presupune evoluția raportului dintre „solidaritate identitară vs. afirmare individuală”, dar și conflictele între „autohtoni” și „vechi veniți” sau „noi-veniți”, toate aceste problematici aducând atingere substanțială cu temele „identității” și ale „diasporei”, simbolizând un demers menit să pună în valoare potențialul creator întâlnit.

Înțelegerea intimității acestei lumi nu a fost o dificultate pentru Simona Hodoș: a avut contacte nenumărate cu personalități remarcabile care i-au facilitat cunoașterea pentru perioada prezentă, dar i-au dat și deschiderea pentru ceea ce a fost. Nu s-a lăsat însă în plasa subiectivității generate de prea marea apropiere de obiect. Singură își propune, ca punct de plecare rezonabil, cercetarea documentelor și, numai în prelungirea acestei sarcini, „subiectivitate obiectivă ori detașată”. În fapt, încă o probă a acestei maturități consistă și în aprecieri de acest tip: teatrul românesc a evoluat „sub semnul istoricității și a relaționărilor sale” sau „schimburile teatrului românesc cu lumea (au) fost marcate (tot timpul) de regimurile politice”, iar în formulări mai largi: „timp de un deceniu, Teatrul Național din Craiova a înscris teatrul românesc pe harta lumii”.

Finalul studiului este dedicat geniului regiei mondiale contemporane, Robert Lepage. Dintru început trebuie să remarcăm faptul că alegerea acestui final se justifică în chip deplin. Și din punct de vedere teoretic, și din cel al relevanței pentru ideea de politică și politici culturale în viitor. În fond, prin intermediul lui Robert Lepage, prin chiar viața și activitatea lui, incluzând-o și pe cea legată de România, avem acces privilegiat la conceptele majore ale lumii de azi: globalism, localism, multilingvism, interculturalitate. El s-a confruntat cu ele, le-a înțeles, le-a aplicat în propria sa practică teatrală ca puțini alții.





*Simona Hodoș*

**Simona Hodoș** is a teatrologist, journalist, cultural manager. She is a graduate in Theatre Studies – UNATC "I.L. Caragiale" Bucharest (1998), Public Relations and Cultural Management – FIMAN International Management Foundation, Italy (2000), Cultural management – Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport du Québec (2006), Mentorship in Cultural Affairs – Marguerite-Bourgeoys School Committee, Montréal (2006). She holds the title of Doctor of Arts in the Theatre and Performing Arts field (2021) and is the author of *Romanian-Canadian Theatre. Cultural Exchanges and Managerial Strategies* (Universitaria, Craiova, 2022).

She is the founder and director of the ROCADE Association, Montréal (2006-present); director of EUROFEST, the Romanian Film Festival in Montréal, Québec, Toronto, Ottawa (2006-2018); founder of the Association of Romanian Businessmen from Canada (AGAR, 2010), member of the Board of Directors of Caisse Desjardins-NDG, Montréal (2013-2020); member of UNITER (since 1998), and the International Association of Theatre Critics – IATC/AICT (since 2000).

# **CÓMO NACIÓ EL LIBRO *HISTORIAS DE ACTORES.* UN RECORRIDO POR EL MUNDO TEATRAL Y CINEMATOGRAFICO**

**Historias de actores**  
2018, (paperback, 395 pp)  
ISBN en trámite por la Secretaría de Cultura del  
Estado de Coahuila  
Raúl Adalid (Author)

## **RAÚL ADALID**

Actor de cine y teatro independiente.  
Colaborador cultural de “La Otra Plana” Torreón.  
*raul\_adalid@yahoo.com.mx*

## **LUIS DE TAVIRA**

Dramaturgo, director de teatro, ensayista y pedagogo

**Abstract:** The article discusses how a book is built. How a writer is born. What elements should be taken into account to prepare a copy. It is an assertion that should be written towards a known topic. What should the author take into account in order to say something significant. How the material to narrate should be ordered. What factors should an editor take into consideration, and also what steps a tutor should follow in order to advise one. It is the description of a passion made book. Making a copy is beautiful, but at the same time, it is a huge responsibility to work on. The book was defined by the great theatre director, Luis De Tavira, in its prologue, as: "The Theatre of Memory."

**Keywords:** Actuación, Historias de actores, Luis de Tavira, cine, memorias.

**How to cite:** Adalid, R., De Tavira, L. (2022). 'Cómo nació el libro *Historias de actores*. Un recorrido por el mundo teatral y cinematográfico', *Concept* 1(24)/2022, pp. 274-284.

**Introducción.** (Una historia de cómo se construyen los sueños, luego el destino hace su parte para que se cumplan.)

Desde la adolescencia tuve la inquietud de escribir. Empecé haciéndolo por medio de lo que yo llamaba la poesía. En realidad, eran sentires que se expresaban por medio de trozos que, según yo, se construían de un modo poético. Hacía semejanzas por medio de metáforas con analogías de mi vida temprana. Todo iba a un cajón. A un cuaderno que se volvió seguramente duro, áspero y amarillo por el correr del tiempo. Esta inquietud permaneció. Mi carrera profesional llamada "Literatura Dramática y Teatro"<sup>65</sup>, me llevó a ser un pertinaz lector. Muchas lecturas sobre teorías teatrales, obras dramáticas diversas, amén de la vasta literatura a leer por mi carrera de actor. Todo este universo de lecturas me hizo ver la vida de una manera no convencional. Todo adquiría un matiz de reflexión. De aterrizar vitalmente lo leído. La vida, mi realidad, era un escenario vivo, un set de acción con la cámara de mis sentidos por testigo. Muchos, muchos años después, caí en un reposo de tres meses, producto de una operación quirúrgica. Todos los días, por las mañanas, me di a la tarea de escribir. La curiosidad y el deseo de comunicación instantánea con el mundo, me hizo que publicara por medio del Facebook. Mis escritos eran reflexiones existenciales. Recuerdos sobre la Ciudad de México en los años ochenta. Nostalgias sobre el teatro lagunero y anécdotas vivas de mi paso por los escenarios teatrales y los sets cinematográficos. Una constante había en esos escritos: hablar sobre actores, escritores, y directores del teatro y del cine. Hubo un escrito elaborado en esa convalecencia en el año 2014. Fue un texto dedicado a Juan José Arreola<sup>66</sup>.

65 La Licenciatura en *Literatura Dramática y Teatro* de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) estudia la actividad teatral en su conjunto. Su propósito es el estudio y creación del arte escénico desde diferentes perspectivas: la literatura dramática, la investigación histórica, la investigación teórica, la actuación, la dirección, la dramaturgia y la producción teatral.

66 Fue un escritor, académico, traductor y editor originario de Zapotlán el Grande, Jalisco, México. Nació

En él desbocaba mi admiración extasiada hacia este mago de la palabra. Aquellos programas televisivos nocturnos hechos por Arreola fueron fundamentales para la elección de mi vocación profesional. El jalisciense Arreola había sido actor antes que escritor. Él fue una inspiración. Un deseo absoluto de ser como él.

El post operatorio lo pasé en mi natal Torreón. Estar en el origen me hizo citarme con una obligación pendiente: escribir. A mi regreso a la Ciudad de México, lugar donde resido, seguí escribiendo prácticamente a diario. He de decir que durante mi recuperación en Torreón recibí la invitación del periodista lagunero Julián Parra Ibarra, para colaborar en su periódico digital, *La otra Plana*. Publicar en las redes de una manera profesional abría un panorama muy interesante a explorar. Lo vi como la oportunidad de desarrollar el oficio diario de la escritura. Recordé al escritor German Dehesa que diariamente publicaba su columna en el periódico *Reforma*. Así empecé a hacerlo. Diariamente enviaba a Julián mi columna. Escritos de toda índole: reflexiones sobre nuestra política mexicana, sentires y análisis sobre fútbol, una obra de teatro, una película, el deleite gastronómico al haber ido a un restaurante, el placer de una charla con un amigo, algún poema o cuento que me asaltaba a crear, y el recurrente tema de la nostalgia hacia obras teatrales y películas realizadas, prevaleciendo una constante, es decir la presencia de actores que me relataban páginas vividas a su lado. La publicación en redes, Facebook, durante el 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, trajo un comentario continuo de parte de generosos lectores que gustaban de mis locuras: *haz un libro*. Para finales de 2017, me pregunté: si hiciera un libro ¿de qué escribiría? Al hacer un rápido repaso de mis constantes al escribir, hubo un tema obvio que se transparentó: los actores, las bellas y talentosas actrices. La mente traviesa y creativa me dijo: Un libro que se llame *Historias de actores*.

Había que pensar cómo construirlo. Hubo tres libros maravillosos de un actor japonés, Yoshi Oida, que me inspiraron a cómo poder darle estructura a esta aventura literaria. Los libros son: *Un actor a la deriva*, *El actor invisible*, *Los trucos del actor*. La lectura de estos tres libros abrió mi inventiva. Yoshi dividía por capítulos sus vivencias y les daba nombres. Se me ocurrió entonces dividir en cinco estaciones –como las llama mi querido prologuista, el maestro Luis De Távira<sup>67</sup>– mi futuro libro. *El Origen*, *El actor quién es*, *El cine, ese privilegio de la imagen*,

---

el 21 de septiembre de 1918 y falleció el 3 de diciembre de 2001, a los 83 años de edad. Destacó enormemente por sus obras literarias, como *Confabulario* (1953), *Bestiario* (1959) y *La feria* (1963). Es considerado como parte de la generación del '50, junto con autores como Emilio Carballido, Sergio Magaña y Juan Rulfo.

67 Luis de Távira es poeta, dramaturgo y ensayista. Estudió Letras Clásicas y Filosofía en el Instituto Libre de Literatura, Puente Grande, Jalisco; y Arte Dramático en la FFyL de la UNAM. Director de escena y fundador del grupo Teatro Taller Épico de la UNAM. Ha sido profesor de Actuación en la UNAM, el INBA y la UIA, de Dirección en la UNAM, de Estética en la ENAP; director del CUT de la UNAM, de Actividades Teatrales de la UNAM, del Centro de Experimentación Teatral del INBA. Ha participado con su grupo Teatro Taller Épico en múltiples festivales teatrales internacionales y dirigido cerca de 50 espectáculos teatrales en México y en el extranjero.

