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IMMIGRATION AS A CULTURAL INVESTMENT

MIRUNA RUNCAN

ABSTRACT. The paper will focus on the "double bind" of the recognition of immigrant writers and artistes in their new home/language: the specific insertion of the voice of the writer as an exotic object of cultural consumption in the hosting linguistic and cultural environment, on one hand, and the mythology of the "success" of the expat in the linguistic and cultural country of origin, on the other hand. We will try to exemplify the strange balance of perception and re-appropriation of the immigrant's works, by means of translations or re-writings, using examples offered by some Romanian famous writers of the last century, such as Eugene Ionesco, Benjamin Fondane, E.M. Cioran and, of course, Matei Visniec.

The method of this kind of analysis will found on contextual and comparative analysis of the two specific cultural spaces in the specific period of insertion and re-insertion, from political, social and aesthetical points of view.

Keywords: *literature, foreign language, theatre, audiences.*

Back home East

A common joke circulating several year ago in Romanian theatrical milieu, referred to a famous stage director, frequently coming back from America to work in his native Romania. Once, in the middle of the rehearsal for a new Romanian production, he gets sick and is urgently transported to a hospital. He complains about unbearable aches in his feet, spine and hands. After several hours of testing and interviewing the patient, the doctor says: "Maestro, I am so sad to announce you have a rare and almost incurable disease: you are constantly transforming into your own statue!"

If the joke works for theatre, it will work even better for literature. Every return in its own country of a writer who became, more or less, famous abroad, especially one who miraculously adapted to e different linguistic space, provoke a new and complex process of reception and evaluation: neither the author, nor its work are coming alone at this meeting, and, as in a fairy tale, the weapon precedes with miles and miles the actual apparition of the dragon.

Still, from a psycho-sociological point of view, we can observe that the natural reception of both the literary work and auctorial presence is, in many ways, over-pressurized and overexposed. Being, in the same time, a native and a foreigner, a "translation" but also a local-routed artistic piece, the author and his work benefit form a sort of particular treatment, symbolically overwhelming. On one hand, he looks like a sportsman/woman coming back from the Olympics, with golden medals on his chest. He/she represents not only him/herself as a winner, on talent and hard work grounds, a simple person who happily managed to DO IT. He/she also stands for the chance of recognition (and we may read "chance" as in a lottery game) of the "national value(s)"; whatever that means, if it means anything.

The most powerful (invisible but, still, energetic) factor who plays its part in this process of double mediation is the collective "identity". We could speak here about a sort of "substantiated identity".

We search ourselves (as person or community) in the writer's books; we try to see how much of the "national identity" is still present inside it. Sometimes, it looks like the recognition is a simple one, as in Panait Istrati's novels written in French, but using spaces, urban myths, legendary patterns and characters from his native Braila, a multicultural town at the Danube Delta gates. In other cases, things are more complex, and the "appropriation" of the literary universe seems less specific, like in Ionesco's plays, where the space, time and characters conserve no local specificity, and the hermeneutical effort seems to imply an "universalistic philosophical" perspective. The most ambiguous case, from this point of view, is E.M. Cioran's one: the French writer-philosopher made a "profession of honor" by dismissing his "Romanianity", and almost his entire work in the native language is focused on his exasperation caused by being a Romanian.

How the origin cultural milieu reads the foreign recognition? I really do no think that the situation in my country is much different from other Central and Eastern European spaces. Basically, we have two standard types of audience response, in terms of "evaluation": the good evaluation, and the bad one.

Statistically, the good evaluation is based on the (rather confuse, but still – paradoxically – strong) feeling that the writers' work and status are the best form of "exporting" the local spiritual essence, in other words the chance to externalize the cultural specificity in an universalistic paradigm.

The "small cultural field" is always obsessed both by the exploration of the Western's (phantasm) cultural centrality, and by Western's recognition of local identity. It's, more or less, like a type of Ulysses's obsession on both traveling to see, and being seen.

In this terms, a writer recognized as famous in a Western cultural environment is perceived, when translated in its own native language, as a quintessence of the "national spirit", somehow more Romanian (Czech, Greek, Polish, whatever) than any other writer working at home. The local river of his/her mind flowed into the "universal" ocean of themes, styles and aesthetical values, and has been accepted as "unique".

Maybe the best example for the Romanian experience of cultural recognition in the last century is Eugene Ionesco. The first Romanian representation of *La Cantatrice Chauve*, in 1965 was liked by the director and producers in a common performance with five short sketches by I.L.Caragiale, the father figure of Romanian modern drama. The intention of the producers and artists was to demonstrate the Romanian roots of the absurd theatre, and also to make Ionesco's text easier to be understood and assimilate for the local audiences. But this particular mix (Caragiale-Ionesco) was abundantly exploited by the critics and literary historians in the last decades, as much as to transform Ionesco's plays not only into classical-cult objects, but also Ionesco himself into somekind of a Super-Romanian writer; which he is not - in legal and patrimonial terms – being a member of French Academy, isn't it?!

The second kind of position in reception and evaluation is the bad one, founded on the suspicion that the success is circumstantial. In these cases, the local cultural environment tends "to know better" and explains the notoriousness in terms of some particular curiozity of the Western audience to a non-aesthetical circumstance. In other words, the local audiences feel „misrepresented" and consider even that the writer and his/her work is ilegittimly overestimated.

For example, the novel *The 25'th Hour*, by Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu, even if published in Paris in 1949 and transformed in a well known movie in the 60s (with a briliant Antony Quin as the main character) was never considered as a Romanian succes. And that is much more strange than it seems, especially after 1989, when both publishers and audiences were anxious to re-apropriate celebrities with Romanian origin. Still, the style of the author was considered poor, and the depiction of Romanian life and space un-authentic, probably by contamination with the film original reception. The book was

not translated at all, and the succes was interpreted as some kind of a propagandistic effect, due to the author's anti-comunist vision. Paradoxically, even the „nationalist" wing of the Romanian intelligentia after 1989 refuzed or ignored to reconsider the author's work, fearing probably a tardy debate on Gheorghiu's pollitical implications in Second World War time.

And this is only one (nearly) classical example. In our more recent history, the literary writings of many foreign celebrities were treatred back home as contextually pollitical excenticities; and even, sometimes, the pollitical implication of expatriate writers was seen as an advertising agenda, destined to undercover the lack of talent, especialy when controversial issues were at stake.

New home west, old home east: Matei Visniec

Someone could, one day, make a case study on the reception of Matei Visniec's work, from both the French and Romanian side. I do no dare to do such thing; it would imply a much more profound analytical reflection and re-search. Still, I can use my personal memories and experiences for a short sketch, oriented only on the Romanian field after 1989. I have also to add that the perspective is a subjective/personal one.

Even if we shared the same kind of interest on poetry, I never knew Matei Visniec was writing for theatre but after 1989. Sincerely, I didn't like much the first production a saw on one of his early plays, never published in Romania before his decision to exile. I remember well it was *Goufi's Country*, a parabolic utopia, and, maybe due to the stage director's vision resembled a lot to the polish absurdist satires from the 60s. But, paradoxically – in a theatrical environment nearly deaf and blind towards contemporary playwriting, as the first years after 1989 were – Matei Visniek's plays were immediately recuperated!

I saw only a few of the productions on his plays then, and I perfectly remember that the first time I was completely seduced by both the text and performance was one or two month after my first experience, when the Piatra Neamt Youth Theatre toured in Bucharest *Oh, Mother, they are telling in the second act what happened in the first one!* It was, somehow, like a revelation, because a good performance helped me to understand not only the author's special style and authenticity, but also some of the reasons of his unusual good reception, from directors willing to stage to critics and usual audiences, allover the country.

In short, I think there were at least three motives, at the beginning, for this fertile enthusiasm. First of all, the writer was still young and only recently emigrated to France, after having his first collection of plays censored by the Romanian authorities. Visniec was perceived, for that reason, as a victim-writer (which he really was), and also as an authentic representative of his generation of poets and novelists, the legendary 80s generation, the only one interested in playwriting. On the other hand, his early plays, partially influenced by Beckett and Mrozek, were intelligent, funny and particularly strange, even tragic, perfectly fitted in the theatrical aesthetic of the (well known) "complicity" between performers and spectators, "in fashion" at that time. Finally, Visniec himself was, in a way, perceived as both native and foreigner, not old enough to be a complete stranger (and idolatrized as such), brave enough to have written such complex, politically sensitive and thrilling plays as he already did.

In time, Visniec's vision, style and themes evolved in a very special dynamic, somehow connected invisibly connected to his audience evolution. First, it was the extraordinary success – in France and in Romania, with at least ten productions from different companies – of *Small Job for a Clown*, a perfect piece of good theatre, a-temporal and still so near by, so poetic, playful and yet profoundly psychological, the dream of each actor, allover the world.

Then, at least for me, it was the shock of such a brutal and politically committed play as *About the woman's sex seen as a battlefield in Bosnia's war*, an experimental work who instantly conquered the theatres and the audiences, and had lots of staged version till today. *The history of communism told for mentally ill persons* offered a completely new structure, on the edge between realism and nightmare. Finally, *Penthouse in Paris with a view on death*, a completely unorthodox fantasy about E.M Cioran's last years consumed by Alzheimer, benefited from at least two Romanian productions by the same director, the young and yet famous Radu Afrim, one in Cluj and another made for the Avignion festival, with an international casting. Both of them had a great success, the last one is still in a long tour in France (March 2009, 12 locations) the moment I am writing this paper. Till now, all the reviews in France are enthusiastic.

And I have to conclude: this reaction in both Romania and France proves wrong all the series of stereotypes a summarized at the beginning of this article. I do not believe that the "substantiated national identity" has anything to do with the actual success of the author's plays, nor with his fame at home. But I still believe that the playwright we are talking about proves that, our days, a vivid talent can embrace a more opened horizon and can find a special way of living in both languages an both spaces in the same time, without being a wizard, or a schizophrenic. Then, the audiences from both homes will sincerely invest in his writings.

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THE SPECTATOR IN THE SOCIAL WORLD OF THE THEATRE

MIHAI PEDESTRU

ABSTRACT. In Stebbins's interpretation of Unruh's theory, (Stebbins, 2006) in the social world of the performing arts, *the strangers* would be represented by the individuals involved in the management, administration or technical workshops, the *tourists* by the general audience, *the regulars* by the amateur producers of contents, and *the insiders* by the professionals directly involved in the artistic creation process, directors, actors, scenographers. This systematisation seems extremely vague and, in essence, irrelevant, it is a random classification, rather than a functional one, since it ignores the fundamentally syncretic nature of the theatrical event, denying the spectator's individuality, as well as any control or influence on the generation of meaning. Undoubtedly, the consideration of the audience as a uniform mass, passively and accidentally receiving a given message is an extremely comfortable perspective for a sociologist, but it does not assist with anything to the spectator's better understanding and to the understanding of his/ her functional mechanisms. Therefore, a more substantial systematisation is required, since we believe that the theory of the social worlds is an extremely interesting one and particularly fertile in the field of our interest.

Keywords: Theatre, audience, spectatorship, social behaviour

The theatrical world, with all of its elements, may be fairly considered a "social world", in Unruh's (1980) approach of the term, of "A diffuse and amorphous unit of social organization … an internally-recognizable constellation of actors, organizations, events, and practices which have coalesced into a perceived common sphere of interest and involvement for participants." (Unruh, 1980:277). Any social world involves four main categories of individual members, namely *strangers*, *tourists*, *regulars* and *insiders* (Unruh, 1979, 1980), each category bringing a contribution necessary for the reliable functioning of the system, having its own motivations and, of course, a variable degree of interference with it.

Although the sociologist Robert Stebbins (2006) includes them exclusively in the category of the tourists, we believe that, with respect to the theatre spectators, they may fit into each of these categories, the specific

differences being operated at the level of the individual's involvement relating to the phenomenology of the production of theatrical event. However, since the reception process allows temporary repositionings, mainly determined by the shift of motivations, Stebbins uses a reduction, admitting a potential dynamics of the categories, resulting from the existence of an "entertainment audience" and of an "expert audience". The entertainment audience would be the subject of the aesthetic reception as such, whereas the expert audience would be motivated strictly by the professional-mimetic interests, thus not fitting into the scope of interest of audience surveys.

In Stebbins's interpretation of Unruh's theory, (Stebbins, 2006) in the social world of the performing arts, *the strangers* would be represented by the individuals involved in the management, administration or technical workshops, the *tourists* by the general audience, *the regulars* by the amateurs producers of contents, and *the insiders* by the professionals directly involved in the artistic creation process, directors, actors, scenographers. This systematisation seems extremely vague and, in essence, irrelevant, it is a random classification, rather than a functional one, since it ignores the fundamentally syncretic nature of the theatrical event, denying the spectator's individuality, as well as any control or influence on the generation of meaning. Undoubtedly, the consideration of the audience as a uniform mass, passively and accidentally receiving a given message is an extremely comfortable perspective for a sociologist, but it does not assist with anything to the spectator's better understanding and of his/ her functional mechanisms. Therefore, a more substantial systematisation is required, since we believe that the theory of the social worlds is an extremely interesting one and particularly fertile in the field of our interest.

From a contextual-relativist perspective and considering the amorphous and non-hierarchical character of the social worlds postulated by Unruh, we may note the existence of two distinct states of the theatrical world: a *state of preparation* and a *state of event,* constantly successive. *The state of event* is an exceptional state of the system, triggered at the beginning of the performance and calls for a clear separation between communicators. This is made by means of specific procedures, from the different lighting of the hall or the limitation of the play area by the proscenium arch, in the classical theatre, up to a strictly conventional, but equally powerful separation for various experimental performances. In the state of event, the actors' polarisation achieves even a territorial dimension, the extension beyond

limits, from whatever direction it comes, generates discomfort, a type of discomfort that can be controlled and used expressively or that may aggravate down to the unilateral suspension of the communication process.

With reference to the *state of preparation*, deemed as the normal state of the system, this is returned to when the performance is completed or suspended and it involves the actors' depolarisation, the annulment of the territorial dimensions and the reassuming of the functional positions.

In the state of preparation, the spectator still constitutes an integral part of the theatrical world, his main role being a catalytic one. However, depending on his or her degree of involvement, respectively on his or her motivations, he or she may equally constitute an extremely powerful censor of the event production, by the feedback or feed-forward he or she provides. Leaving aside Stebbins's systematisation, we think that the theatrical world, in its normal state, is structured concentrically starting from a nucleus of *insiders*, holding an autotelic existential motivation, apparently, applying an extremely powerful, centripetal and cohesive force, which echoes throughout the social world. This nucleus is represented by the theatrical institution as such, the primary producer of contents and event, orbited, in layers, by the other categories of participants, holding increasingly blurred motivations. At this level, reception is a functional one, on which the favourable progress of the event depends.

At the level of the *regulars*, we may incorporate Stebbins's *expert audience*, but we don't think that their reception is a strictly technical one and the audience itself is not just a receptive extension of the nucleus of the insiders. The regulars are, instead, those spectators that hold a considerable amount of knowledge on the intestines of the theatrical production, so that they should be able to contextualise in a phenomenological manner their reception and, possibly, to capitalise on it in one form or another. Here, we include, undoubtedly, the professionals: actors, directors, whose experience is an essentially referential one and an example of multiple positioning or, in Unruh's approach, trans-situational; the critics, whose experience is analytical, as well as the dedicated and constant spectators, consistently watching the trajectory of an institution or a company.

The tourists are the general audience, whose reception is, mainly, an entertainment one, and whose involvement in the theatrical world is a discreet one, even if it is extremely important. While he or she does not provide

an active and visible contribution, and the main feedback, the applause, is frequently conventional, therefore irrelevant, *the tourist*, by his or her mere choice to participate or not in the event determines the very existence of the social world. His or her motivations are far more ambiguous than those of the insiders or of the regulars.

The stranger is the chance spectator, who randomly comes across the theatrical phenomenon. His or her motivations are the most unclear and most detached ones from the phenomenology of the production, but he or she illustrates the entry into the system. Depending on the extent to which the event in which he or she participates fulfils his or her own needs, he or she may remain a stranger or may migrate toward the inner layers.

The binding agent of these layers of participants, as seen from the above, is each individual's motivation of becoming a part of the social world. Despite the fact that such motivations may be presumed as dependent on each participant's psyche, we may identify a series of opinions in the specialised documentation, opinions that, invariably, reach the issue of the very existence of the theatre as a phenomenon. In what follows, we will attempt to focus on those that seem the most remarkable.

Georges Bataille (2008) views the non-productive expenditure, the excess as essence of the social human being's meaning. Excess, he says, "must be as considerable as possible, so that the corresponding activity should acquire its true meaning" (Bataille, 2008, p. 23). Cultural brand and, simultaneously, atavism of primitive, sacrificial societies, excess is present in the theatre in two forms: material excess and symbolic excess. The real expense of the one visible economically. The theatre uses resources without generating anything tangible, its existence being owed to the society's need of defining itself by the power of wasting its wealth. Symbolically, says Bataille, "in their major form, literature and theatre ... provoke dread and horror through symbolic representations of tragic loss (degradation or death); in their minor form, they provoke laughter through representations analogously structured." (Bataille, 2008, p.23). Thus, one possible motivation of the theatre spectator could be the one to support a frame of ritual excess, which constitutes, in fact, a mark and a class or culture/subculture perimeter.

Another possible approach of the motivations emerges when we observe the spectator's condition in relation to the historical mutations of the public sphere. Losing, by means of legislation, the control over his or her

own private life, and by the founding of the representative state the direct control over political life, the citizen loses his or her rank of *oikodespotes*, viewed by Habermas (1989) as the essence of the public life, respectively of the individual's perennial existence, in the ideal model of the public sphere, i.e. the Athenian democracy (p. 3-4). As noted by Green, too:

> Mass representative democracy engenders and normalizes a type of citizen that, as a matter of law and abstract principle, has full political rights but, as a matter of practice, experiences politics primarily as a spectator. (Green, 2010, p.32)

Therefore, the individual is forced into the condition of spectator of his or her own existence, into the constant discharge of control impulses and into their occasional release in an agora simulacrum, the theatre, in which his or her role is that of a jury's simulacrum. From here emerges the transition from a loud, turbulent and participatory audience in the Greek theatre to an increasingly silent, concealed and contemplative audience (see Arnott, 1991).

This perspective establishes the historicity of the reception act, places it in direct relation to the zeitgeist, to the noosphere of the moment. Thus, the participation in the social world of the theatre would be, for the spectator, a substitute for the participation in the city's life, in a public sphere to which access is gradually more restricted, by the limitations of the right to expression inherent to the feudal state and, later on, to the bourgeois-capitalist one (see Roberts, 2003, p. 20-29).

Paul Woodruff (2008) places the reception motivation in direct relation to a territorial need of positioning in a "watching relationship" with the world. In the author's opinion, the theatre would be "the art of finding human action worth watching for a measured time, in a measured space." (p. 19); by watching, we understand a cut-out from reality by the focusing of attention on several isolated segments of it. With Woodruff, the elements determining the individual to involve in the social world of the theatre is, primarily, an ethical-formative dimension.

> Our need to watch theater grows from our need to care about other people. … You pay attention because you care, and paying attention allows you to care. Caring about people in the make-believe world of mimetic theatre may strengthen your ability to care about people offstage. (Woodruff, 2008, p.20)

Subsequently, the participation in the social world would be determined by a conditioning of social custom pedagogy, the performing art institution being a platform of stimulation of what the author considers the most important trait of the socially healthy human being, namely the "humaneness" (p.20).

Nevertheless, the spectator's positioning in this observation relationship may function similarly to his or her positioning in the agora simulacrum from the previous pattern. During the reception, he or she is invested with power over the world, a give-and-take solution in the dissonance between the impulse and simultaneous impossibility of control.

A fourth approach we deem relevant results from the interactional theories of the School of Chicago, from the viewing of the world meaning as a derivative of the symbolic interaction between the individuals. Thus, theatrical reception becomes a form of training for the signification. As noted by George Mead:

> Meaning arises and lies within the field of the relation between the gesture of a given human organism and the subsequent behaviour of this organism as indicated to another human organism by that gesture. … The nature of meaning is intimately associated with the social process as it thus appears (Mead, 1972, p.76)

Assuredly, any form of fiction may assist such training, but of all of them, the theatre seems to be the most efficient one, on the one hand because the simulation of interaction is performed between animated, tangible beings, and on the other hand because its condensed character (at least in the classical theatre) allows the direct observation of the action and of the behaviour induced by it, in a finite timeframe. Thus, the theatre simplifies the observation of the symbolic interaction, eliminating to a great extent the potential "contextual conditioning" that may complicate it (see Strauss, 1993, p. 60).

By summing up the above-mentioned perspective, we may delineate a functional pattern of the social world of the theatre, according to four motivational factors of cohesion:

1. **The social vector** – based on the need of class belonging and identity.

The social vector is most dynamically present at the level of the *strangers* and we think it is the one determining their first contact with the theatrical social world. Its origin is in the latter's exterior, in the conditioning of the general society, as well as of the other social worlds in which the individual takes part.

2. **The political vector** – based on the need to control the public situation/ event.

The political vector is most steadily present at the level of the *tourists*, representing a powerful factor for the system cohesion. Its origin is in the individual and in the extent to which the participation in the theatrical world complies with his or her needs of participating in the public life.

3. **The ethic vector** – based on the need of adequacy of the individual's attitudes and behaviours to an accepted shared code.

The ethic vector is most strongly present at the level of the *regulars*, with the origin in the relationship between a certain instance of the theatrical social world and its faithful spectators who look at it in the terms of a behavioural target.

4. **The semantic vector** – based on the need of creation and constant adequacy of a shared signification frame.

The semantic vector is the most subtle one, equally present at all levels. Actually, it represents a scalar and diffuse entity, but at the same time, a major cohesive factor of the system.

For the healthy existence of a particular aspect of the theatrical social world, we think that it is necessary for the *insiders*, the ones on which its organic functioning depends, to take into account each of these vectors, as well as all of the other participants' cognitive and cultural specificities. By extending the notion of social world at the level of the theatre, we cancel the distance between the spectator position and the one of event producer; thus, they become diachronically interchangeable; this means that, at any time, the *stranger* may become an *insider*, as long as his or her needs are satisfied, the same as the *insider* may leave completely the social world, if the latter no longer satisfies him or her. Within this dynamics of the vectors of cohesion and adequacy of the world to its members' transitory needs we will find the resilience and the vitality of the system in its entirety.

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TYPOLOGIES OF EVERYDAY THEATRICALITY – CASE STUDIES

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ABSTRACT. This paper studies the virtual theatricality as a part of everyday theatricality, through a specific number of case studies: games, films, performances. Virtual theatricality is the type of role assumption produced at the level of the individual imaginary; here, communication is split by an interface; the virtual role assumption is perfectly conscious and allows the interaction with the character created by the one with whom the communication is carried out, but never with the individual as such.

Keywords: theatricality, audiences, role assumption, theatre

Theatricality is the use of the term theatrical imagination to describe the quality of the dramatic art to transform the imitation of an action into a new creative experience, a vision and a revelation shared both by the actor and by the audience.

In the economy of stage situations, the blatant statement of an issue is not sufficient; the playwright must bring forward – even if merely implicitly – its solution and that of the manner of unsettling the relationship between the man and its environment. It is said that the differences between the comedy and other forms of theatre reside in the manner of character portrayal; comedy needs lesser organisation of the material and a less obvious plot... Barett H. Clark says, "Plots in... the best comedies... are, at a concluding analysis, mere bridges used by the playwright in order to unify his gallery of portraits."[1] Were this true, the principles of the dramatic actions couldn't apply to the comedy and we would be compelled to consider the comedy in the terms of a separate form of art. This would be intricate, since it is merely impossible to say where comedy ends and where drama begins. Fortunately, there isn't the slightest argument supporting such a theory; ancient comedies stand out chiefly due to their complex plots. Even the best

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[1] Apud: Carrière, Jean Claude; Bonitzer, Pascal – *Exercise du scénario,* Paris, Femis, 1990

comedies, both ancient and modern, are those whose action is progressive and thick, associating character conflicts to symbolic and satirical situations that remain emblematic.

The historical study of the dramatic theory and technique shows that the approach of the situations and of the characters by the playwright, at least until the establishment of the European avant-gardes in the beginning of the 20th century, is determined by the ideological context contemporary with the author.

Virtual theatricality

Virtual theatricality is the type of role assumption produced at the level of the individual imaginary; here, communication is split by an interface; the virtual role assumption is perfectly conscious and allows the interaction with the character created by the one with whom the communication is carried out, but never with the individual as such. This is one of the most pervasive and easily identifiable typologies of theatricality, preceding in principle the invention of the technology that has generated the virtual media. For instance, a great part of the classic epistolary the novels use the techniques of the imaginary role construction and of their deconstruction put against the universe of the narrative "reality" (with respect to this, the best known example is Laclos's *Dangerous Liaisons,* not accidentally dramatised or screened so recurrently during the last decades of the 20th century. Starting with the cinematographic art and ending with computer games, all forms of artistic expression – should we agree on the fact that the computer game is one of the latest such forms – use virtual theatricality, independently or together with one of the other two categories. In its turn, this is divided in more subclasses, and each of these may be illustrated and explained by a case study.

Nicolae Mandea[2] claims that "if we accept that defining for the concept of theatricality are the relationship between the observer and the observed and the performance of presence by a theatrical act of a virtual reality, we obviously enter the territory of the communication mediated by the contemporary multimedia techniques." Starting from this statement and, particularly, by sustaining the rapport spectacle/spectator, in the case

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[2] Mandea, Nicolae - *Teatralitatea un concept contemporan (Theatricality a Contemporary Concept),* UNATC Press, 2006, pg. 134

of virtual theatricality, the question concerns the estimate of the spectator's involvement in the multimedia event, which, unmistakably, cannot be so easily quantified. Does the receiver of the performance remain exclusively a spectator, or is his / her participation an immersive one, involving – albeit subconsciously – the need of instant answer, of "actio" in a role symmetric to the actor's? Obviously, we should accept the fact that virtual theatricality is more complex than the mere use of certain projections in the dramatic performances.

To what extent is the spectator-user (player) involved in an RPG[3]? Evidently, (this happens) to a far greater extent than in the classic silent atmosphere in the auditorium, where the regular meaning identification and analysis processes take place. However, undoubtedly, feedback may be obtained, the same as in a theatre or a cinema, in relationship to the type of characters involved in the game, to the decisions they make throughout the plot, to the time spent "logged in". Furthermore, in the video game, and particularly in the role play, the actor and the spectator merge, since one cannot watch a game, cannot observe its storyline and evolution without getting involved directly, without interacting as a character. Evidently, there is also the situation in which someone witnesses the manner in which someone else plays a game. However, such cases are so rare that they are not worth taking into consideration, particularly since they do not support the idea of theatricality: merely watching does not mean role assumption.

Similar to the theatre and to the movie, computer role play is constituted in a parallel, coherent world, which has to offer a storyline. Depending on the choices made by the player throughout the play, the scenario may modify, however without impact on the central story, the relational elements of the story staying the same. The frame and typology are identical from the beginning to the end: the Middle Ages, vampires, Mafia, etc. The player creates initially an avatar-character who will be his/ her representation in the game, whom he/ she will control throughout the action, via numerous choices: you're good, you're bad, you're a mage or a gladiator, a man or a woman, you talk to the other characters or you apply them the death strike as soon as you meet them. The characters evolve differently, depending on the points gathered, on the experience, on the time in the game, on the number of victories or defeats.

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[3] The term RPG denotes Role Playing Game, a type of game in which the participant undertakes the role of a fictional character

Both the RPG player and the theatre spectator share the desire of facing a fictional world. However, to what extent does role assumption work and what is its rapport with theatricality?

"The process of secondary identification taking place in cinema theatres depends paradoxically on distance while in the case of games we encounter something more than just intimacy. Identification is replaced by introjection – the subject is projected inward into an "other". We do not need to complete imitation to confuse the "other" with the "self". The subject (player) and the "other" (the onscreen avatar) do not stand at the opposite sides of the mirror anymore - they become one. (...) During the game, the player's identity ends in disintegration, and the merger of user's and character's consciousness ensues"[4]

Consciously, over a certain time interval (starting from one hour now and then, to periods consistently allowed during a day), any individual assumes one role or another, which resembles purely accidentally and superficially the real persona, at the level of clothing or gender. (These are) Social roles, bearing their own behavioural, clothing and rhetoric structure, or private roles, differentiated by means of their own idea of evolution, situation, relationships and discourse[5]. At the theatre, such a role assumption takes place at the level of the spectator's identification with one character or another, or with a certain situation. Similarly, in the case of computer games, too, we are dealing, in a compulsory manner, with the denegation effect, i.e. *"the assiduous burdening, by the spectator, of the product represented by the stage discourse with the mark of non-reality in rapport to daily existence"*[6]. The difference is that, in this case, the computer interface (the prefabricated program, the game stylistics and aesthetics, etc.) substitutes only partially the fictional universes of the theatre or movie show; control decisions concerning the plot are almost simultaneous with the interpretation of the situation and arise unbiased from the virtual role assumption. In other words, the spectator's role laps over the actor's, the player entering consciously in a parallel, fictional world, vested as such, where information is processed throughout the entire story. He/ she builds his/ her own character, guides and controls him/ her, in order to acquire new skills, to develop him/ her and, in the end, in order to win the game.

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[4] Filiciak, Miroslaw, 'Hyperidentities", in Wolf J.P, Perron, Bernard, eds., *The Video Game Theory Reader*, Routledge, N.Y./London: 2003, p.88

[5] With respect to this, see Goffman, Erving, *Viata cotidiana ca spectactol (The Presentation of Self in Everyday Lif)e*, Editura Comunicare.ro, 2006

[6] Runcan, Miruna, *Pentru o semiotică a spectacolului teatral (Towards a Semiotics of the Theatrical Performance)*, ed. Dacia, collection Biblioteca Teatrul Imposibil, Cluj, 2005, p. 52

Case study: *Vampire: The masquerade - Bloodlines*

In order to support the concept of theatricality, we will discuss a certain game, whose principle of construction applies perfectly to the RPG typology, but whose borders have crossed – long before the actual creation of the game – the virtual computer world, being something real in the beginning.

Vampire: The masquerade - Bloodlines[7], VTMB, is a role playing game, inspired from a "live action role playing game". Of course, this new series of terms requires an amplification, which, in fact, we hope will manage to clarify to a certain extent the elements of virtual theatricality, too. A "live action RPG" is a game requiring the compliance with a series of set rules and applying in the players' real life, becoming a style of living. The development of the game depends on the players' decision in their private life, in their relationships with the other mates. However, they are not allowed to bend the rules set by a book that one can buy from bookstores. In Romania, such a game had no kind of success, nor had it in any of the European countries. On the other hand, America, the country inventing the "reality show", promptly embraced thus type of entertainment, which has become, by the role assumption required by the rules, a lifestyle adopted by the fanatics of the simulacrum.

VTMB is based on *The World of Darkness* created by the company White Wolf, which is the redesign in the real world of the universe later on retrieved in VTMB, according to preset rules, including clans and hierarchies, a parlour game at an ampler scale. *Bloodlines* attempts to persuade the players that they can change the surrounding world by the choices they make, whether we are talking about the manner of approaching a task (the violent alternative or sneaking behind the enemies) or about the manner in which they communicate with the NPCs[8].

Strictly owing to these choices, *Bloodlines* has five different endings. The path to be travelled by the player in order to reach one of these endings is full of obstacles. Even if we are talking about the personification of vampires, the world birthing the character directed by the player is as real as possible: it includes art galleries and tunnels, nightclubs and Chinese districts. The alter ego (in already common terms, "the avatar") in the game may be selected

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[7] Additional information on this game is available at:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vampire:_The_Masquerade_%E2%80%93_Bloodlines
[8] NPC or "Non Playing Characters" are the characters with whom the hero interacts throughout the game, generated by the computer and impossible to control by the player.

from among seven vampire clans (of the 13 existing in the pen & paper universe that inspired the game), all clans pertaining only to the Camarilla, the so-called "good guys" of the VTMB universe.

Apart from the choice of the clan, which dictates the game approach, the player has to choose the character's sex, the non playing, programmed characters (NPC), reacting differently throughout the game, conditional on this initial choice. The development of the game depends at first hand on the player's choices: the dialogue with another character provides multiple answers to the various answers and missions proposed, all these choices depending unavoidably on the player's personality and not on the character's.

At this point, the elements of virtual theatricality crop up; they are defining for this type of game, which, in fact, substitutes the primary forms of theatricality of childhood games and which, for the generations born after the 1990s, represent an astounding share of entertainment. Furthermore, a great part of the RPGs, and many other types of computer games, borrow from the film and the theatre dramatic vehicles, character typologies, as well as actors.

Figure 1 – scene in the game Vampires: The Masquerade - Bloodlines

Case study: *Synecdoche, New York*

Whereas, obviously, the RPG computer game is a coherent form of everyday life theatricality, would there be any possibility to define the cinematographic theatricality within the same category? The answer is evidently affirmative, to the extent to which the movie uses a "meta-referentiality", suggesting the cinematic copy of society. One such perfect example is in Charlie Kaufman's films[9]; in what follows, we will discuss particularly *Synecdoche, New York*.

Our topic does not relate to the quality of the movie, which is, in any case, rather difficult to challenge, nor does it deal with the personal choice of cutting excessively long scenes, in order to double the message of the movie. The main issue tackled by Kaufman is the confusion between life and art and the reverse, the conclusion relating to the role assumption. The identification with the character that we "perform" fictionally is real if we choose to introduce equality in the relationship observer/observed.

Caden Cotard (Philip Seymour Hoffman) is the manager of a small dramatic company who had planned a stage adaptation of a new version of the famous play *Death of a Salesman*. The beginning of the movie places the main character during the dress rehearsals and of the premiere. However, in his private life, things are far from perfect; his wife leaves him taking away their daughter, Olive. Furthermore, he is also suffering from a series of strange health disorders, since he is also an increasing hypochondriac. When he least expects it, an unusual event occurs: he wins the famous Mac Arthur prize – a prize to which a considerable amount of money is attached. Starting from this, he decides to direct a ground-breaking play, founded on an extreme realistic system; a gigantesque production, including a huge casting team, to be performed in an abandoned hangar in Manhattan, where a small-scale replica of New York would be built; the topic of the play is just the everyday life in the famous American metropolis. Whereas, at first hand, this should have stimulated him, Caden gradually loses the contact with the real world, becoming the prisoner of a misleading world, in which real life would be mistaken with the imaginary one, at the level of total role assumption.

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[9] Charlie Kaufman is the script-writer for the movies *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, *Confessions of a Dangerous Mind*, *Being John Malkovich* and, especially, *Adaptatio*n, an authentic poetics of the new type of postmodern scenario. *Synecdoche, New York* is also his directing debut.

Clearly, the analysis of the movie will start from the title, precisely because we are dealing with the suggestion from the very beginning of the key of interpretation. According to the Explanatory Dictionary of Romanian[10] the word *synecdoche* is a noun denoting "figure of speech made of the expansion or contraction of the meaning of a word by using the whole instead of the part (and the reverse), the particular instead of the general, the general instead of the particular, the material from which something is made instead of the thing, etc." The dictionary definition itself, related to Kauffman's movie, calls for the idea of theatricality comprehended in the meaning of our thesis: fictional identity assumed as role through an interface, in our case the cinematographic studio that reproduces, gradually, in a laboratory jar, the "everyday" identity of the city.

