



STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS
BABEȘ-BOLYAI



DRAMATICA

2/2010

S T U D I A
UNIVERSITATIS BABEȘ–BOLYAI
DRAMATICA
THEATRE, FILM, MEDIA

2

Desktop Editing Office: 51ST B.P. Hasdeu, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, Phone + 40 264-40.53.52

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APPROCHES PSYCHOLOGIQUES ET PSYCHANALITIQUES

CINEMATIC SYMPTOMS – PSYCHOANALYTICAL KEYS TO UNDERSTANDING THE ROMANIAN „New Wave”

DORU POP

ABSTRACT. Psychoanalytical interpretation was extensively used as a method in cinema and provided access to latent significances in moviemaking. The author uses some key terms in psychoanalytical theory, like trauma, identification, fetishism or Oedipal complex, to give some insights into the framework of the „New Wave” in the Romanian cinema and as a tool for explaining the impact their cinematic images had on the contemporary spectators. Dealing with complex issues of authority and paternal complexes, the young generation of Romanian cinematographers is „read” by their symptoms, somatizations at three possible levels of interpretation: cinematography, themes and the relationship with the viewer.

Keywords: *Psychoanalysis in cinema, Romanian New Wave, trauma, communism, identity.*

The relationship between cinema and psychoanalysis is as old as moviemaking, and has several layers of impact. The first, and the foremost is that of technological and historical interdeterminacy. The development of cinema as a technology and the evolution of psychoanalysis as a science are not just historically coincidental, but they are mutually influenced. The first public presentation of moving images was made in 1893, by Thomas Alva Edison who named his invention „The Kinetoscope”, and it was in the same year that Freud published his first studies on hysteria. While the temporal coincidence is not relevant, the conceptual coincidence is still to be proved, the philosophical links between cinema and psychoanalysis remaining more than obvious. What is cinema but electricity plus voyeurism plus imaginary mechanics (most of the time sexual)? And what is cinema than a machine that copies imitates and sometimes mocks the human subconscious, a machine that is technologically conditioned to reproduce the functioning modes of the psyche? The development of this imaginary machine must be linked to the development of the formation mechanisms of human identity. And, as Freud once noticed, all the machines in modernity are nothing but imperfect and incomplete substitutes for human genitals, so cinema could also be one genital machine that resonates into culture.

It was Christian Metz who, in his discussions about the relationship between psychoanalysis and cinema, developed some of the most important correlations between the two fields (Metz 1982). One fundamental link between cinema and

psychoanalysis is that of the way the mind and the projection machine work. Repeatedly Freud describes the human mind as a functioning mechanism similar to modern visual instruments, the comparisons with the photographic camera or the lenses in a telescope (Freud SE5: 536–7) being of utmost importance. At another level, the seclusion and semi-darkness that govern what happens in the imaginary machine of both cinema and human subconscious, are characteristics. This image making machine (of the cinema) is an apparatus (in French: *dispositif*) as Jean-Louis Baudry described it, similar to the psychic mechanism of each individual, and this mechanism functions like the cinematographic technology (Baudry 1975). The projection of the self onto a „screen“, the transfer into another space and another reality becomes fundamental to the operation of the cinematographic *apparata*, but this way of working is nothing but a replica, a form of simulating the mechanisms of the imaginary in general and the functioning of dreams in particular. The cinema is a „factory of dreams“, where each individual spectator becomes a „machine of desire“ as soon as one enters the projection room. There, the cinematographic apparatus feeds these desires (sometimes perverted, sometimes abnormal, sometimes simple) just like in dreams. In the movies we see (as spectators) images that seem real, yet we know they are products of sheer imagination. And, just like in dreams, in the movies we are satisfied and our desires and fantasies get fulfilled without the „material“ result, without the physical manifestation that comes along with the actual experience. „The dream effect“ of the psyche is very similar to the „effect of the real“ in moviemaking, since cinema creates both the illusion of reality and the phantasmatic transformation of the subject.

The importance of psychoanalysis in understanding contemporary cinema stems from the main answer given by psychoanalytical theories to the problem of meaning production – both at the level of imaginary formations and that of image construction, the psychoanalytical answers can be transferred in cinema imaginary and in image making. We cannot interpret the significations that we receive from a movie only by looking at the external, read superficial, manifestation of the pictures or of the actions depicted. We need a method that can take us to a deeper level, one that would allow us to establish connections between the explicit content (that what we see, images linked to reality) and the ambiguous content (that of what we can make out from what we see).

Psychoanalysis was developed as a method that could provide access to latent significance in the human psyche and thus proved a useful tool for explaining the impact cinematic images have on us beyond simple perception. As Freud puts it when discussing the significance of dreams, there is a manifest content of the images (in a dream), which is developed at the surface level, and a latent one, one that goes deeper than the simple representation of daily experiences. Just like the psychoanalyst is looking for hidden meanings in the manifestations of the human psyche, interpreting meaning in movies that have cryptic significance, means to go beyond movements and actions, and find the significations where they are not explicit.

This possibility was opened by Freud: when discussing the case of Anna O. he used the term „private theater”, for the place where fantasies and realities meet and generate meaning. In this sense cinema too is a form of daydreaming and of private projection, and by this, dreaming and moviemaking are similar, as Noël Carroll argued in the seminal work on theorizing the moving image (Carroll 1996), because they use identical processes, based on the fact that they temporarily suspend consciousness and allow an experience of events and emotions that provides the individual with a phantasmatic world which interprets reality. Also, we can make a direct relationship between interpreting movies and interpreting dreams since, as Freud defined the interpretation of subconscious actions, we can say that movies are simply projections of our own desires and fantasies on the (big) screen. In the dreams this screen is the psyche, while in cinema the dream is projected on a drywall, on the canvas that is materially palpable. Although we are in a context that is non-cinematographic, when watching the movies on a television set or even on the computer, we are watching the screen the same way as we are watching our own imaginary and our brain is processing these images the same way our brain works with pictures in dreaming. In the big darkroom of the movie theater, in a small dark room of our homes, or in the little space of lower imaginary we keep projecting on the screen of the mind daily fantasies.

For Freud there are a couple of mechanisms that explain all dream processes: these mechanisms are condensation (several elements come into a single one), displacement (one element is substituted with another, more suitable for the subconscious) and dramatization, with secondary revision as an added mechanism. These mechanisms were translated in terms of narrative theory and in terms of cinema theories, where substitution must be understood as fundamentally a mechanism of the metaphoric order, while displacement is metonymic by its functions, so that we can say that in cinema we have metaphorical and metonymical representations too (Metz 1982). As it is in the case of classical usages of psychoanalysis in cinema, if cinema is a form of dreaming, then the mechanisms of interpreting dreams becomes a fundamental methodological reference. We can „read” movies as if they were dream like projections. Our interpretation is based on the transparent reading of Freud's approaches towards the works of art (the study on Leonardo da Vinci) and his studies on the relationship between literature and dreams (such as *Creative Writers and Daydreaming*). This approach was widely used in cinema, but maybe the most important was the study of Donald Spoto on Hitchcock's movies, arguing the direct link between early childhood events of the great directors and their cinematographic vision. „Reading” Hitchcock in a similar way Freud used to „read” Leonardo from his painting of the Virgin, Saint Anne and the Child, starting from the relationship with the father and the mother allows us to develop a foundation for interpreting an entire cinematic language.

Another aspect of connecting movies and dreams is the fact that in the movies we are subjected to a regression that is similar to the regression used in

psychoanalysis. Being trapped in the darkness of the movie theater, the spectator „falls” into a realm that was not available to him in natural conditions. This phantasmatic regression is so deep that all other elements in the cinema are integrated into a single machine, with only one imaginary function, the projection of illusions, the creation of sensations that are internal to the process (off screen sound, music), generating significance by means of technological capabilities. For Raymond Bellour this relationship can be understood by referring to hypnosis (Bellour 1990). It is a well-known fact that Freud began his career preoccupied with the mechanisms of hypnosis and the first elements of psychoanalytical theory were linked to understanding hypnotic effects outside the hypnotic practice. The screen has this similar power over the viewer, which is close to the induction of the trance in the hypnotic subject. Projection and introjection – both mechanisms belonging to hypnosis and widely used in psychoanalysis – are two movements fundamental to the cinematographic functioning.

Symptoms, somatizations and possible levels of interpretation

What is the practical use of psychoanalysis in interpreting the cinematic productions of the young Romanian filmmakers? One is that of the changes (understood as manifestations) we observe at the level of their cinematography. As some film theorists, such as Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, pointed out, we can use the concept of symptomatic manifestations in psychoanalysis as formal elements for the film-text analysis (Nowell-Smith 1985: 193). In his study on melodrama, Nowell-Smith elaborated the theory that we can understand film-texts in a manner similar to the formation of hysterical symptoms, as described by Freud. This can be done in the sense that, in some movies, similarly with that which was repressed or could not be expressed in language, something would re-emerge as a bodily symptom, will re-emerge as filming technique. In the case of the film text, such a somatization may frequently be expressed in terms of the sound track usage and in the *mise-en-scène*, both providing outlets for the repressed sexual desires, emotional excess and unresolved contradictions. The elements of narrative changes are manifest in music, camera angles, composition, and so on. In this fashion, that which cannot be explicitly told by the film text for reasons of censorship or even of narrative logic returns as a symptom in its formal construction (Nowell-Smith, 1985). For the Romanian moviemakers the formal aspects of their movies become symptomatic in the sense that they can provide the critic some valuable insights about the workings of the social institutions and the cultural value systems they represent. This can be related to the previous modes of narration and of cinema production, thus forcing the new generation of cinematographers to visually manifest their repressed reactions.

Another approach is that used by several authors, among them Thierry Kuntzel being the most important, who consider that there are more similarities than just using dream processes into interpreting movies (like displacement or condensation for

example). Cinematic processes share with our psychic functioning other traits, for example cinema responds to our primeval need for perversion (fetishes and voyeurism), caused by the relationships and traumatic experiences happening on the primal scene. The spectator „watches” the movies as if he would be re-witnessing the traumatic episodes on the primordial scene (Kuntzel 1975). In the classical Freudian interpretation the work of the movies („le travail du film”) is identical with the work of the subconscious, both on the primary and on the secondary scene (one belonging to the self and the other to cinema).

If, like in dreams, in the cinematic experience the ego seems to be absent, since we give up our own subject and self in order to enter the fantastic narrative, this „absent ego” allows another identity to take over and to take part into the desired world. So the ability of cinema to reconstruct a narrative about our own selves (by means of primary identification) and of our world (at the level of secondary identification) becomes fundamental in using movies as symptoms of social manifestations. Here the key concepts of psychoanalysis, which entered the discourse of cinema interpretation (like the oedipal complex, the castration anxiety, voyeurism and fetishism, the unconscious) can be used as instruments for cultural analysis, not only for personal scrutiny. We can use the same concepts in order to understand the way the new Romanian cinema builds its identity by replicating itself and a traumatic world onto the screen.

A third level of interpretation is that of defining imaginary changes in a new social environment. Using the concept Freud developed in his 1927 essay „On Fetishism” (Freud 1977), where he explains how the fetishist is driven to create a substitute for the absence of the penis of the mother (using only a part of the body, or an object belonging to the mother). More important, in the context of cinematic interpretations, the very mechanism of fetishization becomes instrumental. The situation where the subject knows that the object only replaces the lack of signification, but he believes this substitute to be real becomes, in terms of understanding the cinematic ways of expression, the situation of watching a film, that equals the imaginary substitution put into place by the fetishist. In cinema, what we see is not real, yet we treat the images as if they were actual (Metz 1985: 77-78). Christian Metz talks about this fetishist relationship as a fundamental means into cinema significance building, not only because cinematographic experience can have a powerful relationship with the imaginary, but also because there is a link between moviemaking and the fetishistic investment. The object on the screen is nothing but a substitute for the real object of desire, and, just like in fetishistic perversion, we do not need to have access to the material object in order to re-enact the real desire. The relationship that we develop with the movie, as spectators, which is in itself fetishistic, takes us to the next level, only by hearing the name of a movie we recollect the full emotional experience we had in the darkness of the movie theater.

As Metz has put it, moviemaking is fundamentally an „institution of voyeurism”, a place where we are socially encouraged and stimulated to peak into the intimate lives of our fellows (and this is even more aggressive in television production), thus we have created a public space where extracting pleasure from seeing others is rewarded. The eye of the camera becomes an institutional stuff substitute for our own intimate scene and for our own desires. If the pleasure of watching movies is basically voyeuristic, the experience cinema brings us is at the brink of pathology and perversity. In the sense of the practical psychoanalysis, coming straight from the concepts Freud himself stipulated when discussing works of art, movies are artistic expressions of sublimation for our deepest pulsations. At the end of this argument stays the conclusion of Bellour, who suggests that all the mechanisms of creating images (photography and most importantly cinema) are means of generating ideal „ subjects”. So, from this complex relationship between the viewer and the object on the screen, we must extract some answers for the question of identification. If dreamwork is the method of the subconscious to express indirectly messages that are hidden under the pressure of the super-ego’s censorship, the available manifestations must be connected with deeper significations.

There are three levels of analysis we must address – one, why is the new Romanian cinema oriented towards a certain „minimalist realism”; secondly how the thematic development is constructed as a manifestation of a repressed narrative of the self; and the third is that if new Romanian cinematographers are prone to psychoanalytic, what is the phantasmatic nature of their sublimation process.

The Romanian Revolution as social-traumatic event

The impact of an external event (like the Revolution, which took place, for the young generation of directors, in the early stage of their psychic development) cannot be minimized and makes it even more problematic. Using Spoto's biographical approach and starting with the fact that the theme of the „Romanian Revolution” was recurrent as a motive and was a constant reference point for several movies, we have to note that only in 2006 there were three movies, made by representative directors of the new generation, which focused upon this topic: *A fost sau n-a fost* (12:08 *East of Bucharest*, 2006) *Hîrtia va fi albastră* (*The Paper Will Be Blue*, 2006) *Cum mi-am petrecut sfârșitul lumii* (*How I Spent the End of the World*, 2006). This relationship between biography and the understanding of a work of art, fundamental for the psychoanalytical method, becomes instrumental here. The biographical approach not only helps us to move from the questions of how we can interpret a cinema based on minimalist realism, as it is the case of the new generation of filmmakers in Romania, with a method trapped in phantasmatic and latent significations, but also allows a correct contextualisation of the new generation of directors. Psycho-biography allows us to create a connection between the fact that there are differences between authors like Cristi Puiu, who was born

on April 3rd, 1967, so during the „Revolution” he was 22, or Cristian Mungiu, who was born in 1968, thus he was 21 in 1989, while Corneliu Porumboiu (born September 14, 1975), Cătălin Mitulescu (born January 13, 1972) and Radu Muntean (born June 8, 1971), the three directors who showed their movies about the Revolution in 2006, were 18, 17 or even 14 years old at the moment of the social changes in Romania. Their personal experiences, histories and representation are crucial in describing the connection between these three movies, not only dealing with communism, but also with the traumatic experiences of a specific moment.

In terms of Freudian analytical language, this is a case of typical sublimation of an experience which cannot be dealt with in an every-day manner. The aesthetic manifestation of trauma in cinematographic expression is fundamentally linked to social trauma, since traumatic memories cannot be accepted as exact accounts of things that really happened. Thus the individual constructs his own version of the traumatic experience, in order to cope with it. The Romanian Revolution is not only an example of a traumatic collective experience, it becomes a cinematic expression for two elements that need to be taken into account: one is the recovery from the painful memories of the past and the other is the posttraumatic recovery in post-communism.

The psychoanalytic interpretation is at best in this context, following what Freud developed about trauma in *Moses and Monotheism*, we can say that trauma is fundamentally an expression of the mechanisms of identity formation. In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud attempted to explain Jewish identity with reference to the collective trauma of the murder of the primal father with all its psychic impact on the formation of monotheistic faith (Freud 1939). This last major work of Freud is useful in explaining how the discovery of the „authentic” identity must be connected with trauma formation, and in the case of Romanian moviemakers, with the events that took place on December 17 to 26, 1989. As Freud suggests, the concept of trauma reveals the repressed violence, both to be the basis of individual and group identity.

Trauma and imaginary formations

Jenny Edkins distinguishes the forms of political communities which are formed after a collective trauma according to the relationship between the victim and the aggressor (Edkins 2003: 54). If any imagined community, particularly the modern nations, are founded on violent events such as wars, revolutions and genocides, these events are commemorated differently and they become the political root of the imaginary formations we use about ourselves. According to Rothberg’s reading of Adorno, the meditations of culture „after Auschwitz” „suggest the need for new forms of representation capable of registering the traumatic shock of modern genocide” (Rothberg 2000: 58). For Rothberg these forms of representation are linked to the „traumatic realism”. Again, paraphrasing Adorno’s proposition („To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric”), we can say that to make cinema after communism is not

possible only as a therapeutic understanding of the traumatic experience, it has to be understood at the level of the mechanisms of representation (Adorno 1967: 34). As Meek used the application of psychoanalytic terminology to cultural products, to traumatic experience in film and media, the consequences of any traumatic experience become evident at the level of the production mechanisms in the media (Meek 2010). If we accept the fundamental role the visual media are playing in modifying contemporary forms of art and memory, we must look for the external manifestations of these changes. Discussing the relationship between trauma and cinema, Kaplan and Wang use the recount of the traumatic events as means to find the change of the representation forms (Kaplan and Wang 2004). This is valid for the new Romanian cinema as well, and, for that matter, as Christian Metz has put it, for all the „new forms of cinema”, a way of freeing oneself from the rhetoric restrictions, characterized by the simplifying of the narrative, by a transparency in the cinematic discourse and by its orientation towards an external and an internal realism (Metz 1991).

All films are embodiments of the paradoxical coexistence of traumatic memory and representation, as was argued by Elsaesser (2001). One classical example for this change in cinema modes is the movie made by Alain Resnais in 1959, *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, which was considered the first modern movie due to its orientation towards the representations of the interior and of the effects on the physical being of trauma survivors. Resnais' movie is an example for how witnessing a traumatic history can be dealt with in two different ways: as a silent victim, or by the sublimation of the trauma (Wilson 2006). Seeing a traumatic event (be it the witnessing of the primordial scene in the Oedipal conflict, or the death of a loved one during a trauma) becomes an attack on the ego, on the identity of the self. The refusal of accepting the condition of passive victim in the traumatic experience equals with the refusal of the „old” ways of seeing and of producing meaning.

In this sense, we have to go back to the psychoanalytical contention, that traumatic memories are transformed into mental language. Here, by extension, the trauma becomes visual language. According to Joshua Hirsch and Janet Walker, who both develop theories of a trauma cinema representing the past in narrative forms that reproduce the structure of traumatic memory, trauma processing must be linked with realism. Realism is a manifestation of traumatic elaboration of the past history, rejecting the fantasizing and the repelling of the history painted in sweet colors (of communism and of Nazism). Discussing the concept of traumatic Realism, Michael Rothberg shifted the focus of Adorno's meditation on representation „after Auschwitz” to the problem of the representation of Auschwitz (Rothberg 2000). Janet Walker also defines trauma in films and videos as those that „deal with traumatic events in a non-realist mode characterized by disturbance and fragmentation of the films' narrative and stylistic regimes” (Walker: 19). Trauma cinema is thus contrasted to narrative, or classical realism, on the basis of its aesthetic forms and representational strategies.

As it is in Freud's fundamental perspective on interpretation, the repressed memories are not traumatic until they are revived at a later date, and the recollection of suppressed memories is that which brings trauma to its compulsive repetition of the past. Here we must quote the case of the loss of the authority of the Oedipal father, which produces a dysfunctional and ambivalent individual, situation that will be valid for explaining a dysfunctional society. Trauma lacking heroism leads to rebellion, or quoting Freud, we can say that a hero is „someone who has had the strength to rebel against his father and has in the end victoriously overcome him” (1923: 12). The question rising here is if the Romanian cinematographers are rebelling against the Father figures of authority and if they successfully manage this rebellion.

A rebellious form of cinema making

The Romanian directors positioned themselves from the very beginning as rebels against the established forms of expression in cinema. From the very beginning they contested the authority of their predecessors (like Nae Caramfil), contesting the institutions of the cinema establishment (like Cristi Puiu) or bluntly refused to accept any state financing (like Corneliu Porumboiu). Starting from the assumption of Adorno (1997), who suggested that cinema is by its means a source of authority, the refusal of using the mainstream forms of expression, contesting power and establishment is manifested by searching new forms of expression. The source of their discontent is based on the fact that Romanian cinema production was for decades under the total control of the Communist state, and it was clearly an „Ideological State Apparatus”, in the very terms of Althusser, a means of producing identity and social cohesion. The disillusionments of the new Romanian cinematographers come not only from the problem, deeply rooted in psychoanalysis, of identity. As it is the case with all anti-heroic figures, who are in search of their identity – the defiant nature of the films being oriented against any forms of authority – in a similar way the anti-heroic figures of American cinema (like Marlon Brando and James Dean) became icons of rebellious anti-authoritarianism, where, in terms of classical cinema making, the cut and the use of the fast cut was perceived as a form of rejecting the authoritarian intervention on the „matter” of the film. In the European cinema, the totalitarian intervention of the director in the shot (by the classical dialogue shot-reverse shot) was rejected early on, and was substituted with the use of the long shots.

The Romanian nonconformist moviemakers had few models before them and it took Romanian cinema 40 years from the moment Liviu Ciulei won Best director at Cannes with *Pădurea spânzuraților* (*Forest of the Hanged* 1965), until 2005 when *Moartea domnului Lăzărescu* won another prize in Cannes. The same year, 1965, Lucian Pintilie made his debut movie, *Duminică la șase* (*Sunday at six*). But

between these two crucial moments in the Romanian cinema there was a gap of content and of freedom, because the Romanian cinema became a propaganda engine for the National-Communism ideology of the Ceaușescu social control machine. During this time there were two main archetypes of heroes manifested in the Romanian cinema, that were linked with the propaganda machine. One was the Party activist (in the openly propaganda movies), who got all the traits of the „classical” Hollywood hero. The Party activist was typified as a heroic figure who fights for a principle, a cause, a way of life, or a future vision – also he was handsome, intelligent, and always got the girl in the end. Tavi, the hero from *Caravana cinematografică*, made by Titus Muntean, reverts the same hero into a monstrous character, he is less then intelligent and finishes by raping the young girl who was prepared to run away with him. Another model was the historical hero, extremely important in the National-Communist ideology. This Communist hero was soon put into the service of the official propaganda. Like in the movies made by Sergiu Nicolaescu (productions like *The Dacians* or *Mihai Viteazul*) which brought tens of millions of viewers, or the heroes in the „Transylvanian westerns” of Dan Pița, or the urban westerns with Florin Piersic, these heroes were quintessentially expressions of the social order.

In this sense, the action of Cristi Puiu, together with other representatives of the „new cinema”, screenwriters (Florin Lăzărescu), film critics (Alex Leo Șerban) and actors (Victor Rebengiuc), undertook in 2007 to demand The National Council for Cinema (CNC) to end its politics of non-transparency, accusing the Council to be dominated by the same people who controlled the Romanian cinema during communist times (in 2006 Sergiu Nicolaescu was awarded the biggest sum of money) becomes explicitly an action of rebellion.

The cinematic form of rebellion against these figures of the past can be found in *Amintiri din Epoca de aur* (*Tales from the Golden Age*), where most of the comic characters are based on the same undermining of the figure of the heroic party activist. For example in *Povestea politrucului zelos* (*The story of the overzealous party activist*) where the figure of the Communist activist is not only ironically represented, but also punished and defeated at the end by the common-sense of ordinary people. It is relevant that *Amintiri din Epoca de aur* is divided into two parts, one entitled *Tales of authority* and the second *Tales of Love* contain the ambivalent relationship, the attraction and the disrespect towards authority.

The traits of a traumatic cinema

It is here that we can go back to the connection between trauma and dreamwork, which was early on the basis of the Freudian interpretation, their very phonological relationship being the foundation of this connection. Dreamwork is *Traumarbeit* in German, while trauma (*Trauma*) and drama are similar in their pronunciation. It is my contention that one fundamental element in understanding

the internal mechanism of the new generation of filmmakers in Romania is their interest for the past, and for the recovery from the psychic terror of the Communist regime. The fundamental problem, having deep psychoanalytical consequences, is that of the imaginary traumatic relationship with the „father figure”, which characterized the authoritarian rule of Ceaușescu. Ceaușescu, like Stalin, insisted to be called „The Father of the nation” (while his wife, Elena, was identified with „The loving Mother” of all Romania's children). The relationship, imposed during Communist time from early stages of socialization (children in kindergarten were forced to learn poems and songs of this sort) cannot be ignored if one wants to understand the internal mechanisms of the new Romanian cinematographers.

This approach was previously used by Fernando Cesarman for explaining the characters in the movies of the Spanish author, Buñuel (Cesarman 1982). By using the concepts of psychoanalytical theory, he noted that some of the favored subjects of the Spanish author (torture, violence) can be put into perspective by connecting them with the phantasm of abandonment by the parent. Discussing Buñuel's visual metaphors, Cesarman finds a connection between the absence of identity of the characters and the personal experiences of the cinematographer during the authoritarian regime in Spain.

This traumatic relationship with communism is developed both by non-fictional works – like the documentaries of Alexandru Solomon (*Decreștii, Marele jaf comunist*), or the recent production of Andrei Ujică (*Autobiografia lui Ceaușescu*). Both for Solomon (in *Marele jaf comunist*) and for Ujică the dominant, authoritarian figures, become comic representation, substitutes of a lower symbolic order. Solomon presents the case of several former leaders of the communist party who end up robbing a bank, while Ujică re-creates the image Ceaușescu into another father figure, composed from the broken visual pieces of the „original father”. In this sense their approach is convergent with the theory put forward by Freud in *Moses and Monotheism*. The father is destroyed in order to re-create a sense of identity for its sons. The real Ceaușescu, the dictator who oppresses his people is portrayed subversively as an idiot who is not able to speak properly. Ujică uses only real and authentic footage from the propaganda of Ceaușescu's regime to develop another „Dictator” (just as Chaplin does this in a very physical manner), an evil and stupid double of the „Great Helmsman”. For those who lived during the Communist time the entire movie is constructed as a surreal reference, comparable with the secondary elaboration mechanisms in the dreamwork.

This image of a defective father is built into the movie of Călin Netzer, *Medalia de onoare*, where the protagonist is a former soldier who fought the Eastern front, a man who is not communicating anymore with his wife and son. Victor Rebengiuc, one of the major Romanian actors, who used to play „heroic” characters in the Romanian historical-propaganda movies in the '70s, now de-constructs his character

and his power. While the wife is silent and her only power comes from the refusal of the speech (the fact that she voids herself will be later explained) and that nobody talks to the father and nobody wants to accept him as an identity can be understood. The only way he manages to get their attention back is by fraud – he substitutes himself for a real hero, who is supposed to get a „medal of honor” for his wartime bravery, only because of a mistaken identity. The father without identity is confronted at the end with his own „dark” double, one hidden for a long time. When the son comes to the Christmas dinner with his foreign wife and their little black boy is coming from under the table, this is a dreamlike moment, similar to the hidden unconscious, the dark consequences are there, muted, unintelligible, yet young and vital.

The same transformation of the father figure is used in the episode entitled „The legend of the official photographer” from the multiple stories of the *Tales from the Golden Age* coordinated by Cristian Mungiu. Here, we are witnessing the preparations for an official visit of a Western dignitary in the Communist Romania, which gives way to one of the most ironic representation of authorities and of Ceaușescu himself. The episode is based on one of the most famous urban legends during the Ceaușescu regime, suggesting that during an official visit the „Supreme leader” (as he was extremely small), was added an extra hat to look taller compared to the guest. The only thing the propagandists forgot to check was the fact that the Leader was already wearing a hat. So he got two, one on top of the other, very much subverting his authority.

The problem(s) with the identification

While in the basic theory of identification, which Freud proposed in the *Interpretation of Dreams*, the assimilation of the „I” with another, with an object (defined by the Mother), or with the subject (the Father) is manifested in the „primary identification”, in cinema, one of the specific mechanisms is similar – meaning the spectator’s identification with the camera. In terms of cinematographic language, this is one of the favored techniques of the new Romanian cinema. This can be understood as a reaction to the classical way of identification used in the previous cinema, where the primal identification is that of the spectator with the masculine hero, who has all the power in the field of vision, while the new syntax in movies like *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* encourages a relationship with the camera that dissolves the power of the spectator. At the most explicit level, the problem of identity is a problem of power and of relationship with authorities. Post-communist Romania faced a problem very much similar to that of many of the post-war European countries, when in a period of confusion the authority figures are constantly eroded. This erosion is clear in *A fost sau n-a fost*, where the main character, professor Tiberiu Mănescu, is a nothing but pointless hero, void of any power and lacking purpose or direction. This is also explicit in the first episode of *Amintiri din Epoca de Aur*,

entitled „Tovarăși frumoasă e viața” („Comrades the life is beautiful”), where the party activist falls asleep in the carousel, in a parodic description of his lack of power and lack of control.

Another level of identification is connected to the question of violence against the weak, the Communist world was a world where violence against women was accepted and acceptable. In *4 luni, 3 săptămâni și 2 zile*, the two young women allow themselves to be raped by the so-called doctor, self positioning themselves in a victim like position, while the false doctor has a relationship with his mother, one of the best representations in Romanian cinema of the ambiguous relationship between mother and son, which allows us to get a glimpse of the deeper problem of identification in psychoanalytical terms – do we identify ourselves with the active (thus masculine, fatherly) or with the passive (with a femininity described as victimized). This becomes relevant also in terms of the narrative codes, as they were described by Eco, where the woman is always represented as a reward of the heroic male protagonist (Eco 1976). In this sense *4 months...* is constructed as an anti-classical narrative, where the woman is viewed as a power substitute for the males who are absent or defective (the father of Găbița, never showing up, or Mr. Bebe, who is only a parodic authority). In the movie *Otilia* takes control of her life and moves about as a substitute male figure, she is the absent male in the picture: while taking action into her own hands she becomes a victim and refuses the status of victim. In the movie the daughter-father relationship is not only constructed around absences, but it is also a conflict of identification. She substitutes herself with a „substantial father”, a replacement of the father – a key to understanding the Oedipus myth in cinema –, yet plays the victim and a victimising role, linked to the development of the Oedipal relationship in the primordial scene. Here, the portrait of the rapist pseudo-doctor, who is under the domination of his mother, described as an infantile character, although he manifests himself like a sadistic father, and an abuser of his victims, is a portrait of the „social father”. He himself is an abused individual, abused by the system, by a higher Father, by the presence of The Law of the Father. He is raped by the society, and thus lacks any paternity identification. This is also the case of the boyfriend of Otilia, passive and retractile (in the scene at the table he is pushed in the background, nodding from time to time to his parents), allowing a mise-en-scene constructed to bring the attention on this void of power.

In another movie, *Eu când vreau să fluier, fluier*, by Florin Șerban, the traumatic stage takes place directly. A boy is held in a prison and is ready to be released, when he meets his mother after a long time, and confronts her for abandoning him. The drama of the conflict mother and son is deeply rooted in the Oedipal relationship. Silviu, the older son substituted himself to the figure of the father but he could not fulfill this role because it seems the mother abandoned him repeatedly. For him to see his younger brother going through the same traumatic

experience is unacceptable as it becomes a projection of his own tragedy. In order to save his brother from his mother, he's willing to take a path of action that is deeply irrational. He kidnaps a young student girl doing voluntary work in the penitentiary, he attacks and loans one of the guards and he undermines the authority of the warden who functions as a father figure, as a representation of the super ego. Here too the father is absent or it is replaced by degraded substitutes. In order to follow her sexuality the mother abandons the child for another man. This allows the boy to tell his mother „you are a whore”, while the mother claims her position into the imaginary. In the sense of the father the boy takes on the role that would actually make him the father of his young brother. The Oedipal conflict is explicit here, the boy wants to take the role of his own father while aggressively taking and hating the mother. The woman is both the object of desire and the object of despise, she's wanted and yet rejected as not being worthy of the boys' love. Without being able to be himself, without being able to act like a father and constantly pressured by the male competitors inside the penitentiary, the younger man is put into a position with tragic consequences. His desires of being normal and having a normal relationship with a woman are undermined by his own subconscious desires. It is here when we notice first signs of psychic deterioration, the facial movements of the boy become increasingly erratic. The Oedipus complex contains his adversity and makes place for the manifestation of an identificatory bond with the father and of an object tied to the mother. The unfulfillment takes on the primitive instinct, a primitive instinct Freud called „the id”, and this leads to a disastrous decision and destiny.

Childish phantasm and violent witnessing of the past

According to Metz, in the cinema we are brought back to childhood, and the cinematic projection has the ability to turn adults into children, regressing them to the level of infantile imaginary (Metz 1982). This has to be linked also with a fundamental infantile belief, the conviction that movies „show” us something that is real, which allows us to return to a traumatic experience unresolved previously. In terms of Lacanian psychoanalysis, this „childish” nature of cinema is based on the fact that the cinema spectator is positioned at the level of mirror stage, where the screen functions as a reflecting surface, allowing the development of identity by witnessing oneself as another.

Or, if we are to follow the arguments of Donald Winnicott, every art (and thus cinema too) helps us link some parts of our ego that are otherwise disconnected and function separately (Winnicott 1971). By witnessing images and the experiences of „somebody else” we can integrate those parts of our own identity that are separated during the dramatic and traumatic episodes from the past. This has to be connected with the concepts of infantile sadism and masochism in the analysis of the beating

fantasy from „A Child Is Being Beaten: A Contribution to the Study of the Origin of Sexual Perversion” (Freud, 1955: pp. 179-204), revisited in the relation of the death drive to erotogenic masochism done in *The Economic Problem of Masochism* (Freud 1924).

The assumption is that for the new Romanian cinematographers, the identification similar to the one happening at the mirror stage becomes visible within the actions on the screen. This is fundamental not only because we are brought back to the moment of their childhood, re-living the traumatic experiences of the past with the director/ cinematographer, but we are distributed as spectators in the position of witnesses of traumatic events with consequences at the deepest level of identification. Agressivity and aggression towards those who are not able to defend themselves is repeatedly used in the narrative of the young Romanian directors. For example *Cum mi-am petrecut sfârșitul lumii* (*How I spent the end of the world*), is narrated from the point of view of a young boy. The movie begins with a memorable scene in which Liviu, the young boy, being picked up by an officer of the Miliția (the Communist police) and placed on a stage flanked by the portraits of Ceaușescu as a young boy and as a mature leader. But the portrait of Ceaușescu in the background is, intentionally or not, drawn in a caricature like manner. All of a sudden, the Leader himself enters the „stage”, in the rhythms of the march from the official visits, and gives the boy a huge bread, only to try and steal it immediately. Soon we realize that the scene, filmed in a very realistic manner, was nothing but a dream of the boy who lives in a non-heroic environment. The constant displacements of the boy's fantasies, allows him to travel to countries otherwise impossible to reach. His father plays ironically the role of Ceaușescu, in order to make the boy laugh during his days of illness. The boy beats the father (as The Father of the country) and the mock-Ceaușescu runs away in shame while suddenly there is an electricity blackout. Mitulescu plays here a double game: he is condensing and displacing the image of the two fathers. At the end of the movie Liviu is placed in the crowd of the last public meeting held by Ceaușescu on December the 21st 1989. Liviu uses a sling-shot, just like David in his battle with Goliath, and provokes the end of the totalitarian regime. Not only that we re-live the events of the past through the eyes of a child, but this past is transformed and interpreted in a dreamlike manner.

Masochists and dictators

These same questions appeared in the German society after World War II. How was it possible for a nation to surrender to a figure like Hitler? This same question is addressed by the contemporary Romanian cinema – asking their parents indirectly, how was it possible for all of you to succumb to such a moral decay? The answer lies in the dependence of the ego, within the masochistic behavior of a culture of „employees”. As Hitler was a substitute for a father and there was an accepted violence that provided a monstrous transformation of an entire nation,

Ceașescu was a similar figure. Surviving a political regime based on violence and aggression towards its citizens, as it was the case of the communist regime, entails the deep need for processing personal and public violence. And cinema plays this crucial role of sublimating our deepest traumas.

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THE DRAMATIC PLAY AND THE PSYCHODRAMA SESSION

MIKLÓS BÁCS

ABSTRACT. The present article attempts to give a complex analytical image of psychodrama, from the point of its birth (the essential contribution of J.L. Moreno's revolutionary ideas in the theatrical field) to the theory and practice of dramatherapy during the XXth century. Underlining the differences and meeting points between psychodrama, drama, therapeutic theatre and life, the study follows the motivation of the play in the theatrical art and in the group therapy and the role casting as a creative and as at therapeutic act, taking into consideration at each step that psychodrama is a very delicate, complex thing and an extremely significant action. The characters of the drama and of the psychodrama session, the techniques and procedures used in drama and psychodrama, the dramatic and the psychodramatic "playground" (the stage, common territory in drama and psychodrama, on which the events unfold), their setting and lighting, the dramatic reality (*surplus reality*) and the verbal discourse in drama performance and psychodrama session, are some of the elements on which the analysis focuses its attention.

Keywords: *psychodrama, dramatic play, dramatherapy, role, dramatic audience.*

1. Dramatic premises for the birth of the psychodrama

The investigations into the modernization of theatre also gave birth to experiments imagined and accomplished by people whose interest concerned psychology to a certain extent; we mention only some of these experiments: the one at the Art Theatre in Munich, Kokoschka's and the Bauhaus movement's expressionist experiments or Keisler's attempts of fusing the stage area with the audience's. The young psychiatrist J.L. Moreno's revolutionary ideas in the theatrical field follow the same line of diversification. It is by bringing the spectators in the play that he created new stage models, and by performances with scenarios which settle into shape step by step, throughout their production. The name *Stegreifspiel* (*steg* = path; *reif* = ripening, development; *spiel* = play) means improvisation, but it can also be translated by "the path of development through playing". This is why the name of the theatre managed by Moreno, operating in an apartment in Vienna – *Stegreiftheater* – anticipated the birth of a new therapy based on the concepts borrowed from the universe of theatrical theory.

Pursuing the awakening of the actors' and the spectators' spontaneity, articles known from Viennese journals were dramatised, articles which discussed major themes on which the readers were focusing (the live journal). Moreno cited four requirements relating to his "performances":

- 1) The playwright's (writer, author of dramatic texts) and written plays' exclusion;
- 2) The spectators' active participation, which resulted in his theatre being named "theatre without spectators".
- 3) The actors and spectators should be the only creators of the theatrical event, with the improvisation as means of expression and ultimate goal;
- 4) The replacement of the stage area by the vital, open area.

Via these experiments, Moreno acknowledges the importance of the clear-cut arrangement of the *tempi* and spatial positions occupied by the participants, the importance of the swift or slow transfers from one emotional state to another, considering the conditions of the relational contexts, carrying out the necessity of creating a theoretical corpus.

Initially, the press showed interest in Moreno's ideas, but the spectators and even the touring actors returned – soon after – to the classical form of theatre. This return was owed mainly to the lack of the aesthetical component in the new experimental theatre. Moreno understands that his successes with the children – for whom he had made possible the meeting of the fairy tale world in the Viennese parks, inoculating the satisfaction of the liberating game – were possible only owing to the young spectators' absence of aesthetic expectations. The failure of the impromptu theatre turns into success when Moreno detects certain therapeutic effects on his actors (the Barbara episode) and begins to create a therapeutic game targeting persons suffering from mental disorders, naming it *psychodrama*. By replacing the aesthetical requirements in the theatrical play with the therapeutic ones, Moreno creates a new form of psychotherapy, by which the individual (the patient) fully experiences again the conflicts, via a spontaneous game, within and with the help of the therapeutic ("psychodramatic") group.

The psychodrama, also called the psycho-theatre, is a group therapy; the participants "meet" in order to express themselves more by means of spontaneous action, by play rather than by words. The psychodrama has three stages: *warming-up*, *production* and *sharing*. An important role is achieved by the socio-metrical aspect of the play, the constellation of attraction and repulsion relations present in the group. Moreno enumerates 11 applications of the psychodrama depending on the purpose, theme and the relation with elements "unfamiliar to the psychodrama":

- a) the therapeutic psychodrama (in the clinics with "artificial" groups);
- b) the existential psychodrama (*in situ*);

- c) the analytic psychodrama (a synthesis between psychodrama and psychoanalysis);
- d) the hypno-drama (synthesis between hypnosis and psychodrama);
- e) the sociodrama and the role-play (dealing with the relationship between the collective ideals and the groups);
- f) the ethno-drama;
- g) the axiodrama (individual and collective moral issues);
- h) the diagnostic psychodrama (group or couple syndromes);
- i) the educational psychodrama;
- j) the psycho-dances;
- k) the psycho-music

Other therapies, too, make use of elements of the psychodrama; these are the group psychotherapy or the individual analytic psychotherapy, Adler's individual psychology, the behavioural therapy, Berne's transactional analysis, Perls's Gestalt therapy etc. In theatre, the psychodramatic technique is used by Elia Kazan and applied in *Actor's Studio* with remarkable effects on the actor's art.

2. The differences in psychodrama, drama, therapeutic theatre and life

During the same period (1908-1910), V.N. Iljine, influenced by Stanislavski, firmly believing in the therapeutic powers of the theatre through the Aristotelian *catharsis*, formulates the principles that form the basis of the *therapeutic theatre*. This theatre, emerging from Iljine's attempts of playing together with people involved in life conflict and mentally ill people, becomes another form of therapy through art, closer to the classical theatre than the psychodrama was. In 1925, Iljine translates and publishes in Russian Moreno's *Stegreiftheater*, later stressing Moreno's enormous influence on the establishment of the "therapeutic theatre".

The difference between the therapeutic theatre and the psychodrama is that, with the therapeutic theatre, the improvised performance is preceded by an "improvised training", developing a scenario for the play as such. This scenario is initially created by the therapist from the existing material, then it is processed by the protagonist, too, during a therapeutic session and only after having accomplished these stages is it performed together with the group. This is one resemblance to the classical theatre, relating to the manner of creating the textual basis, whereas with Moreno the text emerges spontaneously, working from one scene to another, throughout the psychodramatic exploration.

We may say that the psychodrama and the therapeutic theatre are closer to the actual life than the classical theatre. However, there are major differences between psychodrama and life. Bentley classifies these differences in the following manner:

a) The “I” is not presented in a sheer, naked, literal state, but clothed, supplemented by another person. When the protagonist of the psychodramatic session becomes reluctant, silent or over-defensive, another person is asked to play his double and to provide exactly those responses which the protagonist is holding back. This is fundamentally different from life, where such help lacks at the most necessary time.

b) The “Thou” is given in a form closer to drama rather than to life: the impersonation. Any partner necessary to the protagonist’s story is enacted either by a trained assistant or by a member of the audience at the session in question. Since this partner is an actual “stranger” to the protagonist, the difference from the real life is significant. However – and this is what matters – a certain “I” – “Thou” relationship is worked out before the session is over. Indeed, what needs calling attention to is not the difficulty of achieving direct communication, under the conditions of the psychodramatic session, but the fact that life is outdone by psychodrama, somewhat as it is by dramatic art, though not to the same extent.

Psychodrama is not “naturalistic”, is it not a duplication of actuality, but, in the most relevant way, an improvement on it, exactly the same way as non-naturalistic art is, for non-naturalistic art is actuality not reproduced but interpreted normatively, which means: transformed to a certain extent. Psychodrama and theatre have in common a trust in human freedom.

The protagonist-patient is not encouraged to rack his brains for the purpose of a most precise report of the moment, as it is with a statement made to the police. He is to lunge into the situation after having tried to recall, as vividly as possible, the moment and the place, without the holding back of the moment in question.

The important aspect is that the “Thou”, which is less, meaning that he can be a stranger, is more, meaning that he is a real “Thou”, which the non-stranger was not.

c) The third way in which the psychodrama differs from life is the use of a director.

During the psychodramatic session, the director gets involved in different ways. In the beginning, he chooses the information according to which the first scene is to be initiated. Then he *shall interrupt* it each time he feels that the drama (a) repeats itself, (b) become contemplative or (c) is exhausted. Since anyone can be wrong with respect to the three moments, the importance of the wisdom and vast knowledge required by the role of leader becomes obvious. In any event, an interruption is a very dynamic factor in itself, a thing known by some playwrights (e.g. Brecht). It can become salutary or disastrous, depending on the time of its occurrence.

The interruption is the director's most important negative action. However, immediately following the interruption, he carries out a positive action too, namely: he *suggests* an alternative.

Reversal of roles is one of the primordial elements and, perhaps, the most successful of psychodrama. At a word from the director, the protagonist plays the role of the partner in the scene. Thus, "I" is forced to see and feel out the situation from the viewpoint of "Thou". Which is not only morally edifying, but generally illuminating and particularly therapeutic. Psychodrama can help by the "It's effort involved in playing seriously at being "Thou".

d) If the "I" and "Thou" of life are modified in psychodrama, so is "They". The "They" of life is, by definition, general and amateur. The "They" of psychodrama is specialised and professional.

One of the fundamental differences between psychodrama and theatre is the following: whereas theatre is judged by the effect the actor has on the audience, in psychodrama the priority goes to the effect the audience has on the actor. This effect and the director's interventions occur by way of *propulsion*. The audience's sympathy oils the wheels; the audience's eager curiosity accelerates the events. The entire occasion is a form of *public confession*. There is relief, and therefore pleasure, in such confessions. The person who finds more pleasure in such occasions is called exhibitionistic. But if the level of exhibitionism is normal, so is a certain degree of shyness. The presence of an audience renders frankness difficult. Psychodrama deals with this shyness and asks that it be tackled, not avoided, as it chiefly is by psychoanalysis.

e) A psychodrama session differs from another two hours of living by the fact that it is literally theatre, whereas life is theatre only metaphorically. The organisation of space is ruthlessly selective by the fact that the greatest part of the details of actuality is omitted. To say the world is a stage is one thing. To represent the actions of this world *on* and *by* a stage is another. The physique of the psychodramatic theatre bears no resemblance to the world-in-general and not too close a resemblance to the world in particular. A scene in a garden will be recreated without the garden. A scene about a man as a child will be recreated without a child (the child's physical presence) on the stage.