*Directores inolvidables, Montajes queridos y la trascendencia transformadora y crítica del teatro.* Los cinco capítulos moldearon el concepto. Logré un orden. Una brújula que daba rumbo definido a una materia tan abstracta e inasible. La gran mayoría de los capítulos tenían varias historias ya escritas. Una vez que se me ocurrió la idea, visualicé a mi estado de Coahuila, a la Secretaría de Cultura de mi entidad como posible editor. Vislumbré a mi cuñada Lupita Richards, quien trabaja para el gobierno del estado, para que le platicara la idea a Sofía García Camil<sup>68</sup>, directora de la Secretaría de Cultura de Coahuila. A Sophie, como cariñosamente le digo, le gustó la aventura. La había conocido trabajando ambos, durante una estadía mía en Torreón, en cuestiones de publicidad comunicativa para el publicista Claudio Sánchez. Sofía visualizó la idea del libro para presentarse durante el *Festival de la Palabra*<sup>69</sup>, a realizarse en Torreón en noviembre del 2018. Antes de tener contestación afirmativa de la secretaria de Cultura, adelanté el sí y le dije a mis dos padrinos que había contemplado en mi imaginación: el director teatral Luis de Tavira y José María de Tavira<sup>70</sup>, si podían darme su apoyo. Pedí al maestro Tavira si me presentaba el libro, me dijo que sí. Mi arrojito lagunero me llevó a pedirle si también me hacía el prólogo. “*Ahí sí*”, me dijo, “primero tengo que leerlo”. Una vez que terminé los episodios que complementaban cada capítulo se lo llevé al maestro. En ese inter de trabajo tuve la respuesta afirmativa de la Secretaría de Cultura de Coahuila. Yo les había asegurado que tanto el maestro Luis, como “Chema” de Tavira, serían mis padrinos. José María siempre me alentó. Me decía que la idea le encantaba. Que le recordaba a un libro exquisito hecho por el gran escritor Vicente Leñero<sup>71</sup>: *Vivir del Teatro*<sup>72</sup>.

68 Sofía García Camil es Licenciada en Ciencias de la Comunicación por la Universidad Iberoamericana Plantel Laguna. Cuenta con diversos cursos y diplomados, entre ellos “Producción Radiofónica”, impartido por Radio Educación. En el plano laboral se ha desempeñado como secretaria de Cultura del Estado, es funcionaria Pública de Carrera y ha ocupado los cargos de directora del Museo Regional de La Laguna INAH, y Coordinadora Honoraria Regional del Comité de Participación Social Campaña del Gobierno del Estado: “En Equipo Contra la Marginación”. Se desempeñó como directora del Instituto Coahuilense de Cultura Región Laguna, Titular de Difusión Cultural de la Universidad Iberoamericana Plantel Laguna, ha laborado en las áreas de comunicación de la Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes, así como en Nacional financiera en la Ciudad de México. Como Secretaria de Cultura mantiene una actividad cultural constante en todas las regiones del Estado de Coahuila.

69 *El Festival de la Palabra* es un festival que se realiza desde 2005 para celebrar anualmente la organización de escritores sonorenses que desean unir esfuerzos para promover en el estado las propias creaciones, así como propiciar la formación de lectores y algo muy importante: la difusión de la literatura escrita en Sonora, no sólo la más reciente, sino la de muchas décadas anteriores a ésta.

70 José María de Tavira Bianchi es un actor mexicano hijo del director de teatro mexicano Luis de Tavira y de la actriz Rosa María Bianchi. Cursó estudios de teatrología en Londres, participando en más de 20 películas y series mexicanas.

71 Vicente Leñero (1993-2014) fue un novelista, dramaturgo, guionista, periodista y académico mexicano.

72 Leñero Vicente (2012) *Vivir del Teatro*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México D.F.

Al terminar de leer el borrador, el maestro De Tavira me dijo: “Ya me eché tu libro, hice un pequeño prólogo, pero está muy sentido”. En efecto era un proemio que me emocionó hasta las lágrimas. Y nada pequeño. Es de un contenido elocuente y profundamente vivo a la luz del conocimiento. Para julio de 2018 todo estaba listo. Mis padrinos estaban prestos. Comencé a hacer las últimas correcciones de estilo, orden de episodios, conseguir fotografías, y algunas historias que surgieron. Para principios de septiembre de 2018, todo se encontraba en Saltillo para el comienzo de edición. El libro estaba ya en su gestación de materia que se tornaría en libro. Con cuerpo en páginas y sangre y órganos hechas letras. Un nombre tendría este niño literario: *Historias de actores (Un recorrido por el mundo teatral y cinematográfico)*. El día viernes 16 de noviembre de 2018 llegó. Acompañado del maestro Luis De Tavira, llegué a la Comarca Lagunera para presentar mi libro en el lugar que había soñado: El Teatro *Isauro Martínez*, en su anexo cultural. Una noche hermosa. El lugar se llenó. Trescientos asistentes para la presentación en sociedad de mi niño. Familiares, amigos queridos, gente que tenía mucho sin ver, personas que no conocía. Era la primera vez que vivía una experiencia así, como escritor. Esa noche en la galería del Teatro *Isauro Martínez* conocí mi libro. En la mañana que llegamos al hotel de Torreón no lo quise conocer. Hasta en la noche en pleno evento quise hacerlo. Quería sentir el asombro: “Vas a sentir muy bonito”, me dijo el maestro Luis, así fue. Aún me parece ver el gentío. La sala iluminada. Las palabras de Luis de Tavira leyendo el prólogo. Mi emoción. La voz quebrada. Mi lectura. Las sonrisas de la gente. Su silencio. Su linda pasión. Enseguida la sorpresa. Algo nuevo para mí. Dedicar mi libro a los asistentes. Una larguísima fila. Palabras lindas de las personas que me saludaban, fotos con ellos. Ver al maestro Luis en lo inusual. Tomándose fotos. Dedicando mi libro a los entusiastas y cándidos asistentes que muchos sabían que es una leyenda viva dentro del arte teatral mexicano. Esa noche era una noche diferente. Los ecos del inicio, del origen, me decían que no me había equivocado al querer ser como un Juan José Arreola. Un actor y un escritor. Después de esa borrachera emocional de lo hermoso vivido en Torreón por la presentación de mi libro, quedaba un asunto a vivir: presentar mi niño literario en la Ciudad de México.

La Secretaría de Cultura de Coahuila dio una fecha: El 25 de marzo de 2019. En mis visualizaciones de sueño contemplé a la “Casa de Coahuila” como la sede del anhelado evento. La “Casa de Coahuila”, en la Ciudad de México, es un lugar hermoso. Enmarcado enfrente de un lugar histórico: El convento de Churubusco, lugar de la heroica batalla mexicana contra el ejército gringo en su intervención a nuestro país. El ver los cañones afuera de ese convento me hacía recrear la imagen del general mexicano, Pedro María Anaya, al decirle al gringo general Scott al rendir la plaza: “Si hubiera habido parque, usted no

estaría aquí”. La historia de México siempre me cautivó desde niño. Ese lugar lo imaginé desde infante. El conocerlo en la edad adulta en México, me causó una impresión recreativa de la batalla muy fuerte. Así que mi origen Lagunero-Coahuilense, me hizo pensar en la casa de nuestra representatividad en la Ciudad de México, como el lugar perfecto. Al tener el libro ya editado sólo nos quedaba, a mi esposa Elvira Richards<sup>73</sup>, y a mí, organizar algo así como una fiesta teatral y cinematográfica. El objetivo era que los actores, directores y escritores, mencionados en el libro, acudieran a la ceremonia de presentación del libro. Imaginar a esas queridas luminarias con los que había compartido la vida teatral o cinematográfica me emocionaba grandemente. La noche del 25 de marzo llegó. Preparé un escrito aludiendo al contenido del libro, lo titulé: “Nunca Ítaca sólo el camino”. El poema *Ítaca*, del griego Kavafis, es un canto de gesta de vida, de emoción, de construir viviendo la existencia. Esta semejanza con el contenido de mi libro me pareció de una elocuencia maravillosa. La lectura del mismo, creo, inquietó. La sala principal de la Casa de Coahuila estaba llena. Unas doscientas cincuenta personas.

Hubo música de un conjunto de cuerdas de ensamble previa a la presentación. Música de cine. De Ennio Morricone. Las piezas musicales cinematográficas del maestro italiano me encantan. El momento de inicio llegó. El maestro Luis De Tavira, José María De Tavira y un servidor pasamos al estrado. ¡Qué impresión! La imagen al ver a tantos actores queridos, creativos admirados, amigos eternos, fue de un shock impactante para mí. Agradecí con la voz entrecortada. Leí mi escrito de presentación. El maestro Luis de Tavira leyó su inspirado prólogo con una paz armónica de transparencia conceptual y emotiva. Chema de Tavira leyó tres de las historias del libro. Una dedicada a ese inmenso actor teatral, Farnesio de Bernal, la segunda a mi admirado cineasta Arturo Ripstein, y la tercera, un homenaje que cree a Julio Castillo, y su magia teatral con el montaje: *De película*. He de decir con sumo agradecimiento que “Chema” hizo una lectura emotiva soberbia.

Cerré la noche leyendo una cuarta historia. Esas de amor a la compañera de vida. Esa que es un agradecimiento enamorado a quien me da centro vital: Elvira Richards.

Hubo una cola inmensa para firmar mi libro. Firmárselo a gente tan admirada como Blanca Guerra, Adriana Roel, Arcelia Ramírez, Marta Navarro, Marina De Tavira, Sonia Salum, Tina French, Ana Silvia Garza, Gastón Melo, Alberto Estrella, Farnesio De Bernal, Manuel Ojeda, Carlos Aguilar, el dramaturgo

---

<sup>73</sup> Elvira Richards es una actriz mexicana, directora de talento y casting. Ha realizado más de ochenta largometrajes como directora de casting de cine. Destacan películas como: *El estudiante*, *La Cebra*, *La mitad del mundo*, *Espiral*, entre muchas otras.

Cutberto López, Emilio Echevarría, Lourdes Echevarría, el maestro Alejandro Luna, y a tantos amigos compañeros, queridos y talentosos actores, fue un regalo que Dios me dio. Ver a mi amigo de toda la vida Oscar Sánchez, a Uriel Bravo desde Querétaro, compañero “fugitivo” teatral, a Jorge Monter, compañero teatral de mi primera obra profesional, *Tartufo*, a mis hermanos laguneros: Delos Jorge De los Reyes, José Juan Meraz, Raúl Méndez y Héctor Kotsifakis, a la distancia. Todos ustedes me dieron un presente que va al cajón de mi más sagrada memoria.