Figure 2 – scene from the movie *Synecdoche, New York* by Charlie Kaufman

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[10] DEX, online version, http://dexonline.ro/search.php?cuv=sinecdoca

The first mark of meta-referentiality in the movie does not arise from the objects that will become symbols, from the character's job (i.e. director), or from the first scene of theatre in the theatre. Undoubtedly, the primary signal shall spread in all these, but it is released by the first scene between Caden (the director) and Hazel (the girl at the box-office, in love with Caden, the one with whom he will start an affair, but who will stand by him, accepting the role playing games proposed by the director):

> "Caden: You're not an idiot."
> Hazel: Then you say: In fact, Hazel, you're very bright, and I love your eyes.
> Caden: In fact, Hazel, you're very bright.
> Hazel: Oh, am I?
> Caden: And I love your eyes.
> Hazel: Do you? Oh, you're a darling.
> Caden: Then what do I say?
> Hazel: I can't say what then you say.
> Caden: Why?
> Hazel: Because it's dirty."

It is the first form of role proposal, even if from a character different from the one who will later on claim and demand the assumption. However, the function of the character Hazel is given away right from this scene: she is the motor and promoter of the creation of the synecdoche, at all of its levels.

Unfortunately, we do not have the space necessary to analyse each symbol and take of this movie, which would be worth a sequential study. However, similar to Goffman's use of an interpretation-supporting frame on the society, Kaufman applies of "key" frame on all the aspects of the main character's life. He is able to see himself and identify, in the first half of the movie, with seemingly unrelated characters, for instance those in a drug advertisement. Later on, the characters in the advertisement shall be retrieved their place and relation to the characters in the movie.

As the plot progresses, reality becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish from fiction; in other words, the main character starts taking real life scenes and transforming fiction in reality, compelling the actors to play their own parts. "We need to investigate. You know, to really discover the essence of each being", the director says to his actors. Furthermore, his own life reaches a point where it is guided by some king of deceit resulting from theatricality, from the imminence of the observation, of the "exterior eye that dictates the frame".

Caden, a hypochondriac, uses the disease excuse in order to prove to himself that he is closer to death; death is one of the main topics of the "study" represented by the "grand directing design": when he feels like crying, he use the "tear substitute", drops that stimulate his emotional relief. The moments of privacy start being invaded by real persons in the director's everyday life; such persons play the part of the voyeurs. Caden's life gradually turns from an observer's existence to one of the observed. The two functions merge for a great part of the movie, and in the end they substitute one another completely. After the first half of the movie, we see Caden with an already well delineated design: "I won't settle for anything less than the brutal truth. Each day I'll hand you a scrap of paper. It'll tell you what happened to you that day. You felt a lump in your breast. You looked at your wife and saw a stranger, et cetera." When asked by the actors "When are we gonna get an audience in here? It's been 17 years", the leading character answers by involving his own being in the grand plan, in the copy of the reality he wants to create.

One of the important moments of the story is the employment of the person to play Caden, in other words the employment of the competitor I, which turns into the confrontation with the double. Only at a second watching do we observe, at the level of the picture control, the presence, now and then, of an extra shoulder or of a character sitting on the other side of the road. This is the one in audition for Caden's role, who, in his turn, reveals himself in order to change the equation – this time from the observer into the observed – after he admits having spent twenty years in observation of his character. In the end, the imitation becomes so real that the character's role attains values of "vampirism" of the "auctorial" self.

Things grow ambiguous at the level of the frames, too: the kitchen at home is identical with the one in the setting; the real spectators need several seconds of adjustment in order to understand whether they are watching the plot in the movie or the plot of the play in the movie, "en mirroir".

La mise en scène becomes monstrous the more that the story progresses: new rooms are added to the setting, new characters emerge incessantly; everything starts looking like a giant building from which a wall has been removed. But will it stay like this? Looking from the opposing sidewalk, Caden is revealed the existence, in reality, of the "fourth wall", made from the walls that delineate the "theatrical" residences from the outside

world. Therefore, the leading character will erect this wall, too, in his own mise en scène, so that the spectator should be physically separated from the characters he sees, similar to the voyeur lurking inside a house.

While the construction becomes outlined and augmented, Caden's personal life declines. Whereas in the beginning his wife, Adele, leaves him, taking away their daughter, Olive, towards the end, the meeting of Olive, on her deathbed, points out the perverted distance between the two characters, a distance also installed at the language level: Olive speaks German, and Caden English. The scene stands for the lies and compromises that people need to undertake during their life, the roles that they have to play and not those they deliberately choose.

Death, one of the central themes, is illustrated extremely graphically in this scene, by the drop of a petal from the tattoo on Olive's hand. Again, we are dealing with the mistake of representation for the reality, at the object level.

Nevertheless, such ambiguity – equal to the total virtual role assumption – is generated when character Ellen appears, the former wife's maid, whose place is taken by Caden in reality, as he goes each night to clean Adele's apartment. Since this is one of the aspects in his everyday life, the leading character-author feels he needs to include it in the script. Subsequently, he employs an Ellen whose place he will occupy in his own play.

The end of the movie is enlightening, in the sense of Shakespeare's phrase "All the world's a stage; And all the men and women merely players". Caden has the revelation of his own mise-en-scène when the actor-voyeur playing him and mistaking, in his turn, reality for fiction, choose suicide: "There are nearly 13 million people in the world. I mean, can you imagine that many people? And none of those people is an extra. They're all leads in their own stories. They have to be given their due."

Death, away from which characters run throughout the movie, gradually surfaces: Caden mistakes himself for Ellen, he forgets about his role of director; he start living in one of the "rooms" of the setting and no longer knows dying, unless directing indications are provided to him on how to do it. In fact, the hour of the beginning of the movie plot is identical with the hour of its end. Kaufman pictures a man's life, relating to human existence, in the form of a single "fictional" day, buried in the virtual theatricality.

In the end, *Synecdoche*, *New York* is perhaps the most complex example for the definition of the concept of everyday drama in the terms of role assumption. The simulacrum in the movie is the performed virtual.

Cinematographic drama is obviously subject to the virtual theatricality. We live in the age of simulation, when the old concept of "mimesis" attains new valences.

Case study: *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare, director Radu Alexandru Nica

Carrying on the discussion on virtual theatricality, one cannot disregard the fact that its presence in the contemporary theatre has started being marked along with the introduction in the language derived from the communication computer practice of the concept of "hyperdrama". Traditionally, the playwright operates a series of choices that result in the selection of the information we receive, in the focusing of attention on the main plot or characters. What we see on stage is, in the classic theatre, the narrative web destined to the situational and signification structure. We are not concerned with what happens outside the stage. In fact, when a great part of the key plot takes place outside the stage, we are disappointed and this failure of writing becomes a valid and traditional critique of the play. The aspects offered by the playwright in the traditional theatre pertain to his/ her personal choice: this private modelling of the material is communicated to us via the course of the plot we follow by sitting in the dark and receiving it passively.

Hyperdrama emerged along with the instant informational modification by technology of the everyday world, becoming Virtual Theatre, in its maximal forms, during the last decade. In the hyperdrama, the traditional storyline explodes in branches, multiplying the plot from a linear ordering of the scenes in simultaneous scenes that occur in a simultaneous area of representation, whether physically real or online. For the former alternative, the spectator's fixed chairs are displaced in order to make possible the audience's mobility and choice of the character's life they want to follow.

In actual fact, almost everybody has encountered hyperdrama in real life. Just picture the latest Christmas dinner with your family. Many people gather at home; there's commotion everywhere: food is prepared in the kitchen; television is being watched in the living room; elsewhere, relatives talk about their latest "adventures". Imagine that all these are actors reciting parts written by a playwright; all these activities take place simultaneously in the entire house and it may be observed either simultaneously or successively: this is hyperdrama in its candid format. At the heart of this amount of activities, place an audience that moves in pursuit of the plot, similar to invisible voyeurs. Virtual theatricality is thus an advanced form of the hyperdrama in the family apartment; the sole difference is that functions are reversed.

Romanian theatre following 2000 has undergone an invasion of performances in which video projections have been used, regardless of their value. The mere presence of an image projected on the screen does not generate the function of virtual theatricality; it does not do it even if the image illustrates real scenes, according to a documentary format. This function may be achieved in the theatre only if the image exceeds its primary meaning of "preservation" or "illustration" of the reality in the performance, becoming a component, doubly mediated, of the virtual exemplified. In other words, the use of video technology and production in the theatrical performance must go through an internal process of deconstruction and re-signification as related to the fictional universe of the stage world physically present (by the actor, the setting, etc.).

One such example is *Hamlet* at the National Theatre Radu Stanca, directed by Radu Alexandru Nica[11]. The video art products in this performance create and complete the image of a 2008 Hamlet. The director offers a version of Shakespeare's play from which he retains only the main characters, performing an efficient cut, placing Horatio, as alter ego, at the centre of the story, apart from Hamlet. Each state, emotion or situation is accompanied by the video depiction, which, slowly, performs functions of a hyper-dramatic dive in a dimension unlike the physically present one. At times, video collages have the role of phantasmal setting, not by doubling the setting as such, but by concurrently offering another dimension of perception (for instance, in the Ofelia-Hamlet scenes). At other times, the fragments projected play a silent character, who observes the physical plot from another dimension (such as in the opening and ending of the performance).

The perspective created owing to the stage construction is completed by the "ceiling" on which the majority of the images are projected. Upon the spectators' entrance in the auditorium, the two gravediggers look down on the room, from another world, as if they were looking into a grave. The circularity (arguably classicist) within which the performance is created will be revealed in the end, when the two gravediggers are joined by Horatio: a collective grave in which we are all buried, the characters of the well-known stories together with the audience.

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[11] The National Theatre Radu Stanca, season 2007-2008, *Hamlet*, an adaptation by Oana Stoica and Radu Alexandru Nica on W. Shakespeare. Director: Radu Alexandru Nica, Translation: Ion Vinea and Rareş Moldovan, Stage decoration: Dragoş Buhagiar. Choreography: Florin Fieroiu. Video: Daniel Gontz. Original music: Vlaicu Golcea. Fencing trainer: Peter Habala. Light Design: Dragoş Buhagiar & Radu Alexandru Nica. Cast: Ofelia Popii, Mariana Presecan, Codruţa Vasiu, Adrian Matioc, Adrian Neacşu, Cătălin Pătru, Vlad Robaş, Ciprian Scurtea, Pali Vecsei.

Ofelia is accompanied by floral projected arabesques that change their colours according to her feelings, while the scenes of psychoanalytical view are filmed and re-broadcast live on two TV sets placed on stage. In an essay-analysis in the periodical *Teatrul azi,* Miruna Runcan writes:

> "The dialogue between the classic setting, the "virtual setting" projected on the ceiling, also on the TV monitors –blending images filmed with actors, computerised animation and montage, at the level of reference, of the film "made patrimonial" (video concept by Daniel Gontz) constantly compels the spectator to make radical decisions relating to the value of the significations of the entire performance. (...) Paradoxically, even if we are suggested...some kind of rereading "from the depths of the grave" (echoing the Latin "de profundis clamavi"), *Hamlet* by Radu Alexandru Nica and his prodigious team does not focus, thematically, on death, as we have been informed on Vlad Mugur's stage version (no clue whether this latter affirmation is accurate or not). This is the mere vehicle; and this despite the fact that such a montage communicates – unaffectedly – semi-polemically with the famous staging at the TNC, as well as with others. For instance, with Cernescu's, in 1974, which Nica couldn't have seen, but on which many notes have been made; Horatio's position had been reoriented there, too; a friendly, manipulating Horatio, and vaguely a scout of Fortimbras, agreeing with the political reading of his master; (there was) even a Horatio who would use, during those tense times, the live microphone, particularly in order to act out... the ghost. Or, this time drastically marked as citation, communicating with Laurence Olivier's screening, which is projected (in an intellectual montage, as the Americans would call it) on the TV monitors as well as on the ceiling of the auditorium, in order to intensify the intra-cultural tension of the conscience/ consciousness dialogue between Hamlet and Horatio"[12]

Then, isn't this one of the most important signals of everyday theatricality and, therefore, owing to the means of performance, of virtual theatricality? The multidimensional mix of the widths of the spectator's perception and interpretation, simultaneously with the paradigm of thematic construction, at the directing level (the contemporary young man's personality, divided by the multitude of roles assumed, either in the "real" universe or in the "cultural" one), provides one of the most coherent and homogeneous suggestions of Shakespearian rereading of the last decade of Romanian theatre.

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[12] Miruna Runcan, "Horatio-Hamlet. Scrisoare din pântecu mauzoleului" (Horatio-Hamlet, Letter from the womb of the mausoleum), *Teatrul azi*, no.5-2008

Furthermore, the director finds a solution-tribute for the creation of the ghost of Hamlet's father, again in the form of the video reconstruction, by using the image of late actor Virgil Flonda. In an interview, Radu Alexandru Nica states[13]: "Initially, we wanted to exploit this idea all the way, to use a hologram. It would have been utterly shocking to have him appear in normal size, move, speak; however, apart from the fact this would have been extremely expensive, it would have also meant a more intense effort and we no longer had time. But it would have been worth the trouble."

Figure 3 Hamlet – directed by Radu Alexandru Nica – National Theatre Radu Stanca, Sibiu

Such a performance, in which the image becomes video-art integrated in a multi-layered concept of stage construction and reception, may carry forward the modalities of successful use of the electronic image, so that they should hold a clearly cut role, a function of stage universe simultaneous with the one of the "performance". As a matter of fact, the director Radu Alexandru Nica has developed into a specialist of this type of theatricality, using it not only in *Hamlet*, but also in *Breaking the Waves* or in other performances in Sibiu.

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[13] http://www.cotidianul.ro/radu_nica_ntotdeauna_am_nevoie_de_ofelia_ca_sa_am_cu_cine_sa_ma_cert-53707.html, interview with the director Radu Alexandru Nica, by Gabriela Lupu

Case study: Motivational appraisal *A.K.A.*

Contemporary dramaturgy aligns and adapt, in its turn, to the times from which it is born. Therefore, writing typologies may (and perhaps *must*) build themselves in progress, using virtual theatricality as an element. With respect to this, the construction of the text *A.K.A*[14] in the summer of 2008 could constitute both a reason of autoscopy and one of explanation at the level of the motivations, intent and of the personal dramaturgic trial.

The new society is not born clean, but in the form of some tumbleweed of contradictions, strains and conflicts. Alvin Toffler wrote in 1973: "By blindly stepping up the rate of change, the level of novelty, and the extent of choice, we are thoughtlessly tampering with these environmental preconditions of rationality. We are condemning countless millions to future shock".[15] The explanation of such shock is simple: in the current society a being undergoes, throughout his/her life, several major changes, with an impact on civilisation. "Future shock" is a type of cultural shock (see the last 20 years in Romania), until recently undergone only by the tourist travelling from one country to another. Now, we can feel this shock by staying in one place, by observing generation conflicts that occur every day, by reading at the surface or in depth the gap between the personal, political, official discourses or those pertaining to the various social categories.

Irrespective of where we live, we can all see clearly that we live in a multicoloured world. Quantity tends to substitute quality. The same category of "efficient" consumption is represented by cable TV or audio-books. An exemplary place where one can safely enjoy the "world simulacrum" is the Mall, its protected playgrounds or amusement parks, which, similar to a conveying belt, compels the consumer to see very many things in very little time. With respect to religion, the sermon may be watched on TV, and even the Pope's benediction is broadcast live. How rational is a culture whose sole ambition is of being efficiently exported, with no wonder on the manner of naturally adjusting its inherent contradictions? How national is a culture that allows its exclusive colonisation without protecting its own specificity?

Considering the premise that art is made to quench human needs, one may say that the new global film industry has adapted flawlessly to such requirements. Why wouldn't dramaturgy do it? Writing plays nowadays will allow contamination, deliberately, on two directions: that of everyday

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[14] The text *A.K.A* will be an integral part of this doctoral thesis, same as my other texts to be referred to herein. They will be rendered in annexes.

[15] Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock*, Editura Politică, Bucharest, 1973, p.353

theatricality and that of the dynamics of cinematographic writing-reception. *A.K.A.* focuses on such a cinematic structure, not including any longer the passages from one scene to another existing in the traditional writing; scenes are made from a minimal text, which outlines intentionality and creates the situation.

In the research carried out during recent years, focusing on the *Generation of X-Men and Women*, we have closely examined a phenomenon specific to cultural consumption by people aged not more than 20: substitution of the written culture by the one of comic strips.

A mass-phenomenon in Jams, comic strips have rapidly conquered America, the land of cultural loans, which, in fact, customized them by the first series of *Hulk*, followed by the super-heroes *Captain America, Superman, Batman, Spiderman,* etc. In its turn, Europe borrowed this cultural form, but with no essential modifications. The Japanese graphic technique has been retained by the French, for instance. The Manga phenomenon has gradually conquered the World and the anime replaced Walt Disney. There isn't, not even in Romania, a young man between 9 and 18 years old, who does not know the specific traits of Manga characters: wide, extremely suggestive eyes, minimal face features, little text, identical bodies. Manga includes several types: addressing the 6 year olds, then those classified on categories: teenage boys, teenage girls, young women, young men, adults up to 30 years old, adults 30+, XXX product-consumers, etc.; each one has a different name and a different specific colouring.

Thus, blending the mange style, the playback speed, the cinematic image, the cultural cliché, as well as the re-mystification or de-mystification typical of postmodernism, the play *A.K.A.* provides another type of stage construction and language. The main focus of the text is on the creation by the young generation of an avatar that should be constructed along the pattern of all the traits everyone would like to have. In *A.K.A* everything takes place in the main character's mind, since we are dealing with an avatar created by the heroine (an obvious element, conceived following the observations relating to the identity loans increasingly carried out by the youth nowadays):

"**Cristina: And then it happened**. I went out of the kitchen and threw a shuriken at her. Alas, I only got her hand. You see, I wasn't yet skilled enough. She started screaming, so I had no choice. Clotilde's home was near ours and she could have heard it. I ran towards her: Grandma, grandma, forgive me"[16].

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[16] A.K.A, episode 2, Grandma

In a world of speed, invaded by media, the identity loan has become more than real. Every day, people across the world assume traits they don't have in the desperate attempt of communicating, even if dealing with virtual communication, carried out via Internet. Cristina Muller is one such individual: she borrows a fake, imaginary identity, thus removing any obstacle on her way. She kills by turn her cat, grandmother, girlfriend, boyfriend, father, following the already established code (grown into a global cultural stereotype) on the global market of Japanese cartoons, manga.

Since fairytales have been replaced by manga, books have been replaced by comic strips, and the classic Disney productions by Naruto and Final Fantasy. Written in Tarantino's brutal and hyper-clichéd style, the text uses a fragmentary aesthetics, including numerous plot turns, crosses from the real to the imaginary, at an insane pace and – hopefully – a humorous one, aiming at deconstructing in plain view the contemporary teenager's divided personality. Stage directions are that part of virtual theatricality that the main character builds: *"scenes from Sailor-Moon roll on the screen while They appear – three actresses dressed in cheerleader uniforms"*. There is an unbiased rapport between the plot of the play and the animation projections. There are whole scenes ending on the projection or beginning with the video image in order to illustrate: characters who exit or enter the screen, who are doubled by manga images

An integral part of the globalised society, virtual theatricality can be provided with an artistic function, both in the theatre and in the cinema, as screenplay structure, as writing technique of montage, as video image turned into a character, parallel and simultaneous dimension, or as mere... fictional role assumption, mediated by (and under protection of) an interface.

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RICHARD II:
ON A VERY BRIEF SPECTATOR'S DISSERTATION

GELU ADRIAN BADEA

ABSTRACT. The paper will try to follow the critical and journalistic response to 1967 performance with Richard II, staged by the famous Romanian director Radu Penciulescu, and to compare the reactions of the time with the actual memories in Penciulescu's recent interviews.

Keywords: Theatre, aesthetics, Shakespeare, the 60s, Radu Penciulescu
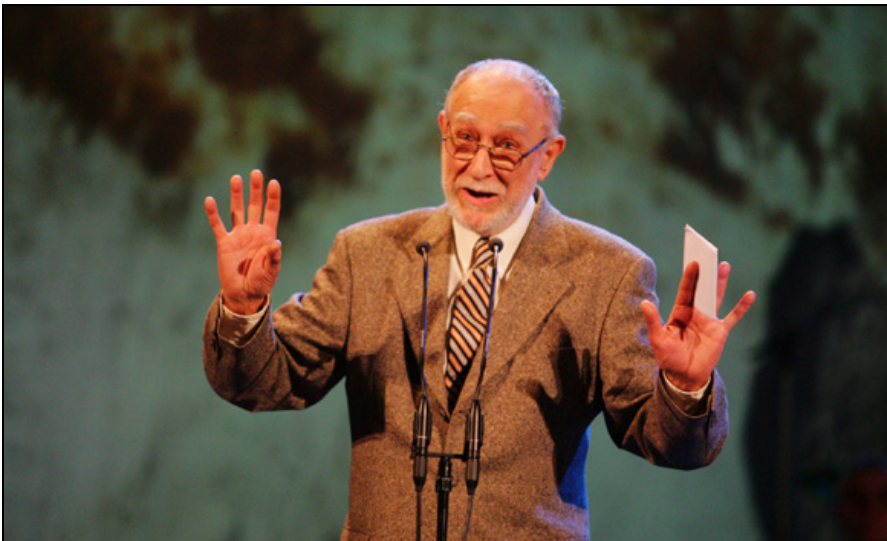
During the 1966-1967 theatre season, Radu Penciulescu orchestrates a play based on Shakespeare's well-known tragedy: *Richard II*. Although known, Shakespeare's astounding play was ignored by the theatre producers in Romania up to not being produced at all during the history of performances in our country. Even if Radu Penciulescu stays faithful to his schedule, namely not having a schedule, the production of *Richard II* fits in the Teatru Mic manager's consuming attempt of putting on stage texts that hadn't been played in Romania.

From the interview made with the play's director (Bucharest, November 2009), we found out that the attraction to this text, although circumstantial at first view[1], is based, similarly to other productions[2], on the director's wish to provide to the audience plays that, in his opinion, may compete against others, too often staged, even eroded by the multitude of representations.[3] The first performance of *Richard II* is on October 5, 1966 and the leading role is played by Victor Rebengiuc, an actor who will become an authentic fetish in a series of Radu Penciulescu's productions. The casting is completed by several important actors of the Romanian theatre: Ion Marinescu, Dinu Ianculescu, Olga Tudorache, Ionecu-Gion, Titus Lapteş, Constantin Codrescu, Vasile Niţulescu, Elena Pop. The entire Teatru Mic company will join them in an intrepid attempt of revealing to the audience a cruel and reckless society. The set is made by Tony Gheorghiu and Traian Niţescu, and the costumes by Dan Nemţeanu. The audience's response matches the performance!

In a review ("Teatrul Mic. Spectacole lectură. Richard II", *Scânteia tineretului*, January 20, 1967), George Banu looks coherently and gallantly inside Radu Penciulescu's directorship. Banu retrieves succinctly the dominant image of the play area: a ramp, unquestionably describing the Elizabethan scene. As a matter of fact, the photographs taken of the performance confirm what George Banu named, along with the small number of objects (determining, however, in an ideal manner the progress of the scenes) *a universe.* George Banu notes, and we believe others did, too, the nearing, by "the characters' learned grouping, as well as many movement solutions", to the sublime world of miniatures. When considering the "concrete nature of the stage image", Banu does focus on the presence of food and beverage as "raw elements of reality", and not as a return to naturalism. Concerning the text of the play, George Banu directs us clearly to an interpretation of the performance produced at Teatrul Mic: Penciulescu dealt with the text in the terms of "a contemplation of politics, of history". Banu goes on saying that,

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[1] The finding of sketches for a set made for a performance of the play *Richard II*, of Tony Gheorghiu's, Radu Penciulescu's old-time collaborator

[2] *Baltagul (The Hatchet)*, a play that was first performed on March 24, 1968, staging of the novel of the same title, by Mihail Sadoveanu, produced by Radu Penciulescu.

[3] In the interview in November 2009, Radu Penciulescu says that the Romanian theatre is dependent on Caragiale, whereas important works are ignored, *Baltagul* representing an attempt of proving that this Romanian odyssey embraces undiscovered dramatic virtues. We believe that the staging of *Richard II* is Radu Penciulescu's bow to a text cancelled by the attention paid to the other Richard: *Richard III*.

once approached in this manner, the directorship blurs, by its mediation in at the level of the ideas, the individual's importance in favour of a general level. The reviewer's representations are carried on and focus on the actors' performance, which was one lacking passion and "totally austere"; at the same time, he notes Olga Tudorache's separation from the style of performance; the actress, by the passionate conflicts in her scenes, overcame the Brechtian mark of performance, settled throughout the play by the entire cast. "Here, the spectators cannot get lost in a world of flesh and blood, but history is explained to them" is, perhaps, George Banu's biggest disapproval of the play's directorship, concluding that the performance calls for the spectator's reason and consideration. Isn't this the purpose of such a play?[4]

Nicolae Carandino provides us with astounding news: Penciulescu had retained Shakespeare's text in its entirety ("Richard II by W. Shakespeare", *Steaua*, issue 1, 1967). Carandino's review considers the influences of the plays we were mentioning in the context of the changes that were occurring in the Romanian theatre during the time of the foundation of Teatrul Mic[5]; moreover, he states it explicitly: "... he understood, as a man of culture and as a real man of theatre, the extent to which modern English directorship assists, by economy of means, by moderation, by strategic drive, the text animated by the actor and the text only." We cannot ignore the fact that Nicolae Carandino ranges Radu Penciulescu in the same line with Peter Brook[6] in his attempts of renewing the poor but specific theatre directing means, marking a further step toward defining the art of directorship as an exact science. Assuredly, Carandino's evaluations credit Radu Penciulescu: at the time Nicolae Carandino was writing the above, Radu Penciulescu was not RADU PENCIULESCU.

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[4] In my conversations with Radu Penciulescu, in November 2009, he was noting, as a symptom almost generalised in the Romanian theatre, **the desire of modernising at any cost** certain classical texts. Unsatisfied with such a fact, Radu Penciulescu was stating that a production of a classical text cannot be justified as long as one does not aim at presenting the classical atmosphere so that our contemporary audience grasp some meaning of the times described by the text. However, it remains true that one needs to identify the means of our time to render possible this fact.

[5] The year 1964, when the establishment of Teatrul Mic was carried out, was one of maximum opportunity for the Romanian theatre: during this year, in Bucharest, the meeting of the *International Theatre Institute* is carried out, focusing on the role of improvisation in the actor's training, as well as the tours of *MHAT* and of *Berliner Ensembler* in Romania, and the *World Theatre Day* is celebrated festively throughout the country.

[6] Royal Shakespeare had been on tour in Romania 1964 with the play *King Lear*.

We must now mention the fact that, in the impressive hall programme, Radu Penciulescu writes a concise but revealing article[7]. This article does not make an apology; it does not explain, it does not elucidate. It provides the steps to follow in the beautiful custom of watching a theatrical performance. Penciulescu's comments fill the two centre pages and include the most direct attack against the attempts of establishing modalities of staging a classical text: "... I **defy** anyone who thinks they are the universal devisee of the great classical legacy."[8] As if anticipating the challenges that may have emerged, Radu Penciulescu is the first one to throw down the gauntlet, thus putting together an authentic matrix for the decoding of his play. He goes on: "... I am concerned with a fairly concrete fact, the one relating to the means of interpretation by which we ease the communication between the great classical playwright, between the great classical work and the spectator of our time". We may conclude that the director does not want to carry out an theoretical act, but rather he wants to mark a further step toward accomplishing the targets stated at the establishment of Teatrul Mic, namely toward providing to the audience, as well as to the actors, *the possibility of communicating via specific theatrical means*. We may say that the audience joins the carrousel of communication through the theatrical means while we are sure that if the former (the audience!) were missing, we could no longer talk about a theatrical performance.

In what follows, Penciulescu makes a real demonstration of theatrical pedagogy in the training of theatrical directors: he compares the two epochs, the one described in Shakespeare's play and the one during which the play is produced; he identifies the differences between these two epochs and the potential similarities, the analogies between them. He will conclude: "Therefore, for a performance with a classical play agreeing with the contemporary spirit, differences are index points to the same extent as the analogies." Consequently: we cannot retain from the classical text only the elements that unite the two epochs and ignore those that separate them. Looking back, I must confess the sin of having acted in such a manner very many times!

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[7] *Cum montăm clasicii? (Să ne amintim unele lucruri ştiute) [How Do We Put on Stage the Classics? (Recalling several things we know)]*

[8] These words seem to confirm the manner in which Radu Penciulescu defends Valeriu Moisescu, in an article published in *Scânteia,* September 25, 1965*,* when he puts on stage at Teatrul Mic a controversial performance with E. Ionesco's *Bald Soprano* et I.L. Caragiale's *Five Sketches*.

The issue further tackled will focus on the modality in which we may *activate* the spectator for his/ her participation as connected as possible in the theatrical act presented, i.e. the manner in which the analogies, **or differences**, that we observe between the time when the play was written and the time when it is presented, may transform an individual in a present, active spectator, fully involved the performance, up to a complete participation, *bearing the feeling of contemporaneousness.* With reference to the manner in which one could retrieve, nowadays, the tragic emotion of Antigone's sacrifice, Penciulescu says this is possible only by "connecting in the performance the human constancies of the text to **your** contemporaneousness, on which **your** spectator's system of aesthetic representations feeds, to whom you are addressing **today**."

With reference, again, to the spectator's involvement in the theatrical act, the director talks about the **efficacy** of the scenes, the efficacy of a moment, in a play. He compares the manner of creating the scenes at different times, starting with Shakespeare's time, when words were carrying great value through themselves, and up to the Romantic age, when the same words were accompanied by grandiloquent actions that emphasised the value of word meanings. Concerning these two manner of *rendering efficient a scene*, Radu Penciulescu concludes that, irrespective of the time of producing a scene, "the moment was efficient because the performance was subordinate to the corresponding contemporaneousness" and that those analogies must be identified through which "the moment may extend its reverberation by interfering with the active universe of representations of our spectator". Thus, the main means through we may acquire the efficacy of a certain moment or of a performance in its entirety is the evading from theatricality and the identification of the most human connections between the characters, considering the nowadays spectator's life experience (memory, affectivity, representations).

No word on the metaphor or on the theatrical image. No word on an intellectual *dramatisation* or *re-dramatisation* that may save the theatre on its path to where we are not aware it is going. What we know for sure is the fact that the only constant element in the production of the theatre performance is the actor. We say that the actor is the axis around which the performance is built; however, the other elements constructing it cannot be ignored. The costumes, the setting, the lighting, the acoustic space, the props

become *auxiliary elements* to the definition, in front of the audience, of the flow of ideas contained by the dramatic work, of its implications through words. Many times, the performances include ideas unachieved in anything, not even in their corresponding director's view; moreover, the ideas contained by the dramatic work are totally ignored, in order to make room to other, *modern and stirring, new and innovative* ideas. These, however, result from the logic approach of ideas of the writing, from a logic reception approach from the spectator. Thus, we are in front of *an original performance*, through which the director meant something, but it was not understood by the actors; they are unprepared, they lack the means of expression and they lack theatrical intelligence. I have met, once, a director who had made his licence performance with a text by E. Ionesco. When I was asked about what I had thought of the performance, I answered that the author's logic of had not matched the logic of the performance I had just seen. The director went on saying that his idea, at least, was interesting. My reply was rather sharp, it was even thrown back at me later on; I went on saying that the ideas do not act on the stage; there are the actors on the stage and they had not managed at all to communicate the idea our younger colleague had been evoking. I will stop parenthesising on the manner to produce a theatrical performance. We have all been at the beginning of the road, at some point, and we assumed that everything we were thinking is implicitly understood on the stage, and, if it was not understood, we cannot be blamed for it.

I remember Radu Penciulescu's words; during the rehearsals for *The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*[9], incidentally, on a break, he was telling me that the basic principle in a director's pedagogy is that he/ she understands that: **what can be seen is what can be seen and not what it means**; that, in order to mean *something*, *something else* must be added to the approach, sometimes even more than what we can imagine.

The astounding conclusion that the main strength of the performance arises from the work of the directorship with the actors makes hay, now, the same as at that time, of an entire series of directors and their disciples.

Now then!

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[9] Radu Penciulescu put on stage this performance at the National Theatre in Bucharest in November 2009, with the premiere on December 3, 2009. The leading character was played by Victor Rebengiuc.

I must mention that the article written by Radu Penciulescu in the hall presentation of the play *Richard II* is a very brief spectator's dissertation, a research instrument available to the audience, by which they may learn at least the manner of watching a play, and even of receiving and understanding it. Relating the possibility of receiving emotion, under any form, we could add, to the associations in the performance of the human constancies of the text to the director's contemporaneousness, on which the corresponding nowadays spectator's system of aesthetic representations feeds, Radu Penciulescu merely encourages the audience toward a contemplation on the times he/ she is living, toward an exploration of the realities of the performance through the realities of the times transits. This means a potential attempt of carrying out analogies or differentiations between the realities of the play (if and then it is read) and the realities of the performance, therefore, of the contemporaneousness undergone by the spectator. Radu Penciulescu encourages the spectator, imperatively, toward his/ her privileged position of partner of the theatrical performance, specifying clearly the right to reject tailor-made products, rooted in an "intrinsic purpose – director's view"[10]. I wonder what would happen if the spectator came to the performance after he/ she had read the play? How would we manage to make him / her watch the performance as long as he / she knows at first hand the progress of the play?

The spectator's participation in the theatrical act will also rule over the above-mentioned **efficacy** of the scenes. The next step, available to the audience, is, in the brief spectator's dissertation drafted by Radu Penciulescu, moving forward the modalities of *rending efficient a scene* to the level of permanent requirement from the spectator, a requirements spanning throughout the performance. The analogies and the differences, the human constancies between the period when the play was written and the one when it is performed, which retrieve their echo in the identification of the most humane relationships between the characters, permanently returning to the spectator's life nowadays, will turn the requirement of efficacy into an element of stimulation for the production of the performances.

This lesson does not end here. It is ongoing to the present time.

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ISSUES IN THE RECEPTION OF JON FOSSE'S PLAYS

DARIA IOAN

ABSTRACT. The type of plays written by Jon Fosse seems awash with the post-dramatic creations transiting the cultural European contemporaneousness: lingering, idleness, speech fragmentation, linguistic minimalism, all in specific proportion and various occurrences, participating together in the making of a singular, astoundingly current dramatic universe. Of course, its reception depends, in different countries, of what we may call a constructed national identity, along with its stereotypes. Given our condition of theatre consumer audience, we are often influenced by an irrational belief in the images of what is typical for a national character, even if we are aware of their excessively simplifying and sometimes provoking nature. National stereotypes may form more or less constant elements of the cultural legacy present in the reference system of our daily communication. Such stereotypes and commonplaces have been the subject of endless research on the "national characters", their conclusions leading to the assertion of the fact that *images* have an obvious impact on intercultural relationships and on the reception of foreign literature. Thus, for a reliable overall picture of the reception of Jon Fosse's dramatic work, we believe that a comparative study of its feedback in different countries is very important, focusing on different stages of social-economic and cultural development, or merely different culturally. Undoubtedly, we will confront the issue of the increasingly fast circulation of cultural goods, generating perceptive levelling and, why not, globalisation of the catharsis achieving mechanisms in the Western-European influenced theatrical sphere

Keywords: Jon Fosse, audience, translation, critical response

The phenomenon of the mostly positive reception of Jon Fosse seems today in obvious contradiction with the theatrical intents founding his international career. Primarily a prose and poetry writer, Fosse constantly doubts his playwright status. The Norwegian director Kai Johnsen encourages him to write *Og aldri skal vi skiljast* (*And Never We'll Be Parted*) and thus, the premiere of the first staging of one of his texts is carried out at Den Nationale Scene in Bergen, Norway, in 1994. Since then, he's been enjoying unprecedented and ever-increasing popularity, particularly

in France, Germany, Portugal, Belgium, the Netherlands, Hungary and Lithuania. Until now, he has written more than 25 plays, all premiered in the majority of the European countries. We add to this 30 prose, lyrics and essay volumes. In the year 2000, the Ministry of Culture from Norway awarded him a lifetime grant.