The physical traits of the theatre – a certain type of floor, the stairs, the suggestive pieces of furniture, the audience's seats arranged in a certain form, the row of faces above the seats – have a personal feature (reality, atmosphere), which contributes to the character of psychodrama as a whole. The entire physical nature of a drama determines the nature of the theatrical event, to a greater extent than accepted by the theoreticians until now. However, more recently, the "environmentalist" writers have reached the opposite end.

Psychodrama is not life, but the recapitulation of life, the living of life for the second time; it is to have your cake and eat it, too. All life is repetitive. By the salutary and necessary repetition, good habits are formed. By the repetition of evil, bad habits are developed. There is an endless repetition of the therapeutic sessions until the reaching of a positive result. And then, in the middle of the repetition, there is illumination.

However, it is our opinion that precisely this repeatability becomes the evocative difference between the theatrical performance and psychodrama. While a theatrical performance lives through the multitude of re-presentations, psychodrama lives through its unrepeatability, since the process – spontaneously emerges – of that “second time” ends with the protagonist’s *catharsis*. From this point of view, we can easily comprehend the interdiction, by the Perls Institute, of the *mise-en-scene*, by the Tabori group at Theaterlabor in Bremen, of certain *Gestalt* protocols. They were not created to be presented in front of an audience.

3. The motivation of the play in the theatrical art and group therapy

With respect to the play’s action, in the case of psychodrama, we may mention a motivation coming from a personal, internal conflict, while, in the case of the theatrical performance, the motivation is literary, i.e. a dramatic text. In Lewis Yablonsky’s opinion, there is an *act-hunger* which prompts people in real life. Such motivations are various. They exist, among other reasons, in order to quench certain physiological and psychological necessities. In theatre, the actor’s motivation includes the examination of the character’s drives. In psychodrama, the motivation concerns the protagonist’s real life problems. He is stimulated to pay in certain scenes in order to understand some phenomena in his life. The theatre actor focuses primarily on a successful interpretation in the performance, which should have an impact on the theatre audience, whereas the psychodrama protagonist’s goal is to solve a personal dilemma or issue, in order to become more efficient in everyday life.

4. Role casting as a creative and a therapeutic act

Carrying out the casting has a different nature in theatre and psychodrama. In psychodrama, there are no fixed partners. In general, the protagonist may choose his own casting and, by change of role, may influence his partners’ way of playing. In real life, people change partners by evolution, divorce or employment. In psychodrama, there are three forms of carrying out the casting:

a) the protagonist may choose an auxiliary ego from amongst the spectators, depending on the external aspect or on the empathy with someone in the group,

b) the therapist may distribute someone in the group, in the hope that the person chosen should execute an emotional portrait in the protagonist's interest or in the hope that, by the play of an auxiliary ego's role, both the auxiliary ego and the protagonist will have something to win,

c) a member of the audience, who is emotionally warmed up, may volunteer for the performance of one of the roles.

Psychodrama is a very delicate, complex thing and an extremely significant action. When professional actors are distributed in the auxiliary egos, we may note their desire of having an impact on the audience, thus revealing the function of the auxiliary egos, which should be an extension of the protagonist and an extension of the therapist, under the compulsory condition of complying with the protagonist's emotional requirements; in this way, the protagonist can explore objectively and explicitly his internal monodrama. Therefore, the professional actor's play turns into an insult to the protagonist's and psychodramatic session's emotional integrity, because the actor will tend to satisfy the necessities of his own ego, by aesthetically satisfying the audience. Nonetheless, there are professional actors trained for psychodrama, too. These actors also have the capacity to not eclipse the protagonist's play. The capacity of harmonising with the auxiliary "I" required by the protagonist and the compliance with his purpose may be an important source of improvement for the actor's art. This way, the actors may earn the capacity of serving both the text and the director's discourse, thus fulfilling the Stanislavskian conditions of loving the drama in it and not it in the drama. By correct casting, the protagonist accepts the group in which he is to perform; by reproducing a correct casting in real life, too, he will accomplish his insertion in society. The protagonist chooses the person to play the antagonist's role depending on his own belief that this member of the group will easily play that role or – even more important – he should be able to represent to the best extent the character in question for his own use.

Role casting by the protagonist makes possible the acknowledgement of the essential traits of the persons important in his life. This is where the Morenian notion "Tele" appears, a notion one can ignore in the case of the casting made in a professional drama by the director and which cannot be used in favour of expressing the relationship in the staged dramatic text. The protagonist expresses verbally the information concerning the auxiliary egos or presents them in a spectacular form. The auxiliary egos help him express as many details as possible, by doubling the protagonist, i.e. standing behind him and determining the thinking aloud, asking him to describe his emotional state at certain moments of the portrayal of the auxiliary egos, or by stirring his fantasy. There can be doubling in the drama, too, when the director follows the actor's performance, intervening with the articulation

of the actor's/character's interior monolog. However, we deal here, in principle, with an unfamiliar role, for which the actor is to discover interior correspondences.

Certainly, whether the actor is to portray the stage character by separation or involve by substitution depends to a great extent on the key of the performance. The protagonist leap fully in the situation, create by "here and now" that "second time" without which that "first time" liberation is not achieved, the therapeutic effect being inexistent. Only by the total identification is the *catharsis* possible, the final most important goal of psychodrama.

5. The characters of the drama and of the psychodrama session

In both cases, we deal with a protagonist (who is the conflict bearer, respectively the main character), an antagonist and other characters who, in psychodrama, are called assistants of the I ("auxiliary egos") – in fact, assistants of the protagonist's ego. In drama, the actor's role is diminished in favour of the script writer, respectively of the playwright and director, who, together, make the staff who determine the repertoire. In psychodrama, following the *warming-up*, the group decides – according to the problems raised in the group by its members – who of the participants are to deal first with their conflict. The *protagonist* (protos= the first, agon = fight, game) is the member of the psychodrama group chosen to enact his own conflict, under the condition of performing himself on the stage. He is the author, director and actor at the same time. The group's choice may depend on criteria such as: whose conflict is stronger or whose conflict may identify with the greatest number of group members. While the actor performs an unfamiliar role, sacrificing his I (a "sacrifice" that will be dramatised and presented as such by Pirandello, turning into the central theme of his works), the psychodrama protagonist enacts his own conflict, with help from the therapist, the same way in which the director helps the actor with the creation of the character. In Pierre Bour's opinion, while the actor is required to perform his role unsparingly, up to self-abandonment – our way from the real to the imaginary – the protagonist, on the contrary, is required to enact himself up to abandonment of the role – our way from the imaginary to the real.

Perhaps this difference between the actor and the protagonist contains, *in nuce*, the chief difference between drama and psychodrama. In *An Actor's Work on Himself*, Stanislavski was stressing the fact that an actor should never forget that each typical gesture constructed, depending on the character, gets him closer to this one, whereas the intrusion of a personal gesture alienates him from the character, by pushing him toward purely personal emotions. The Stanislavskian actor's task is to build a character, by preserving all the typical attributes of reality. The unconscious data form a material later processed by the director, in

order to reach a veridical representation of life. There is an essential difference between Stanislavski's notion and the psychodramatic notion of the actor's art. Stanislavski's method uses the human states and experiences in order to develop the acting skill in a dramatic role. On the contrary, psychodrama uses a person's states and experiences in order to improve his or her results in a life role. While, in psychodrama, the immediate experience of the session has a personal value, the Stanislavskian method is a procedure of training for future theatrical performances.

In drama, space and time are pre-established, having as end purpose the communication of the artistic object (dramatic performance) to the audience, with the actor as bearer of the signs that constitute the language of a play. The psychodrama protagonist is the very material of the drama and his correspondence with the reality is utterly different from the actor's. Not all protagonists can go equally deep in the play, but, the more he goes deeper and trusts deeper, without restraints, the therapist and the group, the more the chance of *catharsis* increases. Often, at the end of a psychodramatic session, the protagonist needs time in order to return to immediate reality. The actor's passage from the role to his own reality is not always uneventful either. There are numerous cases in which the performance of negative roles in a steam disturbs the actor's mind. In the case of repertoire plays, performed several times a week, the actor finds it increasingly difficult to completely escape the influence of their atmosphere. From this viewpoint, the protagonist is more protected, with the advantage of the possibility to return to his group and see his colleagues' feedback. He finds out about the emotions of the other members of the group during the psychodramatic action and this allows him a certain distance from his personal experience. The sharing, i.e. disclosing some conflicts experienced by the other members of the group, too, in their everyday life, may protect the protagonist, making him feel the others' support, warmth, sympathy and participation – which is highly necessary to him at that particular time. Perhaps this is why the actor feels the need of a "feedback" after the performance, the loneliness of such moments being occasionally unbearable. In theatre there is nothing similar to this therapeutic process, which is the essence of psychodrama. The theatre – initially directed in the Antiquity civilised space toward the healing *catharsis* – is now entertainment, starting from the identification, going through the illusion and ending with the acknowledgement of the situation in our society. According to Brecht, this acknowledgement relates to the entertainment, with the exception, of course, of the so-called "Lehrstücken" (instructive plays), in which he sees a "theatre of the future", a theatre in which the dichotomy actor/spectator will be removed and, the same as in Moreno's psychodrama, all will become actors, being at the same time pupils/students/apprentices. By these improvised instructive performances and by the discussions following them, Brecht attempts to change the

participants' approach toward reality. Augusto Boal will carry on the theatrical research along this line, formulating the theoretical bases of the Forum Theatre. This is another resemblance to Moreno's theories from the "Stegreiftheatre" period, from which psychodrama will later emerge.

Warmed up, the protagonist will find it relatively easy – owing to the narcissism typical of every human being – to express his real interior life, cleansed from the social hypocrisy and from the Pirandellian "to seem". He has at hand all the tools of self-expression. The protagonist is the stand-in for all the other members of the group, his problem being important for all the participants in the psychodrama session. Moreno said that the individual became the others' representative by action. The psychodramatic leader considerably introduces the protagonist in his theme, showing him the way to the "playground". We thus reach a common point of drama and psychodrama – the play leader. Whereas the director is supported by and at the same time tied to the play characters, the psychodrama therapist, the *play leader*, must remain free and open to the protagonist. He is not allowed to manipulate the protagonist, but must be present in the "here and now", empathically tied to him, while reason gives him control of the psychodramatic action. The play leader, the psychotherapist, has a chief role in psychodrama. His function is triple: therapist, analyst and play leader. As therapist, he attempts, by psychodramatic techniques and by his own involvement, within the limits of the norms of everyday situations, to change, therapeutically, the course of the session. As analyst, he uses the auxiliary egos as extensions of his person, influencing the situations emerged. As play leader, he directs the warming up, he chooses the type of session, he ends certain scenes, he complies with the *feedback* rules. He is situated at the meeting of the subconscious of each member participating in the psychodramatic group. He is the one to place the dramatic improvisation at the level at which the subject is the most spontaneous. He is at the same time in and out of the game. He must manage the tensions raised during the session and be aware, constantly, of the weak point of the group. The artistic director has very many traits shared with the psychodramatic play leader. Similar to the latter, he is the one who, with a magic wand stroke, opens the way to the imaginary. He must help the actor in the "birth" of the character, taking care of the construction of relationships in the performance. He must concurrently see the part and the whole. The difference between the two is that the director knows, ahead of the rehearsals, what the play is about, while the psychotherapist does not know the issues that will be presented during the warm up. The director influences the actors' play, always providing them with the resolution of the dramatic situations enacted on stage. The therapist must direct the protagonist in such a manner that the latter formulates on his own the resolution of the conflicts. The director's

speech, *in relation to* a dramatic text, is the essence of the entire dramatic work. Another difference is the actual participation in the play. The director will need to withdraw once the play begins, no longer able to influence the unfolding of the events or the generation of the energies necessary to the communication.

The auxiliary egos help the protagonist in the representation of real or imaginary characters, therefore helping the psychotherapist in the analysis of the situations emerged during the session and the development of the therapeutic strategy; moreover, the others in the group get the possibility of entering the protagonist's world. In fact, the performers of these auxiliary Egos are the representatives of the actor in the classical theatre, holder, of course, of a sharp gift of communication and of accessibility toward improvisation. They play a certain role: either a real character in the protagonist's entourage or an imaginary character, be it even a part of the protagonist's personality. He may become an antagonist and a protagonist, too, in case of mirroring.

The auxiliary ego, by his counter-spontaneity, introduces the Other's world, disturbing the protagonist who, spontaneously, sees the entire world agreeing with his requirements. By this, the protagonist is assisted in accepting the exterior world.

6. Techniques and procedures used in drama and psychodrama

Most often, the dialogue is cut when the auxiliary ego (or the antagonist) no longer fits the real image envisaged by the protagonist (he suddenly says, "no, he doesn't do or say this!"). Then, the protagonist chooses the *reversal of roles*, i.e. he takes control of the antagonist's role in order to get the latter closer to his character's interior state. Role reversal is the most powerful and the most used procedure in psychodrama. It matches the Brechtian "*Verfremdungs Effect*", assisting the protagonist in the decentralisation of his position in the unfolding of events. Owing to this reversal, the protagonist may adopt a distance from his feelings, undertaking a different viewpoint. In drama too, one can note the use of the same procedure, even though a great deal rarer, and, usually, by the director who uses it in order to get the actors closer to his notion of the character. The specific techniques within the therapist's reach, in the case of psychodrama, such as: protagonist's doubling, empty chair, ambivalence doubling, mirror technique, psychodramatic interview etc. cannot be used in theatre. At most, the director may use the mirror technique in order to draw the actor's attention to some erroneous unconscious doings.

However, the use of reversal in psychodrama results in the therapeutic repositioning, in certain situations of future life, of the protagonist toward the antagonist, owing to the emotional awareness achieved when the protagonist

“enacts” the antagonist. This is why the reversal becomes one of the key instruments of psychodrama.

A procedure shared by psychodrama and drama is the *soliloquy*. This technique is close to Joyce’s famous “interior monolog” and it is used by the actor in order to render organic the integration of the character played. In psychodrama, it reinforces the subconscious processes, authorising the protagonist’s simultaneous existence “in the interior” and “at the exterior”, defining the respective character’s Pirandellian “to be and to seem”. To the subject wrapped up in his role or unable to undertake the role, the soliloquy becomes impossible. To the professional actor, the soliloquy materialises the resistance of his own private person during the performance of his role. The frequency of the soliloquy may become a measure of the intensity in the living of the role.

7. The dramatic and the psychodramatic “playground”

The play area is the **stage** (common territory in drama and psychodrama, on which the events unfold), a place holding different special attributes, a space we’d better name *aesthetic*, because in Ancient Greek, “aesthetic” means “from or pertaining to things perceivable by the senses”. This space is born owing to the audience’s attention and focus, cut by specific energies out of the real space (this is why we can talk about a theatre of war) and separated from it. The aesthetic space includes an objective, physical part and a subjective, imaginary one. The Elizabethan stage is, in fact, the prototype of the aesthetic space, an empty space furnished by the audience’s and the actor’s fantasy. The idea of this empty space and the modern dramatic theory resulting from its rethinking are formulated by Brook in his book *The Empty Space*. This space is *plastic*, i.e. it exists and it is non-existent at the same time. Here, the duration is separated from time, the past becomes present, the future is present, the deceased lives... everything is possible in this (psycho) dramatic *now and here*. Space and time become elastic, fiction becomes reality and reality – fiction.

This flexibility allows and encourages total creative spontaneity. This space liberates the memory and the imagination (memory as the storage of all thoughts, sensations and emotions lived/tried until now, and imagination as a process of fusion of these memories, a fusion that creates the possible). Imagination is also a reality (the two pertain to the same mental process, unable to exist one without the other); it has an emotional and a dream-fantasy dimension (these attributes are subjective, they are only in the subject’s mind, they are projected in the object rather than contained by it). The aesthetic space is *dichotomous* and creates dichotomy (the people and objects in this place will be in two spaces: “here and now” – “there and then”), has therapeutic properties (solidity of a thing wanted,

but at a distance from it) and it is *tele-microscopic* (brings things closer, increases their intensity, and thus everything gains a new dimension). The vast gnoseologic power of drama resides precisely in these three traits of the aesthetic space. Knowledge is acquired via the senses, via the experience actually lived. The theatre is a mirror by which we may know and influence the human being, the body and the soul, *Soma* and *Psyché*.

In psychodrama, Moreno created a special stage space, made from three concentric circles of different diameters, ranging from 3.60 m up to 4.80 m, one placed on the other, in stairs, representing the “successive planes in the warming up of spontaneity”. A 15 m long, 7.50 m wide and 12 m high balcony, in the background, for mythical characters or personifications of the super-ego would constitute the fourth component of this space. This space is safe, a space in which the protagonist may act without fearing he may have to bear the moral or social consequences. The conditions of the psychodrama stage are: to allow space of movement for the representation of a moment, to require only a few elements of setting, to include lighting possibilities. Moreno said that the space is the actor’s exterior axis, the same as spontaneity is the actor’s interior axis.

8. Dramatic reality (*surplus reality*)

We must mention here another element shared both by drama and psychodrama, namely dramatic reality. Dramatic reality is a reality created in the aesthetic space. Susana Pendzik submits a six-key evaluation of the protagonists, according to the dramatic reality: the following six keys are the nucleus around which the therapy through drama is carried out and which includes the greatest number of elements circumscribed by dramatic reality:

1. the ability to transfer in and from daily reality;
2. a particular feature;
3. roles and characters;
4. patterns: plot, themes and conflicts;
5. answer to them;
6. a subtext.

Though dramatic reality is always a *Gestalt*, the analysis of the elements composing it may assist the therapist in the identification of the areas of difficulty, the selection of the work parameters, the evaluation of progress and, in general, its systematic study. The first two keys concern the *form*, while keys 3 and 4 pertain mostly to the *content*. The fifth key considers dramatic reality from the outside (*the audience*). Finally, the sixth explores the *residues* – the elements that had no place in the open expression.

First key – the threshold, the entrance and exit from dramatic reality

According to Robbins, dramatic reality is a psycho-aesthetic space, a space that lacks pattern, rhythm, intensity, texture etc. In order to classify its components, it would be useful to moderate the rich variety of the images that could describe it. Dramatic reality may be intense, calm, fluctuating, constrained, juicy, slow, cloudy etc. It may have holes, like the cheese, or body, like well-preserved wines, it may have the quality of a video or the feeling of a flight.

Second key – a qualitative parameter

The qualitative key considers the acting style, involvement, spontaneity, focus and, in general, all the aspects pertaining to form. Thus, Johnson's idea for the evaluation of the style, involvement, use of space etc. may be practical. Furthermore, the adjustment by Phil Jones of the Sutton Smith- Lazier Scale of Dramatic Involvement may help with the evaluation of certain aspects of the quality of dramatic reality. The Lahadian model may also be applied to the qualitative key. Since categories concern the form (language) used by an individual, a person with increased physicality will easily deal with the physical activities, exercises and entertainment games, whereas a person having a social chief mode will benefit from the role-play and simulations.

Third key – roles and characters

The notions of role and character are not clearly cut in the specialised literature, with the exception of Duggan and Grainger, who define the role as function to a greater extent and the character as the "collection of qualities, attitudes and beliefs unique to an individual"¹.

In our opinion, the difference between these concepts is the following: a role is a structure, a container connected by an archetypal layer – such as the Mother, the Guide, the Trickster etc., while the character is an integrated role; it is the particular way in which an individual personifies or represents a given role. In order to illustrate this point of view, the murderer's role may be explored via several characters, such as Macbeth, a terrorist or a bandit. On the other hand, a character includes multiples roles: Macbeth is a fighter, a royal officer, king, spouse etc. By exploring a character, an individual is bound to meet other roles. This flexibility of the role/character mechanism allows us to navigate in the role system and perform therapeutic interventions.

Fourth key – plot, themes and conflicts

If dramatic reality is the projected image of a person's inner life, the recurrent motives at its base are means of accessing the chief issue to be solved

¹ M. Duggan & R. Grainger, *Imagination, Identification and Catharsis in Theatre and Therapy*, London, Jessica Kingsley, 1997, p. 52.

by the person under therapy. The plot is the “plan, project, scheme or pattern”² of a story. While the previous keys concern those who join the dramatic reality, this key concerns what happens in it. The plot may be assessed by its pattern, by the emotions contained or by the mythical or metaphorical messages communicated, by the degree of complexity etc.

Certainly, the themes are a metaphor of the internal processes faced by a person or group. Usually, their purpose is general; they persist and are explored by a variety of characters and plots. Relationships, identity, aggression etc. are examples of themes. The conflicts may be seen, on the one hand, as focused aspects of themes. For instance, the relationships as theme may include several clashes, such as dependence/autonomy, ideal/real. Conversely, the dependence/autonomy clash may be spread in other themes, too, such as control or identity. Added to the psychological and literary ways of reading stories, the vast field of narrative therapy and of bibliotherapy may inform us on the evaluation and interventions of this key (Gersie; Lahad; White and Epston, Burns, Barker etc.)

Fifth key – the audience – response to dramatic reality

When returning from dramatic reality, a person or a group takes control of the audience – witness of the represented dramatic reality. This mutation is natural, the greatest part of the adults tend to comment on the dramatic reality one way or another, once they return from it.

As said by John Casson, one of the therapeutic aspects of being audience is that “we are aware that we experiment”³. We add: as witness of dramatic reality, the audience has the power to legitimate the experience.

People’s reaction to the representation is different. One person may be deeply involved in the dramatic reality and yet may deny what they did when returning to everyday life – as “only a game” – something with no repercussions in real life. They may minimise the experience or judge it, becoming “critical” of it. Similarly, individuals who, to the therapist, seem less involved in the dramatic reality, confess significant experiences when returning to everyday reality.

Johnson connects the individuals’ attitudes toward their own presentation and the feelings on themselves. The response can only be considered as a measure of a person’s self-esteem. The response may show something on the process as such, too: a denial of the actions in the dramatic reality may well be a way of saying: “this does not work for me”. This key assesses the impact of the therapeutic process; this is why it is an instrument for the selection of future interventions.

² J.A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, London, Penguin, 1991, p. 719.

³ John W. Casson, *The Therapeutics of the Audience*, in S. Jennings (Ed.), *Dramatherapy: Theory and Practice* (vol. 3, pp. 43-54), London, Routledge, 1977, p. 46.

Sixth key – subtext or *meta-reality*

Cuddon defines the subtext as what resides “under or behind the text; that which is not said or done”⁴, adding that the subtext concerns the marginal, the ambiguous, the implied and the evasive, denoting the unsaid in a play; that which is implied by pauses and silence. And perhaps what is understood by Harold Pinter by the “pressure behind the words”. In the Stanislavskian theory, the subtext is what forms the basis of the character’s existence: it is a “network of various patterns in a play or in a role”. By using these ideas as guidelines, I would define the subtext, in dramatherapy, as that which is present but cannot find an actual representation in the dramatic reality, or in the actual one. In dramatherapy, the subtext may be a state or a feeling, a role or a character, a plot, a theme etc. concealed around the therapeutic process, but not overtly present. It is a *meta-reality* – as a parallel story wandering between the two realities, unable to find its place.

We may identify here transferential or counter-transferential material, dynamics or untold feeling etc. As said by Jennings, the transferential phenomenon may be considered “act of dramatic imagination”⁵, in which the client engages a communication “as if”, when the transferential content is not expressed or acknowledged via dramatic or everyday reality, but is settled as subtext. Several factors may participate in the development of this meta-level. The oscillation between realities, which is the central process in dramatherapy, is not always a clear and smooth passage. Even if the *un-rolling* is carried out, some residues of the role played in dramatic reality may stay attached either to the therapist or to the client. As emphasised by Johnson, the therapist often assumes three different role levels: social (the therapist), dramatic (the character played) and psychological (a transferential figure).

This juxtaposition of roles sustains the creation of the meta-reality. This key is not present in all the therapeutic situations, but when present, it has a powerful effect on the therapeutic process. The presence of the subtext is marked by a powerful feeling of the therapist or patient toward the other, a feeling of absence of progress, a difficulty in entering or sustaining dramatic reality (keys 1 and 2). When this key evolves, the therapist must consider the *untold story* and seek modalities of integrating it in the dramatic or everyday reality. When the protagonist is warmed up and his memories are awake, the therapist asks him to furnish the stage, i.e. to relive together with the other members of the group the space in which the events unfold, with all the details available.

⁴ J.A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, London, Penguin, 1991 p. 931.

⁵ Sue Jennings, *Dramatherapy and Groups*, in S. Jennings (Ed.), *Dramatherapy: Theory and Practice for Teachers and Clinicians* (pp. 1-18), London, Routledge, 1987, p. 11.

9. The dramatic and psychodramatic setting and lighting

In everyday life, there are different types of settings, most often impossible to be fully controlled by the individual. In drama, the setting is rich or poor, depending on the director's approach. In psychodrama, the setting is built depending on the protagonist's requirements, being an important source for the therapist. Though its elements are scarce, the psychodramatic setting is supplemented through the description provided by the protagonist, in the form of a soliloquy. The lighting is useful in deciding the time of day of the play. If the action takes place in a room, the stage is set as similar as possible to that space, as it is with the dramatic rehearsals. When asked to walk through the space thus created, the protagonist will have different reactions to the different elements of the furnishing; it is possible to see the objects to which he pays a greater degree of attention or love and which trigger mental discomfort states. Olfactory elements may also be used, considering the ease by which smell creates emotions.

In drama, the actor performs in the theatrical setting, costume and makeup only in the dress rehearsals. The stage image is developed by the scenographer and the director; the actor cannot contribute to its creation. It often happens that the space imagined by the actor throughout the rehearsals does not match the stage image created by the scenographer for the premiere, and this discrepancy leads to the impossibility of incorporating the character. In psychodrama, the protagonist does not undergo such shocks (reality checks). He may choose even the play fellows, which an actor cannot do.

10. Verbal discourse in drama performance and psychodrama session

Another major difference is the textual body. In real life, most people do not *act* but *react*, in their drama, as others dictate rather than they are the creators of their own scenarios. Most often, they comply with certain cultural scripts, which seem to be or which are accepted by them as their fate. From this viewpoint, they are restricted by their role of attempting to vitalise a petrified scenario. In psychodrama, the protagonist can write or modify his own scenario. Another characteristic of psychodrama, which sets it apart from the dramatic art, is the *flexibility* of the scenario. A protagonist may enact the entire casting of his own social atom, acquiring by the role exchange new perspectives on his own personality.

The protagonist converses with the auxiliary egos owing to the Tele, the duration of the dialogue depending on its well functioning. The adjustment function of the auxiliary egos must be mentioned at this point. Furthermore, psychodrama does not know temporal limitation, as real life or dramatic performances do. While in real life we can recollect our past or project ourselves in the future, we cannot escape the present. This is accentuated in the theatre, where the actor is even more limited to a temporal space created by a playwright, in a pre-established scenario.

The surplus reality created by psychodrama provides the possibility of undertaking a range of roles wider than in real life or in drama. Of the three generic human forms of interaction, psychodrama offers the greatest degree of freedom and possibilities, at least in the *here and now* of the therapeutic session. It helps the individual explore and talk with the therapist and the audience about the many directions of the script existing in the monodrama of his mind.

In drama, the actor is handed over the text corresponding to his character, to be assimilated organically by him, by constructing that interior monologue which, in fact, is the connection between his personality and the character. On the contrary, the psychodrama protagonist's verbal formulas emerge spontaneously throughout the events. However, it is true that even in the professional drama there are tendencies of abandoning the text or the massive drama operations on the body of the classical texts, in view of sustaining a directing discourse. The nucleus searches, carried out by Artaud, Grotowski or Barba indicate the practitioners' concern with redefining the text-play relationship:

Artaud comprehended the director's instructions as a metaphysical arrangement of forms, where the word does not have a place unless it discloses its concrete resources. Grotowski uses renowned texts, close to the value of a myth in a certain culture, by which he intends communicating a series of messages on the current human condition. The discovery of the primordial centre of the play, undertaken by the performance, justifies the sacrifice of its other data. The nucleus is never an idea, but rather a collective myth, an archetypal situation. Here, the reduction is performed without any verbal comment.⁶

11. "The Others", the dramatic audience and the psychodrama group

In psychodrama, drama and life, the audience has different natures. In life, the audience includes the individual's friends, relatives and sometimes persons unfamiliar to him. In psychodrama, the audience is the group present at the session. Moreno grants them an impressive importance in the dynamics of psychodrama; therefore, the audience becomes a primary component of the psychodramatic session. The force that creates the theatre and the drama is not the actor on the stage; it is not the producer or the playwright backstage; it is the audience in front of the proscenium. The spectator becomes actor while encountering the persons who perform on the stage.

The dramatic audience is numerous and, in general, fixed. Some actors manage to charm their audience, others disappoint them. The debates on the role of the audience in theatre may be classed in two large categories: the first one

⁶ George Banu, Michaela Tonitza-Iordache, *Arta Teatrului*, Bucharest, Ed. Nemira, 2004, p. 210.

includes the manner of reception, for which the play is developed (for a play that ignores its audience fails in expressive incoherence), the second concerns the spectators' political, social, ideological homogeneity or non-homogeneity. True, nowadays the theatre no longer admits an audience "in general", but detects their specific traits.

The theatrical audience's worth is expressed by Harold Clurman, in his book *On directing*, in the following manner:

The audience differs in different spaces and in different conditions. Ignoring the audience's reactions is not «artistic». To neglect the nature of an audience means to perform anti-theatre. The audience is the primordial factor and the main «actor» in theatre. To the deepest extent, the audience is the one who produces the performance. The director selects the spine of the play, the key or keyboard of its performance, depending on his illuminations, and of course on the available actors, the audience to which he wants to speak and the effect expected on this audience, because he and his audience, in a very critical sense, are part in the play⁷.

The audience may change the entire meaning of a performance. The same stays valid for the audience in real life; their reaction may change the meaning or the nature of an action. The psychodrama, theatre and life audiences are significantly different. In theatre, the audience is restricted to several responses. They may express a positive reaction by laughs, tears or applauses or, even more typical, may stay silent. Wrapped up in this silence, the spectators may be untouched by the performance or deeply touched by it, the range of their emotions being extremely limited. In real life, the audience has three ways of reacting: positive reaction, reaction of rejection or indifference, lacking any concrete reaction to the protagonist. In psychodrama, the audience may (and they often do) participate in the stage events, entering the protagonist's life. The psychodrama audience may feel the protagonist's pain, joy, *catharsis* and interior world. They may learn from the protagonist and may share their own experiences. This is why the psychodrama audience is symbolic and born along with the protagonist's drama.

In real life, there is audience even when someone is alone. By looking in the mirror, the individual alone anticipates the future audience's reactions. The real life audience restricts to several persons important in the person's life. This audience may be ruthless or indulgent, depending on the correctness of the actions undertaken by the individual.

In psychodrama, the audience is a function of the protagonist. The audience participates not only as a witness, but also as an assistant, a supporter of the protagonist. Toward this audience, the expectation is that they become sympathetic

⁷ Harold Clurman, *On Directing*, New York, Collier Macmillan, 1972, p. 20.

and compassionate co-actor for the protagonist. At the end of the session, they must assume their analytic and critical role by sharing their own experiences relating to the protagonist's psychodrama.

The theatrical play is conceived and created in order to be presented to an audience – who will appreciate (“taste”) the result of the professional artists’ work – with it being an aesthetic “object” that cannot exist outside reception. Moreno’s psychodrama, similar to the protocols of Perls’ Gestalt therapy and to Iljine’s therapeutic theatre, takes place only within the group closed circle, the group actively participating in the game and taking advantage of the healing, respectively constructive effects of the dramatic play. In fact, this audience is made of potential protagonists and represents, to the same extent, the way of emission of the improvisation waves, emerged, more or less, in the psychodramatic stage space. The theatre audience’s passive role is abolished. The psychodramatic audience is called a group, thus becoming restricted in number if compared to the theatrical audience and has a double role in the session: they help the patient or they become patients themselves. The abolition of the difference between the audience and the actor will become one of the renewal directions in the professional drama, too.

The principle of the form, the aesthetic reason, plays no role in psychodrama. On certain conditions, an aesthetic form may result, but it is not the result of an effort, as it is with the theatre. The material presented by the protagonist is always his personal experience, whether this is a conflict with the partner or with the parents, a pain not yet released or a dream.

Such experiences are dealt with in the psychodrama group. During the psychodramatic action, each member of the group has the opportunity to identify or not with the protagonist. To the protagonist, the dynamics of the group is an improvement of their range of reaction and, thus, an actual support in the process of self-knowledge. After the end of the psychodrama session, the group process carries on until the next session, which begins with the acknowledgement of each individual’s interior state, in the present space and time. This stays valid both for a psychodrama centred on the protagonist, and for that focusing on the group. In the case of the theatrical audience, we cannot consider a group process, since the audience changes from one performance to another. It is true that they “sought” on their own the play, but they will remain alone after the performance, both as a group (crowd) and as an individual. Though they have the chance – during and after the performance – of showing their agreement or disagreement, they may only do so as a crowd, without acknowledging each individual’s internal state and the interactions amongst them. The only individual interactions take place during the intermissions, but they do not become defining at the level of the group.

Meanwhile, Moreno's stipulations have become current again, with respect to the involvement of the audience. Paul Portner's "Mitspiele" and Peter Stein's theatre prove it. Like Moreno, by involving the experience of the body and space in all its meanings, by feeling the protagonist's interior mood (for example, via the role reversal), they made possible an extension of the space of experience, the same as the theatre attempted via its experiments to redefine this space. After the discovery of the pantomime, the actors are no longer those "talking busts", as Jean-Louis Barrault had once noted. In particular, Tabori's theatrical experiments follow the line of self-knowledge for the actor and the audience, beyond what had been possible in the theatre. Like Moreno, Iljine and Perls, too, attempt to discover the "truth of the spirit through action". By this "action" we reach, beyond the body experience, a better emotional awareness in the present time and space. Therapy and theatre meet again in this point, holding a shared space of experience.

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MATÉI VIȘNIEC À LA RECHERCHE D'ÉMILE CIORAN

ERIC LEVÉEL

ABSTRACT. Matéi Vișniec's play *Paris Attic overlooking Death* (2005) reconstructs Emil Cioran fictionally through his "last" journey in his adopted city: Paris. Vișniec cleverly moves away from the hagiographic trappings to imagine – and re-imagine – Cioran's complex life, and Romanian past. This article questions and analyses Vișniec's attempt in the light of Emil Cioran's relationship to his native country through a close reading of Vișniec's play, and of some of Cioran's writings on "Romanity" and national consciousness, or lack thereof. It also questions Cioran's links to his native land and his famous stance on a so-called 'Romanian Nothingness', "Romanian Permanent Failure" which Vișniec heavily draws from in his play.

In tackling such a "*monstre sacré*", Matéi Vișniec not only pays a critical tribute to the philosopher but he also positions himself on what it is to feel "Romanian", and how does it feel to be Romanian away from one's birthplace? Or more critically, is it at all possible to feel "Romanian"?

Keywords: *Matéi Vișniec – Emil Cioran – Romania – Exile – National Consciousness.*

« On se demandera de quel droit Matéi Vișniec s'empare de Cioran. Est-ce sa *roumanité* qui lui confère brevet pour lui tailler un costume de personnage ? »¹. Telle est l'interrogation que lance Gilles Losseroy dans la postface qu'il a écrit à la pièce visniecienne *Les Détours de Cioran ou Mansarde à Paris avec vue sur la mort* dans son édition de 2007. Plus précisément, comment s'attaque-t-on à un personnage aussi complexe qu'Émile (Emil) Cioran ? Faut-il en effet être soi-même roumain pour oser le transformer en personnage théâtral ? Faut-il être soi-même exilé pour mieux appréhender le lien haine-amour de Cioran avec le pays natal, le lien avec cette terre de « l'échec permanent »² ? La mort du philosophe a-t-elle libéré Vișniec d'une certaine timidité par rapport à l'occupant de la « mansarde céleste »³ ? Elle a fait de lui « un personnage disponible »⁴, un fantôme bienveillant qui arpente toujours la rue de l'Odéon, le jardin du Luxembourg, l'hôpital Broca, la gare

¹ Matéi Vișniec, *Les Détours de Cioran ou Mansarde à Paris avec vue sur la mort*. Carrières/Morlanwelz, Lansman Éditeurs, 2007, p. 10.

² Luca Pițu, Sorin Antohi, *Le Néant roumain. Un entretien*. Iași, Polirom, 2009, p. 33.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 10. Sorin Antohi reprend à son compte l'expression de Mihai Ursachi qui, lui, nommait « céleste » son faubourg de Iași, ville où Antohi enseigna de longues années et où Luca Pițu enseigne toujours.

⁴ Matéi Vișniec, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

de l'Est, comme il arpentait autrefois les rues de la saxonne Sibiu dans un brouillard d'insomnie et de désespoir avant celui de la maladie d'Alzheimer.

Cette pièce atypique, et singulière, dans la production visniecienne se veut un hommage chaleureux et critique à une existence un peu toujours à l'envers de ce monde⁵. Rédigée de 2003 à 2004, cette pièce sera achevée en 2005 pour le dixième anniversaire de la mort du philosophe – elle sera jouée pour la première fois en 2007 à Esch-sur-Alzette au Luxembourg. Pièce atypique car son personnage principal est réel alors que Visniec semble toujours préférer la fiction parfaite dans ses productions même si elle est inspirée d'une réalité souvent bien vivace – exception faite d'Anton Tchekhov en 2002 (2005) en tant que personnage central dans *La Machine Tchekhov*.

Il semble aussi que Visniec se rapproche ainsi plus de ses racines dans la représentation de ce Roumain inquiet⁶, de cet apatride de fait. Sans être Cioran, Visniec ne voit-il pas en lui une vague réflexion de son moi ? Un Autre qui aurait pu être lui à une époque et dans des circonstances historiques différentes ? Cioran c'est avant tout la voix de la désespérance mais également de la liberté pour la génération de Visniec, emprisonnée dans l'État ceausescusien : paradoxalement, la voix des possibles arrivant clandestinement d'un Paris fantasmé. Après 1987, pour Matéi Visniec, Cioran devient la matrice de sa propre situation d'exilé dans un Paris devenu bien réel.

C'est donc Paris qui sert principalement de décor à cette pièce, la Roumanie n'est qu'une présence qui plane, lointaine, tout au bout de la ligne défunte de l'Orient-Express car : « il n'y a pas de train qui arrive de Bucarest. Il n'y a pas de trains qui viennent du néant... Vous savez Bucarest, c'est la capitale d'un trou...d'un trou historique, d'une forme d'anémie axiologique qui est mon pays d'origine »⁷. Ce *neantul românesc* demeure, outre ce concept si cioranien, le livre en suspens, l'ouvrage jamais écrit, cet autre bréviaire que Cioran ne publia jamais⁸. La Roumanie disparaît également dans les brumes de la maladie que Visniec tente de décrire tout en donnant à son personnage une dignité par l'intermédiaire de l'ironie : le Cioran théâtral s'ingénie à refermer à clé les portes derrière lui, emprisonnant ainsi tous les opportuns, fictionnels, que Matéi Visniec a jeté sur son passage, tout particulièrement les membres de la Société des camps de la mort des livres de Cioran⁹ – il n'est pas utile de rappeler combien Cioran méprisait l'analyse de son œuvre, et toute admiration.

⁵ Cette expression « à l'envers de ce monde » est empruntée à Elsa Triolet.

⁶ On lira à cet effet le texte de Liliana Nicorescu intitulé « Comment peut-on être Cioran ? » disponible sur la banque de données du centre de recherche POEXIL de l'Université de Montréal, www.poexil.umontreal.ca/textes/liliana.conference.pdf

⁷ Matéi Visniec, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁸ Luca Pițu, Sorin Antohi, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-105.

⁹ Matéi Visniec, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

Cette référence à la fois directe et détournée à la Shoah fait d'une certaine manière écho au passé trouble de Cioran que Visniec affronte sans timidité aucune alors que le sujet de la Garde de fer divise encore la Roumanie actuelle¹⁰. Le dramaturge fait usage du personnage de la dactylographe du service des apatrides comme d'une Furie vengeresse accusant Cioran de s'être fourvoyé dans la politique légionnaire et le fascisme roumain¹¹. Ce personnage condamne également les deux amis de Cioran : Mircea Eliade et Eugène Ionesco dans une diatribe violente contre ce qu'Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine nomme « l'oubli du fascisme »¹². Et c'est bien d'oubli dont il s'agit dans cette scène, oubli provoqué par la maladie certes, mais oubli tout court, que Visniec souligne par la réponse polysémique de Cioran à son accusatrice qui lui lâche : « vous avez tout caché ! Toutes vos lettres de jeunesse, tous vos écrits de jeunesse... », ce à quoi le personnage de Cioran, cherchant désespérant son immeuble du 22 rue de l'Odéon depuis le matin, rétorque :

Mademoiselle, vous êtes peut-être née avec plusieurs clefs, ou vous avez peut-être une clef qui ouvre toutes les portes, mais, moi, depuis toujours, je n'ai eu qu'une seule clef qui ouvre une seule porte. Et j'ai dû naviguer dans ce siècle misérable avec une seule clef...¹³

Serait-ce une excuse cachée à des insolences politiques de jeunesse¹⁴ ? Une excuse que Matéi Visniec avance, celle d'un siècle confus, surtout dans les Balkans et dans cette Roumanie fragmentée par les régionalismes qui fut tant à la recherche d'un idéal national après des siècles d'oppression et d'invasion. L'engouement de Cioran pour la Garde de fer et Codreanu aurait-il alors été la seule tentation de donner un avenir à la Roumanie, à ce pays qui possède « une très mauvaise mémoire de l'avenir »¹⁵. Cette unique clé dont parle Cioran le personnage, sous la plume de Visniec, ne serait-elle pas cette 'roumanité' si pesante dont il ne put jamais complètement se défaire ? La dactylographe française – aux manières étrangement proches d'un agent de la Securitate roumaine – surenchérit : « toute votre vie vous n'avez fait que ça, essayer d'effacer votre passé ! Votre passé de fasciste... »¹⁶. Réponse polysémique à une explication qui l'était également : le point d'exclamation de la colère et de l'accusation ponctue autant qu'il sépare deux propositions distinctes. Il n'est pas certain que Matéi Visniec, en faisant usage de la répétition du mot 'passé', décrive le même passé cioranien. Que cherche-t-il à effacer ? Ses amours fascisantes du Bucarest des années trente ? Certes, la

¹⁰ Cf. Préface en langue anglaise de Radu Ioanid au journal de Mihail Sebastian, *Journal 1935-1944*. Londres, Pimlico, 2007, pp. vii-xx.

¹¹ Matéi Visniec, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-39.

¹² Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, *Cioran, Eliade, Ionesco : l'oubli du fascisme*. Paris, P.U.F., 2002.

¹³ Matéi Visniec, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

¹⁴ Luca Pițu, Sorin Antohi, *op. cit.*, 2009, p. 53.

¹⁵ Matéi Visniec, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 39.

preuve en fut faite lors de l'autocensure de l'auteur lui-même à la nouvelle publication à Bucarest de *Schimbarea la față a României* en 1993¹⁷. Mais aussi son existence de l'avant Paris, son existence roumaine tout simplement ? En 1991, Cioran affirmait qu'il avait absolument voulu quitter la Roumanie en 1937, qu'il ne supportait plus de vivre dans ce pays du « génie de l'échec »¹⁸. Ce passé, il l'a 'effacé' tout en y revenant sans cesse pour mieux encore l'anéantir sous l'injure et le crachat. Matéi Visniec décide d'étaler tous les qualificatifs négatifs liés au pays natal, tout ce nous pourrions même nommer des poncifs tant ils ont été répétés, analysés et disséqués. C'est en véritable glossateur que le dramaturge laisse se déferler cette diarrhée verbale et scriptée. Cette fois-ci, l'accusation voilée est proférée par le personnage du chef du service des apatrides qui ouvre les hostilités contre ce vieil homme perdu dans les méandres de la préfecture de police de Paris. La dactylographe qui mènera ensuite l'attaque contre le passé légionnaire de Cioran ponctue les paroles de son supérieur hiérarchique d'interjections violentes dont on peut se demander parfois si elles abondent dans le sens de Cioran ou bien si elle tente de l'accuser : « trou du cul du monde ! » ; « Pays de nuls ! »¹⁹. Le chef de service lit un document compulsé par sa dactylographe dont on découvre les talents de policière de l'écrit ; première allusion ironique et noire de Visniec au fonctionnaire digne de l'avant 1989 en Roumanie – qui a relevé toute la bile cioranienne vis-à-vis de sa « poussière natale »²⁰. Tout y passe ! Visniec a établi une liste, certes non exhaustive, des 'bons mots' du maître à penser de sa génération. Ce semi monologue s'achève par une conclusion violente et sans appel de la part de la dactylographe, question identitaire que le naturalisé français Visniec aurait pu sans doute poser au philosophe : « et malgré tout cela, il n'a jamais, jamais, jamais demandé la nationalité française... »²¹. Le personnage Cioran apporte une réponse sous forme d'expiation, de *mea culpa* devant ce qui s'érige comme un égoïsme, un ultime échec : « Je comprends que mon attitude puisse paraître odieuse... Vouloir la liberté absolue, se libérer de son propre pays, se libérer de sa pensée de jeunesse, c'est finalement odieux... »²². Mais est-il jamais possible de se libérer de tout cela ? Peut-on véritablement faire abstraction de ce qui fut ? Peut-on à ce point renier son passé ? En ce qui concerne son pays, la tentative est impossible, tout ce que l'on peut espérer c'est une vague réconciliation avec sa terre, ou tout du moins la fin d'une hantise qui ne remet absolument pas en cause l'idée que l'on se fait de son pays²³ et la réalisation qu'une « épine ensanglantera

¹⁷ Il faut noter que l'année 2009 a vu la traduction complète en français de cet ouvrage de 1936 sous le titre *La Transfiguration de la Roumanie* aux éditions de l'Herne.