\*\*\*

La memoria es al final de cuentas una reconstrucción de la vida, es verbalizarla, recordarla. Escribirla es vivirla, quizá volver a componerla. Este libro es un repaso por mi existencia. Un testimonio. He querido enfocarlo en mi paso por el escenario teatral y cinematográfico, donde he tenido la oportunidad de conocerme y hablarme de tú con mi ser, con mis deseos, mis luchas y saber qué es lo que quiero. En este camino he tenido la fortuna de conocer gente maravillosa. Seres que sueñan, que inventan, que juegan creativamente a recrear la vida. Estos seres fantásticos han sido los actores, los directores de teatro y cine, los escritores, mis maestros inolvidables, el público. Con ellos he querido caminar estas páginas para revelar ese mundo grandioso que es el teatro y el cine. Los pasos van desde el origen. El llamado a ser actor. Torreón, mi ciudad natal, como protagonista inspirador. Por medio de algunas historias con intérpretes con los que he compartido vida, he querido revelar quién es el actor, qué sueña, qué vive, por qué quiso ser histrión. Hubiera querido plasmar todas las vivencias con todos los queridos actores con los que he tenido la fortuna de convivir, pero la tarea hubiera sido titánica. Están, quizá, los que llegaron a asaltarme emotivamente en el camino de este recuento de trozos de vida. Está el paso por el cine. Ese séptimo arte que desde niño siempre me gustó. Habitan en estas páginas directores queridos con los que he tenido el privilegio de trabajar y están aquellos por los que siento una gran admiración sin que haya tenido la suerte de conocerlos. Viven aquí actores, no todos mencionados, que para mí han sido entrañables. Gente que he conocido y otros que hubiera dado mi reino por conocer. Moran en estas líneas los directores de teatro inolvidables. Mis maestros y otros que, aunque no lo fueron, me enseñaron mucho. Finalmente residen en este libro aquellas obras teatrales que han sido memorables para mí, muchas que viví y otras donde fui un amante espectador. La memoria es caprichosa y muchas veces uno sufre de no haber relatado tantos y tantos montajes y películas que han sido motivos de vivencia perpetua. Éste es, al final de cuentas, un libro de sueños: relatos de seres que han visto la vida a través de la ficción. Al hablar de actores,



de escritores, de directores, de amigos, de amores, del público, me he permitido también componer uno que otro cuento y a veces volcarme en la lira poética. Es mi deseo que el lector que me brinde su generosa lectura viva un sueño, una ficción, que pueda abrirse una puerta que permita conocer y sentir quiénes son esos seres maravillosos que componen las fantasías, aquellos que nos plasman la vida para que la reconozcamos, y podamos, por qué no, transformarla. Después de todo, toda la vida es sueño y los sueños, sueños son.

### **Conclusión**

Conviví con todos estos actores, artistas queridos, por medio de las letras al recordarlos y plasmarlos. El verlos era como si una película se hiciera elocuente presencia. Una aventura teatral viva. Una catarsis para mí fue esa noche del 25 de marzo de 2019. El viernes 26 de abril de 2019, *Historias de actores (Un recorrido por el mundo teatral y cinematográfico)*, vive en los estantes de la librería especializada en cine y teatro, la entrañable: “Paso de Gato”<sup>74</sup>, en la Colonia San Mateo Coyoacán. Ese mi niño literario los espera con las páginas abiertas para quien guste ser mi amigo por medio de sus letras y sentires. La historia de génesis de este libro tiene una enseñanza muy grande para mí: todo lo que se sueña con la profundidad del alma, con fuerza, con determinación de obrar en la obra, se consigue. Aparecen ángeles que te señalan la luz del camino. Gracias siempre a Dios, a Sofía García Camil, a Lupita Richards, a Luis de Tavira, a Chema de Tavira, a la “Casa de Coahuila”, a todos mis compañeros de senda teatral y cinematográfica, a mis amigos, familiares, por inspirarme la vida, a mis padres por darme el privilegio de vivir, y a mi pulsar amoroso: Elvirita Richards. Con la ayuda de Dios y de los sueños, todo, todo es posible.

**Raúl Adalid Sainz**, en algún lugar de México Tenochtitlan.

PD: El libro ya no está a la venta. Se agotó. Espero que podamos sacar una segunda edición.

<sup>74</sup> La Revista *Paso de Gato* nació en 2001 como una revista teatral mexicana. Sin embargo, ahora es un proyecto cultural más amplio.

## El teatro de la memoria

La vida es un invento de la memoria y el teatro es el mirador donde mejor se contempla. Por las cinco estaciones de este libro, los pasos de Raúl Adalid desembocan en el íntimo espacio de un teatro de la memoria. Las dimensiones de ese teatro dependen aquí del tamaño del deseo de recordar aquello que es capaz de contener la intensa vivencia de una aventura que comienza cuando se sucumbe a la irresistible tentación de contemplar cómo se entreabre un viejo telón verde, justo un instante antes de que aparezca la presencia transfigurada de la actriz. El teatro de la memoria es una metáfora, pero también es una estructura mental que se construye a partir del destello retenido en esos mendrugos de luz que un viajero saca de su alforja para ofrecerlos generosamente a la hora de la vigilia solidaria. Son impresiones, huellas de lo vivido que resucitan para testimoniar lo que una vez fue realidad y pudo determinar la vida como un destino. Pero también son sueños, ficciones, leyendas que van transformando esa realidad en la morada donde el alma se demora para descubrir el nombre de una patria prometida. Sin embargo, son, sobre todo, evocaciones de presencias, lugares, libros, conversaciones, espectáculos, filmes, ensayos, filmaciones, viajes, calles, noches innumerables que pueden ser mitad reales, mitad ficticios y que al volver van creando las estancias de un teatro en cuyo ciclorama se hiciera una puerta imaginaria que sirviera de atajo hacia aquel desahogo donde se eleva una escalera mental que lleva a sitios que nunca antes existieron. Raúl Adalid es ante todo un actor que no cesa de preguntarse por el enigma de la actuación como arte de la vida. Y es feliz porque mantiene vivas sus preguntas y porque ha conseguido no responderse todavía. Porque el que ya no se pregunta por sí mismo, y por los demás, irá por la vida cada vez más sordo y más ciego, parecerá ser alguien cuando en realidad ya es nadie. Raúl Adalid es un actor que piensa sobre lo que hace, lo que contempla y lo que convive en el hacer colectivo de un arte por esencia comunitario. Pero además escribe. Y quien escribe plática con el tiempo, construye una memoria compatible. Dice Aristóteles que es el asombro lo que nos enseña a pensar. Pero habrá que entender también que ese deslumbramiento no depende del que piensa sino de que aquello que se piensa tome la iniciativa de salir de la sombra y de asaltarlo. Los textos que integran este libro provienen de ese asombro y por eso testimonian el asalto de lo otro que siempre lo sorprende. Nadie elige la vida del teatro si antes el teatro no lo eligió. Aquí el autor comparece ante lo que testimonia como el que acude a la obediencia de un llamado. En estos textos da cuenta de su asombro, lo transforma en substancia memorable de lo que se pondera, se admira, se agradece y generosamente se comparte como solo puede compartirse esa especial alegría de vivir sintiéndose vivido.

Por las estancias de este teatro de la memoria irrumpen presencias deslumbrantes e imprescindibles para una necesaria historiografía del teatro mexicano y, en especial, con mayor urgencia, del teatro de Coahuila. Por estas páginas cruzan de pronto personajes cifrados de una posible e inquietante novela teatral. Se hace confidencia del hallazgo de una misión teatral. Se relatan los momentos decisivos de los años de aprendizaje y se consignan las andanzas de un diario de trabajo. Pero sobre todo resuena poderosamente la narración justiciera que testimonia la admirable voluntad de existir del teatro en La Laguna. Este libro es una colección de retratos de actores, escritores, directores y cineastas, cómo son vistos a través de los ojos siempre asombrados de Raúl Adalid. Los relatos que aquí se reúnen –acerca de Sonia Salum, Rogelio Luévano, Virginia Valdivieso, Ignacio López Tarso, Claudio Brook, Ludwik Margules, Raúl Zermeño, José Caballero, Héctor Bonilla, Arturo Ripstein, Luis Buñuel, entre muchos más– revelan múltiples anécdotas y vivencias memorables que sólo pudieron suceder en la trama del quehacer teatral y cinematográfico, y que muestran a sus personajes al contraluz de esa semi penumbra que se demora tras bambalinas. Este libro es un testimonio entrañable y solidario donde la pasión por el arte de la actuación se entreteje con la leyenda de sus creadores y donde los datos y las anécdotas se convierten en los pasillos que llevan a un escenario donde cabe el mundo.

**Luis de Tavira**



**References:**

1. Fiesco, Roberto (2019). *Blanca apuntes de Guerra*. Editorial Universidad de Guadalajara y Centro Universitario de la Costa.
2. Kavafis, Konstantinos (1933). *Ítaca*. Traducción de Vicente Fernández González e ilustraciones de Federico Delicado. Nórdica Libros.
3. Leñero, Vicente (2012). *Vivir del Teatro*. México D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
4. López, Cutberto (2009). *Yamaba 300*. México D.F.: Ediciones El Milagro.
5. Oida, Yoshi (2010). *Los trucos del actor*. Barcelona: ALBA editorial.
6. Oida, Yoshi (2012). *El actor invisible*. México D.F.: Ediciones El Milagro.
7. Oida, Yoshi (2017). *Un actor a la deriva*. Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, México D.F.: Ediciones El Milagro.
8. Paranagua, Paulo Antonio (1998). *Arturo Ripstein*. Editorial Catedra.

**Online references:**

1. criticateatral2021.org (n.d.). *Reseña Histórica del Teatro México 2,0-21* [Online]. Available at: <http://critica-teatral2021org-html> (Accessed: 21 April 2022)
2. Secretaría de Cultura (2016). *Refrenda la Casa de Coahuila su vocación y esfuerzos por difundir la cultura y las tradiciones de la entidad* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.gob.mx/cultura/prensa/refrenda-la-casa-de-coahuila-su-vocacion-y-esfuerzos-por-difundir-la-cultura-y-las-tradiciones-de-la-entidad> (Accessed: 27 April 2022)
3. telediario.mx (2022). *Historia y evolución del teatro lagunero, por Juan Carlos Martínez* [Online]. Available at: <https://www.telediario.mx/cultura/historia-evolucion-teatro-lagunero-juan-carlos-martinez> (Accessed: 21 April 2022)

**Raúl Adalid Sainz** es un actor de cine, teatro y televisión, escritor, locutor y conductor de radio y televisión. Estudió la carrera de Literatura Dramática y Teatro en la UNAM. Fue actor de la Compañía teatral “Repertorio Español” en la Ciudad de Nueva York. Sus maestros de actuación fueron: José Luis Ibáñez, Ludwig Margules y Raúl Zermeño. Ha participado en más de sesenta obras teatrales, trabajando con directores como: Luis de Tavira, José Luis Ibáñez, Raúl Zermeño, Gustavo Torres Cuesta, Flavio González Mello, Boris Shoemann, Alberto Lomnitz, Hugo Arrevillaga, José Luis Cruz, René Buch, Marta Luna, entre muchos otros. Ha realizado, como actor, treinta películas entre largometrajes y cortos. Con directores como Jaime Humberto Hermosillo, Armando Casas, Antonio Serrano, entre muchos otros. Ha hecho diversas series televisivas. Realizó como actor-narrador, el audio libro *Corazón diario de un niño*, producción de Carlos Acosta. En el año 2018 publicó el libro *Historias de actores* (un recorrido por el mundo teatral y cinematográfico), con un prólogo de Luis de Tavira, edición de la Secretaría de Cultura de Coahuila. Escribe su columna cultural para el periódico *La Otra Plana*, de la ciudad de Torreón Coahuila, dirección del periodista Julián Parra. En el año 2015 recibe el premio *Huizache*, a mejor actor en el “Festival de Cine sin Cines de Michoacán”, en el año 2019, el mismo Festival le da el premio *La Máscara*, por su trayectoria actoral, festival que dirige la actriz internacional mexicana Elpidia Carrillo. En el año 2019 recibe el premio *San Ginés de Oro*, (premios de Teatro Independiente de México) por su trayectoria actoral.