Published in our country, too, in the translation by Carmen Vioreanu, several plays written by Jon Fosse rapidly gather their audience: *Someone Is Going to Come*, *The Girl on the Sofa*, *Autumn Dream, Sleep* (all printed by Unitext Publishing House in 2003 and *Beautiful* (printed by Vremea Publishing House, in 2008). The productions of these texts are, however, very few, at least for now; several plays haven't been put on stage; their contact with the stage is almost tangential, lacking the privilege of scenography and costumes, in the form of reading-performance: *Someone Is Going to Come* (reading performance, Teatrul Act, 2003), *The Girl on the Sofa* (reading performance, Teatrul Act, 2003). Nevertheless, two plays are materialised in complex director's creation: *Autumn Dream* (performance created at the Classical Theatre "Ion Slavici" in Arad, 2007), directed by Radu Afrim and *Beautiful* (performance created at the Theatre "Toma Caragiu" in Ploieşti, 2008), directed by Vlad Massaci.

The type of plays written by Jon Fosse seems awash with the post-dramatic creations transiting the cultural European contemporaneousness: lingering, idleness, speech fragmentation, linguistic minimalism, all in specific proportion and various occurrences, participating together in the making of a singular, astoundingly current dramatic universe. Of course, its reception depends, in different countries, of what we may call a constructed national identity, along with its stereotypes. Given our condition of theatre consumer audience, we are often influenced by an irrational belief in the images of what is typical for a national character, even if we are aware of their excessively simplifying and sometimes provoking nature. National stereotypes may form more or less constant elements of the cultural legacy present in the reference system of our daily communication. Such stereotypes and commonplaces have been the subject of endless research on the "national characters", their conclusions leading to the assertion of the fact that *images* have an obvious impact on intercultural relationships and on the reception of foreign literature. Thus, for a reliable overall picture of the reception of Jon Fosse's dramatic work, we believe that a comparative study of its feedback in different countries is very important, focusing on different stages of social-economic and cultural development, or merely different culturally. Undoubtedly, we will confront the issue of the increasingly fast circulation of cultural goods, generating perceptive levelling and, why not, globalisation of the catharsis achieving

mechanisms in the Western-European influenced theatrical sphere. This study may be structured depending on the contemporary approaches of Jon Fosse's texts and of the contextual layers (indicating cultural values and identities) or on issues of revealing mutual perceptions of self-images and of hetero-images (images of the other).

The disintegration to otherness is an unavoidable element of our contemporary world; in the field of the theatrical creation, it has reached the level of artistic exercise, an exercise of the *cultural detour.* Thus, our study will examine global cultural currents in the terms of significant experiences of regionalism, nationality, interculturalism and transculturalism, attempting an intromission in their development processes. The notion of nationality bears, undoubtedly, a signification in the reception of this successful contemporary author and raises issues of translatability, as well as of intelligibility, where there is no need of translating his texts in languages radically different from Norwegian, as the situation is in our country. However, in support of a reception as close as possible to the Fosse's intents in his texts, his publisher, Berit Gulberg, tries to provide to all translators, irrespective of their nationality, the access to the original works and not to their already existing translations that would greatly influence the structure of the plays.

In this article, we will focus particularly on the countries where Fosse was wanted on the stage at the beginning of his playwright career. Following his debut on the Norwegian stage in 1994, there came the staging, in 1995, of the play *Namnet* (*The Name*), again at Den Nationale Scenen in Bergen, and again directed by Kai Johnsen, who insists with supporting this author's plays. Next comes *Someone Is Going to Come*, at Det Norske Teatret in Oslo, in 1996, and the debut of this play in Denmark (Caféteatret, Copenhagen), Sweden (Teater Cinnober, Goteborg) and France (at Radio France) in 1998, close to the premiere at Theâtre Nanterre Amandiers, in the Paris Autumn Festival (1999). During the same year, Thomas Ostermeier, the new manager of the theatre Schaubühne in Berlin, announces a new realism that, at the end of the 1990s, will match a waning audience, and Fosse fits perfectly in his concept. In 2000, Ostermeier already presents the German version of the play *The Name* (*Der Name*) during the Festival Salzburger Theaterfestspiele. Fosse's playwriting was broadly discussed in the media, both in Norway and in Germany. In both countries, the plays were discussed as a turning point in the contemporary theatre, but also as a longed-for change of repertoire in the theatrical institutions. "My works have always polarised critics; some

like them a lot, other hate them»[1], Jon Fosse was noticing in 2002 (Oberender 2002: 135). In our study, we attempt following several of the reception documents, in order to be able to render an image of the expectations and hierarchies that dominate the orientation of the contemporary theatre.

Peter Szondi was noting the birth of the static drama at the end of the 20th century, the opening of the intra-dimension resulting from the disintegration of the inter-human elements, the dissolution of the action that retreats progressively from the sphere of causality (Szondi 2006: 69-70). Gilles Deleuze focuses on a similar phenomenon in cinematography: *the movement-image* makes room for the *time-image*, i.e. a mute view of the world, with the action substituted by *pure* images, which signify only by themselves, the same as the language that signifies prior to the words (Deleuze 1985). However, despite these mutations, the theatre is still maintained in the sphere of the intelligible defined by the classical concepts.

In his book *Postdramatisches Theater*, Lehmann describes the *dramatic theatre* as a dominant tradition in the theatrical institutions in Germany, even today. All forms, no matter how different, included by him in his notion of *dramatic theatre* share a trait: the various means of accomplishment are subordinated to the text dominance. With reference to the criteria that orient the reception of the theatre at the end of the 1990s, the German critic says that they are primarily: "an intelligible fable, a content with meaning" (Lehmann 2005: 16-17). Lehmann is joined by Hans-Peter Bayerdörfer, who states that the Aristotelian favouring of the dramatic text as compared to the representation – "opsis" – is the basis of a powerful and *still active* normative corpus that places the theatre in a plan secondary to the leading literary under-layer (Bayerdörfer 2005: 74). For Etienne Souriau, in 1950, the action is an element of the dramatic situation, passing necessarily through all the elements of the drama (Souriau 1950). However, Lehmann focuses on the period between the 1970s and the 1990s, during which the dramatic theatre, founded on action, still exists. The action actuators and the characters on the stage will build a dramatic illusion. Categories such as "the creation of illusion", "the representation of reality" and "unity" are founding quality principles inside the dramatic paradigm. The emergence of a post-dramatic theatre doesn't yet influence acutely the expectations chart in the sphere of theatre reception nowadays. Concerning the programme of the theatrical institutions in Norway, Hallfrid Velure provides us with the image of a slightly

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[1] All fragments quoted have been translated in Romanian by the author.

variable aesthetics fairly resembling the leading reception scope in Germany, outlined by Lehmann: a dramatic text as a premise for the stage art, the spoken word as the most important element in the representation, the stage art perceived as stage representation of the text, the text representing the contents, and the stage artists dealing with the aesthetic form, a shared dramatic and literary genre canon in the selection of the texts by European institutions, the subordination of all the elements of the stage art by the text. Velure writes that more than 80 % of the repertoire of the 5 greatest theatrical institutions in Norway are plays in which the dramatic text is the premise of the stage art. In the cultural message, innovation also pertains greatly to a theatre centred on the text, in which artistic renewal and variety are included in the dramatic work (Velure 2007).

Suzanne Bordemann, researcher on Jon Fosse's theatre reception in Scandinavia and in German-speaking countries, connects this author to the principles outlined by Lehmann, both with respect to exceeding the dramatic theatre, which has lost its productive strength, and with respect to the correlation with the traits of the new type of theatre, called *post-dramatic* by the theatre critic and which, despite is heterogeneity, possesses a common basic trait for all of its occurrences: the dramatic text no longer dominates, but becomes equally important or subordinated to the other theatrical means of production (Bordemann 2008).

What is the situation of Fosse's dramatic art when reported to the transformations specified by Lehmann? This author's plays are, undoubtedly, based on the text; the performance orbits the word, but, simultaneously, they pound many of the critics' normative expectations. Certainly, this is not a post-dramatic release of the theatrical space or an abrogation of the traditional hierarchy of theatrical means. In many critics' opinion, Fosse's dramatic texts oppose the power position of psychological realism in the theatrical institutions and approach primarily the theatre in its dialogue space quality. But this extension beyond the conventional scope of expectations instates a series of questions concerning the new substitution of the recognisable elements by new ones, still difficult to systematise. Hadle Oftedal Andersen writes that Fosse's dramatic art needs explanations, in the absence of which it stays incomprehensible and difficult to approach (*Morgenbladet*, 14.1.2005). Asbjørn Aarseth, attempting a description of Fosse's dramatic strategy in the play *Namnet* (*The Name*), states that it "brings up-to-date the question of how a dramatic art should be. It is a work based on a great deal of triviality and on redundant dialogue, where we may say that the possibility

of communicating the meaning resides in the pause intervals, however without great facilitation of understanding what such pauses mean" (Aarseth 1998). This is made of realistic, naturalistic and absurd elements, which bring it close to acknowledged models of theatrical communication, but at the same time separates from them. By their upset, unstable plot, by the barely outlined identity figures, the tendency of dissolving language significations and their inconstant temporal chart, Fosse's plays breach conventional expectations, entail an opening in the semantic sphere and a linguistic stylisation, travelling between the spoken representation and the presentation. Text theatricality is the central element; the replies are used mainly as rhythmic material and less as meaningful structure. Materiality acquires a possibility of evoking a reaction or an effect. Lars Sætre writes that Fosse "manages to create a *performing materiality*" (Sætre 2004: 269).

According to a tradition instituted in the field of reception, many critics tend to claim a positive theatrical experience when contacting Fosse, which operates a closure of the possibility for the emergence of an authentic experience, Bordemann considers. Often, interpretation clichés miss the actual value of Fosse's texts.

Articulated by the very author of this new type of theatre, the stake of these plays relates rather to an act of epiphany, to the magical moment when, at the theatre, an angel crosses the stage, modifying the witnesses' life. The mutating power of such maximum intensity moments has nothing to do with a message that the text may convey; not even with a potential meaning that may arise following a psychological interpretation rooted in the art of convention.

The Swedish critic Leif Zern expresses the paradox of the effect created by Fosse's plays and the wonder of traditional thinking by the title of his book focusing on this author's study: *Det Lysande Mørket* (*The Shining Darkness*). "Fosse dares to follow his own paths", writes Zern (2005), and states that unconditional opening is necessary in order to access the aesthetic experience that his play may provide.

The reception scope of this dramatic author is broad and contains even extreme tendencies, many of them negative; we may say that he perplexes the mechanisms of criticism; he destabilises it.

For instance, Wenche Larsen claims that Fosse repeats clichés of the representation of a masculine loner and of the woman as object of his desires. At the other pole of this reception, we can see many of the materials gathered by Kirsti Mathilde Thorheim for the project of the "Jon Fosse"

institute: the Norwegian director Kai Johnsen insists, in an interview, on the amazing language renewal generated by Fosse in the modern theatre: "He writes a type of traditional theatre that leaves room, at the same time, for other savours, too" (Thorheim 2008: 140). Sarah Cameron Sunde, in her turn, states, with respect to *Deathvariations* (*Dødsvariasjonar*), that the depressing aspect that can be read at the exterior cannot dominate the perception and that Fosse communicates to us, at a philosophical level, that we *can* find our peace once we become aware that two individuals cannot actually ever be together (Thorheim 2008: 148).

Following a conversation with Jon Fosse, Ruth Kreftig Engers concludes that "Jon Fosse's theatre is characterised by the presence of the common human destiny in the context of ordinary, daily and poetic occurrences that we easily recognise" (Aftenposten, 30.8.1999). The critic wonders whether this is the reason why this reserved author's plays have managed to revive the theatre sphere and what the tendencies are, upon making contact with Fosse, which determine the gathering of an increasingly dense audience. In Krefting Engers's hierarchic evaluation, which we may deem representative for a great part of reception documentation in Norway, there are criteria such as *availability*, *recognition* or *familiarity*, *truth* and, particularly, *the poetic use of language*. Fosse's international success is another central criterion. Even from the beginning, his theatre has enjoyed a mainly positive reception in his home country, but at the same time the artificial language in which the author writes has been criticised frequently. Fosse opposes to the translation on the stage of this artificial language in dialects, and this is perceived as a novice's mistake, Suzanne Bordemann considers (Bordemann 2008), and Hans Rossiné writes that Fosse does not yet hold the reins of the dramatic form, considering that in his first dramatic text he seems a novelist rather than a playwright (*Dagbladet*, 27.2.1994).

Eilif Straume, in his turn, challenges the originality of Fosse's dramatic art, as follows:

> Getting out was as if life was given back to you. The extreme one hour and 20 minutes boredom was definitely an additional ramification, because it represented an expression of certain parts of the Norwegian reality, the idleness and the indistinct, the tired and incapable spirit that is not the author's invention, but was the cause of a soul parting in Norwegian towns and maybe even in the cities, greater than violence and drinking (*Aftenposten*, 29.05.1995).

The negative reception of Fosse's plays echoes the scope of expectations that Lehmann was outlining in the beginning: the intelligible fable, a significant context, cultural self-determination and captivating dramatic feelings. An eloquent example for an almost automatically contextual approach of the dramatic texts is provided by the director Terje Mærli, who describes a turning point during the rehearsals for the production of the play *Dødsvariasjonar* in 2001 at Nationaltheatret. During these, the director, together with the actors, built secondary stories in order to fill the play with substance:

> In a way, we made a story by Ibsen from the existential minimum […]. We discovered that we were at the risk of playing a history that was neither bad, nor uninteresting, but which was not necessarily compatible with the constraints that Fosse had inserted in the text. In practice, this means only that we did not further pursue the piece of fantasy that was supposed to clarify the story. It was a painful evolution for all of us. (Mærli 2005: 237)

Kai Johnsen also emphasised the fact that it is important to approach some distance from the need to interpret and clarify Fosse's texts: "Working with Fosse's texts implies self-discipline. You must stand back and let the text speak for a greater part, without too much interference" (*VG*, 26.5.2005).

The search for basic truths is present in the reception documentation both with respect to the German criticism and with respect to the Norwegian one. Lehmann discusses this aspect in the terms of a general phenomenon: "Particularly, the focus on action seems to function together with a certain automatism of reducing the theatre aesthetics to a dimension depending on another reality – life, human behaviour, reality, etc. At the origin, there is the concept of the theatre conceived as a double. Focused on actions envisaged programmatically/ fake, the attention shifts from the structure of the written drama and from what is immediately, at first hand, transmitted to the senses, to what is represented, to the alleged substance of the significations and, in the end, to the meaning. (Lehmann 2005: 54). With Fosse, rhythmic recurring structures and pauses dominate the dialogue and the materiality of the monologue (Bordemann 2008). In the Norwegian reception, Fosse's dramatic work is usually appraised for its precise substance and for the poetic, minimalist, repetitive, rhythmic and musical language. But this language is equally the subject of strong criticism, where it interferes with the spectator's experience, with the verisimilitude of the contents and with the manner of reception, an aspect named by *travelling in an illusion*. Obviously, the stylisation will not be able to disturb this process: "infinite

repetitions", many critics write, "become at a certain point difficult to bear" (*Bergens Tidende*, 29.5.1995). In *Aftenposten*, the play *Nokon kjem til å komme* is characterised as an abstract trial of form, which is not available to the audience. Elisabeth Rygg says it is "a naive and arbitrary experiment for a particularly interested audience" (*Aftenposten*, 28.4.1996).

The concepts of "surrealism" or of "hyperrealism", taken over from Baudrillard, are frequently used in the German-speaking reception and turn into a commonplace of the critic comments, as main modality of positioning the Fosse effect on an already instituted scale of the intelligible. Bordemann notes that language musicality is almost constantly mentioned in the comments and always subordinate to meaningful elements, to a search for plot, for a theatre structured in a teleological manner, for a course of action, for an application of social criticism, for a good captivating story. The many repetitions and pauses that dominate Fosse's dialogues – the enduring and repetitive time aesthetics – were rarely perceived as the key of an intense theatrical experience, of the *pseudo-tactile effect* defined by Lehmann (Lehmann 1999: 19).

The fractures operated by Fosse in the temporal sphere become visible, destabilise the action and, therefore, are constantly asserted against a criticism searching for context and movement in action.

In the German-speaking reception, too, temporal aesthetics opposes Fosse's theatre. On the one hand, the idleness and simplicity are well valued in the terms of a longed-for change of theatrical paradigm. Fosse's minimalism opposes a theatrical directorship dominated by effects and by the presentation of brutality on stage, many critics say. The German theatre has great expectations from Fosse, but, at the same time, they are wrong, perhaps, precisely because of their conventionalism. In Germany, this author's promotion encountered many issues, one of the most frequent ones being precisely the apparently static nature, the explicit lack of action of his plays.

The young director Falk Richter, who directed plays by Fosse several times, says: my audience has to tolerate lingering (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 26.9.2000).

Nils Tabert from Rowohlt Theaterverlag describes the first reaction of the theatre to Fosse's work as below:

> The plan was to introduce Jon Fosse as a playwright in Germany with the play *The Name*. […] I sent *The Name* to several different directors, but it didn't have success with any of them. They all responded by: "Are they insane? That play has no plot, what's it all about, I cannot understand, it is bad", […]. During that time, the theatres were putting on stage the young British

playwrights; the "dirty" theatre. Fosse was rather different from that tradition. His plays are static, without many words and rather cryptic. I don't blame at all those that had not understood from the beginning that Fosse's plays are good, unique and special (Seiness 2003: 28).

Fosse is frequently quoted in order to explain what he creates through the "images of emptiness". "These may say something about our times, but not necessarily", Fosse was stating in the programme of the performance for the play *The Name* at Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus, in 2000.

The French director Claude Régy states his belief in Fosse's theatre. In his opinion, he achieves that he deems essential for the writing: a fair balance between the personal and the universal, a troublesome strangeness circulating under the mask of the ordinary (Régy 2001).

In the Norwegian reception, connections have been frequently operated between Fosse's minimalism and the universality or general validity of the texts: "The combination of anonymity and generality is perhaps the basis of the universal appeal to the audience of Fosse's texts throughout the world" (*Bergens Tidende*, 8.5.2005). The simplicity and minimalism are often interpreted as an act of search for truth: "The intoxicating bluntness insists on itself without protection, which renders a fair character to the performance" (*Klassekampen*, 30.5.2005). On the contrary, many German-speaking critics label this atmosphere in the terms of "burdensome sadness" and of the characters' annoying inability of acting. Bodemann notes that the latter resembles, in many critics' opinion, to "empty spaces that wait to be filled, and the description they provide them with is lacking personality, anonymous, unexciting: simple and lonely people, lacking special traits – in fact, why are they shown to us?, many ask. In addition, these characters incite charges with provincialism and inadequacy" (Bordemann, 2008).

Even if such occurrences of the reception are also present in the home country, things seem to be on the right way for Fosse's theatre. One last strong argument for the importance awarded to his is given by the attempts of opening a national Jon Fosse institute in Oslo, along with an archive that should always be available to the researchers and directors that want to study and work actively with the Norwegian playwright's new theatre.

"Usually, the archives are constituted far too late and the opportunity of accessing contemporary testimonies will have long elapsed. The fact of having directors, etc. talk about Fosse now will be priceless for future generations" (Ostermeier 2007).

From this perspective, the reception is definitely positive, and the directors and critics throughout the world that support Fosse are numerous, the same as the argument for the creation of such an institute. Amongst these, we may mention here Claude Régy, Kai Johnsen, Thomas Ostermeier, Luk Perceval, Leif Zern, Sumie Kawai, Eirik Stubø.

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THE RECEPTION OF THE FARCES OF THE EXPRESSIVE

FILIP ODANGIU

ABSTRACT. This paper is interested in outlining the particular manner in which reception mechanisms operate when the expressive is short-circuited by reality. I am attempting an investigation of the spectators' interest, increasingly acute, for the theatre laboratory; to see how and whether the weight of the interest in the invisible part of the theatre may compete against the aesthetic pleasure; to see how the audience's taste for the visible part (the performance) may be influenced by the distrust of the authenticity of the reality on the stage. The audience meets increasingly frequent suggestions for watching performances in their "workshop" stage, public rehearsals, reading-performances, readings "mise en espace", interactive theatre, workshops that allow the presence of the audience, etc. I wonder whether the approach of all these performance sub-types holds a signification more complex than the mere answer provided to the spectator's voyeur curiosity. Do these experiences, situated in the region of the pre-expressive, correspond to the audience's increasing interest in the experiential values, interest correlated with the increasing distrust with the fictionalisation suggested by the "magic box" of the theatre?

Keywords: Theatre, audiences, participation, workshop evaluation

I have opted for the title *The Reception of the Farces of the Expressive* by taking over, from Eugenio Barba, terms that describe a special category of theatrical, or rather meta-theatrical event. I'm interested in outlining the particular manner in which reception mechanisms operate when the expressive is short-circuited by reality. I am attempting an investigation of the spectators' interest, increasingly acute, for the theatre laboratory; to see how and whether the weight of the interest in the invisible part of the theatre may compete against the aesthetic pleasure; to see how the audience's taste for the visible part (the performance) may be influenced by the distrust of the authenticity of the reality on the stage.

The audience meets increasingly frequent suggestions for watching performances in their "workshop" stage, public rehearsals, reading-perform- ances, "readings mise en espace", interactive theatre, workshops that allow the presence of the audience, etc. I wonder whether the approach of all these performance sub-types holds a signification more complex than the mere

answer provided to the spectator's voyeur curiosity. Do these experiences, situated in the region of the pre-expressive, correspond to the audience's increasing interest in the experiential values, interest correlated with the increasing distrust with the fictionalisation suggested by the "magic box" of the theatre? During our time, the cinematography has triggered an authentic offensive for the seizure of the imaginary by super-productions in which fictional worlds are impeccably built and, owing to the new technologies, seem more authentic than reality itself[1]. In such conditions, the fundamental law establishing the existence framework for the theatre: the fact that the audience does not have the right, nor the obligation of participating directly in the dramatic action on the stage – this law seems to need several amendments.

In the chapter "The Drift of Exercises" in his book, *The Paper Canoe,* Eugenio Barba analyses a phenomenon of modern history of the theatre that debuts along with Stanislawski's studies: "the exercise begin being considered a group of practices useful for the transformation of the actor's ordinary body-spirit into a scenic body-spirit" (Eugenio Barba, 2003, p165)[2]. While until Stanislawski the exercises were the ABC of the profession or to learn fencing, ballet, acrobatics, skills necessary for the proximity to certain characters, later on the exercises started to represent for certain actors the quintessence of their job, turning into a purpose, and not a means, Barba further notes.

As a symptom of this phenomenon, Barba cites the unprecedented increase of the number of studios and theatrical experimentation laboratories, a model instituted at the beginning of the 20th century in Russia and Europe and undergoing a striking development up to our times. In this type of approach, situated half-way between professionalism and self-didacticism, I believe we may perceive the development of that "horizontal axis"[3] of the communication of the theatrical education mentioned by David Esrig. During the second half of the 20th century there emerges an entire network of "seminaries", "laboratories", "courses", "training", and "workshops" whose purposes were not the preparation for a repertoire, but an active experimentation of the theatre.

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[1] "The cinematograph is the form of art that corresponds to the increasing danger of losing your life, a danger that our contemporaries must consider" Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, quoted by Gianni Vatimo in *Societatea transparentă*, Ed. Pontica, Constanța, 1995, p. 57

[2] The notion of body-spirit for stage is very frequently used nowadays in the speech of workshop promoters. I have come again across the phrase "body for stage" in a Neo-Nô theatre workshop coordinated by Izumi Ashizawa, whose approach combines harmoniously the traditional perspective on the Nô actor's condition with the requirements of the training of the contemporary dancing actor.

[3] "Horizontal axis" - between same generation directors and actors who choose to work and explore together, according to certain artistic affinities, to a shared belief; "vertical axis", from the reader to the student (taken from personal notes on a meeting with David Esrig at the SPOT theatre festival, in Carei, 2009.

The actor's work at the pre-expressive level becomes autonomous; it turns into a "spectacle in search for a genre". Of course, this genre cannot and does not aim at substituting the play as form of artistic performance. The training, as emphasised by Eugenio Barba, has two main functions:

a. At the beginning of the career, it assists the actor in introducing him/ her in the theatre environment chosen.

b. If the actor is duly resolute and not tolerant with him/ herself, if he struggles to go on, if the abandons the exercises he/ she masters in order to search for and invent others, if he does not obey to them (...), in the long run, the training will guide him toward individual independence. Therefore, the function of the training is reversed: in the beginning, it assists the novice actor to integrate in the theatrical environment and then helps him/ her to maintain his/ her independence from the same environment, from the teacher, from the director, from the audience. (Eugenio Barba, 2003, p167). Training teaches you to take your stand, both in the extra-daily behaviour on the stage and in front of the profession, of the group with which you work.

While charged many times with professional inefficiency and cultural loss, this formula of the pre-expressive training proved efficient in the field of the creation of performances, being adopted as a method of creation by many prestigious theatrical troupes, starting with the Living Theatre to the Open Theatree or Barba's Odin Teatret.

Whereas the drift of the exercises described by Barba leads, in the Italian author's opinion, to the customization of training, favouring the emergence of the "indrawn score", founding the actor's stage, the theatre for the actor, far from the spectator's eye and mind, recent tendencies indicate a reopening of the gates of the laboratory toward the public, in order to allow the spectator to witness the actor's private training. A proof with respect to this is the example chosen by Barba to illustrate de idea of "farce of the expressive". The dramatic anthropologist describes the surprising effect triggered amongst the audience by an actress from the Odin Teatret, who presented her own training to certain theatre students and teachers in the recitation room of an Italian university. Barba labels the result of the event in the terms of a "failure". The audience perceived the training segments as performance scenes, and reacted accordingly. What should have been an academic lesson, Barba says, ended into an impudent exhibition. Contemplating on such an incident, which he includes in the category of "farces of the expressive", Barba concludes, however, that the element having caught in

a "net" the witnesses' imaginary and reflections, despite the fact they were attending a mere presentation – of an alphabet of theatrical technique elements – was the transformation of those elements in an organic process.

The example provided by Eugenio Barba challenged me to identify, in my own experience, examples of similar occurrences. I recalled several events that, individually, had generated intense emotional use at the time of their occurrence. From such experiences, similar up to a point, I've selected three I considered more interesting to analyse.

In all the three cases, hazard played a decisive role in the generation of innovative situations of reception. Two of the situations concern moments when the reception (or framing) phenomenon was triggered suddenly, prematurely, without the will of those on the stage, accidentally. The third situation, while different, can lead us to complementary conclusion. Concretely, the cases analysed describe two types of situations:

a. the spectators' unexpected raid in the area of play, prior to the installation of the performance conditions, and
b. the situation in which the audience was surprised when receiving something they did not expect, instead of the performance

Each time, the shock and bewilderment on the one and the other side of the limit between stage and auditorium have held an essential role.

Situation 1

Thus, the first case concerns the schedule errors of a performance in a student theatre festival during which we were going to perform. Because of an error caused, probably, by tiredness and the mental chaos accompanying it, the festival organisers introduced the audience in the auditorium before the beginning of the performance. When we entered the stage, in order to begin installing the setting, we saw that the audience was already there. Our arrival triggered the deathly silence specific to the spectators ready to watch the beginning of the play. Therefore, we found ourselves, unwillingly, in the heart of the performance. This sequence seems cut out of any actor's nightmare or at least of an acting exercise that tests the spontaneity of the reaction. Unfortunately, the event was placing us in the most immediate reality. It took a lot of courage to announce the audience that there had been a mistake and that the performance would begin once we had finished the installation. Surprisingly, very few left; the majority chose to stay, perhaps because of the cold weather outside. The consequence may

be considered the most theatrical setting installation possible. The audience's continuous supervision and attention adjusted and intensified all of our actions that, from "civil" had suddenly become expressive.

Situation 2

In the second case, more fortunate from the perspective of those on stage, the event was generated by a presentation with the students on the stage in the room Auditorium Maximum of the "Babeş-Bolyai" University in Cluj. The situation would have had nothing special (and thus would have been uninteresting for the current study) if the audience had been warned that what they were about to see was not a performance. But my arrival, as a teacher, on the stage, prior to what was going to be a mere demonstration, and the announcement of the programme, prompted bewilderment. Since the presentation of a performance was no longer possible, we had taken the last-minute decision of presenting exercises with the students. Throughout the progress of the training (which meant a series of exercises and games of confidence, concentration, attentions and coordination, and, in very brief ones, the improvising nuclei with masks of commedia dell'arte), the audience's attitude underwent radical modifications. Instead of being bored, the spectators were captivated of what was happening and, in the end, to our sheer amazement they applauded generously, similarly to the applauses during a play.

Situation 3

The third case takes place in Luxembourg, in 2006, during a sojourn for Eastern European artists. During two months, we were expected to prepare, along with other troupes, a performance, in a disused industrial area. The sojourn project compelled all the artists to accept the so-called "guided visits of the audience". This meant that during certain days anyone could enter the rehearsals room and assist to the process of creation. We were told not to worry about it, that we might be surprised during any phase of work and even in our break ties. We trusted them. Our setting was a tourist trailer in and around which the action would unfold. One day we were almost all in the trailer, engaged in a heated argument. At a certain point, one of us, watching out the window of the trailer, sees that there were approximately 80 people in front of the trailer and two television sets, silent, disciplined and available in the manner of the Occidental audiences.

One of the actors was absent. Those who were present had to decided instantly on how and whether we should get out of the trailer. The director indicated a movement theme and another one for the musician of the troupe. Therefore, during five minutes, we improvised. Terrifying! Weak applauses. The next day, we created a ten minutes back-up moment, in order to prevent the future repetition of the embarrassing situation.

These moments of blockage were overcome successfully almost every time (obviously with tribute paid to the psychological pressure) and this is owed primarily to the surprise element and to the adrenaline permanently intensifying the actors' performance in unforeseen situations.[4]

I haven't described these situations for their anecdotic side, but in order to be able to distinguish, beyond it, several aspects relating to the specific of reception in exceptional situations. Each case has its particularities. They are similar to a certain extent, but, at the same time, there are specific differences. For a simplification of the analysis and of the travelling between the examples, I will name situation 1: "Involuntary Actors", situation 2: "The Training" and situation 3: "The guided visit".

Let's approach the **first example** and see the audience's expectations and the complete framing operated by them. Announced by the poster that they are going to see a play named *Lift*[5], the observers are, from the beginning, the victims of a misreading framing: in the arrival on the stage of some people bearing certain objects and various luggage, they see the beginning point of the play *Lift*. The convention of the performance, expected to install during the first minutes of the play, is contradicted during the next moment, when a character (I) stops the action and announces that what can be seen is not the play and that the performance is to begin after the installation of the setting. When considering the first part, the arrival, when we, on the stage, hadn't yet become aware of the audience's attendance and were still behaving naturally, as if they weren't there, we may talk about a shock when, noticing the spectators, I proceed to breaking the

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[4] Sometimes, such incidents are at the border with the absurd, but they always provide the measure of the exceptional communion of will that may emerge between the audience and the scene, as it happened with a representation in 2005 with the play *Top Dogs* at the Theatrel Arca (Directed by Theo Herghelegiu. Cast: Valeria Seciu, Victor Rebengiuc, Claudiu Bleonț, Şerban Ionescu, Ozana Oanea, Ionel Mihăilescu, Mihai Dinvale), when, in the middle of the play there was a power failure and when, at an actor's question, the audience suggested that the performance continued even during the blackout. Obviously, the actor's performance was reanimated, leading to an exceptional theatrical evening.

[5] The play *Lift,* directed and script by Filip Odangiu, the troupe "Verde Crud", "Babeş-Bolyai" University, Cluj, 2007

convention of the secure "fourth invisible wall" and address directly to the audience, suggesting that they may leave. Identified now as a director, and not as a character, the audience modifies the framing, adopting the correct one. However, the audience's decision to stay in the room (a decision that cannot be exclusively ascribed to the dread of the cold outside) leads to other framings in which we, the ones involved in the installation of the performance, become characters again. The audience's focus on what we do and the bizarre fact that, despite our expectations (hopes), the spectators do not start talking one with the other intensifies the pressure. We, those under observation, change the social role; we no longer fit, but something interfered amongst us, conditioning us, and we have to take it into account in the framing: the audience. Given the idea that the audience must not grow bored if they chose to stay in the auditorium, our acts become more explicit, in order to make them understand what we were doing; we control our language, we are more pedant, more concentrated, more efficient than usual, the installation becomes interesting, similar to a practical improvisation in an expressive form.

The audience's decision of accepting the modification of framing, the role-play, the availability they engaged in these processes was fed, in this case, by the identification of a real problem, by the interference of the reality that breaks up the fiction several seconds following its installation. All these factors pertaining to misreading and framing errors did not engage the failure of the theatrical act, in the end. The performance following immediately after was one of the most successful representations. By their reactions at the end, the audience was conveying a feeling of pride, as if they had co-authored the success by the decision of supporting by their attendance, during the rehearsals, the overcome of the blockage in the beginning. The reception of the fiction-performance was not jammed, but intensified by the spectacle of the reality. Real interaction produced between the audience and the stage had been produced.

Situation 2, "The Training" raises the issue of the acceptance condition. We are dealing with an audience ready to assist to a performance on a stage, but are provided with something different. Instead of witnessing a plot, what do they see? (They see) a group of individuals who ignore them and who seem to focus exclusively on their games and exercises, in a closed, self-sufficient system.

Augusto Boal develops his theories and exercises in the *Theatre of the Oppressed* starting with the plain observation that, inside, each of us embraces an actor – someone who plays – and a spectator – one who's

watching the actor playing. Each individual, concludes Boal, is a <u>theatre in miniature</u>. However, the difference between a regular individual and an actor resides in the fact that the latter uses in full awareness a theatrical language unknown to the common individual. The audience undergoes, in the situation examined, without necessarily wanting it, the experience of receiving a new *keying,* i.e. they learn to operate in the reception with a new reading algorithm, according to which an acting exercise may be equally interesting to watch as an actual performance. The games selected particularly for the demonstration, such as the stimulus communications, are games in which the stake is the energetic transfer. Performed accurately, these exercises allow to the outside viewer to see how energy materialises, how it becomes palpable.

Another interesting fact is involved in this situation, namely a mutation of the framing, carried out through the leader who guides the improvisation by dictation. During the exercise, the leader/ teacher address comments to the students and provide them with indications on the spot.[6] The spectator may or may not undertake the interpretation grid suggested by the leader's comments. Undoubtedly, the attention on the act in progress on the stage is considerably intensified by the primary reflection, the one expressed in a loud voice by the trainer. After the end of the exercises, I have presented a small chapter prepared beforehand. However, the audience did not show the same interest as during the exercise, despite the fact that the brief performance moment was addressed to them. The spectators' reaction no longer went beyond the limits of the usual. The subsequent feedback, mixing enthusiasm and amazement relating to the maximum rigour required from the students, confirmed the feeling that the game that, as we know, fully involves those who attend it and compels them not to escape from the present moment, had been far more interesting to watch than the made up part.

In the first two cases, the improvisation held, each time, the most important role in the "revival" of the reception quality.

The third situation, "the guided visit", relates, in terms of emergence conditions, with Situation 1, "Involuntary Actors": the audience accesses the "device" unexpectedly, at an inconvenient time. However, now the conditions were slightly modified. Contrary to the reassurances I had received that the audience of the guided visits did not expect to see anything special, but just the work, our mind was operating on the usual coordinates at home: if

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[6] The procedure is called, in the terms coined by the current Creative Drama, "sidecoaching."

there is an inspection, everything must be/ seem all right.[7] While in the situations 1 and 2, the undertaking by those on the stage of the fact that they were not expected to deliver a final product freed the expression and stimulated creativity, in the case of the "Guided Visit", the situation was different: the obsession that we absolutely had to come clean out of it and that the audience must receive a final product undermined the improvisation and the way out of the blockage almost failed.