¹⁸ Luca, Pițu, Sorin, Antohi, *op. cit.*, 2009, p. 34.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 35-36.

²⁰ Émile, Cioran, *Histoire et Utopie*, Paris, Gallimard Quarto (*Œuvres complètes*), 1995, p. 980.

²¹ Matéi Visniec, *Les Détours de Cioran ou Mansarde à Paris avec vue sur la mort*, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ Cf. Émile, Cioran, *La Tentation d'exister*. Paris, Gallimard Quarto (*Œuvres complètes*), 1995, p. 851.

[toujours] la quiétude de [l']oubli »²⁴. Quant à sa pensée de jeunesse, bien enfouie dans les méandres de la recreation de Cioran de l'après 1949, elle resurgit néanmoins dès la mort de l'auteur, et s'amplifie jusqu'en cette année 2009 à la lecture de *La Transfiguration de la Roumanie*.

Visniec ne tombe en rien dans l'hagiographie tant il présente la complexité du personnage Cioran. On perçoit, que malgré l'hommage, certaines critiques percent, mais au lieu d'accuser le vieux philosophe, il préfère l'identifier à un survivant qui a traversé le siècle²⁵, tant bien que mal.

Un des autres aspects que Visniec aborde se trouve être celui de la relation de Cioran à la religion. Une fois encore, le dramaturge fait lire l'acte d'accusation par l'inévitable dactylographe/archiviste digne cette fois-ci d'une inquisitrice, d'une protectrice de la foi orthodoxe. En écho à l'accusation-cliché de Dracula²⁶, quant à son passé fascisant, proférée dans l'hystérie par la-dite dactylographe – mais également dans un paroxysme ironique cher à Visniec ne pouvant s'empêcher, sans doute, de renvoyer l'image éculé de son pays d'origine –, celle-ci déverse tout son venin lorsqu'il s'agit, appelons-le ainsi, de l'athéisme de Cioran en le traitant d'assassin²⁷ car son crime le plus grand réside dans sa déstructuration de la croyance chrétienne²⁸. En y regardant de plus près, on note que Matéi Visniec – bien que 'neutre' – a construit cette réplique sur un mode polémique, tentant de reformuler les griefs les plus graves faits à Cioran par la frange plus traditionnelle et religieuse de la société roumaine. Pour s'en convaincre, il nous suffit de nous pencher sur les trois exclamations introductives de ce passage : « Apostat ! Blasphémateur ! Renégat ! »²⁹. Il s'agit, à n'en point douter, d'une excommunication classique, mais l'intelligence et la finesse de Visniec apparaissent dans l'ambiguïté du propos : de quoi accuse-t-on vraiment Émile Cioran ? De rejeter Dieu, de rejeter le Divin ? Non, de « salir Dieu », de « se moquer des saints » mais surtout de « démolir la religion orthodoxe »³⁰ ; la dernière accusation touchant au cœur de la psyché roumaine mais ne correspondant à aucuns des péchés susnommés : certainement pas la renégation, malgré les tentations bouddhistes et judaïques de Cioran³¹. C'est l'attaque contre l'Église orthodoxe roumaine – le dogme – qui est en jeu

²⁴ Émile, Cioran, *Bréviaire des vaincus*, éd. cit., p. 545.

²⁵ Matéi, Visniec, *Les Détours de Cioran ou Mansarde à Paris avec vue sur la mort*, op. cit., p. 37.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 39.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 45.

²⁸ On notera que l'attaque précédente (p. 44) portant sur le concept de révolution chez Cioran et sa soi-disant fascination pour le léninisme, le trotskisme et le stalinisme ne se conclut pas avec cette idée de mort et de meurtre mais reprend simplement le thème de la girouette idéologique : le « caméléon » politique qui a déjà été mentionné par Visniec.

²⁹ Matéi, Visniec, *Les Détours de Cioran ou Mansarde à Paris avec vue sur la mort*, op. cit., p. 45.

³⁰ *Idem*.

³¹ Cf. www.poexil.umontreal.ca/textes/liliana.conference.pdf ; et Émile Cioran, *Œuvres complètes*, éd. cit., p. 1739 (Glossaire).

dans ce coup de griffe de Visniec ; l'on sait qu'il serait faux de placer Cioran dans la catégorie des athées : il est habité du doute et de la fascination du négatif mais non de l'impossibilité de Dieu, ou d'un dieu³². Ou bien, nous faut-il comprendre ce terme de renégat dans son aspect non pas religieux mais culturel ? – on peut également arguer du fait que l'Église orthodoxe roumaine dépasse le religieux pour atteindre au culturel de par sa place prépondérante, que ce soit historiquement ou de manière sociétale. On pourrait peut-être avancer l'idée que cette accusation de renégation se doit d'être comprise dans l'effacement systématique du passé et dans l'adoption d'une nouvelle langue et de nouvelles normes culturelles. En cela, cette attaque aux accents religieux se rapprocherait en fait de celle, déjà mentionnée, sur l'enfouissement du passé roumain de Cioran. Matéi Visniec, qui connaît fort bien l'œuvre cioranienne, se réfère-t-il au *Précis de décomposition* et à sa partie sur Le Renégat ? On serait tenté de le croire de par l'accent mis sur l'idée du passé, et sur les retours dans le temps que Cioran effectue dans cette pièce. À la lecture du passage sur le renégat, on ne peut qu'être frappés par cette définition du déni :

Il [le renégat] se rappelle être né quelque part, avoir cru aux erreurs natales, proposé des principes et prôné des bêtises enflammées. Il en rougit..., et s'acharne à abjurer son passé, ses patries réelles ou rêvées, les vérités surgies de sa moelle, il ne trouvera la paix qu'après avoir anéanti en lui le dernier réflexe de citoyen et les enthousiasmes hérités. Comment les coutumes du cœur pourraient-elles l'enchaîner encore, quand il veut s'émanciper des généalogies (...)³³.

Une analyse rapide du vocable employé par le philosophe tend à nous conforter dans notre supposition : l'excommunication de la dactylographe dépasse le religieux tout en l'incorporant. Le religieux roumain, c'est la Roumanie, tout particulièrement dans cette Transylvanie occupée de Cioran : l'orthodoxie fut le ferment du peuple roumain au-delà des Carpates, l'appartenance collective d'une ethnie-nation assujettie. Ce sont à la fois la généalogie et l'erreur natale : les coutumes ancestrales « du cœur », mais certainement pas de la raison. Cette orthodoxie nationaliste fut également le ferment du nationalisme gardiste de la Roumanie de l'entre-deux guerres. Le mouvement légionnaire y prit ses racines, comme le franquisme dans le catholicisme espagnol. La religion de son enfance que Cioran rejette si violemment fut aussi la cause de ses « bêtises enflammées », dont il rougit dans ce *mea culpa* hautement symbolique. En reniant la religion du père, Cioran renie – dans ce premier ouvrage en langue française – son passé politique ancré dans le nationalisme-chrétien de Codreanu : l'injure aux saints des iconostases s'associe à l'injure libératoire faite aux saints laïcs et légionnaires. Même si Émile Cioran avait perdu la foi bien avant son ralliement à la Garde de fer, l'orthodoxie

³² Émile, Cioran, *ibidem*, p. 1777 (Glossaire).

³³ Émile, Cioran, *Précis de décomposition*, Paris : Gallimard Quarto (*Œuvres*), 1995, p. 635.

représentait le ciment culturel, le fondement du mouvement dans sa tentative de transfiguration de la Roumanie, polluée par des restes phanaro-ottomans.

C'est dans *Précis de décomposition*, ce livre de l'exil territorial et linguistique, que débute la véritable transfiguration de Cioran en cet homme que Matéi Visniec célèbre sans compromissions, sans tentations hagiographiques. C'est dans cet ouvrage qu'Emil Cioran devient Émile Cioran lorsqu'il foule « aux pieds son identité » et qu'il se délie de « tous les préjugés »³⁴. Mais ce déracinement ne va pas sans douleur, non pas immédiatement mais lorsque la vie s'achève et que la mémoire et la raison prennent congé de votre être. Cet exil voulu devant l'échec roumain, ou plus précisément devant ce que Cioran nomme, de manière très régionaliste, le « destin valaque »³⁵, l'exilé Visniec y est sensible mais c'est en observateur qu'il se pose de par le fait qu'il a refusé de couper les ponts avec sa patrie natale. Là où Cioran n'est que venin, puis pessimisme quant à la Roumanie, Visniec, sans l'encenser, lui fait prendre la décision d'amener ses racines avec lui³⁶ et de ne pas couper tous les ponts, de ne pas en faire son deuil. Le changement d'idiome, signe tangible de l'exil, permet à Matéi Visniec de multiplier ses expérimentations créatives, de plonger dans un ailleurs plein de promesses. Chez Cioran celui « qui renie sa langue, pour en adopter une autre, change d'identité, voire de déceptions. Héroïquement traître, il rompt avec ses souvenirs et, jusqu'à un certain point, avec lui-même »³⁷.

Mais les souvenirs refont surface après de si nombreuses années d'exil. Là où Bucarest, la capitale valaque, n'est qu'un trou béant d'où les trains n'arrivent plus, dans l'avant-dernière scène des *Détours de Cioran*, des images de Sibiu se forment sur une toile géante tendue en guise de décor mais aussi dans le cerveau embrumé du vieux Transylvain qui débute un dernier dialogue avec un jeune homme de cette ville : Emil, son double, son fantôme, lui. C'est l'avant-Bucarest, le début des insomnies sur lesquelles plane l'idée du suicide. Mais c'est également, ce que nous aimerions nommer : l'avant-Valachie, avant les compromissions, la chute, puis la fuite. La ville de Sibiu ne peut être vue comme un paradis mais la cité saxonne vaut mieux sans doute que la capitale qui corrompt. Il est fort intéressant de noter que Bucarest ne sert pas de décor direct à l'une des scènes de la pièce. Sans être entièrement occultée, elle est éloignée, distante, et le Cioran visniecien n'y revient ni en songe ni en pensée. Visniec choisit même dans ses indications

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 636.

³⁵ Émile, Cioran, *Bréviaire des vaincus*, éd. cit., p. 537.

³⁶ On lira à cet effet la thèse de doctorat, encore non publiée, de Madame Olga Oprea-Gancevici intitulée « Matéi Visniec – texte et image » dans laquelle elle rapporte ces propos de Matéi Visniec lors d'une entrevue télévisée en Roumanie (p. 125) – cette thèse de doctorat est consultable auprès de la bibliothèque de la faculté des Lettres de l'Université Babeș-Bolyai de Cluj-Napoca (Roumanie), Université où elle fut soutenue en novembre 2008.

³⁷ Émile, Cioran, *La Tentation d'exister*, éd. cit., p. 854.

scéniques – en chapeaux de chaque « partie » – de ne pas projeter de vues du Bucarest d'avant-guerre, préférant des images du mythique Orient-Express. L'accent est mis sur le départ, et l'arrivée à Paris comme lorsque Cioran attend son frère Aurel qui ne paraîtra pas.

Cette absence relative de Bucarest ne peut laisser indifférent car elle transcrit le rapport que Cioran a entretenu avec cette ville, et avec la province de Valachie. On ne peut qu'être frappé par les références 'valaques' chez Cioran ; même ce néant roumain, sur lequel il aurait tant aimé écrire un livre, tend à équivaloir au néant valaque. Il est intéressant de remarquer le 'régionalisme' cioranien : la géographie du rejet. Certains passages laissent littéralement rêveur de par leur délimitation de l'espace 'roumain'. Comment ne pas s'extasier devant cette carte tracée dans *Bréviaire des vaincus* :

Pourquoi des créatures, nées ridées et les yeux cernés, vieilles par le néant, épuisées par une impuissance congénitale, se sont-elles arrêtées sur les rives du Danube ou à l'ombre des Carpates ? Elles glissent toutes vers des mers Noires, des mers inhospitalières qui les rejettent sur la grève, cruellement privées de noyade³⁸.

À cette citation, on pourrait également y associer celle du même ouvrage qui reprend pour ainsi dire la même symbolique en insistant sur ce même espace 'sudiste' :

Au pied des Carpates, la marche du monde n'a cure des hommes et le soleil se noie dans le purin et la vulgarité. Aucun idéal ne féconde la gaieté mortuaire des esclaves du temps aux portes de l'Orient³⁹.

Doit-on souligner plus avant ce thème récurrent tant il se répète, tant Cioran 'enfonce le clou' dans le cercueil valaque : « (...) ces hordes qui, impuissantes à poursuivre leur marche vers l'Ouest, s'affaissèrent le long des Carpates et du Danube, pour s'y tapir, pour y sommeiller, masse de déserteurs aux confins de l'Empire, racaille fardée d'un rien de latinité »⁴⁰.

Ce que nous aimerions nommer le rejet géographique de Cioran, ou bien la cartographie cioranienne, apparaît clairement dans la pièce de Matéi Vişniec tant la Valachie en est absente, comme nous l'avons déjà souligné. Le sud des Carpates a disparu de l'espace théâtral comme il a disparu chez Cioran, à tout jamais. Comme le rappelle Ilianca Zarifopol-Johnston, culturellement Sibiu et Bucarest sont deux mondes à part. Sibiu était – et l'est encore – une cité occidentale ordonnée ancrée dans ce que l'on nomme l'Europe centrale alors que Bucarest est une ville polymorphe faite de bric et de broc au lourd passé ottoman⁴¹.

³⁸ Émile, Cioran, *Bréviaire des vaincus*, éd. cit., pp. 531-532.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 537.

⁴⁰ Émile, Cioran, *La Tentation d'exister*, éd. cit., p. 851.

⁴¹ Ilianca Zarifopol-Johnston, *Searching for Cioran*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2009, pp. 60-61.

Zarifopol-Johnston affirme également que le sentiment d'infériorité de Cioran trouverait ses racines dans son statut de Transylvain né sous domination hongroise⁴². Nous ne pouvons entièrement abonder en ce sens malgré la validité historique du propos. Il suffit de lire les descriptions nombreuses du philosophe sur sa Transylvanie natale pour comprendre que le sentiment d'infériorité se développa plutôt lors de son arrivée à Bucarest la francophone, lui le romano-magyaro-germanophone. Ce point est souligné par Cioran lui-même dans une lettre à Jean-François Duval en 1979 :

Je viens d'une province de Roumanie, la Transylvanie qui avait appartenu à l'Autriche-Hongrie (...) j'étais austro-hongrois. Dans ces régions on parlait l'allemand, le hongrois, etc. Mais mes parents ne savaient pas un mot de français. Par contre, à Bucarest, la capitale, tout le monde était francisé. Tous les intellectuels parlaient couramment français. Tout le monde ! Et moi, j'arrive comme étudiant parmi tous ces gens... Évidemment, j'ai fait des complexes d'infériorité⁴³.

La capitale est une ville étrangère qui l'engloutira malgré son désir de la conquérir tel un Julien Sorel transylvain⁴⁴. C'est le temps des erreurs, des fourvoiements et des extrémismes. C'est le temps de l'antisémitisme et des attaques contre les anciens maîtres magyars : le temps de la folie qu'il admettra plus tard⁴⁵. Cette agitation de jeunesse, Vișniec la reprend et la mentionne dans l'avant-dernière scène de sa pièce lorsqu'Émile Cioran vieillit 'rencontre' le jeune Emil Cioran insomniaque dans une Sibiu suggérée par des images projetées sur une toile géante. Cioran l'ancien ne supporte plus Cioran le jeune, lui affirmant : « tu m'agaces. Tu m'agaces de plus en plus. Plus je vieillis, plus tu m'énerves. Comment est-ce que j'ai pu être aussi stupide »⁴⁶ ?

Matéi Vișniec choisit de conclure sa pièce dans une Transylvanie imaginée et imaginaire comme pour mieux souligner le lien indestructible entre Cioran et sa province natale qu'il place au dessus de 'son' pays qui ne trouvera jamais entièrement grâce à ses yeux malgré son appel – sa diatribe – de *Transfiguration de la Roumanie*. Vișniec le Bucovinien ne peut être insensible à l'ancrage régionaliste de Cioran. Cet ancrage transcende, transfigure, la nationalité acquise en 1919 par le philosophe, celle soumise aux aléas de la politique valaque, ainsi que cette 'ethnicité' encombrante, celle dont Cioran ne se sent pas responsable tant son destin le désespère⁴⁷. Si la Roumanie est un échec permanent, Sibiu demeurerait-elle la seule proue visible

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 106.

⁴³ Émile Cioran, *éd. cit.*, p. 1788 (Glossaire).

⁴⁴ Ilinca Zarifopol-Johnston, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-62.

⁴⁵ Émile Cioran, *Transfiguration de la Roumanie*, Paris, L'Herne, 2009, p. 77 (Fragments de correspondance de Cioran).

⁴⁶ Matéi, Vișniec, *Les Détours de Cioran ou Mansarde à Paris avec vue sur la mort*, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

⁴⁷ Émile Cioran, *Bréviaire des vaincus*, *éd. cit.*, pp. 546.

de ce navire à la dérive ? Pour Cioran, tout du moins, elle demeure la ville qu'il aime le plus au monde⁴⁸ même si elle n'est plus qu'une ombre de son passé – et d'elle-même dans une certaine mesure⁴⁹ – sur laquelle plane la sienne ; lui, qui a dû se « débrouiller pendant soixante ans à Paris sans [elle] »⁵⁰.

Plus encore qu'à Sibiu, nous serions tenté de dire que la pièce devait s'achever à Rășinari et c'est bien dans le village tant aimé du philosophe que Matéi Vișniec décide de faire ses adieux scéniques à son personnage. Le dramaturge choisit d'annoncer la mort attendue du vieil homme par la bouche de la pleureuse officielle du village. C'est tout d'abord en langue roumaine qu'un court échange s'établit entre Cioran et la vieille femme, comme pour réaffirmer le retour aux sources. Ces quelques mots en roumain seront les derniers du personnage puisque la traduction française ne sera audible qu'en voix off afin de s'assurer que les ultimes mots du personnage Cioran seront ceux dans l'idiome originel vers lequel l'exilé semble toujours revenir, envers et contre tout. Vișniec choisit la spatialité pour faire 'disparaître' son Cioran : là où les rampes auraient pu s'éteindre, il préfère souligner une dernière fois le retour au pays natal par l'évanouissement dans les premiers contreforts des Carpates de son Cioran imaginaire. La langue de naissance et les montagnes agissent ici, selon l'interprétation visniecienne, comme les deux seules constantes dans l'existence d'Émile Cioran. Plus encore, il semblerait que Vișniec souhaite célébrer la transylvanité intrinsèque du philosophe de langue française qui semblerait s'imposer comme l'élément salvateur au cœur du désert roumain et de ses propres difficultés avec sa roumanité. Étrangement, c'est à Sibiu que le choix de l'exil parisien de Cioran se dessine et non pas dans le petit Paris bucarestois ; c'est dans sa transylvanité que sa francité prend forme car Hermannstadt-Nagyszeben-Sibiu lui a offert le goût des villes multilingues et cosmopolites alors que le Bucarest intellectuel, unilingue francophone des années trente ne lui rappela jamais l'occidentalisme de sa ville : Bucarest l'oriental ne fut qu'une pale copie d'un Paris imaginé alors que Sibiu l'allemande, la hongroise et la roumaine le sensibilisa pour toujours aux métropoles pluriculturelles⁵¹.

Les Détours de Cioran tentent de raconter Émile Cioran dans toute sa complexité sans jamais tomber dans l'éloge servile ou l'attaque rangée. La pièce, bien loin de perdre le spectateur – et le lecteur – dans les détours existentiels du philosophe – malgré un système référentiel qui nécessite néanmoins une connaissance assez approfondie de la vie et de l'œuvre de Cioran – permet au contraire de retrouver grâce au personnage théâtral la personne que fut Cioran, et surtout de

⁴⁸ Émile, Cioran, *éd. cit.*, p. 1784 (Glossaire).

⁴⁹ Luca Pițu, Sorin Antohi, *Le Néant roumain. Un entretien. éd. cit.*, pp. 112-113.

⁵⁰ Matéi, Vișniec, *Les Détours de Cioran ou Mansarde à Paris avec vue sur la mort, op. cit.*, p. 64.

⁵¹ Émile, Cioran, *éd. cit.*, p. 1784 (Glossaire).

le rapprocher de son héritage transylvain qui se détache bien plus clairement que son destin roumain, imposé et honni. En guise de conclusion, pourrions-nous avancer que ce n'est pas simplement en Roumain exilé que Matéi Vișniec se penche sur le cas de son aîné Cioran, mais que c'est le Bucovinien qui interroge le Transylvain dans l'espace théâtral tout en y superposant l'espace commun des vieilles provinces habsbourgeoises dans leur similitudes culturelles et linguistiques, et dans leur spécificité que l'Union et le centralisme bucarestois n'ont jamais pu effacer ? S'il existe un néant roumain selon Cioran, celui-ci s'applique-t-il à tout le pays ou bien simplement aux terres au sud des Carpates ?

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FROM THE ANXIETY OF DEATH TO AESTHETIC SUBLIMATION

OANA CORINA POCAN

ABSTRACT. The present article aims at investigating two of the constants in Ionesco's work, as they are fashioned in *'Frenzy for Two or More'*. Firstly, one can note the autobiographical projection: from the motif of the paternal figure, rejected and repressed, the discussion is reached about the image-parabola of a universe in which the authority is violently rejected (suggesting war atmosphere). Secondly, the study unveils a thanatic dominant, considered to be the authentic tragic root of Eugene Ionesco's work.

In addition to this thematic research, the study approaches the intertextuality of the chosen dramatic text, by reference to E. Ionesco's work and confessions, as well as in association to other names well-known to literature (Caragiale, Arghezi, Kafka). Without being intended as an exhaustive presentation, this work outlines the author's message to his audience: the world of the evoked dramatic space will find no way out, as long as it refuses to mediate conflicts and prefers to remain in a universe of extremisms.

Keywords: *Ionesco, psychoanalysis, death, conflict, extremism*

"...art is the most notable human activity; that it is above policy, philosophy, science. That gestures and acts die and harden; that science and philosophy undo, split, turn to pieces; it is only art that creates. It thoroughly mends the evil created by science or politics, spiritualizing machines, binding elements together, humanising the political act."

*(E. Ionesco)**

The need for a Ionesco-like expression in terms of drama is not a free, selfish or theatrical manifestation, but an extrapolation of the anxiety of the Self, a picture of an inexpressible reality forced to express itself. Thus, E. Ionesco projects on an aesthetic level his deepest phobias and unrests in an attempt to reveal the human constants¹. One can enumerate: the misfortune of being born, the anxiety of death, the ridiculousness of being mortal, the feeling of existence deception, 'the terror of history', the nihilistic sentiment, the revolt against the paternal image, the emotional pattern of domestic violence, apocalyptic danger, depersonalization, negative

* E. Ionesco, *Eu*, Cluj, Ed. Echinox, 1990, p. 77.

¹ Dana Puiu, *Parody in modern and postmodern theatre*, Pitești, Paralela 45, 2002, p. 185 "In order to discover the basic problem shared by all people, I should wonder what my own fundamental problem, my well-rooted fear are. Thus I will discover the fears and problems of each of us. Here's the right way, going deep into my uncertainty, into our uncertainty" (about the playwright's role).

apotheosis of light, “rhinoceritis”, and, not least, the depiction of the puppet world and the fundamental badness of existence. Therefore, the playwright can be placed under the Cartesian principle, paraphrased: “I am afraid, therefore I exist”. Of the items listed above only two will be underlined, the one related to Thanatos and the one related to the father figure and, implicitly, to the father’s country, Romania, the chosen support text being *Frenzy for Two or More*.

If from a psychoanalytic point of view traumatising memories are repressed, only peripheral details (the so-called “screen memories”) being left, everything related in Ionesco’s plays to the family environment and the image of the couple can be interpreted as an emotional autobiographical pattern, evolving from domestic violence to racial and social violence. The author’s confessions bring light upon a childhood scene where the mother is seen as a victim of the husband’s authority: “a poor child, disarmed, a puppet in the hands of my father and the subject of his persecution”². The attempt to move the balance of forces from the father toward the mother will engender (in his theatre) powerful female figures, rational and capable of facing the masculine element, for example, HER permanently fighting back HIS behaviour and language. Her force of domination is also revealed by her apparent verbal or physical aggressiveness: “You shameless! You cheater! Cheater! Cheater!”; or “Asshole! Cheater!”³. We may even talk about a compensation of reality through literature; family ghosts are but common in Ionesco’s plays: grandparents, uncles, step mother, sister/brother-in-law, mother and father.

The refusal to accept the paternal attitude is also related to a sort of hatred displayed towards any kind of authority, including the blaming of the native country, equalled to the terror space of the Legionary Movement⁴. This dispute with Romania in its two hypostases (Legionary Romania and the father’s country) is masked in *Frenzy for two or more* by the terrifying war atmosphere: “*The outside noise grows now; shouts and weapons snapping, that were vaguely heard from a distance, are approaching, are under the window now.*”⁵ It is the same stupid fanaticism and collective psychosis (dehumanization, depersonalization, the absence of physiognomy) that Ionesco suggested by the “rhinoceros-isation” existing both in *Rhinoceros* or *Journey among the Dead* as well as in *Antidotes* or in *Past Present, Present Past*. This fear of gregariousness appears with both characters preferring to not involve directly in the course of events and their desire to take shelter: “Let’s barricade. The wardrobe. Push the wardrobe before the front door.”⁶

² E. Ionesco, *Past Present, Present Past*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1993, p. 24

³ E. Ionesco, *Frenzy for two or more*, in *Theatre*, Volume II, Bucharest, Minerva, 1970, p. 279

⁴ See E. Ionesco, *Past Present...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20: “I feel this is why I hate authority, as there is the source of my anti-militarism, of everything the martial word stands for, everything a society based on the primacy of man over woman means. [...] Everything I did, I did it in a way against [my father]. I have published pamphlets against his country (I can’t stand the land, because it means my father’s land...)”

⁵ E. Ionesco, *Frenzy for two or more*, *op. cit.*, 1970, p. 279

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 283

Nonetheless, the external factor is destructive, undermining the protection the couple are looking for, which becomes apparent toward the end of the play, when the room turns to ruins “[...] pieces keep falling from the ceiling. At the end of the play there will be nothing left of the ceiling or the walls. In their place some sort of stairs, silhouettes, possibly flags will be visible.”⁷ This “shell” bears an analogy with the two animals becoming subject of dispute, the snail and the turtle, symbols of the wish of *regressus ad uterum*. This undermining of the closed, domestic area, the destruction of a cliché-ed family existence (they are fighting for seventeen years over whether the snail and the turtle are similar or different) allows the transformation of the interior space into a space of absurd death, an element identified by Laura Pavel as specifically “Gothic”⁸. War battles or the battles between spouses become a parable of the idea that ethnic disputes are rarely ended by consensus. E. Ionesco was aware that aggression against the individual “self” matches in the twentieth century the “two collectivist, anti-personality trends of this century: Nazism and left-wing totalitarianism”⁹. The main argument is that crowds, the herd, are depersonalised as physiognomy. “People have no face when forming too many groups or when, if I assigned a face, this collective face is hideous.”¹⁰ As spectators to the war street, HE and SHE do not distinguish the faces of those who fight, but only the battle engulfing an ordinary passer-by, a sign that the danger of death is lurking.

She: What's going on?

He: No big deal. There are three dead.

She: Who are they?

He: One on either side. And a neutral person, a passer-by.¹¹

The threat carried by the air at the hearing level is thus more obviously materialised and represents the hallmark of a relentless aggression, of an invading mechanism.

In addition to the exterior-interior scenic area dualism, dialogues show the same swinging between extremes “aggravated by the conspicuously confessed inability

⁷ *Idem*

⁸ Laura Pavel, *Ionesco, the anti-world of a sceptic*, Pitești, Paralela 45, 2002, p. 211: “What is specific to the Gothic novel, and to no lesser extent to the contemporary neo-Gothic dramatic art, is exactly the undermining of the closed domestic space, the familiar habits, by insinuation from the outside of the out of the ordinary, the strangeness and the unfamiliarity, categories negatively labelled within the literary poetic topic of distress and the sensational macabre feeling [...]. The bourgeois interior, the apparently secured area [...] invokes exactly the recurring Gothic location of cemeteries, graves, associating to it an eschatologist-grotesque vision of a catastrophic future of mankind.”

⁹ E. Ionesco, *Log in shreds*, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 1993, p. 81

¹⁰ Ionesco, *Between life and dream*, translation from French by Simona Cioculescu, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1999, p. 115

¹¹ E. Ionesco, *Frenzy for two or more*, *op. cit.*, p. 280

to reach steady beliefs.”¹² The disputed issue is eclectic: from zoology to the opening and closing of a window, from the mirage of choosing a different destiny to charging wrong choices, from finding a refuge to the statue’s identity, from the desire to get out of the house to the illusion that peace was established. Neighbours represent human hypostasis in need of a conflict and of events that make them feel alive, as the conflict is “useful for life to pass”, and as “We are having fun anywhere there is a conflict around.”¹³ Swinging between two poles is a constant in E. Ionesco’s life; he’s always been forced to choose and, perhaps, wishing to solve contradictions set by his double ethnicity (Romanian father, French mother). His tragic failure to rise above his roots is also artistically sublimated by his reaching for a condition other than the human hypostasis present in *Elegies of Minuscule Beings* (Elegy, Prayer). The intense ethnic stigmata, experienced by other personalities as well, in the interwar period, is emphasized in his case by the alleged paternal self-blaming: “I committed a great mistake in my life; I spoiled my blood, I must redeem the sin of blood.”¹⁴ Extrapolated, the inability to overcome one’s ethnic condition becomes, from a romantic and a bookish theme, a dramatically and even metaphysically lived reality. Joining his father with Romania and France with his mother, the playwright renegades his native place, a space where anti-Semitism is manifested, “the island of monstrosity”¹⁵, in favour of his spiritual cradle, France, “a kind of paradise”¹⁶, the “headquarters of Ionesco’s anima”¹⁷. Such biographical mystifications allow revelation of an identity crisis that can be identified in both his theatre and other texts, although the process of deceiving oneself is motivated by socio-political circumstances. Nonetheless, the final rupture from Romania will be due to the scandal linked to the article *Letters from Paris* published in Paris in the review *Romanian Life*, 3 / March 1946, following which he was sentenced to detention in communist Romania without the penalty ever being applied.¹⁸

The play *Frenzy for Two or More* will therefore not only be “a parody of family life”¹⁹ by intertextual reference to Caragiale’s play *Conu’ Leonida Faces the Reaction* (setting, characters’ reactions to the external auditory element, age, attire, etc.) but also a parable of terror. Ionesco obsessively remembers the Legionary atmosphere²⁰, which is high-lightened in the play by the obsessive repetition of bombshell on stage, songs, shouts and clamours mentioned by the stage directions.

¹² Ion Pop, *Avangarda in Romanian literature*, Atlas, Bucuresti, 2000, p. 388

¹³ E. Ionesco, *Frenzy for two or more*, *op. cit.*, pp. 294, 298

¹⁴ Marta Petreu, *Ionesco father in the country*, Cluj-Napoca, Apostrof, 2001, p. 129

¹⁵ E. Ionesco, *Past Present, Present Past*, *op. cit.*, p. 141

¹⁶ E. Ionesco, *Log in shreds*, *op. cit.*, p. 9

¹⁷ L. Pavel, *Ionesco, the anti-world of a skeptic*, *op. cit.*, p. 75

¹⁸ See M. Petreu, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-124

¹⁹ L. Pavel, *Ionesco, the anti-world of a skeptic*, *op. cit.*, p. 156

²⁰ E. Ionesco, *War with everybody*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1992, p. 273: “On my street, in a dour and dreary November, a group of Legionaries, embodiment of all bestiality and unlimited stupidity of the whole mankind and the cosmos, went by singing some sort of an iron song (a kind of roar), with words of iron and

Beyond terror, beyond the desire to overcome the traumas of childhood, beyond the attempt to sublimate family failures, appears the second constant in Ionesco's dramatic art, mentioned in the beginning of this work: *death*. Seen as the depiction of anxiety, the misfortune of being born or the shame of the mortal condition, it establishes the roots of authentic drama. The sources of this feeling – the revelation of death, the metaphysical ridiculousness of the human condition and 'the terror of history' are associated with the bookish motif of the increate, the desire of not having been born or the wish that life should represent at least a secure area, not a permanent threat. Feeling "cheated twice"²¹, the playwright will protest, through the lines of his characters, against life put under the sign of death.

She: They'll put us in prison. They are going to kill us.

He: But I did nothing.

She: But I did nothing.

He: That's why.

She: We didn't put out nose in their business.

He: Well, that's it, I'm telling you, that's it.

She: Well, if we mixed into it, they would have killed us all the same.

He: We would have been dead at this time.²²

Sentencing the innocent to death in an absurd manner is also treated by Kafka in *The Process* where the final sentence is received with indignation by the character while in *Frenzy for two or more* the sentence is received with serenity "It's a consolation.", "Now they are giving the verdict with serenity. They installed the guillotine up there. See, there's peace."²³ Not as much death itself bothers Ionesco but the humility of not having the opportunity to choose whether to live or die²⁴, or at least the possibility to improve life. The question whether they have made a good choice or not would always torture the two protagonists of the play, doubting the solution they adopted in a particular case and wanting to know whether they have missed their destiny because of the use of free will.

He: I'm not just anyone! I was invited by princesses who had necklines opening down to their navels and blouses over to cover it, otherwise they would be naked. I had brilliant ideas, I could have written them down, I might have been asked to. I would have been a poet.

gall, spitting iron and gall, faces of chained and branded beasts. When looking at their faces, which resembles so much among themselves, one would feel certain they wore all the same face multiplied that read military, police, magistracy, Eleanor, middle class, nationalism, stupidity, when you looked at them, you had serious impression that Romania was lost for mankind."

²¹ E. Ionesco, *Past present, Present past*, op. cit., 1993, p. 225

²² E. Ionesco, *Frenzy for two or more*, op. cit., pp. 293-294

²³ *Ibidem*, pp. 294, 299

²⁴ E. Ionesco, *Questioning*, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 1994, p. 22: "It humiliates me because [death] is an expression of our finitude."

She: You think you're better than others; I thought so, too, one day, when I was crazy. It's not true. I pretended to believe you ... Because you seduced me, but you are nothing but an asshole!

He: (...) If I had not seen you, if we had not met, what would it have been like? Maybe I would have become a painter. Or maybe something else. How could it have been. Maybe I would have travelled, maybe I would have been younger now.

She: Maybe you would have died in an asylum. We might as well meet some day. Maybe there is no elsewhere. What would we know?²⁵

This idea is associated with the impression that the man is a puppet that someone else is playing with.²⁶ This is why the puppet hallmark appears as well in Ionesco's lyrical texts *A girl sees angels*, *Elegy for the doll with bran*, etc., but also in *Frenzy for two or more* by the element of stage props "One can see hanging bodies without heads, puppets heads without bodies coming down in slow motion."²⁷ The human dimension is almost cancelled due to decapitation and the apparition of the guillotine – a symbol of the totalitarian regime – and due to the presence of death floating above the heads of the characters. In this vision of a world of puppets, biographical elements are converging (the mother - victim of the father), the motif of the world as a theatre present both in antiquity and in Shakespeare's work joins the visions of the Romantics and avant-garde artists, Schopenhauer's ideas that the world is built on suffering and that there is a fundamental evil that no one can avoid, meets the Christian motif of the world as a place of transition and the Greek motif of the inexistence of reality²⁸. However, Ionesco puts the sign of equivalence between safety, evidence and lie, namely between insecurity, chaos and life²⁹ so that *Frenzy for two or More* can be considered a manifesto of the existence of the chaotic as the sole way out of stereotype behaviours and languages. Even the title of the play intertextually alludes to Arghezi's poem *Hide and Seek* where death is associated with a game of life that "One can play in two / in three / As many as want to can play it! / May it burn in fire!" Death anxiety is so strong that Ionesco would finally prefer torture and the nightmare of reality³⁰, like the two main characters of the play, images of the playwright's alter-

²⁵ E. Ionesco, *Frenzy For Two or More*, *op. cit.*, pp. 279, 281

²⁶ E. Ionesco, *I*, Cluj, Equinox, 1990, p. 170: "Look: the mechanism of the strings pulling me is very simple, classic in its simplicity: I say no, no, not to all what is being offered to me; and, yes, to everything that is refused to me"

²⁷ E. Ionesco, *Frenzy For Two or More*, *op. cit.*, p. 299

²⁸ See Marta Petreu, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9

²⁹ E. Ionesco, *I*, *op. cit.*, p. 165: "... When, in fact, everything is uncertain, when nothing could be proved without being wrong, when we can only hope because there is uncertainty; when chaos is the only way we can live, I cannot understand, in no way, why on earth do we run, why do we want to get unhappy with certainties, with records, which, on top of it, are necessarily liars."

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 156: "I prefer nightmare to this insipid reality because, so far, I still prefer torture to death."

ego, who are struggling for survival blocking themselves into the house. The neighbours face the danger to witnesses the events, and the Soldier seeks his feminine hypostasis (Janette). Generic appellations such as *Him, Her, the Soldier, the Neighbours*, the last ones with a definite article, reflect the archetypal level reached by the play, fitting into a certain typology: Him-Her – the Couple, the Soldier – the Authority that is no longer felt as terrifying, the Neighbours – the Adventurers. In addition to the *thanatic* fear appears a sort of fascination related to death in different hypostases (considered by Laura Pavel still a Gothic-type element): although the two characters are frightened, they want to see what happens in the street, boredom being more powerful than the instinct of survival.³¹

Danger is lurking by every step marked by stage directions in the play, projectiles penetrating through the window, the door, the ceiling, destroying, in other words, everything that was safe³². The construction of this eschatological poetics impression is amplified by the impression that the universe is calm. In fact, it is the lull before the storm, the apparent peace instituted in the play.

Him: Everything is calming down. Can you hear it? Calming down.

Her: Events go faster when they are no longer.³³

Peace which is disturbed again by the apparition of beheaded puppets in parallel with the noise of the saw noise suggesting the guillotine. Even the symbol of light is reversed, as in the beginning the interior was bathed in light, in correlation with the action of closing the shutters, but once the walls and the ceiling collapse, light becomes excessive and evokes blindness and death³⁴, as puppets heads invade the protective space of the two protagonists. Expressionist accents of the vision remind of aesthetic formula of I.L. Caragiale “I feel enormously” and “I see monstrously” and the Theatre of Cruelty of Antonin Artaud.³⁵

³¹ Emil Cioran, *The Trouble With Being Born*, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 1995, p. 84: “The antidote of boredom is fear. The cure must be stronger than the disease.”

³² E. Ionesco, *Between life and dream ...*, p. 153: ‘We live in an apocalyptic world. We live an apocalyptic age all the time, the Apocalypse exists in every moment of history, but more or less obvious, more or less marked. I feel that the world heads towards a catastrophe.’

³³ E. Ionesco, *Frenzy For Two or More*, *op. cit.*, p. 297

³⁴ Although in other texts E. Ionesco defines himself as a person who “loves light”. See Ionesco, *I, op. cit.*, p. 79: “At night, fear comes to me. Then, more than ever, I feel the need of light, sun. I love daytime. Only light can soothe me.”

³⁵ A. Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*, Cluj-Napoca, Equinox Publishing House, 1997, p. 67: “After light and sound, we have action and the dynamism of action: only now theatre, instead of copying life, connects as much as it can to pure forces. Whether accepted or denied, there is still a way to speak that invokes forces, which makes the unconscious give rise to energetic images and to the exterior gratuitous crime. A violent and condensed action means a semblance of lyricism: it calls forth supernatural images, a blood of pictures and a bloody flood of images in the mind of the poet, and in the mind of the spectator.”

Irritation regarding death is due to the powerlessness of controlling it, which is evident in the composition of the play, when the protagonists are left to hope that everything was completed, so that the sense of terror could come again more violently. Actually, the playwright does not oscillate “between doubt and faith, but between doubt and hope”. It is literature that remains a tactic of defence against death anxiety, because serious issues such as death, fear or disaster, can be thus trivialized³⁹, their metaphysical meaning being lost in a way.

Seen as a rear view mirror that allows dedublation⁴⁰, the play *Frenzy For Two or More* hides as well E. Ionesco’s phobias and complexes linked to his family, to his identity oscillation, to the anxiety of death or to the torture of life, to the imminent danger of catastrophe in a world in which, as long as for Her, the snail and the turtle are the same species but for Him they have nothing in common, extremisms will never find a way of reconciliation.

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INTERARTES : LITTÉRATURE, THÉÂTRE, CINÉMA

ENTRE ARTAUD ET HESSE : BAUDELAIRE, PRÉCURSEUR D'UNE ESTHÉTIQUE THÉÂTRALE MODERNE

IOAN POP-CURȘEU

ABSTRACT. This paper shows that Baudelaire had a great importance for the evolution of modern ideas concerning the art of theatre. In some fragments of his writings, Baudelaire imagines a hyperbolic show, which should be able to combine pantomime, symbolical masks, magical tricks, suggestive music and painting, as well as the most powerful resources of verbal language. By these ideas, Baudelaire anticipates the views of Antonin Artaud (*Le Théâtre et son double*) and Hermann Hesse (*Der Steppenwolf*) on what they call a *magical theatre*, with an entrance open only for mad people. The paper is based on a comparative interpretation of Baudelaire, Artaud, Hesse, and on a very pertinent interdisciplinary approach, meant to recreate the dialogue between theatre and other arts at the very beginning of our modernity.

Keywords: *hyperbole, theatricality, madness, magic theatre, mask, modernity.*

Se laissant prendre par le « vertige de l'hyperbole » que lui causent certains spectacles de pantomime anglaise, décrits dans un article de 1855 (*De l'essence du rire et généralement du comique dans les arts plastiques*), Baudelaire construit une conception esthétique moderne du théâtre, qu'il entend appliquer à toutes les formes imaginables de spectacle¹. Une note de son projet incendiaire, *Mon cœur mis à nu*, montre un grand esprit de provocation et un immense désir de choquer le bourgeois qui ne sont pas sans rapport avec d'autres textes baudelairiens. Cette note, au-delà de l'humour, nous renseigne sur ce que Baudelaire se proposait de faire dans le théâtre si jamais il avait pu mener un de ses quatorze projets de pièces à bonne fin, et sur la révolution qu'il comptait apporter dans une sphère culturelle dominée par des tragédies éculées, des comédies légères ou des drames romantiques déjà conventionnels. Le passage tout entier se situe sous le signe de l'hyperbole : le théâtre n'a de valeur que dans la mesure où il devient un art de l'exagération, à l'instar de la pantomime anglaise et de *La Comédie humaine* de Balzac, et le discours esthétique ne peut se mettre en place qu'à travers cette incontournable figure de style qui attire l'attention des lecteurs et attise leur curiosité :

¹ Toutes les citations des textes de Baudelaire proviennent de l'édition critique des *Œuvres complètes* établie par Claude Pichois, Paris, Gallimard, « Bibliothèque de la Pléiade », 1993, marquées comme suit : sigle CEC, numéro du volume en chiffres romains, I ou II, page où se trouve la citation). Chaque fois que nous citerons d'une autre édition des écrits de Baudelaire, nous le spécifierons soigneusement. Dans le présent travail, nous employons aussi les conventions typographiques de la « Pléiade ». Pour la citation de cette première phrase, CEC II, p. 539.

Mes opinions sur le théâtre. Ce que j'ai toujours trouvé de plus beau dans un théâtre, dans mon enfance et encore maintenant, c'est *le lustre* – un bel objet lumineux, cristallin, compliqué, circulaire et symétrique.

Cependant, je ne nie pas absolument la valeur de la littérature dramatique. Seulement, je voudrais que les comédiens fussent montés sur des patins très hauts, portassent des masques plus expressifs que le visage humain, et parlassent à travers des porte-voix ; enfin que les rôles de femmes fussent joués par des hommes.

Après tout, le lustre m'a toujours paru l'acteur principal, vu à travers le gros bout ou le petit bout de la lorgnette.²

Les acteurs sont montés sur des patins très hauts, portent des masques plus expressifs que le visage humain et parlent à travers des porte-voix dans le théâtre rêvé par Baudelaire, qui n'est pas sans rappeler les spectacles de rue du Tiers Théâtre d'Eugenio Barba. Tout y est amplifié : la stature des personnages, l'expression de leurs émotions (à travers les masques qui les figent) et le son de leurs voix, mais même ce théâtre hyperbolique ne suffit pas au « goût de l'infini » de Baudelaire, et il finit la note de *Mon cœur mis à nu* sur un paradoxe qui ramène au premier plan le lustre. Ce que nous aimerions souligner en ce qui concerne cet « acteur principal », c'est qu'il peut être regardé de deux manières : à travers le petit ou le gros bout de la lorgnette. La première façon de le regarder le grossit à l'excès, tandis que l'autre façon le rapetisse extraordinairement. Par analogie, nous dirions que le premier regard est hyperbolique, tandis que le deuxième relèverait d'une sorte de litote, figure de style contraire de l'hyperbole. Cependant, le réseau textuel dans lequel Baudelaire situe ce deuxième type de regard sur le lustre laisse entendre que pour lui la litote n'est pas un trope indépendant (comme pour les rhétoriciens classiques), mais une hyperbole à rebours. Cette perception de la litote en tant qu'hyperbole à rebours peut être rapprochée d'un passage du « Théâtre de Séraphin », section des *Paradis artificiels*, où un drogué doué d'un tempérament littéraire entre dans un théâtre et regarde distraitemment une pièce qui se déroule sur une scène située « comme au bout d'un immense stéréoscope » et réduite aux dimensions d'un castelet pour marionnettes, ce qui n'empêche cependant pas l'acuité et la précision du regard³.