CONCEPT 1(24)/2022

---

# TEATRALITATEA EXTINSĂ - O CALE ORIGINALĂ ÎN TEATRUL ACTUAL

Teatrul telematic  
Editura Universitaria  
2022, (paperback, 350 pp)  
ISBN: 9786061418558  
Marina Hanganu (Author)

**NICOLAE MANDEA**



UNATC "I.L. Caragiale", Bucharest, Romania  
*nicumandea@unatc.ro*

**Abstract:** The volume is remarkable from all aspects, based on the experiments and creative path of the author, but above all on a significant originality. The clear and precise definition of the working methodology highlights the maturity of thought, as artist and researcher, a special quality in a field where the temptation of impressionism is frequent. Marina Hanganu defines telematic theatre as “taking place simultaneously in at least two different spaces, physical or virtual, connected by telecommunications”. The concept is clear, simple and operational and belongs to a post-digital condition of theatre that goes beyond the transmission of the live or edited performance, presupposing a different creative process. It is an important step in the direction of *a dramaturgy in an extended sense* (phrase coined by the author).

**Keywords:** telematic theatre, experimental art, extended dramaturgy, digital theatre, digital performance.

**How to cite:** Manda, Nicolae (2022). ‘Teatralitatea extinsă – o cale originală în teatrul actual’, *Concept* 1(24)/2022, pp. 286-290.

Ne aflăm în fața unei lucrări care îmbină cercetarea teoretică și studiul fenomenului artistic contemporan cu perspectivele multiple ale interdisciplinarității. Definierea clară și precisă a metodologiei de lucru pune în evidență maturitatea gândirii, ca artist și cercetător, o calitate deosebită într-un domeniu în care tentația impresionismului este prea des întâlnită. Autoarea lucrării definește *teatrul telematic* prin faptul că „se desfășoară simultan în cel puțin două spații diferite, fizice sau virtuale, conectate prin telecomunicații”. Conceptul este limpede, simplu și operațional și ține de o condiție post-digitală a teatrului care depășește transmisiunea spectacolului live sau editat, presupunând un proces de creație diferit. Este un pas important în direcția unei dramaturgii în sens extins (expresia aparține autoarei), *de compoziție a întregului spectacol*. Contextul de lucru este acela al unei tehnologii digitale care prin materialitatea sa specifică deschide căi spre noi structuri spațio-temporale, spre o altă percepție a corporalității și a relațiilor între persoane, obiecte, ambient.

Conceptele de lucru sunt aliniate unei „tendințe a extinderii” (de exemplu *dramaturgia extinsă*), conformă cu o tendință generalizată în estetica contemporană, în domeniul artelor spectacolului cu deosebire. Dacă în plan filozofic putem vorbi de un reflex al viziunii postumaniste, în planul practicii artistice este o influență puternică din direcția cercetării artistice, fie ca art research sau art-based research.

Cercetarea este solid ancorată într-o tematică de extremă actualitate, vehiculând concepte clare și având un grad ridicat de noutate și originalitate. Volumul este structurat într-o logică strânsă, coerentă, specifică unei lucrări științifice. Primul capitol (*Teatrul telematic – context*) clarifică definițiile de bază, accentele personale și relația cu domeniul tehnologic. Nu este prima oară când teatrul asimilează noi tehnologii, precum mecanismele teatrului baroc sau iluminatul electric al scenei, dar de această dată este pus în discuție modul de manifestare al prezenței ca teleprezență. Este un merit important al lucrării acela

de a fi sesizat aspectul și de a-l relaționa cu alte concepte precum *teatrul digital*, *performance digital*, *cyborg theatre*. Sunt analizate cu finețe analitică criteriile specifice: „ruptura” telematică, schimbul telematic, discontinuitățile spațio-temporale, cu o mare varietate de referințe bibliografice și factuale, în special în zona avangardei istorice și contemporane.

În Capitolul II. *Un teatru postuman(ist)*, Marina Hanganu găsește corespondentul esteticii specifice teatrului telematic în direcția filozofică a gândirii postumaniste, definind teatrul postuman „acel asamblaj în care figura omului este înlocuită sau dependentă de cea a postumanului (cyborg, mașinărie, animal, obiect etc.) în percepția publicului”, văzut, pe urmele lui Rosi Braidotti (*The Posthuman*, 2013), ca „o oportunitate pentru recuperarea umanității în sens extins, inclusiv, și pentru modelarea creativă și critică a unei subiectivități postumane”. De fapt întreaga problematică a teatrului postdramatic definită de Hans-Thies Lehmann deschide dramaturgia contemporană spre această perspectivă filosofică, aspect foarte bine surprins în text.

Capitolele III, IV și V sunt exemplare pentru modul în care se dezvoltă simultan conceptul specific, metodologia de cercetare și practica de creație artistică. Sistemul celor cinci matrice își are punctul de pornire în gândirea teatrală a lui Eugenio Barba, dar este preluat mai exact și mai dezvoltat de la Michael Kirby, citat de autoarea volumului (p. 77) cu textul *On Acting and Not-acting* din volumul *Acting (Re)considered (2005)*. De fapt, gândirea autoarei este una aplicat regizorală și face saltul de la problema artei actorului la problemele compoziționale ale artei regizorale. Perspectiva sa este în același timp originală și reprezentativă pentru școala românească de teatru, în care gândirea regizorală are o pondere importantă.

Sunt definite cinci matrice: narativă, tehnologică, spațio-temporală, corporală și matricea întâlnirii teatrale. Sensurile operei teatrale în complexitatea ei integrală apar prin interacțiunea permanentă din interiorul acestui sistem conceptual. Nu este o dezvoltare speculativă, ci una bazată pe exemple concrete remarcabile din teatrul contemporan (vezi p. 81, de exemplu). Fără a intra în amănuntele acestei dezvoltări, trebuie să remarcăm limpezimea discursului, excelența documentare și fuziunea dintre perspectiva teoretică și practica artistică. Este unul din cele mai bune exemple de cercetare artistică (art research), în care simțul estetic, pragmatica artistică, conceptualizarea critică și energia explorării unor căi cu totul noi tipică avangardei se integrează într-un unic demers.

Calitatea excepțională a acestui volum nu este o surpriză, întrucât am fost martor al modului în care a evoluat, de la propunerea inițială ce conținea în nuce întreg potențialul dezvăluit astăzi. Lucrarea are un grad ridicat de originalitate și se validează și prin proiectele europene pe care le-a generat.



Bibliografia este de referință, ca extindere și actualitate, în mod evident aprofundată și asimilată demersului de cercetare științifică și artistică.

În lumea realității extinse caracteristică societății postumane, artele, între care și teatrul, își descoperă noi dimensiuni creative și cognitive, modalități inedite de a reflecta lumea și relația omului cu aceasta. Consider că rezultatele muncii Marinei Hanganu sunt deosebit de valoroase și consistente. Merită subliniată și capacitatea artistului-cercetător în domeniul art research de a se obiectiva în raport cu propria activitate creatoare, printr-o mentalitate caracteristică mai ales artei conceptuale.



*Marina Hanganu*

**Marina Hanganu** explores the integration of technology in art (internet, robots, artificial intelligence, virtual reality) from a practical and theoretical perspective. She is a graduate of the Theatre Directing Department of UNATC "I.L. Caragiale" Bucharest (2014) and of the MA Advanced Theatre Practice at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama (London, 2015). She holds the title of doctor from UNATC "I.L. Caragiale" after the successful defense of her thesis, *Telematic Theatre – From Concept to Performance* (2022).

She coordinated the cultural projects *Tele-Encounters* and *Tele-Encounters: Beyond the Human*, co-financed by the Creative Europe program of the European Union. Partners: George Ciprian Theatre, Industria Scenica (Italia), Universidad Católica San Antonio de Murcia (Spania), Município de Lousada (Portugalia).

Her creations include: *2052 SMART-FAMILY*, *Generation 200 /Generația 200*, *Planeta Viselor Pierdute*, *Orfeu și Euridice*, *Tele-City* (George Ciprian Theatre, Buzău), *Magazinul de sinucideri* after Jean Teulé (Comedy Theatre, Bucharest – winner of *Comedia Tine la TINERi*), *Before Sunset/After Sunrise* (Bloomsbury Festival and We Are Now Festival, London), *Strada Popa Rusu nr. 50* (Teatrul 7, Bucharest), *Mariwol* by José Rivera (UNATC „I.L. Caragiale”, Bucharest).

*2052 SMART-FAMILY* was selected in the National Theatre Festival and in the Milan Digital Week festival (2022).

Marina Hanganu is the editor of *Tele-Encounters: Telepresence and Migration* (UNATC Press, 2019).