The main difference between the audiences is the fact to consider. The difference between the Luxembourg audience and the autochthon one, with the usual expectations, results, primarily, from the different reception habits. The Luxembourger spectators had chosen to come announced to a rehearsal, assuming the risk of surprising us even during a lunch break or an inspiration standstill. On the contrary, our framing was targeting an audience that required a finite, ready-made product, which we did not have. The obsession of the result: a miss-keying example. The attempt of miming a result only worsened the feeling of surprise.

One possible conclusion would be that the (re)formation of certain reception habits may improve theatrical performance. The reception habits do not concern only the reception from the audience to the stage, but also the manner in which those on the stage perceive both their partners and their audience.

While in the traditional theoretical perspective, the attention focused on the creation and the work, the philosophy of the end of the last century – beginning of the current one, as well as the psychology founded on the objective method and the cybernetics, later on, undertook the mission of rephrasing the particular function of reception in the artistic communication. The work of art, from object for itself becomes an object for the other. The addressee of the artistic message may be considered, in his turn, a constructor that must not be necessarily provided with ready-made products, but stimulated to understand and participate in the re(construction).

In the chapter "The Relationships with Other Actors", in the book comprising his instructions[8], Yoshi Oida suggests a helping exercise meant to assist the actor toward becoming a reliable partner. He demands the actor to walk through the room attempting to perform two things simultaneously:

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[7] See Ion Caramitru's famous response addressed to Mircea Dinescu at the Television during the 1989 Revolution: "Mircea, pretend you're working!"

[8] YOSHI OIDA and Lorna Marshall. *Actorul invizibil (The Invisible Actor),* translation by Maia Teszler, Oradea, ArtSpect Publishing House, 2009

to retain the awareness of his or her own body in the room and to achieve contact with the other actors. Next, he asks the actors to imagine there is someone doubling each of them in the world and that the former sees what is happening, observes each person's physical positioning and the manner of interaction with other people. By achieving such a *self division* (multiplication?), the actor should gain three levels of awareness activity: the physical body in space, the relationship with the other actors and with the silent observer. Oida notes: it is interesting to play randomly with these three elements. Similarly, perhaps it wouldn't hurt if the actors considered in a fairer manner the relationship with the silent partner in the room.

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FILM AS A SMALL EPIPHANY

OLIVIA GRECEA

ABSTRACT. The cinematography of the Dardenne brothers is a mixture between concrete socio-political issues and a film structure that breaches the dominance of the everyday life in the main character's development. The reason behind this apparent contradiction is the relationship of the movie makers with the concepts of fiction and fictional character.

Keywords: political cinema, realism, structure, fiction

> *The truth is always less interesting than the fiction.*
> *Jean-Pierre Dardenne*

In what concerns the impact of a producer of culture, it might seem strange that I chose to refer to the work of a pair of movie makers relatively unknown to the mainstream of the film industry, yet rewarded by the authorities of this industry, to speak only of the Cannes festival, where they are regulars. However, a closer look into their work reveals a constant preoccupation for a certain thematic, sustained by a discrete eye of the camera, qualities that oppose the audience expectations in the era of the renaissance of special effects the film industry is currently in, giving their work an appealing against-the-tide touch.

The first film that put me in contact with their filmography is the recent *Le silence de Lorna* (2008), the story of an Albanese immigrant living in Belgium, involved in a "blank marriage" (in order to get the Belgian nationality) with Claudy, a junkie; Lorna must raise money to open a bar, together with her Albanian lover, by marrying a dubious Russian businessman also interested in having Belgian nationality. Claudy must die to make room for the second hushband; however, between him and Lorna grows a certain intimacy, that pushes Lorna to devellop, after his unavoidable death, an obsession about carrying Claudy's child.
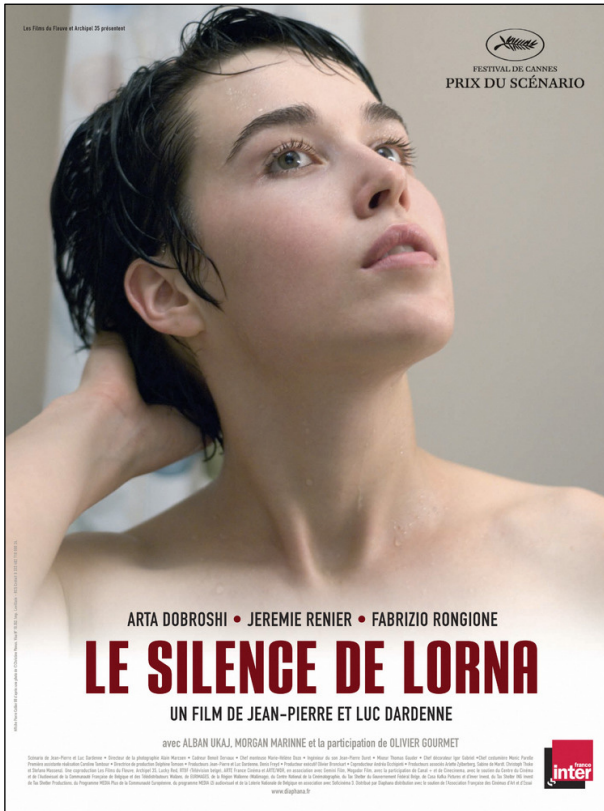
Le silence de Lorna is said to have opened a new creation stage for the Dardenne brothers, first of all due to the fact that the film marks the movement from 16 mm to 35 mm, which involves a distance to the subject, and also because it uses a more complex design of characters and, implicitly, of conflicts. Viewing it, without a background in the filmography of the Dardenne brothers, I was stroke by the unemphatical / not at all pathetic approach of a socially delicate subject. Further on, going through older films (*Le fils, L'enfant*) I noticed the thematic predilection for episodes in the lives of disadvantaged social categories (immigrants, workers, petty criminals) and a typical film structure for cinematographic neorealism, also visible in the Romanian new wave, the best example being *Police, adjective.* The specificities of this structure are the ellipse, the gradual unveiling of conflicts / character information, through accumulation, which leads to a certain "weight", creating a heavy atmosphere (sometimes tiresome for the audience). These elements are by no means an obstacle for reception (not in my case, anyway), although my generation (the so-called young generation) has a very limited attention spam; in what concerns *Police, adjective*, the main objections of the viewers of all ages pointed at the (upsettingly) long frames and at the overall movie length. When criticized, the Dardenne brothers are being reproached precisely due to the feeling of flatness conveyed by their films.

Beyond technical aspects (related to cinematography), subjects belonging to the same thematic area and characters in itselves are a bizarre attraction for the regular viewer, taking into account the distance between him

and the Dardenne brothers' universe, even with the viewer's effort to sign the fictional pact proposed with each film. Although they rejected the "political cinema" tag, the Dardenne brothers combine social reflection with empathy for the characters: "Cinéma totalement maitrisé dans sa forme renouvelée, nous entraîne dans un moment rare où l'émotion est inséparable de la réflexion."[1]. From my point of view, the pertinence of the makers does not reside in the reinvention of cinematographic language / experiment in cinema (though it has been affirmed that they have reinvented realism), but in the relationship between theme and its handling. As I do not have a well developed political gene, I am rather interested in unveiling what is human in the most oppressing situations (in other words, emotion rather than [social or political] reflection).

The Dardenne brothers got closer to cinematography through documentaries, that fueled their need to extract the character out of reality and place it in fiction (the motto of this paper is to be noted). They have a preoccupation for an unfinished, authentic aspect, reflected in their preference for debutants (or very young actors)[2].

A script by the Dardenne brothers touches a few nodal points, out of which 2 are fundamental: the first is the moment when the error takes place, and the second the redemption, the attempt to repair what proved to be a mistake. The shock of the first moment is always given out without any notice, it hits, it grows naturally in the characters' world: Bruno (*Le fils*) tries to make money through scams and when he becomes a father, sells his new born baby; Rosetta (*Rosetta*) is a teenager that betrays her only friend (that sells his own gauffre at the shop where he works) in order to take his job; Igor (*La promesse*) is a teenager that assists his father in the family business of sheltering illegal immigrants (and occasionally turning some of them in to the police), witness of the death of the African Amidu, that falls off a stair and that his father can't take to hospital, so eventually he abandons him to die under a prelate in their yard.

The characters carry out acts of cruelty (not necessarily primal, physiologic acts, but placed on different degrees on a scale of "gravity") out of habit and instinct of survival, but every time there comes a moment of grace when the protagonist outstrips his / her natural condition, as if

[1] http://blogs.politique.eu.org/hugueslepaige/index.html (Hugues Le Paige, journalist and film producer)
[2] http://cannes2009.rfi.fr/fr/

defying the universe / the context in which he or she existed up to that point. The inexplicable thrust of the human. When they reach this point, the Dardenne brothers' characters become something other than the product of a society, the reflection of a discriminating system, that fragilizes some ethnical or social categories, it is the moment when a sparkle illuminates the flat and miserable world previously described.

In the case of the Dardenne brothers' cinematography, there is a horizon of expectations fulfilled with the viewing of each film: I watch one of their films anticipating the thematic area and the way in which it will be treated, thus anticipating a familiarity (and a metafamiliarity, regarding fetish-actors and changes that occur from one role to another). Yet, despite this pre-intuition, there are small surprises, nuances concerning the character or the ensemble that fulfill the critic, demanding, professional eye, nuances derived from the casualness of the Dardenne brothers' movie-making: as producers of their own films, they afford developing them in their own pace. However, the main reason I watched all their feature films is connected to the "redemption moment", the moment of the metamorphosis, of release, when appeasement takes place; it is like someone trustworthy tells you everything will be fine and that is sufficient. No further arguments needed.

In a certain way, the evolution of Dardenne brothers' characters has a christic aura; their realism [with its unreclaimed political nuances], their quality of being "as in everyday life" is contradicted by the unexpected turn of situation, that is not a coup de theatre or a grandiose gesture, but an action, a state that affects strictly the protagonist.

In other words, never say never, a glimpse of humanity exists in every one of us (them included), a glimpse that sparkles even inside the most numb character, a strange mechanism that will suddenly unveil itself, defying all that is miserable, ugly and unbearable, meaning reality. The consequences are not shown, the story is not exhausted, does not become dogmatic. I appreciate the subtlety of the Dardenne brothers, that make no radical affirmations.

Looking back and cumulating the impact of the 5 feature films of the Dardenne brothers, I consider each one of them almost-an-epiphany, estetically and culturally induced. A discrete epiphany, made possible by accepting the fiction.[3] As if the Dardenne brothers see cinema as an art that transforms (which may seem paradoxal, taking into account the formal

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[3] Luc Dardenne on Lorna: "How can a woman who doesn't believe in God believe everything is possible? Where does this crazy hope come from? She is strange, out of the ordinary. A fictional character always swims against the tide.", http://www.dardenne-brothers.com/articles/worldsocialis

elements of their cinematography) reality out of a necessity, necessity derived from its sheer quality of art. A film by the Dardenne brothers is to me a contemporary, realistic fairytale, an experience that is first of all emotional, that gains its value both through content and the relationship between content and form; a real and transforming story, in the least pretentious sense, without being condenscedent or moralizing.

The Dardenne brothers filmography:

> *Le silence de Lorna* (2008)
> *L'enfant* (2005)
> *Le fils* (2002)
> *Rosetta* (1999)
> *La promesse* (1996)

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GET UP!

SABINA ANDRON

ABSTRACT. The visual stimuli urban dwellers are given when they go out in the street are far more complex than what lies on billboards and commercial posters. The alternative universe represented by street art is one of the most vivid and non-discriminatory forms of artistic practice in today's society, especially as it allows for a more direct relation between art producers and receivers. This article focuses on how street art can turn common city dwellers into active participants to the phenomenon, the line from observation to interaction being much more fragile than with other artistic forms.

Keywords: *street art, urban walls, active receiver, passive producer, public signification codes*

"You can have a better life today!" Just open your eyes, and you'll become an adventurous addressee instead of remaining an average passer-by. Everything is completely free, service is available 24/7 and the quality of your urban experiences is guaranteed to improve. You'll learn to mind street corners looking for somebody (2D version), to pay more attention to the back of street signs than to their meaning, you'll choose different routes for reaching your daily destinations and you will often find yourselves on large detours, always waiting to meet somebody else a hundred meters further[1]. A new type of never-ending, liberal and all-participant social network will offer you full membership if you prove to be a fine observer. Still, some members of this network have made a reputation for being more aggressive and will therefore be harder to ignore, the risk of them attacking being a constant threat. When art attacks, the best reaction is to strike back, but it will surely not come after you unless you are a loser. Art takes care of the people it likes and it especially likes the people that like it, although it fancies a number of different categories. *You* can also be a part of the new social network, today! Participation is anonymous, and once you become a member you will have unrestricted access to the parallel universe camouflaged in the streets of the city. All you have to do is open your eyes.

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[1] "To the trained eye, museum pieces lurk everywhere" (*New York Times*, in Pro-Actif Communications, *Untitled. Street Art in the Counter Culture*, Livingstone House, Darlington, 2008, p. 41)

The meeting with street art takes place for all of us each day, whether we know about it or not, whether we enjoy it, get annoyed by it, or just remain completely indifferent. The massive presence of visual stimuli in the public space makes the passer-by/receiver to unaware pass between them and lose his capacity to distinguish or extract from all the visual information he is offered. The reception of street art is directly conditioned by attention, a trigger followed by a small dose of visual practice. If this triggering moment takes place, each trip into town will be the equivalent of visiting an infinite gallery of free art. If it doesn't take place, it is like the phenomenon didn't even exist, and there is no point in talking about a process of reception. The terms under which an encounter with this type of cultural product takes place are in a way more liberal, as they don't imply a choice of space-time presence that dedicates itself entirely to the phenomenon. Still, this 'free' experience manifests itself in a sneaky manner. It is there, casually exposing itself, ready to undergo judgment and public intervention at any given time, provoking, attacking and watching you when you can't see it. It concerns *you* as a society, being your artistic expression of choice, and *you* as an individual, marking the taking into possession of public space, materless which end of the spray can [or other artistic instruments] you're on. The moment the color hits the wall makes the difference between receiver and creator.

The lack of involvement of the urban dweller in its relationship with the streets is the main target of street art. The action itself of producing street art, called *getting up*[2], is concerned with re-discussing the aesthetical, semiotic and media-related configuration of urban reality through undermining its codes of affirmation and existence. The cityscape has a certain aspect, the space on the corner of the street is suffocated with billboards and ads, traffic signs dictate manners of public behavior and the local council installed colored lights in the central square pavement – all these aspects, which I daily make contact with as a city dweller, will determine me to take some artistically configured civic measures[3]. If I be behind the spray, that is. After the spray (because in front of it lies just the patient old wall) comes the debate, that

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[2] To get up from your comfort zone, to wake up and see reality, to take active measures, to rebel
[3] Tags or initial forms of graffiti also had a civic component, drawing attention to the existence of subcultures and social classes whose only chance of affirming their identity was exactly that. Vandals and unrefined as they were, graffiti writers also fed on a 'civic' spirit of rebellion

ranges from monologue to war and from game playing to teasing and serious provoking. The city becomes alive when you speak to it, and street art is one of its favorite topics.

Street art is the defining artistic form for the space and time of contemporary society. Its independence from designated spaces or exclusive communities of production and reception, as well its autonomy from any sort of conceptual or aesthetical norms, turn street art into the most lively and relevant artistic manifestation of the urban year 2010. And this vigor is mostly due to the tiny distance that separates producers and receivers. Exposing your art on a wall in the city centre automatically gives you access to an unlimited and non-selective audience, that hasn't made any financial, social or intellectual choices concerning the product. This is presently the most direct relation between cultural production and reception, gaining serious credibility under the wall of anonymity[4] [or *on* that wall]. The receivers will be the passers-by themselves, the hurried urban dwellers with their own education, families and problems, and with no other common characteristics as a group of receivers other then the fact that they accidentally lifted their head from the ground on their way home. And this ever-changing mass of passers-by also includes the producers themselves, who are nothing more than active receivers – and may this also happen to *you*.

Production and reception relate to each other in the street following certain rules that differ substantially from those in other cultural areas. The producers may have an intentional selection by addressing a certain piece to a certain audience, but there will never be a real and proper selection where that audience is concerned. They all participate, they just react differently. The fact that this public has nothing to say about what they meet or do not meet on the street brings the producer/receiver categories at a closer statute. Consequently, the phenomenon has the tendency of evolving towards a community of actions rather than towards a formal encounter between production and reception. Proof for this are the countless walls where the tags and messages form a network of questions and answers, spontaneous reactions, or defensive attitudes towards mental or physical

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[4] There are noticeable exceptions to this rule, in the persons of very famous artists, for whose pieces people travel all over the world or pay millions at Sotheby's. Still, the physical identity of the producer is completely irrelevant, as it is transposed in his logo or stylistic mark. The artist is the product itself, and that product is just a piece that is very likely to be gone by tomorrow.

territories. It is like a relationship between two partners that, though equal in statute, only one of them has the tendency to be passive while the other one is active[5]. One of these days the passive one will get up, take his freshly cut stencil in his backpack and go out bombing, after which he will again become passive, with the satisfaction of having contributed to the city canvas. Active receiver / passive producer – here are two coincidental categories defined by street art.

The fact that street art is always ephemeral spices things up for enthusiasts, but also raises loss frequency[6].

From the moment you start seeing street art pieces you are not alone anymore, you never get bored while in town and the imaginary map of streets and places changes its landmarks, passing from addresses and boutiques to messages and familiar characters. This is how my involvement with the phenomenon started, and the confirmation came when I surprised myself taking pictures of walls during my last vacations, capturing everything from tags and doodles to cute stencils and elaborate graffiti pieces, which I came to consider the most relevant and up-to-date landmarks for the respective places. There is no city in the world without street art and this huge global community that forms and re-forms itself every day knows how to write and read universal language. When millions of stories take place at the same time in the world and our visual and informational media impose only a selection of them, street art is the means through which each of us can tell their story, and each of us can contribute to that or make it go away.

These very loose conditions of production and reception can be speculated very efficiently by large companies who abandon billboards and infiltrate the visual universe of street art precisely in order to catch the addressee with his guard down. Because once you assume a distinction between commercial visual language and street art, this distinction will be harder to refine when their specific codes start contaminating each other[7].

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[5] "Graffiti is very much like making love to a beautiful woman. It's much easier to sit at home and watch other people doing it" (Pro-Actif Communications, *id*., p. 171)

[6] One of the best stencils in Cluj, which also happened to be my favorite, and to whom I used to smile from the bus each time I passed it by, is gone! I was shocked to see the wall turned white and I was sad all evening for losing a friend – it doesn't even matter anymore who it was [but I can leave a hint: it used to live in Mihai Viteazu sq.]

[7] The highly visible stencils from Cluj that use the particle *choco-* in order to subvertize various famous logos are actually a national campaign for promoting *Poiana Chocotoff*. No further comment.

In short, art was initially the one to get out in the street and use public signification codes in order to undermine them; now, the reverse phenomenon is taking place, and the language used by street art became the most efficient medium for the promotion of all product types. This is taking place because street art aesthetics gained a lot of popularity during the last five to ten years, and people's availability towards it has reached and maintained its peak ever since. Music, films, videos, fashion and design – they all draw upon the aesthetics of street creation, making it very hard to foresee the possible reasons for a collapse of the phenomenon.

You'll find the answer next block.

Because it depends on an edgy, limitless space and defies time by endorsing all its whims [BMW?], because it is the man who makes love to the woman inside who many women dwell and fights new battles each day [Hugo Boss?], because many dwell inside him and he can always be more [the poet Pessoa?], because it suffocates when indoors, the city is its playground, and lives each day like the last [James Bond?], because you're worth it! [L'Oreal!?!] --- and because it remains impersonal when aiming with such precision at your daily route, you have to love it. Eyes wide open, get up today!

Partner:

Pro-Actif Communications, *Untitled. Street Art in the Counter Culture*, Livingstone House, Darlington, 2008.

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THE SACRED QUALITY IN TARKOVSKI'S CINEMA

CRISTIANA KERESZTES

ABSTRACT. This paper tries to display in simple words the factors that invest Andrei Tarkovski's work with spiritual value. Even though we do not always understand WHAT he's saying, we can observe HOW he is doing it, by what means and, more important, we can take notice of the effects. The elements decomposed bellow (time, space, madness and a few other archetypes) are just the ones present in all, or most of his movies, having the same tendency of revealing the invisible, the untouchable, the sacredness; so the essay comes as a "recipe" that worked so good for the Russian director.

Keywords: sacred, memory, symbol, origin, spirituality, film, Tarkovski.

The socio-political context in which Andrei Tarkovski made his debut in cinematography was a rather convenient one. After the "soviet classical school" of the beginning of the XXst century followed the decline (in all artistic domains) under the domination of the socialist realism ideology. Film becomes no more than a propaganda instrument and a way of illustrating

political ideas. The 50's come with the promise of a change: generations that lived through the war bring along a fresh blowing in art, and Stalin's death comes as a motivation further to the thaw, to the ideological relaxation. In this décor Tarkovski makes his first steps in the world of the seventh's art, joining in the State Institute of Cinematography.

The relative loosening in which the director initiated his work hadn't let off the harsh censorship's harassment, the unending bureaucracy procedure for the movies' export visa, or the struggle with the criticism specific to the soviet regime. He doesn't trust the materialistic dialectics, on the contrary, he is preoccupied of anything that evokes the reality of a superior plan of existence; his readings, starting from adolescence, determine his will to searching for a higher spiritual order: amongst them, Thomas Mann, Rudolf Steiner, Herman Hesse.

As any other art, film-making offers specific imaginary universes, diverse fictional worlds. "But sacredness is not a part of the human imaginative, it belongs to a different regime of existence"[1], having its origins beyond human perception. And so, the question: "In what proportion can art reflect the sacredness?"[2] And the answer is, again, beyond art or beyond our power of understanding. But what we can assess is the sensitive effect of that we can not our finger on: "[The sensitive plan] making itself the bearer of the other world and the body of it, carries it along (...) and transfigures itself, it sanctifies and transfers itself into symbol, meaning an organic unity of the representative and the represented" (Pavel Florenski)[3].

The sacred Space

The more it sinks into philosophical reflection and it tries to draw itself near to the "original zones of human spirit", art advances to metaphysics. "In one word, a virtual space becomes a metaphysical space when acquiring a visible spiritual meaning."[4] Hereby we get to talk about the metaphysical film (after vanguard passing the ideological barrier of cinema as direct reflection of reality), using names such as Tarkovski, Bresson, Herzog and others. The thing these artists have in common is the very transcendence's suggestion, not through what they film but through the way they do it: the

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[1] Dulgheru, Elena, *Tarkovski, filmul ca rugăciune,* Ed. Arca Învierii, Bucureşti, 2004, p. 74 (my translation).

[2] Ibidem.

[3] Rushian theologian, philosopher and mathematican. The quotation appertains to *Dogmatică şi dogmatism. Studii şi eseuri teologice*, Ed. Anastasia, 1998, p.92, în op. cit., p.75; my translation.

[4] Dulgheru, Elena, *Tarkovski, filmul ca rugăciune,* Ed. Arca Învierii, Bucureşti, 2004., p. 85; my translation.

mystic artist's view is always in correlation with something beyond the filmed object; and so, what the frame represents is just one of the ellipse's poles, a metaphor of what is not directly accessible -and the spectator feels it, too, rather unconsciously.

<<The real purpose of the artistic picture, its highest vocation, is to unlock us the possibility of relating to the infinity>>[5].

The sacred Time

In tight conjunction with the sacred space, time flows smoothly towards infinty, towards indefiniteness. The director explains: <<How does the perception of time in frame occur? It appears where, behind what is actually happening, a certain density of truth is being felt; it's then when you acquire the assurance that what you see is not consumed by the visible image, but it alludes something that spreads outside the frame>>.

As Dahli's clocks (The Persistence of Memory), time in Tarkovski's imagery stretches itself activating the memory of our sacred geneses, our nostalgia of them.

The sacred Madness

If psycho-pathological diagnostics can be assigned to Shakespeare's characters, to the tarkovskian ones we can at least point out some symptoms of the same kind: melancholia would be the most obvious one, reaching each of the Russian director's heroes. Just like Florin Mihăescu's observation in his book, *Hamlet, the prince of melancholia,* about the shakespearian character, "Melancholia is an awareness of ones verticality, an insatiable yearning for returning to the Principle, the Fundamental."[6] He marks out the superior condition of the melancholic state, probably as a way of transition in a superior "other side", far from the gloomy and miserly look of the sick one; this principle of meditation that is superior to action, of a road to the Absolute, of the return towards the sacred origin (also affirmed in Shakespeare's tragedy through the spectrum's cue, "Remember me!") is found in Tarkovski's cinema, too: <<..."Nostalghia" signifies the longing to what is very far from us, the longing for the worlds that we can not unite in one, but is the same time the longing for our native land, our spiritual origin>>[7].

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[5] Tarkovski, *Le Temps Scelle*... in op. cit., p. 86; my translation.
[6] Mihăescu, Florin, *Hamlet, prinţul melancoliei*, Ed. Rosmarin, Bucureşti, 1997, p. 181.
[7] Andrei Tarkovski, *O prirode nostalgii, p.131*, in Dulgheru, Elena, *Tarkovski, filmul ca rugăciune,* p. 60.

Besides the lost-in-metaphysical-contemplation disease of the intellectual, we also observe the "proclaimed" madman. Here are a few examples: the mad mathematician Domenico, in *Nostalghia,* a seeker for the meaning of life; he is insane just because he withstands the "madness" of our world, fact that ensures him the saint aura: <<…Domenico's fight refers to us all… he is right when accusing us of passivity. He is the "madman" who accuses "normality" of weakness and who sacrifices himself for waking us up, for making us react>>.[8] Another character that lost his sanity, the survivor of the fires in *Ivan's Childhood,* shouts: "No, the stove can not be destroyed!" while an oven's smoke rises among the ruins, as a symbol of the sacred fire, of death and rebirth, of the soul that dwells in the demolished home.

Any of the "un-normal" men in Tarkovski's filmography has the look of the divine lunacy of which the ancient Greeks where talking (Plato, *Phaidros*); a god speaks through them, or a heavenly gift descended over them. Their mania is not an earthly one.

Tarkovski's Archetypes

The archetype, with its meaning of prime model, ideal, or with the purports added by Jung –"pattern", collective representations"- acquires the sacred energy, strength, of universality.

1.   The main tarkovskian archetype is the house:

In all his movies the house represents more than just a covering; the house suggests the space of maternal interiority, the space of safety and intimacy (most of the time being isolated in the middle of nowhere). The domestic space is the soul's hospitable dwelling.

In *Solaris,* all the main character's memories are bound to the terrestrial home, and very much attached to the female image: both mother's and lover's. Standing in a totally opposite spacing, the cold and unfriendly cosmos, Kris creates a solemn aura for that house, making it a symbol for the entire humanity, its foundation. The music and the ornamental objects brought on the extraterrestrial station, having the intention of "taming" the sterile atmosphere and humanizing it, creates such a huge dissonance in its simple joining that the achieved effect is exactly the opposite one, deepening the feeling of exile in nothingness.

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[8] Ibidem.

If in *Mirror* the childhood home is an extension of the hero's personality, memories being the substance of this character, in *The Sacrifice*, the house becomes the protagonist's essence, his soul. He swears to sacrifice everything he's got for the world's salvation, ending up burning his home.

In *Nostaghia*, the house brings to mind the hostile space of the symbolist-expressionist poets: it is cold, inhospitable, dank and, although foreign, it reflects entirely the renter's morbid state of mind.

In *Ivan's Childhood, Andrei Lubliov* and *Stalker,* the house is not the shelter-aimed building. The characters don't have a terrestrial house (at least not one in which to feel home) just a spiritual house. In *Stalker*, the spiritual resting place and the source of vitality -represented usually as homely residence- are in the Zone, the dangerous place of divine revelations.

2. The Garden

The garden comes as a completion to the palette of significances ascribed to the house (even in *Stalker*). This one directs to the Garden of Eden. The nature, the vitality, the un-desecrated miraculous, are the attributes of a space which every tarkovskian hero dreams of, remembering them of their paradisiacal origin (seen through the nostalgia's mist).

3. Water

In the Dictionary of Symbols the water's purports are reduced to three major topics: water as origin of life, as a mean of cleansing and water as centre of regeneration. But the water also has another side, opposed to it's meaning of fountain of life and that is the generator of death.

For Tarkovski water dominates the natural space and invades the anthropical one (the homely space). In *Stalker,* water is used with all its significances; the mustiness, the mud outside the Zone reproduces the filth and the discomfort determined by the profane man, withstanding to the fertile matter of the mud from the Zone or other movies (*Ivan's Childhood).* Once arrived in the Zone, the moist nature, the fresh green of the vegetation strewed with dew, inspire vitality, vigour; the stream in which the three travelers are resting is the water of oblivion, of purifying their mind. The waterfall in the "dry tunnel" –from which not anybody gets out alive- is the water of rebirth. The stagnant water of the slops may signify the regeneration ferment and the fountain's water is the heart, the Zone's soul.

The rain, almost uninterrupted in this film and present in every one of the others, symbolizes the celestial influence that exerts on Earth. As Elena Dulgheru observes, in *Solaris* and *Mirror,* we see the sunny rains, like some blessings from above, while in *Nostalghia* water is used with its meaning of "psychic decomposition"-al rain.

4. The Dog

The dog is a funeral dog, a soul's guide on the land of death. In the director's filmography the dog becomes something like a guarding angel that appears from time to time, watching over the trippers when they sleep and leads them from behind on their subterranean way to resurrection.

5. The Horse

The sometimes transparent apparition of the horse takes place in the fabulous, paradisiac spaces of dreams and memories. Just like a unicorn, the white horse represents the intangible ideal for the worldly life. Symbol of life and death both, the horse is a magical animal, sacred at most of the cultures.

Although accused of elitism and discredited in his homeland, Tarkovski obtained his repute during his activity, but especially postmortem, like the majority of the world known artists.

"Masterpieces can not be imitated, they can be felt, they can provide energy, emotion, life; but the inspiration always derives from somewhere above".

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PEPE vs. PEACHUM OR THE HAND WITHOUT A STORY

MONICA BOZDOG

ABSTRACT. This essay is an overview on the resemblances between two characters: Mr. Puiut, Pepe one of the main characters in Nae Caranfil's movie: Philanthropy and Mr. Jonathan Jeremiah Peachum a character in Bertolt Brecht's The Threepenny Opera. It is an attempt to bring to the surface the universal way of seeing a side of every society that is ignored and overlooked: beggars. In the organized hierarchy of the world of the beggars these characters appear as the masterminds behind the curtain. They have similar ways of seeing the world and human emotions and values like charity, indifference, morality and last but not least money. Although they belong to different societies in more than half a century away they are, surprisingly, very much alike. The present work is just the starting point for a more profound and in-depth analysis.

Keywords: The Threepenny Opera, Philanthropy, Beggars Opera, beggars, charity, indifference, money, Pepe, Peachum, Nae Caranfil, Bertolt Brecht.

1. Intro

Begging is a complex state of the art. It requires a bit of creative play writing, some acting and performing skills and a well thought costume and set design. You learn this while watching Nae Caranfil's Philanthropy. When i first saw the movie i had a strange feeling that i knew Pepe, one of the main characters, from somewhere but i couldn't quite put my finger on from where. I developed an obsession over this tormenting deja vu. The familiar imagery was constantly escaping my memory. And then, in a moment of totally unexpected lucidity, it hit me: The Threepenny Opera. Pepe was very similar to Mr. Peachum, the character brought to life by John Gay and developed by Bertolt Brecht into one of the most memorable, charismatic and tasty drama characters.

A comparison beetween a world known opera, performed thousands of times by world famous singers and actors, that made it to big screen a few times, accompanied by Kurt Weill's compositions and a movie, no matter how complex it may be, is fairly unjust. And such a comparison would be greatly harmfull and damaging for the last. Therefore, i resumed myself to making a more equitable evaluation in the form of character vs. character.

Although, at first sight, the two characters, that were brought to life more than half of century appart, belonging to profundly different cultures, don't seem to have much in common, a carefull close look will reveal unexpected similarities.

2. The „Beggar's Friend" and Philanthropy

The reaching hand without a story is an empty hand.
Be a professional, for crying out loud!

Jonathan Jeremiah Peachum runs a perfectly respectable and very profitable shop with begging arsenal and equipment, called Beggar's Friend. Peachum does it all, he finds texts capable of melting the human heart, he makes the costumes, he asigns each beggar a well delimited teritory, he gives them the license to practice and the authorization for begging. *„I only give authorizations to professionals. London is divided into fourteen districts. Anyone who cares to practice begging in one of theese districts must have an authorization from Jonathan Jeremiah Peachum et comp."*

Mr. Pavel Puiuț, also known as Pepe runs Philanthropy, a „charity" organization[1]. He calls himself a „text-writer for beggars, (the texts) are short but with a great advantage: they sell well. The demand is overwhealming". Pepe doesn't do the organizational and administrative parts; he deals only with the creative vision and text. His money comes from the commission he receives for each beggar and from scans that he directs himself.

The two characters share the same vision upon charity and humanity. If you can impress and wring tears from one's eyes then you have found the shortest path to one's wallet. They are both aware that the business is becoming more and more difficult as people grow more and more indifferent and hard to impress. This sudden petrifying of the human heart is the result of the oversaturation and overexposure to the same images and slogans. This is where they come in. nowadays they would be called image consultants and their job: rebranding. *"Arousing one's pity, that's the challenge! In life there are only a few things capable of touching a deep cord in someone's heart. Very few! And the bad part is that once you've used them a few times they lose their power. And that's because the human being has this horrible feature of growing unfeeling as he pleases".*

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[1] I am very happy for this young couple. Here, at the Foundation, we start from the idea that it's better to really help ONE MAN than giving a bit to a lot.

Pepe's reply is similar: "*The mechanism of pity has never preoccupied you? It's a very interesting domain indeed. What's that secret engine that's actuating human compassion? I'll tell you: it's always a story. If that hand, that's reaching for charity, doesn't tell a story then it stays empty. Compassion is very important for me; it's sort of my area of expertise. My business. I'm an expert in wringing tears".* There you have it: two different societies, two different countries with different economies and different living standards and still...these two characters prove that some things remain the same, are somehow universal, namely: the opportunist stereotype and human indifference. Here one may argue that poverty awakes this monsters; indeed, but poverty without indifference could not generate this blamable yet ingenious occupations by itself.

Pepe and Peachum have theorized begging, elevating it, almost transforming it into a science. Hence the typologies they have created. Peachum divides misery into fundamental categories/types "capable of melting the human heart". Therefore beggars can be: a victim of modern traffic, the so called cheerful cripple; a war victim/the veteran; the victim of the industrial peak: the pitiful blind or the High School of the art of begging and the poverty-stricken gentleman. Of course that every one of these "jobs" comes with its own equipment[2]. Nonetheless Peachum is not the only theoretician of begging. Pepe himself names more types of the beggar. There we have the intellectual in the gutter, the crazy painters[3], the lethargic violinist[4], the poor crazy bride[5], the homeless film-director[6], the Metrorex orphan[7], the

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[2] Theese are the fundamental types of misery, capable of touching the human heart. When he witnesses one of them he enters a abnormal state: he's willing to give money away. Equipment A: the victim of modern traffic- the cheerfull cripple, always in a good mood, yet he receives simpathy for being handicaped. Equipment B: a war victim. He's shaking all the time pestering the pedestrians, disgusting them, but they admire him because of his war medals. Equipment C: a victim of modern industrial technology – the pittyful blind or the High Art of begging.

[3] I've got plenty intellectuals in the gutter! I need some crazy painters! But you are one of "unemployed with a diploma".

[4] The sad violinist who can't even play, that's how desperate he is...How sad. The catch is he's never played in the first place; he doesn't have a clue, the violin is just a prop. We even had to teach him how to hold it. But people give him nonetheless...