² CEC I, p. 682. Claude Delarue, *L'Enfant idiot. Honte et révolte chez Charles Baudelaire*, Paris, Belfond, 1997, p. 183, considère que ce passage ironique « laisse croire qu'il [Baudelaire] connaissait non seulement la tragédie antique et le théâtre baroque mais aussi le théâtre Nô » ; malheureusement, cette supposition n'est pas argumentée. Si pour la tragédie antique ou le théâtre baroque l'argumentation n'est pas nécessaire, pour le théâtre Nô elle s'impose, vu qu'au milieu du XIX^{ème} siècle il n'était pas encore très connu en Europe, cf. Ernst Earle, « The Influence of Japanese Theatrical Style on Western Theatre », in *Educational Theatre Journal*, vol. 21, n° 2, May 1969, pp. 127-138.

³ Voir en entier les passages sur l'expérience du drogué au théâtre, CEC I, pp. 418-419 : « Quant à la scène (c'était une scène consacrée au genre comique), elle était lumineuse, infiniment petite et située très loin, très loin, comme au bout d'un immense stéréoscope. Je ne vous dirai pas que j'écoutais les comédiens, vous savez que cela est impossible ; de temps en temps ma pensée accrochait au passage un lambeau de phrase, et,

Les patins et les masques transforment les acteurs en grands mannequins, et cette hypothèse n'est pas gratuite lorsqu'on connaît la place importante du mannequin dans la poésie baudelairienne, où il représente un double symbolique de la marionnette⁴. Le mannequin sur une scène de théâtre fait penser tout de suite à Antonin Artaud, dont il est une des principales obsessions. Le théoricien recommande l'emploi de mannequins géants dès l'époque du Théâtre Jarry (1926-1930), en passant par *Les Cenci* (1935), jusqu'au *Théâtre et son double* (1938). Dans *Le Théâtre de la cruauté (Premier manifeste)*, Artaud imagine un spectacle où plusieurs éléments conjugués changeraient le langage traditionnel de la scène : « *apparitions concrètes d'objets neufs et surprenants, masques, mannequins de plusieurs mètres, changements brusques de la lumière* »⁵. La préoccupation pour les mannequins revient dans *Le Théâtre de la cruauté (Second manifeste)*, où Artaud est étonnamment proche de Baudelaire. Le théoricien imagine des personnages agrandis jusqu'à devenir des mannequins, et qui jouent un rôle capital dans la construction du décor de la pièce :

semblable à une danseuse habile, elle s'en servait comme d'un tremplin pour bondir dans des rêveries très-lointaines. On pourrait supposer qu'un drame, entendu de cette façon, manque de logique et d'enchaînement ; détrompez-vous ; je découvrais un sens très-subtil dans le drame créé par ma distraction. Rien ne m'en choquait, et je ressemblais un peu à ce poète qui, voyant jouer *Esther* pour la première fois, trouvait tout naturel qu'Aman fit une déclaration d'amour à la reine. C'était, comme on le devine, l'instant où celui-ci se jette aux pieds de la reine pour implorer le pardon de ses crimes. Si tous les drames étaient entendus selon cette méthode, ils y gagneraient de grandes beautés, même ceux de Racine. Les comédiens me semblaient excessivement petits et cernés d'un contour précis et soigné, comme les figures de Meissonier. Je voyais distinctement, non-seulement les détails les plus minutieux de leurs ajustements, comme dessins d'étoffe, coutures, boutons, etc., mais encore la ligne de séparation du faux front d'avec le véritable, le blanc, le bleu et le rouge, et tous les moyens de grimage. Et ces lilliputiens étaient revêtus d'une clarté froide et magique, comme celle qu'une vitre très-nette ajoute à une peinture à l'huile. »

⁴ « À mes côtés, au lieu du mannequin puissant / Qui semblait avoir fait provision de sang, / Tremblaient confusément des débris de squelette », *Les Métamorphoses du vampire*, CEC I, p. 159 ; « Contemple-les, mon âme ; ils sont vraiment affreux ! / Pareils aux mannequins ; vaguement ridicules ; / Terribles, singuliers, comme les somnambules ; », *Les Aveugles*, CEC I, p. 92. Dans *La Fanfarlo*, Samuel Cramer critique les romans de Walter Scott en des termes inspirés du théâtre : « des auberges gothiques et des châteaux de mélodrame, où se promènent quelques mannequins à ressort, vêtus de justaucorps et de pourpoints bariolés », CEC I, p. 557. Sur la femme-mannequin chez plusieurs écrivains du XIX^{ème} siècle, voir Ross Chambers, *L'Ange et l'automate. Variations sur le mythe de l'actrice de Nerval à Proust*, « Archives des lettres modernes », n° 128 / 1971.

⁵ Antonin Artaud, *Le Théâtre et son double, Le Théâtre de la cruauté (Premier manifeste)*, in *Œuvres complètes*, Tome IV, Paris, Gallimard, 1964, p. 111. Un autre passage du même manifeste, p. 116, reprend ces idées et en précise la portée. Pour Antonin Artaud, les images purement visuelles du théâtre, comme les masques et les mannequins, ont pour fonction principale de doubler le langage verbal et de faire sentir – violemment – aux spectateurs que le théâtre est en tout premier lieu un art de la concrétude : « *Des mannequins, des masques énormes, des objets aux proportions singulières apparaîtront au même titre que des images verbales, insisteront sur le côté concret de toute image et de toute expression, – avec pour contre-partie que des choses qui exigent d'habitude leur figuration objective seront escamotées ou dissimulées.* »

Le décor sera constitué par les personnages eux-mêmes, grandis à la taille de mannequins gigantesques, par des paysages de lumières mouvantes jouant sur des objets et des masques en perpétuel déplacement.⁶

Le goût d'Artaud pour les « *mannequins de plusieurs mètres* », pour les « *mannequins gigantesques* » et pour les « *masques énormes* » rend compte d'une même propension à l'hyperbole visuelle que chez Baudelaire et d'un désir semblable d'affranchir le théâtre des conventions bourgeoises de la représentation. Si pour Baudelaire le point de départ d'une réflexion révolutionnaire sur le théâtre se trouve dans l'opposition au moralisme étroit du théâtre de son temps (cf. l'article *Les Drames et les romans honnêtes*), pour Artaud le point de départ de la réflexion sur *le théâtre et son double* se trouve dans l'opposition à un théâtre psychologisant, privilégiant l'intrigue et une mise en scène vériste, qui a perdu le contact avec les grandes forces des origines. Le théâtre ne peut être affranchi que par une recherche constante de la démesure dans la mise en scène et dans les décors, que par un effort soutenu de dépassement de l'humain à travers des figures symboliques (mannequins, marionnettes), et par un équilibre savant entre parole, pantomime, musique, danse, plastique, éclairage et décor.

Artaud semble « suivre » Baudelaire aussi en ce qui concerne la pantomime. Pour le théoricien du XX^{ème} siècle, le théâtre occidental – et surtout latin – est déchu puisqu'il tend à tout réduire à la parole et à la diction. Or, Antonin Artaud, sans bannir la parole, cherche ce qui est spécifiquement théâtral dans le théâtre et le trouve dans la mise en scène et dans le travail complexe qui se réalise sur les planches⁷. Il va jusqu'à analyser un aspect « du langage théâtral pur », constitué en dehors de la parole « par signes, par gestes et attitudes ayant une valeur idéographique tels qu'ils existent dans certaines pantomimes non perverses ». Par « pantomime non perversée », Artaud entend la « Pantomime directe », telle qu'on la trouve dans le théâtre balinais par exemple, où chaque geste évoque de manière concrète et précise des idées abstraites. La pantomime européenne, « vieille de cinquante ans seulement, et qui n'est qu'une déformation des parties muettes de la comédie italienne », ne s'inscrit pas dans l'exigence artaudienne d'absolu dans les gestes et les expressions des acteurs sur scène⁸.

Mais les similitudes entre les deux penseurs ne s'arrêtent pas là. Le manifeste artaudien intitulé *Le Théâtre de Séraphin*, écrit en 1936 et destiné à compléter *Le Théâtre et son double*, constitue un renvoi direct aux *Paradis artificiels*. Selon certains critiques, les points de contact entre les deux textes ne sont pas nombreux, si l'on

⁶ Antonin Artaud, *Le Théâtre et son double, Le Théâtre de la cruauté (Second manifeste)*, in *Œuvres complètes*, Tome IV, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

⁷ Voir *Le Théâtre et son double, La Mise en scène et la métaphysique*, in *Œuvres complètes*, Tome IV, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

⁸ Pour les dernières citations, *ibidem*, p. 48. Voir, pour une meilleure compréhension de la pantomime chez Artaud, *La Pierre philosophale*, in *Œuvres complètes*, Tome II, Paris, Gallimard, 1961, pp. 83-90.

excepte le titre et une référence commune au hiéroglyphe⁹. Michel Jeanneret, au contraire, affirme que « d'un texte à l'autre, l'affinité des thèmes est étroite »¹⁰. Annie Gilles, tout en pointant les similitudes des deux *Théâtre(s) de Séraphin*, en souligne surtout les différences¹¹. Pour bien comprendre la conception baudelairienne du théâtre, ainsi que l'enjeu de la réflexion artaudienne dans *Le Théâtre de Séraphin*, la meilleure position à prendre est sans aucun doute celle de Michel Jeanneret. Le pont que trace le critique entre les deux textes est traversé par une voie royale, celle du rêve. Le « théâtre des rêves » sous-tend à la fois l'architecture théâtrale des *Paradis artificiels* et la structure argumentative du *Séraphin* d'Artaud. En comparant le théâtre et la vie, Artaud découvre – par le biais du rêve – que la sensation de réalité est beaucoup plus forte sur une scène que dans la vie quotidienne. Dans la vie de tous les jours, l'homme n'a pas le contrôle total de ses actes et de ses pensées, étant souvent un jouet de la fatalité. Le rêve éclaircit le sens de cette condition pitoyable et transforme le théâtre en réalité suprême, où la fatalité disparaît au profit d'un ordre supérieur :

Quand je vis je ne me sens pas vivre. Mais quand je joue c'est là que je me sens exister. Qu'est-ce qui m'empêcherait de croire au rêve du théâtre quand je crois au rêve de la réalité ? Quand je rêve je fais quelque chose et au théâtre je fais quelque chose. Les événements du rêve conduits par ma conscience profonde m'apprennent le sens des événements de la veille où la fatalité toute nue me conduit. Or le théâtre est comme une grande veille, où c'est moi qui conduis la fatalité.¹²

Selon Michel Jeanneret, Artaud – sur les traces de Baudelaire – fait du rêve le paradigme du théâtre, et du théâtre d'ombres l'expression la plus achevée de cet art dont l'essence est si difficile à saisir. Plus que cela, Artaud suggère dans la *Préface* du *Théâtre et son double* que sur la scène on doit ressusciter et faire vivre « toutes les ombres que désavoue la culture »¹³. Ce pouvoir de ressusciter et de faire vivre les ombres (des défunts, du passé, de l'outre-monde, de la caverne platonicienne) marque la liaison profonde du théâtre et de la magie, et Artaud en fait un des thèmes récurrents de son livre. *Le Théâtre de Séraphin* proclame, par exemple, à deux reprises la « magie de vivre » et la « magie d'exister », toujours intimement liées au théâtre¹⁴. Des termes plus ou moins synonymes de la « magie », « sorcellerie » et

⁹ Jean-Luc Steinmetz, « Artaud lecteur de Baudelaire », in *Les Théâtres de la cruauté. Hommage à Antonin Artaud*, Textes réunis par Camille Dumoulié, Paris, Éditions Desjonquière, 2000, p. 253.

¹⁰ Michel Jeanneret, « Baudelaire et le théâtre d'ombres », in *Le Lieu et la formule. Hommage à Marc Eigeldinger*, Neuchâtel, À La Baconnière, 1978, p. 134.

¹¹ Annie Gilles, *Images de la marionnette dans la littérature : textes écrits ou traduits en français de Cervantès à nos jours*, Nancy, Presses Universitaires de Nancy : Institut international de la marionnette, « Psychologie et psychanalyse », 1993, p. 35.

¹² *Le Théâtre de Séraphin*, in *Œuvres complètes*, Tome IV, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

¹³ Michel Jeanneret, *art. cit.*, p. 135.

¹⁴ *Le Théâtre de Séraphin*, in *Œuvres complètes*, Tome IV, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

« alchimie », traversent le livre d'Artaud pour devenir des « doubles » analogiques des phénomènes qui se passent au théâtre¹⁵. Tout comme dans une opération de sorcellerie, dans une incantation magique ou dans le processus de transmutation alchimique du plomb en or, le théâtre parvient à changer la nature de la matière, les choses opaques deviennent transparentes, les objets lourds s'allègent, ce qui est lumineux s'obscurcit et ce qui est léger s'alourdit, dans une tentative tendue de conciliation des contraires. Et, répétons-le encore une fois, tout se passe sur la scène, beaucoup plus qu'au niveau d'un texte que l'on chercherait à adapter ; la *coincidentia oppositorum* a lieu dans le travail de rendre vivant un spectacle :

C'est sous cet angle d'utilisation magique et de sorcellerie qu'il faut considérer la mise en scène, non comme le reflet d'un texte écrit et de toute cette projection de doubles physiques qui se dégage de l'écrit mais comme la projection brûlante de tout ce qui peut être tiré de conséquences objectives d'un geste, d'un mot, d'un son, d'une musique et de leurs combinaisons entre eux. Cette projection active ne peut se faire que sur la scène et ses conséquences trouvées devant la scène et sur la scène ; et l'auteur qui use exclusivement de mots écrits n'a que faire et doit céder la place à des spécialistes de cette sorcellerie objective et animée.¹⁶

En ce qui concerne Baudelaire, dans *Les Paradis artificiels* il condamne la sorcellerie et la magie au nom du catholicisme¹⁷. La magie et la sorcellerie sont diaboliques puisqu'elles s'opposent aux intentions de Dieu, qu'elles annihilent le temps et veulent supprimer les conditions de pureté et de moralité ; l'être humain s'en sert surtout pour connaître des jouissances infinies d'un seul coup, sans effort, sans concentration et sans travail. Cependant, l'acception négative des pratiques magiques est doublée chez Baudelaire d'une acception positive : le poète leur attribue une valeur d'emblème pour le travail poétique. Cette acception positive est concentrée dans la magnifique expression plusieurs fois employée par Baudelaire, « sorcellerie évocatoire »¹⁸. La « sorcellerie évocatoire » suppose un travail ardu sur la langue, elle est mue par le désir de retrouver la chair des mots, en accouplant tel substantif

¹⁵ Voir surtout *Le Théâtre et son double, Le Théâtre alchimique*, in *Œuvres complètes*, Tome IV, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-63.

¹⁶ *Le Théâtre et son double, Théâtre oriental et théâtre occidental*, in *Œuvres complètes*, Tome IV, *op. cit.*, p. 88. À la p. 87, Artaud parle « d'une certaine poésie dans l'espace qui se confond elle-même avec la sorcellerie ».

¹⁷ Pour la superposition sémantique de « sorcellerie » et « magie », voir Pierre Brunel, « Troisième essai. La Magicienne », in *Baudelaire et le « puits des magies ». Six essais sur Baudelaire et la poésie moderne*, Paris, José Corti, 2003, p. 128 : « Magie, sorcellerie : Baudelaire peut donner l'impression qu'il use indifféremment des deux termes. En tout cas il les enchaîne. »

¹⁸ *Les Paradis artificiels*, IV « L'Homme-Dieu », CEC I, p. 431 (« La grammaire, l'aride grammaire elle-même, devient quelque chose comme une sorcellerie évocatoire ; les mots ressuscitent revêtus de chair et d'os, le substantif, dans sa majesté substantielle, l'adjectif vêtement transparent qui l'habille et le colore comme un glaci, et le verbe, ange du mouvement, qui donne le branle à la phrase. »), *Théophile Gautier [I]*, CEC II, p. 118 (« Manier savamment une langue, c'est pratiquer une espèce de sorcellerie évocatoire. »), *Fusées*, XI, CEC I, p. 658 (deux mentions du syntagme, dont « De la langue et de l'écriture, prises comme opérations magiques, sorcellerie évocatoire. »).

avec l'adjectif qui lui correspond le mieux, qui le colore, et avec le verbe qui puisse mettre la phrase en mouvement et la sortir de l'ornière de l'expression commune¹⁹.

Dans une note de *Fusées*, Baudelaire place la réflexion sur la sorcellerie au niveau du théâtre, et ne la traite pas comme un phénomène de langage, bien qu'il l'accouple au « romanesque », mais bien plutôt comme élément thématique, puisqu'il l'associe aussi au « merveilleux ». Le « drame » dont rêve le poète est inséparable d'un côté d'une dimension magique, d'un autre côté d'une dimension narrative (« récit »). Ces deux dimensions sont subtilement réunies dans *La Chute de la maison Usher*, conte de Poe (autre auteur favori d'Artaud, avec Baudelaire), qui est cité dans le fragment de *Fusées* :

Ne pas oublier dans le drame le côté merveilleux, la sorcellerie et le romanesque.

Les milieux, les atmosphères dont tout un récit doit être trempé. (Voir *Usher* et en référer aux sensations profondes du haschisch et de l'opium).²⁰

Si un drame tel que celui imaginé par Baudelaire ou Artaud parvenait à être créé sur une scène, il tendrait à être une œuvre d'art totale, qui envoûte complètement les spectateurs²¹. La « poésie dans l'espace » qu'est le théâtre allierait les sons, les paroles, les cris, les lumières pour parler directement à tous les sens, dans des synesthésies infinies²². En examinant les écrits de Baudelaire, l'importance du mot « hiéroglyphe » dans le cadre de sa réflexion esthétique sur les

¹⁹ Pour la comparaison avec la « sorcellerie évocatoire » baudelairienne, voir un passage du *Théâtre et la cruauté (Premier manifeste)* : « Abandonnant les utilisations occidentales de la parole, il [le théâtre, n. n.] fait des mots des incantations. », *Œuvres complètes*, Tome IV, *op. cit.*, p. 108, et un autre du *Théâtre et la cruauté (Second manifeste)*, *Œuvres complètes*, Tome IV, *op. cit.*, p. 149 : « Mais à côté de ce sens logique, les mots seront pris dans un sens incantatoire, vraiment magique, – pour leur forme, leurs émanations sensibles, et non plus seulement pour leur sens. »

²⁰ Baudelaire, *Fusées*, VIII, CEC I, p. 655. Sur Baudelaire, la sorcellerie et la magie, voir le texte classique de Georges Blin, « Recours de Baudelaire à la sorcellerie », in *Le Sadisme de Baudelaire*, Paris, Éditions José Corti, 1948, pp. 73-100, et le livre de Pierre Brunel, *op. cit.*

²¹ Voir Artaud, *Le Théâtre et son double, Le Théâtre de la cruauté (Premier manifeste)*, in *Œuvres complètes*, Tome IV, *op. cit.*, pp. 110-111 où le but du théâtre est décrit comme suit : « réaliser activement, c'est-à-dire magiquement, en termes vrais, une sorte de création totale, où il ne reste plus à l'homme que de reprendre sa place entre le rêve et les événements ».

²² Quelques lignes parmi les plus belles sur les synesthésies se trouvent dans *Les Paradis artificiels*, « Le Théâtre de Séraphin », juste après le récit de la soirée qu'un littérateur passe au théâtre, CEC I, p. 419 : « C'est en effet à cette période de l'ivresse que se manifeste une finesse nouvelle, une acuité supérieure dans tous les sens. L'odorat, la vue, l'ouïe, le toucher participent également à ce progrès. Les yeux visent l'infini. L'oreille perçoit des sons presque insaisissables au milieu du plus vaste tumulte. C'est alors que commencent les hallucinations. Les objets extérieurs prennent lentement, successivement, des apparences singulières ; ils se déforment et se transforment. Puis, arrivent les équivoques, les méprises et les transpositions d'idées. Les sons se revêtent de couleurs, et les couleurs contiennent une musique. [...] Les notes musicales deviennent des nombres, et si votre esprit est doué de quelque aptitude mathématique, la mélodie, l'harmonie écoutée, tout en gardant son caractère voluptueux et sensuel, se transforme en une vaste opération arithmétique, où les nombres engendrent les nombres, et dont vous suivez les phases et la génération avec une facilité inexplicable et une agilité égale à celle de l'exécutant. »

synesthésies et les correspondances ne peut pas ne pas frapper le lecteur. Dans l'article *Théodore de Banville*, Baudelaire parle de la mythologie comme d'un « dictionnaire d'hiéroglyphes vivants », qui – étant connus de tout le monde – doivent être employés par le poète pour mieux rendre sensible sa pensée. Mais pour Baudelaire il n'y a pas que la mythologie qui soit un dictionnaire de hiéroglyphes. Le monde matériel, dont la copie fidèle est considérée le but même de l'art par la clique des réalistes, n'est autre chose qu'un « dictionnaire hiéroglyphique »²³. On trouve l'expression la plus forte de la pensée sur le hiéroglyphe dans l'article consacré à Hugo dans *Réflexions sur quelques-uns de mes contemporains*. Baudelaire commence par un bref aperçu de la doctrine de Fourier qui a parlé trop pompeusement de l'« analogie », comme si c'était lui qui l'eût découverte. Mais avant Fourier, tous les poètes ont eu une connaissance plus ou moins claire de l'analogie, et des doctrinaires l'ont mise en évidence. Le théologien protestant suisse Johann Kaspar Lavater s'est préoccupé du « sens spirituel » de la forme, de la dimension et du contour du visage humain²⁴. Le visionnaire Swedenborg a enseigné que le ciel est semblable à un homme immense et que « tout, forme, mouvement, nombre, couleur, parfum, dans le *spirituel* comme dans le *naturel*, est significatif, réciproque, converse, *correspondant* ». Si, à partir de l'expérience des poètes et des penseurs tels que Fourier, Lavater, Swedenborg, on ouvre le champ de la « démonstration », on découvre facilement que « tout est hiéroglyphique » et que les symboles ne sont opaques qu'en fonction soit de la « pureté », soit de la « bonne volonté », soit de la « clairvoyance native des âmes ». Dans un monde où « tout est hiéroglyphique », le poète ne peut être envisagé que comme un « traducteur », un « déchiffreur » du mystère universel, et les métaphores, comparaisons, épithètes ou hyperboles qu'il emploie sont « d'une application mathématiquement exacte » à la circonstance si seulement il les puise dans l'« *universelle analogie* »²⁵.

Dans « Le Théâtre de Séraphin », Baudelaire commence par circonscrire les effets du hachisch. Pour le faire, il a besoin d'une analogie et la trouve dans le rêve, qui est un voyage merveilleux accompli chaque nuit par l'être humain, mais dont la fréquence a émoussé le mystère et la force dépaysante. Le poète partage les rêves en deux grandes catégories, le rêve naturel et le rêve hiéroglyphique. Le rêve naturel est plein de la vie quotidienne du rêveur et représente un espace de résurgence des pensées, des préoccupations, des désirs cachés, des vices invouables, qui se combinent avec les objets entrevus dans la réalité, « fixés sur la vaste toile

²³ Baudelaire, *Puisque réalisme il y a*, ŒC II, p. 59.

²⁴ Sur Baudelaire, Lavater et la physiognomonie, voir Jean Pommier, *La Mystique de Baudelaire*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1932, pp. 42-54.

²⁵ Voir cette démonstration baudelairienne dans *Réflexions sur quelques-uns de mes contemporains*, Victor Hugo, ŒC II, pp. 132-133. Toutes les citations à la p. 133. Une des meilleures études sur la pensée analogique de Baudelaire est encore aujourd'hui celle de Jean Pommier, *La Mystique de Baudelaire*, op. cit.

de la mémoire »²⁶. Le rêve hiéroglyphique a quelque chose d'« absurde » parce qu'il ne présente aucun rapport avec le caractère, les passions et la vie du dormeur. Selon Baudelaire, ce genre de rêve est lié au « côté surnaturel de la vie » et c'est la raison pour laquelle les anciens l'ont considéré d'inspiration divine. Sans parler des oniromanciens, beaucoup de penseurs voient dans le rêve hiéroglyphique « un tableau symbolique et moral », un « dictionnaire » que les sages doivent longuement étudier avant d'en obtenir la clef²⁷. Quant à Artaud, inspiré par Baudelaire, il veut créer des hiéroglyphes dans un théâtre essentiellement symbolique, qui fasse du spectateur un traducteur et un déchiffreur du vaste « alphabet » (= « dictionnaire ») qui s'étire sur la scène :

C'est ici qu'intervient, en dehors du langage auditif des sons, le langage visuel des objets, des mouvements, des attitudes, des gestes, mais à condition qu'on prolonge leur sens, leur physionomie, leurs assemblages jusqu'aux signes, en faisant de ces signes une manière d'alphabet. Ayant pris conscience de ce langage dans l'espace, langage de sons, de cris, de lumières, d'onomatopées, le théâtre se doit de l'organiser en faisant avec les personnages et les objets de véritables hiéroglyphes, et en se servant de leur symbolisme et de leurs correspondances par rapport à tous les organes et sur tous les plans.²⁸

Cependant, si le théâtre était réduit à constituer un simple langage analogique, où les spectateurs se limiteraient à déchiffrer les hiéroglyphes scéniques, il serait encore une entreprise sans risques et sans intérêt véritable ! Le théâtre, pour changer en profondeur, doit assumer une dimension qui surgit dans la réflexion artaudienne toujours par le biais du rêve : la cruauté. À l'instar du rêve, le théâtre envisagé par Antonin Artaud est « sanguinaire » et « inhumain »²⁹. Il réveille les instincts les plus sauvages et les plus soigneusement enfouis de l'homme, projette sur scène de noirs cauchemars et d'atroces visions, dans une tentative perpétuelle d'« exorcismes renouvelés »³⁰. Avec *Le Théâtre et son double*, la conception de la *catharsis* change radicalement. Le spectateur ne ressent plus « terreur » et « pitié » devant la destinée tragique des personnages, mais il se débat en proie au mal, dans un affrontement violent avec soi-même. Au lieu d'apaiser les passions, « le théâtre de la cruauté » les déchaîne de plus belle :

²⁶ *Les Paradis artificiels*, « Le Théâtre de Séraphin », CEC I, p. 408.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 408-409. La théorie baudelairienne du rêve a quelques ressemblances avec la théorie freudienne, surtout à cause de l'intuition de Baudelaire d'un « contenu latent » et d'un « contenu manifeste » du rêve.

²⁸ Antonin Artaud, *Le Théâtre de la cruauté (Premier manifeste)*, in *Œuvres complètes*, Tome IV, *op. cit.*, p. 107. Pour mieux comprendre le sens du « hiéroglyphe » chez Artaud, voir *Œuvres complètes*, Tome IV, *op. cit.* : *Le Théâtre de la cruauté (Second manifeste)*, p. 149 : « Et l'on peut dire que l'esprit des plus antiques hiéroglyphes présidera à la création de ce langage théâtral pur. », *Le Théâtre de Séraphin*, p. 182 : « Et je veux avec l'hiéroglyphe d'un souffle retrouver une idée du théâtre sacré. »

²⁹ *Le Théâtre de la cruauté (Premier manifeste)*, in *Œuvres complètes*, Tome IV, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 106.

Le théâtre ne pourra redevenir lui-même, c'est-à-dire constituer un moyen d'illusion vraie, qu'en fournissant au spectateur des précipités véridiques de rêves, où son goût du crime, ses obsessions érotiques, sa sauvagerie, ses chimères, son sens utopique de la vie et des choses, son cannibalisme même, se débondent, sur un plan non pas supposé et illusoire, mais intérieur.³¹

Même si elle s'en nourrit dans une bonne mesure, la cruauté du théâtre rêvé par Artaud ne saurait être réduite au sadisme et aux horreurs sanguinaires. Les trois *Lettres sur la cruauté* apportent des précisions importantes là-dessus. En premier lieu, la cruauté est liée à l'idée d'une grande rigueur, d'une décision imbattable, d'une détermination infinie. En deuxième lieu, la cruauté est rattachée à la « conscience », ce qui rappelle le poème baudelairien *L'Héautontimorouménos*, où le « je » est à la fois victime et bourreau, sujet et objet de sa propre action maléfique et ironique. Le rythme de la phrase artaudienne qui établit l'équation presque mathématique entre « cruauté » et « conscience » est proche du rythme de certaines phrases baudelairiennes des écrits intimes : « Pas de cruauté sans conscience, sans une sorte de conscience appliquée. C'est la conscience qui donne à l'exercice de tout acte de vie sa couleur de sang, sa nuance cruelle, puisqu'il est entendu que la vie c'est toujours la mort de quelqu'un. »³² Dans le *Second manifeste*, Artaud essaie de conférer une aura mythique au « théâtre de la cruauté ». Son désir est que ce théâtre mette en scène – entre autres – les grands mythes cosmogoniques mexicains, hindous, judaïques, iraniens, dans une vision très imprégnée de gnose dualiste qui souligne le conflit irréductible entre les principes universels du bien et du mal, de la lumière et des ténèbres.

Le premier spectacle du Théâtre de la Cruauté devrait être *La Conquête du Mexique*, spectacle qui ferait voir surtout le choc de deux cultures, en interrogeant la légitimité de la colonisation et de la domination d'un continent sur un autre. Artaud a l'intention d'opposer la débâcle de la monarchie chrétienne, basée sur des principes matériels, à la parfaite organisation de la société aztèque, qui tire sa légitimité de principes spirituels. Le metteur en scène veut accentuer dans son spectacle la brutalité des dialogues et la force des images, ainsi que les tensions de la lutte entre Européens et Aztèques. Dans *La Conquête du Mexique* tout tournerait autour de Montézuma, dont le pouvoir est doublement menacé, d'un côté par les étrangers envahisseurs, d'un autre côté par la révolte des siens³³. Baudelaire aurait sans doute souscrit à un tel spectacle, à la brutalité, à la force, et

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 109.

³² Antonin Artaud, *Le Théâtre et son double, Lettres sur la cruauté. Première lettre*, in *Œuvres complètes*, Tome IV, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

³³ Sur *La Conquête du Mexique*, voir *Le Théâtre de la cruauté (Second manifeste)*, in *Œuvres complètes*, Tome IV, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-153, et une variante plus développée du plan dans *Œuvres complètes*, Tome V, Paris, Gallimard, 1964, pp. 21-29.

au choc des civilisations, mais il aurait centré sa création scénique autour de la figure d'un *conquistador*, lui qui voulait devenir « pape militaire », sans rester non plus insensible à la grandeur sanguinaire du roi aztèque « dont la main habile aux sacrifices pouvait immoler en un seul jour trois mille créatures humaines sur l'autel pyramidal du Soleil »³⁴.

Le meilleur *analogon* pour la cruauté du théâtre artaudien est la peste, détail qu'il emprunte à *La Cité de Dieu* de Saint Augustin. Mais si Saint Augustin l'emploie pour condamner le théâtre, Artaud s'en sert pour le glorifier. Selon lui, il y a une mystérieuse identité entre le théâtre et la peste, visible tout d'abord dans le fait que le spectacle peut frapper le spectateur avec la force contagieuse de l'épidémie. Lorsqu'une épidémie de peste touche une société quelconque, le délire se répand, il gagne tous les êtres sans distinction. De même dans une représentation du théâtre de la cruauté, le délire peut empoigner violemment à la fois les acteurs et les spectateurs. Alain Virmaux met en évidence la prédilection d'Artaud pour les lexèmes liés à l'épidémie (contagion, lèpre, peste, virus), auxquels s'ajoute la famille sémantique du feu (brûler, calciner, flamme, incendie)³⁵; dans l'entrecroisement perpétuel des deux séries lexicales, on a un autre point de contact manifeste entre Artaud et Baudelaire.

Artaud est persuadé qu'il faut beaucoup plus de force à l'acteur mis dans une situation scénique déterminée pour s'empêcher de commettre un crime, qu'il n'en faut à un homme dans une situation semblable de la vie réelle. Le théâtre et la peste agissent sur de grandes collectivités et les transforment dans un sens identique. Comme la peste, le théâtre hyperbolise tout : « la peste prend les images qui dorment, un désordre latent et les pousse tout à coup jusqu'aux gestes les plus extrêmes ; et le théâtre lui aussi prend les gestes et les pousse à bout »³⁶. Comme la peste, le théâtre doit ramener l'esprit « à la source de ses conflits »³⁷. Comme la peste, le théâtre consacre le triomphe du mal et des forces noires par « la révélation, la mise en avant, la poussée vers l'extérieur d'un fond de cruauté latente par lequel se localisent sur un individu ou sur un peuple toutes les possibilités perverses de l'esprit »³⁸. La peste et le théâtre permettent de découvrir la noirceur foncière de tous les mythes, inséparables de la torture, du sang versé, du massacre, de l'inceste. Cependant, la responsabilité de toute cette violence n'est pas attribuée au théâtre, mais à la vie :

³⁴ *L'Œuvre et la vie d'Eugène Delacroix*, CEC II, p. 760. On se rappellera que Baudelaire compare Delacroix à Montezuma I^{er}, roi des Aztèques, et qu'il met les deux figures sous le signe du Soleil et du feu, ce qui – entre autres – nous fait dire qu'il aurait apprécié *La Conquête du Mexique* mise en scène par Antonin Artaud.

³⁵ Alain Virmaux, *Antonin Artaud et le théâtre*, Paris, Seghers, 1970, p. 83.

³⁶ Antonin Artaud, *Le Théâtre et son double, Le Théâtre et la peste*, in *Œuvres complètes*, Tome IV, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 37.

³⁸ *Idem*.

Le théâtre, comme la peste, est à l'image de ce carnage, de cette essentielle séparation. Il dénoue des conflits, il dégage des forces, il déclenche des possibilités, et si ces possibilités et ces forces sont noires, c'est la faute non pas de la peste ou du théâtre, mais de la vie.³⁹

Ce bref passage pose la relation étroite entre théâtre et vie. Sans la copier, sans transporter des tranches de vie sur scène, le théâtre l'absorbe tout entière d'autant plus facilement qu'il y va d'une identité d'essence⁴⁰. Une vie coupable et violente ne peut mener qu'à un théâtre qui le soit aussi. L'aboutissement du théâtre de la cruauté est le suprême brouillage des frontières entre l'existential et l'esthétique : « C'est-à-dire qu'entre la vie et le théâtre, on ne trouvera plus de coupure nette, plus de solution de continuité. »⁴¹ Ainsi, dans la perspective du brouillage entre vie et théâtre, le spectacle tel que Baudelaire et Artaud le conçoivent, devient-il un parcours initiatique, une aventure de l'être en quête de sa profondeur intérieure et de la profondeur du *theatrum mundi*. Comme la peste, le théâtre est une crise – qui provoque une descente aux enfers (ceux du moi ou ceux du monde) – après laquelle l'être humain ne peut envisager que la mort ou la purification. Mais qu'advient-il alors que quelqu'un est à la fois acteur, spectateur et metteur en scène, comme le sont Baudelaire et Artaud, à la fois dans leurs écrits et dans leur vie ? André Masson laisse un témoignage tout à fait convaincant sur Artaud : « Il y avait en même temps en lui l'acteur et le spectateur, il se regardait. [...] Sa propre souffrance existait mais il se la jouait, il cherchait la plénitude de sa souffrance. Artaud s'est dit : c'est moi qui jouerai Artaud. »⁴²

Or, le brouillage entre théâtre et vie, la pratique de la théâtralité dans l'existence quotidienne et le dédoublement continu ne débouchent ni sur la mort, ni sur la purification, mais sur un état intermédiaire entre les deux : la folie. Ce

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 38.

⁴⁰ Tout comme le théâtre absorbe la vie, celle-ci peut se construire sur le modèle du théâtre, cf. un *Projet de lettre* au Secrétaire général de l'Alliance française, *Œuvres complètes*, Tome VIII, Paris, Gallimard, 1971, p. 350 : « La vie d'Héliogabale est théâtrale. Mais sa façon théâtrale de concevoir l'existence vise à créer une vraie magie du réel. Je ne conçois d'ailleurs pas le théâtre comme séparé de l'existence. Non que la vie m'apparaisse sous un aspect illusoire et surfait. Mais au contraire je cherche à supprimer l'illusion du théâtre lui-même et, par les moyens poétiques et techniques qui sont à la base de l'art théâtral tel qu'il se pratiquait aux origines, à introduire au théâtre la notion de réalité. Si les rêves sont l'envers de la vie, si le réel apparaît sous un aspect envoûtant et magique auquel l'esprit adhère entièrement, c'est à cette adhésion non illusoire que je cherche à contraindre le spectateur. »

⁴¹ Antonin Artaud, *Le Théâtre et son double, Le Théâtre de la cruauté (Second manifeste)*, in *Œuvres complètes*, Tome IV, *op. cit.*, p. 151. Y aurait-il dans ce passage une légère contradiction dans les termes (« coupure nette » / « solution de continuité ») ?

⁴² Cf. « Conversation avec André Masson. Propos recueillis par S. B. et J. C. », in *Cahiers Renaud-Barrault*, Réimprimés à Amsterdam, 1969 [première parution mai 1958], p. 13.

qu'Artaud préconise dans *Le Théâtre et son double* pour le renouvellement profond de l'art scénique, il le pratique constamment dans sa vie. Sa soif d'absolu le pousse à brouiller ses perceptions et les frontières entre ses cinq sens par les drogues (opium, peyotl), à rêver d'incestes illimités sur la scène, à vivre en se regardant vivre, à faire l'apologie de la cruauté et du sang, à chercher un langage total à même d'exprimer l'être humain tout entier. Comme le montre Gérard Durozoi, chez Artaud, la folie répond à « l'enracinement du texte dans la biographie, ou plutôt au cheminement double d'une vie et d'une pensée sans cesse étroitement dépendantes l'une de l'autre »⁴³. Et Artaud, s'enfonçant de plus en plus loin dans la démence, retrouve une dernière fois Baudelaire, ce que Jean-Luc Steinmetz a déjà souligné :

Au fur et à mesure que la folie s'est plus profondément emparée de lui, il a élaboré un univers explicatif qui concorde intimement avec celui de l'auteur des *Fleurs du Mal* : présences sataniques, activités constantes de démons, succubes ou incubes. Là où notre lecture de Baudelaire, pusillanime et, en apparence, sensée, nous conseille de voir des images, il semble bien qu'Artaud ait vécu littéralement les violences d'un tel monde.⁴⁴

Le roman de Hermann Hesse *Le Loup des steppes* (1927), offre un précieux complément aux relations entre théâtre et magie, théâtre et folie, qu'on a entrevues à travers la comparaison Baudelaire-Artaud. *Der Steppenwolf* raconte l'histoire d'un intellectuel allemand – Harry Haller – qui vit en marge de la société bourgeoise, sans en adopter pleinement les valeurs, mais sans les rejeter décidément non plus. Certains événements qui lui arrivent, des rencontres qu'il fait l'amènent à penser autrement sa vie, à mettre en question ses repères et certitudes, à faire entrer dans son système intellectualiste de rapport au monde des formes de vie pour lesquelles il n'avait eu que du mépris et qu'il avait considérées comme vulgaires⁴⁵. L'apothéose de cette transfiguration a lieu dans un « théâtre magique » dont l'entrée est réservée aux fous⁴⁶. La promesse d'un tel théâtre magique apparaît dès le début du roman sous la forme d'une enseigne que Haller – semblable au « flâneur » du poème *Les Sept*

⁴³ Gérard Durozoi, *Artaud, l'aliénation et la folie*, Paris, Larousse, « Thèmes et textes », 1973, p. 9.

⁴⁴ Jean-Luc Steinmetz, « Artaud lecteur de Baudelaire », *op. cit.*, p. 262. À la p. 255, le critique souligne que les livres de Baudelaire, pour Artaud, répondent à une « urgence » et découvrent une « vérité ».

⁴⁵ On sent ici une profonde influence de Nietzsche, cf. Herbert W. Reichert, *The Impact of Nietzsche on Hermann Hesse*, Michigan, The Enigma Press, 1972.

⁴⁶ L'expression « théâtre magique » apparaît aussi chez Nicolas Evreïnoff, *Le Théâtre dans la vie*, Cinquième édition, Paris, Librairie Stock, Delamain et Boutelleau, 7 rue du Vieux-Colombier, 1930, p. 45, et chez Patrick Labarthe à propos des *Fantômes parisiens*, « Une poétique ambiguë. Les correspondances », in « *Les Fleurs du mal* ». *Actes du colloque de la Sorbonne des 10 et 11 janvier 2003*, Édités par André Guyaux et Bertrand Marchal, Paris, Presses Universitaires de Paris-Sorbonne, 2003, p. 137. Le Frioulan Giulio Camillo Delminio imagine, dans *L'Idée del Teatro*, traité publié à Florence en 1550, un théâtre magique qui soit une parfaite *imago mundi*, où tous les êtres et les objets s'inscrivent en raison de leurs caractéristiques astrales, cf. Ioan Peter Couliano, *Éros et magie à la Renaissance. 1484*, Avec une préface de Mircea Eliade, Flammarion « Idées et recherches », 1984, pp. 351-354.

vieillards, de Baudelaire – découvre au-dessus d'une porte, dans le brouillard épais d'une nuit d'automne, mais ce n'est qu'à la fin du roman qu'il parviendra à y pénétrer. Ses initiateurs, Pablo (joueur de saxophone) et Hermine (femme mystérieuse dont la vitalité sensuelle l'attire irrésistiblement), le convient à un bal masqué, où il est bientôt las de la moiteur de la salle, des odeurs pesantes, du tourbillon des danseurs. Voulant s'en aller, il demande son paletot au vestiaire, et l'employé exige le numéro. Haller se rend compte qu'il l'a perdu, et un petit diabolin rouge et jaune – un masque, sans doute ! – lui donne le sien avant de se perdre dans la foule. Mais le petit disque en métal porte, au lieu de chiffres, une inscription qui fait Haller complètement changer d'avis :

*Cette nuit à partir de quatre heures Théâtre Magique
– seulement pour les fous –
L'entrée coûte la raison.
Pas pour tout le monde. Hermine est en enfer.*

Comme une marionnette dont le metteur en scène, un instant, a perdu les fils, se ranime après un bref effondrement et une dégringolade, reprend sa place parmi les acteurs, danse et joue, je me lançai, attaché au fil magique, dans le brouhaha que je venais de fuir. Je l'avais abandonné, vieux, las et dégrisé, j'y retournai jeune, ardent et souple. Jamais un pêcheur n'eut tant de hâte de retourner en enfer.⁴⁷

Chez Baudelaire, dans « Le Théâtre de Séraphin », dont on a suggéré les rapports analogiques avec la magie et le rêve, l'expérience des drogues est décrite comme une véritable « folie » à plusieurs reprises. Par exemple, la femme sensible, dont le récit suit celui de l'expérience que le littérateur fait au théâtre, se sert du terme pour circonscrire la nature particulière du « plaisir de contempler ces formes et ces couleurs brillantes, et de [s]e croire le centre d'un drame fantastique »⁴⁸. Bien que les drogués considèrent souvent eux-mêmes leur état comme une folie, l'altération de leur personnalité est surtout visible de l'extérieur, pour ceux qui n'ont pas pris de la drogue et dont les perceptions ne sont pas perturbées. Celui qui a eu assez de force pour s'abstenir ne montre que de la condescendance pour celui qui n'a pas été capable de faire un bouclier de sa volonté. Mais cette condescendance, teintée de pitié, est encore plus grande en sens inverse : « Le fou prend le sage en pitié, et dès lors l'idée de sa supériorité commence à poindre à l'horizon de son intellect. Bientôt elle grandira, grossira et éclatera comme un météore. »⁴⁹

Le terme « folie » a au moins deux acceptions chez Baudelaire, selon les contextes, exactement comme « sorcellerie » ou « magie ». L'acception négative de la folie, liée à l'impuissance, au délire stérile, à la démission de la volonté, est doublée par une acception positive. Dans cette deuxième acception, la « folie » est dominée par la volonté et se transforme en formidable moteur de créativité artistique. Une

⁴⁷ Hermann Hesse, *Le Loup des steppes*, Traduit de l'allemand par Juliette Pary, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 2002, p. 141.