# ***III. INTERVIEW***





*Alexandra Badea*  
Photo by Richard Schroeder

# INTERVIU CU AUTOAREA ȘI REGIZOAREA **ALEXANDRA BADEA**

*Scriu plecând de la un subiect care îmi creează  
un impuls de violență și care mă revoltă.*

**MIHAELA  
MICHAILOV**



**Alexandra Badea** este scriitoare, regizoare de teatru și film, stabilită de aproape 20 de ani la Paris, implicată în proiecte artistice în Europa, Canada, Statele Unite ale Americii, America Latină. A absolvit Universitatea Națională de Artă Teatrală și Cinematografică „I.L. Caragiale” din București, cu un spectacol care a marcat istoria anilor 2000 la Studioul Casandra – *LEBENSRAUM* – *Spațiul Vital* de Israel Horovitz. La Paris, Alexandra Badea a urmat cursurile Masteratului de Teorie și Estetică Teatrală de la Universitatea Sorbonne Nouvelle. Primele trei texte de teatru – *Mode D’Emploi*, *Controle d’identité* și *Burnout* au fost publicate în 2009 la una dintre cele mai importante edituri de teatru din Franța – Arche Éditeur, care i-a publicat ulterior toate textele. În 2013 a obținut, cu piesa *Pulverizare*, Marele Premiu pentru Literatură Dramatică, oferit de Ministerul Culturii din Franța. Alexandra Badea scrie piese de teatru, scenariile de film, romane (*Zone d’amour prioritaire*, 2014; *Tu marches au bord du monde*, 2020), texte performative hibride. Abordează teme sociale și politice prin care chestionează, cu rigoare de documentaristă nuanțată, problematici relevante: apartenența identitară, relațiile de muncă, globalizarea, statutul migranților, traumele transmise din generație în generație, istoriile marginalizate, trecute sub tăcere. În 2018, la invitația dramaturgului și regizorului Wajdi Mouawad, director al Teatrului Național La Colline, a montat trilogia *Points de non-retour*. Trilogia, creată în intervalul 2018-2021, a fost prezentată în 2022 în integralitatea sa la Teatrul La Colline. În perioada februarie-aprilie 2022, Alexandra Badea a ținut, la UNATC „I.L. Caragiale”, un atelier de teatru dedicat studentelor și studenților de la Regie, Scriere Dramatică, Actorie și Teatologie, care s-a finalizat cu trei spectacole pentru publicul tânăr. În septembrie 2022, a avut loc, la Teatrul Național din București, premiera spectacolului *Exil*, pe textul și în regia ei.

**Mihaela Michailov:** *Aș vrea să începem dialogul nostru întorcându-ne la momentul în care ai terminat UNATC-ul. Ce experiențe puternice ai luat cu tine? Ce ți-a lipsit când erai studentă la regie?*

**Alexandra Badea:** Cei patru ani de UNATC au fost un teren de experiment, în care mi-am dat seama ce fel de teatru vreau să fac. Profesorii mei, Valeriu Moisescu și Nicolae Manda, ne-au dat posibilitatea să facem asta și să ne concentrăm pe ceea ce ne interesează cel mai tare. Cred că am fost promoția care a lucrat cel mai mult pe dramaturgia contemporană. De la ei am învățat să îmi pun enorm de multe întrebări înainte de a concepe un spectacol, să găsesc întotdeauna cea mai ofertantă soluție, să descopăr un echilibru între intuiția mea și modul în care publicul ar putea percepe intențiile mele. Un lucru important a fost faptul că am petrecut mult timp la clasele de actorie și așa am învățat cum să lucrez cu actorii, observând-o pe Sanda Manu și pe studenții ei. Cred că mi-a

lipsit un pic teoria. În vremea aceea nu aveam acces atât de ușor la ce se scria despre teatrul contemporan, spectacolele străine nu prea ajungeau în București, iar istoria teatrului se oprea la Strehler și la Brook.

**M.M.:** *De ce ai ales ca spectacolul tău de licență să fie pe un text contemporan care vorbește despre traume istorice? Cum crezi că ți-a definit momentul Lebensraum – Spațiu vital alegerile ulterioare?*

**A.B.:** Îmi amintesc și acum momentul în care am citit textul, în biblioteca Institutului Francez, care era pentru mine unul dintre locurile-refugiu din București. A fost un șoc puternic. Era piesa pe care o căutam și ca subiect, și ca formă. Cred că Holocaustul și antisemitismul României interbelice constituie o traumă puternică a noastră, pe care nu o tratăm nici măcar astăzi. La școală mi s-a spus tot timpul că românii i-au salvat pe evrei. Pe palierul din blocul copilăriei mele aveam o vecină supraviețuitoare de la Auschwitz. Nici ea nu vorbea foarte mult despre această perioadă, dar povestea ei se știa și am vrut mereu să aflu mai multe despre ea. Ce m-a interesat în acest text este că el nu se limitează doar la a relata o perioadă istorică, ci creează un scenariu de tipul „ce-ar fi dac-ar fi”, pentru a chestiona traumele din prezent cauzate de acea perioadă și urmele ei în viețile noastre. Cred că tot parcursul meu de artistă este marcat de acest prim spectacol. Această temă a urmelor lăsate de traumele netratate ale istoriei, a secretelor de familie și a imposibilității de a trăi liber în prezent fără a analiza trecutul (privind evenimentele și acțiunile făcute de cei care au trecut pe aici cu mult înaintea noastră) revine foarte des în ceea ce fac, este punctul de plecare al trilogiei *Points de non-retour*, dar și al textelor scrise în română – *Perfect compus* și *Exil*. Iar forma textului m-a influențat evident în textele pe care le-am scris mai târziu eu (*Pulvérisés*, *Europe connexion* etc...). A fost și un moment de explorare a unei estetici scenice pe care am tot reinventat-o de la acel moment (adresarea directă către public, mixarea imaginilor pre-înregistrate și a imaginii video captate în direct de către actori, utilizarea sunetului, a microfoanelor).

**M.M.:** *Ce a stat la baza deciziei tale de a pleca din România și a studia în Franța?*

**A.B.:** Mi-am dorit, în primul rând, să cunosc alte moduri de a face teatru. Parisul este locul în care ai posibilitatea să vezi cam tot ce se creează în lume, atât în teatru, cât și în arta contemporană sau cinema. De la forme recunoscute în marile festivaluri până la forme mai puțin cunoscute. Pentru mine, Parisul a fost și rămâne un punct de contact cu diversitatea lumii. De asta aveam cel mai mult nevoie și asta nu prea regăseam în România. Mi-am dorit și să am un moment în care să mă concentrez mai mult pe partea teoretică și să pot conceptualiza ceea ce încercam să fac în spectacolele mele, chiar dacă eram la început. Așa am ajuns să fac un master despre teatrul minimalist. Inițial eu nu m-am gândit să plec

din România, mai ales că în momentul plecării mi se întâmplaseră multe lucruri pozitive, dar cred că undeva am simțit că nu puteam trăi ca artistă mai mult decât ceea ce trăisem deja. Probabil că, dacă era un context prielnic tinerilor artiști și deschis către tipul de teatru pe care îl făceam eu, m-aș fi întors după master, dar totul părea din ce în ce mai greoi, iar eu nu mă puteam adapta la acest sistem.

**M.M.:** *Care a fost perioada cea mai dificilă la Paris? Au existat momente când ai simțit că te confrunți cu o lume pe care nu o înțelegi?*

**A.B.:** Perioada de după master. Nu am simțit că nu înțeleg această lume. Cred că, paradoxal, o înțelegeam mai bine decât pe cea din care veneam, pe care uneori nici acum n-o prea înțeleg. Era dificil pentru că ușile păreau greu de deschis. Teatrul românesc nu fascina pe nimeni, așa că diploma mea nu valora nimic. De fapt, în Franța, nicio diplomă nu prea înseamnă ceva în artă, dar, trecând printr-o școală importantă de aici, îți faci un carnet de adrese, întâlnești niște oameni care te pot ajuta mai târziu. Și pentru un francez e la fel de greu la început. Sunt câteva excepții de artiști care au făcut studii sau asistență de regie pe lângă regizori-directori de teatru și atunci lor le e mai simplu, dar marea majoritate a tinerilor așteaptă ani se zile înainte să poată intra în sistem ca să poată trăi din meseria asta.

**M.M.:** *Din ce ți-ai câștigat existența după ce ai terminat Masteratul de Teorie și Estetică Teatrală la Sorbonne Nouvelle?*

**A.B.:** Am ținut multe cursuri de teatru, am lucrat câțiva ani la RFI la Emisiunea în limba română. Am prins încă perioada în care montam emisiunile cu foarfeca, era practic o altă meserie, dar mi-a plăcut. Uitându-mă, cu experiența de azi, la acea perioadă, mi se pare că a fost foarte importantă. Probabil că, dacă aș fi intrat direct în teatre și aș fi făcut spectacol după spectacol, aș fi refăcut același traseu, nu aș fi avut timp să mă gândesc la ceea ce vreau cu adevărat să fac și sigur nu aș fi ajuns să scriu.

**„Cred că scrisul este pentru mine și o modalitate de a controla ceea ce mi se pare incontrollabil în lumea în care trăim.”**

**M.M.:** *De la prima piesă pe care ai scris-o, Mode d'Emploi, și până în prezent, ai creat texte de teatru jucate peste tot în lume. Ce urgențe te hrănesc atunci când scrii?*

**A.B.:** În general, scriu plecând de la un subiect care îmi creează un impuls de violență, care revine obsesional, pe care nu îl înțeleg și care mă revoltă. Nu caut subiecte, ele pur și simplu se impun. De multe ori am refuzat colaborări pentru că mi se sugera o temă care, deși mi se părea interesantă, nu venea organic din mine, nu aveam eu nevoie să mă duc mai departe cu ea. Cred că scrisul este

pentru mine și o modalitate de a controla ceea ce mi se pare incontrollabil în lumea în care trăim.

**M.M.:** *Cât de importantă este documentarea pentru tine și cum o integrezi în ficțiunile pe care le imaginezi?*

**A.B.:** Documentarea este cea mai importantă parte din proces. Pot petrece un an, doi ca perioadă de documentare. De fapt așa începe totul. De multe ori dau peste un subiect, el apare de mai multe ori în jurul meu și încep să fac căutări pentru a înțelege mai bine mecanismele care stau la originea sa. O fac pentru mine, nu mă gândesc neapărat că asta va da o piesă. Adeseori mă pierd în documentare și, când din acest proces apar în mod spontan fragmente de situații, de ficțiune, încep să mă gândesc la text. De foarte multe ori nici nu salvez fragmentele astea de documentare, ele se depun pur și simplu în mine și încep să articulez textul plecând de la ceea ce îmi rămâne. Asta este a doua parte importantă, articularea structurii dramaturgice, a personajelor. Lucrez într-un fel destul de matematic. Scriul în sine se derulează foarte rapid dacă aceste două etape sunt bine făcute.

**M.M.:** *Atunci când începi să scrii o piesă, te gândești automat și cum ai pune-o în scenă? Gândirea ta regizorală îți influențează scriitura?*

**A.B.:** Depinde. Când scriu piese pe care nu le montez eu (asta mi se întâmplă din ce în ce mai rar în ultimul timp), nu mă gândesc deloc la montare, mă simt mult mai liberă. Mă gândesc însă mult la actori, la cum ar putea fi spus textul, la ritmicitatea lui, la ce poate provoca în scenă, la ce generează el în corpurile actorilor. Când scriu însă piese pe care le voi face eu, plec de la dispozitivul scenic. Am nevoie să știu cum va fi decorul, care e universul, chiar dacă asta se poate schimba pe parcurs, dar plec de la ceva concret. Nu înscriu spectacolul în text, dar îmi imaginez ce tip de spectacole pot fi generate de text. Am nevoie ca regizor să am o libertate în momentul în care ajung la scenă, la fel cum am nevoie să știu că textul pe care îl scriu e „oferant” scenic, poate genera opțiuni diferite.