[5] You dress her up real nice, in a wedding dress and you send her over to churches with a picture of her recently deceased husband. Make her a banner that says: "My husband will be right back. He went to see God and he told me to wait here..."

[6] Film director. Make him a board that says: in Ceausescu's time I was making movies. Now Sergiu Nicolaescu is in Senate and I'm unemployed and ill.

[7] Crap! Aids doesn't work in Romania, here people die of the common flu. Can he sing? I'll write him a little orphanage song that he can perform in the metro.

double-crippled veteran: blind and hamstrung[8], the empty carriage mother[9] and businessman in distress[10].

The resourcefulness of our characters knows no boundaries. The indifference of regular people stimulates their creativity and their minds trump up different stories every time. If Peachum gets his inspiration from the Holy Bible Pepe makes up his, as he goes along. Their occupation makes the difference between the half-wit free lancers and the organized fortunate beggars. They place themselves amongst the poor and needy, which they understand and help, even if that is for a fair share.

Both Pepe and Peachum know it all, they have years of experience behind and now the time has come to disseminate, to pass on their knowledge and know-how. Although at some points they strike you as know-it-all, they always manage, and this is solely the merit of the authors, to maintain an extraordinary sense of humor that sweetens the pill for their apprentices and reinforces the connection with the audience. As ill-natured as they are, yet they manage to remain very charismatic and funny.

Peachum takes Filch, an independent beggar, under his wing and all through the play he gives him "carrier advice". It's he to whom Peachum explains the fundamental types of begging, he is the one to run the errands, being the one entrusted with the vote of confidence, he becomes sort of a personal assistant, Peachum's ears and eyes. Being a kind and caring person, Filch's odds don't look bright: "He feels pity! You'll never get to be a true beggar! You're just a poor sucker!"

Pepe has an apprentice of his own, a high school Literature teacher, Ovidiu, who likes to think himself a writer. Ovidiu lives with his parents although he's in his 30's and desperately needs money to date young model. The lack of money pushes him right into Mr. Puiut's grabbing claws. As useless to the business initially as Filch is, he's not spared of Pepe's scorching remarks regarding his occupation, income and high moral standards: "Can you see them? This are the meager, the free-lancers as you may call them. Nobody

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[8] No, this one you dress as an officer with a lot of medals. You leave the crutches; you blind him with ping pong ball and give him a sign: my eye and leg are still in Stalingrad.

[9] You give this one a baby carriage with a doll. The doll must be all rags. Text: At least this little one must survive.

[10] Sometimes you mustn't wear rags in order to get charity; this is something the government morons haven't understood yet.

coordinates them, they earn basically nothing and they are useless to society. Kind of like you". Pepe's attitude towards Ovidiu is sometimes almost fatherly-like. The learn-as-fast-as-you-can-for-your-own-good speech is structured around personal experience and know-how and it has a sort of personal input. The emotions and moral standards are redundant and they must be removed because society doesn't allow human weakness.

> "Your dignity? With what you earn you think you can afford a dignity? Let me tell you a story. In the '50s, when I was young myself, I wanted to be great writer, just like you. Do you know how much that crotchet cost me? Five years in Jilava. The comrades didn't appreciate the manuscript. There, in the big house you find what the catch with the whole dignity thingy is. A cigarette for the guard. A day of dignity. No more cigarettes? Be careful when you bend. And after five years when I got out what do you think I found out? That outside is no different. So you can take your dignity and shove it up your ass so others don't shove theirs. And when you have enough dough to support it you can take it out and make a nice trophy out of it and put in your library."

When he finds out what drives Ovidiu to make more money Pepe is really disappointed. You may say he's offended that all his lessons were overlooked and ignored and that he muddled through them:

> "Do you see all the nobodies that walk pass you every day? Millions of nobodies... when you first came to see me with this innocent nobody face what did I say to myself? I said: "this kid wants to be somebody; he wants to learn a trade". There are three basic jobs in this world: wealth, poverty and sex. You can make a living from every one of them. But from love and writing you'll starve, you idiot! You'll die for nothing! You flunk teach. Get started on your reading. Come see me and impress me. Touch a string, wring a tear...tell me a story about the poor girl with the matches whom you want to help, what does she crave for: a fur, a little apartment?"

How do they see the institutions of the state? Actually they get along pretty good; in order for a mechanism to function all the parts must work together. They see themselves as an institution; they have the power to set into movement hundreds of people. Peachum directs a poverty/misery march to disturb the coronation procession. Pepe has a network of beggars that communicate between. Their informal information network work as a charm and they are extremely efficient. Peachum explains to the beggars the inner-workings of the rich and famous:

"You would have rotten in Turnbridge's pit-hole if it weren't for me to work my brains out in my long sleepless nights how I could make some money out of your misery. And I've discovered that the rulers of our world can create poverty but they can't look it in the eye. They're weak and narrow; just like you [...] still they're not able to see a man faint from hunger in front of them in cold blood."

Pepe has the same amount of respect for the wisdom and competence of the state and its institutions. This frightenly smart people with their natural born sense of making money out of thin air are the brave mouth that shouts out loud the shameful truth: *"You think small: there's no shame in asking, shame is in not getting. The Romanian state is begging for years now, in Europe and America alike, without shame, the problem is nobody gives a penny. It's their problem if they choose to work with amateurs."*

3. "You feel sorry? I've got your money!" instead of conclusions

This sketch gives the borderline of the resemblances between the two characters. A more profound analysis on this subject could reveal many more. Even more so this confrontation left the characters unchanged.

Open for meditation or not the speech of both characters is structured around big themes: like charity in a society without pity, indifference, poverty, human misery and the holy penny. Even though the two authors have apparently no connection, their characters share a strong bond. In the way of universal human issues there can't be any differences strong enough, even if they are economical, temporal or spatial.

Both Bertolt Brecht and Nae Caranfil have managed to create two monumental characters of such complexity that is practically impossible to demonstrate in a mere work. Although they are anti-heroes, the bad guys, you can see the love of their creators in them. The rest of the characters, the big themes and ideas are all structured around Pepe and Peachum.

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ON "SIX SHOOTER", MARTIN McDONAGH'S 2004
SHORT FILM OR RATHER ON THE SURPRISES
THAT A SIX SHOOTER CAN HIDE

ADINA URSU

ABSTRACT. Our attempt is to highlight, as much in detail as we are able to recall, the most important moments in our first contact with a relevant cinematic piece of art of our choice. We have chosen Martin Mcdonagh's "Six Shooter" not only because it is the most recent film that had such an impact on our perception as both performer and spectator, but also because it revived our taste for short-films, a genre withhold in high esteem.

Keywords: Film, Theatre, Audience studies, Spectator response

I was rather late in finding out about this short film. I actually heard of it long after its director had been already nominated to the Oscars for his feature film "In Bruges" and had won the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay. Only then, did someone in school mention that I should really take a look at his short film too. I did watch it , but unfortunately not on a cinema big screen and that I truly regret, to this day.

Oddly, I didn't read anything in advance on the film, nor on its director, although it is unlike me not to access the IMDB or browse Wikipedia a little. Anyway, I only did that after watching the film and due to my ignorance I must have had my chance at really, genuinely being surprised and delighted about it.

As I was already familiar with "In Bruges" I was kind of expecting black humour, but I had no idea that McDonagh had such affinity with the theatre. After watching the short film, I was going to read about the success of his two trilogies "The Leenane Trilogy" and "The Aran Islands Trilogy" and also about his play "The Pillowman".

The dramatic or should I say theatrical style of McDonagh's directing is complementary to his scriptwriting style, while, paradoxically, the two always antagonize in a very energetic fashion. Probably due to my professional

training, I am rather inclined to believe that such theatrical sense of "staging" and such ability to use turning points, as well as the natural instinct for surprise elements - that maximize either the comical or the dramatic effect - can only be acquired, "learned" or rather smoothened through work in theatre. It seems to me like McDonagh had plenty of that.

The film is around 27 minutes long. The first 3 minutes are cleverly, although classically allotted to presenting the main character, performed by Brendan Gleeson, who would go on to performing alongside Colin Farrell in "In Bruges". During these first 3 minutes, Mr. Donnelly is informed that his wife has passed, he exchanges a few words with the doctor, in a most British-like manner, he spends a few last moments alone with his deceased wife , to whom he has brought a photo of Danny; no, not their son … a rabbit, actually.

The next sequence shows him standing alone at the train station, waiting for the train, no doubt, but also subtly expressing loneliness and grief. Long shots, from various angles, alternating close - ups and medium shots, much expressivity of the character, all these facilitated my entering a state of immediate acceptance, especially since I could not predict what was going to follow next.

Then enters Ruaidhrí Conroy's character, a young man already passenger on the train and the story starts to unfold and roll in a frantic, absolutely captivating manner.

I find it relevant to mention several things that for me erased the border between real and fiction: firstly, this second character's colloquial speech, at fast pace, with a charming Irish accent, then, the fact that all characters' backgrounds have a common element, that they share a common experience, which becomes apparent quite soon but reveals its relevance later on, also the murder-like suicide committed on the train, that becomes utterly absurd as far as the instigator's behavior is concerned – transforming the plot into a bizarre "Conan Doyle meets Becket meets A. Christie meets Poe" eclectic story.

Moreover, the lively dialogues, the anecdotes and the whole *road movie meets thriller* atmosphere made me eager to accept and barely able to wait for whatever was about to happen next, no matter how odd, as I was going to perceive it as only natural.

To my mind, "Six Shooter" as a cultural product, aims not only at a various, miscellaneous target audience, but perhaps also at those with a passion for film and theatre, at those finding a certain satisfaction in

recognizing certain acting techniques, or in spotting various characteristics of the shooting style, or other elements that have to do with the director's vision.

Surely, more often than not, short films have a particularly dense structure and at least one turning point in the end, which is probably why, as I noticed at the film festivals I attended, many young people from the audience prefer short films. It most probably has to do with attention span range, and also with the fact that, in these cases, satisfaction comes sooner.

Moreover, although I usually boast with a high level capacity of anticipation, the predictibility of the short film in question was reduced to a minimum. Surprises kept my senses alert, facilitating the state of acceptance. At no time did it seem to me - as it frequently does- that the scenes were linked in neither a far fetched manner, nor that there was too much information. On the contrary, I think "Six Shooter" is a most organic piece of art which proves that McDonagh, as Tarantino (despite the fact that, beyond resemblances, their styles are also quite different), really knows how to tell a story.

On the other hand, the "amorality" suggested by the director and the script writer Martin McDonagh, as well as the ludic dimension of the film recommend it to a wide range of receptors, but requires them to have in common a sharp sense of humor and the habit of NOT judging in terms of "right" and "wrong", "good" or "evil", "moral" and "immoral". This leads me to conclude that a different training background and a less rational nature than mine would have definitely altered my perception on the film. I also seriously doubt that screenings of this short film would be allowed in a totalitarian society.

Which brings me to the cynicism in the film, cynicism that I, without hesitation, identify mine with, but which does not, in any way, prevent "Six Shooter" from having a very, very sensitive dimension too, as far as I can tell. Thus, I cannot help but saying that the film in question is a quite elaborate piece of work, and its making must have required a great deal of skills.

To my mind, beyond the metaphors that the director plays with, well disguised by a sort of British humorous realism, McDonagh gives life to a universe of paradoxes, ruled by chance and accidents, in which suicidal impulses spring from thoughts lingering in excess over the idea of an impotent divinity, and the only **salvation** comes from playfulness, games and stories, when it doesn't occur accidentally, of course.

People living in this universe are condemned to cross their paths and bear with each other.

As far as I am concerned, much of my personal vision upon the world is contained by McDonagh's vision as presented above. That is probably why I was able to easily relate to the truth in his discourse and to identify myself, at least partially, to certain situations. As it turns out, I have also had my share of traveling by train and I can also relate to the occasional oddness of interacting with one's traveling companions. Of course, my own experiences never went as far as the characters' in the film did, but the overlap that I spotted between the two (my own and theirs) led me to the conclusion that "Six Shooter" as a a cultural product, has not only aesthetical value, but also identification potential and much cohesive, not to mention symbolic, and even experiential value.

Even though we are not talking about a film with an optimistic message to convey, I do recall that after watching it the first time I couldn't help being taken away by this incredible *joie de vivre,* and I even empathized with Brendan Gleeson's character, which hadn't happened to me in a long, long time, although, I confess, I never miss the chance to see a new theatre performance or to watch a new film.

Ruaidhrí Conroy's character is by far one of the most intriguing "bad guys" I've come across in a long time and I was mesmerized by him all along watching "Six Shooter". Perhaps the reason why that happened is precisely the double relation I had with that part, or character: on the one hand, as a spectator, I found the character intriguing, credible and frightfully ambiguous, appearing to be so innocent and naturally playful, that he crossed the border of abnormality.

On the other hand, I've always wanted to play such a part. I've been trying to "take notes on" or to watch and learn how to create a so called anti-hero, but what Conroy managed to do was remarkable, even though his loquacity reminded me of Guy Richie's films.

I would like to point out that it was my encounter with "Six Shooter"[1] that triggered my urge to find Martin McDonagh's plays which I started doing with the same expectancy and sense of possibility that I had years

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[1] http://www.slantmagazine.com/house/2007/10/european-overload-the-latest-from-cinema-16/ "Essentially this is the film the horrendous *Smokin' Aces* wanted to be, and in ¼ of the time. It genuinely looks at the way people cope with death while also getting a rise out of the hilarity that often surrounds the bleakest of scenarios. Given its grim indulgences, it's nothing short of amazing that the film won the 2006 Oscar for Best Short, and one can rightly assume that no previous winner in the Academy's history featured an entire sequence concerning a cow with trapped wind".

ago, while making acquaintance with Sarah Kane's plays, one of which I actually performed. To sum up, I would only say that my crossing paths with McDonagh's work revived my taste for short-films, as well as defusing tensions I did not know or had forgotten I had had - some of them, on a professional level, such as adding "flesh" to a character and so on and so forth; others, referring to various, more or less philosophical, matters.

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STAND-UP COMEDY: A SELF-EXPERIMENT
(WITHOUT ACTUALLY STANDING UP)

RAUL BOTHA

ABSTRACT. Comedy comes first and foremost from observation. It is all about being open with all your senses to the world which is constantly signaling. And this might mean a shift of view. Looking at things differently, listening to everything that surrounds you, observing the emotions that take place inside of you and then finding the way to express all these in a funny yet meaningful way. Because, as somebody very well put it, there is something to get, as in to understand, which the stand-up comedian must transmit to the audience.

Looking at life through the humor glass, questioning every single thing that surrounds you, every notion you believe is firm and rooted into our conscience, every belief, every stereotype action we do, every prejudice we have upon ourselves and others and remarking the things people are oblivious of but are there - now that's a place you really want to explore bringing funny along with you. It's accessing knowledge like no other means can; it's basically an act of courage and freedom.

Keywords: Theatre, audience, society, stand-up comedy

> ***To joke non-jokingly and not to joke jokingly.***
> Anonymous

Comedy has been around my family ever since I caught awareness of myself, which was sometimes before I was born. In other words it's in my genes, or to be more precise in my parents' genes, especially my mother's, who got them from her mother – an authentic peasant woman by all means. So, humor and humoresque was always around the house, making it noticeable under various forms, invading the entire space of my being with its fragrance. We would laugh of things, situations and people. That's right. We would particularly laugh at people in things and situations.

Paradoxically though, by constitution, I used to be very serious all the time. I actually had my own response to emphasize this statement.

When people came to me asking: 'What is your name?' I would promptly reply: '*I'm a sheeeoush man!*' And for some reason they would find this very adorable, because I probably sounded like a little Italian Mafia Godfather 'Shaay, I'm a sheeeoush man. I don't do names, lady. Hey Tony, whack 'em!' And they got accustomed to this and I got accustomed to be a 2 year-old Italian mob *sheeeous* as well.

But then, as I gradually grew older, underneath the crust of seriousness I developed a counterpart nature, the gluey, mushy non-serious me. And I would mostly use this me only in comfortable contexts, at home or with close family and friends. In time I began experiencing the mere feeling of being the subversive Italian Mob Godfather who is breaking the law, in this case the law of gravity (and here I mean the law of the utterly serious and solemn... honestly I had nothing to do with breaking the other law...I wasn't even in town that weekend) and other severe aspects of life in order to expose the funny.

Now, where does stand-up come into place?

In my first college years I used to watch contemporary stand-up comedians like Jerry Seinfeld in his last stand-up show *I'm telling you for the last time*, Pablo Francisco's vocal impression of Don LaFontaine, "the Movie Voiceover King" (Wikipedia citation). Then there was George Carlin just about funny on serious matters style and Gabriel Iglesias' fluffy autobiographical humor. But, naturally, needs and tastes change and I noticed that except for Gabriel Iglesias, the first three are not as funny as they used to be.

In the meantime came *Whose line is it anyway*, a comic improvisation TV show which is not a stand-up show but has many elements of the stand-up. Or should it be vice versa? Stand-up extracts many elements out of stage improvisation? Let's say they intermingle. The sole difference is probably that stand-up is mostly alone, while improvisation is a group thing, like theatre plays. And I like group thingies.

Then, a couple of years ago I discovered Eddie Izzard's (a British transvestite) approach on comedy which so far seems to best satisfy my comedy taste and needs. And for about a week or so I'm doing laughter therapy viewing his shows and reading books on stand-up phenomena. The first piece I have seen with him was on languages, which I came through by accident. Here's a transcript on learning French:

I learnt French at school
up to the age of (mumbles). Then I kept talking it endlessly after that.
At school, the first page I learnt in French was full of things that are
difficult to get into conversation.
"The mouse is under the table." La
souris est en dessous de la table. Just slip that in
when you're buying a ticket to Paris.
"Le train a Paris, oui?"
"C'est ici? C'est maintenant?
Cinq minutes."
"La souris est
en dessous de la table?"
The other line was, "The cat is on the chair." Le chat est sur la chaise,
slightly more easy to fit in.
And, "The monkey is on the branch", le singe est sur la branche,
very difficult to get into a conversation.
Not a lot of jungle in France.
Monkeys thin on the ground. Thin in the air. Just generally pretty trim
And, yeah. So it just wasn't working.
We go to bars and cafes. That's where we go. We sit there and we have chats in
the cafes.
"J'aime beaucoup le cafe, le cafe noir et tres fort, tres chaud.
Avec une cuillere dedans. Ahhh.
We go and get hotel rooms –
"Vous avez une chambre, monsieur?"
"Oui, nous avons les chambres,
nous sommes un hotel!"
"OK, je voudrais une chambre
avec un grand lit, a large bed,
"avec une vue de la mer,
a view of the sea.
Avec une douche.
With a spider."

"Oui, monsieur."
"Er...c'est chambre monsieur."
"merci beaucoup. Mais -
la souris est en dessous de la table,
le chat est sur la chaise
et le singe est sur la branche."

"Quoi?
Il y a un singe sur la branche?
Le chat? La souris?
Ou est le singe?"
"Le singe est sur la branche."
"Est-ce que le singe
est dans la chambre?"
"Non. Le singe n'est pas dans la chamber. Michelle est dans la chambre
avec le President de Burundi."
The only way I could get that into a conversation was to go to France with a cat, a
mouse, a monkey, a table and a chair and wander round heavily wooded areas.
"Come on, come on.
Someone's coming. Quick, positions.
Les positions, maintenant!"
"Boulot! Boulot! Tout de suite! Vas-y, vas-y.
"Bonjour!"
[French guy impersonation] "Eh, bonjour. Qu'est-ce qui se passe?"
"Bonjour, je suis Anglais,
je suis ici en vacances. C'est tres belle ici,
les couleurs, les bras, tres belle."
"Ouais, ouais.
(Inhaling) "Ouais, ouais.
"Tu es un travesti?"
"Ouais, je suis un travesti,
mais pas un travesti typical.
Je suis un travesti executif.
Un travesti d'action."
"Tres bien."
"Mais la souris est en dessous de la table, le chat est sur la chaise et le singe est s...
Est...
Le singe est disparu."
Cos the monkey would fuck off.
He'd do his own thing.
He was a bloody monkey.
He was a cheeky monkey.
He knew my French wasn't good,
so he'd go and do things.
"Ah, regarde -
il est sur une bicyclette.

Il joue au banjo.
Et il fume une pipe.
Maintenant il arrete,
il lit un journal, il a un journal.
"Et maintenant il est dans l'autobus!
Il conduit l'autobus.
Et Sandra Bullock
est dans l'autobus!
Il y a une bombe dans l'autobus!
Il faut conduire l'autobus
plus de kilometres par l'heure.
Et Keanu Reeves! Lo!
Il arrive dans la voiture!
Il a pas de cheveux
et Jeff Daniels est deja mort.
Regarde, il se jette dans l'autobus.
Et Dennis Hopper, ooh,
Dennis Hopper, quel mechant!"
That was the film Speed in French.
Which in France
was called La Vitesse.
Or it should have been. But in fact, it was called Speed.[1]

Comedy comes first and foremost from observation. It is all about being open with all your senses to the world which is constantly signaling. And this might mean a shift of view. Looking at things differently, listening to everything that surrounds you, observing the emotions that take place inside of you and then finding the way to express all these in a funny yet meaningful way. Because, as somebody very well put it, there is something *to get*, as in *to understand*, which the stand-up comedian must transmit to the audience. And often people best respond to things or situations when they can actually relate to. Like in Eddie Izzard's example above: the topic is simple – the difficulties of putting into practice (in real life situation) the foreign language sentences we are taught in class. I believe very few people don't go through that experience, as a result most of them can *be* in that story.

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[1] Transcript from his show "Dress to kill" (recorded 1998, San Francisco). This is a section on languages. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1hJQsvoY6VU starting at 4'05"

From a perspective point of view, Eddie Izzard's story above shifts angles/settings about three times: first he's at the hotel getting a room in France (first story), a very real situation; then he fictionalizes by adding questionable verisimilitude to the story, which practically resets the whole context:

> The only way I could get that into a conversation was to go to France with a cat, a mouse, a monkey, a table and a chair and wander round heavily wooded areas.

and starts another scene with a stereotype local Frenchman. Yet, when the punch line should occur,

> Mais -la souris est en dessous de la table, le chat est sur la chaise et le singe est sur la branche.

he plays again with people's expectation by making the monkey disappear, and reappear in the French version of the movie *Speed*, which takes quite some skill and hard work in developing it. That's why people usually say that it takes years to polish one's act in order to make it fluent, from a narrative, performance and quality point of view.

Well, that's how my comments would sound if I were to embed a researcher's discourse and voice it into this paper.

But, moving on…

Looking at life through the humor glass, questioning every single thing that surrounds you, every notion you believe is firm and rooted into our conscience, every belief, every stereotype action we do, every prejudice we have upon ourselves and others and remarking the things people are oblivious of but are there - now that's a place you really want to explore bringing funny along with you. It's accessing knowledge like no other means can; it's basically an act of courage and freedom. Ultimately it's all about self-discovery; it's about getting as personal as possible. That's why, when it comes to stand-up Jay Sankey points out that is not something you do, is more of something you are.

It's quite good I should say…

But then, everything we do and care about starts influencing our lives. In my case, I began having insomnias, and I kept finding myself in the middle of the night thinking the unthinkable: if we should pray for our enemies, should we pray for the devil too? Is there anyone praying for the poor bastard? I mean

he is probably quite lonely, left-out and uncomfortable not being mentioned in a single prayer. And the sort… It's quite amazing once you get in that *whirlpoolish* state of mind. It's humor everywhere. It's like awareness. You start to see life as never before.

Indeed. Jay Sankey also notices: laughter is a *release of tension*[2]. Personally, I would go as far as saying that getting the laughs is often a secondary aim. You just want to feel good about yourself and know that others appreciate your humor and you are accepted and praised among them. Yeees, that's the hidden drive…

When telling a joke, Mr. Sankey continues, the comic challenges a convention or taboo, creating tension and people laugh[3]. True.

In Jay Sankey opinion stand-up comedy is telling believable lies to make people laugh.[4] This brings to mind a story with a 5 year-old kid who was asked on the beach by some strangers: "What grade are you in?" he replied "I'm seventh grade". "That cannot be", because to tell the truth it did show he wasn't. "Alright, alright, you caught me. I'm actually 2nd grade." And they bought it. They actually believed it. I know it for fact because it was me.

In stand-up I believe there is already a convention. People *know* they are going to hear things which might not be real in fact, but are mere possibilities of life's different, materially unexpressed facet, and they are fine with that as long as they get a laugh. But I see it more as an alternative reality to what is known or what is considered status quo.

I have never done formal stand-up comedy as far as my life is concerned. Virtual stand-up, now that's a totally different thing. I have done virtual stand-up as well as pseudo stand-up and life stand-up, and sit-ups too. But actual stand-up, no, I haven't. But I could talk to you about it for pages and pages, because that's what we learn in school. To talk about things we've never experienced and make it sound verisimilar. If that is not paper stand-up than I don't know what is.

But virtual Stand-up is a mind opening experience. It's a sharing type of experience. You can actually find humor in every messy situation you're in and in contexts where you would normally freak out. It's a very liberating feeling, cathartic I might say.

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[2] Jay Sankey, Zen and the art of stand-up comedy, page 2.
[3] *Ibidem*, p.3
[4] *ibidem*, p.3

Oh yes, and finally I should add: real life stand-up in real life situations - that's the closest approach of reality.

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__Theatre and Film Studies__

THE DEFINITION OF ACTING REVISITED: MEISNER AND KIRBY

EBERHARD SCHEIFFELE

ABSTRACT. This article will explain and take apart the definitions of acting given by Meisner and Kirby. While they at first seem very different, we will be able to establish a correspondence taking into account that there are different degrees of acting. Meisner's definition will be seen as the more useful one, especially for the actor and acting teacher. He focuses on the quality of acting, whereas Kirby emphasizes the quantity of acting. Kirby's definition assumes a level of exactness in comparing different instances of acting that will be shown to be unattainable.

Keywords: Theatre, Acting Theory, Group Theatre

On Meisner

The nature of acting and how one can best accomplish this elusive task has puzzled most theatre practitioners and theorists at one time or another. Among the many attempts to answer this question, Sanford Meisner's definition stands out, both for its theoretical clarity and for its usefulness in actor's training.

Sanford Meisner (1905–1997) was a member of the Group Theatre in the thirties in New York. For 55 years he had directed the acting program at the Neighborhood Playhouse School of the Theatre. His teaching has influenced several generations of actors. It was not until 1987 that a book was published documenting his method of teaching. There we can read Meisner's now widely known definition of acting as "living truthfully under imaginary circumstances" (Meisner & Longwell, 1987, p.15). This seems paradoxical at first - how can we be truthful while imagining we are someone or somewhere else?

If we take this process apart for the moment in order to explain it, we see that the actor's first task is to imagine the given circumstances, such as character (including previous events and relations with other characters), time and place of the action (including sensorial experiences such as smell or temperature), sometimes a fourth wall and sometimes the audience will be part of the imaginary world, etc.

The actor's next task is to then react truthfully to these circumstances. One of Meisner's basic principles is: "Don't do anything unless something happens to make you do it" (Meisner & Longwell, 1987, p. 34). So if the actor cries, it shouldn't be because it is written in the script (hence many Meisner Technique teachers would scratch the stage directions in scripts) or because the director said so, it can only be because of what actually happened on stage (that is to say in the actor's imaginary world - a combination of what she imagines the other *characters* and herself to be and what the other *actors* actually did, themselves living truthfully as characters in an imaginary world).

The character rarely *tries* to cry (unless she is in a scene in which she wants to manipulate someone by crying), usually she tries *not* to cry, but is driven to it by circumstances. Similarly the actor shouldn't make it her objective to cry, but rather allow herself to cry only if the emotion comes out of the circumstances.

At times she might have to hold back, but this is only effective if she first allows herself to feel the emotion. While it is moving to watch someone hold back emotions, it usually isn't as interesting to watch someone who simply doesn't feel any emotions, who isn't affected by what happens around them.[1] "But in order to hold back, you have to have something to *hold*." (Meisner & Longwell, 1987, p. 176).

The actor can only play circumstances and objectives, not emotions. "You must have a reason why you want to do it, because that's the source of your concentration and eventually of your emotion, which comes by itself" (Meisner & Longwell, 1987, p. 39). If the director wants the actor to be more angry, she doesn't simply tell him to be more angry, but rather to concentrate on the circumstances, e.g. something the other character did to him or what he wants from the other character. There is a certain language that should be used when talking to an actor that encourages truthfulness, creativity, and aliveness. Of course not all directors speak this language and a good actor should be able to translate any directions into his own language.

For example, if the director tells the actor: "When your uncle comes in you stand up and look at him with anger," the actor has to be careful not

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[1] On the other hand there are such characters, and they seem to capture mainstream culture's ideal of masculinity, such as James Bond who is all about the fact that he can pull the trigger and kill people without feeling anything, acting and appearing like a machine. Why this should be a male role-model is beyond the scope of this article (and perhaps beyond any comprehension). But one could question whether playing such a character is not more similar to modeling (perhaps the female equivalent of men acting like machines), than to acting in Meisner's sense of the word.

to just stand up like someone who has been told to stand up (which would presumably make the actor's emotion unbelievable to the audience); rather he has to translate the director's request into a statement about circumstances and motivations, something like: "When you see your uncle, you think about how he killed your father, and you want to make him afraid of you."

Initially the actor uses concentration and control to put himself in the imaginary circumstances. Then he is to simply follow his impulses, to allow himself to *be affected* by what happens in front of him, to give up control. "Don't give a performance. Let the performance give you" (Meisner & Longwell, 1987, p. 128).

The actor is called upon to be even more truthful than in real life. "You're allowed to do things onstage that you don't do in life. You're permitted to express yourself on stage and don't need to hold yourself back as you must in life" (Meisner & Longwell, 1987, p. 162). Hence for Meisner "living truthfully" does not necessarily mean to act as you would in real life. He asks us to be more open than most of us are normally. The stage becomes a safe place to be dangerous.

This approach to acting is in great conflict with our culture's principles derived from pop-psychology and cognitive-behavior therapy, who promote the ideal of not being affected by the people around us. "Don't take it personally!" (Savage, 2000; Held, 1998). In sharp contrast, many acting teachers tell their students: "Do take it personally!" (Phillips, 2000) and "allow [yourself] to be insulted" (Johnstone, 1979, p. 53). In teaching acting I have observed, that for many acting students who have adapted to our culture, this proposition is difficult to understand, and even more difficult to follow.

In Meisner's system the actor doesn't suddenly become someone else when he starts to act. Contrary to some popular notion, acting is not about hiding yourself, deceiving, or feigning. On the contrary, "Acting is the art of self-revelation" (Meisner & Longwell, 1987, p. 145). On the stage you can be yourself even more fully than in life. "Be yourself! Accept whatever comes out spontaneously!" (Meisner & Longwell, 1987, p. 173).

The tendency of acting students to pretend to be somebody else and to act from their intellectual ideas of what the character should do or feel, rather than to follow their impulses, is a problem which Meisner frequently encounters in his classes. His response: "I had to give him an inoculation. What was the inoculation? *No acting, please*." (Meisner & Longwell, 1987,

p. 128). This somewhat paradoxical phrase is frequently heard in acting classes and is of course meant to point out *bad* acting. "Don't be an actor," Meisner says. "Be a human being who works off what exists under imaginary circumstances" (Meisner & Longwell, 1987, p. 128).

After having investigated Meisner's definition of good acting, it is only natural to ask: what is the definition of acting as such, without any value judgments such as "truthful"? What is the essence of acting, whether good or bad and also independent of acting style?

First of all we note that it is impossible to decide if someone is acting by observation alone; for example we might watch a play and someone falls down, screaming apparently over a broken leg. Now it is possible that the actor actually slipped and broke his leg by accident and screamed because of the pain. Then we wouldn't say that he was acting (even if his fall was written in the play). On the other hand, if the actor fell and screamed because it was written in the play or because of the circumstances he imagined, we would say that he was acting. But especially with a good actor we might not be able to see the difference.

Similarly if during a play we see someone walking on stage, picking up a broken glass and walking off, we might not be able to tell, if it was an actor who is part of the play, or a stage-hand trying to prevent injuries. If we know the play we might have more of a clue, but it could be an original or even improvised performance.

So how do we decide if the person is acting? We could ask him what he was doing and presumably he would be able to tell us whether he actually broke his leg. Or we could look at his X-rays. But even if his X-rays show that he actually broke his leg, we wouldn't necessarily conclude that he was not acting. Maybe he was acting just like the night before, but for some reason he actually broke his leg this time.

If we ask the actor whether he was acting and assuming he answers honestly, we could hardly argue with his answer. In other words if the actor *thinks* he is acting, it usually implies that he *is* in fact acting. Acting is something the actor does consciously.

So the main criterion for acting is what was going on in the actor's mind and imagination. This leads us back to Meisner's definition of good acting. If we take the judgment out, we are left with: <u>Acting is living under imaginary circumstances.</u>

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One might suggest to replace living with performing, but while there is no theatre without spectators, it is certainly possible to act without performing for an audience, for example if I practice a monologue in my living room.

To see if our definition captures the notion of acting, we must ask: Is it possible to live under imaginary circumstances without acting? The only cases that come to mind are psychotics or someone who has taken drugs like LSD. Such a person might be considered to be living under imaginary circumstances, e.g. thinking he can fly, but not to be acting. Why not? Because acting is something the actor does *intentionally*, something he can choose not to do. And a psychotic doesn't have that choice. (If he did, we would indeed say that he is acting, or that he is faking his mental illness.)

So to exclude these cases we can modify our definition as follows: <u>Acting is intentionally living under imaginary circumstances.</u>

To this one might object: What if someone is taking LSD with the intention to live under imaginary circumstances? Should they be considered to be acting? Certainly not, the point is that while under the influence of the drug they are no longer doing anything to act. And as anybody who ever had such an experience knows, they can not just stop at will. To be acting one has to be able to stop if one chooses to.[2]

The next question we have to ask is: Is it possible to be acting while not living intentionally under imaginary circumstances? We often hear that teaching is like acting. So is a professor giving a lecture acting? I would argue that this depends precisely on whether imaginary circumstances are involved. Teaching is certainly like acting in many respects, e.g. it involves projection, communication with an audience, etc. But if a professor is lecturing to students, sharing her knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject with the people who are actually in front of her, we wouldn't usually say that she is acting - she is just being herself in the actual time and place of the lecture. She might of course be considered to be performing.

But if somehow we knew that she really hates the subject or her students, while in the lecture she acts *as if* she likes the subject, we would

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[2] A possible exception might be an actor who suffers from a *histrionic neurosis*: He can no longer distinguish between his own self and the role he plays. We might meet such an actor on the street and he starts (unintentionally) acting like Hamlet. Would we then say he is acting? This is indeed a debatable question.

consider her to be acting. But then she is also intentionally focusing on the imaginary circumstance that she is someone who likes her subject.

Another case we might be asked to consider is an actor using "tricks", such as in the following example from Vakhtangov's system:

> A performer who is directed to pace the stage and think of avenging his father's death, for example, may not be stimulated by the director's suggestion and find no inner reality in the action. But he could pretend to himself that the purpose of his pacing is to find a weak floorboard in order to fall through the stage and sue the theatre's management! (Gordon, 1987, p. 83)

Clearly the actor is still living intentionally under imaginary circumstances - the point is that the circumstances that he imagines are different from the circumstances that he appears to be living in as written in the play. One could of course question whether he is living *truthfully* and therefore whether this is *good* acting.

While for many the criterion for good acting is how it looks to the audience, independently of how this look was achieved, for Meisner it is part of his aesthetics for good acting to be truthful and to focus on the imaginary circumstances. So the actor portraying Hamlet in the above example wouldn't be considered a good actor in this view. Of course Meisner is also very concerned with the perception of the audience, but he thinks the best way to *look* believable is to *actually* be truthful.