⁴⁸ *Les Paradis artificiels*, « Le Théâtre de Séraphin », ŒC I, p. 424.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 412.

folie lucide, théâtralisée avec intelligence et avec perversité, est une des caractéristiques importantes de l'artiste, assimilée qu'elle est, parfois, à la faculté de rêver intensément. Même si elle altère la perception de la réalité, en provoquant des distorsions inouïes, la folie offre une forte compensation dans le flamboiement de ses visions fantastiques. Dans *La Voix*, très beau poème inclus dans *Les Épaves*, deux voix parlent à un enfant dont le berceau s'appuie à la bibliothèque. Une des ces voix lui promet la conquête du monde, tandis que l'autre l'envoûte pour le faire voyager « dans les rêves, au-delà du possible, au-delà du connu ». Ayant écouté cette deuxième voix, le petit être signe comme une sorte de pacte diabolique avec la folie :

Et c'est depuis ce temps que, pareil aux prophètes,
 J'aime si tendrement le désert et la mer ;
 Que je ris dans les deuils et pleure dans les fêtes,
 Et trouve un goût suave au vin le plus amer ;
 Que je prends très souvent les faits pour des mensonges,
 Et que, les yeux au ciel, je tombe dans des trous.
 Mais la Voix me console et me dit : « Garde tes songes ;
 Les sages n'en ont pas d'aussi beaux que les fous ! »⁵⁰

Dans l'œuvre de Baudelaire, il y a un phénomène très intéressant qui affecte la « folie » : comme pour Dieu et Satan, la différence entre les deux hypostases de la folie (positive / négative) s'avère le plus souvent impossible, ou inutile, l'important étant que le spectacle puisse continuer, que la source des visions éclatantes ne tarisse jamais. Et il ne faut pas oublier que Baudelaire, comme le souligne Jérôme Thélot, réunit sous l'appellation générique d'« hystérie » tout l'ensemble des troubles psychiques liés à l'image de soi et à l'intégration dans le monde : « Rappelons que s'il est vrai, à cette époque d'avant les résultats de Charcot, que le mot *hystérie* est employé sans véritable contenu scientifique pour toute *maladie nerveuse*, et surtout pour recouvrir l'incompréhension de la médecine devant les névroses, tout de même Baudelaire, lecteur de Briquet, souvent y a eu recours, jusque dans ses poèmes. »⁵¹ Qu'on se rappelle tout simplement les considérations de Baudelaire à propos de la valeur littéraire de l'« hystérie » dans le bel article de 1857, sur *Madame Bovary* de Flaubert. – Pour tirer une sorte de rapide conclusion sur la question, hystérie et folie sont, chez le poète des *Fleurs du mal*, en variation libre.

L'entrée du théâtre magique de Hesse est « seulement pour les fous », pour ceux qui auraient le courage d'abandonner la raison au vestiaire, comme un banal paletot. Mais quel genre de folie s'exprime donc dans ce théâtre magique ?

⁵⁰ Baudelaire, *La Voix*, ŒC I, p. 170.

⁵¹ Jérôme Thélot, *Baudelaire. Violence et poésie*, Paris, Gallimard, 1993, p. 227. La maladie dont souffre Baudelaire pendant sa dernière année de vie, et pour l'identification de laquelle il ne dispose pas de tous les moyens « scientifiques », porte le même nom imprécis mais inquiétant : « Le médecin a lâché le mot : hystérie. », lettre à Caroline Aupick, 6 février 1866, *Correspondance*, II (mars 1860-mars 1866), Texte établi, présenté et annoté par Claude Pichois, avec la collaboration de Jean Ziegler, Paris, Éditions Gallimard, « Bibliothèque de la Pléiade », 1973, p. 589.

Est-ce une folie stérile ou bien une folie créatrice ? Avant d'avoir la permission d'entrer dans le théâtre, Hermine et Harry sont conduits dans une pièce ronde où Pablo leur donne des cigarettes singulièrement odorantes et une boisson qui agit instantanément en annulant toute idée de poids et toute sensation de lourdeur. Pendant que les drogues font leur effet, le saxophoniste, dont les yeux ensorcellent, tient tout un discours qui rappelle certaines idées des *Paradis artificiels*. Il ne promet à Haller que ce qui existe déjà en lui-même, tout comme le haschisch et l'opium ne font que pousser le caractère du drogué à outrance, sans y rien changer de fondamental : « Je ne puis rien vous donner qui n'existe déjà en vous-même, ni vous ouvrir une autre galerie d'images que celle de votre âme. »⁵² Hermine et Harry entrent enfin dans un théâtre en hémicycle, autour duquel de nombreuses portes conduisent aux loges ; ces portes ont chacune un écriteau qui promet la réalisation d'un désir particulier, impossible à envisager dans la vie quotidienne. Pablo attribue le côté gauche du théâtre à Harry Haller et le côté droit à Hermine, en leur attirant l'attention qu'ils peuvent se rencontrer autant de fois qu'ils veulent à l'intérieur, et en soulignant la nature illusoire des expériences qu'ils vont vivre : « nous sommes ici dans un théâtre magique, tout y est images, il n'y a pas de réalités »⁵³.

Dans son aventure à l'intérieur du théâtre, Harry réalise en fait une descente à l'intérieur de sa propre âme, en affrontant ses désirs et ses instincts les plus sauvages. La première porte qu'il choisit lui promet une partie de chasse à l'automobile, où toute sa cruauté réprimée et ses instincts sanguinaires peuvent s'exprimer. Il connaît la volupté de la guerre gratuite, faite pour le seul plaisir de tuer, « la guerre, une guerre violente, racée et infiniment sympathique, où il ne s'agissait plus de kaiser, de république, de frontières, de drapeaux, de couleurs et autres fichaises théâtrales et décoratives, mais où tous ceux qui n'avaient plus d'air pour respirer, qui n'avaient plus goût à la vie, extériorisaient violemment leur irritation et s'associaient à la destruction générale de ce monde verni et civilisé »⁵⁴. Une autre porte le mène au cœur de sa sexualité, en lui faisant revivre sa vie amoureuse sous un jour meilleur. Tout ce qui n'avait été que possibilité devient fait accompli, toutes les chances ratées parviennent à un accomplissement, et l'instinct amoureux de Harry Haller s'aiguise en vue de la rencontre finale avec Hermine, qu'il découvre – derrière la dernière porte par où il entre – couchée nue dans les bras de Pablo. Saisi par une jalousie féroce, il la tue, brisant les règles de jeu du théâtre magique et permettant l'immixtion de la réalité dans le monde des images.

Au-delà de la guerre et de l'érotisme, le sens de l'expérience vécue dans le théâtre magique est une recomposition entière de la personnalité : une fois là-dedans, Harry Haller comprend intuitivement toute sa vie passée et découvre les infinies possibilités spirituelles de l'être humain, qui peut combiner à sa guise les

⁵² *Le Loup des steppes, op. cit.*, p. 152.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 155.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 157-158.

images fascinantes qu'il porte en soi. D'ailleurs, dans une des chambres du théâtre, une sorte de yogi lui apprend comment jouer quelque chose comme un jeu d'échecs avec les diverses figures de sa personnalité (le jeune homme, le vieillard, le violent, le tendre, le fou, le sage, le bourgeois, l'artiste). Harry Haller apprend ainsi que sa personnalité n'est pas seulement duelle (intellectuel bourgeois / loup des steppes sauvage), mais multiple, éclatée, incontrôlable. Le yogi lui enseigne aussi la valeur créatrice et gnoséologique de la folie :

De même que la folie, dans un sens élevé, est le commencement de toute sagesse, la schizophrénie est, elle, le commencement de tout art, de toute imagination. Les savants même l'ont déjà presque admis, comme vous pouvez vous en rendre compte en lisant *La Corne d'abondance du Prince*, ce livre enchanteur où la besogne pénible d'un savant est ennoblie par la collaboration géniale d'un certain nombre d'artistes déments, enfermés dans des asiles d'aliénés. Tenez, reprenez vos figurines, ce jeu-là vous amusera souvent.⁵⁵

L'aventure de Harry Haller – à la fois dans le théâtre magique et dans le roman – finit dans un éclat de rire inhumain, supérieur, absolu, qui marque sa libération totale de tout le passé et des idées fausses qui ont façonné sa pensée et sa vie. Par son rire froid et prolongé qui ébranle la voûte du ciel, Haller enterre définitivement la dualité bourgeois / loup des steppes, la séparation intellect / instinct, et se montre prêt « à retraverser encore et toujours l'enfer » qu'il porte en lui⁵⁶, pareil à l'auteur des *Fleurs du mal* ou à Antonin Artaud. Cependant, le jeu en vaut la chandelle, puisque les spectacles de ces traversées de l'enfer sont véritablement magiques : lumières savamment braquées sur des objets dont elles accentuent les contours, harmonies de couleurs sulfureuses qui composent une musique bouillante, mannequins symboliques, pantomimes d'un comique irrésistible, poésie ardente de l'espace, synesthésies et correspondances. Baudelaire, *Les Paradis artificiels* et les notes disparates nous l'ont bien montré, rêve d'un théâtre intérieur à risque d'hystérie, en réaction au théâtre vulgaire et banal de son époque (tragédie néo-classique, drame romantique, drame honnête). Mais, pour jouir d'un tel théâtre magique, l'être humain est-il condamné irrévocablement à la folie ? N'y a-t-il pas pour l'homme une manière d'éprouver des jouissances *théâtrales* extrêmes, hyperboliques, sans perdre la raison ?

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LE CINÉASTE COCTEAU : UNE CONCEPTION ARTISTIQUE AU CARREFOUR DE LA LITTÉRATURE ET DES ARTS VISUELS

IRINA ARMIANU

ABSTRACT. A poet and a movie director, Jean Cocteau brilliantly manifested surrealist inspiration in his poetry, in the performative art of his theatrical representation, and in his cinematography. His work is the best example to follow when asking how much the new art of cinematography inherited from other artistic expressions, especially from literature. This study seeks to provide new and interdisciplinary inside into precisely those ways in which film is intimately related to literature. This article recognizes cinema as a longstanding art and analyzes its technique, inspired by other arts. As with literary texts, cinema must attend to narrative creation, to the construction of plot and to the unfolding of character. As in theatre it involves declamation and the art of decorations. As in dance performance it relies on music, sound and animation. There are ways in which cinematography, through special effects, finds its own path and provides a means to express poetical intuition. In this, Cocteau has been recognized as one of the most creative directors of all time.

Keywords: *Jean Cocteau, visual arts, literature and cinema, poetical intuition.*

Pendant plusieurs décennies, l'œuvre de Jean Cocteau a été oubliée, étudiée, réinventée et traitée comme un ensemble de pièces hétérogènes. Cet article propose une analyse de sa poétique polyvalente, manifestée dans une multitude d'expressions artistiques : le théâtre, la poésie, la danse, la chorégraphie, le dessin, le cinéma, etc. Un tel projet ne peut pas se passer d'une méthode de recherche interdisciplinaire, en explorant les domaines du film, de la représentation scénique et de la littérature, à travers plusieurs outils comme la psychanalyse, les études du film, les lectures féministes ou structuralistes, etc.

Jean Cocteau, connu surtout grâce à sa poésie et à son théâtre, prend comme sujet d'analyse la question de la création et il conçoit ses films – *Le Sang d'un poète*, *Orphée* et *Le Testament d'Orphée* – surtout du point de vue d'un littérateur. L'artiste ne raconte pas des histoires ou des répétitions de conflits mythologiques dans ses films mais il y cherche un noyau de poéticité. Il ne fait pas de cinéma mais toujours de la poésie, une poésie des images, une poésie de cinématographe. L'investigation de son art poétique pose ainsi la question du commerce de plusieurs arts dans la naissance du cinématographe et surtout celle de l'apport de la littérature.

Cette étude ne peut pas suivre un seul développement logique du génie de Cocteau mais elle se propose plutôt de révéler sa pensée esthétique dans la pluralité des langages artistiques. Voilà pourquoi le parcours de l'analyse est divisé en deux parties qui le concernent directement. La première, plus technique, se focalise sur la fonction du mythe, du symbole et de l'allégorie chez Cocteau ; sur la théorie de la poésie, et sur la parenté de nature visuelle entre le film et la poésie. Une deuxième partie met en discussion l'art particulier du cinématographe : la différence établie entre le cinématographe d'art et le cinéma populaire ; la critique de cinéma et ses convergences avec les critères de la critique littéraire ; le côté hétérogène du langage cinématographique et l'esprit inventif du cinéaste Cocteau.

L'art hétérogène de Jean Cocteau laisse entrevoir un esprit créatif, romantique par la recherche d'une sensibilité intérieure, mais tout à fait surréaliste dans l'ingénuité des moyens artistiques. L'harmonie interne d'une œuvre fragmentaire dans ses divers langages d'expression artistiques relève son côté postmoderniste. Parmi ces langages, l'image, tout comme les mots, n'est plus référentielle mais expressive et affective. Plusieurs théories ont fait la tentative de définir ces nouveaux pouvoirs de l'image et ont mis leur empreinte sur la conception de l'image chez Cocteau: Pierre Reverdy (*Livre de mon bord*, 1948) perçoit l'image dans le rapprochement de deux réalités distinctes ; André Breton (*Les Manifestes du surréalisme*, 1955) apprécie dans l'image son pouvoir de stupéfiant, issu des profondeurs de l'inconscient ; Bergson (*Matière et mémoire*, 1896) est le fondateur de la théorie de l'imagemouvement, un tout indivisible qui naît selon la réalité du temps concret et des coupes immobiles d'un temps abstrait. Enfin, Deleuze a eu l'intuition du concept de l'image-temps et d'une subordination du mouvement au temps.

Cocteau, un artiste du visuel, cherche la nature de la poésie et le rôle du poète, l'enjeu de la création dans la création même. L'image et sa signification deviennent suggestives seulement au contact du public. La question du choix d'un langage artistique fait que la meilleure expression d'une image est directement liée à l'intuition de l'œuvre et à la réception de l'œuvre. Le cinéma, par exemple, a son langage spécifique qui combine le son et l'image. Sa structure laisse voir les résonances expressives de l'image qui ont remplacé parfois même les mots. Pendant l'exploration de ce pouvoir suggestif de l'image, le travail avec le mythe, le réinvestissement du symbole et l'appel à l'allégorie ont joué un rôle décisif. Le monde des choses n'est plus là, c'est la poésie qui l'invente.

1. Allégorie et mythe

L'allégorie n'est pas une figure surévaluée chez Cocteau. L'interprétation allégorique de ses personnages se soutient grâce à l'ouverture de l'œuvre à toute interprétation possible. Un événement comme le voyage du poète dans le temps,

(*Le Sang d'un poète*), le passage par un miroir qu'Orphée entreprend à plusieurs reprises ou le geste meurtrier de Minerve dans *Le testament d'Orphée* interviennent tout simplement comme des suggestions accidentelles. C'est l'auditoire qui leur donne des significations jamais imaginées par l'auteur.

En ce qui concerne le mythe, l'essentiel est de construire une histoire autour d'une vérité profonde de l'existence. Cocteau trouve ici une équivalence avec la poésie qui reflète dans l'individualité du poète une vérité des hommes, qu'il s'agisse de la nostalgie pour l'enfance, de l'amour impossible ou de la perte d'un ami. La tradition théâtrale a fait que les deux personnages mythiques, Œdipe et Orphée, représentent le destin du poète. Le premier transforme son monde et le libère de l'obscurité par le pouvoir de la parole et de la raison. Le dernier quitte son monde pour une autre dimension, celle de l'au-delà. Cocteau emprunte aussi de la mythologie le décor antique et la noblesse de la tragédie. Le mythe a une double fonction : comme point de départ dans une œuvre et comme masque allégorique. Dans l'utilisation du mythe, les masques sont nombreux et couvrent plusieurs instances de l'œuvre : le public, la critique, la poésie, l'auteur, les personnes et les événements qui ont influencé la création artistique.

L'Œdipe de Cocteau n'est pas un personnage antique renouvelé grâce à la magie transformatrice du théâtre moderne. Son histoire garde le même souffle tragique de l'homme impuissant face aux dieux, comme partie intégrante de la mythologie personnelle du poète Cocteau.

Orphée, de l'autre côté, marque l'emploi du thème orphique et de l'autoréflexion, et montre l'importance de cette figure pour la mythologie de Cocteau. À l'intérieur de la trilogie orphique du film *Le Sang d'un poète*, nous avons affaire en grandes lignes à l'aventure du poète dans sa quête artistique. Une introspection, une descente aux enfers, des naissances et des morts inattendues changent la chaîne des événements mythiques. Le mythe orphique illustre le concept de la création artistique qui donne un sens à l'existence du poète. Cocteau emprunte du mythe grec quelques éléments du tragique comme la fatalité, qui semble collée au destin du poète, hanté par la nuit de son intuition créatrice. L'invocation des dieux et l'entremise des hommes dans son chemin rappellent aussi le parcours de héros mythiques comme Hercule. Les obstacles, que le poète dépasse dans sa quête, ressemblent aux rites d'initiation d'un culte pas encore découvert.

Et la poésie devient ainsi une religion lorsqu'elle travaille avec les mêmes catégories de l'émotion, du sacré et de la présence du divin dans la vie quotidienne. L'existence de la Voix dans *La machine infernale* est l'artifice scénique qui remplace le personnage collectif du chœur antique. La voix résume les événements et crée les possibilités de prolepse et d'analepse tout au long de la pièce. Le mythe, sous sa forme traditionnelle semble une apparence derrière laquelle se cache l'ironie et le

travail de désacralisation du théâtre moderne de Cocteau. Œdipe, par exemple, est la victime de ses propres illusions de grand réformateur. Il sort du paradigme littéraire moderne, bien établi dans la littérature chez André Gide ou Jean Anouilh, dans la musique de Stravinsky ou de Georges Enesco et dans le cinéma de Pasolini.

D'un autre côté, la place du mythe dans la création de Cocteau est dépendante du symbole. Si Barthes regarde le mythe comme un signifiant pour l'idéologie d'une société, (Barthes, *Mythologies*, 1957), le mythe chez Cocteau est aussi un instrument de transmission de valeurs artistiques et de médiation entre l'intuition et la création. À travers son monde fantasmatique, le poète humanise les personnages du mythe pour leur donner une touche dramatique, mais il ne retravaille pas le conflit, déjà vigoureux, emprunté au mythe antique.

2. Le symbole

Au cours de l'histoire, le symbole évolue d'un sens bien établi (son emploi classique chez Boileau), à l'indétermination romantique (chez Musset), tout en passant par le travail symboliste vers l'obscurité et l'ouverture (chez Verlaine et Mallarmé). Dans le cadre du surréalisme et de l'art non-figuratif, il participe de la naissance d'un sens qui est né à l'improviste, à la confluence de l'inattendu, de l'indéfini et du hasard. L'œuvre la plus représentative pour l'usage du symbole chez Cocteau est *Le sang d'un poète*, une médiation picturale des émotions esthétiques, spontanément nées face aux monstres d'un monde mystérieux, créé sur l'écran. Ce monde n'a plus de cohérence narrative, c'est un monde de rêve, du merveilleux et dont le seul thème est, comme nous l'avons dit, l'investigation sur la création.

En 1950 un autre film, *Orphée*, retient l'attention par le thème de l'inspiration poétique. Plus réaliste, cette production met l'accent sur les décors et les éléments de la narrativité, tout en travaillant avec les mêmes symboles et thèmes : le miroir, la zone, la poésie comme avènement de soi. En 1960 *Le testament d'Orphée*, le dernier film de Cocteau, remet en question l'identité du poète et fait appel au thème du phénix pour illustrer la réinvention du poète à chaque nouvelle création. La diversité des paysages, des personnages et des sous-thèmes rompt avec la règle de l'enchaînement narratif et de l'unité du cinéma.

Dans cette trilogie une subtile analogie s'établit entre l'ange et l'hermaphrodite, deux personnages fortement investis du pouvoir de la suggestion de l'indéterminé. Ils cachent un sens subversif dans leur symbolisme : c'est le refus de toute classification. L'ange est le personnage qui vit entre deux mondes, neutre et en transit. Une syntaxe en images, *Le testament d'Orphée* positionne l'image et les gestes plus hautement que le discours, comme s'il faisait une vraie tentative de transmutation du verbe en actes. Son film n'est plus une histoire accompagnée par la colonne sonore. Le souci pour l'illusion de réalité, essentiel au cinéma, est dépassé pour que la poésie

des gestes et des images se fasse mieux sentir. Ni fiction, ni représentation historique, *Le Testament d'Orphée* pourrait être la première production d'un genre cinématographique, inconnu jusqu'à Cocteau, le *documentaire d'art poétique*. Son message se propose de découvrir le poète et le secret de la magie de sa poésie. C'est le poète qui grâce à la force de la mémoire affective peut transgresser le temps et retrouver ses premiers temps créatifs.

La corrélation du symbole et des effets spéciaux révèle quelque chose de la performance de l'artiste qui visualise l'image finale, à la place du public. Le choix d'un cadre trop simplifié ou d'une méthode de tournage moins connue ou même inventée, dirige *Le Sang d'un poète* vers la création des personnages non-individualisés, dans un monde abstrait. Cet effet est réalisé grâce à l'illusion d'un mouvement étrange de leur corps, un langage gestuel, héraldique et bien stylisé.

Le rejet du symbole dans la théorie du film traduit, chez Cocteau, le refus d'une exclusivité du symbole, qui vole le pouvoir de signifier à l'œuvre même. Les symboles vivent encore chez Cocteau, mais ils ne limitent plus le sens de l'œuvre parce qu'ils ne représentent pas son seul moyen expressif. La motivation du symbole chez Cocteau est manifeste soit dans un sens déjà créé et spécifiquement réitéré, comme c'est le cas du sang, du miroir ou de la boule de neige, soit dans un sens accidentel, tout à fait inconnu jusqu'alors, et qui naît à chaque lecture dans la proximité de tous les éléments de l'œuvre.

Selon Paul Ricœur (*De l'interprétation*, 1965), le symbole se trouve au centre de l'identité de l'artiste, placé entre la progression et la régression. Chez Cocteau le poète se méfie de la fonction usuelle du symbole pour lui accorder de nouvelles valences qu'il brode à partir d'un sens régressif. La Sphinge (*La machine infernale*) renvoie en arrière jusqu'aux déités égyptiennes. Son image polymorphique, d'un corps demi-humain et demi-animalier, représente un progrès par rapport à l'élément humain du personnage littéraire traditionnel. Tous ces anachronismes entre les personnages humains, animaliers ou tout simplement mythiques ; les décors qui dominent parfois les protagonistes, les images et les bruits sans relation logique, montrent que l'artiste est entré dans un autre âge de la création en toute liberté. Il se refuse à l'art figuratif et poursuit la recherche de sa nuit intérieure, des données de l'inconscient et de sa vision subjective, dont rien ne peut deviner les formes ou les règles de composition. Le poète même est un initié de sa propre nuit. La célèbre formule de Rimbaud « je est un autre » cache la vérité de Cocteau comme c'était le cas pour les surréalistes ou pour les peintres modernes, à partir de Picasso ou Dali : « Une forme de moi, peut-être obscure, peut-être pénible, mais plus vraie mille fois que celle qui parle et que vous avez devant les yeux. »¹

¹ Jean Cocteau, *Le sang d'un poète*. Paris, Editions du Rocher, 1948, p. 107, dans un texte prononcé en Janvier 1932 à l'occasion de la projection du film au Vieux Colombier.

3. Identité, style et conception artistique

Le poète cherche son identité dans l'œuvre et l'avènement de soi est problématique d'où son narcissisme et le questionnement obsessionnel sur son destin. Le dédoublement est une archéologie involontaire chez Cocteau qui se regarde dans l'œuvre et voit l'artisan et le génie d'un côté et son identité sociale de l'autre. Ce dédoublement fait naître dans l'œuvre une distinction entre le temps du rêve et le temps de la vie.

Borges explique le dédoublement entre la personne de l'artiste et son identité créatrice (*Borges et moi*). Ici, comme chez Cocteau, l'auteur voit son nom reconnu partout, dans les listes académiques ou dans un dictionnaire biographique mais il sait que l'artiste vit d'une existence à côté². Cité par Maritain, justement dans le contexte de l'explication du fonctionnement de l'intuition créatrice, T. S. Eliot faisait la même remarque concernant l'artiste : « La destinée de l'artiste est un sacrifice de soi continu, une continuelle extinction de la personnalité. »³

À la suite de ce tremblement de son identité, Cocteau découvre *la phénixologie*, un mécanisme psychologique inhérent à tout artiste. La mort du poète pour le bien de son art est une dissolution de ses limites individuelles, une ouverture aux possibilités infinies de la création. L'existence du poète est une vie en excès lorsqu'il sait regarder derrière la réalité immédiate. Il est un prophète, dans l'acception romantique du terme.

Pendant ce long travail sur son identité artistique, le contact des contemporains a enrichi les sources d'inspiration aussi bien que la technique de la poésie de Cocteau : Stravinsky lui avait dévoilé la dureté des dissonances dans la musique, Satie la sensibilité de la composition musicale, Picasso l'introduit dans la force du cubisme à travers la relativité du regard. Sa poésie retrouve une familiarité innée auprès du cubisme. À ce courant nouveau de la peinture elle emprunte la relativité du regard, la perspective multiple sur un modèle unique et une certaine force du visuel.

La préoccupation d'André Breton pour un sens plus libre de l'identité psychique dans le second manifeste surréaliste est présente chez Cocteau dans l'orientation vers la vie psychique de l'individu et vers son enjeu pour la création artistique. L'influence de la peinture moderne non-figurative est visible dans les décors créés pour la scène du théâtre ou du cadre filmé. Le décor de la pièce *Orphée*, par exemple, semblable à une peinture de Chirico, donne aux choses une lumière sombre, de ciel d'avril, au milieu de la scène où un socle vide attend le buste d'un grand artiste.

² Borges Jorge Luis, *A Personal Anthology*, New York, Grove Press, 1967, p. 200.

³ Jacques Maritain, *L'intuition créatrice dans l'art et dans la poésie*, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1966, p. 133.

André Bazin, dans *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?*, appelle *Le sang d'un poète*, « un documentaire sur l'imagination »⁴. Cette capacité visuelle attire Cocteau vers le montage, dans la perspective d'une écriture en images, de type surréaliste. Chez lui, le film dépasse les limites du cinéma, qui devrait respecter l'unité de l'espace. L'esprit de la découverte et de l'innovation ne le quitte pas. La continuité avec les mouvements d'avant-garde est manifeste dans la recreation sur l'écran de la sensation de découverte et dans les rapports qui se rétablissent entre l'écriture et le monde décrit, tout en provoquant les effets très riches des « synchronies accidentelles ».⁵

Le style de Jean Cocteau ne répond plus de la distinction de genre artistique mais il se définit par la magie poétique, soit-elle sur l'écran du cinématographe, en vers ou dans les lignes du dessin. Cette magie naît de son inventivité, du sortilège des mots et des images et de l'intelligence de la conversation. C'est aussi le résultat de la création comme œuvre ouverte. Chez Umberto Eco ce concept vient de l'allégorisme du Moyen Age qui affirme l'existence de plusieurs niveaux dans la réception d'une œuvre : littéraire, allégorique, moral ou anagogique. La multiple possibilité de l'interprétation fait que le poète Cocteau pense bien à cette ouverture de l'interprétation et qu'il planifie minutieusement son œuvre parsemée d'incertitudes et d'équivoques.

Malgré cette ouverture et cette liberté de la création, un effort de clarté s'impose dans l'ambiguïté de la place du poète par rapport à la poésie, étant donnée la diversité de genres et de catégories esthétiques abordées. Chez lui, il y a deux types de poètes : le *classique*, qui travaille son œuvre comme un artisan, en manœuvrant le beau, et le *romantique* qui pense le beau et cherche le génie, et pour lequel l'inspiration vient de l'extérieur : « Mozart est classique, Beethoven romantique. Je préfère Mozart. Je suis un classique. Ma seule préoccupation, c'est d'être un bon artisan, de perfectionner mes outils. Le reste ne dépend pas de moi. »⁶

Sa conception artistique s'érige sur un commerce intime, voire une forme de pénétration réciproque, entre l'art et la poésie. La poésie même, comme connaissance intuitive du monde, est l'élément qui donne un sens artistique à

⁴ André Bazin, *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma ?*, Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, p. 54.

⁵ Ce procédé spécifique à Cocteau est un bon exemple pour la manière spontanée dans laquelle son art cinématographique s'érige à partir des expérimentations sur le plateau de tournage. Le cinéaste l'observe pour la première fois pendant la réalisation du film *Coriolan*, une production en 16 mm, sous l'influence de Chaplin, et commence à comprendre son enjeu plus tard, pendant la représentation du ballet *Le jeune homme et la mort*, quand il remplace un morceau de jazz par un passage de Bach. L'effet inattendu met Cocteau sur la piste d'une découverte personnelle : le hasard de la création peut l'enrichir, selon son témoignage dans *Entretiens sur le cinématographe*, Paris, Editions du Rocher, 2003, p. 44.

⁶ Jean Cocteau, *28 Autoportraits écrits et dessinés*, Montréal, Écriture, 2003, p. 18.

l'existence. Cette théorie, selon Jacques Maritain, dans son étude consacrée particulièrement à l'art et à la poésie, était déjà présente chez Coleridge, avant qu'elle soit formulée systématiquement chez Cocteau. Selon Coleridge, la poésie agit comme une forme d'énergie spirituelle qui réveille dans la création artistique la capacité intellectuelle et l'imagination du poète à la fois⁷.

4. Littérature et cinéma

Jacques Maritain, parmi les contemporains de Jean Cocteau, a influencé le poète et sa poésie au plus haut degré. Il réclamait, à partir d'une idée de Thomas d'Aquin, la nécessité de la connaissance poétique, une connaissance basée sur la connaturalité affective de l'âme du poète avec l'œuvre d'art⁸. Cette difficulté d'être devient, d'une part, le motif central dans la définition de la place du poète et de sa poésie chez Cocteau. De l'autre part, il reste très lié au surréalisme à cause de cette conception moderne de l'image et de la création. Le monde se donne à inventer, il n'existe plus *a priori*. Aragon dans son *Traité du style* énonce cette théorie non-représentationnelle en 1928 et laisse voir ce côté inventif, de la découverte et de la création en marche. L'auteur ne sait rien de son œuvre à venir, d'où cette impression qu'il lui est un étranger et que l'œuvre se forme indépendamment.

Cocteau garde ce crédo esthétique dans sa littérature tout comme dans son cinématographe. Les moyens expressifs de la littérature et du cinéma se rencontrent sur le terrain de la narrativité, de la fiction, de la poéticité et de l'inspiration fraîche. L'attention prêtée aux détails a déterminée une préférence de l'image cinématographique à la représentation scénique. L'œil de la caméra est défini par Cocteau comme un regard pénétrant à l'intérieur de la scène, parmi les personnages agissants et qui a l'avantage de saisir en détail leurs réactions et leurs gestes les plus fins. Dans ses *Parents terribles*, il y a un moment-clé du conflit où la mère glisse par une porte latérale pour prendre du poison, ignorée et cachée à la vue des autres. L'adaptation sur l'écran fait que la caméra souligne ce trait tragique sur le visage même du personnage en train de se suicider. Cet élément est un signe de prolepse, qui annonce le dénouement malheureux.

L'œil de la caméra apporte une révolution dans la perspective des arts visuels, qui plagiaient jusqu'alors la position unique du spectateur. Dans la

⁷ Jacques Maritain a trouvé son argument initial de l'interdépendance de l'art et de la poésie chez Coleridge dans *Lectures et notes on Shakespeare and other dramatists*, New York, Harper, 1853, p. 181-182. Tout comme Cocteau plus tard, Coleridge avait bien deviné la définition de la poésie qui devient un terme général pour nommer les beaux-arts.

⁸ Jacques Maritain, *L'intuition créatrice dans l'art et dans la poésie*, op. cit., p. 109.

peinture, cette révolution est déjà annoncée par le même refus d'un point d'observation unique, d'où l'impression de fugitif dans les lignes et dans les formes. Les cubistes expriment la même relativité du regard, qui voit à travers la présence simultanée de toutes les positions possibles du modèle.

La littérature joue un rôle central dans la création et dans la réception du film parce que leur parenté souligne le souci de la fiction et d'un imaginaire qui croit à un monde autre que la réalité. Leurs chemins se croisent et s'éloignent à maintes reprises: dans le support d'un texte écrit ou dans l'usage d'une perspective narrative. La construction du récit, l'effet visuel de l'image signifiante, les moyens de description où la présentation des personnages et des thèmes sont, dans le cinématographe, tributaires de la tradition littéraire.

Les éléments mythiques hérités de la littérature donnent la possibilité d'employer les effets du merveilleux, de l'étrange et du fantastique⁹. L'atmosphère étrange et la voix du poète qui parle comme d'un autre monde ressemblent à ceux des vers du *Cap de Bonne Espérance*. Les ondulations douces du rythme poétique transmettent le sentiment de la tragédie humaine, qu'il s'agisse de la guerre, de la perte des amis ou de la perte de soi. Si le cinématographe est aussi un langage de poésie, c'est parce qu'il témoigne du même souffle tragique et du même rythme étrange du mouvement.

Le mouvement anachronique du corps du poète dans l'hôtel des folies, dans *Le Sang d'un poète*, laisse voir sa nature surnaturelle, angélique. Les passages des miroirs, qui symbolisent le pouvoir de regarder derrière les choses, dans *Orphée*, ou les trompe – l'œil du *Testament d'Orphée* tout comme les êtres bizarres de l'homme cheval ou des idoles, témoignent chez Cocteau d'une créativité hors du commun pour l'art visuel hétérogène de son cinématographe. Le film devient le véhicule d'une âme de tragédien, au même titre qu'il garde la place du réalisateur comme auteur des vers, de la musique ou du dessin.

Si *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel* est le genre de poésie le plus soumis à la manière du spectacle théâtral avec ses décors et ses excellents effets de scène, pour le film c'est *Le Cap de Bonne-Espérance* le recueil le plus adaptable au langage des images et des sons. Les sens visuel et auditif sont spontanément sollicités quand les consonnes du nom de Roland Garros se mêlent dans les célèbres voltes en air de son avion, bourdonnant de sensations fortes. La graphique même des vers est significative pour l'effet visuel du vol en cercles. La poésie annonce déjà l'image-mouvement et le travail de l'imaginaire cinématographique.

Le rapprochement du cinéma et du texte écrit est une constante dans le cinématographe d'inspiration littéraire de Cocteau. *Le Sang d'un poète* fait que la

⁹ Selon la visée de Tzvetan Todorov dans son étude *Introduction à la littérature fantastique*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1976.

voix de Cocteau récite des phrases reprises en bas de l'écran. Le procédé, commun au cinéma muet, renforce la présence du poète, à l'aide du son. L'emploi d'une voix au cinéma est le signe d'une identification et de la formation de la subjectivité de celui qui raconte, qui détient le pouvoir de la connaissance et du regard. Les deux techniques se confondent dans l'art essentiellement visuel de Cocteau.

À l'intérieur de ce nouveau genre artistique du cinéma il y a une frontière dépassée par Cocteau, celle du genre du film populaire. Quoiqu'il n'ait pas été le seul cinéaste de son temps qui ait essayé le film expérimental ou poétique, (Buñuel, *Un chien andalou* ou Resnais dans *L'année dernière à Marienbad*), Cocteau reste l'un des parents du genre pour avoir focalisé ses films sur la question de l'art poétique.

Le film poétique de Cocteau ne suit pas un plan préétabli, il se donne à découvrir et sa structure s'élève pendant le tournage même. Cocteau cherche « des synchronismes accidentels », ces facteurs imprévus qui interviennent pendant la production d'un film et qui lui offrent des significations nouvelles ou des effets spéciaux inespérés, comme l'effet d'étrange produit par la poussière des balayeurs à la fin du *Sang d'un poète*.

Dans le film d'art, l'image visuelle est employée pour évoquer plutôt que pour la fonction représentationnelle du cinéma populaire. Ainsi elle justifie ses rapports avec la poésie et son langage de suggestion. Elle se rend significative par rapport aux autres cadres d'une scène ou dans la composition d'une structure abstraite d'un même cadre.

La différence entre *le cinéma* et *le cinématographe*, ou entre la mise en scène d'une représentation théâtrale et le tournage d'un film, représente des limites nécessaires à l'art poétique cinématographique, chez Cocteau. Le seul but est d'atteindre cette intuition d'un monde miraculeux, que le poète envisage dans ses pensées, cette nuit qui le hante : « J'ai donc eu tort de vous parler de réalisme ; c'est "vérisme" qu'il faudrait dire. Non qu'on tente de s'approcher d'une vérité qui objectivement n'existe pas, mais, subjectivement, qui est la nôtre. »¹⁰

Un procédé que le *Testament d'Orphée* emprunte à la littérature est celui de la mise en abîme, en soulignant les problèmes de la création d'un cinéaste. Le film ne s'arrête pas à ce thème général mais il plonge directement dans le monde fictionnel de l'œuvre tout entière. Cocteau joue son rôle et se promène parmi les vieux décors de son théâtre ou de ses films où il rencontre Œdipe, La Mort, les poètes contemporains et même son double.

Mais le cinématographe inspire la littérature à son tour. L'un des apports du cinéma à la littérature est, par exemple, le sens subversif de sa dialectique. Le cinématographe de Cocteau travaille en sous-texte pour la libération de l'œil de la caméra de sa matérialité spatiale et temporelle. Le but est d'obtenir l'illusion

¹⁰ Jean Cocteau, *Entretiens sur le cinématographe*, op. cit., p. 67.

d'une distance entre le public et les images, un détachement émotionnel du sujet spectateur pour une plus grande liberté d'interprétation. Le film réalise ce travail psychologique sur son auditoire à travers quelques décisions thématiques et techniques du cinéaste : l'autocritique et l'autoréflexivité, le renversement des symboles archaïques et l'invention de nouvelles significations. Le poète enseigne à son public une manière plus libre de penser l'art, auprès d'une défamiliarisation et d'une rupture avec le mode conformiste de la réception du film et de la poésie.

Le grand public perçoit souvent le cinématographe comme un genre moderne, de la nouveauté, et le théâtre comme l'endroit où la tragédie antique vit encore, même dans ses formes les plus démythifiées, comme chez Jean Anouilh, Giraudoux ou Ionesco. Dans le cas de Cocteau, c'est toujours le visuel qui est soumis à la modernisation et c'est à travers le cinématographe que le théâtre s'imprègne de cette nouvelle forme artistique de l'image : « Je suis dessinateur. Il m'est naturel de voir et d'entendre ce que j'écris, de le douer d'une forme plastique. Lorsque je tourne un film, les scènes que je règle deviennent pour moi des dessins qui bougent, des mises en places du peintre. »¹¹

Le dessin, par exemple, n'est, selon lui, qu'une écriture dénouée et renouée : « Pas plus que les Eugènes de paix, les Eugènes de guerre ne prétendent être du 'dessin'. Tout au plus l'écriture du poète plus grosse, et qui essaye maladroitement de s'affranchir des mots. »¹²

Dès son premier recueil de poésie, la littérature s'inspire beaucoup de la vision graphique du cubisme, par exemple dans le poème *Chant du paveur*, où la fragmentation des angles et la multiplication des perspectives laissent la place à une œuvre essentiellement moderne par son ouverture. Même dès ce moment initial de la poésie de Cocteau, la littérature est déjà une source inépuisable d'inspiration, où les mots arrivent d'une intuition artistique née à la confluence de diverses émotions esthétiques.

En rapport direct avec la peinture ou le théâtre, le cinématographe n'exalte plus le génie de l'individualisme. Il est par excellence un art populaire et collectif, de plusieurs artistes du point de vue de la production et de la réception. Le cinématographe maîtrisant, en principe, le pouvoir narratif à partir de l'enchaînement de plusieurs épisodes, était aux années trente un art en train de re-délimiter son territoire et de re-définir ses genres.

Dès lors que les œuvres choisies pour cette analyse manifestent un caractère d'art poétique très marqué, elles ont enrichi la perspective théorique sur la création cinématographique et théâtrale de Cocteau. Dans la filmographie du poète, les productions de la trilogie sont particulièrement suggestives quant au

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 18.

¹² Jean Cocteau, *Œuvres romanesques complètes*, Paris, Gallimard, 2006, p. 227.

thème orphique. *Le sang d'un poète* est le premier film de Cocteau qui concerne directement son identité artistique. *Orphée* est le plus grand succès de public et l'œuvre qui met en pratique la théorie du trompe-l'œil réaliste. Le dernier film réalisé par Cocteau, *Le Testament d'Orphée*, arrive au comble de son art poétique certainement par l'identification accomplie avec le masque mythique d'Orphée. En ce qui concerne l'identité artistique du poète et les traits qui gouvernent son existence, la théorie de Cocteau est révélatrice. L'art et l'artiste sont conscients de leur liberté à poursuivre la vertu créatrice. Ils sont deux entités différentes grâce au pouvoir de transformer le monde des choses selon une vision singulière qui est l'intuition créatrice. C'est la vérité de cette vision, l'unique vérité requise du poète, dont Cocteau parle, en l'appelant « vérisme »¹³.

Ainsi, le mouvement-instant a-t-il positionné le film par rapport à la perspective tridimensionnelle des arts graphiques. Cette notion, mise en valeur par Deleuze, et déjà préfigurée par André Bazin, a encouragé le développement du cinéma, un nouvel art avec son propre objet, ses moyens spécifiques et ses principes de création. Le cinématographe marque ainsi son point de référence dans la révolution de l'art moderne et Jean Cocteau y trouve sa place d'honneur, étant reconnu comme l'un des plus créatifs directeurs de film du XXe siècle.

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¹³ Jean Cocteau, *Entretiens sur le cinématographe*, Paris, Editions du Rocher, 2003, p. 67.

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ARTHUR ADAMOV ET LE POP ART : TÉMOIGNER D'UNE RÉALITÉ, TÉMOIGNER D'UNE OBSESSION

ȘTEFANA POP-CURȘEU

ABSTRACT. Taking as a starting point the mere observation of the fact that Arthur Adamov, beyond the “absurd” or the “political” aspects of his theatre, had an intuition of the evolution of his contemporary world similar to that of the Popular artistic movements of the '50-'70, the present article proposes an investigation of this inter-artistic relation, centered around the idea of *testimony*. One of the questions tried to be answered concerns the nature of common testimony of these artists and the way the image of living in the XXth century modernity surfaces behind the show case of the work of art, be it projected for an exhibition or for the scene of a Theatre. Obsessed with the same ideas of the commerce of men and objects, of the seriality, of the spectacular and the parody, of the socio-economical mechanism of consummation and of exhibited eroticism, Arthur Adamov uses artistic forms claimed by Pop artist and New Realists denouncing at the same time the rigidity and the alienation which they generated, and of which they were nothing more than a visual travesty.

Keywords : *Pop Art, theatre of the absurd, modernity, art as a witness, consummation, alienation.*

Parler d'Arthur Adamov et du Pop Art représente en même temps une chose qui va de soi et un défi : les recherches déjà entreprises sur les influences subies par le théâtre adamovien ne sont pas passées à côté des « voyages américains » de l'écrivain qui ont donné naissance à une pièce comme *Off Limits*, où la présence des « happenings » démontre clairement une prise de contact avec les réalités artistiques des États-Unis, et c'est aussi dans ce même contexte du Pop Art que Klaus Michael Grüber a créé la mise en scène de cette pièce, à Düsseldorf, en 1972. Pourtant, les liens entre la vision adamovienne du monde du XX^e siècle et celle des artistes pop va beaucoup plus loin.

Car Adamov a eu l'intuition de la réalité, telle que les vagues artistiques des années '50-'70 l'ont vécue, dès l'entre-deux-guerres : hanté par les mêmes idées du commerce des hommes et des objets, de la sérialité, du spectaculaire et du parodique que les artistes Pop, que les Nouveaux Réalistes et les Assemblagistes, son théâtre est un témoignage qui unit dans une expérience unique et personnelle tous les témoignages de ces groupes produits par un même mécanisme politique et socioéconomique. « Témoignage » qu'ils apportent de la vie de l'homme moderne,

de ses craintes, peurs, angoisses, désirs, passions et obsessions. Il ne sera pas question de la qualité artistique des œuvres à citer, mais de leur expressivité analysée d'un point de vue existentiel, c'est-à-dire dans une perspective qui cherche à cerner le fait humain et social caché derrière les surfaces coloriées, coupées et collées. Quel est le témoignage commun de ces artistes et comment l'image du vécu de ce monde de la modernité du XX^{ème} siècle apparaît-elle derrière les vitrines de l'œuvre artistique, qu'elle soit pensée pour la scène d'un théâtre ou pour celle d'une exposition ? Voilà les deux questions auxquelles cette étude essayera de répondre.

Ancrés délibérément et d'une manière ostentatoire dans la vie quotidienne, les années Pop (1950-1970) se concentrent sur la présence, artistique en elle-même – décontextualisée aussi bien que récontextualisée – des objets et des images directement empruntées à la réalité sociale, technique, médiatique, commerciale et des loisirs. L'art descend dans la rue ou, plutôt, monte de la rue directement au musée. Les critiques d'art ont beaucoup parlé de l'« esthétique distanciée » du Pop Art, marquée par l'effacement de la présence de l'artiste – que souligne d'ailleurs Warhol à propos de ses œuvres –, à laquelle nous avons affaire dans le cadre du rapport artiste-œuvre, artiste-réalité. Il ne s'agit pourtant pas d'une distanciation véritablement critique, mais le plus souvent d'un jeu proche du procédé photographique, l'objectif de l'appareil photo étant, cette fois-ci, l'œil de l'artiste et son intention. C'est ainsi que la réponse de Roy Lichtenstein à la question « *What is pop art?* » est : « I don't know – the use of commercial art as subject matter in painting. I suppose » et que Robert Indiana utilise une expression extrêmement suggestive à propos des artistes pop : ils sont « eye-hungry » et leur technique est « straight-to-the-point, severely blunt, with as little "artistic" transformation and delectation as possible. The self-conscious brush stroke and the even more self-conscious drip are not central to its generation. Impasto is visual indigestion. »¹ Il y a donc une faim visuelle qui accapare l'image et une présence affirmée de l'artiste qui voit, qui saisit, qui rend. Rapport à la réalité que Adamov anticipe dans son journal : « Rendre témoignage. Rendre, c'est restituer »². Présence où le regard tourne au voyeurisme lorsque l'artiste témoin commence à y prendre du plaisir. Et c'est ici que se dévoile le caractère spécial du témoignage des artistes des années '60 : leur regard ne fait pas que *surprendre* ; il fait intrusion dans le « vu » et participe, paradoxalement, à travers le « rendu » à un enchaînement visuel, qui encadre automatiquement l'œuvre d'art dans la sérialité des images « réelles ». Au témoignage de la réalité se joint ainsi le témoignage des obsessions que cette réalité a fait naître et qui viennent confirmer la puissance même de cette réalité dénoncée : la guerre, l'érotisme, la communication tronquée entre les hommes.