**M.M.:** *Ești o creatoare care lucrează cu formate și medii diferite – teatru, performance, film, proză. Ai simțit anumite limitări într-o anumită zonă și ai vrut să testezi posibilitățile alteia?*

**A.B.:** Subiectul impune o formă. Povestea pe care vreau să o spun. Personajele care apar. Unele lucruri au nevoie de o temporalitate mai diferită, de o aprofundare, și atunci știu că voi scrie un roman. Altele au nevoie să fie spuse în imagini, în acțiuni, nu sunt lucruri care se dezvoltă prin cuvinte sau prin introspecție, și atunci le gândesc filmic, iar altele au nevoie de un conflict mai puternic, de dezbateri. *Performance*-ul a venit dintr-o frustrare de a scrie texte cu



mult înaintea actului scenic, care nu mai au legătură cu ceea ce simt și cu ceea ce mă traversează în momentul întâlnirii cu publicul. Așa am conceput *Mondes*, un performance în care mixez texte scrise cu câteva zile înainte, cu texte scrise în momentul reprezentației pe care spectatorii le văd cum se scriu în direct pe un ecran conectat la computerul meu.

**„Mi se pare important că teatrul este încă un spațiu al dialecticii.”**

**M.M.:** *Ce înseamnă pentru tine să faci un teatru care abordează teme și subiecte politice? Să vorbești despre globalizare, raporturi de inechitate în relațiile de muncă, exploatare, migrație? Din ce perspectivă le abordezi?*

**A.B.:** Încerc să dau un spațiu celor care sunt invizibilizați de sistem, să aduc în scenă persoane ale căror povești au fost marginalizate. Nu spun niciodată o singură poveste, în spatele unui personaj sunt poate zeci de mărturii pe care le-am găsit și care se compun unele cu celelalte, fiind legate de ficțiune. În ultimele texte încerc să ofer mai multe puncte de vedere, care intră în conflict unele cu celelalte, și las mai mult spațiu spectatorilor pentru a alege personajul cu care se identifică. Cred că din cauză că această identificare e posibilă, ei pot avea acces și la un alt punct de vedere, cu care nu sunt poate de acord, dar care este important să fie auzit. Trăim într-o lume în care avem din ce în ce mai rar acces la puncte de vedere diferite de convingerile noastre și mi se pare important că teatrul este încă un spațiu al dialecticii.

**M.M.:** *Ai montat la prestigiosul Teatru La Colline o trilogie care are în centru părți din istoria Franței mai puțin explorate. De ce ai simțit nevoia să le aduci în prim-plan și care este pentru tine miza acestei recuperări istorice? Așupra căror traume istorice ai vrut să reflectezi teatral?*

**A.B.:** Lucrez de mult timp cu artiști originari din țări colonizate în trecut și am călătorit des pentru anumite proiecte în aceste locuri, se acumulasera multe întrebări, povești, neînțelegeri. În 2014, când am primit cetățenia franceză, ni s-a spus la o ceremonie care se organizează cu această ocazie: „De acum va trebui să vă asumați istoria acestei țări cu momentele ei de glorie și cu zonele ei de umbră.” Și prima mea reacție a fost: „Cum să îmi asum eu acum colonizarea?” Un an după, în perioada de după atentatele de la Paris din 2015, au fost multe dezbateri despre ce am ratat noi artiștii pentru ca să ajungem în această situație, într-o societate profund divizată, și unul dintre răspunsurile pe care le-am auzit a fost: „Poate că nu am povestit destul *nos recits manquants*” (nici nu știu cum să traduc această expresie – poveștile nespuse, ascunse, care nu au fost integrate în istoria comună a unei societăți). Toate lucrurile astea au făcut ca atunci când am fost invitată de Wajdi Mouawad la Teatrul Național de la Colline, să îi propun să

scriu ceva plecând de la tema aceasta – a „poveștilor ascunse din istoria colonială și post-colonială a Franței”. Începând documentarea, mi-am dat seama că nu pot face doar un spectacol, pentru că subiectul este mult prea vast, și a ieșit o trilogie, *Points de non-retour*. Prima parte este despre un masacru colonial din Senegal, în care soldații africani, care își cereau drepturile financiare (promise de statul francez) la sfârșitul celui de-al Doilea Război Mondial, au fost omorâți, pretextându-se faptul că ar fi pus la cale o revoltă într-o bază militară. A doua parte este despre algerienii aruncați în Sena în timpul unei manifestații din Paris în 1961 și a treia este despre copiii aduși din insula Réunion pentru a popula teritoriile franceze rămase fără mână de lucru, copii care au fost transformați în sclavi. Ceea ce m-a interesat nu a fost numai să aduc în lumină aceste subiecte care sunt foarte puțin cunoscute (masacrul colonial era practic total necunoscut chiar de profesorii de istorie), ci mai ales să arăt ceea ce produc astăzi aceste traume ascunse și aceste secrete ale istoriei, care de multe ori sunt ținute sub tăcere chiar și în interiorul familiilor victimelor. Cum ne putem reconstrui, ca indivizi și ca societate, neștiind ce s-a întâmplat de fapt în trecutul familiilor noastre?



*Points de non-retour (Diagonale du vide)*,  
r: Alexandra Badea, Foto: Pascal Gély

**M.M.:** *În primăvară ai ținut la UNATC un atelier cu studenți și studenți la regie, scriere dramatică, actori și teatrologie, care a implicat realizarea unui număr de 3 spectacole pentru publicul tânăr. Care a fost metoda pe care ai folosit-o în timpul lucrului?*

**A.B.:** Într-o primă etapă am lucrat cu studenții și studentele de la regie și dramaturgie. Am încercat să îi ajut să găsească temele care sunt cu adevărat personale și importante pentru ei. Cred că asta e pasul cel mai important într-un proces creativ, să înțelegi ce vrei să spui și să ai acces la propria autenticitate. Le-am propus o serie de exerciții de scriere automată, intuitivă, pe care cred că ar trebui să le facem toți din când în când. Și, plecând de la ce au descoperit că a ieșit din inconștientul lor, au început să listeze tematici, personaje, începuturi de povești. Așa s-au și format grupele de regizori-dramaturgi. În a doua etapă, am integrat studenții și studentele de la actorie. Cu ei am lucrat pe o metodă pe care am descoperit-o și eu de puțin timp, și pe care o folosesc în ultimele mele proiecte și cu actori profesioniști. Este metoda „étude” pe care Stanislavski a dezvoltat-o în ultimii ani din viață și pe care a conceptualizat-o asistenta lui, Maria Knebel. Se pleacă de la analiza dramaturgică a textului și a personajului, după care actorii joacă situația cu propriile lor cuvinte, respectând tot ceea ce au descoperit în această analiză. După fiecare improvizație, ei se întorc la text, reanalizează unde s-au îndepărtat de el și ce au descoperit că ar merge în sensul textului și, treptat, îl integrează fără a-l memoriza mecanic. Este o metodă care permite integrarea textului în mod organic, fără a separa corpul de mental și permite actorului să-și construiască monologul interior intuitiv încă de la prima etapă de lucru. Ca regizor, este foarte comod să lucrezi așa pentru că lași actorilor o libertate în care ei descoperă în mod natural justetea personajelor și a situațiilor, devin mai creativi în propuneri și nu mai e nevoie de acea etapă în care trebuie să îi scoți din automatisme și artificii. Practic, textul nu sună niciodată fals pentru că s-a ajuns la el în mod organic, nu a fost învățat în gol, mecanic fără intenții, în afara situației. Dar este o metodă care necesită foarte mult timp de lucru.

**M.M.:** *În septembrie este programată premiera spectacolului pe care îl montezi la Teatrul Național din București – Exil. Ce istorii intime și politice sunt adâncite în acest nou spectacol?*

**A.B.:** E un spectacol pe care îmi doream să îl fac demult, dar nu aveam distribuția necesară. Când am fost invitată la TNB mi-a fost clar că e un proiect care se poate face cu actorii trupei, pentru că ei acoperă generații diferite care au traversat perioadele despre care eu vorbesc și pentru că este cea mai complexă trupă din România, care reprezintă foarte bine societatea românească. Este un spectacol despre blocajele identitare pe care le purtăm în noi fără să știm, despre traumele transmise la nivel intim și politic dintr-o generație în alta, despre tensiunile pe care le avem cu România și, în același timp, despre imposibilitatea de

a te rupe definitiv în momentul în care decizi să pleci, despre nevoia de libertate, incapacitatea de adaptare, neputințe, lașități, iubiri sufocate de contextul social-politic, familii destrămate, familii care înăbușă autenticitatea celor care ies din tipar, despre lupta continuă de a te desprinde de tot acest bagaj și de a trăi în acord cu tine într-o societate care îți interzice să o faci.

**„Franceza a devenit o limbă în care am început să îmi analizez aceste traume.”**

**M.M.:** *Ești o autoare care scrie și în română, și în franceză – piese de teatru, scenarii, romane, texte eseistice. Cum se construiește o identitate prin limbaj? Sunt lucruri pe care simți că nu le poți spune decât în română și care se pierd atunci când le articulezi în franceză? Sau, dimpotrivă, a scrie într-o limbă care nu îți e limba maternă îți dă o mai mare libertate de creație?*

**A.B.:** Mie dintotdeauna mi-a fost greu să scriu în limba română, am reușit să o fac foarte târziu, după multe texte publicate în franceză, pentru că eram invitată să montez în România, aveam o idee foarte clară despre ce voiam să vorbesc și îmi trebuia un text pe care numai eu îl puteam scrie. Acest blocaj cred că vine din faptul că am trăit anumite traume în limba română. Poate cea mai mare traumă a fost sistemul de învățământ, modul în care am fost forțată să învăț pe de rost pagini scrise de alții fără să le pot analiza sau să le pun la îndoială, competiția în care suntem aruncați de mici, fricile care ni se induc. Am crezut tot timpul că sunt incapabilă să scriu în română, că tot ce fac în limba asta e prost. Am ales să fiu regizoare pentru că mi se părea singura posibilitate de a mă exprima, fără să trebuiască să scriu sau să vorbesc eu. Cred că am dezvoltat un complex cu limba română. Nu am ales să scriu în franceză. Pur și simplu, când nevoia de a scrie a devenit vitală, când am început primul text mai mult ca un proces personal terapeutic, am descoperit că în franceză nu aveam nicio barieră, că pot scrie ceea ce îmi trece prin cap fără să mă auto-evaluez în permanență, fără să simt că cineva mă urmărește și îmi dă note în timp ce o fac. Cred că franceza a devenit o limbă în care am început să îmi analizez aceste traume. Ca să o fac, aveam nevoie de această neutralitate, de un teren nou, în care să pot explora liberă. Este practic limba în care am deconstruit un mod de gândire care mi-a fost impus cu forța și în care am început să învăț cine sunt eu de fapt și ceea ce vreau să spun cu adevărat.