So what about people who are lying in life? Are they acting? I would argue that this depends precisely on whether imaginary circumstances are involved. If a pupil claims the dog ate the homework paper, there is usually no acting. But when he is trying to be allowed to go home because he is sick, there may be acting involved - if he lives under imaginary circumstances. For example he may focus on imagining that his stomach feels upset, and after a while when he can feel it, he may talk to the teacher in a voice affected by his imaginary circumstances. In such cases we may even call him a good actor.

One of my favorite exercises to use in beginning acting classes is to ask students to answer questions about statements they make about themselves, which may not be (historically) true. They soon discover that they are most successful at "lying" if they choose a statement that they can imagine in detail, as if it were true.

On Kirby

Another definition of acting which appears to be very different from Meisner's was presented by Michael Kirby (1931-1997). While his essay *On Acting and Non-Acting* was first published in 1972, it is still considered to be of great importance, as exemplified by its republication in *Acting Re(Considered),* edited by Zarrilli (2002).

Kirby defines acting as follows: "Acting means to feign, to simulate, to represent, to impersonate. (...it) represents, or pretend to be in, a time or place different than that of the spectator" (Kirby, 1972, p. 3). This definition raises some concerns: Feigning and pretending are often used to denote *bad* acting and while we want to include bad acting in our definition of acting, we do not want to emphasize it. According to Meisner, "you can't fake emotion" (Meisner & Longwell, 1987, p. 87). What he means is of course that if you try to fake emotion, the audience will sense this and not be moved. Meisner and other teachers often ask their students *not* to pretend. "The foundation of acting is the reality of doing" (Meisner & Longwell, 1987, p. 16). For example, if you are supposed to listen to the other character it is important that "You're not pretending that you're listening; you're listening. You're *really* listening" (Meisner & Longwell, 1987, p. 16). Then you allow yourself to react to what you *actually* hear. And if the other person says something different (or in a different way) from the night before, your response should be changed accordingly.

Dance performances may or may not contain elements of acting. Words like "simulate" or "represent" could be applied to dancers even when they are not acting. For example, they might have been given movements that simulate or represent a struggle that the choreographer had with his brother (or more abstractly with his inner child). The dancers however might not even know that and simply perform what they consider to be abstract movements. We would not consider them actors. It seems impossible to imagine a case where an actor is acting (as opposed to representing) a character without knowing it.[3]

While for these reasons I prefer the definition we derived above from Meisner, most of Kirby's analysis can be transferred to our definition. Kirby's main point in his essay is that there is a whole continuum between acting

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[3] In ordinary language we may hear phrases such as: "My girl-friend is often acting like my mother." Presumably the girl-friend does not know this and does not do anything intentionally to be acting in this way. I would argue that this is a different use of the term "acting", which here means essentially the same as "behaving", and has nothing to do with the use of the term as related to theatre arts and film.

and not-acting. He suggests "a scale that measures the amount or degree of representation, simulation, impersonation and so forth in performance behavior" (Kirby, 1972, p. 9) and gives examples of performances with different amounts of acting. His complete scale looks as follows (Kirby, 1972, p. 8):

NON-ACTING   ACTING

| Non-Matrixed Performing | Non-Matrixed Representation | "Received" Acting | Simple Acting | Complex Acting |

Using our definition above, the degree of acting can be seen as the amount of imaginary circumstances involved. The imaginary circumstances can be divided into time, place, situation, and character. Or where, when, and who am I. Situation may include who the other characters are and the objectives. Character can be further divided and includes such elements as age, profession, habits, sexual preferences, personal tastes and opinions, ailments, etc. and also life history up to what happened before the scene, relations to other characters, etc.

To illustrate the different degrees or amounts of acting, let us look at a hypothetical but typical psychodrama (Moreno, 1946) session and observe how the protagonist moves from no acting at all to complex acting. (Psychodrama is a good example in this context, since all the different degrees of acting can occur in one event.)

As the group session starts, the participants move into the room and either sit in a circle (in which case the center functions as a stage) or sit in front of a stage of some sort. As they gather they might be introducing each other and socialize - clearly there is no acting at that stage.

After a warm-up a protagonist might be asked to come onto the stage to explore his issues. The director might first ask him to say if he is aware of any sensations or feelings he is having right now. The protagonist might answer that he feels some tension in his neck and that he is nervous since he is on the spot. There are no imaginary circumstances involved and hence the protagonist is not acting. However, he has moved a step closer on the scale to acting, since he is now in front of an audience. Kirby calls this *Non-Matrixed Performing*. "When the performer ... is merely himself

and is not imbedded, as it were, in matrices of pretended or represented character, situation, place and time, I refer to him as being 'non-matrixed'" (Kirby, 1972, p. 4).

Next the protagonist might report that he feels hostile towards his parents. The director then may ask him to choose two people (*auxiliary egos* in Moreno's terminology) to represent his father and mother on the stage, and to start telling them how he feels about them. The people representing the father and mother at first just stand there without any instructions. They are merely being themselves and don't *do* anything to act, nor do they imagine any circumstances, other than the actual ones: that they have been asked to stand on the stage representing the parents. Nevertheless, they are one step closer to acting, since they represent father and mother. This is what Kirby calls *non-matrixed representation*. "In 'non-matrixed representation' the referential elements are applied *to* the performer and are not acted *by* him" (Kirby, 1972, p. 5).

The protagonist in the above scenario has to focus on at least one imaginary circumstance, namely that the people he is talking to are his parents. So he is acting, but his acting is very simple; since he is playing himself, he doesn't have to act any elements of a character (other than himself). He might also not act any other place and time if he imagines his parents are with him on the stage at this time and he simply expresses the feelings he has right now. So this is the very first step towards *simple acting*.

Now suppose the director asks the protagonist if he remembers a typical scene with his parents. The protagonist might remember that his parents used to play cards while he had to play by himself. The director now sets up a scene asking the protagonist how he remembers his living room and using props to indicate furniture, etc. Then he tells the people representing the parents simply to sit on a table and play any card game they know (lets assume someone has actually brought real cards that are being used). Meanwhile the protagonist plays by himself next to the table, possibly giving a soliloquy about his feelings of isolation.

The players representing the parents are still not acting (assuming they have not yet been given any other directions about how to be like the parents). They are being themselves playing with actual cards in the here and now and are not *doing* anything to appear to be someone, somewhere, or someplace else. For them there are no imaginary circumstances involved.

However, they have moved another step closer to acting, since now they clearly *appear* to be someone else in another place and time. Kirby calls this *received acting*.

> As "received" references increase, however, it is difficult to say that the performer is not acting even though he is *doing* nothing that we could define as acting. ... When the matrices are strong, persistent and reinforce each other, we see an actor, no matter how ordinary the behavior. This condition, the next step closer to true acting on our continuum, we may refer to as "received acting." (Kirby, 1972, p. 5)

The protagonist has also moved further on the scale towards acting. His acting is more complex - he is imagining to be in a different time and place, that the people playing cards are his parents, that the props are furniture in his family home, etc. He is still playing himself, though probably younger, and he doesn't have to act many elements of character. He also has the advantage that he can rely on his own memory, instead of imagining the details of a character.

To go another step further we can suppose that the director asks the protagonist what he would have liked to have done when his parents were playing cards and how he thinks his parents would have reacted. He might respond that he felt like taking the cards away from them and telling them to stop playing. He thought his parents would get furious if he did that and would yell at him or even hit him. The director would then set up the scene and instruct the protagonist to demonstrate to the other actors exactly what they should do to portray his parents (this is usually done through *role-reversal*, where the protagonist takes on the role of the parents). Then the scene would be enacted, hopefully giving the protagonist some therapeutic relief.

For the protagonist this would only be a small step further on the acting scale, the main difference being that he entered what Moreno calls *Surplus Reality*, where it is possible to enact not only what has actually happened in the past, but also what one wishes or fears might have or will happen (Moreno, Blomkvist, & Rützel, 2000). This requires a higher degree of imagination, but the protagonist can still work from what he remembers about his own life. (The scenes in Surplus Reality are often the most therapeutic and cathartic, but this is beyond the scope of this paper (see Scheiffele 2005, p. 11).)

The auxiliary egos have now entered *complex acting*, so to speak surpassing the protagonist on the acting scale. They now have to imagine place, time, situation, and character. How much character they act will depend on how much information they are given and how skilled and experienced they are.

We have thus seen that all the different degrees of acting can occur even within one psychodrama session.

As quoted above, Kirby states that he has found "a scale that measures the amount or degree of representation, simulation, impersonation and so forth in performance behavior." The mathematically inclined reader might wonder exactly what kind of "scale that measures" Kirby has designed. This question is particularly relevant, since Kirby himself has been described as "a mathematician at heart" (Schechner & McNamara, 1997, p. 8).

Measurement involving a scale is usually defined as "the assignment of numerals to objects or events according to rules". This definition was first presented in the classic (Stevens, 1946), see also (Janda, 1998, p. 21). But is this really possible here or is the use of the term measurement too optimistic? Kirby certainly doesn't give any such rules.

What kind of scale do we have here? There are four basic scales of measurement, as first established by (Stevens, 1946), and now to be found in any standard textbook on measurement:

> The nominal scale assigns numbers to categories and statements such as "equal to" and "not equal to" are the only arithmetic operations that can be performed with such numbers. The ordinal scale rank orders observations and the statements "greater than" and "less than" can be made about numbers derived from this scale. Measurements that meet the requirements of the interval scale allow statements about the magnitude of differences between numbers. Consequently, addition and subtraction can be performed on such data. The ratio scale, which has an absolute zero, permits multiplication and division. (Janda, 1998, p. 38)

Clearly Kirby's scale is not an *interval* or *ratio* scale, since it wouldn't make sense to talk of one person (or event) acting twice as much as another person, or of the difference in acting degree between performances A and B being twice as much as the difference between performances C and D.

This suggests that we might be looking at an *ordinal scale*, which is simply a ranking of observations along some dimension. The only statements we can meaningfully make are about *more* and *less*, not about *how much* more. Many of the scales psychologists use are of this sort, e.g. preference or intelligence (we say one person is more intelligent than another person, but not someone is twice as intelligent as another).

However, even such a scale requires that we have a *total order*, i.e. that any two events are comparable. If we have two instances of performance behavior, can we always say which one has a higher degree of acting? It seems quite impossible to compare any two totally different performances. But even with related performances difficulties arise: Let A be a psychodrama scene as above in which the protagonist talks to his parents in the actual time and place. Now there are different ways in which the amount of acting can be increased. Let B be the same session with his brother and sister added. Let C be the scene where the parents are acting elements of character. Let D be the scene where we are taken into the past and a living room, etc. Now B, C, D are all comparable to A (they all have higher degrees of acting than A). But how could we possibly decide which of B, C, D contains the most acting?

Following our earlier definition of acting involving imaginary circumstances, two performances X and Y are only comparable when the corresponding sets of imaginary circumstances $I(X)$ and $I(Y)$ are comparable. For I(X) and I(Y) to be comparable we have to be able to decide which one contains a larger amount of imaginary circumstances. This is clear only if one is a subset of the other, as in the above example where we have $I(A) \subseteq I(B)$, or in cases where one only contains a few elements and the other a large number. In general however, our notions are not precise enough to actually count the amount of imaginary circumstances. We have no way to decide which of the sets of imaginary circumstances I(B), I(C), I(D) is largest.

So we could only have a *partial* order, as long as we can show that *transitivity* holds (this means that $I(X) \subseteq I(Y)$ and $I(Y) \subseteq I(Z)$, implies $I(X) \subseteq I(Z)$). Kirby's scale is indeed transitive, since if I(X) contains a lesser amount of imaginary circumstances than I(Y), and I(Y) contains a lesser amount than I(Z), then clearly I(X) contains a lesser amount than I(Z).

But if we only have a partial order it is not possible to assign numbers to all events in a consistent and meaningful manner - if it were we could use the numbers to compare *any* two events and we would have a total order. Of course the simple set of the five *categories* that are listed on Kirby's scale is totally ordered and the order is evident from the diagram.

Conclusion

When comparing Kirby's and Meisner's definition of acting, Meisner's definition is seen as more useful and inspiring for the actor and acting teacher, and more intriguing and interesting for the theorist. Meisner's chief concern is the quality of acting, as expressed in the notion of "truthfulness", something Kirby does not mention at all. Kirby on the other hand is mainly concerned with the quantity of acting, and he fails to make a clear argument why his considerations are important for the theatre practitioner or educator. Kirby's main point about there being different degrees of acting can be adapted to Meisner's definition, if we consider the degree of acting to be expressed by the amount of imaginary circumstances. Kirby's scale however is not a scale of measurement in the scientific/mathematical sense.

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JEWISH HUMOR IN RADU MIHĂILEANU'S CINEMA

DORU POP

ABSTRACT. What is the essence of Jewish humor and how does this kind humor come into place in movies and in cinematic storytelling? Is there a characteristic of the "laughable" in the Bible and in the traditions of the Jewish community? Or should we consider, as some authors have suggested (Eckardt, 1992), that the notion of ''Jewish humor" should be replaced with the more politically correct phrase "humor amongst Jews", since the first term is too constricting and stereotyping, while other authors, like Patricia Erens, provide arguments for the existence of a "Yiddish narrative" in cinema, attempting to identify general elements of this narrative: pathos, humor and humanity (Erens, 1984). And, if we can use the term Jewish humor, what are the fundamental elements to be found in cinema? Using the Romanian-born, French director Radu Mihăileanu as an example, I found one answer he himself has given to the set of questions on what Jewish humor is, with reference to "other" types of humor. "The Jewish tell a lot of jokes about themselves... about their mother, about their rabbi, about their accountant, about God. They are always discussing with God" (Mihăileanu, 2000). The second level of questioning refers to the general mechanism that puts into place the Jewish humor, what is its main resource. On possible answer is to be found with Henri Bergson, who, in his seminal book on laughter, Le rire (Bergson, 1901), suggests that laughter evolved to make social life possible for human beings. If we use his argument in trying to explain Jewish humor in cinema, we can start from the theoretical premise that laughter makes possible social circumstances that are otherwise unbearable for humans beings. This I believe to be explicit with Radu Mihăileanu's cinema – and I will refer in this paper to three of his movies: Train de vie (Train of life, 1998), Va, vis et deviens (Live and become, 2005) and Le Concert (The Concert, 2009), all three having in their center the problems of identity (Jewish and non-Jewish) and Jewishness as a social phenomena.

Keywords: Humor is cinema, Radu Mihăileanu, Jewish humor, Ethnic stereotypes in jokes, comedy dialogues and characters in cinema

Yiddishkeit in cinema

One central hypothesis of this paper is that there can be described a general trait (in cinema, as well as in literature) that can be interpreted as typical Jewish humor. Starting from this point, we need to ask what are the characteristics of this type of cinema? It was Judith Goldberg, in her seminal work on Jewishness in cinema, who suggested this key distinction, the

existence of a "Jewish spirit", as "Jewish wit" in cinema (Goldberg, 1983). In a survey of Yiddish films from 1910 to 1961, from the pre-war Russia to contemporary United States productions, looking at authors like Joseph Selden or Edgar G. Ulmer, Goldberg makes use of the term Yiddishkeit, as the cultural mark of the Eastern European Jews coming to America and influencing US cinema culture – a mix of laughter and tears. It is also appropriate to mention that a study made during the 80's in the United States showed that 80% of the successful humor writers were of Jewish descent.

It is my contention that we need to perceive Radu Mihăileanu as a European representative of not only the Eastern European Jewish spirit, but also as a cinematographer whose work has explicit roots in the traits of Yiddishkeit – in the spirituality of Jewish artists. Identifying these traits in his movies can provide an insight into what Jewish humor represents.

Another problem is to identify some traits that can be attributed to "Jewish" cinema, in terms of characters and of stories. Authors like Omer Bartov focused on the negative aspects of Jewishness in cinema (Bartov, 2005), while others, like Patricia Erens, provided a historical evolution of the image of the Jew and the Jewess in American cinema (Erens, 1984). From the story of the Golem in the early years of "primitive era" cinema productions, to the characters played by Charlie Chaplin, and to the movies of Woody Allen, the presence of Jewish characters, directors and actors gave way to many cinematographic masterpieces.

Tragic-comic nature of laughter and the bitter-sweet taste of comedy

Bermant (1989) used this type of reasoning when he described the historical resources of the Jewish humor, starting with the reading of the Yiddish author Sholem Aleichem, in order to get an understanding of the "wryness, sharpness, rancor, irony, self-deprecation, cynicism, and pathos" which characterize Jewish humor. This type of humor can be described as having a bittersweet quality, with rather more bitterness than sweetness to it. This "quality" of the Jewish humor can be found in the classical definitions. Because tragedy and the comic seem to be always closely knit, one spinning out of the other easily. It is in the Symposium, when Socrates discusses with Aristophanes on the nature of comedy and tragedy, where we have one of the first references to the same intricate relationship between comedy and tragedy. Socrates and Aristophanes are the two participants at the banquet who are not intoxicated with alcohol, so Socrates was "compelling" Aristophanes to accept that the genius of comedy is the same with that of tragedy. Yet, at the end of the platonic dialogue, their connection remains unspoken, indescribable, since no one remembers what their relationship is about, yet it is always present and powerful.

This bitter-sweet nature of comedy is equally relevant in Mihăileanu's cinematography and in his methods of bringing out humor. For Mihăileanu drama lives closely to comedy in the purest way, as it is in the end of the Symposium and as it happens in the end of the Train de vie. The entire story of escaping the Holocaust by a fake train proves to be a simple fantasy of a Jewish prisoner. A similar movie was made by Roberto Benigni in the same year as Mihăileanu, Benigni transforms reality into a fantastic storytelling. But comparing Train de vie with Benigni's *La vitta e bella*, as Bartov noticed, *Train de vie* is more disturbing and more hilarious, because Mihăileanu, who apparently has sent his screenplay to Benigni, inviting him to play in his movie, uses a total transformation of tragedy into comedic setting. The entire plot in the Train de vie is a bitter remembrance of a tragic event, while in the same time placed into a comic, and sometimes even cheerful, context. The train itself is a bitter-sweet remembrance of the trains of death carrying millions over the plains of Central and Eastern Europe to destruction. Still, comedy irrupts from this tragical reference, this is the case in the scene where Shtrul, the train mechanic climbs into the train, without having any knowledge about train driving, and shouts "Full speed ahead to Palestine!", while Palestine, obviously, cannot be reached by train.

All the characters that Mihăileanu builds are bitter-sweet figures. Andrei Filipov in Le Concert is developed as a character being at the limit between tragedy and comedy. In the scene where he confesses to the daughter of his former first violinist, he says that his heroism of not throwing out the Jewish musicians out of his orchestra during Communism was not a heroic gesture, but one of deep egoism, because he was looking for musical perfection, and this perfections he could not reach without them. As in the greek comedy, the search for perfection is the road to destruction, because Leia, the first violinist of the Bolshoi theater is taken into the Gulag, together with her husband and they both die there. Filipov, as many other musicians in his orchestra, becomes an alcoholic, while others find marginal jobs, and others are thrown into total social annihilation. As it is explicit in the end of Le Concert, music as humor, is a way of looking for the truth. It is through music and humor that the characters discover their identity, find their meaning in life and are sometimes radically transformed. The work of art has the power to transform humanity, to restore humans to their full potential. This view of the work of art is similar in Train de vie, where the two different communities, the gypsies and the Jews start singing separately and end up as a single voice. Music and humor brings people together in Le Concert too. The 14 minutes at the end of the movie, when the Tchaikovsky concert actually takes place is the climactic point in the film towards which we are driven by comedic movements. The theory on music that Mihăileanu presents us, through the voice of one of the characters is suggestive for the entire vision he develops about comic and laughter, and finally about art. Filipov

describes it this way: „spontaneity is more important that repetition... No technique. Only soul". And the search for soul is fundamentally tied to humor and humorous acceptance of life.

It is the same in *Va, vis et deviens*, a deeply emotional and dramatic movie, yet still its comedy is fundamentally rooted in tragedy. The story of the young Ethiopian Christian boy who substitutes the dead boy of a Falasha mother in Sudan is always at the brink of tragical solution. Nonetheless, the boy grows up surpassing everything that would throw him into the pits of tragedy. Left alone after the Falasha woman dies, he is adopted by a middle class, loving family, he gets married against all odds and finally finds his real mother still alive in the camps of Africa.

The laughter of the marginals

Berger (1961) provides another approach to Jewish humor, not on the grounds of Jewish specificity, but on the basis of a typical socio-historical condition called "marginality", which in itself is independent of Jewishness (Rosenberg & Shapiro, 1959). The "margins" of society have represented the Jewish cultural background for many centuries and from this marginal position the Jewish intellectuals and thinkers were able to perceive things more clearly and, therefore, more humorously. It is the humorous capacity that allows the placement of oneself in the other's position, to look at oneself critically, and to take all serious matters lightly. Berger suggests that such characteristics are usable definition of Jewishness, and, although such traits may be seen as the products of social marginality, they are fundamentally tied to Jewish expression of social life. S. B. Cohen brings to this debate the idea that Jewish humor is not only based on the masochistic-like characteristics of the Jews (expressed in self-critical jokes), but it also has been a major source of salvation (Cohen, 1987).

I think that salvation through humor and marginal perspectives on society represent some of the most important themes in Mihăileanu's movies. This kind of humor allows Shlomo in Train de vie to cope with the detention of the extermination camp and the same is valid for the depiction of the shtetl as a point of view that allows its members to see the defects of society.

In Va, vis et deviens, another Shlomo, the Ethiopian boy, who is always out of his element, he is the odd ball even in an all-integrating world, survives because of social circumstances that are at the limits of humor. Shlomo is the non-Jew in the Jewish world, a reversed figure of the Jew in the Non-Jewish space, an eternal marginal who ends up integrating the others in his world. This continuous reversal of situations, the paradox of switching roles between the center and the marginality has the power of transformation – through the use of tragic-comic elements.

Also, the two elements come together, because in order to find salvation, it is sometimes necessary to bring the person to the margins of its own existence. This is happening in Va, vis et deviens, where the death of the Falasha boy means the possibility of existence for another human being. Radu Mihăileanu is building his stories around tragedy contexts. Go, cryies a mother chasing away her son during operation "Moses" that saved 8 milion Jews while 4 more million died on the way from Ethiopia to Sudan, where the airplanes waited for them. With Mitragedy generates salvation and sacrifice generates survival

Or, less tragically, in Le Concert, when Gavrilov, the former KGB officer prays to God at the beginning of the concert, asking the divine intervention so that the "flock" may become coherent, since none of the players have practiced. And when the Lord seems to listen to prayers, the atheist Communist exclaim: "Is it possible that you might really exist? The salvation that comes

from the margins of existence is also put into place in *Train de vie*, when the individuals are forced radically change their behavior in order to help the entire community.

Self-criticism and self-deprecating in Jewish humor

One of the authors who was among the first to write about the "Jewish side" of humor was Sigmund Freud. Although his book that compares dreams and jokes has numerous examples taken from Jewish tradition, Freud uses both his personal experience and that of his friends and relatives as a source for Jewish jokes and creates an authentic reference point for what humor is in a Jewish environment. It is Freud who first noticed that importance of self-criticism as one of the most important functions developed in the "soil of the Jewish popular life". Being Jewish and criticizing Jewish traits and defects is one of the key elements in understanding humor in Hebrew culture.

Radu Mihăileanu's movies extensively display this critical and funny evaluation of Jewish culture and traits. For example in *Train de vie*, the life in the "shtetl" is portrayed with a detached and condescending eye. Or, when the Jewish community decides to leave, their "Gentile" neighbors become worried that there's nobody left to do business with, not because of the tragical outcome of their staying. Or, in the same context, when the community decides how to disguise a part of the Jews into German officers, they face the problem of finding uniforms. Suddenly, the answer comes: "Who are the best tailors in the world? The Jews", they answer, so the end up making identical replicas of the German army's military attire.

Making fun of occupational stereotypes of the Jewish community is again and again used as a resource for humor in Mihăileanu's movies. Also in Train de vie, one of the characters is an accountant who does not want to pay for the train that would ultimately ensure the salvation of all his fellows, and he is constantly negotiating with his own men for a better price on everything. The same happens in Le Concert, where the two Jewish brass players, father and son, come to Paris with a luggage full of caviar, they are trying to sell to different restaurants. The two are prototypes for Jewish tradesmen, although the restaurant owners refuse to buy caviar (because the Carrefour supermarket has better prices), they end up selling souvenirs in the lobby of the theater, just before the concert begins, in packages that include caviar and a defective cell phone. So, while the concert has already begun, the two enter the stage with their plastic bags filled with euros, yet ready to play, in the midst of the laughter of the entire audience.

Why the Jewish humor is self deprecating, this is a question that has puzzled many authors, from Freud to Reik (Halkin, 2006). One of the answers that can be extracted from Mihăileanu's movies is that the moral inconsistency of the ethnic group is also a source of criticizing the groups that pushed the Jewish community in a tragic condition.

According to Reik, a dominant characteristic of Jewish humor is that in many instances it is directed against the Jews themselves, as individuals or as a race (Reik, 1962). Reading this attitude in psychoanalytic terms, the result of self-mocking humor represents a humorous re-evaluation of Jewish weaknesses and deficiencies where the superego invites the ego in a critical, but kind re-viewing of these shortcomings, usually associated with the Jewish attitude and way of life. But such attitude towards oneself is often the manifestation of a aggressiveness against the self which, in turn, conceals an aggressiveness against the Gentiles, against the social context which is responsible for the common deficiencies that Jewish wit seems to understand and to deplore. Reik suggests that in criticizing themselves, the Jews are really criticizing their enemies and their oppressors.

This is visible Radu Mihăileanu's technique of humorous interpretation of the Other. For example in Train de vie, the Jews that become Nazis are gradually turning into their enemies, exhibiting traits that are self critical, while powerfully enough critical towards the oppressors. In psychoanalytic terms, self-criticism is directed not so much against oneself, as against an the object of hatred.

If there is a general tendency toward self-criticism in many Jewish jokes, this is a sign of criticism directed against a hostile external object, and the laughter self-directed is more an aggression towards the cause of hostility. Reik maintains that such Jewish humor represents the triumph of the oppressed against the oppressor. Mihăileanu puts this into action in the sequence where one of the members of the community gets lost and is captured by "the real" Germans. The Jewish fake Nazis in the train decide to go into the camp of the German army and use the militarism and the respect for hierarchy to get their fellow man back. When he is recovered, after a parodic and paradoxical exchange with the German general, the lost Jew tells the members of his train cart: "Our Germans are better than their Germans. They are real "Mentsh"."

Moreover, according to Reik, this aggression embedded in Jewish jokes can be seen also as more than just oriented against human enemies. It is sometimes directed against the Jewish God himself, perceived as the symbolic source of all the suffering.

Humorously talking to (about) God

Making fun of the Creator, and joking about the Saviour himself (as Messiah in the Jewish sense, or even humorously treating the Christian Messiah) is recurrent in Jewish humor. This is also connected with the traditional joking with the Rabbis and other spiritual figures, and, as Arthur Asa Berger proves, the Rabbi jokes are an integral part of the genius of the Jewish humor (Berger, 2006)

Radu Mihăileanu's movies constantly make reference to the funny side of the Torah and of the Rabbinate. Repeatedly Mihăileanu uses the "funny side" of the Torah in the most "traditional" way, as critical-comical interpretation of Orthodox Jewish practices and customs. For example, *Va, vis et deviens* begins with a quote from the Torah, but this is used as an ironic reference to the violent moving of the Falashas, the black Jews from Ethiopia, to Israel. "I took you on the wings of a great eagle in order to carry you to me" is a quotation designed to paradoxically place the will of God in the hands of a technologically advanced people.

In the same movie, when the great Rabbi of Israel wants to convert for the second time the already Jewish Falashas, by taking a drop of blood out of their penises, while supporting the matriarchal descending of the Jews, Shlomo runs with his addoptive father in a second escape, this time not from the dictatorship of Mengistu, but that of Orthodox practices. Also, there is a embedded irony of the typical Rabinical reasoning, Queen Sheba was not Jewish, thus the Falashas need a new conversion and a second circumcision.

Parodic Rabbis and religious figures appear recurrently in Mihăileanu's comic constructions. This is the case of the Rabbi in Train de vie, who is portrayed as a hesitant, yet naïve character. Also, the Rabbi in Va, vis... who complains about the fact that nothing is working in Israel, and when Shlomo appears, the Rabbi says, can't you come gently, like the Messiah? There is another typical comical situation developed by Mihăileanu around the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. When the Rabbi asks the young pupils: Who is the founding figure of our religion? Shlomo replies without hesitation, "Jesus", and, to the shock of the classroom Shlomo continues: Because when Jesus converted, he was the first Jew to become Christian. The Rabbi sighs deeply and raises his brow in an ambivalent atittude. So Shlomo begins to learn by heart the Old Testament, trying to prove himself to the Rabbi. The result is a competition in the synagogue between Shlomo and one of his colleagues. The question being is Adam was white or

not – while his Orthodox Jewish colleague offers a "classical" racist answer, the young black (and fake) Jew provides a fundamentally rabbinical explanation: Adam is neither white, nor black, he is red, like the American Indians – which is in fact the *khiddush*, the creative interpretation of the holy texts.

Another comic translation of Jewish customs is presented in Va, vis…, when Shlomo's adoptive family, the typical "leftist", liberal household, wants to integrate him, they invite him to dinner, and while he is afraid to say the truth about his origins, his silence is taken as a sign of praying, and the entire home starts praying. The comic situation comes from the fact that a Jewish, secular family wants to pray with a non-Jew, who declines their offer. Here is a direct irony to the prejudgments of a non-judge mental group, the adoptive family believes the Ethiopians are all religious. So Schlomo is taken to a religious school in the afternoons. Criticizing the nature of the relation between the "chosen people" and God comes from the same source. After a visit in the Kibbutz, Shlomo asks Papy, his adoptive grandfather, a survivor of the Jewish-Arab wars: "Do you believe in God", and he answers, "Only when my feet hurt, or when there's a war here and somewhere else, it must be a Leftist thing".

False identity, fakes and pretenders

Most of the comic situations in Mihăileanu's movies are based on the theme of the false identity. Using the disguise and the false appearance is a way to access the resources of discussing the deep issues of identity and belonging. Va, vis et deviens is built around this profound question, who it the "real Jew" and who is the false, the pretended carrier of the true name. In the story of the black Ethiopian boy, who is given twice a false name, once when he becomes the fake "Salomon" in Sudan, and then when he becomes "Shlomo" in Israel, is the story of the search for identity of the "chosen people".

Not only the Jewish characters are false and misrepresented – as it happens in Le Concert, the entire orchestra is made out of pretenders. The former KGB, Ivan Gavrilov, assumes the role of the manager, Andrei Filipov, with the help of his best friend, Sacha Grossman, is faking the entire Bolshoi theater, while the musicians, once arriving in Paris, take various jobs, some as taxi drivers, others as furniture movers, while obviously this was their intent from the very start, they were fakes. Yet this false identification becomes in the end the true nature of the individuals and of the group. Like the orchestra in the end of Le Concert, who finds its true voice and becomes

successful, Shlomo is Va, vis... becomes a true Jew, not by origin, but by qualities and willfulness. The same happens in Train de vie, where the fake Nazis, chosen from among the villagers of the shtetl, find their true Jewishness after they mirror it to their new, false, personas.

The fundamentally comic Jewish character

There is a historical link between Jewish names and laughter, and the best example is Isaac, who is a quintessential name in Jewish (and non-Jewish) jokes (with his colloquial name, Itzik) is actually a key biblical figure, meaning exactly the "laughing one". He was born in one of the cases of Bible laughter, and in the story of Sarah (Genesis 18:11–15), where laughing is involved, this is connected especially with the promises of the Lord as being impossible, absurd and nonsensical. In this context it is relevant to bring up the argument Gregory made (Gregory, 1924) when he identifies in the Bible several sources of the laughter: the laughter of play, of contempt, of superiority, of self-congratulation, and of triumph and he also identifies the laughter of "scorn" by way of citing the Biblical text in 2 Chronicles 30:10: "So the runners passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun; but they laughed them to scorn and mocked them."

This laugh of derision is fundamental to understanding the type of humor Jewish comedy and jokes are based on. The derision can be, as it happens in Va, vis et deviens, about the characteristics of Itzik, the accountant, or about the nature of the relationship between the Rabbi and his community, or, in the tragic end of the movie, when we discover that the scorn is addressed against the Nazi capturers, since Shlomo is actually a captive and he make up the entire story only to survive detention.

The "schlemiel" as a source for character humoresque

Sanford Pinsker uses another key character that is typical for the Jewish humor, the "schlemiel". In his revised version of the original book on "schlemiel" Pinsker has added Woody Allen as representative for this traditional Jewish character (Pinsker, 1991). Using *Take the Money and Run* (1969) as an example, a movie in which Allen plays the role of Virgil Starkwell, Pinsker proves that this character is embedding all three manifestations of the disastrous character from Jewish literature. Creating Starkwell, Allen portrays a movie character who is the altogether the weakling, the "klutz" and the "schlemiel" and the "nebbish".

The klutz is the pretender, the looser who acts like somebody else, and this is a trait used extensively by Mihăileanu in his movies. In Train de vie the klutz is Mordechai Schwartz, who is forced to become a German Fieldmarchal from a woodsworksman in the shtetl.

The schlemiel is another archetype (found in Isaac Bashevis Singer's novel taking place in the mythical town of Chelm) that has been heavily "exported" from Jewish folklore, to jokes, literature and more recently the movies. He is the character that is always haunted by ill luck and by handling situations in a manner that turn into involuntary accidents.

The term "schlemiel" apparently comes from the Shelumiel ben Zurishaddai (Numbers 9:19), also called Zimri. The schlemiel is the typical Chelmite, who is the well intended fool, but who always gets into trouble and causes havoc.

A typical schlemiel in Mihăileanu's character development is Schlomo, from *Train de vie*. Schlomo is the village fool, whose ideas and actions generate the entire comical plot. In *Train...* Schlomo arrives to the Rabbi with the news that the Nazis are deporting entire villages, from "across the mountain" and that they will soon arrive to their "shtetl". Trying to find a solution, the community is blocked in the imposibility of finding one, until the idiot of the village proposes the apparently absurd solution: a false train of deportation, where the Nazis and the Jews are all Jewish. In a comical reversal of the Pascal logic, the elders of the village are confronted with the following options, if Schlomo is a fool and they didn't do anything, then they themselves will look like fools. So the elders and the Rabbi take the decision to actually deport themselves.

Andrei Filipov, the main character in *Le Concert*, played by Alexei Guskov, although not a biographically Jewish himself, is portrayed by Mihăileanu as a schlemiel, one of the key comic figures in Jewish humor.

Oy, the Jewish mother!

Patricia Erens (Erens, 1984) identifies another major theme in the Jewish humor, and in the movies exploring the resources of Jewishness, this being based on the "Jewish mother" character comedy. The Jewish mother is repeatedly appearing in Mihăileanu's humoresque. For example in *Va, vis et deviens*, the theme of the Jewish mother is manifested in all its possibilities. One instance is when the adoptive grandmother of Shlomo (the mother of Yael) comes to the house to meet for the first time the black Jew, and abruptly decides that Schlomo is "pale", black-pale that is",

she corrects, causing humor by the absurdity of her observation. Another instance is Yael herself, most explicit in the sequence when some of the parents in the school threaten to withdraw their children if Schlomo is not removed from the school. In a brief conflict in front of the school Yael shouts "you are all animals", and then starts licking her adoptive son's face, in a comic and yet tragic acting-out. Again, the worrisome Jewish mother appears in the scenes when the adoptive father demands that Schlomo goes alone to school, and his adoptive mother starts following him to school everyday, wearing a disguise. The third context is that of the wife portrayed as a Jewish mother, Rachel, the wife of Schlomo, love him for almost a decade in a twisted, yet loving manner, and when she finally returns to him after their separation, she says: "You have many mothers who love you"! In Train de vie the Jewish mother is again represented in the character of the wife of the Rabbi, who brings the elders to order, asking them to keep quiet (and they ask themselves "How can we think, if we don't speak").