¹ Carol Anne Mashun (éd.), *Pop Art: The Critical Dialogue*, London/Michigan, UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor, 1989, pp.111 et 122.

² A. Adamov, *Je...Ils*, Paris, Gallimard, 1969, p. 41.

On ne peut pas rendre que ce dont on a pris possession. Pris, c'est-à-dire touché, goûté, senti, vu. L'essentiel est de voir. Voir non pas les choses, mais à travers elles.³

Nous suivrons le cheminement de ce témoignage ambigu principalement dans les deux dernières pièces d'Arthur Adamov : *Off Limits* et *Si l'été revenait*, bien que sa toute première pièce, *La Parodie*, en contienne déjà des éléments parlants. Ce qui rend les choses plus évidentes dans les textes choisis, c'est le cadre américain de *Off Limits* et le concentré de vie que suppose le monde enfermé, sous surveillance, des jeunes de *Si l'été revenait*.

Une « hideuse enfant phtisique à la balle » qui tousse, puis pousse sa balle d'un geste mécanique et sisyphique » « c'est l'âme de notre époque acculée dans l'impasse affreuse où l'esprit confondu s'arrête et titube »⁴. Voilà la société, telle qu'Adamov la présente dans *Off Limits* et *Si l'été revenait* sous les apparences d'un monde sécurisant auquel des jeunes personnages doivent faire face et contre lequel ils se heurtent en permanence. Car ce qui unit, en apparence, les personnages de *Off Limits*, par exemple, sont les produits de cette société à laquelle ils donnent tous corps : l'alcool, la drogue, la trivialité, le racisme, les *parties* et les *happenings* qui remplissent leur existence marquée par la hantise de la mort.

Pour l'Européen et l'Américain des années '50-'70 la mort reste une permanence : les séquelles de la deuxième guerre mondiale, la Guerre du Vietnam, la lutte pour le pouvoir politique, les répressions sanglantes de l'Alabama. Les œuvres de Wolf Vostell en témoignent : *Deutscher Ausblick. Das Schwarze Zimmer*, ou *Treblinka, Das Schwarze Zimmer* ou encore *Auschwitz-Scheinwerfer. Das Schwarze Zimmer*, à travers leur sujet aussi bien qu'à travers leur technique : ce sont des décollages, avec du fil de fer barbelé, du bois, du papier journal, des os, des fragments de téléviseurs, motocyclettes, phares de voitures, pellicules. Il ne s'agit plus de faire un tableau de ce qui a été, mais de refaire une image matérielle et concentrée de ce qui est encore présent dans la vie de ceux qui ont vécu les atrocités de la guerre. Ces fragments de matières mutilées sont des fragments de l'homme moderne mutilé ; tout y est : les camps, la mort, les fausses images propagées par les médias, les télévisions éentrées dont la réalité est technique et non humaine, la lumière et les voix qui encageaient les victimes, les tortures physiques et psychiques.

Les personnages adamoviens de *Si l'été revenait* se trouvent dans une situation similaire : ils sont des bribes d'existences, des bribes d'eux-mêmes, surveillés par la lumière crue du spectacle. Viktor est le rescapé de la guerre, la mémoire vivante de ce qui a été, Viktor est une image : il coupe des fils de fer barbelé, il ronge la barre de la bicyclette d'Alma, annulation de sa propre intégrité corporelle masculine.

³ *Idem.*

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 107.

Viktor soulève la bicyclette d'Alma, qui se trouvait presque à ses pieds, une bicyclette de femme, sans barre.

Et voilà la bicyclette d'Alma, dont, une nuit, j'ai rongé la barre. Ça n'a pas été commode, crois-moi, de l'éliminer, cette sacrée barre. J'y suis parvenu, cependant.⁵

La haine – accompagnée d'impuissance – se tourne contre l'état des choses et contre l'État, symbole de ce pouvoir politique destructeur, qui « frustre » l'homme de son « âme »⁶. Ce qui fait que l'homme perd la maîtrise de soi, qu'il ne peut plus être lui-même, qu'il reste en proie à la souffrance :

Viktor, désignant sa propre tête : Tu vois, Alma, c'est comme si j'avais un anneau qui me serrait le crâne. (À la cantonade.) Admirez, mes amis, la toute dernière mode masculine de la planète ! L'anneau de fer de l'État. Regardez-moi, nu et sans défense (Alma essaye d'enlever à Viktor son anneau de fer imaginaire.) Que fais-tu ? Tu me fais mal. [...] Sais-tu, Alma que je ne suis qu'un prêt et qu'à n'importe quel moment le distributeur de sécurité peut me reprendre ? On n'a pas fixé la date du remboursement.⁷

L'homme dans et par rapport à la guerre est une cible – *The first real Target* ? comme le dit l'œuvre de Peter Blake en 1961 ou, avant lui, Jasper Johns avec son *Target with Plaster Casts*, en 1955 – une cible et une matière recyclable. Derek Boshier le montre bien à travers le canon qui projette dans l'air un flux d'hommes qui deviennent des silhouettes, puis de la chair molle, puis de la matière qui prend les couleurs du drapeau britannique (*Re-think, Re-entry*, huile sur toile, 1962).

De plus, l'homme se traduit en langage politique en un chiffre, en une vie à « payer », en une permanente contrainte. Pourtant, Adamov, dans le passage cité, saisit l'aspect paradoxal de cette relation au malheur: les hommes ne veulent pas être sauvés de cette contrainte, ils ne veulent pas en être débarrassés, ils refusent qu'on leur enlève leur anneau de fer, pour la simple raison qu'ils ne sont jamais assez forts, assez sur-humains pour vivre sans lui. Et s'il est vrai que la politique de l'âge moderne dénuie l'homme et le dépouille de son humanité, il s'agit d'un dénuement et d'un vide que l'homme demande inconsciemment dans son rapport masochiste à sa propre existence. Il devient pareil à ce « grand monsieur de plomb qui s'écaille de toutes parts » et qu'il faut aider pour que « ses bouts tiennent encore un bout de temps »⁸ que nous retrouvons dans le personnage de Lars dans *Si l'été revenait* ou dans le collage de Niegel Henderson *Head of a man*.

Aux guerres mondiales s'ajoutent les « génocides » américains. Sentiments de culpabilité, de désespoir, de révolte, de peur, honte, névrose et pensée de suicide s'y mêlent. La société, telle qu'elle est présentée dans *Off Limits*, par exemple, souffre un puissant traumatisme psychique, qui se reflète dans la névrose des

⁵ A. Adamov, *Si l'été revenait*, Paris, Gallimard, coll. Le Manteau d'Arlequin, 1970.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 71.

⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 65-66.

personnages, et dont la cause principale est la guerre du Vietnam née de la même politique menée par le système au pouvoir. La guerre, dit Adamov, « loin d'avoir été une expérience sévère, l'occasion unique de remettre tout en question, n'a marqué, au contraire, qu'un degré de plus dans l'enfoncement, dans l'assoupissement des consciences »⁹. Cette guerre devient une des causes principales du vide rongé la société et de *la faute*, de la culpabilité ressentie par les personnages. « Ce n'est la faute de personne ! »¹⁰, crie Dorothy, et c'est pourtant la faute de tout un chacun, de tous ceux qui se laissent faire, qui acceptent ce qui leur est donné, qui oublient la verticalité humaine. George Maciunas le montre aussi, en 1968, avec sa sérigraphie *U.S.A. surpasses all genocide records* où, dans le drapeau américain, les étoiles sont remplacées par des têtes de morts et les lignes rouges par l'énumération des massacres en Europe et aux États-Unis¹¹.

Que reste-t-il à faire ? Se laisser submerger par les plaisirs des paradis artificiels offerts par les médias, les cinémas, les modes vestimentaires et les modes artistiques. Afin de mieux protester, il faut vivre à l'intérieur du système, il faut faire partie du système, il faut se plier aux lois du système et dévoiler le système de l'intérieur, à travers le témoignage de surfaces recontextualisées.

James Rosenquist le reconnaît d'ailleurs : « O.K., the critics can say [that pop artists accept the mechanization of the soul]. I think it's very enlightening that if we do, we realize it instead of protesting too much. »¹² D'un côté, Lucy Lippard a raison d'affirmer que les répétitions « impitoyables » qui apparaissent dans les œuvres de Warhol – dans la série *Death and Disasters* – auraient « plus de résonance que n'importe quelle description ultra-réaliste de personnes accidentées »¹³. D'un autre côté, il est important de comprendre que leur résonance tient sa puissance des techniques publicitaires mêmes, puisque cette sérialité, qui s'encadre parfaitement dans le système de la politique commerciale américaine, est d'autant plus aliénante qu'elle met dans la même marmite boîtes de soupe, portraits de stars et photographies troubles d'accidents routiers et qu'elle revient, avec une insistance qui tient presque du pathologique, à la manière des slogans politiques, devant les yeux du « consommateur » d'art. La guerre, la mort, peut ainsi, à son tour, être consommée. Elle devient une obsession enivrante, surtout quand elle s'associe – et cela de manière récurrente – à l'érotisme.

Quand Wolf Vostell fait une sérigraphie sur carton et collage d'un bombardier qui lance des bâtons de rouge à lèvres en guise de bombes (« *Lippenstift-bomber* » B52, 1968) il devient clair que l'érotisme a réussi à se superposer peu à peu la guerre et à prendre sur lui toutes les angoisses et voluptés que cette dernière avait

⁹ A. Adamov, « Journal terrible », in *Je... Ils...*, op. cit., p. 129.

¹⁰ A. Adamov, *Off Limits*, Paris, Gallimard, 1969, p. 70.

¹¹ Voir aussi Robert Indiana, *Alabama*, 1965, huile sur toile, 152,5 x 127 cm.

¹² Carol Anne Mahsun, op. cit., p. 128

¹³ Lucy R. Lippard, *Le Pop Art*, avec la collaboration de Lawrence Alloway, Nancy Marmer, Nicolas Calas, Singapour, Thames & Hudson, 1996 (l'édition originale-1966), pp. 98-99.

générées. Les artistes pop ne parlent jamais d'amour, mais l'érotisme est une présence constante dans leurs œuvres. C'est l'image qui compte et dont ils rendent compte et non le sentiment. De même, Adamov tranche entre l'amour et l'érotisme :

Au cinéma, installé dans une loge royale, près d'une fille d'officier, Janine Ville, je veux prendre son bras et n'ose pas, tiens seulement amoureusement contre moi la manche de son manteau. Aucune envie de baiser ses pieds. Séparation absolue déjà entre l'érotisme et tout ce qui de près ou de loin peut ressembler à de l'amour.¹⁴

Cette séparation vécue comme telle est essentielle de deux points de vue. Premièrement, parce que Adamov et son œuvre sont littéralement marqués par l'érotisme séparateur – ils en portent la tache : les couples des pièces adamoviennes ne sont jamais véritablement ensemble, ils se laissent toujours séparer par des interventions extérieures ou par manque de courage, par lâcheté devant ce que suppose l'*agir*. Ce sont des personnages vivant dans la discontinuité et esclaves de cette discontinuité qu'ils sont trop faibles pour rompre. De plus, là où l'érotisme l'emporte sur l'amour, il y a toujours un côté destructif de la relation qui est activé. « Que signifie l'érotisme des corps, sinon une violation de l'être des partenaires ? une violation qui confine à la mort ? qui confine au meurtre ? »¹⁵, se demande de façon rhétorique Georges Bataille.

Les relations érotiques ne sont chez Adamov, à quelques exceptions près, que des « phantasmes », ayant un « caractère stéréotypé », car « les mêmes images [...] reviennent dans le même ordre »¹⁶ : variations sur le même thème, sérialité de cette même obsession existentielle. À cause de cette répétition, de cette réitération des images érotiques – incomplètes et stériles en dernière instance – puisque l'amour, quel qu'il soit, manque –, le partenaire du jeu érotique devient non plus seulement un *objet* du désir comme chez Tom Wesselman (avec ses *Great American Nude, No 10, No 54* etc.), mais aussi et surtout un *objet consommable* et dangereux en même temps, comme dans les œuvres de Bruce Conner (par exemple *Untitled, 1954-1961* (vue de dos) où, à un excentrique puzzle d'images de corps de femmes dans toutes les postures, s'ajoutent des étiquettes-avertissements : « *Fragile* », « *Warning, you are in great danger* »).

En fait, il s'agit aussi d'une manière simple de masquer l'impuissance croissante de l'homme moderne devant l'« autre », avec qui une relation basée sur l'amour véritable suppose une prise de responsabilité de tout ce que cet « autre » comprend, et implicitement un sacrifice de soi pour l'autre. Une impuissance compensée artificiellement par le bombardement d'images érotiques et de sensations construites et consommées individuellement de la manière la plus égoïste possible ou dans la perversité de la jouissance à plusieurs, devant l'écran de cinéma, de télévision, devant les revues, les affiches ou les photos pornographiques devenues usuelles.

¹⁴ A. Adamov, *Je... Ils...*, op. cit, p. 24.

¹⁵ Georges Bataille, *L'érotisme*, Paris, Union Générale d'Éditions, 1965, p. 22.

¹⁶ A. Adamov, *L'homme et l'enfant*, Paris, Gallimard, 1968, p. 173.

C'est ainsi que la femme apparaît de plus en plus comme un objet sexuel : il suffit de regarder les deux *It's a Man's World* de Pauline Boty (l'un représentant des collages d'images d'hommes habillés – stars et grands homes d'état et l'autre, des femmes mélancoliques et nues) ou les images de Marylin Monroe utilisées par un grand nombre d'artistes, surtout Andy Warhol et Mimmo Rotella. La femme est une « matière », un « caoutchouc animé » comme l'affirme Jim, un des personnages révoltés de *Off Limits*, matière spectaculaire, capable de satisfaire le désir de voyeurisme des autres¹⁷. Elle est en même temps fragile, objet cassant, bibelot habillé par Andy Warhol dans des *Fragile Dress-es*.

Le rapport au corps se caractérise par une permanente découverte, il s'agit d'expérimenter, de voir tout ce qui peut être vu, de comprendre, de se rendre maître des formes. Les sourires, les rires, le bonheur affiché qui accompagnent ces expériences modernes comportent cependant quelque chose de profondément dramatique dont une œuvre telle que *La « party »* de Gerhard Richter (1962) est à même de rendre compte. C'est la terrifiante image d'un été (« était ») qui *off limits*, ne reviendra jamais, ni pour Arthur Adamov, ni pour les artistes pop et qui témoigne d'une déshumanisation qui fait que ce n'est plus seulement l'amour qui est vécu maladivement à cause de la guerre qu'il implique et cache, mais toute l'existence : « Dire qu'il va falloir vivre, et qu'on finira par la trouver normale, cette vie, cette vie fichée entre deux morts. »¹⁸

Adamov illustre ainsi par ses propres personnages cette tare de l'homme moderne, qui devient lui-même un produit consommable, pareil aux objets auxquels il est assujéti. Une grande partie de ses personnages sont consommés d'une manière ou d'une autre, par les autres, par la politique, par un appareil à sous, par l'argent, par la Loi de la société, par l'alcool et la drogue, par le passé et les remords, en un mot, par leur propre existence. Et il en est de même pour les générations des « années pop ». Générations qui témoignent de leurs propres expériences d'un monde en train de changer de priorités mais aussi d'un monde piège, de la manipulation, et de l'exhibition naturalisée.

Arthur Adamov et les artistes Pop sont tout à fait conscients de leur acte artistique en tant qu'acte *envers* et à *l'encontre* de la société et du monde dans lequel ils vivent. Ils voient, ils y touchent, ils goûtent et ils y prennent goût ; et tout cela représente pour nous un témoignage obsédant, inscrit dans le diachronique, un témoignage interprétable, à croire ou tout simplement à prendre en considération, comme dans un procès où la vérité essaye toujours de faire surface.

Gene Swenson: *If you cast a beer can, you don't have to have a social attitude to beer cans or art?*

Jasper Johns : No.

¹⁷ Voir à ce propos l'huile sur toile de Anthony Donaldson, *It won't be long*, images en série d'une stripteuse.

¹⁸ A. Adamov, *Si l'été revenait*, op. cit., p. 66.

Gene Swenson : [...] *But weren't you saying that art should not be used as a social force?*

Jasper Johns : For myself I would choose to be as much as possible outside that area. It's difficult because we are constantly faced with social situations and our work is being used in ways we didn't ask for it to be used. We see it being done. We're not idiots.¹⁹

Et nous, spectateurs d'aujourd'hui, nous ne sommes pas des idiots non plus. *The critic sees*, comme le dirait Jasper Johns.

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¹⁹ Carol Anne Mahsun, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-137.

THE MASK AND THE ACTOR: ION SAVA'S VISION WITHIN A EUROPEAN THEATRICAL HERITAGE

ELENA BUTUȘINĂ

ABSTRACT. This article deals with Ion Sava's belief in the dynamic potential of the mask, as shown by his own direction of the performance "Macbeth with Masks". Considering this turning point of the Romanian theatrical life to be a pretext, the article then analyses the artistic background of the Romanian director, with an emphasis on his early interest for caricature and on his readings of Artaud, Craig or Meyerhold. His option for the mask as an artistic device actually stands for a deeper concern with the right manner to stylise and to touch the essence of the creative impulse of both the modern actor and the modern director.

Keywords: *Sava, mask, acting, directing, Macbeth.*

The outstanding project entitled "*Macbeth with Masks*", unprecedented in the Romanian theatrical life, had been conceived by Ion Sava as a result of a syncretic artistic evolution. The theatre director was doubled by a visual artist whose caricatures and stagecraft drawings were valuable, and by a theoretician whose innovative conceptions could not pass unnoticed during that time. Even today, Sava's observations regarding the work of the stage director and the interpretation of the actor are significant and stand for his open spirit and special sensibility towards the mutations within a cultural space that was not only national, but universal too.

Sava's theories regarding the role of the mask in creating the theatre character were published in *Lumea (The World)* magazine, while working on the performance that, unwillingly depending on the conditions of its time, came to an end before reaching the level it had been designed to accomplish. Anyway, in spite of the after-war crisis compromises and the formal reserves of the contemporaries, the show entered theatre history as one of the least conventional Romanian directing pieces of the moment. The innovation consisted in the aesthetic formula chosen for the Shakespearean text, including the inner motivations of the director's option, and especially in challenging the actors. As the project had first been planned – a true mega-production –, the actors had to search for stronger body and voice expressive resources. While reading the published theoretical background for the project, as well as Sava's programmatic essays, one can now realize that great minds of the contemporary theatre thinkers such as Tairov, Craig, Bragaglia and, perhaps, Baty and Dullin, strongly

influenced the Romanian director. Suggestively, a similar approach was conducted, in the occidental world, by another great reformer of the performative arts – Jouvett.

Probably having a strong sense of the theoretical void concerning the issue, within the frame of the Romanian theatre, Sava expresses his belief in an art of the present, with an innovative technical background, bearing the influence of the new scientific discoveries. Therefore, from Sava's point of view, this modern syncretic science – globally known as *performative arts* – could not be separated from the discoveries in the field of psychology or medicine (including branches such as endocrinology, psychiatry and neuroscience, whose principles Sava sometimes uses for choosing a certain distribution, for instance)¹. This represents a crucial point where Sava's beliefs resemble that of Moreno or Artaud's prophetic intuitions. This new science, considered by Sava to be a reformation of teaching, excluded the realistic treatment of themes, freeing the actor from the dominance of the written text. Thus liberated, the actor must become "*a specialist of the modern theatre science – the performative arts*"², conditioned, nevertheless, by the mastering of the internal technique (one's own creative will) and the external one (by means of physical expressivity)³. In order to fix the ruling principles of such a performative discipline, Sava tried to write down an elaborate study, left unfinished or probably lost, that he named "*the solfeggios of the acting student*"⁴ – in fact, a collection of breathing, moving, dancing and watching exercises, with examples of oriental origin. The actors respecting such a strict stylistic behaviour were actually the disciples of Meyerhold's method, all of them cold-minded when acting, stylizing and freezing their part. Symbolically, all of them evoked "*a still-life expressivity*", meanwhile being a sort of "*sound tableaux vivants*" within a visual theatre where the actor has to obey the dominance of the plastic effects.

The leitmotif of such a project was the mask, with its paradoxical dynamism – the most authentic and reduced to essences element of the performance. The underlying message of the approach was sometimes expressed directly, and it went against the realist theatre that lacked psychology. This kind of theatre, while attempting to represent reality as it was, only lead to a labile confusion with daily life (the same thing that, unwillingly, the naturalist actor used to do) and to the annihilation of the actual performance. This is where Sava's thought evoked, probably unconsciously, Craig's point of view. "*The photo camera in the eye*" and "*the sound recorder in the ears*", when bringing information that did not undergo a process of sublimation, could only lead to a photographic imitation of nature and to

¹ Ion Sava, *Teatralitatea teatrului*, București, ed. Eminescu, 1981, pp. 287-288.

² *Ibidem*, pp. 283-284.

³ *Idem*.

⁴ *Ibidem*, thoughts expressed in a study mentioned by Ion Cazaban, Sava's wish being that of publishing this study under the title "*Carte pentru cei care vor să ajungă actori de teatru*" / "*Book for Those Who Wish to Become Theatre Actors*".

a simple reproduction of its sonorities⁵. It is exactly the reproach Gordon Craig brought to the non-imaginative actor and to his camera-like manner of recording life and desperately attempting to reproduce its clichés⁶. Notably, Sava, who had a brief filming career too, had been the disciple of Ion Aurel Maican, during the first one's debut at the National Theatre of Iași. Maican had been an apprentice in the German movie studios, where he saw the masterpieces of expressionists such as Fritz Lang and Robert Wiene and had observed the way Leopold Jessner and Erwin Piscator worked⁷. Charlot's repeated evocation, as the supreme example of "*cinematic mask*", proves the influence of cinematography on what Sava believed to be the right stage work. He had previously used cinematographic elements in his operetta works.

Under these circumstances, how would theatre and stage acting confront the rivalry of the big screen productions? As many other theoreticians of modern theatre, Sava stated the necessity of theatre's liberation, thus revealing a strong Dada and surrealist influence. Significantly, the futurist Marinetti became the leading figure of Sava's programmatic essay "*Pitic – manifest teatral*"⁸ published in 1945. Consequently, modern directing becomes a major synthesis between architecture, painting, chemistry, physics and dance, while the director is the one "*turning theatre into magic*". This is the answer given by Sava to the crisis of that time's Romanian theatre: "*a new magic, funding theatre on its real bases, re-theatralising it without mystifying the past, but bearing the marks of the modern social mystery, offering it the freedom and the technical possibilities to cover the surreal and the modern fantasy. By means of artistic and technical theatrical accomplishments, the stage of the new theatre has to make mankind's dream of happiness come true.*"⁹ Surprisingly, Sava turns his wish into something real while taking refuge into the fantastic, "*through a sublimation of reality, simultaneously comprised within its concrete shapes and in the implications that go beyond the apparent, revealed by social satire, caricature and aspiration to reconstruct the real at a new level*".¹⁰ Whereas the director saw the text as a raw material that had to be transformed subjectively, the same thing happened with images where, by observing the contrasting tensions between "*the cherished beauty and the existing ugliness*", that is to say "*the lack of harmony between man, nature and society*", the image received a different depth. Sava's attitude is explainable by his former career as a caricaturist – one where he had to transfigure reality, trying to catch both "*its concrete look and the implications lying underneath this appearance.*"

⁵ *Idem*.

⁶ Boris Elvin (ed.), *Dialogul neîntrerupt al teatrului în sec. XX*, ed. Minerva, București, 1973, vol. 1, p. 150.

⁷ Ileana Berlogea, in Sava, Ion, *Măști*, ed. Cartea Românească, București, 1973, p. 7.

⁸ Boris Elvin, (ed.), *Dialogul neîntrerupt al teatrului în sec. XX*, ed. Minerva, București, 1973, vol. 2, pp. 105-107.

⁹ Ion Sava, *Măști*, ed. Cartea Românească, București, 1973, p. 23, our translation.

¹⁰ Ion Biberi, *Ion Sava*, ed. Meridiane, București, 1974, p. 6.

Social satire and caricature were, probably, the first school of the future man of theatre Ion Sava, having to do with “*the aspiration of reconstructing the real on a different level – following certain suggestive asymmetries*”¹¹. In order to build this “*second degree world*” – the surreal Sava dreamt of –, one had to surpass the theatrical mediocrity of the 19th century, looking for the dominant schemes of understanding the world as a huge stage performance. As a caricaturist, Sava had already mastered the capacity to apprehend the contradictory movements and the disharmonies – a lesson he had probably learned from artists such as Daumier, Gavarni or Cham. After having assumed this lesson, Sava didn’t give up his belief in a life-revealing caricature and this had probably been one of the reasons of his stylistic option in “*Macbeth with Masks*”. This way, he was able to confront the realistic Romanian tradition with one of a different origin, though Petru Comarnescu claims that the masks in “*Macbeth*” resemble those of Nereju region¹².

Concerning his option for the mask, Sava comes even closer to the theatrical theories of Meyerhold, one of his uncontested masters. If Meyerhold regarded ham acting as the supreme performance, the only one capable of synthesizing the forces of the primary elements of theatre, Sava cherished the same dream while working on the project “*Macbeth with Masks*”. His stress upon mask, gesture, movement in the development of the intrigue helped to free the energy that Sava was looking for. “*The magical force of the mask enables the spectator to see not one specific Harlequin, but all the Harlequins his memory retained*”¹³, Meyerhold wrote in his notes. In addition, Sava considered the mask to be the only possibility to equalize the poetic shape of the text and to harmonize the fantastic and the realistic in Shakespeare’s plays. The ideological sources of such an approach are openly accepted by Sava who declares his theatre show to be an experimental one to the extent that it experiments its own form. Another reason for introducing the mask in the performance, as an essential path between actor and character, is the need to overcome the distribution clichés frequently used at that time. These clichés were quite risky, Sava would argue, as they degraded the actor’s natural expression because of the pre-established conventions, leading the actor to an unwilling act of “*satansing*”¹⁴ his own figure. Therefore, the actor Sava would like to find behind the mask is related to Meyerhold’s ham performer, one that is permanently alive, just like a vigilant aviator. “*One should work in the theatre as in aircraft*”, Sava wrote, considering the actor to be always on the road, a modern nomad whose “*settlement*” would mean death. “*Theatre may*

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 12

¹² The masks which we can still find in the Nereju region (Vrancea, Moldavia) are very archaic, ritual masks used in the ceremonies of funerary watch.

¹³ Boris Elvin (ed.), *Dialogul neîntrerupt al teatrului în sec. XX*, vol. 2, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

¹⁴ Ion Sava, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

be defined as a gipsy caravan”, similar to that of the fair jugglers, acrobats and tightrope walkers that Meyerhold envisaged. Adhering to the praiseful critique of the polyvalent ham actor, Sava was actually writing about the underlying conflict between “the routine professional” and “the professional amateur”¹⁵ – an opposition that marked the conflict between the physical and the psychic acting formulae.

Considering these as the engine of the combustions behind the mask, Sava takes the hypothesis further, explaining his option for the burlesque and the grotesque in creating the masks: “Man is nothing else than his own caricature, concealing himself all his life under various masks, hoping that God, deceived, would keep a place for him in paradise.”¹⁶ In fact, this problem is as old as theatre itself, no matter the cultural environment where it takes place. The manner in which tension is controlled and exhibited makes all the difference. In Sava’s vision, as one can realize from “*Macbeth with Masks*” and from the buffoonery sketches on which he had worked all his life, there is a continuous dialectics between the grotesque and the sublime, with a hidden sense of the pathetic behind the thirst for absoluteness.

Within a gorgeous project like “*Macbeth*”, Sava worked animated by the primitive force of the mask, which he considered to be “a sort of fake passport for heavens”, the individual’s purest way to become part of the performance, instinctively looking for his acting part. Pirandello’s influence with his theory on “*l’umorismo*” lies, probably, underneath these ideas. Sava believed that, during the 20th century, only the resurrection of the mask could save the theatre from extinction. This revival would only become operative in the syncretic perspective of the director. “*The technical authors*”, surely named so as a tribute paid to Bragaglia, should compose a “*neocanovaccio*”, free from literary, confusing, useless, didactic and prosaic elements. Such a process would inevitably tend towards a new geometry of the stagecraft, echoing Craig’s thoughts on the *Übermarionette*. Essentially theatrical, the mask proved to be the most glorious chapter in the history of the theatre. It “stimulates and amplifies (...), suppresses the mediocre, absorbs, transforms and expresses the soul”¹⁷ of the actor. Inside a play dealing with surreal visions, with the subconscious, with the instincts, as well as with witchcraft, the mask is the only one able to offer the appropriate technical stage solutions because of its mobility. And we should not forget that, being an ideal shape of a synthetic expression of the character, the mask also benefits from a strong Elizabethan tradition (Inigo Jones, for instance, had created many court performances known as “masks”). At the same time, the importance of the cultural background reinforcing Sava’s choice is revealed by the

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 290-292.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 294.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 300.

influence of painters such as Bosch, Bruegel, Goya, and Ensor, in creating the masks and their mise-en-scènes, as one can notice from the director's own notes and sketches.

In conclusion we could say that Ion Sava's creative attitude marked a turning point of the Romanian theatrical life, his option for the mask as an artistic device actually standing for a deep concern with the right manner to stylise and to touch the essence of the creative impulse of both the modern Romanian actor and the modern director, in an effervescent European cultural context, permanently reevaluating its artistic generative forces and its theatrical heritage.

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QUESTIONNEMENTS THÉÂTRAUX

WOYZECK OR THE ABOLITION OF THE NOTION OF “THE DIRECTOR AS CREATOR OF SHOW”

GELU ADRIAN BADEA

ABSTRACT. Through a sum of interviews, testimonies and dialogues with important personalities in the world of Romanian theatre, this article proposes a short foray in Radu Penciulescu’s theatrical journey as a director in the ’70, focusing on his approach of G. Büchner’s *Woyzeck*. The free form of play he started to put on stage after leaving the management of Teatrul Mic, his personal aesthetics and position in front of the stage, of the actor and of the audience, are some of the aspects presented here.

Keywords: *Woyzeck, Penciulescu, director, theatre.*

The manager’s agenda of the Teatrul Mic (The Small Theatre) continued to be sustained by performances in the theatres where Radu Penciulescu would come to stage-manage, even after he left the management of the Săririndar company. As a director, he focused on two levels of this agenda: putting on stage valuable contemporary Romanian plays, as well as important plays pertaining to universal dramaturgy, performed for the first time in Romania.

In an article written by Valentin Silvestru, we read about Radu Penciulescu: “he always leaves Bucharest, where, I cannot figure out why, he cannot find anything to do”. Indeed, following the management of the Teatrul Mic, Radu Penciulescu leaves for the “I. L. Caragiale” Institute of Theatrical and Cinematic Art in Bucharest; he sets off a series of performances in the country and completes the controversial Shakespeare’s *King Lear* performance at the National Theatre in Bucharest. The same Valentin Silvestru provides us with the data that establish Radu Penciulescu’s interest in valuable texts from the universal literature, namely that the director carries out the first staging of Büchner’s *Woyzeck*.

In a dialogue with George Banu, “The theatre under communism and after”¹, Radu Penciulescu admits that leaving the management of Teatrul Mic had been the result of the events occurred in 1968. The management of a theatre had turned into an activity that no longer “seduced” him and he wanted to materialise his travelling projects, the projects of reinventing his own artistic personality, of necessary renewal.

¹ “Teatrul sub comunism și mai încoace”, Dilema Dossier, *Dilema Veche*, VII/345, p. VIII), August 22nd, 2010, at La Bachelierie.

The departure is followed by the execution of performances “everywhere”: *Woyzeck* by G. Buchner in Piatra Neamț, *King Lear* by W. Shakespeare in Bucharest, *Sergeant Musgrave’s Dance* by J. Arden, in Târgu Mureș², *The Last Ones* by M. Gorki at the Romanian Television³. After leaving Teatrul Mic, Radu Penciulescu is forcedly named manager of the Direction for Theatres in the Ministry of Culture, from where he managed to save Aureliu Manea’s play staged by the latter in Sibiu⁴.

George Banu says the post-Teatrul Mic plays “are resplendent with an unseen before vitality, with a new energy” and calls back the memory of the democratic debate which followed the staging of *King Lear*, initiated by George Ivașcu; to Banu, this debate is “perhaps the last *heroic* clash before the night which sets on culture and theatre along with the *July Theses*”⁵.

“Running away” from Bucharest, Radu Penciulescu puts on state, at the Theatre of Youth in Piatra Neamț, in national première, G. Buchner’s *Woyzeck*. The play made the most of the text of an author discovered in Romania by Liviu Ciulei, a director who put, for the first time in Romania, *Leonce and Lena* on the stage of the Bucharest Municipal Theatre.

It was, it is still and it will always be said about Radu Penciulescu, director and entertainer, that he had put at the heart of his preoccupation the actor’s art rather than the director’s art. Penciulescu admits it himself: “I was stimulated by the pleasure of reuniting people rather than by that of making a masterpiece. I loved the actors.”⁶ Penciulescu is indeed a director who loves the actor and the performance in Piatra Neamț is a testimony of this statement. All the reviews published in the local or central publications established for eternity the role of trainer of the actor’s creative abilities. However, in very many situations, this “love” was mistaken for other dimensions that mark the dramatic art. To Penciulescu, this word was obvious in his

² This mise-en-scene has a very beautiful story linked to it: on the way back from Constanta, together with Mihai Dimiu, where he had seen a bachelor degree performance, Radu Penciulescu stops in Bucharest North Railway Station to “try” a vodka in the railway station restaurant; while reading a newspaper, he finds out about the bewildering occurrence in Prague (Jan Palach’s immolation!) and decides to leave Bucharest immediately, knowing that he had to act; he leaves the city on the first train and reaches Târgu Mureș, then the Theatre; he meets Tompa Miklos; to his question, “what’s your deal here, Radu?”, Penciulescu answers he came to make a play; “Then we’ll schedule rehearsals for you tomorrow morning, Radu!”. I found out about this episode from Radu Penciulescu during the rehearsals at T.N.B. in November 2010. This was witnessed by Valeriu Grama, former manager of the Cassandra theatre studio, and the director Marius Costache.

³ The play, the last one made by Radu Penciulescu in Romania, was possible owing to Dinu Săraru’s invitation; he will follow Radu Penciulescu for many years at the management of Teatrul Mic.

⁴ Aureliu Manea was Radu Penciulescu’s student. In Sibiu, he put on stage H. Ibsen’s play *Rosmersholm*. The information is published in the interview on August 22nd, 2010.

⁵ “Theatre under communism and after”, *op. cit.*, p. VIII.

⁶ *Idem*.

intimacy with the actor's art, a constant intimacy with the development of the actor's creative dimensions; this "love" surfaced in the understanding beyond limits of the actor character's depth and vulnerability, in the paternal concern with the only profession that makes the best of the theatre and, therefore, of the director, in the creation of a climate in which "a human quality should appear"⁷.

In his review of the spectacle, "A vision on the world"⁸, George Banu shows that "Woyzeck is a dignified director's play expecting a dignified spectator". The feeling of dignity was perhaps suggested to the reviewer by the action-image which set off the play: the entire cast would wash the scene, in an action of "scraping", an act of liberation, at least at the declarative level, of cancellation of the actors' tendency to put themselves above the spectators.

The ample, integrating, open play stage included the entire auditorium: "on the stage, everything is community", Banu says. This modality of composing the stage area, so frequent these days (the setting extended in the auditorium, entrances and exits through the auditorium!), lead to a structuring of the play both simple and efficient, through the direct and permanent participation of all the cast actors. The actors' participation in the entire action of the play made them actors-spectators of their own performance. The actors witness the drama; they are not its mere presenters. Therefore, the play becomes, as the reviewer points it out, "the opportunity of a beautiful comprehension of theatre, for the play no longer concerns exclusively the audience; on the contrary, it appears to be the story the actors tell to themselves".

Next, George Banu refers to the materials used in the costume-making, showing that in the play's simple print, with their softness diminishing the chromatic rigidity, they blissfully complete the space in which they are worn. Concerning the actors' performance, Banu stresses the "condensed eroticism" opposed to the "physiological metaphors" identified in Liviu Ciulei's *Leonce and Lena* at Bulandra Theatre, for a text written by the same author.

The author of the material does not come to a conclusion before mentioning the fact that Radu Penciulescu attains here the coherent image of the world in which "tragedy ensues from the man only", in a performance structured "with severity", managing to bring to light an "austere world, a Kafkaesque mechanism without the expressionist accents".

In an interview with Radu Penciulescu by Cristian Livescu⁹, the director confirms, almost programmatically and for the first time so vehemently, the free form of play he started to put on stage after leaving the management of Teatrul

⁷ *Idem.*

⁸ "O viziune asupra lumii", *România Literară*, March 12, 1971.

⁹ "The time has come to abolish the notion of the director as creator of shows", *Supliment Ceahlăul*, April 1970.

Mic. Penciulescu says unequivocally, as he will do frequently from then on, that he is fond only of the last performance, and this no more than up to the moment where "I slash it, too"¹⁰.

The interview paints a portrait of the stage director via the voice of Radu Penciulescu himself. When talking about his profession, Penciulescu stresses that the director is a bearer of feelings, pains and experience and that the director's authority is established only when he suppresses, kills it. Cristian Livescu refers to the director's first wish, his most precious aspiration, namely that the play pursues "the issue of the actor's unveiling in his natural freedom, less in his professional technique, in his talent (an increasingly ugly word!)". The actor who plays the characters mustn't be one of the author's "loudspeakers" and we need to put an end to the action of cancelling the "loudspeaker actor" and transforming him into the bearer of the author's ideas, retaining the integrity of the amount of truth that we are compelled to present in the play. This is why the spectacular suggestions adopted by Radu Penciulescu, even in *Woyzeck*, are free forms of communication between the actor and the spectator. With reference to this play, Penciulescu states that it is not the director's staging, text and actors, but that the performance in Piatra Neamț is a manner of assaulting a mass of people.

One of the most important materials written after the staging of *Woyzeck* by Radu Penciulescu is the one published by Mihai Nadin: "*Woyzeck*, două spectacole acute" ("*Woyzeck*, two sharp performances"), *Astra*, April 1970. He draws a parallel between the play put on stage in Piatra Neamț and the one at Deutsches Schauspielhaus staged by Niels Peter Rudolf, precisely in order to shed light upon Radu Penciulescu's method: the play area, at Penciulescu, is perpendicular on the auditorium, it runs through the auditorium, while at Rudolf it is parallel to the hall, made of an immense canvas. The space management in the German play unlocked explosive images, whereas, in the Romanian version, the images required rigour and the "asceticism of the stage ritual". In the German performance, everything was exposed, the world introduced was exposed, while in the Piatra Neamț version, the story permeated the auditorium and, thus, the spectators entered the world proposed. All these unswervingly quantified the directors' degree of involvement, their active participation in the stage, scenography and other constructions. Whereas Rudolf was present aggressively, from the images created to the modality of working with the actors, Radu Penciulescu escaped this participation, enjoying his role of director of the stage process, setter of the actors' creation and guide to the unknown, in order to reach, through the actor, the ideas that must be transmitted,

¹⁰ This statement reinforces the director's belief, expressed several years before, in the article "The power to not hold on the form that you created yourself" in "Files for a contemporary history of the Romanian theatre", *Teatrul*, no. 12, dec. 1967.

the images materialised by the actors' presence and by the words that can generate images. Commenting on the modality of working with the actors, Nadin refers in fact to the leading roles performers' act: Mitiță Popescu, who played Woyzeck in Piatra Neamț, is "bright and natural", while Fritz Leichtenhan, at Deutsches Schauspielhaus, is rather a "fruit of life arranged in front of us", disclosed or, as said above, "exposed". Carmen Galin played Marie in Penciulescu's version, and in Rudolf's the performer was Angela Schmidt; the former displayed a "rough sensuality", whereas the German actress made use of "a sad, exhausted tone", showing a maternal predilection that unveiled a Marie who had read, seen and experienced a *Woyzeck*.

With the performance in Piatra Neamț, the stage atmosphere drew out towards the auditorium, letting in even the presence of the actors' tension and relief during their rehearsals, the acute nature of the play being seen as a connection to the fulfilment of the dramatic act. At the same time, the acute nature of the play in Hamburg was rendered by the charge on the stage and by the challenge emerging from the state, from the creators' area, towards the spectators' consciousness.

To the reviewer "Radu Penciulescu is a director-image of the creative discontent, of the essence of youthfulness expressed in its turn in measures of artistic protest against routine, conformism, and platitude." This is a conclusion more than praiseworthy, because Radu Penciulescu managed, by this text thick with hatred and violence, to complete his role of director who shows the ways to the spectators' minds and to direct the spectators' minds, even if only for a few hours, toward places from where warning signals may be perceived: "These plays, built on hatred and violence – I believe now – were required by time. As if I was the one who listened to it and worked under his ruling. I was its agent. And, under such impact, I was merely saying and repeating that *the time of hope had passed*."¹¹

Ana Maria Narti published a comprehensive article ("Patima lucrurilor simple" (The passion for simple things), *Contemporanul*, March 13, 1970) in which she analyses pertinently the achievement of Teatrul Tineretului. The attention vector of the staging became simplicity, the identification of the dramatic power in simplicity. Narti shows that the first layer of simplicity is simplicity felt as core of the performance. Then, as in the comparison with the play staged in Hamburg, our attention is drawn to an "incessant stripping of the situations, actions, relationships, of anything that might foul their human reality". This leads to essentialisation, and essentialisation is one of Penciulescu's concerns.

To the director, simple is never poor. Simple is the synonym of alive, of the elementary reaction, and the metaphor is born by sensation. The work with the actors resulted in the escape from the bothersome falsity that stems from the type of proposed space treatment, the actors' movement among the spectators becoming

¹¹ George Banu, "Teatrul sub comunism și mai încoace", *op. cit.*, p. VIII.

thus almost necessary, accepted unreservedly both by the performers and by the spectators who became actors in the show they witnessed. Ana Maria Narti defines, at this point, in an almost philosophical manner, the setting, the space proposed by Penciulescu: “the setting is nothing more than a resonance box, a visual environment structured in order to receive movements.”

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**WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY SAMUEL BECKETT
THE PROBLEM OF INTERPRETATION IN BECKETT'S OWN STAGE
ADAPTATION OF *ENDGAME***

MARTON IMOLA

ABSTRACT. Throughout his career as a playwright, Samuel Beckett has always expected the performance not to fill up the text with spare meaning, but to be as close as possible to the composing elements of the text. The present article aims at demonstrating the assumption that the actor's presence on stage inhibits the director from staging a play without interpretation. This hypothesis will be sustained by the questioning of the San Quentin Drama Workshop's performance of *Endgame*, which was directed by Beckett himself in 1980. According to Beckett's idea that a theatre performance is defined by the space and the characters, a first comparative analysis of the written text's space with the one on the stage, will be followed by that of the play's characters and those who are brought into being by the actors of the San Quentin Drama Workshop.

Keywords: *Samuel Beckett, Endgame, directing, interpretation.*

In our days, the authorial attitude which considers the plays a simple starting point in the theatrical creative process becomes more and more current. In this way a play isn't treated as a work of art, but as a defenseless subordinate element of the performance. Samuel Beckett has been fighting against this unstoppable process from the very beginning of his career as a playwright. He always demanded that directors should stage his plays avoiding any kind of interpretation, which means faithfulness towards the text and strict observance of the stage directions. Beckett's seclusion from the act of interpretation also includes the expectation that the performance shouldn't fill up the text with spare meaning, so the components of the performance must be as appropriate as possible to the elements of the text. Consequently Beckett wanted to see nothing else, but his own conception and ideas on the stage. Because the plays were staged rarely and only partly corresponding to the writer's expectations, Beckett himself started to direct his own plays. As a director he made such great demands for himself as for other directors.

In the present essay I would like to demonstrate the assumption that the actor's presence on the stage inhibits the director from staging a play without interpretation. This hypothesis will be demonstrated through the San Quentin Drama Workshop's¹ performance of *Endgame*² which was directed by Beckett himself in 1980. Beckett staged *Endgame* for the first time at the Schiller Theater in 1967, in Berlin. But while he thought that the German performance was only satisfactory, he was truly pleased with the one created with the San Quentin Drama Workshop.

The question of interpretation in the San Quentin Drama Workshop's *Endgame* will be approached through the examination of the process by which from writing *Endgame* Beckett gets to direct his own play. First I will compare the original text with the revised one, I will then analyze how the elements of the dramatic text are shown on the stage in the San Quentin Drama Workshop's production. As a result of this analysis I will determine those elements of the dramatic text in the case of which the interpretation can be avoided in the staging process and those in the case of which the interpretation and the drawing-away from the original concept can't be helped.

The revised play

When Beckett started staging his own plays, he declared that at the time of writing *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* he didn't know anything about theatre. Because of the lack of experience he couldn't judge whether the text is or isn't operable on stage. However Beckett was able and willing to correct and rewrite himself. The chance of revising himself was given by the directorial work, he "(...) used directorial opportunities to continue the creative process, cutting, revising, tightening his original script."³ It is important to notice that at the beginning of his career as a playwright, Beckett objected to any kind of rewriting of his plays which he considered to be individual, but further on, as an effect of his practical work in theatre, his point of view has changed. He acknowledged that a play's operability on the stage depends not only on the text, but on the director and the actors as well. Therefore, he conceded

¹ The San Quentin Drama Workshop is a non-professional theatre company which was established by the inmates of the San Quentin State Prison. The founder was Rick Cluchey with the guidance of whom the company started its work in 1961. The plays were chosen by a committee consisting of inmates. The San Quentin Drama Workshop presented plays like *Waiting for Godot*, *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Endgame*, *Twelve Angry Men*, *Stalag 17* and *Caine Mutiny Court*. In the early 70's a lot of inmates were set free or released on life parole. Rick Cluchey was discharged on life parole too. He continued his work as director and actor outside the prison as well.