**M.M.:** *Se vorbește mult în România, în prezent, despre statutul lucrătorului cultural și necesitatea unor politici publice care să-l reglementeze. În Franța există un statut al artistului intermitent. Poți să îl descrii puțin și să îi definești beneficiile?*

**A.B.:** Este un sistem unic în lume. Practic, acumulând 507 de ore de lucru într-un an (ceea ce este foarte greu pentru un artist la debut și e destul de greu de

menținut pentru un regizor, având în vedere că în Franța, media de producții a unui regizor este de una la doi ani), ai dreptul la o indemnizație în lunile în care nu lucrezi. Ce e interesant în acest sistem este că permite finanțarea timpului de cercetare, plecând de la premisa că un artist nu poate produce tot timpul și că timpul lui de creație nu poate fi cuantificat. Acest sistem finanțează și formarea continuă. Acumulând ore, acumulezi ore de *workshop* în care poți lucra cu artiști care te interesează sau poți experimenta tehnici de lucru pe care nu le cunoști.

**M.M.:** *Ce simți că ți-a adus, intim și politic, apartenența ta multiplă?*

**A.B.:** O capacitate de a mă adapta mai ușor la contexte diferite, o deschidere față de alte culturi și viziuni ale lumii, poate o analiză mai complexă a anumitor situații și convingerea că, orice s-ar întâmpla, îmi voi găsi un loc în lumea asta, în care să mă pot simți liberă.

**M.M.:** *Care e amintirea cea mai puternică pe care o duci cu tine oriunde ajungi?*

**A.B.:** Acum câțiva ani, când am prezentat a doua parte a trilogiei *Points de non-retour* la Festivalul de la Avignon, la o întâlnire cu publicul, o liceană a venit la mine, mi-a dat un bilet și a plecat. În bilet scria că s-a recunoscut în personajul principal și că de atunci se simte un pic mai înțeleasă, că avea nevoie de experiența asta. Am ținut mult biletul ei în geantă și la premiera trilogiei la Paris anul acesta, i l-am dat actriței care a creat acest personaj. De atunci, înaintea fiecărui spectacol, în momente de îndoieli, îmi spun că în acea seară trebuie să fie în sală măcar o persoană care are nevoie de ceea ce facem noi.

# INTERVIEW<sup>1</sup> WITH AUTHOR AND DIRECTOR **ALEXANDRA BADEA**

*I write starting from a topic that creates an  
impulse of violence and that revolts me.*

**MIHAELA  
MICHAILOV**



---

1 Translated by Cornel Huțanu

**Alexandra Badea** is a writer, stage and film director, settled in Paris for almost 20 years, involved in artistic projects in Europe, Canada, the United States, Latin America. She is a graduate of the “I.L. Caragiale” National University of Theatre and Film in Bucharest, following a performance that marked the history of the 2000s at the Casandra Studio – *LEBENSRAUM – Vital Space* by Israel Horovitz. In Paris, Alexandra Badea attended the MA in Theatrical Theory and Aesthetics at the Sorbonne Nouvelle University. The first three theatrical texts – *Mode D’Emploi*, *Controle d’identité* and *Burnout* were published in 2009 at one of the most important theatre publishing houses in France – Arche Éditeur, who subsequently published all her texts. In 2013 she won, with the play *Pulverizare*, the Grand Prize for Dramatic Literature, awarded by the French Ministry of Culture. Alexandra Badea writes plays, film scripts, novels (*Zone d’amour prioritaire*, 2014; *Tu marches au bord du monde*, 2020), hybrid performative texts. She addresses social and political topics questioning, with the rigor of a nuanced documentarian, relevant issues: identity belonging, labour relations, globalization, status of migrants, traumas transmitted from generation to generation, marginalized, silenced histories. In 2018, at the invitation of playwright and director Wajdi Mouawad, director of La Colline National Theatre, she staged the *Points de non-retour* trilogy. The trilogy, created between 2018 and 2021, was presented in 2022 in its entirety at the La Colline Theatre. Between February and April 2022, Alexandra Badea held, at UNATC “I.L. Caragiale”, a theatre workshop dedicated to students from the directing, dramatic writing, acting and theatre studies departments, concluded with three performances for young audiences. In September 2022, at the National Theatre of Bucharest, the premiere of the performance *Exil* took place, on her text and under her directing.

**Mihaela Michailov:** *I’d like us to start our dialogue by going back to the moment you graduated from UNATC. What powerful experiences have you taken with you? What did you lack while you were a directing student?*

**Alexandra Badea:** The four years at UNATC were a field for experiment, where I realized what kind of theatre I wanted to do. My teachers, Valeriu Moisescu and Nicolae Manda, gave us the opportunity to do this and to focus on what interests us the most. I think we were the promotion that worked the most on contemporary dramaturgy. From them I learned to ask myself many questions before conceiving a performance, to always find the most offering solution, to discover a balance between my intuition and how the audience could perceive my intentions. An important thing was the time spent in acting classes, as I learned how to work with actors observing Sanda Manu and her students. I think I lacked the theory part a bit. At the time we did not have such easy access to written content on contemporary theatre, foreign performances did not really reach Bucharest, and the history of theatre stopped at Strehler and Brook.

**M.M.:** *Why did you choose a BA graduation performance based on a contemporary text that talks about historical trauma? How do you think the Lebensraum – Vital Space moment defined your subsequent choices?*

**A.B.:** I still remember the moment when I read the text, in the library of the French Institute, which was for me one of the places of refuge in Bucharest. It was a powerful shock. It was the play I was looking for both in terms of subject and form. I believe that the Holocaust and antisemitism of interwar Romania constitute a powerful trauma of ours, which we do not treat even today. At school I was always told that the Romanians saved the Jews. One of the neighbors in my childhood apartment building was a survivor of Auschwitz. She didn't talk very much about this period either, but her story was known, and I always wanted to know more about her. What interested me in this text is that it is not limited to reporting a historical period, but it creates a „what if it were” scenario to question the present traumas caused by that period and its traces in our lives. I think my entire journey as an artist is influenced by this first performance. This theme of marks left by the untreated traumas of history, family secrets and the impossibility of living freely in the present without analyzing the past (looking at the events and actions of those who lived here long before us) very often returns in what I do, is the starting point of the *Points of non-retour* trilogy, but also of the texts written in Romanian – *Perfect compus* and *Exil*. And the text obviously influenced the texts I wrote later (*Pulvérisés*, *Europe connexion*, etc...). It was also a moment of exploration of a stage aesthetic that I kept reinventing since that moment (directly addressing the audience, mixing pre-recorded images and video image captured live by the actors, using sound, microphones).

**M.M.:** *What was the basis of your decision to leave Romania and study in France?*

**A.B.:** First of all, I wanted to know other ways of doing theatre. Paris is the place where you can see pretty much everything that is created worldwide, both in theatre and in contemporary art or cinema. From forms acknowledged in major festivals to lesser-known forms. For me, Paris has been and remains a point of contact with the diversity of the world. That's what I needed the most and that's not what I found in Romania. I also wanted to have a moment where I could focus on the theoretical side and to be able to conceptualize what I was trying to do in my performances, even though I was at the beginning. That's how I ended up doing an MA on minimalist theatre. Initially I didn't think of leaving Romania, especially since at the time of my departure many positive things had happened to me, but I think that somewhere I felt that as an artist I could no longer live more than what I had already experienced. Probably, if there had been a favourable context for young artists and opened to the type of theatre I was



doing, I would have come back after my MA, but everything seemed more and more cumbersome, and I could not adapt to this system.

**M.M.:** *What was the most difficult period in Paris? Were there times when you felt like you were facing a world you didn't understand?*

**A.B.:** The period after the master's degree. I didn't feel like I didn't understand this world. I think, paradoxically, I understood it better than the one I came from, which sometimes I don't really get. It was difficult because the doors seemed difficult to open. Romanian theatre did not fascinate anyone, so my diploma was worth nothing. In fact, in France, no degree really means anything in art, but by going through an important school here, you create a set of contacts, you meet people who can later help you. For a Frenchman, it's just as hard at first. There are a few exceptions of artists who have done studies or directing assistance alongside stage managers-directors and it's easier for them, but the vast majority of young artists wait for years before they can enter the system and make a living from this job.

**M.M.:** *What did you make a living from after completing your MA in Theatrical Theory and Aesthetics at the Sorbonne Nouvelle?*



*Points de non-retour (Thiaroye),*  
d: Alexandra Badea, Photo: Pascal Gély

**A.B.:** I held many theatre classes, I worked for a few years for RFI on the show in Romanian. I caught the period when the editing was still done with scissors, it was basically another job, but I liked it. Looking back, with today's experience, at that time, it seems to me that it was very important. Probably, if I had gone straight into theatre and done performance after performance, I would have taken the same path, I wouldn't have had time to think about what I really wanted to do, and I certainly wouldn't have managed to write.

***"I believe writing is also for me a way to control what I find uncontrollable in the world we live in."***

**M.M.:** *From the first play you wrote, Mode d'Emploi, to the current ones, you've created theatrical texts played all over the world. What emergencies feed you when you write?*

**A.B.:** In general, I write based on a subject that creates an impulse of violence for me, which returns obsessively, which I do not understand and that revolts me. I'm not looking for topics, they just impose themselves. Many times, I refused collaborations because I was suggested a topic that, although I found interesting, did not come organically from me, I did not need to continue it. I believe writing is also for me a way to control what I find uncontrollable in the world we live in.

**M.M.:** *How important is documentation to you and how do you integrate it into the fictions you imagine?*

**A.B.:** Documentation is the most important part of the process. I can spend a year, two on a documentation. In fact, that's how it all starts. Many times, I come across a topic, it revolves several times around me and I begin to research it to better understand the mechanisms that lie at its origin. I do it for myself, I don't necessarily think that this will result in a play. I often get lost in documentation, and when fragments of situations, of fiction spontaneously appear from this process, I start thinking about the text. Very often I don't even save these fragments of documentation, they simply deposit in me, and I start to articulate the text based on what remains. That's the second important part, the articulation of the dramatic structure, of the characters. I work in a pretty mathematical manner. The writing itself unfolds very quickly if these two stages are well executed.