The Jewish mother is a comic stereotype that endures in all contexts and situations (Antler, 2007) because it presents trans-ethnic characteristics and traits. The overprotective mother, trying to fight for her son is in the center of Train de vie - both the Ethiopian mother, the Falasha mother and the Israeli mother of Shlomo are in the center of his survival (and of the survival of an entire people). This is very well developed by the scene in the Train de vie, where Esther reads to the children a idealistic story about a fantastic and positive world, when in fact she holds in her hands the story of the Red Ridding Hood. The Jewish mother is in Mihăileanu's movie a source for salvation and of humorous solution to the problems of life (and history).

Ethnic humor and the "Jewish racism" in comedy

Christie Davies elaborated a theory of ethnic humor by (Davies, 1990), suggesting that ethnic jokes are centered around the three main themes: stupidity, canniness and sexual behavior. For Davies ethnic humor is a characteristic for people who live on the edge of a dominant nation or who are perceived as culturally ambiguous by the dominant people of the center. Raskin (1985) supported the same idea, basically suggesting that Jewish jokes are based on integration all ethnic jokes possible into its own cultural contexts. All the ethnic characteristic we can find in jokes about ethnic groups are to be found in Jewish humor. The ethnic characteristics ridiculed in Jewish jokes are, selecting just a relevant few, cowardice, untidiness, Jewish logic, attraction to money, paradoxical relation to things, family relations (Jewish

mothers, wives and Jewish). One of the most important characteristic of ethnic jokes identified by Raskin is anti-Semitism, the relations with non-Jews (the goyim) and the pogroms. Laughing at Jewish anti-Semitism is one of the most paradoxical elements in Jewish humor and, as Isaac Asimov has put it (Asimov, 1971), one has to be Jewish to be able to properly (and non-agressively) say a Jewish joke.

One of the many instances where the deep racism of Jews is criticized by Mihăileanu is in Va, vis et deviens. From one of the first scenes of the movie, as the newly saved Falashas from Sudan approach the compound in Israel where they are going to be quarantined, one of the refugees asks: "Are there many "albinos" in Israel? And the answer is: "In Israel all Jews are white". Va, vis et deviens is actually an entire movie constructed around the rejection of the Other by a community who suffered its entire history because of this. Not only that the Jewish "Inquisitors", who are searching for false Falashas, behave like monstrous others, and thus become comedy figures, but their actions are aggressively transformative. In the same movie, when the Israeli "inspector" of the Falashas asks one elder what is his name, the man answers "Adisalem", meaning new world. Since the inspector decides that this is not a Jewish name, the elder Falasha becomes "baptized" Eddy. Another powerful critique of Jewish racism goes even deeper, when it is moved at the personal level. In the scene where the father of Sarah, an Orthodox Jew, does not want his daughter to marry a black boy, his attitude is hostile beyond measure. Even if this boy non-white boy is well educated in the teachings of the Torah, the father of Sarah casts aside his daughter after her marriage with Shlomo.

Criticizing ethnic defects of the Jews is at the core of the question of what real Jewishness is. If in Ethiopia the Falashas were accused of being Jewish, and in Israel they are accused of not being Jewish, then what are they? This is, of course, an ironic way to represent one of the most important problems in the survival of the Jewish people. For example when Shlomo fights with his adoptive grandfather about the priority of the Egyptian Jews versus that of the Ethiopian ones, he is claiming that Alexandria was a shack, while Papy starts yelling, "Savage black" and other "insults" which we don't perceive as ethnic insults but as humorous ways to deal with ethnic conflicts.

Antisemitism is a central motive in *Le Concert* also, but here it takes different aspects – we witness the Communist antisemitism of Breshnev, who decides to eliminate all Jewish players in the state orchestras, and also the "positive" anti-semitism of the funny portrayal of the Jewish members

of the orchestra. But out of this conflict comes again the question of identity, because in the end of the movie, the main feminine character, Anne Marie Jaquette, discovers that she is the natural daughter of a Jewish violinist, and finding out her true identity takes place through a series of comic exchanges in her ethnic biases.

Humor as weapon against authority

In this context I want to address another source of Jewish humor, which Richard Rubenstein identified as one of the most important sources of Jewish thinking, the rebellion against authority figures (Rubenstein, 1966). This comes from a long tradition of oppression, coupled with the impossibility of open reaction to authority aggression, and with the need to deal with the tragic consequences of the Shoah.

"Oppressed people tend to be funny", said Saul Below and using this portrayal of the Jew as The Victim who comes against its Oppressor with the only weapon he has, the comical reaction, has a long history in the contemporary cinema. Charlie Chaplin's barber is one of the most powerful examples of how the victim who laughs at the oppressor uses this as an instrument for his own salvation.

This kind of humor is extensively used by Mihăileanu in *Train de vie.* One example is the son of the Rabbi, Yossi, who shaves his beard and becomes a Communist in the middle of their escape from Nazi persecution. Once Yossi becomes a fervent activist for the Communist Party, this becomes a reaction against the authority of his father. In this circumstances, the Rabbi takes no action against his son, but warns another member of the community, who is sent to town to find a mechanic for the fake deportation train: "Don't you dare come back a Communist".

In the same movie, the question of authority and the transformations authority causes on people is tackled with the character of Mordechai Schwartz, who is forced by the members of the shtetl to take the responsibility of the Nazi commander of the train, simply because he is the only one with a good mastery of the German language. As a biographical note, it is relevant that Radu Mihăileanu's father was Mordechai Buchman, and he himself escaped from a Nazi concentration camp. In the movie Mordechai is slowly transforming into a real German officer, having to face not only the authority figures of the real Nazis, but also the rebuttal of his own community. The technique, used both by Chaplin and Lubitch, of transforming the Jewish

character into its antagonistic figure, is the source of comical exchanges, that provokes the final humorous confrontation. In the same time, Mordechai is used to become the parodic expression of social darwinism, the main ideology the created Nazism. As the leader of the fake Nazis, Mordechai declares to his fellow man that "one doesn't become a German solider because one wants to, but because he deserves it, and has worked hard in order to be a German soldier". This identification with his fake authority role brings up the revolt of the other parodic group of authority figures. The Communists rebel against the leaders of the train demanding that they all "have the right to enjoy the privileges of the Germans", while his comrades agree with shouts of "Amen".

One of the most funny sequences in the movie is that when the three opposing authorities of the fake deportation train, the Rabbi, the Nazi and the Communist leaders, confront at the religious celebration. Yossi, the son of the Rabbi, together with his group of "revolting proletarians" refuse to obey the rituals of the common celebration, while Mordechai refuses to let his soldiers (also Jewish) to take off their helmets while praying as the Rabbi demands. So the "German soldiers" pray with their holly books in their hands and the full military attire of the Wehrmacht, while their Jewish tzitzis come out of the uniforms.

Social and historical criticism

Freud has explained the mechanism of humor within the internal relationship between the manifestations of the person, that is the fact that the tensional relationship between the conscious and unconscious is decompressed by humor (Freud, 1900). While the "super ego", representing authority forbids the manifestations of the pleasure seeking "id", the "ego" looks for alternative ways to release the accumulating emotional energy. Simply put, in Freudian terms jokes are ways of venting the energy steamed up by the control exercised by of the super ego.

In the same way, the repressed social inhibitions are transformed into social tensions and, similarly with the psyche who tends to make economy of its resources - and humor is an economical way to release internal emotional pressure - jokes are time saving instruments for releasing social tensions. In this respect, Jewish humor can be considered a mechanism for survival in a hostile social environment or, as Avner Ziv suggested, that the Jewish humor is fundamentally a aggressive-defensive form, used as a weapon against social enemies that are not otherwise beatable.

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Mel Brooks plays on Jewishness in History of the World (1981) using Jewish victimization as a source of laughter, picking up taboos (like the episode of Moses dropping the commandment and ending up with only two tablets) and humorously dealing with their consequences.

Radu Mihăileanu targets in his movies many of the social defects of contemporary ideologies, and one of the most important is towards Communism. Coming from a society where the Nationalist-Socialism of the Ceaușescu regime was aggressive and tyrannical (Mihăileanu actually fled Romania during the 80's because of the Communist dictatorship) the critique of the Communism is a natural and personal attribute. For example Mihăileanu uses one of the most common jokes of the Communist period in order to expose the emptiness of the Marxist ideology when he shows us the make believe "Communist soviet" in the train cart discussing about Marx. The group is reaching the conclusion that you don't need to read Marx in order to know what's Communism (and to be a loyal member of the Party). Treating the Communist regime in an ironic way means also criticizing the emptiness of authorities and of authority figures. This is the case with the French Communist Party, who is about to be evicted from its building, while the coffee shop where the ideological debates took place during the 60s (with a suggestive name, Le Trou Normand) is now a belly dancer bar for the Maghreb community. Even the attempts to save Communism are described parodically. Seeing the decay of Communism in the West, Gavrilov, de former KGB officer in *Le Concert*, wants to bring back the former glory of the Party, by nothing less than taking over the power in France and in the world. As he moves forward with his plan, we discover that he has a red dossier with the name "Parij" written in chirilic letters on it, which is gives to this forme comrade, Momo. To this, the parodic replica of Gavrilov, Momo, the member of the French Communist Party and Gavrilov's friend says the following: "We have more rooms than Party members".

In *Train de vie* the emptiness of the Communist ideology is satirized by the character of Yossi, the son of the Rabbi, who becomes a Communist agitator and tries to convince his fellow community members to become "new men". To this proposal, one of the newly adherents to the ideology of the proletarians declares: "What is the legal age at which we can become new men?". Or, in another instance, the same group starts shouting: "We are not proletarians, we are Jewish". Also, in another scene from the same movie, when the Communists of the fake deportation train escape from the fake Nazis, Yossi the agitator gives the following advice to his fellows: "It is time

for us to separate" and bids farewell to his comrades shouting: "Proletarians of the world unite", while, in the meantime, the heroic pseudo-communists scatter in the woods. Another member of the community, during his conversation with the Communist agitator declares that he wants to become a Communist only if he can keep his kaftan and the other religious attire.

Laughing about linguistic traits of Jewishness

Theodore Reik, in his book on Jewish Wit, not only develops some of Freud's key concepts from the Interpretation of dreams, but provides another characteristic (Reik, 1962) of Jewish humor. Using Freud's examples and describing the role played by the multiplicity of idioms the Jewish community utilizes, Reik describes this as a key technique. The play upon words that Jewish humor uses to generate laughter is mostly based on the caricatures of typical Jewish figures. Introducing phrases in Yiddish in the middle of "normal" conversation is used as a way to generate humor by underlying the ethnic component of the joke. This "artificial coloring" of the language provokes the comic effect, based either by the equivocal significance of terms or on their cultural relevance (as is in Freuds example with the Baroness giving birth and the doctor waiting for her to cry Ay, ay, ay, before running to her). Starting with Heinrich Heine, a baptized Jew himself, the uses of Jewish expressions of generating humor in literature are widely acknowledged.

Mihăileanu uses the play with Yiddish words in most of his comic developments. One example is the first scene in *Train de vie,* which begins with a comic movement of the entire shtetl, following the fool of the village, Shlomo, while they are all yelling "Oy, oy, oy!", in a comic transformation of the danger by humorous reference to this typical Jewish expression. This is the same when the Rabbi cries, scared of the news of the Germans approaching: "Oy wey, we deport ourselves"! In the same movie the relationship between German and Yiddish is described in a comic way. Those selected for the roles of Nazis in the fake deportation train discuss about the nature of Yiddish and of German, and they reach the funny conclusion that German is a sad and strict language, while Yiddish is the same language, but filled with love. At this juncture, one of the community members reaches the comical, yet emotionally powerful conclusion: "Maybe the Germans know we speak their language this way, and that's why they hate us!". In *Va, vis, et deviens* Schlomo make fun of Ms. Zilberman's Jewish expression "Oy, oy, oy Mein Gott", and says that this is what it mean to be Jewish.

A mix of comic ingredients: Gypsies, Gays and Jews

In the remake of the movie "To be or not to be" (made by Lubitch), Mel Brooks' character, Bronski says: "Without Jews, gypsies and fags, there is no theater."

In most of his movies Mihăileanu brings together all of these elements. In his most recent movie, *Le Concert*, all these elements are present and put into action, while in the other movies analyzed here, like *Train de vie*, the reunion of two of these elements, in a paradoxical mixture, is key to the comedy development. *Le Concert* ends with a cathartic effect on all the participant in the movie (and also on the viewers themselves) combining all these elements: not only that the typical Paris music critic becomes human and emotional, and the former KGB officer becomes a believer in God, but also the young violinist discovers her Jewish roots, while playing along with an orchestra dressed up by gypsies, and the manager of the theater kisses his man assistant on the mouth.

This total comical effect, which includes all the comic elements Brooks (as Bronski) described is evident in Train de vie, where the meeting between the fake train of deportation made by the Jews and the fake convoy of Gypsy captives is one of final and comic release of tensions. While in Train... the meeting of the two communities ends the continuous vagrancy of the Jews, in *Le Concert* the Gypsies are used as a counterpoint for the flaws of Jewishness. This counterpoint is powerfully put into place also in Train..., where the pig eating gypsies are forced to live together with the "kosher" Jews - in one scene, the guarding the cow to remain pure from the staining influence of the pig is replicated by the answer of the Rabbi: God will decide if we are impure or not.

This mixing of races (at the end of *Train...* this is manifested sexually also, Esther and Sami find Gypsy partners) and the collision of cultures is fundamental for Mihăileanu's construction of significance and of humorous solutions. The various worlds that are so separate that they cannot be in communication end up in a dialogue that provides salvation. This s a constant theme in Mihăileanu's cinema, as it happens in *Le Concert* when the first violinist of the fake Bolshoi theater is a chief of a gypsy clan, yet when he starts playing, his performance impresses the main interpret, who seems first unwilling to accept that a gypsy can play in such a manner. In a comical solution to this very much racist dilemma, the elitist violinist asks the gypsy: "How did you manage to plays these harmonic arpeggios?" With the

hand, replies the man, transforming the scene, from a heavily emotionally negative context, into an accepting and all embracing one – and this is the context where humor is used to break boundaries.

This mixture of identities and of cultures is the basis for many of Mihăileanu's situations that generate comedy. For example one of the funniest scenes in *Le Concert* is the one in the Moscow airport, where the orchestra arrives on foot, walking along the freeway in a long line, similar to the one of the exile in Egypt. This humorous treatment continues when the orchestra arrives inside the airport, and nobody has visa for France or passports. So a group of gypsies start making their passports and visas right on the spot, just before they get onto the plane. And here Mihăileanu proves again to be a master of comedy dialogues, in using Jewish negotiation practices as ironical starting point. The chief of the gypsy group tries to convince one of the brass players in the orchestra to buy a second visa, one for Morocco, as a bonus for the already fake one for Paris.

Conclusion

From The Interpretation of Dreams (1900) which was one of the first theoretical approaches to finding the mechanisms of the Witz and its relationship with the Jewish humor, to the contemporary studies on the humorous treatment of the Holocaust in a comic manner, the search for the techniques used in telling jokes, and the effort to identify the comic maneuvers of the Witz as Central European expression of Jewish humor were a constant source for interpretations. With Radu Mihăileanu's cinema all these elements are integrated in a comic narrative representative for a way of understanding and expressing humanism and human relationship beyond the limitations of ethnicity or identity.

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THE TEXT OF THE PERFORMANCE: FROM LITERATURE TO IMAGE

CRISTIAN RUSU

ABSTRACT. The performance recollection is the "mnemic" image of the play, the images in the play that we remember and that have stuck in the memory by the unbiased participation in its carrying out and representation. And the creation of this complex system of images is a development equally laborious and fascinating, equally ordered and rational, equally creative and poetic; it is, in fact, the laboratory part that most of us – theatre creators – will most frequently leave unexplained, undisclosed.

The creation of the theatrical performance starting with the text, with the reading of the text, which, most of the times, is explained to the scenographer, and not only, directly in images. This is why I believe that the reading of the text is a *zero-image* of the performance.

Keywords: *Theatre, set design, drama, text*

1. "The Scenographer's Revenge"

As scenographer, I must admit from the very beginning that I embraced Professor Marian Popescu's phrase "the scenographer's revenge" used specifically in the context of the analysis of the contemporary spectacle, in which a dominating element is the visual-media component. This is an apparent revenge, in front of the director, which I have immediately analysed in the context of teamwork. I will not go further than the initial context in which the phrase was used: I am talking strictly about the visual elements of the performance, about the area of creation pertaining mainly to the scenographer, relating to the translation of the dramatic text into a performance, and the manner in which I understand this laboratory, or, at least, what I understand by such a challenge.

The show, irrespective of its genre, is relatively short-lived, measurable, of course, in the number of representations. In the end, it can go on living in the archives, by the photo-video documentation, by physical preservation (settings, objects, costumes), by the scenographer's sketches or patterns, and by its consideration in the critics' texts (preservation of the literary secretariat).

However, a performance is also preserved affectively, in honour of its creators or (especially) of its audience. The performance recollection is the "mnemic" image of the play, the images in the play that we remember and that have stuck in the memory by the unbiased participation in its carrying out and representation. And the creation of this complex system of images is a development equally laborious and fascinating, equally ordered and rational, equally creative and poetic; it is, in fact, the laboratory part that most of us – theatre creators – will most frequently leave unexplained, undisclosed.

The creation of the theatrical performance starting with the text, with the reading of the text, which, most of the times, is explained to the scenographer, and not only, directly in images. This is why I believe that the reading of the text is a *zero-image* of the performance. And I want to start my demonstration by a brief analysis of the theatre through rebound, through considerations on the other genres of the performing art. We have text in the theatre, music and libretto in the opera. In the opera, music is the main pillar, supported by a story line and "translated" dramatically by the libretto, by the account written, then said / articulated/ sung by the performer / soloists and choir (in absence of the human voice, this genre of performance no longer makes sense; it no longer exists as genre). But in the specific case of the opera, the text / libretto can no longer be conceived in absence of the music for which it was written: the music and the text work together as a mandatory supra-text. This is a unit that can function excellently as zero-image of the performance, but the final restrictions of the translation of the dynamic images in the opera performance are a lot thicker because of the density of the fixed music-libretto pillar. Another situation may be paradoxically generated precisely by the opposite effect of this apparently rigid circumstance: the strictness of the stage situation (i.e. the dramatic situation plus the performers / soloists, plus the choir – a broad and traditionally immobile mass, therefore statutory as presence) generates power-images, representative of the performance. Approaching a composition adequate to the stage frame (scenographic/set design composition and a pleasant division of the mass – the choir) the immobility of the sequence in an opera performance may easily turn into an image emblematic for that performance, or even more, for that work. In this case, the composition and straightforwardness of the performers' play required by the genre of the performance guarantees

success keys for a powerful image[1]. Of course, the audience's imaginary contributes considerably to the projection and achievement of these scenic images; for the opera performance, the audience's imaginary is extremely important and exacting in its manner.

The dance performance is inherently related to the space, and this means a relatively empty stage space or at least a ground for free movement (where the situation does not concern dance plus scenographic installation). And in this case the choreographic writing overlaying the music will be the one to fulfil the role of the story line; it will be the choreographic account. If we assume that there is not setting, the visual will have its revenge by the compositions of the movement, by potential visual effects (lighting, video projections, etc.) that, in the end, are elements of the stage image. The basic pillar around which the image is built is the eloquence of the human body in movement, the story it describes in the great choreographic picture.

The video memory handles a considerably wide scope of (re)activation of the feelings relating to the performances witnessed. The audio memory functions in a similar manner, frequently surpassing the video one. Perhaps it is the merit of the musical piece selected from the performance, or the fact that the music, in relation to the stage image (connected to the general picture in progress) is far more powerful and intensifies its articulacy. I would recall here the case of the performance "Electra", directed by Mihai Măniuțiu, in which the folklore band Iza constantly accompanies musically *live* the tragedy characters; it is an active character of the tragedy[2]. In the case of this performance, we are right to talk about an extremely powerful feeling imprinted by the video image, and particularly by the audible one: a stamp and a distinct *land-mark* of the performance[3].

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[1] I put on stage, in 2008, at Cluj National Opera, the performance "The Rake's Progress" by I. Stravinski (director: M. Bogdan). This practical experience triggers my considerations on the ontology of the dramatic image in the performing art of the opera.

[2] The performance « Electra" was initially produced at the Oradea State Theatre in 2004, then at the National Theatre "Radu Stanca" Sibiu in 2005.

[3] Undoubtedly, this folklore mark, respectively the audible stamp of the performance was one of the decisive elements that rendered "Electra" at the National Theatre "Radu Stanca" Sibiu into an "export" performance.

2. The Time and the Story

Based on the dramatic writing (irrespective of its form) the performance embraces time; the performance progresses in time. And where it does not include a dramatic text, it comprises a "dramatic writing" that creates or at least involves that idea of text-writing as function of narrative sequencing of the performance plot. Irrespective of the epic amplitude of the account put on stage, the progress in time of the performance triggers and requires the creation of a story on stage and its reflection in the audience's imagination.

We cannot evade the story, because the story is the sublimation of time in an intelligible form, especially legible (here and there in a mythical form, but always acceptable). We attempt conformity of the dramatic time passage that we attend as participants by cultural constructs. In all of our experiences, we are observing in a technical-physical manner the passage of time; this is why most of our actions will enter a dialogue with it, respectively will deal directly with this thing and will debate straightforwardly with it; because, through all of our cultural constructs, we will attempt (perhaps illusorily) to defeat it. Practically, this is the permanent antagonism expressed by the fundamental concept *Nature versus Culture.*

However, the story is constantly reinvented by the construction of structure (the architecture), by music, by performance; we have invented (cultural) means of bypassing this (natural) passage of time by the invention and later on by the writing (for preservation of the memory) of the *story*.

The performance is time, so it needs the story, irrespective of how abstract it is.

With respect to this, a significant example of analysis is given by Michel Corvin from the book *Polieri une passion visionnaire*[4]. Corvin's premise is that the theatre is a *story* told in two steps: the step of the fictional story on the stage and the actual time of the spectator in the room. The overlapping of these two types of time drift, "creates what we call the stage illusion"[5]. Well, it is precisely the re-questioning of these lapsing times, of their nature, of their dramatic and scenic function, then of their poetics, or insofar as working components/ instruments, with an origin directly in the dramatic text (accepted in this case as final instance and maximum challenge in the

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[4] Corvin M. *Polieri une passion visionnaire*, Adam Biro Paris, 1998.
[5] I dare say that everything takes place over a third time passage: the objective time lapse as *duration of the performance*, which, not to be mistaken for the actual passage of the spectator's time – each spectator's sensitivity will influence their perception and will determine subjective time passages, generating particular reactions relating to the passage of time in the theatre.

production of the epoch), therefore such re-questioning meant, in Corvin's opinion, a big step toward the renewal of the theatre. And the notable example provided is *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett, with respect to: "it's been Beckett's genius inspiration to stimulate this new perception by his very own writing. *Godot* is an abstract play, since what it presents is simply time in pure state."[6]

In other words, we are working with a given/ implied/ word-suggested micro-image, which we compose from a macro-image created by the joining of "small" images and provided by the entire corresponding dramatic text. Therefore, by the director's poetics, the word may be translated into image, the same as the text fragments. So I will attempt explaining what the dramatic text is for the performance. Is it a *pre-text* or a *pre-image*?

It may be neither.

3. The Dramatic Text as Zero-Image of the Performance

I wonder if we can talk about literary image in the literary genre of the dramatic text. Or is this response of compiling the "sister-visual image" mentioned by Wunenburger already translated by a method of direct processing of the word-sign during the reading of the dramatic text?

> "Although, by its etymology and history, the image holds a privileged relationship with the visual representations, the term also applies to linguistic representations (the metaphor, for example). The literary image, twin system of the visual image, thus amplifies the category by a semantic procedure of justified analogy, introducing at the same time a powerful heterogeneity of mental experiences." (Wunenburger p.33)[7]

Given the above-mentioned context, I consider that the dramatic text works as a zero-image of the performance during its first reading, having as background and purpose the production of the performance. Wunenburger again:

> "The progress of the account, whether relating to authentic or fictional exterior facts, requires, in its turn, a play of images that build a history. Therefore, the images give birth to a narrative imaginary in the form of *novelistic plot*, of *story*, of *legend*, or of *mythical script*." (Wunenburger p. 63)[8]

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[6] from Corvin M. *Polieri une passion visionnaire,* p. 29, 30.
[7] Wunenburger J-J. *Filosofia imaginilo (The Philosophy of Images)*, Polirom, 2004.
[8] *Op. Cit.*

Following this logic, we read the dramatic text with the purpose of visualising the sequences; it is a form of applied reading, somehow translated in a cartoon. We pre-work and pre-create the text in images, precisely in the sense of the prefix used, of anticipation of a future decision. The decisions made at the end of the reading will be made depending on our creative sensitivities, on each of the producers' (directors, scenographers) and on the determinations required from the staging of the performance, and maybe the most important fact, on the determinations of the story.

The popularisation of dramaturgy (as well as of the great literature) used inclusively the cartoon, which demonstrates straightforwardly the story function of the dramatic text, as long as the dramatic text lends itself to this; this means that it holds narrative potential, it holds availability of being converted into image, either printed (in our case, in the form of cartoon) or animated in the form of (theatrical, cinema, etc.) performance.[9]

A "contradictory" example to such media promoted situation of the reading of a story and of mental translation into image is the extreme-contemporary text *Psychosis 4:48* by Sarah Kane[10] in which the puzzle-text provides directly puzzle-images. The operation of "story restoring", of creation of a coherent narrative at least at a first level of reading in coherent sequences pertains precisely to the show creators' resourcefulness.

However, in this case, too, since the text is apparently fragmentary and fragmented according to the author's special logic (difficult to understand), the director's task being to re-construct a state in a narrative dramatic image, the text includes poetic hints, ways of interpretation, motifs and particularly (direct or implied) images through which the (author's authentic) *hallucination* may be trimmed down to the *story*. The theme to solve will have been the arrangement of the performance image in the order of the text re-established by the director.

Wunenburger identifies in his system several typologies of images, among which the images he calls matrix. I quote: "there is a category of the semi-images or rather of the potential images, which carry nonetheless seminal information able to produce images."[11] He goes on with his analysis:

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[9] For the study of the story function, I suggest Umberto Eco who focuses in almost all of his entire work on the study of the narrative as system of communication signs (all novels plus the theoretical works *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* and *The Limits of Interpretation).* Since Eco is a great admirer of cartoons, he has written a novel triggered by the memory of the cartoon readings during this childhood, *The Mysterious Flame of Queen Luana*.

[10] Performance produced in 2008 at Cluj National Theatre, director: M. Măniuţiu.

[11] *Op. Cit.* p. 66.

"[…] because the image doesn't designate only a constituted representation, but also a representation in gestation, in progress, by means of the verbal, moving, visual, etc. forms."[12] Wunenburger retains this theoretical support in order to classify the matrix image in categories, for a differential use of the latter.

In the theatre, we use these archetypal, prototype, stereotype or paradigm-images in our poetic attempt of sensitising precisely the deep layer of the primordial images of the collective imaginary, for the communication of emotion through message.

4. Images

The scenic image is a group of signs and significations, resulting from a compositional association of the objects, of the actors, of the sound and of the lighting, in a constant relationship of semantic interdependence and all in the visual stage frame. This is an attempt of defining what I understand by scenic (stage) image (theatrical image), in the sense where we look at it singularly, only as a cut from a performance, exclusively as a suspended moment from that performance.

The fundamental difference between the stage image and the literary one (from the dramatic text) emerges here, too, because a stage image, in essence, does not pursue what Wunenburger names, "the logic of sign substitution" (as it happens in the case of figures of speech in literature). In the case of the theatrical image perceived as a summum, all of its elements are self-sufficient, but they are also incomplete, unfulfilled; paradoxically, because the element we are talking about (object, actor, sound, lighting, etc) enters the stage polished to the maximum extent; however it never lives in itself, but only in a symbiosis with the other elements with which it relates *a priori* in the poetic logic of the image construction. Therefore, we cannot talk about sign substitution in the theatre.

The zero-image of the performance, identifiable when reading the dramatic text, is therefore, a *croquis*; basically, it is an activation of the scenographer's (and not only his) imaginary, which, as the laboratory evolves toward the completion of the performance, is ordered in concrete images that are already detached from the initial skeletons and pertain to a

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[12] *Op. Cit.* p. 66.

more complex condition of expression. This is the stage on which the summum mentioned above in the *stage image* may depend and will be necessarily built on the repertoire of already refined images. And because the laboratory of the performance also evolves in time (the images function along time) and the only thing constant is the text "to put on stage", the text being the architecture of the show, it stays a source of stimulation for the dynamics of the performance images.

However, the minimum condition for the acceptance of the story delivered by the performance via its entire narration built by the sophisticated complex of images must lead to the pact with the convention: *the suspension of disbelief*. Reaching this point, the images achieved and handled by the artists should fit directly to the spectators' imaginary, so that the image registered by the spectators should be *exactly the image of the performance.* The ideal situation is the one in which what we project as image on the stage echoes on a one-to-one scale amongst the audience, i.e. according to the designed parameters of emotional and aesthetic.

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PUPPET THEATRE: THE BEGINNINGS:
WAYANG KULIT AND THE JAVANESE LEGACY - NATURAL CONTEXT

ANCA DOCZI

ABSTRACT. How history – when *history* is just a *high story* - will describe the origins of Puppet Theatre? Analitical! Exactly! *Dolls and mouth moving masks where used in rituals all over Asia, Africa, Australia. They were animated by strings or sticks....*Great! So this will explain for real the origis of Theatre? Probably yes. As some arheologists and historians could claim that puppets were predceding actors. But this answer for our modern spirit is not good enough, even if we talk about Theatre or Puppet Theatre. (Yes, the question of „what was first?" will always come in our mind) Why? Because we lost the meaning of „ritual", our *digital* thinking can not respond positive to this word. Do we need a historical explanation over the origins of theatre or do we covet to understand what real needs made humans create theatre...not as a ritual but as an animated story to watch after sun will go down? An animated story with a great apparence of life that could only be seen but not touched. The story of Wu Han and Li Wang is a relevant example of how humans desire to bring back to life their beloved ones, how they accept to see only their gost if they can not see tham in flash and blood; i would go further and i woud say that humans only belive when thay *see* things, and theatre offered tham the eyes to see history moving, the high story evolving in front of tham.

Keywords: Theatre, puppetry, China

Let's go back in 121 BC in China, during Han dynasty. The Emperor Wu was incredibly sad as he had lost his favorite consort, Lady Li Wang. He was totally inconsolable after her death. It is said that he was wandering all night in the castle mourning his beloved woman, waiting for her spirit to come in sight. One day he called a man versed in occult arts, coming from the Ts'i region, named Li Shao-weng or Li Shao-kiun. This man told the Emperor he coud make the ghost of Li Wang to appear, but he would not be able to touch her. That night he fenced the inside of a room with a curtain, lighted lamps and torches, and told the Emperor to sit down by another curtain, and look from some distance. Then within the curtain a beautiful woman appeared, whose form was that of the lady *Li*. Magnetized of her eidolon, Eperor Wu grabed the curtain but he had found nothing behind it.

The story would go in different versions. Some claim that the form was made out of animal skin some woud say that it was made out of stone.[1] No matter what material was used, what attracted me the most in this story was the real need that made the ilusion to come out. The origins of one thing can only be found in the need of that object. Can we place the birth of Puppet Theatre here as we have seen one of the first examples of Shadow Theatre? The history is a little bit confused itself. Some would say that Shadow Theatre was born in China, used in rituals and educative aims, as precursory of Puppet Theatre. Some woud say that evidence of using puppets were found in Egipt back to 2000 BC when string-operated figures of wood were manipulated to perform the action of kneading bread. But writen evidence are no longer than 422 BC from Xenophon in Simphosyum (which was writen in 381) describing some festivals from 40 yers back.

How history – when *history* is just a *high story* - will describe the origins of Puppet Theatre? Analitical! Exactly! *Dolls and mouth moving masks where used in rituals all over Asia, Africa, Australia. They were animated by strings or sticks....*Great! So this will explain for real the origis of Theatre? Probably yes. As some arheologists and historians could claim that puppets were predceding actors. But this answer for our modern spirit is not good enough, even if we talk about Theatre or Puppet Theatre. (Yes, the question of „what was first?" will always come in our mind) Why? Because we lost the meaning of „ritual", our *digital* thinking can not respond positive to this word. Do we need a historical explanation over the origins of theatre or do we covet to understand what real needs made humans create theatre...not as a ritual but as an animated story to watch after sun will go down? An animated story with a great apparence of life that could only be seen but not touched. The story of Wu Han and Li Wang is a relevant example of how humans desire to bring back to life their beloved ones, how they accept to see only their gost if they can not see tham in flash and blood; i would go further and i woud say that humans only belive when thay *see* things, and theatre offered tham the eyes to see history moving, the high story evolving in front of tham. This is the magic of theatre...making ghosts to come in sight... Giving forms to our ilusions...Healing our sadness and yarnings...

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[1] Keith Rawlings, in his online article from november 1999, called OBSERVATIONS ON THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PUPPETRY, a very well documented article in five chapters, discuss upon three stories related to this event, that he had found in Chinese history and literature books.

When it comes for Puppet Theatre and it's first forms like Shadow Theatre, a very important form is Wayang Kulit - the shadow theatre from Java, Indonesia. In this article i would only refer to Javanese theatre. It woud appear very strange the introduction i made for this subject, but as long as i want to comment upon the begings of Asian puppet theatre, it was very logical for me to start with a „*big bang*" of the phenomen, even that happend on another planet or in another time. The origins of Javanese Theatre will be found in rituals – of course – but the onirical aspect of giving life to ilusions still remain. Javanese hisorians sugest that Wayang Kulit grew out of native animistic ancestor worship in which the souls of the ancestors were brought to life as shadows in order to gain from tham advice and magical assistance.[2] Some hisotorians belived that javanese theatre found it's inspiration from the indian shadow theatre, but this theory has been widely debated with inconclusive results. The Javanese culture borrowed and assimilated many other Indian cultural elements in the centuries that folowed the birth of Christ. A lot of Wayang characters are inspired by Indian epics. „Yet, as far as we know, Indian Sanskrit drama has never been known to Java".[3]

In Javnese, the word *wayang* means *shadow* and *kulit* means *leather.* The puppets were made of lether, tinted with strong colours and some time with gold leaf. The shadow was created with lamps and tourches. By extension the concept of *wayang kulit* it also has come to mean not only the tehnicque of shadow play performance but the plays themselfes.

The wayang figures were about two feet high and they were braced in wood racks. The screen, or *kelir*, was made of cotton and supported by bamboo sticks and it was about five feet high and up to fifteen feet long. Two long stems of banana plants, placed along the bottom of the screen, were used to hold the puppets' rods when they are off stage, the good characters on the right, the evil on the left. Every aspect of the puppet's design is set down by tradition and is related to the character portrayed. Thus the audience gathers all the necessary information about the puppet's character from its appearance.[4]

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[2] **On thrones of gold: three Javanese shadow plays,** James R. Brandon, Pandam Guritno, Roger A. Long, first published by Harvard University Press 1970, this edition was published in 1993 by James R. Brandon.

[3] **On thrones of gold: three Javanese shadow plays,** James R. Brandon, Pandam Guritno, Roger A. Long, first published by Harvard University Press 1970, this edition was published in 1993 by James R. Brandon.

[4] *OBSERVATIONS ON THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PUPPETRY,* Keith Rawlings, online article, 1999

The Javanese puppeteer, the *dalang*, presents his shadow show from sunset to sunrise. He plays all the characters, makes all the voices and even conducts the *gamelan* – the orchestra that sits behind him. His role has been related to that of the priest as in Java puppets are thought to be the incarnation of ancestral spirits, and thus the *dalang* is a medium between the spirits and his audience.