² The University of Maryland College Park Visual Press, *Cameras Continentales*, San Quentin Drama Workshop, "Endgame", 1980. Online video: <http://www.greylodge.org/gpc/?p=901>, 2010. september 17.

³ *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett. Endgame*, Edited by S. E. Gontarski, Grove Press, New York, 1993.

that a play or a performance can never be considered definite because the revision could become necessary at any moment of the creative process.

The text of *Endgame* was revised for two times: first in 1967 for the production of the Schiller Theater and for the second time in 1980 for the San Quentin Drama Workshop's performance. As we can get to know from Beckett's theatrical notebook, edited by S. E. Gontarski, the two revisions of *Endgame* have a lot of elements in common, but there were in both cases special changes which were determined by the given actors. In this way, the second revision included changes not made for the first time and also some retrieval of the changes made in 1967. In the revision of *Endgame*, Beckett applied three methods: cutting, adding and rewriting. All three revision-techniques can be observed in the dialogues and in the stage directions as well, but we must accentuate that Beckett made more changes in the stage directions. Hereinafter we will examine all of Beckett's revision-methods, so we can obtain a comprehensive view of the revised text and the consequences of the rewriting.

First of all we must notice that Beckett cut two long passages from the original text. Through the first cut the telescope-scene became simpler as he put away the whole part which follows:

CLOV: [*He gets up on ladder, raises the telescope, turns it on auditorium.*]
 I see... a multitude... in transports... of joy. [*Pause.*] That's what I call a magnifier. [*He lowers the telescope, turns towards Hamm.*] Well? Don't we laugh?
 HAMM: [*after reflection*] I don't.
 CLOV: [*after reflection*] Nor I.⁴

By cutting this passage the scene became shorter and more striking. Also, because Beckett cut a part which was reflecting to the spectators, as a consequence of the change the fourth wall between stage and auditorium became firmer. This was an accentuated intention of Beckett all along his directing career. We have to mention another remarkable cut which also had as objective the simplification of the given scene. Beckett cut such a part which didn't have relevant role from the point of view of the scene's content and form:

[*Clov goes, humming, towards window right, halt before it, looks up at it.*]
 HAMM: Don't sing.
 CLOV: [*Turning towards Hamm.*] One hasn't the right to sing any more?
 HAMM: No.
 CLOV: Then how can it end?
 HAMM: You want it to end?
 CLOV: I want to sing.
 HAMM: I can't prevent you."⁵

⁴ Beckett, Samuel, *The Dramatic Works of Samuel Beckett*, Volume III of The Grove Centenary Edition, Grove Press, New York, 2006, p. 112.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 144.

Beside these two important passages we can notice only a few more cuts on the level of the dialogue. We can notice that the rewriting of the dialogue is more frequently used. We can observe two types of this revision when only one word is rewritten. In the first case, Beckett changes some words with their synonyms: *won't* becomes *shan't*, *cupboard* changes to *larder*, *shelter* to *refuge*. In the second case, the rewriting results a change in the content. The most relevant and beautiful example for this kind of rewriting is Hamm's reaction when he comes to know that there isn't any more pain-killer:

HAMM: Is it not time for my pain-killer?
 CLOV: Yes.
 HAMM: Ah! At last! Give it to me! Quick! [*Pause.*]
 CLOV: There's no more pain-killer. [*Pause.*]
 HAMM: [*appalled*] Good!... [*Pause.*] No more pain-killer!"⁶

In this passage Beckett rewrote only one word: he changed the word *Good* to *God*. The consequential effect of this change appears first of all on the level of content because the word *God* brings desperation into Hamm's indignation.

The aim of the third revision-technique, namely the adding is the intensification of accentuation, repetitiveness and automatism. For instance when Nagg asks again and again for his sugar-plums, in the original text, Hamm says „There are no more sugar-plums!"⁷, but in the revised play Beckett adds to this the following: „You'll never get any more sugar-plums."⁸ The repetition's function in this case is first of all to stress the idea and also to individualize the general thought of the first sentence which, by adding the second one, becomes very personal to Nagg.

The most relevant example of adding in reference to the stage directions is a repetitive movement attached to one of Clov's recurring sentences:

CLOV: I'll leave you, I have things to do.
 HAMM: Do you remember when you came here?
 CLOV: No. Too small, you told me."⁹

This passage changes to the following in the revised text:

CLOV: I'll leave you, I have things to do.
 [*Clov moves towards door.*]
 HAMM: Do you remember when you came here?
 [*Clov halts.*]
 CLOV No. Too small, you told me."¹⁰

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 143.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 132.

⁸ *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett. Endgame, ed. cit.*, p. 26.

⁹ Beckett, Samuel, *The Dramatic Works of Samuel Beckett, ed. cit.*, p. 118.

¹⁰ *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett. Endgame, ed. cit.*, p. 21.

This movement of Clov is added to the original text fourfold – always next to his revelation that he wants to leave. Every time Clov starts off, he stops right away because Hamm is asking him the question. The recurrent sentence and the repetitive movement suggest that Clov will never leave Hamm. Furthermore the use of the repetitive movement indicates that Beckett sought for creating and bringing to perfection the echoes, not only on the level of the dialogue, but on the level of the form as well.

Unlike the adding, the rewriting of stage directions isn't characteristic. In most cases when it appears, it serves the simplification (for instance Hamm's handkerchief is *large blood-stained* in the original version and it changes to *dirty* after the revision) or the change of certain gestures' and movements' nuance (for example *moving chair slightly* becomes *thumps chair* or *lowered his arms to armrests* becomes *drops his arms to armrests*). In the case of rewriting the stage directions we must mention another significant act of revision which accentuates the strict geometry of the characters' spatial position. In *Endgame*, Clov has a stable spatial position to which he is always returning. In the original version this point lies right next to Hamm's armchair. The stage direction relating to Clov's stable position appears exactly ten times in the play, in most cases as *Clov returns to his place beside the chair* and sometimes as *he halts beside the chair*. Through the revision, Beckett changed Clov's position: his stable point became the midpoint between the door and Hamm's armchair. Beckett named this point *A*, so these stage directions appear in the revised text in the following way: *Clov returns to his place at A, he halts at A*. Because of this stable midpoint Clov's movement becomes symmetrical, geometrical and, by this, automatic. Beckett also determined the exact number of Clov's steps because he thought that these so called pythagorean movement patterns are perceived by the spectators' subconscious.¹¹

Lastly we have to mention the cuts which can be observed in the stage directions. The aim of these cuts is always the simplification and the perfection of rhythm. For instance Beckett cuts all references to the picture because in this way the symmetry determined by the two small windows isn't deranged by anything. Furthermore Beckett changes the movement in certain cases to silence. This kind of revision is made to the following part of the telescope-scene:

CLOV: [*looking*] Grey.
 [*Lowering the telescope, turning towards Hamm, louder.*] Grey.
 [*Pause. Still louder.*] GRREY!
 [*Pause. He gets down, approaches Hamm from behind, whispers in his ear.*]¹²

In turn the revised version is the following:

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 50.

¹² Beckett, Samuel, *The Dramatic Works of Samuel Beckett, op. cit.*, p. 114.

CLOV: [*looking*] Grey.
[*Pause. Louder.*] Grey.
[*Pause. Still louder.*] GRREY!
[*Pause. He gets down, approaches Hamm from behind, whispers in his ear.*]¹³

We can observe that on account of the revision, the scene's rhythm became more ordinate, respectively the gradation more perceptible.

The examples analyzed hereinbefore give a comprehensive picture about the revision's objectives, methods and consequences. Beckett's aim was to change *Endgame* into a play more operable on stage, to remove the unnecessary, to intensify the patterns and echoes and to tighten the rhythm. These objectives were attained by three revision-techniques: cutting, rewriting and adding. Although the revision itself can be considered an act of interpretation, in the case of Beckett it is an aspiration, an effort to bring the performance as close as possible to the perfect realization of the original concept of *Endgame*.

Play versus stage

Hereinafter I will compare the text of *Endgame* with the performance of the San Quentin Drama Workshop. The starting point of this analysis is Beckett's observation according to which, when we examine a theatre performance, we must deal with the space and with the people in it.¹⁴ According to this idea a theatre performance is defined by the space and the characters. Because of this I have to compare firstly the written text's space with the one on the stage, then I have to examine the play's characters and those who are brought into being by the actors of the San Quentin Drama Workshop.

Space in the play / space in the performance

The space of *Endgame* is quite modest, minimalist and it contains only a few elements. The action of the play takes place in an empty room without furniture. There are two small windows in the room, one on the right wall and one on the left. On both windows the curtains are drawn. On the right side of the front-stage there is a door. In the original version of *Endgame* there was a picture near the door, hanging with its face to the wall, but in the revised text and in the San Quentin Drama Workshop's production Beckett decided to renounce at this element. On the left side of the front-stage there are two ashbins covered with an old sheet. In the center of the room there is Hamm sitting in an armchair, also covered with an old sheet. The light is all along grey.

¹³ *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett. Endgame, ed. cit., p. 18.*

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. XIII.

Even if there have been a lot of productions of *Endgame* which interpreted this space in a very specific and even written way, this space is so simple and precisely circumscribed, that basically excludes the chance of interpretation – of course only if the respective director takes into consideration the stage directions and seeks the concrete and accurate adaptation of them. Beckett as director remained absolutely faithful to his own playwright-identity. The scene of the San Quentin Drama Workshop's production takes account of the stage directions regarding almost every element of the set. Besides the missing picture, the nature of the windows can be considered an exception. In the original text the windows appear in the following way: „*Left and right, high up, two small windows, curtains drawn.*”¹⁵. In the performance the windows are so low that Clov (played by Bud Thorpe) could easily look out of them, even in spite of his sloucher and even without a scale (but of course he never looks out without getting up the ladder). Beckett explains the low setting of the windows in his theatrical notebook. He observes that only by this kind of placement becomes justified Hamm's question to Clov: „Have you Shrunk?”

In connection with the production's scene, we have to mention that it intensifies substantially the particularity of the light, namely the greyness. In Beckett's production every element of the set is grey: the floor is light grey, the two ashbins are metallic grey, the walls are dark grey and Hamm's armchair is greyish seedy black. The scene's greyness isn't deranged by anything, not even by the objects brought in by Clov: the ladder, the toy dog, the insecticide, the alarm-clock, the gaff. The powerful accentuation of the greyness influences the rhythm of the space – the uniformity of the color gives the scene a slow rhythm which is refracted slightly only by the wall's set-backs and by the actors' presence.

It is very important to emphasize apropos of Beckett's space that it doesn't represent any other space or location outside itself.¹⁶ Accordingly it doesn't contain such signs which would motivate the spectator to decode the *Endgame's* room as any specific space. Consequently the meaning of *Endgame's* space lies in itself.

We can observe that Beckett remained faithful to his own stage directions regarding the play's space. Furthermore he created such a set which through its color, shape and absence of any specific significance, makes Beckett's universe visible, perceptible and indirectly cognizable.

Written characters / Actors on stage

The characters brought into being by actors can be considered very risky from the point of view of the interpretation because in every actor's case there is

¹⁵ Beckett, Samuel, *The Dramatic Works of Samuel Beckett, op. cit.*, p. 91.

¹⁶ Tassi, Marguerite, “Shakespeare and Beckett Revisited: A Phenomenology of Theater”, in *Comparative Drama*, vol. 31, nr. 2, Summer 1997.

intense subjectivity, individual gestures and intonation – all these containing the possibility of interpretation. However, Beckett doesn't give his characters and his actors a totally free hand. He constrains his characters in such unusual situations, postures and movement patterns which reduce the possibility of interpretation and require self control and providence towards the body's expressing tools. Pierre Chabert accentuates that one of the most important characteristics of Beckett's theatre is the body's metamorphoses. In his opinion the body is tempered just like a sculptor's raw material in order to develop a special relation between body and movement, body and space, body and words.¹⁷ In *Endgame* every character's body is ungainly in a very specific way: Hamm is blind and cannot walk, Clov is stooped and cannot sit down, Nagg and Nell are placed in two ashbins from where they cannot escape because they are legless. In this way Beckett bereaves every character, apart from Clov, from the possibility to move or walk, what is more, from Nagg and Nell he takes away the gesticulation as well. These barriers influence the acting and the level of interpretation. To determine the differences between the characters of the written text and the characters of the San Quentin Drama Workshop's performance, we have to examine their position on the scene, their costumes, their movement, gesticulation, mimics, the accentuation of the dialogues and the rhythm of the acting.

The actors' position on the stage and their costumes depend on the director's decisions. The preciseness treasured by Beckett appears flawlessly in the characters' spatial position and in their movement or lack of movement. The spatial position of Nagg and Nell doesn't change at all in the play, neither in the performance: their ashbins are placed all along on the left side of the front-stage. Even if Hamm is as well immobilized, with the help of his armchair and Clov, he leaves his stable point for two times. However his "walks" near the walls are short. He spends only a few minutes away from the center of the room, he right away desiderates to go back. The space becomes stable¹⁸ again by his come-back (the scene's stability is determined by Hamm's armchair and the ashbins).

Clov's stable point (point A) also contributes to the scene's harmony. As we mentioned, this point changed from being near Hamm's armchair to the midpoint between Hamm and the door. In the San Quentin Drama Workshop's production Clov's stable point swings a bit to the left, namely Clov gets closer to Hamm. In spite of Clov's continuous pacing up and down, the scene's stability remains undamaged since Beckett composes visually the number, the direction and the rhythm of Clov's steps. The spatial points which define Clov's walking

¹⁷ Chabert, Pierre, "The body in Beckett's theatre", in *Journal of Beckett Studies*, Number 8, Autumn 1982. (<http://www.english.fsu.edu/jobs/num08/Num8Chabert.htm>, 2010. september 24.)

¹⁸ The stability of the space refers to visual stability.

about are the following: the door, point A, Hamm's armchair, the two ashbins and the two windows. Beckett's aspiration for preciseness and symmetry can be noticed most of all in the number of Clov's steps: a given distance always means the same number of steps and the same walking with a shuffle. Therefore, beside the three immobilized characters' stable points, even Clov's walking contributes to the creation of a balanced set. As a conclusion we can declare that concerning the characters' spatial position and their movement, Beckett accomplished the same mathematical punctuality in the play and in the performance.

Beckett remains faithful to the play concerning the costumes as well. The stage directions relating to the costumes are in general short and precise. Hamm's costume is the most circumstantially depicted: „*In a dressing-gown, a stiff toque on his head, a dirty handkerchief over his face, a whistle hanging from his neck, a rug over his knees, thick socks on his feet, (...)*”¹⁹. In the San Quentin Drama Workshop's performance Hamm's costume differs just a little from the stage directions. The only significant difference is that in the production there isn't a rug over Hamm's knees. Interestingly, Beckett didn't cut this instruction during the revision, however in the production he didn't use a rug. This decision is certified because, beside other things, Hamm is asking for a rug (Clov's answers of course that there are no more rugs). We must also observe that the stage directions don't refer to the color of Hamm's costume. Beckett decides that Hamm should wear a greyish black dressing-gown which matches perfectly with the set's still greyness. The same colors characterize Clov's costume: in Beckett's production he wears a dirty grey shirt and overworn grey trousers. But just as in Hamm's case, the play doesn't contain any instruction referring to the color of Clov's costume.

There is another interesting difference between play and performance: the text doesn't refer to the fact that Clov, after he goes to his kitchen to kill the rat, comes back wearing a waistcoat – the first sign which indicates that he is preparing to leave. We can find precise description of Clov's costume only in the last scene of the play: „*Enter Clov, dressed for the road. Panama hat, tweed coat, raincoat over his arm, umbrella, bag.*”²⁰ In the San Quentin Drama Workshop's performance, Clov appears in the last scene dressed according to the instruction. But we can observe that this costume-description doesn't determine the color. In the performance Clov's tweed coat is dark grey, his umbrella is black, his panama hat is light grey with a dark ribbon on it, his raincoat is beige and his bag is dark brown. In this case we can discover that Beckett as director uses meaningful colors: the grey, the beige and the brown color suggest Clov's transition between his present life and the world outside

¹⁹ The description of Hamm's costume is cited from the revised text. *The Theatrical Notebooks of Samuel Beckett. Endgame, ed. cit., p. 3.*

²⁰ Beckett, Samuel, *The Dramatic Works of Samuel Beckett, ed. cit., p. 152.*

the room. In the case of Nagg and Nell it is easy to examine the costumes because only their head and hands are visible. According to the stage direction Nagg wears a simple nightcap and Nell a flovncy one. Both nightcaps are dirty, their color is greyish-white. We can draw the conclusion that on the level of the costumes, Beckett as director was faithful to his own text. Regarding the shape and color, he created costumes which don't misinterpret the characters, but harmonize with them, with the set and with the universe presented in *Endgame*.

The mimicry and the intonation is harder to control than the characters' spatial position, their movement and costumes. Beckett sought absolute punctuality concerning the stage directions which circumscribe the actors' (characters') mimicry and accentuation: whenever it proved to be necessary he described as precise as possible how a given sentence should be accentuated and what kind of facial expression should be used by the actors. These instructions usually consist of a single word, for instance *impatiently, gloomy, scandalized*. In spite of the punctual expressions, these instructions can easily be misinterpreted, because a state as impatience or gloominess has different meaning for every actor: different condition, different expressing tools and results. So an actor can understand and interpret such an instruction in a totally different way than the writer. Beckett tried to avoid these misinterpretations by not allowing the actors to improvise. Beside the precise stage directions of the play, Beckett as a director told his actors exactly how they should move or speak. It also frequently happened that Beckett himself got up on the stage and tried out some passages to be able to instruct his actors right. Through the punctual stage directions and Beckett's way to instruct the actors it can be achieved a certain level of automatism and economy of the gesticulation, mimicry and accentuation, but as we can observe in the San Quentin Drama Workshop's performance, moderate misinterpretations are inevitable on these levels. Also in this production's case we have to take into consideration that the actors aren't professionals.²¹

In the analysis of the gesticulation, mimicry and accentuation in *Endgame*, the condition of the characters' body must be considered as starting point. Clov is the only one in case of whom the actor can use any of his expressing tools: he can move, gesticulate, he can play with his face and voice as well. Hamm loses the ability to move, as to Nagg and Nell, they lose the gestures too because they use their hands mostly to hang on to the margin of the ashbins. The loss of certain expressing methods doesn't imply unequivocally the absence of interpretation

²¹ Ann Beer accentuates as well that the production's problems are caused first of all by the actors' incomplete preparation. Beer, Ann, Beckett in Oxford: the San Quentin Drama Workshop production of "Krapp's last tape" and "Endgame", in *Journal of Beckett Studies*, Number 8, Autumn 1982. (<http://www.english.fsu.edu/jobs/num08/Num8Beer.htm>, 2010. september 24.)

because it could appear as a process of compensation when the actors don't use their expressing tools with providence.

In spite of the fact that Bud Thorpe has the largest number of "instruments" to bring Clov into existence, he is the most careful and precise. In his case it is truly available Anna McMullan's observation that an actor rehearsing and performing Beckett gets the chance to learn how to lead his body and how to change it into a perfect musical instrument²². Bud Thorpe's gestures are reduced, in general his hands simply hang on his sides. He uses big gestures only once when he shakes the insecticide into his trousers, but even in this scene his gestures are methodical and he doesn't exaggerate. Bud Thorpe mimicry and accentuation are also characterized by cautiousness and punctuality, automatism and repetitiveness. Although Bud Thorpe is faithful to Beckett's text, there is one important variance which is repeated for three times, so it signifies a directorial intention. During the following passages, Bud Thorpe's mimicry and accentuation differ from the text:

CLOV: When there were still bicycles I wept to have one. I crawled at your feet. You told me to go to hell. Now there are none.

HAMM: And your rounds? When you inspected my paupers. Always on foot?

CLOV: Sometimes on horse.²³

CLOV: We too were bonny – once. It's a rare thing not to have been bonny – once. [*Pause.*]²⁴

CLOV: A madman? When was that?

HAMM: Oh way back, way back, you weren't in the land of the living.

CLOV: God be with the days! [*Pause. Hamm raises his toque.*]²⁵

These three passages don't contain any stage directions referring to Clov, however Bud Thorpe reacts three times in the same way to Hamm's words: he lifts up his eyes to the ceiling, his face is flushed with a nostalgic smile and his voice is filled with nostalgic happiness. In all three cases Clov's reaction is perfectly the same. These differences towards the text serve the harmony between content and shape, namely the words and the body's manifestation. Clov's nostalgia towards the past, the times when he used to ride a horse, when he was nice-looking or when he wasn't even born, appears in his gesticulation and intonation as well. This could be considered an act of interpretation, but not a misinterpretation.

²² McMullan, Anna, *Samuel Beckett as Director: the art of mastering failure*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Beckett*, edited by John Pilling, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 206.

²³ Beckett, Samuel, *The Dramatic Works of Samuel Beckett*, ed. cit., p. 97.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 121.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 124.

From the interpretation's point of view, the case of Hamm (Rick Cluchey) is not so clear. Since Hamm is immobilized, Rick Cluchey has to create Hamm with the help of the gesticulation, mimicry and accentuation. But Rick Cluchey didn't follow out Beckett's principle, namely that "less is more". Hamm's mood and condition fluctuates constantly, so Rick Cluchey has to express a lot of changes and gradations. Unfortunately on the level of the mimicry and the accentuation he isn't at all careful, so his acting can't be automatic. In his case preciseness can be observed in the use of gestures. James Knowlson emphasizes that Beckett always took pains over the setting of his characters' hands during directing his own plays.²⁶ Hamm's gestures are designed, his hands always move according to a choreography (for instance when he removes the handkerchief from his face and then he folds it up carefully or when he raises his hat). There is preciseness in the hands' position as well (when the two hands rest on the chair's two banisters or in Hamm's lap). Consequently Rick Cluchey draws off from Beckett's conception of Hamm's mimicry and cadence, but the motion of his hands and his gestures are punctual and without any misinterpretation.

The same can be told about Nagg's and Nell's hands. Alan Mandell and Teresita Garcia Suro succeed in keeping religiously Beckett's stage directions referring to their hands. The two pair of hands are in a perfect symmetry. Furthermore, the motion of Nagg's right hand, namely the knocking on the top of Nell's ashbin is precisely choreographed. But their mimicry and the stressing of their words is problematical. Teresita Garcia Suro doesn't use her face as an expressing tool: during her single scene, she stares all along rigidly at a point in the space. Her accentuation is neutral as well, but we have to mention that not being a native English speaker, she articulates the sentences extremely strange. She uses long pauses not only between sentences, but between words too. So her sentences become disturbingly intermittent. In this way the character of Nell becomes misinterpreted.

On the other hand Alan Mandell achieves to create the character of Nagg according to Beckett's conception. In his case predominates the principle of providence: Nagg is created using a few recurring elements. His face looks mostly as if he bit into a lemon: his eyes are really small because of the wink and his mouth is deflected. This basic state of his face changes to roundabout, pinking eyes and open mouth when the dialogue puts him off his basic position. We also must notice the perfect rhythm of his sentences. A sentence *per se* has a fast rhythm, but the last word of every sentence is protracted for a few seconds. The sentences are generally followed by a pause. From sentence to sentence we can notice the same pattern of the rhythm, in this manner Nagg's way of speaking becomes automatic and dynamic at the same time.

²⁶ Haynes, John-Knowlson, James, *Beckett képei*, translated by Dedinszky Zsófia, Publisher Európa Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 2006, p. 90.

The automatism of the rhythm which characterizes Nagg's sentences, is representative as well for the production in general. The patterns of the rhythm are created first of all by respecting the stage directions relating to the silence and the pause. In addition we have to mention another level of the play's rhythm, namely the one which evolves through the dialogues and the monologues. The leveling of the text's bigger units creates a wavering rhythm: a fast unit is followed by a slower one which is followed again by a unit with a faster rhythm. The play's wavering rhythm is fulfilled in the San Quentin Drama Workshop's production as well. Consequently, on the level of the rhythm, Beckett's play is operable on the stage.

After the comparison of the written text's and the production's elements, we have to draw the conclusion that the repetitiveness, the automatism of *Endgame* and the absolute punctuality of its stage directions exclude the chance of much interpretation and misinterpretation. So if a director is willing to approach the dramatic text with respect for the writer and is willing to remain faithful to the play, he could create a performance close to Beckett's conception. If the director is Beckett himself, the chance of a perfect Beckettian adaptation is even bigger, but not guaranteed. In the course of the analysis, we could observe that, on certain levels, the exclusion of a specific interpretation is possible, but in the case of those layers of the performance which are based on the actors, there exists the risk of misinterpretation. In consequence not even Beckett as a director couldn't accomplish perfectly the ideal conception of Beckett the writer.

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SEMIOLOGIC LECTURE NOTES ON PETER HALL'S *AGAMEMNON* (1981)

MARINA CRISTEA

ABSTRACT. This paper dwells on some semiologic aspects of the 1981 Peter Hall's 'Agamemnon' staging along with the Greek theatre conventions such as set design, chorus, masks etc. Also, the paper takes some issues on the traditional semiologic approach regarding definitions of sign-function or overcoding.

Keywords: *semiotic devices, sign-function, abduction, ostension, Greek theatre conventions, 'Agamemnon', Peter Hall, Tony Harrison, Charles Peirce, Umberto Eco.*

The configuration of the National Theatre of London's „Olivier” auditorium, where Peter Hall staged in 1981 the „Oresteia” trilogy is analogous to the Greek *theatron*.

The set of „Agamemnon”, trilogy's first part, rests in semidarkness, the curtain already pulled open¹. This is how the transitional phase is marked, from audience reality to stage reality, implicitly the starting point of the negotiation process.

The audience does not become silent as usual when the curtain pulls open, but when the presence of the masked actant is perceived, slightly lit up in the left upper corner of the stage. As a subcode element, it is not the mask in itself that catches the eye, but its formal approach². Its minimalist lines are ambiguous; only referring to the tragic rictus without containing it. In a few seconds, the actant's voice³ breaks the silence: not the usual prologue invitation, but a hurried exposition alluding to the plot – the audience is forced to cross the denegation phase to search for support in order to install, to settle in.

Vertically, behind the actant's back – that the spectators now acknowledge as the guardian – a mass of metallic reflexes is discernable in contrast with the flat texture of his indefinite brown costume, whose cut reposes the stylistic ambiguity of the mask. The first semantic negotiation is the attempt to determine the chronotope: it could be the residence of Menelaos, Argos, as Homer tells us (*Odyssey*, III, 251) or the Mycenaean citadel „rich in gold” (*Ibid.*, III, 305). Spectators soon find out it is none of them, but the double unnamed residence of the Atrid brothers.

¹ There was no stage curtain in the Greek theatres.

² Not the usual ocular fossae, but the globes.

³ The absence of mask's resonance is somehow compensated by the sonority of the translation and by the emphasized kinesic characteristics.

The guardian finally accomplishes his mission: the long waited sign of the burning torch is visible, but only to him: his observation post is frontally and gradually lit, for a few moments being flooded by a warm golden light. His kinesic area grows both intensively and extensively. The audience is not allowed to see the burning torch, only to perceive its effect, its reflexions on him (the torch's warm light is a direct indicator⁴, while the kinesic aspects are a derived one). The object of the torch is not present deictically, but indicially, effectively. The visible-invisible/seen-unseen game starts simultaneously, both at the level of the propositional discourse (the guardian's monologue) and at the level of the unpropositional discourse (visual dimension), game maintained up to the dénouement. The installation phase ends. The soundtrack introduces the chorus on the last three verses of the guardian's monologue that alludes again to the plot, and accompanies its presence all along the strophes and the anti-strophes, recited and tuned up alternatively.

The twelve actants⁵ standing for the Argive old men chorus enter the stage from the sides. The lateral screens, whose metallic gloss is now completely visible, camouflage from top to bottom the sides of the stage which is deprived of its usual „artifices". Unlike the front ones, the rear-lit side screens are translucent, revealing the supporting structure: an enormous three-sided lattice work cage shaped.⁶

The chorus occupies the *proscenium* and the stage, always accompanied by the soundtrack – a sort of dodecaphonic percussion and wind music, following the rhythm imposed by the stage translation of Tony Harrison⁷, scanned in anapaest and dactyl, with middle verse caesura, abundant in alliterations and assonances, in gutturals and dentals⁸.

During the performance, the kinesic and proxemic characteristics of the chorus interweave with the paralinguistics as sign-functions and interfere with the constant presence of the mask⁹: their number, their disposal, the rhythm of their

⁴ See Peirce's definition, *Collected Papers*, 2.243.

⁵ Hall also respects the gender and number convention: Aeschylus reduced, following Sophocles's example, from 15 to 12 the chorus' members, the choragus inclusively. Thus, *Oresteia* utilized a total of 15 male actants (of which the three actors), except the supernumerary.

⁶ Hall observes another Greek tragic convention, the permanence of the principal stage set, of a fix structure.

⁷ See Oswyn Murray's book review "Poetry in Public", *Times Literary Supplement*, nr. 4218 (June the 6th 1986), pp. 615-6, reproduced in "Tony Harrison", *Contemporary Literary Criticism*. ed. Jeffrey W. Hunter. vol. 129, Gale Group, Detroit, 2000, pp. 168. Murray affirms the importance Harrison allots to the relationship between music and theatre, the former playing an essential role in the performance at issue.

⁸ Such as: "Coerced into keening by Queen Clytaemnestra for King Agamemnon as if for our bloodkin." Or: "Kilos of cold clinker packed in army-issue urns".

⁹ For the delineation of the ritual resources and the ritual transition to dramatic action as it is today, see section „Ancient Near East Ritual Drama", signed by Th. H. Gaster, in „Drama", *Encyclopedia of Religion*, editor in chief M. Eliade, Macmillan, New York, 1987, pp. 446-447) where the factors responsible for this transition are considered one by one. Also, Gaster mentions the link between the terms «drama»

movements and of their recitative, the absence of their interaction – every verse is said or tuned up with their faces towards the audience, the intention being explicitly expositive, typical to dithyramb songs of which, according to Aristotle¹⁰, the drama would have been arisen from.

The mask is a sign-function for the representational act: the actant does not narrate/tell the story, he actualizes the story. The mask is a symbol operating at the stage-audience limit: it secures the actant's identity, his liberty of expression in the story and of movement on stage, eliminating the risk of any association by the audience. The mask is an indicator: on one hand, the focus is easily set on the listening-understanding dimension¹¹, maintaining the paradigmatic equilibrium, on the other hand, it leads to corporal expressivity enhancement in the kinesic domain, fact that supports the linguistic and paralinguistic range meanings.

According to Eco, within the semiotic definition, "Ostension occurs when a given object or event produced by nature or human action (intentionally or unintentionally and existing in a world of facts as a fact among facts) is 'picked up' by someone and *shown* as the **expression of the class of which it is a member**."¹² does not resist in such a case: the glove Clytaemnestra wears when she gets out of the royal residence and the audience sees her beside Agamemnon and Cassandra's corpses as explicit sign of her bloody deed is a functionalized costume element, **not as an expression** of the class of objects of which it is a member, **but as sign of something else** that belongs to a class of which it is not a member.¹³

Only one of ostension's conditions functions in theatre, the sufficient one, i.e. "a given object is 'picked up' by someone and *shown*", which, according to the semiotic convention¹⁴ is postulated as sign: „There is a sign every time a human group decides to use and to recognize something as the vehicle of something

(something making the object of a certain action aimed at a certain person; something that is taking place, that is unfolding itself) and «theatre» (something being watched, known; something known as having a certain meaning), originated in the verbs δράω (*dráōō*) and θεάομαι (*theáomai*) passive participles. The dramatic or pre-dramatic character of the mask and its connection with Dionysus cult proved to be an insoluble issue. (See, for instance, Oliver Taplin, „Masks in Greek Tragedy”, *Didaskalia, (The Archive of Performance of Greek and Roman Drama, University of Oxford)*, vol. 5, nr. 2 (2001), that affirms mask can't be pre-dramatic, but is pre-eminently dramatic, being indivisible of this genre of action.

¹⁰ *Poetics* 1449

¹¹ Benedict Nightingale, „Peter Hall stages a London 'Oresteia'", *The Times*, 12.20.1981

¹² Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, Indiana U.P., Bloomington-London, 1976, pp. 224-225 (our ann.)

¹³ See also Eco's "Semiotics of Theatrical Performance", *The Drama Review: TDR*, vol. 21, no. 1, Theatre and Social Action Issue, (Mar. 1977), p. 111: "In the mise-en-scène an object, first recognized as a real object, is then assumed as a sign in order to refer back to another object (or to a class of objects) whose constitutive stuff is the same as that of the representing object." (our ann.)

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 17, note 4. Eco quotes David K. Lewis, *Convention. A Philosophical Study*, Harvard U.P., Cambridge, 1969.

else.”¹⁵ This leads directly to the sign-function: „When a code apports the elements of a conveying system to the elements of a conveyed system, the former becomes the expression of the latter and the latter becomes the content of the former.” Considering a part of Eco’s exact wording¹⁶, the former could become the expression (as the image, sound or movement) of the latter, still it is not mandatory the latter becomes **by itself** the content of the former – in theatre isomorphism is a possible, yet rare a case.

The expression content does not correspond to the reference class of objects, to which it assigns another content by abduction¹⁷, i.e. when from an inference it is obtained a case derived both from the rule and from the result (or consequence). The new resulted sign-function is an abduction case. It follows that, in theatre, propositional or unpropositional, the ostensive discourse has specific features.

In theatre, the overcoding¹⁸ is not only an hypothetical approach for it employs icons, not symbols, as rhetorics or, for instance, iconography: red colour is the chromatic correspondent for Christian love, but in theatre, the same issue, Clytaemnestra’s costume colour, does not exclusively designate by virtue of an implicit law, but it is a quality¹⁹, a mark assignable with a un-finite sum of significations offered or deductible out of the macro-context: here, red is the colour of a brutal vengeance, of a bloodshed to recall another bloodshed, Iphigenia’s sacrifice, to add to the others of the Trojan war etc., in a sort of an apparently unbreakable circularity. In

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 48

¹⁷ Peirce used in certain cases for abduction the term hypothesis. (*Collected Papers*, 2.262) See also Eco’s explanation *op. cit.*, p. 132: “But the hypothetical movement is fulfilled when a new sense (a new combinational quality) is assigned to every sound (our ann., perceptive unit), inasmuch as they compose the new contextual meaning of the musical piece.” (Eco refers here to Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 2.643, wherefrom we quote: “Hypothesis substitutes, for a complicated tangle of predicates attached to one subject, **a single conception**. (our ann.) Now, there is a particular sensation belonging to the act of thinking that each of these predicates inheres in the subject. In hypothetic inference this complicated feeling so produced is replaced by **a single feeling of greater intensity** (our ann.), that belonging to the act of thinking the hypothetic conclusion... Thus, the various sounds made by the instruments of an orchestra strike upon the ear, and the result is a peculiar musical emotion, quite distinct from the sounds themselves”). Abduction is a case of synthetic inference “where we find some very curious circumstances, which would be explained by the supposition that it was a case of a certain general rule, and thereupon adopt that supposition.” (*Collected Papers*, 2.624)

¹⁸ „On the basis of a pre-established rule, a new rule was proposed which governed a rarer application of the previous rule.” (*Ibid.*, p. 133)

¹⁹ According to Peirce, a quality is something capable of being completely embodied “but the embodiment has nothing to do with its character as a sign.” (*The Essential Peirce*, Indiana U.P., 1998, p. 291). “(...) Since a quality is whatever it is positive in itself, a quality can only denote an Object by virtue of some common ingredient or similarity (...).” (*Ibid.*, p. 294).

theatre, there is no seriality, as in iconography, the game of inferences reaching the completion: induction, abduction, deduction.

We dwelt on only a few sign-functions we considered important in Peter Halls' 1981 staging: the mask, the type of kinesic values (the expositive one), the formal unity of the chorus, of the cromatics (the lighting devices included) and of the soundtrack. The base of the theatrical analysis traditional modalities is the communicational model: it refers to what takes place on the stage as having an universal meaning, valid for any community of spectators, with a content transmitted by somebody to somebody else, where the performance²⁰ is the medium of the content's transmission. Yet, the actors acting on stage and their relationship with the audience are two insoluble aspects of this communicational scheme²¹. The audience's competence is more enhanced in theatrical language than it is in the articulated languages, as Helbo affirms, "because of the emergence of the aesthetic aspect, i.e. the dramatic creativity."²²

Also, the staging of a play is a codified system of elaboration and rendering, and even more, an implicitly codified one. Epical, lyrical, dramatical or mixed, the fabric and stratification are semiotic and prove viable²³ aside or inside the semiotic analytical approach that discerns and classifies the signs, the codes and their disposition within the system, in order to provide an explicit model.

The origins of the dramatic performance, as we know it, are the Greek dramatic competitions. These addressed to a certain community, which, in its turn, designated and evaluated their contents. Apparently, for that community, the processes of encoding and decoding were transparent and well assimilated.²⁴

²⁰ The term *performance* as *spectacle* did not exist in Greek language. It is attested only in classic Latin. The article *specio, specis, specere, spexi, spectrum* (*Dictionnaire etymologique de la langue latine*, ed. Ernout-Meillet, Paris, 1939, p. 920) refers, among others, to θεατός (theatós), word used by the attic tragic poets with a double meaning: visible and worth of being watched respectively. (*Dictionnaire grec-français*, ed. V. Magnien – M. Lacroix, Paris, 1969, p. 810)

²¹ See Roman Jakobson, *Essais de linguistique générale*, ed. de Minuit, Paris, 1963, pp. 213-221

²² André Helbo, "Le code théâtral", *Sémiologie de la représentation*, ed. André Helbo, Complexe, Bruxelles, 1975, p. 16

²³ Actions like dancing, singing, storytelling, wearing masks, reciting, embodying (supernatural, human, animal or fantastic creatures), preparing (by rehearsals) such presentations – representations being elements of intrinsic spectacularity.

²⁴ Richard Schechner, section "Performance and Ritual", "Drama", in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 1987, pp. 436-437: „Even as scholars argue which came first, «entertainment» or «ritual», evidence abounds that the two are indissolubly braided together." According to the anthropologic approach, in ritual "«meaning» tends to be generated at the interfaces between established cultural subsystems, though meanings are then institutionalized and consolidated at the centers of such systems." (*Ibid.*, p. 442, Schechner quotes V. Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 1982, p. 41)

The model elaborated in the seventies and in the eighties²⁵ were centered on «audience response» studies and affirmed that the cultural products contained no meanings, forms, behaviors or uni-dimensional beliefs – we would say universally determined and immutable –, but that they rather “produce meaning through the discursive work of an interpretative community and through the lived, everyday relationships of people with texts and performances”²⁶, as audiences «answer back», activate meaning within their own experiences – the signs are received, decoded, interpreted and used.

Both the Greek classic stagings and the performances based on classic dramas²⁷ are suitable for such a *post priori* reading in the very absence of their target audiences, for although the author’s inspiration – author of the texts or of the *mises-en-scène* – can’t transcend the historical-cultural context (of source or of destination), it might instead contribute to the thoroughness of the semantic sphere, through the same devices we dealt with above.

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²⁶ Richard P. Knowles, *Reading the material theatre*, Cambridge U. P., Cambridge, 2004, p. 17. See also, Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences*, Routledge, New York, 1997, p. 3.

²⁷ We refer to both Greek dramas performed by its contemporaries (it is known that in the fifth century B.C., Aeschylus’ dramas were the first to be copied and multiplied by government decree, having been allowed to be performed for the Great Dionysia, though these competitions accepted only new written dramas), and to Greek dramas staged nowadays.

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HISTORICAL MATERIALS IN CONFLICT WITH 'EFFECTIVE THEATRE', EXAMPLE OF WALE OGUNYEMI'S *IJAYE*

ADEBISI ADEMAKINWA

ABSTRACT. Historical materials have been used through the ages by dramatists such as William Shakespeare, Alexander Pushkin, Gerhart Hauptmann and so on to create effective theatre. Plays such as *Julius Caesar*, *Boris Godunov*, *The Weavers* are works that have tenuous roots dug into history. In Nigeria, *Ijaye* and *Kurunmi* by Wale Ogunyemi and Ola Rotimi respectively are plays which incidentally use the same historical material in their dramaturgy. Due to the great divergence in what we call 'theatrical effectiveness' and despite what could be accepted as individual style, it becomes imperative to raise some questions among which are: what best methods should be adopted in the transformation of historical material into drama? What 'theatrical ingredients' contribute more to reinforce the dramaturgy or performance aesthetics of one play more than the other?

Keywords: *Theatrical effectiveness, dramaturgy, aesthetics, language.*

Wale Ogunyemi and his Theatre

Quite apart from professional theatre practitioners, if one asks students, who are trying to stage a play for their practical courses in any drama department in Nigeria, which play they would prefer to stage between Ola Rotimi's *Kurunmi* and Wale Ogunyemi's *Ijaye*, one would be surprised at the preponderant number of those who will rather go for *Kurunmi*.

The reasons for this could be various. Remi Adedokun in an interview of June 2, 2001, attributed this to four fundamental issues which trailed Ogunyemi as a person and Ogunyemi's works in general. To him Ogunyemi's level of education counted against him in all fronts. "In comparison to J.P Clark, Soyinka, Rotimi, Osofisan etc., Ogunyemi had the lowest level of education and this had an intricate backlash on his output and self esteem". Apart from this factor, Ogunyemi was very unfortunate in that he received little assistance from within and without the country, quite unlike Rotimi, Soyinka etc. This factor is especially important because of the peculiar aesthetic orientation of Nigerians; they never appreciated any author until the storm of appreciation from outside swayed their sensibilities.

Moreover, Ogunyemi remained in active obscurity because of his predominant Yoruba culture orientation, an orientation, which makes his works cyclical and replete with Yoruba content. Adedokun's final point is similar as it trails the language in most of Ogunyemi's works. In Adedokun's analysis, using Rotimi's *Kurunmi* as an example, he draws differences in the language used in the play and *Ijaye* of Ogunyemi.

The poesy of *Kurunmi* reverberates, it makes the play more compact and the image conjured by the powerful lines leaves you in no doubt Rotimi has the full command of his medium.¹

He further asserted:

Nowhere in *Ijaye* would you find any line that compares to *Kurunmi*'s "a paddle here a paddle there, the canoe stays still" or "the gaboon viper! When the gaboon viper dies, its children take up its habits etc." of Rotimi. Ogunyemi's language is more traditionally over-laden and it affects the artistic confluence of the play.

While we would like to treat the veracity of Adedokun's first and second points as being beyond the scope of this work, his third and fourth points deserve serious attention. Going through Ogunyemi's works, *Ijaye* in particular, one tends to notice occasions, according to Martin Banham (1976, p. 46) "... when the English perhaps as a result of attempts to close transportation from the original Yoruba is stilted and awkward..."

One also notices an asphyxiation of Ogunyemi's dramaturgy emanating from uncondusive artistic environment where "authentic presentation of material of history and tradition is important" (p. 46). What Adedokun refers to as top-heavy cultural orientation are indeed Ogunyemi's historical details in conflict with dramaturgy. Dathorne (1976, p. 317) said that

Ogunde, Ijimere, Ogunmeyi [sic] share one attribute in common – the ability to draw from the reservoirs of Yoruba traditional group experience and to give this experience a new and distinct form. In this work the entire realm of Yoruba culture may be seen and if a comparison may be made between them and other single group in African literature, then it must be with the writer of Onitsha literature.

As much as one would like to subscribe to this idea, especially as one would find it difficult to disprove the fact that these writers all appeal to 'home' audience, nevertheless, Rotimi's dramaturgy takes his works more into the universal realm, as Banham (1976, p. 45) further explicates talking about *Kurunmi*:

Kurunmi, the tale of intrigue and human fallibility records accurately and with verve an important period of Yoruba history. It also casts shadows on to

¹ Adedokun, Remi. [2001] An interview conducted as part of his investiture as the National Deputy President of the Association of Nigerian Theatre Practitioners on June 2, of the year.

contemporary affairs, and its comments often seen as pertinent to the tragedies of our age as they are to those of days long gone.

Although we have no intention of doing a comparative study of both *Kurunmi* and *Ijaye*, however, one could hardly help making references to both, most especially as they are products from the same cooking pot. Ogunyemi, while trying to draw line between his *Ijaye* and *Kurunmi* brings us to make the comparison. He agrees in an interview conducted on April 24, 2001 that *Kurunmi* is better appreciated worldwide due to the fact that it was first performed outside the country. Above all, "if they know all the flaws in *Kurunmi*, maybe they would not perform it as often as they do."

Historical materials as used in *Ijaye*

A brief survey of *Ijaye* reveals a lot of historical signposts that only somebody vast in Yoruba history can fully appreciate. They emphasise the thoroughness of Ogunyemi's six months research about the *Ijaye* war, which took place in the mid 19th century between the towns of Ibadan and *Ijaye*. The remote cause of the war has been incontrovertible, the refusal of Kurunmi, the Aare Ona Kakanfo (the Generalissimo) to recognise Adelu, the newly crowned Alaafin of Oyo, who naturally should have followed his father to the grave as the tradition demanded. The war that followed, the actual prosecution of the war, the intrigues and the eventual death of Kurunmi, are bits and pieces that needed to be woven artistically and this was the main thrust of Ogunyemi's 1970 publication – *Ijaye War* and *Ijaye* of 1997.