**M.M.:** *When you start writing a play, do you automatically think about it and how you would stage it? Does your directorial thinking influence your writing?*

**A.B.:** It depends. When I write plays that I don't plan to stage myself (this is happening to me less and less lately), I don't think about staging at all, I feel

much freer. But I think a lot about the actors, about how the text could be uttered, about its rhythmicity, about what it can cause in the scene, about what it generates in the actors' bodies. But when I write plays that I'm going to direct, I start from the stage device. I need to know what the set is going to be like, what the universe is like, even if that can change along the way, but I start from something concrete. I don't put the performance in the text, but I imagine what type of performances can be generated by the text. I need as a director to have some freedom when I get to the stage, just as I need to know that the text I write is stage "attractive", can generate different options.

**M.M.:** *You are a creator who works with different formats and mediums – theatre, performance, film, prose. Did you feel certain limitations in one area and wanted to test the possibilities of another?*

**A.B.:** The topic imposes a form. The story I want to tell. The characters that appear. Some things need a different temporality, an in-depth look, and then I know I'm going to write a novel. Others need to be said in images, in actions, they're not things that develop through words or introspection, so I think of them filmically, and some need a stronger conflict, a debate. The *performance* came from a frustration of writing texts long before the stage act, which are no longer related to what I feel and what crosses me when meeting the audience. That's how I designed *Mondes*, a performance where I mix texts written a few days in advance, with texts written during the performance that viewers see being written live on a screen connected to my computer.

***"I find it important that theatre is still a space of dialectics."***

**M.M.:** *What does it mean to you to make theatre that tackles political themes and topics? To talk about globalization, relations of inequity in labour, exploitation, migration relations? From what perspective do you approach them?*

**A.B.:** I try to offer a space to those who are made invisible by the system, to bring on stage people whose stories have been marginalized. I never tell one story, behind a character there are maybe dozens of testimonies that I have found and that are composed together, being related to fiction. In the last few texts, I try to offer several points of view, which conflict with each other, and I leave more space for the spectators to choose the character with whom they identify. I think because this identification is possible, they can also have access to another point of view, which they may not agree with, but which is important to hear. We live in a world where we rarely have access to points of view different from our beliefs, and I find it important that theatre is still a space of dialectics.

**M.M.:** *You've staged at the prestigious La Colline Theatre a trilogy that focusses on parts of the history of France that are less explored. Why did you feel the need to bring them to the forefront and what is at stake for you in this historic recovery? What historical trauma did you want to reflect theatrically?*

**A.B.:** I worked for a long time with artists originally from countries colonized in the past and I have often travelled for certain projects in these places, many questions, stories, misunderstandings had accumulated. In 2014, when I received French citizenship, we were told at a ceremony that is held on that occasion, "From now on you will have to assume the history of this country with its moments of glory and its areas of shadow." And my first reaction was, "How can I now assume colonization?" A year after, in the period after the Paris attacks of 2015, there was a lot of debate about what we artists failed in order to reach this situation, a deeply divided society, and one of the answers I heard was, "Maybe I didn't tell enough of *nos recits manquants*" (I don't even know how to translate this phrase – the untold, hidden stories, which have not been integrated into the common history of a society). All of this made it so that when I was invited by Wajdi Mouawad at the Colline National Theatre I proposed to him to write something based on this theme – of "the hidden stories of the colonial and post-colonial history of France". Having started the documentation, I realized that I can't just do one performance, because the subject is far too vast, and a trilogy came out, *Points de non-retour*. The first part is about a colonial massacre in Senegal, in which African soldiers demanding their financial rights (promised by the French state) at the end of the Second World War are killed, on the premise to have planned an uprising in a military base. The second part is about Algerians thrown into the Seine during a rally in Paris in 1961 and the third is about children brought from the Réunion Island to populate the French territories left without labour force, children who were turned into slaves. What interested me was not only to bring to light these subjects that are lesser known (the colonial massacre was practically totally unknown even to the history teachers themselves), but especially to show what these hidden traumas and secrets of history produce today, often kept silent even within the families of the victims. How can we rebuild ourselves, as individuals and as a society, by not knowing what actually happened in our families' past?

**M.M.:** *In spring you held at UNATC a workshop with students from the directing, dramatic writing, acting and theatre studies departments, which involved the realization of 3 performances for young audiences. What was the method you used while working?*

**A.B.:** In a first stage I worked with students from directing and dramaturgy. I tried to help them find the themes that are personal and important to them. I think that's the most important step in a creative process, to understand what you



*Points de non-retour (Quai de Seine),*  
d: Alexandra Badea, Photo: Pascal Gély

mean and to have access to your own authenticity. We proposed to them a series of automatic, intuitive writing exercises, which I think we should all do from time to time. And, starting from what they discovered from their unconscious, they began to list themes, characters, beginnings of stories. This is how the groups of directors-playwrights were formed. In the second stage, we integrated the acting students. With them I worked on a method that I recently discovered, and that I used in my last projects and with professional actors. It is the “étude” method that Stanislavsky developed in the last years of his life and was conceptualized by his assistant, Maria Knebel. It starts from the dramaturgical analysis of the text and of the character, after which the actors play the situation in their own words, respecting everything they have discovered in this analysis. After each improvisation, they return to the text, reconsider where they have moved away from it and what they have found in the sense of the text, and gradually integrate it without memorizing it mechanically. It is a method that allows the integration of the text in an organic manner, without separating the body from the mental and allows the actor to build his inner monologue intuitively from the very first stage of work. As a director, it is very convenient to work like this because you leave the actors a freedom in which they naturally discover the rightness of the characters and situations, they become more creative in

proposals and there is no need for that stage where you have to take them out of automatism and gimmicks. Basically, the text never sounds false because it was reached organically, it was not learned automatically, mechanically without intentions, outside the situation. But it is a method that requires a lot of time to work.

**M.M.:** *In September, the premiere of the performance you are staging at the National Theatre of Bucharest, Exil, is scheduled. What intimate and political histories are steeped in this new performance?*

**A.B.:** It's a performance that I wanted to do a long time ago, but I didn't have the necessary cast. When I was invited to NTB, it was clear to me that it is a project that can be done with the actors of the company, because they cover different generations that have lived the times I am discussing and because it is the most complex company in Romania, which represents the Romanian society very well. It is a show about the identity blockages that we carry within us without knowing, about the traumas transmitted at an intimate and political level from one generation to another, about the tensions we have with Romania and, at the same time, about the impossibility to permanently break from when you decide to leave, about the need for freedom, the inability to adapt, about helplessness, cowardice, love suffocated by the socio-political context, broken families, families that stifle the authenticity of those who break pattern, about the continuous struggle to detach yourself from all this baggage and to live in agreement with yourself in a society that forbids you to do so.

***“French became a language in which I started to analyse these traumas.”***

**M.M.:** *You are an author who writes both in Romanian and in French – plays, scripts, novels, essayistic texts. How do you build an identity through language? Are there things that you feel you can only say in Romanian and that are lost when you articulate them in French? Or, on the contrary, writing in a language that is not your mother tongue gives you greater creative freedom?*

**A.B.:** It has always been difficult for me to write in Romanian, I managed to do it very late, after many texts published in French, because I was invited to stage plays in Romania, I had a very clear idea of what I wanted to talk about, and I needed a text that only I could write. This blockage I think comes from the fact that I have experienced certain traumas in Romanian. Perhaps the biggest trauma was the educational system, the way I was forced to learn by heart pages written by others without being able to analyse or question them, the competition in which we are thrown from a young age, the fears that were induced in us. I've always believed that I'm incapable of writing in Romanian, that everything I do

in this language is stupid. I chose to be a director because it seemed to me the only way to express myself without having to write or speak myself. I think we have developed a complex regarding Romanian. I did not choose to write in French. Simply put, when the need to write became vital, when I started the first text more as a personal therapeutic process, I discovered that in French I had no barriers, that I could write what goes through my head without constantly self-evaluating myself, without feeling that someone is following me and giving me notes while I do it. I think French became a language in which I started to analyse these traumas. To do it, I needed this neutrality, a new ground where I could explore freely. It's basically the language in which I have deconstructed a way of thinking that has been forcibly imposed on me and in which I have begun to learn who I am and what I really mean.

**M.M.:** *There is a lot of talk in Romania, at present, about the status of the cultural worker and the need for public policies to regulate it. In France there is an intermittent artist status. Can you describe it in a few words and define its benefits?*

**A.B.:** It's a system unique in the world. Basically, accumulating 507 hours of work per year (which is very difficult for an artist on debut and is quite difficult to maintain for a director, given that in France, the average for productions by a director is one per two years), you are entitled to an allowance in the months in which you do not work. What's interesting about this system is that it allows funding for research, based on the premise that an artist can't produce all the time and that his creative time can't be quantified. This system also funds lifelong learning. By accumulating hours, you accumulate *workshop* hours in which you can work with artists who are interested in you, or you can experience working techniques that you are not familiar with.

**M.M.:** *What do you feel your multiple belonging has brought you, intimately and politically?*

**A.B.:** An ability to adapt more easily to different contexts, an openness to other cultures and worldviews, perhaps a more complex analysis of certain situations and the belief that, whatever happens, I will find a place in this world where I can feel free.

**M.M.:** *What's the most powerful memory you carry with you wherever you go?*

**A.B.:** A few years ago, when I presented the second part of the *Points non-retour* trilogy at the Avignon Festival, at a meeting with the audience, a high school student came up to me, gave me a note and left. In the note she wrote that she recognized herself in the main character and that since then she felt a little more understood, that she needed this experience. I kept her note in my purse for

a long time and at the trilogy premiere in Paris this year, I gave it to the actress who created this character. Since then, before every performance, in moments of doubt, I tell myself that that evening there must be at least one person in the room that is in need of what we do.













UNATC PRESS 2022  
ISSN 2248-3756  
ISSN-L 2098-4444

*www.unatc.ro*

**EDITORIAL OFFICE:**  
5B Tudor Arghezi Street,  
Bucharest, Romania  
Phone: +40 735856057

Contact: [concept@unatc.ro](mailto:concept@unatc.ro)  
[mihaela.betiu@unatc.ro](mailto:mihaela.betiu@unatc.ro)



Still from the film *The Swimmer* (USA, 1968). Directed by **Frank Perry**, screenplay by **Eleanor Perry**, based on a short story by **John Cheever**. In the image, sleeping in the pool, we see the writer John Cheever, credited simply as *Man at Pool Party*. Sitting with the back to the camera, next to the protagonist of the film **Burt Lancaster**, is screenwriter Eleanor Perry. Both Cheever and Perry play episodic parts as a married couple.

CONCEPT is a biannual open access academic publication, edited by the I.L. Caragiale National University of Theater and Cinematography, which has been published since 2010. CONCEPT uses a double-blind peer-review system, is classified C by the Romanian National Council for Scientific Research and is indexed in several international databases: CEEOL, SCPIO, EBSCO.



UNA TC PRESS 2022  
ISSN 2248-3756  
ISSN-L 2068-4444