The narratives themes of the plays performed in Javanese theatre derive from the Hindu epics. (Even the population today is mostly islamic – arabic, the oldest religion here is the hindusism) The *Arjuna Sasra Bahu* and *Ramayana* cycles concern the storyes of the noble Rama himself and his ancestors. Some of the favorite stories concern Rama's marriage to Sinta; their expulsion together with his brother Laksmana; Sinta's kidnapping by the monster king Rahwana and her rescue, with the help of the Monkey King from the kingdom of Sri Lanka. The *Ramayana* contains many episodes from the lives of these characters. The plays combines some of the storyes or take just one secquence. Another inspiration comes from The *Mahahharata* which descibes the conflict between the superior Pandewa brothers (Judistra, Bima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sadewa) and their hundred jealous cousins, the Kurewas, who drive them away from their home at the court of Astina, to wander in the wild. In the forest the Pandewas boosted the idealized kingdom of Amarta where the majority of the plays are set. Events are presented as taking place in Java rather than India, and the heroic Pandewas, descendants of Vishnu, are the ancestors of the Javanese kings and many episodes have simply been invented by puppeteers over generations. These stories are important as well as for the comic misadventures and intrigue of the Pandewas' clown servants, the Punakawans: Semar the wise, whose identity is thought to have evolved from that of the pre-Hindu Javanese god Ismaya and his sons. The melancholic Gareng, with his round drooping nose, is the butt of jokes and tricks played by the sharp Petruk[5].

Wayang puppets are manipulated from below by means of one, two or three rods. They are generaly known as *cempurit,* the central rod which controls the center of the puppet is known as *gapit,* and the sticks by which the hands and arms are manipulated are called *tuding.*[6] Wayang puppets

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[5] *Arts and Crafts of Indonezia,* by Anne Richters, photographer John Storey, Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 1993

[6] Today, in Romanian puppet theatre we use the same words to describe these parts of the puppet's body. (author's note)

are finely decorated: carved, embossed and painted. The carving is also visible on the shadows created on the screen, both as a whole and in detailes: the light on the shadows is sometimes created by the perforations of the puppet.[7] The complex iconography, the voice given to each puppet, the idiolect of a character and the manner of movement express in subtle and powerful ways the character of each represented personage. When the puppeter narates or during dialogues, the puppets are arranged on the screen mostly immobile except for ocasional hand movement when a puppet speaks. The way each puppet is placed on the screen (angle, heigh, arms positions, positions in relation to other characters) indicates his or her realtive importance in the scene, status in relation, mood, etc.[8] A certain character may have different *wanda (*expressions) – a character is depicted by a number of individuals puppets with subtle differnces who express different „inner" moods, from the context.

A very important and integral element of a wyang performance is the music of the gamelan, an ensamble consisting mainly in percussive instruments like gongs, metlallophones, drums. The drumer controls the tempo of the show. A metallophone with thirteen or fourteen keys suspended above tube resonators played with two mallets is melodicaly and functionaly important and provides a continous soft accompaniment during dialogues and narrations, when other instruments do not play. Singers are important too in Javaness wayang, expecialy the *pesindhen* – the female singers, who are a major visual attraction for the audience.[9]

Today Wayang Kulit is a patrimony of Java and an element of large celebrations, such as weddings, circumcisions, national holidays, aniversaries of companies, openings of restaurants – events of great importance for the Java people. Wayang may be also held to protect people or a place from evil forces or accidents. They are in many cases performances of popular entertainment (but not always and not exclusovely). Sponsoring a wayang performance is a sign of prestige and therefore a huge motivation. But in the end, the most important function of the wayang is to bring people toghether.

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[7] *Phenomenology of a puppet theatre: contemplations on the art of Javanes...,* by Jan Mrázek, KITLV Press (Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Assian and Caribbean Studies)
[8] *Ibidem* 7
[9] *Phenomenology of a puppet theatre: contemplations on the art of Javanes...,* by Jan Mrázek, KITLV Press (Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Assian and Caribbean Studies)

Dictionary

>*Wayang* - shadow
>*Kulit* – leather
>*Kelir* – screen
>*Dalang* – pupeteer
>*Gamelan* – orchestra
>*Cempurit* – rods of the puppet
>*Gapit* – central rod
>*Tuding* – rods of the arms and hands
>*Wanda* – expression
>*Pesindhen* – female singer

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Interviews & Reviews

CAREI: UN ORAŞ FĂRĂ TEATRU, OCUPAT DE TEATRU

TEODORA PĂCURAR

Interviu cu PAUL SARVADI, directorul Festivalului Şcolilor de Teatru de la Carei

Oraşul Carei nu are teatru. Totuşi, am văzut acolo o mulţime de spectacole. Spectacole de teatru: Ionesco, Shakespeare, LaBute. La fiecare sfârşit de noiembrie, de trei ani încoace, studenţi-actori din toată ţara, dar şi din străinătate, demonstrează că se poate face teatru indiferent de condiţii. Nu e nevoie de o capitală, nu e nevoie de tradiţie, nici măcar de o sală de teatru nu e nevoie. Tot ce le trebuie e entuziasmul, un public şi o şansă. Ceea ce acum câţiva ani părea o iluzie de nerealizat, şi-a definit acum o direcţie sigură. Festivalul SPOT a devenit o lecţie serioasă despre absurd ca formă de existenţă. În 2009 festivalul se afla la cea de-a treia ediţie a sa, cu un număr impresionant de participanţi şi invitaţi. Cele mai importante centre universitare din România, dar şi Academia Athanor din Burghausen s-au întâlnit la Carei, unde şi-au confruntat experienţele. Omul care a conceput festivalul se numeşte Paul Sarvadi, teatrolog care a absolvit la Cluj şi care l-a adus pe David Esrig în Carei. Să stăm puţin de vorbă cu Paul...

Teodora Păcurar: *Pentru cei care nu cunosc festivalul, ce înseamnă SPOT şi cu ce scop a luat fiinţă?*

Paul Sarvadi: Există oameni care nu îl cunosc? *(Râde).*

T.P: *Îţi apreciez modestia, dar ştii şi tu că dacă vezi un afiş nu înseamnă să cunoşti evenimentul.*

P.S: Spot-ul e o lumină specială care se foloseşte în teatru pentru a scoate în evidenţă ceva. În cazul de faţă e vorba de student, care este echivalent cu viitorul în teatru. În acelaşi timp, lumina înseamnă vizibilitate, înseamnă căldură, dar şi responsabilitate, pentru că expune. Nu mai ţin minte dacă a fost mai intâi ideea festivalului şi apoi numele lui sau invers. SPOT a luat fiinţă

în 2007, aparent dintr-un motiv simplu, dar de fapt esenţial: întâlnirea, care e un principiu vital în teatru. E, practic, starea definitorie pentru această artă. Actorul se întâlneşte cu textul. Regizorul se întâlneşte cu scenograful. Publicul se întâlneşte cu toţi şi cu toate. Numai studentul, săracul de el, nu se întâlnea cu nimeni. Ideea a fost să creăm un spaţiu, deci, al întâlnirii între şcolile de teatru din România şi, în măsura posibilităţilor, cu unele din stăinătate. Procesul de formare al unui actor, sau mai bine zis, al unui om de teatru, trebuie să ţină cont şi de acest aspect, de raportarea continuă la cei din jur, şi aici nu mă refer numai la alţi oameni de teatru. E foarte important ca studentul să ajungă în situaţia de a-şi măsura conştiinţa de sine. Apoi, am vrut ca acest festival să nu semene cu nici un alt festival, ci să aibă o identitate precisă. Nu exista acum trei ani o întâlnire a şcolilor de teatru, aşa că am facut-o la Carei, într-un loc în care nu există facultăţi şi nici un teatru în adevăratul sens al cuvântului. Ideea e simplă. Timp de patru, cinci zile, în funcţie de buget şi remuneraţie, studenţii vin la Carei, se urmăresc şi află ce se întâmplă prin alte şcoli. Vrem să păstrăm atmosfera informală, neacademică. Acesta e un festival „fără geacă şi cravată". Nu uităm însă să le oferim an de an ceva în plus.

T.P: *Ce le-aţi oferit în plus anul acesta?*

P.S: Am invitat reprezentanţi ai teatrelor independente. Studenţii care au vrut, au putut asculta povestea *Teatrului de curte şi garaj* din Timişoara, povestită de Ovidiu Mihăiţă, de exmplu, cel care l-a şi înfiinţat. Nu s-a vorbit despre latura artistică, ci despre lucruri concrete pe care, dacă bine ţin minte, nimeni nu ţi le spune în facultate. Ovidiu le-a povestit cum se obţine o finanţare de la primărie, cât costă un bec într-un reflector, ce înseamnă contabilitatea, relaţia cu presa. Cam toate aspectele practice ale muncii într-un teatru privat, unde lucrurile sunt complicate, dar infinit mai simple ca într-un teatru instituţionalizat. Pentru ediţia de anul viitor vom propune mici ateliere şi vom crea o secţiune de discuţii, de anliză aplictă asupra examenelor-spectacole prezentate.

T.P: *Spuneai că în Carei nu este nici facultate, nici teatru. Asta o ştim. Şi tocmai de aceea, ce înseamnă să organizezi un festival de teatru într-un oraş fără tradiţie teatrală?*

P.S: Înseamnă să îţi asumi riscul de a te trezi cu sala goală. În rest, cred că înseamnă exact ceea ce înseamnă şi în altă parte. Înseamnă să te baţi să obţii bani şi să creezi cele mai bune condiţii pentru invitaţi. Prima ediţie a fost cea

mai grea din acest punct de vedere. Pentru că nimeni nu auzise de Carei. Dar, printr-o subtilă şmecherie am reuşit să îi atragem. Deşi sunt total împotriva ideii de competiţie în artă, am organizat un festival de teatru pentru studenţi cu premii uriaşe pntru aceea vreme - de 1000 de euro. Un student putea să îşi plătească chiria 6 luni cu banii ăia. Aşa că au venit. În plus, am invitat o facultate din Ungaria unde studia un careian, este vorba despre facultatea din Kaposvar, şi am invitat şi facultatea din Oradea, unde era de asemenea un student careian. Sunt micile secrete care poate nici nu ar trebui făcute publice. Dar sinceritatea în teatru e o altă garanţie a succesului. Apoi lucrurile s-au simplificat. Lumea s-a simţit bine.

"Teatrul ar trebui să însemne şi altceva decât genunchi zdreliţi"

T.P: *Şi banii? Aici care e secretul? Cum ai atras sprijin financiar?*

P.S: Administratorii de bani publici sunt specii aparte. În primă fază am depus un proiect pentru mai multe evenimente orgnizate de Casa de Cultură din Carei, în care am inclus şi festivalul de teatru. În 2008 am cerut bani mai mulţi pentru că evenimentele finaţate în 2007 au avut succes. Dacă faci prostii eşti tăiat de pe listele celor finaţaţi. Noi nu am facut prostii, aşa că în 2008 am primit şi mai mulţi bani de la consiliul judeţean şi am putut face şi ediţia a II-a. Iar anul acesta, am fost sprijiniţi cel mai mult din punct de vedere financiar de consiliul local, care a suportat aproape 70% din cheltuielile festivalului. Echipa de fotbal din Carei, care evoluează în liga judeţeană şi se întrece eroic săptămână de săptămână cu marile echipe din Berveni, Foieni, Căpleni, Căuaş, are un buget de apropae patru ori mai mare decât cel al festivalului. Bani pe care îi primeşte şi de la consiliul local. Aici e o mare problemă. Există un paralelism al valorilor de care unii nu ţin cont. Ei trag o linie orizontală şi astfel, să zicem, o serbare a unei grădiniţe e judecată la fel ca o întâlnire a şvabilor sau festivalul de teatru.

T.P*: Tocmai din asemenea cauze erai privit cu mult scepticism acum trei ani. Erai un fel de Don Quijote al Careiului, dar se pare ca ai reuşit să răstorni mitul.*

P.S: Un festival trăieşte şi prin încăpăţânarea celor care îl orgnizează, dar şi prin nevoile pe care le satisface. Dacă nu ar fi nevoie de SPOT, el nu ar mai exista. Mi se pare simplu. E, să zicem, ca festivalul de la Gărâna. SPOT e alimentat de

fanatismul celor care îl organizează, dar se autosuţine şi prin lipsurile pe care le umple, prin nevoile celor cărora le răspunde. Să nu uităm nici faptul că timp de cinci zile profesorii şi studenţii scapă puţin de stresul academic zilnic. Profităm din plin de specificul zonei, aşa că avem meru o sticlă de pălincă gata să schimbe starea de spirit. Anul acesta am deschis ştrandul pentru studenţi. După spectacole, ei povesteau într-un bazin cu apă termală despre cele văzute. Teatrul ar trebui să însemne şi altceva decât genunchi zdreliţi, picături de sânge şi coate date în toate direcţiile.

T.P: *Nu exagera...*

P.S: Nu exagerez. Un profesor invitat spunea că teatrul e o junglă. Poate. Dar timp de cinci zile, aici, la Carei, e exact opusul junglei. Teatrul se face în comunitate, cu prietenie, cu respect, zâmbind. Vreau să cred că studenţii şi profesorii vin aici, la Carei, nu pentru a-şi confirma valoarea pe care şi-o atribuie fiecare în mod arbitrar şi cu mult orgoliu, ci pentru o raportare corectă la momentul actual. Un alt aspect important e impactul cu publicul. Nu e normal ca un student la actorie să lucreze patru, cinci ani în aceeaşi sală, în acelaşi spaţiu. Aici trebuie să se acomodeze. Sunt într-o continuă stare de veghe, cu toate istrumentele pregătite. Nu lâncezesc.

"Am avut un cal adevărat în spectacol"

T.P: *Din cine e alcătuit acest public al festivalului şi în ce măsură există implicare din partea acestuia?*

P.S: Prioritate au studenţii. Tocmai din această cauză impunem ca toţi studenţii invitaţi să rămână în Carei pe durata întregului festival. Ca să îi poată vedea pe ceilalţi. Apoi, în public se regăsesc cei câţiva intelectuali careieni, mai mult sau mai puţin instruiţi în teatru, elevii şi chiar părinţii studenţilor, care vin din Satu Mare, Baia Mare şi Oradea. Există o famile care s-a împrietenit deja cu noi. Părinţii uеni studente din Târgu Mureş care au venit în fiecare să îşi vadă fiica. Din nefericire însă, din public nu a făcut parte niciodată directorul teatrului din Satu Mare, Baia Mare sau Oradea, deşi aproape în fiecare an au fost aici studenţi în an terminal, pregătiţi să se angaje în vreun teatru. Există încă mici probleme cu publicul, probleme tipice unui oraş mic: indisciplina, lipsa de punctualitate. Dar, pe de altă parte, anul acesta au fost

extrem de mulți tineri, elevi, ceea ce e bine. Oamenii încep să gândească, încep să judece. Şi cred că la următorul spectacol al teatrului din Satu Mare vor fi probleme pentru că acum s-a creat un nivel şi pentru publicul de aici.

T.P: *Dificultăți - mă gândesc că ai întâmpinat destule. Povesteşte-mi.*

P.S: Singura problemă e că suntem puțini. Timp ce cinci zile, cei şase, şapte colegi care lucrează efectiv în festival dorm câteva ore pe noapte. Mă gândesc ca la anul să încerc implicarea voluntarilor. Poate reuşesc o colaborare cu o facultate de teatru. Şi atunci mă voi putea baza pe studenții teatrologi sau, de ce nu, pe cei ai secției de management teatral din Sibiu. Rămâne de văzut. Există dicultăți în ceea ce priveşte infrastructura. Am depăşit limitele Careiului. Timp de cinci zile, între 25 şi 29, toate hotelurile din oraş erau pline. Ceea ce e bine, pentru că băgăm un ban în buzunarul patronilor. Dar pe de altă parte, nu mai putem mări numărul de participanți. Asta va fi o mare problemă la anul. Nu mai avem unde să îi cazăm. Apoi sunt problemele drăguțe, cele care produc amintirile unice. În primul an a trebuit să fac rost de un cal pentru un spectacolul al studenților de la Cluj. Un cal adevărat, cu bale şi copite. Până la urmă l-am închiriat de la o babă alcoolică, cu doi dinți în gură şi mustață, care a întrebat când i-am dat o anumită sumă de bani convenită dacă nu dau şi ceva de băut. Anul ăsta a trebuit să găsim o pivniță pentru studenții de la ATHANOR, ceea ce iarăşi a fost interesant, dar de mare folos pentru că am decoperit un spațiu minunat care se pote integra în circuitul spațiilor culturale careiene.

T.P: *OK. Zi-mi de public. Ce fel de feedback ai avut din partea publicului?*

P.S: Cred că întâlnirea cu David Esrig elimină întrebarea ta. Ai de puține ori şansa în viață să te întâlneşti cu oameni ca el. Asta pe partea studenților şi a profesorilor. Faptul că unii au rămas pe afară e iarăşi un semn bun. Oamenii se racordează încet la SPOT. Îşi programează săptămâna în aşa fel încât să spoate veni la spectacole. Starea de festival, pentru că există o stare de festival, e una aparte. Dacă o simți odată devi dependent. Şi eu cred că în Carei încep să o simtă din ce în ce mai mulți.

T.P: *Din câte ai observat în trei ani, în ce direcție evoluează festivalul?*

P.S: În fiacre an festivalul a avut ceva în plus. Anul trecut au venit şi studenții din Craiova, anul acesta au venit cei din Sibiu şi Bucureşti, plus studentele de la teatrologie care au făcut o revistă tare drăguță, cu interviuri şi cronici, pe

durata festivalului. A fost în Carei David Esrig, Vlad Rădescu, Radu Alexandru Nica, Adrian Andone. Hathazi Andras. Prin prezența lor şi a studenților validează acest festival. La anul îmi propun o întâlnire între David Esrig şi Lev Dodin. Ar fi ceva aextraordinar. Deci evoluăm. De la trei articole de căcat în presa locală, am ajuns în buletinele de ştiri de la realitatea în plină campanie electorală.

"Întâlnirea cu David Esrig schimbă destine"

T.P: *Deci unul din cele mai mari succese ale festivalului a fost prezența lui David Esrig in Carei. Ce a însemnat experiența asta pentru tine, ca teatrolog, pentru studenți şi pentru public?*

P.S: Nu sunt deloc sigur că toți cei prezenți ştiu cu exactitate cine e David Esrig şi ce reprezintă el pentru teatrul românesc, pentru teatrul european şi pentru pedagogia teatrală. Hai să o luăm sistematic. Pentru public a însemnat un spectacol grozav... cel prezentat de studenții de la academia ATHANOR, care au acceptat să îl joace chiar de trei ori pentru ca toată lumea să îl poată vedea. Pentru studenți şi profesorii lor cred că a însemnat chiar mai mult. O dată spectacolul, apoi micul colocviu susținut de domnul Esrig care, deşi a fost programat pentru 30 de minute, acesta a ținut peste trei ore. A fost o discuție cutermurătoare despre metodele lui de predare, despre cum e organizată şcoala pe care a înființa-to. Mi s-a părut că David Esrig e la curent cu învățământul teatral românesc, începând cu sistemul Bologna, până la particularități. Ca să simplific: a prezentat un model extrem de valabil care există şi produce adevărați oameni de teatru. Mie mi-a arătat spre ce ar trebui să tindă învățământul teatral românesc şi nu numai. Dar nu aş vrea să mă transform într-un judecător al vreunei facultăți pentru că nu am competența necesară. Ştiu doar că am văzut şi am auzit, grație lui David Esrig, lucruri inexistente în momentul de față în România. Până la urmă, seara în care a vorbit Esrig a fost exact acel interval de timp pentru care a apărut acest festival. Despre asta ar trebui să fie vorba când pomenim de SPOT: o întâlnire cu puterea de a schimba destinul artistic al unui student. Eu, deşi nu am cochetat niciodată cu actoria la modul serios, mi-aş fi dorit să fiu unul dintre cei din spectacolul academiei ATHANOR. Mă întreb, oare ce au simțit, în acest caz, 130 de studenți la actorie care îşi

"sacrifică" studenția ca să ajungă actori, iar eu sunt extrem de bucuros acum că am reuşit să le ofer tuturor această şansă. Vorba domnului Esrig, e bine că ne-am întîlnit nu doar ca să ne despărțim.

T.P: *Prin ce l-ai convins să vină în Carei? Mă gândesc că nu acceptă fiecare invitație care i se aduce.*

P.S: Nu l-am convins eu, în mod direct. L-a convins ideea festivalului. Am vorbit câteva minute despre studenții lui, despre o mulțime de lucruri pe care le consider imporatante în educația şi formarea lor şi apoi a zis că îi place ce vrem să facem noi aici şi că în mod sigur va participa şi el cu studenții. Iar alegerea spectacolului a fost genială. Din mai multe puncte de vedere. În primul rând pentru că a fost total diferit de tot ce am văzut eu vreodată că se face în şcolile de teatru româneşti, atât ca spațiu de joc, cât şi ca valoare. A fost un şoc. Exact ceea ce lipsea pina acum festivalului. Un alt fel de model pedagogic. Cred că pe domnul Esrig l-a convins ideea că întâlnirea studenților pe care-i pregăteşte cu o țară nouă, cu un public nou, cu alți studenți la actorie, le poate fi de mare folos. A fost o invitație simplă, sinceră. Probabil i s-a părut simpatic ca într-un oraş precum Careiul se organizează aşa ceva. De altfel, şi academia lui funcționează tot într-un mic oraş din Germania. Singurul câştig pe care îl oferă festivalul e în plan profesional pentru toți cei prezenți. E un câştig al pedagogiei teatrale româneşti. Alte avantaje nu există aici, decât cele strict teatrale. Nu îți împopoțonezi CV-ul cu participarea la SPOT, dar poți discuta ore întregi cu David Esrig despre metodele lui de lucru în cadrul academiei.

T.P: *Aveți proiecte de colaborare cu David Esrig, ziceai. Despre ce e vorba mai exact?*

P.S: Vom face o tabără de lucru la vară aici, la Carei. Pentru că avem un ştrand uriaş şi condiții excelente. Plus bunăvoința din partea propietarului ştrandului de a finanța un asemnea proiect.

T.P: *Sala de teatru din Carei se află într-o stare deplorabilă. SPOT-ul pare a fi, deci, un manifest pentru salvarea acesteia. Care sunt reacțiile autorităților în privința aceasta?*

P.S: Festivalul nu a fost programat sau gândit aşa. Pe măsură ce teatrul s-a degradat a devenit clar ca un oraş care are un asemnea festival ar trebui să aibă şi o sală pe măsură. În momentul de față există depus un proiect, dacă

se câştigă finanţarea se va renova teatrul. Ceea ce însemană că la anul în locul ruinelor de acum va fi un şantier. Pe termen lung asta ajută festivalul. Dar la anul vom avea probleme mari de tot: ori nu vom avea teatru pentru că va fi şantier, ori va fi deja atât de distrus încât nu vom putea să îl folosim. E ca o piesă de Ionesco sau Vişniec acest festival.

T.P: *Cam cât ar costa toată treaba cu clădirea teatrului? Poate ajunge Man.In.Fest.-ul în mâinile lui Becali. Dacă tot se produc atâtea miracole...*

P.S: Să ştii că am luat legătura şi cu el anul ăsta. Dar mi s-a transmis că i se cer asemenea lucruri de sute de ori pe zi. Poate e mai bine aşa. Poate era o asociere nefericită pentru festival: Beclai şi Esrig. Îţi dai seama? Ar fi deja poveste de Woody Allen.

T.P: *Deci cum e? Un teatru fără teatru, dar ocupat cu teatru?*

P.S: Un oraş fără teatru, ocupat de teatru.

HANS-THIES LEHMANN, *Teatrul Postdramatic*,
editura UNITEXT (Colecția FNT), Bucureşti, 2009,
traducere din limba germană de Victor Scoradeț

Studiile despre teatru ale lui Hans-Thies Lehmann pornesc dintr-o vastă tradiție teoretică, începută cu articole despre post-structuralismul francez până la teoriile materialiste ale literaturii şi artelor scenice. Profesor la Universitatea *Goethe* din Frankfurt, Hans-Thies Lehmann publică în anii '80 volumul *Contribuții în teoria materialistă a literaturii*, studii despre Georges Bataille, Georg Büchner şi Heiner Müller. Anii '90 sunt marcați de studierea minuțioasă a teoriilor brechtiene, fascinant (din punctul de vedere al lui Lehmann) prin conceptele sale de teatru epic şi scenariu. În 1999, se publică pentru prima dată vastul studiu despre *Teatrul Postdramatic*, prin care se obține o panoramare a întregului tablou teatral contemporan şi se încearcă o definire a unei logici estetice a noului teatru, din ultimii trezeci de ani. Lehmann consideră că el porneşte tocmai de la acei creatori studiați sau mai bine spus, „disecați" de-a lungul carierei sale. În capitolele studiului, se vorbeşte mult despre ce înseamnă acum un „discurs dramatic" sau „epicizare", *performance* (făcând referință la teoriile lui Richard Schechner), importanța corporalității actorului în noul teatru, conceptul de „teatru energetic".

De la publicarea sa până astăzi, *Teatrul Postdramatic* s-a tradus în cincisprezece limbi, ajungând şi la noi, cu ocazia celei de-a XIX-a ediții a Festivalului Național de Teatru, de la Bucureşti. Lansarea din 1 noiembrie 2009, de la Cărtureşti, i-a avut de față pe autorul cărții şi pe traducătorul ei, Victor Scoradeț.

Studiul teatrului postdramatic porneşte de la premisa că, în zilele noastre teatrul nu mai este un mijloc de comunicare în masă: „Dependente estetic una de cealaltă, într-o relație de profundă repulsie şi atracție, literatura şi teatrul ajung la statutul de practică minoritară"[1]. Într-adevăr, în epoca noastră tehnologizată, se pune frecvent întrebarea dacă practicile de o tradiție antică pot să mai supraviețuiască şi să câştige adepți. Ceea ce face însă experiența teatrului unică, ceea ce nu se va perima niciodată este acea suprapunere a timpilor de existență, care creează (pentru o perioadă scurtă

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[1] Lehmann, Hans-Thies, *Teatrul Postdramatic*, traducere V. Scoradeț, Ed. Unitext (seria FNT), Buc., 2009, p. 5.

de timp) o viață comună, aceea a actorului şi a spectatorului, într-un spaţiu organizat, al unei săli de spectacol. Teatrul occidental deţine *cuvântul* ca element de bază constitutiv. Supremaţia textului începe să pălească în faţa discursului spectacular abia în teoriile de început de secol XX, unde el este considerat ca fiind doar element constitutiv al creaţiei scenice şi nu suveran. Teatrul postdramatic, aşa cum îl înţelege Lehmann, se trage din linia iniţiată de Artaud-Brecht-teatru absurd-Foreman-Wilson. „El (teatrul postdramatic) se situează într-o zonă pe care au deschis-o întrebările lui Brecht, referitoare la prezenţa şi conştienţa procesului reprezentării şi al reprezentatului, ca şi antrenarea lui legată de o nouă artă de a privi. [2]" Ceea ce împrumută acum teatrul occidental de la cel oriental este codificarea, înţelegerea mesajului printr-o analiză semiologică, folosirea corporalităţii pentru exprimarea stării personajului de pe scenă, altfel decât în cuvânt. În plus, ceea ce subliniază şi Jean-François Lyotard (şi Lehmann îl citează) este apariţia acelei energii, dincolo de *drama propriu-zisă*, dincolo de reprezentarea ei, lăsând în urmă chiar logica acesteia. Perioada de la sfârşitul secolului al XIX-lea începutul secolului XX este considerată ca fiind *preistoria teatrului postdramatic*. Un fapt inevitabil a contribuit la această autonomizare şi re-teatralizare a teatrului: apariţia regizorului, devenit în timp, *autor de spectacol*. Acesta desprinde literatura de arta scenică, din convingerea logică a ascunderii crizei prin care trecea drama în acel moment, căutând mereu alte şi alte elemente originale. Aceste căutări au dus teatrul spre drumul său propriu. Teatrul lui Jarry, Maeterlinck, Artaud, Brecht, Gertrude Stein descoperă o latură metafizică, grotescă, pe alocuri fracturată din punct de vedere logic, de-personalizată, tipizată şi plină de ironie. Aceste elemente se păstrează în timp şi se regăsesc şi peste jumătate de secol sau chiar mai mult, în teatrul postdramatic.

Elementul vizual este extrem de important astăzi, artele scenice apropiindu-se mult de artele plastice. Un exemplu grăitor în acest caz este Tadeusz Kantor, care în universul său artistic implică teatrul-happening-performance-pictură-sculptură-artă obiectuală şi spaţială-reflectarea permanentă în texte teoretice. Mai mult ca niciodată, teatrul este reprezentarea stranie a unui ceremonial care are ca punct central de interes sentimentul Morţii. Manechinele lui Kantor nu au nicio legătură cu supramarionetele lui Craig. În acest caz, „ele transformă scena într-un peisaj al morţii[3]".

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[2] *Ibid.*, p. 35
[3] Idem, p. 93

Lehmann descrie aproape pedagogic elementele prin care se poate descoperi postdramaticul pe scenă. Mesajul se transmite aproape exclusiv prin semn (sau simultaneitatea semnelor), prin elementul oniric (care dă textura de colaj, fragmentar, non-ierarhia imaginilor), prin sinestezie, asemănătoare tradiţiei manieriste (spre grotesc, paradox, incertitudine). De asemenea, noul teatru deţine elemente de *performance*, când „sub impresia unor ritmuri de percepţie mai accelerate, teatrul experimental devine 'mai scurt': nemaifiind orientat spre desfăşurarea psihologică de acţiune şi caracter, el se poate mulţumi adeseori cu spectacole durând o oră sau mai puţin". Scenografia devine *dramaturgie vizuală*, având acum propriul ei discurs: un loc în care corpul omenesc devine o metaforă, în care mişcările sale nu sunt altceva decât un *dans.*

Studiul lui Lehmann are un capitol special în care se face diferenţierea clară dintre ce înseamnă *performance* comparativ cu teatrul. În primul rând, dacă teatrul ţine de domeniul virtualului, *performance*-ul, constrângător şi emoţional, se întâmplă în mod real, din moment ce artistul se oferă pe sine publicului, în postura de victimă. De aceea, în general, el este „izbitor de des, un 'teritoriu al femeii'"[4], suprafaţă codificată, cu trimitere directă înspre social, politic, feminism, tradiţionalism vs. empancipare.

Teatrul postdramatic este un paradox al unitarului şi extremului fragmentarism. Toate elementele constitutive, de la text-imagine-actor-voce-corporalitate-scenografie-proiecţii ş.a., luate separat, deţin autonomia discursului propriu, fiecare îşi creează un limbaj aparte. Luate împreună, ele construiesc un produs complex şi ingenios, într-un spaţiu care nu mai înseamnă doar „locul corpurilor grele, ci şi acela al adunărilor reale, în care are loc o intersectare, unică în felul ei, de viaţă organizată estetic, cu viaţă cotidian reală.[5]"

ALEXANDRA FELSEGHI

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[4] *Op. Cit.*, p. 194
[5] *Op. Cit.*, p. 6

BRIAN McHALE, *Ficțiunea Postmodernistă,*
Editura Polirom, Iaşi, 2009

Editată în limba română abia în anul 2009, *Ficțiunea postmodernistă* de Brian McHale circulă pe piaţa criticii literare internaţionale încă din 1987, an în care a fost publicată pentru prima oară în Statele Unite ale Americii. Cartea este, aşadar, primul studiu de lungă întindere pe tema postmodernismului literar al teoriticianului. Câţiva ani mai târziu, acesta avea să publice *Constructing Postmodernism* (1992) şi *The Obligation toward the Difficult Whole* (2004). A mai coordonat, alături de Randall Stevenson, *The Edinburgh Companion to Twentieth-Century Literatures in English* (2006). Totodată, este autorul mai multor articole ştiinţifice, în care îşi manifestă interesul pentru teme precum *discursul indirect liber*, *mise en abyme*, *poetici moderniste şi postmoderniste*, dar şi pentru *literatura ştiinţifico-fantastică*.

În ciuda titlului pe care îl poartă, *Ficțiunea postmodernistă* nu limitează preocuparea autorului asupra fenomenului exclusiv postmodernist, acesta dezvoltându-şi interesul pe întreg *procesul de postmodernizare*, dacă îl putem numi astfel. Iar dacă există un astfel de proces, atunci postmodernismul pare a fi o urmare a ceva, nicidecum un curent independent. Dar Brian Mchale explică – atât prin argumente teoretice, cât şi practice – felul în care postmodernismul, prin prefixul *post*, nu exprimă o simplă posterioritate temporală, acesta sugerând, în mod logic, şi elemental de consecinţă istorică. Aşadar, spune McHale, "postmodernismul vine *din* modernism, într-un anume sens, mai mult decât vine *după* modernism". Cu toate acestea, el pune în opoziţie termenii poeticii moderniste cu cele postmoderniste.

Pe plan teoretic, expunerea lui Brian Mchale înfruntă, desfiinţează, sau completează idei privitoare la postmodernism definite de alţi teoreticieni literari precum John Barth, Charles Newman, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Ihab Hassan ş.a.m.d. În acelaşi timp, aduce argumente practice puternice pentru a-şi susţine propria teorie asupra problemei. McHale face, aşadar, o demonstraţie aplicată pe texte ale unor mari autori de ficţiune dintre care Samuel Beckett, Alain Robbe-Grillet, Carlos Fuentes, Vladimir Nabokov, Robert Coover şi Thomas Pynchon. Prin câteva fragmente din autorii citaţi, teorticianul explică felul în care aceştia au glisat de la practica modernistă la cea postmodernistă.

McHale diferenţiază cele două tehnici literare prin *dominanta* operelor, termen pe care îl preia de la lingvistul Roman Jakobson. Dacă dominanta ficţiunii moderniste este *epistemologică*, componenta focalizantă a ficţiunii postmoderniste este *ontologică*, mai exact, textele postmoderniste plasează problemele *cunoaşterii* în fundal şi aduc în prim plan problema *modurilor de a fi,* spune McHale.

Unul dintre exemplele sale este, cum am mai precizat, Carlos Fuentes. Criticul urmăreşte îndeaproape evoluţia autorului de la modernismul regăsit în *Moartea lui Artemio Cruz* (1962) şi *Zona sagrada* (1967)*,* la modernismul-limită din *Cambio de piel* (1967) şi la *Terra nostra* (1975), care atinge punctul culminant al genurilor ontologice. "Acest roman este, alături de *Curcubeul gravitaţiei* (1973) a lui Pynchon, unul dintre textele paradigmatice ale scrierii postmoderniste, literalmente o antologie de procedee şi teme postmoderniste", precizează în studiul său Brian McHale. Potrivit cercetătorului, *Terra nostra* înfăţişează un motiv ontologic prin intermediul unui carnaval transistoric, unde mai multe personaje ale altor autori se întâlnesc într-un spaţiu existenţial comun. "Cu alte cuvinte, avem de-a face cu un caz de încălcare intertextuală a graniţelor, identitatea transmundană între personaje aparţinând unor lumi ficţionale diferite", precizează McHale.

Unora dintre cititorii *Ficţiunii postmoderniste* li s-ar putea părea monoton studiul textului lui McHale, din cauza frecventelor repetiţii ale aceloraşi idei – aplicate, bineînţeles, pe texte de ficţiune diferite. Dar o recomand celor care ştiu că satisfacţia este mereu direct proporţională cu răbdarea. Este o carte eficientă, indispensabilă, aş spune, dar nu pentru a elucida misterele postmodernismului, ci din contră, pentru a adânci şi mai mult misterele sale.

TEODORA PĂCURAR