While weaving the play, however, Ogunyemi displayed a total commitment to authenticate the historicity of his materials and thus, some characters, episodes, towns, villages etc., which were involved in the historical events, were brought to play their parts in the progression of the play. Examples of towns and villages in this category include Okeho, Saki etc., which in history declared their support for Ibadan and they actually served as battlegrounds in *Ijaye* (pp. 10 & 11). One can notice that the attention paid to these towns by Ogunyemi serves little artistic purpose other than to explain the traditional politics of alliance between belligerent groups in Yorubaland. It also explains the reaction of Adelu to his weak army in a face-off with Kurunmi's force. Moreover, it brings a cultural detail which does not contribute to the overall progress of the play, to rudely stare us in the face – the lifestyle of an Alaafin in his palace.

The portrayal of the Alaafin's royal ways is Ogunyemi's idea of injecting grandeur that could come from the combination of costume, set etc., but one is inclined to think they have little relevance to the overall dramaturgy of the play. There is no doubt, however, that the episode reveals the alliance between Ibadan and Oyo. It also introduces the beginning of the conflict between Adelu and Kurunmi in relations to Abu's acts in the play. The episode in the long run reveals

Ogunyemi's ignorance of the enmity existing between Ibadan and Oyo before the Ijaye war. Asaju in *Ijaye* says:

For no one treats the Alaafin with contempt and lives. Unless he is removed, our alliances with Ibadan will not only become a dream, but also unending conflict will ensue. (p. 10)

The events traced in Samuel Johnson (1969 edition) disprove that Kurunmi's removal would have tightened the alliance between Ibadan and Oyo and one is generally made to believe that Ogunyemi's act of featuring the Alaafin was not done to score any artistic point. This view is buttressed by the fact that Alaafin does not feature in any other scene till the end of the play even when we would have been more interested in knowing his reaction to the subsequent events of the war with Kurunmi.

One is also struck with the story of Abu (Kurunmi's mother-in-law) who comes to fight Kurunmi's war. What makes this historical detail look odd is in the fact that the motive inherent in "I am ready to do anything for my daughter to save her husband's honour. I am ready to fight and help you with all my wealth. I have men outside to effect a defeat..." [Sic] is rather too weak (7). Moreover, Samuel Johnson (1969) did not mention her military exploits, which led to her death in Ogunyemi's *Ijaye*.

The death of Animashaun is another historical event which Ogunyemi came about in the course of his research on Ijaye war. Ogunyemi conceded he wanted to use the episode to prove the popular Yoruba proverb "*Aare npe o o ndifa, b'ifa ba fore ti Aare fo 'bi nko*" which he translated in *Ijaye*:

When I Kurunmi, Aare-Ona-Kakanfo by merit and by right call you, you do not say you are busy consulting the oracle. What if the oracle says well and I say ill and chop off the hand that held your opele? (p. 4)

The fact that the episode is dragged in is proven by its reflection on the reality of time lag in the play. Mosadiwin goes to call Animashaun and almost immediately, she comes back to announce Animashaun's indisposition. If one does not accept this as a dramatic device, then one is bound to believe Animashaun lives in the same compound as Kurunmi, a situation that was not so.

We also run into the same problem of time lag in "if he had responded promptly to my call, I would have sent him to Okeho and Saki and stop them playing Ibadan's stooge" (p. 5). The time indicator between the event when Asipa declares "we had a delegation from Saki this morning, and another from Okeho pledging their loyalty to Adelu and denouncing you" (p. 5) and Animashaun's indisposition does not indicate the laps of time that would make Animashaun stop Okeho and Saki from playing Ibadan's stooge.

This episode further exposes the weakness of Ogunyemi's artistic contrivance thereby contributing to the ineffectiveness of his theatre. Moreover, with the retinue of servants and hangers-on in Kurunmi's court, one thinks sending Mosadiwin, the most senior wife, to go and call Animashaun, dents Yoruba tradition a bit. It is also remarkable that in the first scene, Kurunmi twice sends her out on errands.

If the idea is meant to portray the closeness of Kurunmi's household, with no space for any servant and hangers-on, one is then inclined to ask, where Mosadiwin is in the subsequent scenes in the play. She completely fizzles out, most especially at the time of Kurunmi's travail, when she would have been most needed. Ogunyemi also struggled to introduce the basis of the recurrent feud between the present royal lineage of Alaafin and the Asipa lineage. The ascension of Adelu to the throne prevented the Asipa lineage from ascending the throne. Asipa in pages 4-8 serves the purpose of being the carrier of news that will incense Kurunmi to go to the extreme left, eliciting in the process a promise from Kurunmi that he (Asipa) will get back the throne which at present is being occupied by Adelu.

There is also an attempt to show Kurunmi as an entertainer. Ogunyemi believes it is highly compulsory to show this part of Kurunmi. Ogunyemi strongly maintained in the 2001 interview that he clearly showed this quality in Kurunmi, right from the very first scene in *Ijaye*. From the opening chants to the time Kurunmi goes in with Edun, the priest, however, one thinks Kurunmi as an entertainer stands unconvincing. With his dance and utterance "A frog is kicked, and lies on its back, we shall all die in myriads" (2), one feels no entertainment and if there is any, it is of the fiendish kind.

In this same manner, the story of how Abogunrin becomes Kurunmi's sword bearer is historically sound, and, in fact, this story inspired Ogunyemi to commence research on *Ijaye* war, as he confirmed in 2001:

There was this *Iwe Iroyin*, it was the first newspaper to be published in this country, it was published by the missionaries in Abeokuta – *Iwe Iroyin Egba ati Yoruba li Ede Yoruba* – I came across it. I have a whole collection of them. As I was going through them – I have been reading of the account of the war from the front, it was always in the newspaper, it was one penny or 20 cowries – they said a lot about Kurunmi. But the account which thrilled me and spurred me to commence research was the fact that Kurunmi showed mercy to a captive, that is, Abogunrin. Then, I said I must know more about this man, thus, I began my research.

The Abogunrin's episode succeeds in portraying the complex nature of Kurunmi – the round nature of his characterisation that makes him stand out like any classical tragic hero –, aspect which was also realised by Ogunyemi's rival, Rotimi, who promptly utilised it to build his *Kurunmi*. Ogunyemi intuitively makes an attempt to achieve this dramatic effect in pages 17 to 20. Abogunrin stands

with his mother before Kurunmi who has a naked sword in his hand, tension is built with the death that hovers over Abogunrin's head and the audience waits with baited breath before Kurunmi returns the sword into its scabbard saying:

You tenderly purchased his pardon. I am delighted by your love... You have a worthy mother, Abogunrin... Your son will die no more. (20)

Apart from this, the basis of the tragic play, *Ijaye*, is made to rest on the magic cloth on Kurunmi's staff. Ogunyemi (2001) condemned Rotimi's treatment of Kurunmi's fall.

It is not the fact that Kurunmi crossed river Ose. What actually happened which is in my play is that his trusted Babalawo betrayed him.

One is however inclined to disagree with this magic cloth syndrome. This is because when Kurunmi is in possession of the cloth, a series of tragedies trails Kurunmi and his army: there is disunity among Kurunmi's warlords, within themselves as well as with Kurunmi (Areagoro episode in pages 35 to 38 is an example); there is the intransigence of Abeokuta warlords led by Somoye (pp. 37-38); moreover, half of Kurunmi's army has been captured by the Ibadans while many more were killed. Kurunmi as a result of all these circumstances sends to recall his sons from Oyo to help save his town. Even then, these sons come back with 200 men – a small fraction indeed compared to what Ibadan warlords have, not to mention the reinforcement brought by Balogun Ibikunle to swell Ibadan's rank.

Strategically, therefore, Kurunmi seems to have lost the battle even with the magic cloth. This is probably the reason which made Ola Rotimi to hinge the butt of the tragedy on strategic failure in his *Kurunmi*. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that the magic cloth contributes in destroying the morale of Kurunmi and his army, but many other events bring their contribution too. The historical significance of this magic cloth used by Ogunyemi as an artistic means of furthering the plot rather serves to weaken the structure of the play.

Edun is another historical figure that Ogunyemi unearthed through his research. This character that purportedly plays the mighty role of Judas Iscariot in his successful ploy of shooting Kurunmi and throw, indeed, the whole of *Ijaye's* future into oblivion, is anything but a round character. Edun has no motivation to betray his hometown. His reason for selling his people out is neither highlighted nor is his reward for committing this heinous crime ever claimed (Ogunyemi 2001).

It was not money. He said I will give him inducement and so on like that. The Babalawo charmed him to go and do it. They are in the same awo's group, anyway, not that he went there to say: my friend, help me collect Kurunmi's flag, no, spiritually, metaphysically, they got in contact.

This reason is hardly theatrically effective, as Fajenyo does not demonstrate this metaphysical contact. Nevertheless, Ogunyemi (2001) draws his satisfaction from the fact that Edun's descendants up until today are still true to type:

When I performed it in Ijaye Abeokuta, one day, after rehearsal, one fellow said the family of this Babalawo are still like that in Abeokuta. They migrated from Ijaye to Abeokuta when Ijaye fell: they ran to Ijaye–Abeokuta. He remarked that the family members are still like that, Edun. The way the Babalawo did it, anybody would fall for it.

The death of Kurunmi is another historical detail replete with controversy. Ogunyemi managed it in *Ijaye* with enough logic that would complement his artistic effort. Ola Rotimi allowed Kurunmi to drink poison, but this is what Ogunyemi (2001) condemned with passion as he once exclaimed:

How can you want to commit suicide with your household in front of your household and your generals and so on, and they will be looking at you, even singing, while following you to the suicide scene. You talk and talk and you drink the poison!

He further declared:

Even if you see your enemy trying to commit suicide, you first of all shout. If you want to commit suicide, nobody would allow you in full view of the people. It is not credible. Why does our government punish anybody who attempts suicide? They still take him to court for trying to kill himself.

Historically, Kurunmi had starved himself to death within a period of three months. Ogunyemi managed this situation with his own peculiar artistry:

In my own play, he is alone, lamenting his loss, the tragedy that befalls him. And each time they come to him, he asks "am I in the wrong in this matter?" And he wasn't wrong! Although Rotimi's Kurunmi also said it, it wasn't strong enough. (Ogunyemi, 2001)

Ogunyemi asserted that he based his plot on the fact that: "A person like Kurunmi, you cannot kill him with a gun, you can't kill him with a machete, even if you give him poison, it won't have effect. That was what I learnt. So, what do I do? Then, symbolically, he removed his battledress, gives it to Abogunrin with all the charms he has with him, so he is vulnerable. Even then, he doesn't take poison because there is no way he would not have assimilated power in his stomach, so, he has this heart attack" (Ogunyemi, 2001). He stressed that since in history Kurunmi starved himself to death for three months. "Definitely even if you starve yourself to death, it means your heart failed, so, that is what I used to make it logical and credible".

Impact of Historical Materials on Effective Theatre in *Ijaye* and *Kurunmi*

This last point brings us to assess the level of Ogunyemi's commitment to history and the impact of it on an effective theatre; a theatre that will be plausible,

believable, entertaining and vigorous. One noticed that Ogunyemi often attempts to follow tradition and history to its logical end. This fact is reflected in the way he religiously avoided using any fictitious names to replace the names of the historical figures concerned. In the 2001 interview, Ogunyemi vehemently declared: "If I go to do research and I don't use the real names, who would I say said this? If I don't get the actual name I won't use fictitious name."

However, when he was recently accused of tampering with history in *Oduduwa* (the film script which he wrote), he defended himself in *Sunday Tribune* of October 29, 2000 by saying:

Their arguments hold no water. Drama is not like a documentary. As a dramatist you have to treat historical material artistically. If you are writing a documentary, we know you are writing a documentary. If they are not satisfied with my script let them do a documentary where they will be completely true to history.

This argument gives us the assurance that Ogunyemi believed historical material should be treated artistically, but obviously, this affects recent historical material which has fact to buttress it and this differentiates this category from *Oduduwa* which is a quasi-historical play. Nevertheless, one notices that Ogunyemi was cautious in his treatment of historical material more than his contemporary, Ola Rotimi.

Perhaps one of the dramaturgical problems stems from Ogunyemi's supreme reluctance to discard any fragments of the materials painstakingly collected in the course of his research. It is perhaps responsible for the intractable plots in his historical plays such as *Ijaye* and *Kiriji*. Ogunyemi (2001) declared:

I spent 600 pounds on my research on *Kiriji*. I went through thick and thin to gather my materials. Sometimes I had to travel by tipper Lorries because vehicles were few in those days and the villages and towns were remote.

His efforts were however rewarded with success as he was able to gather enormous volumes of materials, as he confessed:

the materials were so much I was afraid something would happen to them. I had to keep them in the University main library. Even then, I was so confused by the size that I didn't know from where to begin the drama. Three months later, as I was standing in front of the Institute, the first line of the play came and I quickly asked the secretary to help me write it down.

We would need to reiterate our determination not to make this study a comparative one, the reference we make of Rotimi's *Kurunmi* is due to the fact that one believes the determinant which worked to make *Ijaye* so artistically different from Rotimi's *Kurunmi* is worth exploring. One is most likely to conclude that Ola Rotimi conceived of the whole *Ijaye* war with an innate artistic appeal. He

saw the character of Kurunmi playing out an Aristotelian protagonist whose flaw situates him within the framework of a classical tragic hero.

Ogunyemi however conceived his *Ijaye* as an historical drama, which has many events and characters being intrinsic to the value of the play. To him they were no means to an end, but an end in the general concept. Ogunyemi (2001) clarified this when he said:

To me, Kurunmi was just an actor in the whole drama whereas Rotimi placed his own emphasis on Kurunmi. In *Ijaye*, you have Ogunmola, you have Ibikunle, you have all others playing prominent roles there.

One is however inclined to agree with Adedokun on the compactness of Rotimi's *Kurunmi*, because his artistic coordination is remarkable even though he paid very little attention to the historicity of his materials. One is even more susceptible to conclude that Ola Rotimi drew more of his materials from Samuel Johnson's *The History of the Yorubas* quite unlike Ogunyemi who did more field work.

The difference between Rotimi's *Kurunmi* and Ogunyemi's *Ijaye* also stem from the fact that while Rotimi was more committed to the artistic coordination of his work, Ogunyemi was more committed to an artistic use of historical materials. Rotimi's abject disregard for the historicity of his plot was a great irritation to Ogunyemi, most especially as Ogunyemi wrote his *Ijaye War* before Ola Rotimi wrote his *Kurunmi*. There is no doubt Rotimi tried to improve on Ogunyemi's effort. As Ogunyemi (2001) commented:

I wrote mine before Rotimi wrote his own. He knew I wrote it, it wasn't performed. Then he read my own script. Professor Akintoye said he gave it to Rotimi to read. Rotimi saw me then he said he learnt that I have written something about Kurunmi and that he would want to do his research and write his own. He titled his own *Kurunmi* while I titled mine *Ijaye War*.

However, Ogunyemi couldn't stage his play whereas Rotimi had the advantage of the Oriolokun Theatre which staged his. It was even by providence that *Ijaye War* was published before *Kurunmi*. As Ogunyemi (2001) narrated:

When Wole Soyinka, by accident, read my own version, he came to me and asked, what time did you write your own play? I told him 1968. He said your own has a lot of meat. He said he would like to direct it, but for the fact that he was travelling he couldn't. Then he said that he would get it published before Rotimi's *Kurunmi*. That was in 1970.

In terms of language, Ogunyemi's play stands apart from Rotimi's. As for Ogunyemi, he believed that language must reflect the historical figures concerned. Ogunyemi (2001) proudly declared: "The people whose fathers and grandfathers were involved in the Kiriji War corroborated the authenticity of my dialogue. They

all referred to me as an abiku because I write the exact thing they said at the time as if I was there. Ogunyemi's idea on language ensures the translation and transliteration of Yoruba thought pattern, idioms and clichés that are so thick in *Ijaye*. Rotimi had a little inclination other than to create his own pattern of language steeped in his peculiar poesy. Paradoxically, his effort seems to be more acceptable than Ogunyemi's even when Rotimi's language is marred by what could be termed a "period fallacy", a thing which Ogunyemi (2001) has already pointed out:

Rotimi said something about a cow going to the white man's land not knowing it will return as corned beef. There was no corned beef at that time!

Ogunyemi's Commitment to History

Ogunyemi's commitment to history stems from his background. He was born in the town of Igbajo (which experienced great disruption during Kiriji war). He lived within tradition and history and he worked with the Institute of African Studies till his retirement and eventual death. He was quite unlike the *Waffi* man, Ola Rotimi, who lived for a long time in Warri, far away from Yoruba land.

Whereas Rotimi could afford to weave, subjugate or abrogate historical materials in his artistic pursuit, Ogunyemi felt reluctant to do so. Besides, Rotimi was a master of his craft and the result of all this is that many people (students, professional troupes etc.) prefer to stage *Kurunmi* rather than *Ijaye*.

Ogunyemi did not believe he treated historical material with such reverence as he once argued that he has had to discard many historical materials he got on *Ijaye* war. In the present play, *Ijaye*, for instance, he discarded the role of the white men in the conflict which Rotimi added to his *Kurunmi*. As Ogunyemi (2001) says, "Now, *Ijaye* that you have now is a more compact one because all the three Oyibos (white men) in *Ijaye* war, I removed them. No Oyinbo in this recent one." However, removing the white men does not contribute to the compactness. In fact, it militates against the artistic standard especially as these white men played a prominent role during the war. Martin Banham (1976, p. 46) especially comments the scene when:

The conquering Ogunmola storms into *Ijaye* to take prisoner, the expatriate missionary Roper. It has about it a tension and excitement that delights.

This scene, rather than some static scenes, is what Ogunyemi removed in his bid for compactness. He also stressed (2001) that he has had to do away with mythical materials which would have sounded far-fetched and would have been difficult to achieve with the limitation of the stage. One of such is the magical power of *Kurunmi* who, each time he wanted to mobilise his men for war:

Would float mid-air as high as two-storey building, looking over the entire village, commanding everybody to pick up arms. He would see everywhere and he

often would say 'anybody who doesn't want to go, don't kill him, only remove his heart, and put it at his feet, then you come along'. Whenever he left this position he would disappear only to be found at the warfront.

Conclusion

The attempt made by Ogunyemi to be true to his historic materials has been achieved at the expense of his artistic endeavours. Although, one feels historical events which are chronologically plotted are infused with highly imaginative dialogue, the attempt made of infusing heavy historic materials into his play has contributed to the static nature of many scenes in *Ijaye* and some of his other plays. It has also contributed to the disjointed nature of his historical dramas. Tejumola Olaniyan (1988: p. 97) summarises the whole conflict between history and art in his work when he says:

The closeness of *Ijaye War* to exact historical details is obvious but the usefulness of this fact is questionable, for we are dealing here with art and not history, and when art takes on the function of history, it cannot but lose some of its cherished tightness and richness – *Ijaye War* is not spared this weakness.

The width of the play also results in the scattered nature of the characters and events: thus, only feeble attempts were made at coordination. These problems eventually result in ephemeral treatment meted out to the characters; thus, many characters that should have depth are shallow indeed. Nevertheless, Ogunyemi in his lifetime was one of the foremost writers highly sought by Nigerian film producers keen on producing historic drama. He therefore wrote many of such plays for stage and screen. These include *Oduduwa*, *Sango*, *Obaluaye*, *Kiriji*, *Queen Amina of Zazzau* etc.

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**FESTIVALUL INTERNAȚIONAL INTERFERENȚE –
TEATRUL MAGHIAR DE STAT CLUJ
WOYZECK OU L'ÉBAUCHE DU VERTIGE**

Josef Nadj a fost prezent în cadrul Festivalului Internațional Interferențe de la Teatrul Maghiar de Stat Cluj cu spectacolul *Woyzeck*, o coproducție a Centrului Național de Coregrafie din Orléans, pe care îl și conduce, cu Teatrul Național din Bretagne-Rennes. Spectacolul *Woyzeck, ou l'ébauche du vertige (Woyzeck, sau schița unui vertij)* s-a jucat până acum de peste 500 de ori și e singular în creația lui Josef Nadj prin faptul că a pornit de la un text dramatic.

Deși e un spectacol scurt (durează o oră!), *Woyzeck* are densitatea unei construcții de lut, greoaie, dar foarte precisă. Lipsite de capacitatea de a-și articula verbal intențiile, personajele imaginate de Nadj sunt mișcate de ideile centrale care plutesc în textul lui Büchner: automatizarea, corpul uman ca instrument de luptă și problema cruzimii sau legătura dintre destin și ființa umană.

Spectacolul e o adaptare liberă după cele patru variante de *Woyzeck* lăsate de Büchner și e inspirat, așa cum a povestit Nadj la întâlnirea cu publicul de la Casa Tranzit, din ideea firului de praf. Dacă pentru Büchner, firul de praf e definiția umanului, Josef Nadj merge mai departe pe această linie și modelează firul de praf până când devine un bulgăre de lut, apoi figurină umană și în final, chip de lut. Ideea centrală desprinsă din universul büchnerian e aceea a corpului uman depersonalizat, lipsit de identitate clară, privat de libertate dar înzestrat cu o cruzime care pendulează între latent și manifest, un corp uman mereu gata de luptă, oricât de mizerabil ar fi.

Într-un moment cheie al spectacolului, construit pictural, personajul *Woyzeck* ține într-o mână o pană, ușoară ca un fulg de zăpadă și în cealaltă bulgărele de lut diform. Această imagine în care pana cântărește mai greu decât pumnul de argilă, se constituie ca punct de sprijin pentru viziunea regizorală; e un paradox cu multiple implicații filosofice pe care se construiește lumea lui *Woyzeck* imaginată de Nadj. Destinul omului pus în balanță cu detaliul care poate declanșa catastrofe, ușurința cu care destinul uman poate fi sabotat, iată problemele formulate prin această imagine.

Raportul dintre fragilitate și greutate, în sensul de greoi și apăsător e recurent în spectacol atât prin opțiuni scenografice și vestimentare, cât și prin joc actoricesc. Este exploatat corpul uman, jumătate uman/jumătate mineral, pus în mișcare de gesturi bine calculate, care variază de la încetineală lăncedă, sugerând întârzierea mentală și fizică, și timpul real al acțiunilor specifice momentelor de luptă. Acest joc permanent între greoi și ușor amintește de secvențele coșmarești în care lucruri fine se împletesc în mod straniu cu lucruri greoaie, într-o dizarmonie stridentă, psihic deranjantă.

Personajele legate cu sfoară sau bandajate (semn al unor suferințe fizice), chipuri de lut ascunse în costumele noroioase, sunt creaturi ale căror umanitate e greu de recunoscut. Ochii sunt parcă singurele rămășițe din această umanitate precară a personajelor. Woyzeck (Josef Nadj) are momente în care comunică numai din priviri, alte personaje sunt expresive prin mișcările greoaie pe care le fac, sau dimpotrivă prin mișcări ușoare, ca și cum personajul ar fi lipsit de gravitate. Marie (Henrieta Varga) apare ca un personaj amorțit, cu mișcări de noctambul, care are ceva din rătăcirea printr-un vis. Atribuindu-i-se și o prezență de marionetă, purtată pe spatele personajelor masculine, Marie capătă funcția unui obiect de decor atunci când e așezată lângă un perete și uitată acolo. Ea e activată în momentele în care își poate arăta cruzimea provenită din puterea sexuală exercitată asupra personajelor masculine.

Crima nu se constituie ca un climax în economia spectacolului așa cum ne-am așteptat, ci e un moment diluat, împrăștiat în „porții mici” pe toată durata reprezentației sub forma atrocităților pe care personajele le suportă unele de la celelalte. Luptele simbolice sunt puse în scenă cu precizia specifică artelor marțiale, însă ritmul lor prea scăzut nu le valorizează suficient; e o lene și o apăsare care pare să domine prezențele scenice inclusiv atunci când sunt implicate în lupte corp la corp. Cruzimea înfățișată e contrapunctată de diverse nuanțe comice, aflate undeva în umbra mișcărilor: medicul îmbrăcat în alb e într-adevăr o prezență respingătoare și stranie, dar în același timp înfățișarea lui pietroasă are un efect comic, la fel și mișcările capului sau privirile confuze, neputincioase.

Din punct de vedere vizual, impactul e puternic și presupune atenție distributivă, pentru că există situații în care spațiul de joc e umplut de acțiuni paralele. Spațiul scenic e curajos gândit: oricând claustrofobia de pe scenă poate fi resimțită în public ca zgomot, dar precizia cu care se mișcă cele șapte personaje înghesuite în cutia scenică și geometriile create de mișcările lor balansează eficient această opțiune. Pe de altă parte, decorul e plin de surprize scenografice, spre exemplu: o ușă decupată din perete descoperă un personaj împăienjenit, înțepenit între rame, care se încăpățânează să fie „desprins”. În aceeași ordine se înscrie și colivia cu o pasăre vie purtată de Marie pe piept atunci când e sugerată infidelitatea.

Tributar unei gândiri de tip vizual, *Woyzeck*-ul lui Nadj reușește să fie pe cât de surprinzător pe atât de fecund în semnificații. Spectacolul e dovada unei fantezii de tip expresionist, fiecare clipă din spectacol putând fi pretext pentru capturi fotografice.

Coregrafie : Josef Nadj

Muzica : Aladar Racz

Lumini: Raymond Blot

Dansatori : Josef Nadj, Guillaume Bertrand, Istvan Bickei, Denes Debrei, Samuel Dutertre, Peter Gemza, Henrieta Varga.

PREA FIDELUL SFÂRȘIT DE PARTIDĂ

Patru personaje și o sală plină – în așteptarea sfârșitului. Spectacolul lui Krystian Lupa (jucat în 3 decembrie 2010, în cadrul Festivalului de Teatru *Interferențe*) redă ca la carte – cum s-ar spune – viziunea lui Beckett, respectă întocmai indicațiile scenice și potențează ideea centrală a scriitorului dramatic prin meditații și contemplații fie absurde, fie tacite, dar cât se poate de intense. La Beckett, timpul stă în loc, însă la Lupa, care l-a concretizat în imagine, el trece. Trece greu și îl apasă și mai greu pe spectatorul care nu cunoaște principiile și forma teatrului beckettian. În sens profesional, *Sfârșit de partidă* este o reprezentare fidelă, impecabilă a textului, dar din perspectiva spectatorului care e astăzi presat de trecerea timpului și nu-și permite să-l piardă în îndelungi așteptări, linearitatea și lipsa de intensitate apasă acut asupra răbdării și atenției cu care a venit sau nu înarmat pentru spectacol. Dacă așteptările personajelor nu au ajuns la un capăt, nici așteptările spectatorului nu par a fi fost satisfăcute. Însă, pentru a se identifica în absurdul existenței ar fi avut poate nevoie să fie provocat cu ceva mai mult decât replicile din sfera absurdului nostalgic, e adevărat.

Personajele își debitează drama fără a acționa, se înțelege că sunt deja resemnate în această situație și nu intenționează defel să o schimbe, la fel cum se înțelege și că ele ne reprezintă, iar acesta este cel mai important lucru. Spațiul de joc, puternic delimitat de un cadru roșu care dă senzația că totul se întâmplă într-o vitrină, sugerează întocmai această izolare, o ruptură fizică și metafizică a personajelor de lumea pe care o văd doar prin lunetă și pe care o percep doar odată cu schimbarea de lumină. La nivel de percepție, acesta rezește cel mai sugestiv element scenic. Resimte tensiunea și totodată o face resimțită. Clov, Hamm și băștii sunt imobilizați între acești pereți, de altfel foarte frumos colorați. Ceea ce vedem pe scenă este reflexia într-o oglindă convexă a cel puțin unei trăsături ce ne definește astăzi. Înainte de orice, acest lucru se impune a fi știut și asumat și de spectator care, odată ce a început spectacolul, se alătură personajelor și formează un univers din care nu poate să nu-și dea seama că face parte.

Mecanicizarea, lipsa de sens, reducerea și limitarea cu care se confruntă personajele lui Beckett sunt sugestive pentru omul secolului al XX-lea, pe care noi, cei de azi îl cunoaștem foarte bine dat fiind faptul că suntem în generația imediat următoare lui, dar ale cărui trăsături nu le conștientizăm tocmai din această imposibilitate de distanțare pe care Lupa o accentuează. De aceea în *Sfârșit de partidă*, un element cheie este timpul (explicat în permanență de jocul „atunci” / „altădată”), o nostalgie continuă în concordanță cu ceea ce implică acest timp: așteptare, oscilare și perspectiva morții. Timpul, care nu este resimțit de personajele de pe scenă care nu acționează, ci își păstrează un permanent calm asemeni celui din orizontul mării pe care doar

Clov îl vede prin fereastră. Timpul, de a cărui trecere suntem totuși (ei și noi) anunțați prin schimbarea intensității luminii. Jocul „vreau” / „nu pot” din discursul lor, concretizat de oscilația lui Clov între a muri și a anunța sau nu asta, între a pleca și a nu pleca, este de asemenea o ilustrare a resemnării omului aflat în imposibilitate, redus, limitat la doar câteva caracteristici. Hamm este orb și imobilizat într-un scaun cu rotile, iar el, Clov și bătrânii trăiesc într-o interdependență care le este incomodă, dar de care nu pot scăpa. Nagg și Nell, părinții, sunt reduși la stadiul de ființe fără membre inferioare, blocați fiecare în containerul – mai bine zis, cutia, căci așa pare – cu rumeguș sau nisip, aflați mereu la dispoziția lui Hamm. Cu toții sunt actanți schilodiți, în jocul rutinei, al nimicului, al sictirului pe care și-l asumă și pe care îl trăiesc cu indiferență. Un absurd al existenței înglobat într-un stadiu situat la limita dintre omenesc și animalic asumat de cele mai multe ori cu o încăpățănare aberantă. Asumare grație căreia situația e fără ieșire.

Însă la Beckett, acest absurd ar fi putut fi valorificat ușor și eficient prin accentuarea valențelor comice ale textului în cadrul reprezentației. Beckett vrea ca omul să râdă de propria-i condiție de mecanism care are pretenția că merită să trăiască. Personajele din *Sfârșit de partidă* nu își propun să stârnească compasiune. Ele au scopul de a trezi la realitate. Or, în această punere în scenă, pasivitatea lor nu e îmbogățită cu nimic pentru a stârni reacții, ci e pur și simplu accentuată și, totodată, aproape mistificată. Într-adevăr, esența textului e impecabil redată. Însă miza pe care se bazează această redare – răbdarea, calmul, staticul excesiv – e riscantă.

Acuratețea se regăsește și în jocul actorilor de la Teatro de la Abadia (Spania), căci ei îi interpretează pe Hamm, Clov, Nagg și Nell. Personajele sunt statice, în sine. Nagg este cel mai simpatic în acea lume a apatiei. În tot cazul, sunt profesioniști, căci în nefirescul situației, jocul lor e firesc. Spectatorul trebuie să înțeleagă că ei se află într-un spațiu limitat și izolat, din care nu pot pleca. O insulă care nu le oferă altă posibilitate de a se delecta decât cu geamurile către mare, către un infinit necunoscut, dar prezent. Clov este singurul care se bucură de o mai mare libertate, căci dincolo de ușiță își are propriul spațiu, o bucătărie de „trei pe trei pe trei metri”, din care apare doar dacă e chemat de Hamm. Pe scenă se creează o relație de interdependență în centrul căreia se află Hamm. De la stânga la dreapta, Nagg și Nell sunt la cheremul lui Hamm, căci sunt aduși la vedere la ordinul lui, iar în sens invers e Clov.

Un lucru foarte interesant în vizunea regizorală despre Clov, este travestiul cu care este înzestrat acest personaj. E îmbrăcat ca un băiat, neglijent și cu căciulă în cap. Arată de parcă ar fi stagnat în stadiul infantil, al perioadei când copilul își târâie picioarele și-și lasă hainele să atârne de el ca de gard. Deși surpriza este anunțată de voce, ea este contrazisă de gesturi. De la calm la vagă răzvrătire, de la firesc la neașteptat, Clov – fie că e un *el* sau o *ea* – e singurul care se schimbă, odată cu atmosfera și vizual, începând cu pantofii verzi. Pentru Hamm, în schimb, batista, ochelarii, halatul sunt constante indispensabile la fel ca și starea lui de spirit.

Lumina e statică, în concordanță cu atmosfera, pe care o modifică, însă, într-un mod desăvârșit, alături de muzică și sunetul vântului, al golului, doar în momentele cheie, mai aproape de final și de dezvăluirea ultimă. Publicul e parte intergrantă a lumii lor limitate căci iluminatul de pe scenă coincide până la final cu cel din sală. Spectatorul nu le urmărește existența, ci face parte din ea, e direct vizat și implicat. Stingerea luminii coincide cu momentul de tensiune maximă, potențat de lumina apusului care se revarsă pe geamuri și schimbă drastic atmosfera din spațiul personajelor, limitat ostentativ și sugestiv de acel cadran roșu care nu poate fi scos din aria vizuală.

Se pare, deci, că existența e un joc, o partidă de la care absentăm și pe care o pierdem îngropându-ne în replici, lamentații, aparențe și aberații. Tragicul existenței într-o lume care nu exprimă nimic e prezent, plutește și apasă ca un nor de fum. E amuzant sau lamentabil? Provocator sau plictisitor? Cert e că în sfârșit suntem față în față cu propria noastră existență, suntem puși în situația de a o percepe amplificată și de a ne da singuri seama care e esența ei. Căci acum *se impune* să o cunoaștem. Să ne cunoaștem.

ANDRADA VAIDOȘ

IVONA, PRINCIPEȘA BURGUNDIEI: UN ADEVĂRAT CIRCULUS VITOSUS

Scurtă lecție de istorie

La o privire analitică și comparativă a picturii lui Rubens, spre exemplu și a imaginilor de pe copertele *Cosmopolitan*, vom observa că în primul caz nudul feminin este întruchipat, nici mai mult nici mai puțin ca fiind rotunjour, cu forme pline și încărcat de voluptate, iar în al doilea frumusețea feminină se materializează într-o făptură suplă, cu picioare lungi și talie de viespe, aproape anorexică, într-o ființă care însumează standarde ideale foarte greu de atins. Așadar, dacă ne îndreptăm privirea înapoi în timp, vom sesiza evidența că întotdeauna societatea a fost cea care a impus normele estetice și criteriile de apreciere a frumuseții.

Trăim într-o societate în care distorsiunile sunt condamnate și arătate cu degetul iar caricaturalul este respins, în care formele, etichetele și normele sunt cele care dictează, o societate insensibilă și lipsită de conținut sau profunzime. Această lume este aspru criticată în piesa *Ivona, principesa Burgundiei*, scrisă în 1935 de Witold Gombrowicz – romancier, dramaturg și filozof polonez, care a dus o luptă împotriva tradițiilor, bătălia servindu-i drept punct de plecare pentru poveștile sale. Am putea spune că Gombrowicz este un fel de Rabelais al lumii ploneze în materie de atac satiric. În *Ivona, principesa Burgundiei*, piesă scrisă într-un registru grotesc, formalitățile acaparează individul surprins în imposibilitatea de a se elibera. Ivona – personajul-motor al acțiunii – întruchipează tot ce e mai rău: „o curcă plouată, mofluză și smiorcăită, molâie și lălâie, o moluscă îmbufnată și îndoliată”, cum spune chiar textul. Ea este, în plan estetic, un soi de *Ducesă Urâtă* – pictura lui Quentin Massys unde distorsiunile sunt duse până la limitele grotescului.

Montarea lui Bocsárdi

În punerea în scenă propusă publicului în cadrul festivalului „Interferențe”, la Teatrul Maghiar de Stat, Cluj-Napoca, regizorul László Bocsárdi intuiește foarte bine punctele nodale ale piesei, reușind să sincronizeze intențiile dramaturgului cu ale lui însuși, dar și cu ale actorilor de la Teatrul „Tamási Áron”, Sfântu Gheorghe. Alegerea lui este vădit inteligentă, întrucât piesa poloneză oferă multă libertate viziunii regizorale, care, nu-i așa, are în general rolul de a umple golurile lăsate intenționat sau nu de dramaturg, de a accentua semnificații sau a produce altele noi, de a realiza o operă artistică, nu de a transpune doar mimetic pe scenă un text literar, Bocsárdi dovedindu-și forța creatoare necesară în acest sens.

Curtea regală la care se desfășoară acțiunea devine indicele societății meschine, înfățișată de regizor ca fiind o societate dominată de media. Această

convenție ni se introduce din primele momente: Șambelanul intră în scenă cu o cameră de filmat, fiind urmat de suita regelui și a reginei, iar imaginile pe care le surprinde sunt proiectate live pe un ecran de televizor aflat în partea stângă. Escorta este reprezentată de câțiva bărbați îmbrăcați în negru și de trei doamne de onoare deloc onorabile. Prin intermediul acestora se sugerează supremația normelor și a protocolului și se subliniază ideea lui Gombrowicz privind limitările și încâtușările impuse de *formă*. Spațiul de joc ales este unul de factură minimalistă: spatele scenei studio este încadrat de panouri negre, iar în partea dreaptă e plasată o canapea-mobilă (valorificată la maximum de-a lungul spectacolului). Surpriza se produce puțin mai târziu, când două panouri din partea centrală se deschid și ni se înfățișează un al doilea spațiu de joc foarte bine delimitat – spațiul Ivonei, înconjurat de pereți albi, având în centru un bazin de noroi pe marginea căruia se poate circula.

Una din tehnicile principale utilizate este caricatura. Bocsárdi dovedește înțelegerea acesteia, a faptului că prin distorsiunea și exagerarea unor caracteristici se poate obține satirizarea, ridicularizarea și atragerea atenției asupra personajelor pe care le construiește în această manieră. La curtea regală toți acționează în conformitate cu anumite conduite impuse. Acest ceremonial social este doborât de apariția Ivonei, o prezență cu totul și cu totul deosebită. Actrița Gisella Kicsid realizează o compoziție impresionantă, absolut totul fiind deformat în cazul ei: gura îi e strâmbă, privirea îi este goală, mersul e sacadat, diform, încovoiat. Glasul este denaturat, mai mult geme cuvintele decât le articulează. Costumul e în prima parte alb, confecționat din bucăți de pânză, cu niște săni uriași, falși, lăsați, de-a dreptul grotești, iar în partea a doua e îmbrăcată într-un costum bărbătesc, semn al pseudo-integrării ei în societate.

Prezența Ivonei este una misterioasă și stranie, se bălăcește în noroi, acest spațiu cu mocirlă în care își duce existența sugerează modul în care e stigmatizată, marginalizată, batjocorită de către societate din cauza bolii pe care o are: „dacă s-ar însufleți, sângele ei ar circula mai repede, iar dacă sângele i-ar circula mai repede, s-ar însufleți”. Prin această replică se esențializează ideea de *circulus vitiosus*, speculată de regizor în întreg spectacolul. Ivona nu este retardată, ea înțelege perfect ce se petrece în jurul ei, înțelege cruzimea lumii și își alege o armă extrem de puternică: tăcerea, o tăcere sfidătoare, care îi permite să se distanțeze. Prințul Filip este extrem de intrigat de această creatură ciudată: inițial o umilește, dar treptat devine din ce în ce mai atras de ea și vrea cu orice preț să o ia de soție, dar nu pentru că o iubește, ci pentru că astfel se poate elibera din existența monotonă și plată în care e cufundat. Actorul László Mátray crează un personaj crud, ignorant, nemilos, dinamic, nevrotic pe alocuri. Filip o prezintă pe Ivona curții regale, acesta fiind momentul declanșator: marcați de apariția ei, toți încep treptat să își dezvăluie adevăratul

caracter: regele își amintește de crima din tinerețe, sunt scoase la iveală înclinațiile lirice ale reginei Margareta, de care aceasta se rușinează, iar Șambelanul își trădează tendințele homosexuale. Ideile frumosului sunt adânc implementate la nivel social, iar orice deviație de la aceste standarde este reprimată. Reprezentanții curții sunt atât de deranjați de Ivona, încât se ajunge la plănuirea unei crime: ea trebuie ucisă, trebuie distrusă orice urmă de pericol sau de atac la adresa societății. Pentru ca cercul să se închidă, Șambelanul filmează chipul suferind al Ivonei care se înecă cu un os de caras, prim-planurile fiind proiectate pe același ecran.

În cele din urmă, pentru a realiza un spectacol valoros sunt necesare câteva ingrediente: o trupă de actori serioasă și talentată, un regizor priceput și un text care permite interpretări multiple, în spectacolul de la Sfântu Gheorghe regăsindu-se din plin aceste elemente.

Regia: László Bocskári

Traducerea: Pályi András

Costume: Judit Dobre Kóthay

Muzica: Árpád Könczei

Coregrafia: Fatma Mohamed

Filmări și montaj video: Sándor Sebesi

Cu: Gisella Kicsid, Levente Nemes, Zsuzsa Gajzágó, Tibor Pállfy, Gyöngyi Pál-Ferenczi, Loránd Vata, József Kolcsár, Gizella Molnár, Szidónia Krizsovánszky, Gábor Erdei, László Botka, Mihály Kömíves, László Veress, László Károly, Mária Fekete, Éva Ruzsuly, Imola Magyarosi, Fatma Mohamed, László Darvas.

ANDREEA DUDA

HEY, GIRL!: ALUNECÂND ÎNSPRE FEMINITATE

Teatrul Bulandra a fost scena care a primit în cadrul FNT un produs din 2006 al companiei de teatru „Società Raffaello Sanzio”, condusă de Romeo Castellucci. *Hey, girl!*, spectacol uluitor și plin de noutate în regia și sceografia lui Castellucci însuși, cu Silvia Costa și Sonia Beltran Napoles, n-a lăsat pe nimeni indiferent, drept dovadă stând discuțiile aprinse din mediile virtuale. Nu cred că există cale de mijloc în „cazul” Castellucci: îți place și vrei să-l mai vezi o dată sau ieși din sală cu simțurile iritate și mintea buimăcită. Prospețimea tehnologică, vizuală, narativă, sau, mai exact, non-narativă, cu care a venit la pachet acest spectacol-conceptual bulversează criteriile tradiționale ale receptării.

Hey, girl! nu dispune de o poveste tradițională; e ilustrarea unui moment care, în căutarea suportului scenic, a fost dilatat astfel încât să poată cuprinde o întreagă simbolică. Castellucci a exploatat vizual o stare de tranziție, de la fată/adolescentă/puștoaică la femeie, făcând un spectacol-poem, proiectat în hiperbolă, simbol, metaforă, peste care a adăugat inteligent elementele concrete de scenografie. Rezultatul e complex, halucinant. Spațiul scenic apare ca un spațiu de incubație a feminității în care e topit un univers gestual ritualic: nașterea, recunoașterea, decapitarea, îmbrățișarea și, în final, eliberarea. Pentru că transformarea e un proces delicat, gesturile sunt impregnate cu lentoare pentru ca ochiul spectator să poată privi „înăuntru” cu atenție. Corpului moale și lent i se opun stridențele sonore, aproape insuportabile, create de Scott Gibbons, un vechi colaborator al companiei conduse de Castellucci.

Un trup moale și lipsit de identitate se dezlipește dintr-un țesut organic. E o naștere tăcută, liniștită, însoțită de sonorități optimiste; trupul gol se privește într-o oglindă și își recunoaște pentru prima dată feminitatea incipientă, adolescentină – asistăm la începerea procesului de asumare și transformare. Urmează o suită de gesturi și acțiuni simbolice care încarcă ritualul devenirii: fata bate într-o toacă celebrându-și intrarea în lume, apoi suspină cu capul plecat. Dar continuă să se transforme; își pune o pereche de jeanși și un tricou alb care-i subliniază „băiețenia” trupului, apoi se apropie de o sabie încinsă, în avanscenă, peste care topește un ruj și stropește parfum. „I hate these medieval symbols”, se aud șoaptele fetei. Sabia sfârâie sub picăturile chimice, în sală se propagă mirosul parfumului, iar metafora feminității incipiente se concretizează olfactiv. Îmbracă apoi o mantie imprimată cu un X, atât trimitere la ipostaze feminine istorice precum Ioana d’Arc sau Maria Antoaneta, cât și la imediata lor negare. Un sunet violent ca o eroare de computer face publicul să tresară. Dublate de note apăsată, două cuburi, situate în stânga și dreapta sus, se aprind și se sting în ritm crescendo, în timp ce personajul ezită între cele două semnale. Ce drum să aleagă?

Confuzia o lasă în întuneric și tăcere. Silueta ei apare acum întinsă pe scenă. Corpul palpită ca într-o mișcare lentă de cădere în gol. Pe scenă se aglomerează 30 de bărbați „înarmați” cu perne, iar ea nu luptă, neputincioasă, singură. Siluetele masculine întunecate, iluminate de un curent slab, acționând parcă la comanda sunetelor devenite monstruoase, cărora li se adaugă zgomotul produs de cele 30 de perne lovind scena, marchează un punct de maximă violență. Stop! scena se aprinde într-un roșu furios; pentru o secundă, se taie respirația spectatorului. Roșul e stins în întuneric de câteva ori, imitând mișcarea rapidă a pleoapei de la închidere la deschidere, ca și cum un ochi uriaș ar fi clipit pe scenă. Prin beznă, se distinge în avanscenă capul supradimensionat al fetei, o rămășiță necesară. Din grupul de bărbați, fata conduce cu griji o femeie de culoare îmbrăcată identic, purtând o copie a capului fetei albe. Femeia albă dezbracă și eliberează femeia neagră de hainele adolescente, iar capul-mască e luat și depus ca într-un gest de înmormântare lângă capul femeii albe. E părăsită astfel carcasa adolescenței, făcând loc unei ipostaze noi.

Negresa, femeia nou-născută, reia prin aceleași gesturi devenirea fetei albe: de la suspinele nașterii la recunoașterea în oglindă. Un personaj masculin îmbrăcat în hainele unui vânzător de sclavi de secol 19 încătușează femeia neagră cu lanțuri pentru a o vinde apoi femeii albe, care își preia „produsul” cu umilință, sugerând faptul că descoperirea identității presupune vrând-nevrând o tranzacție socială. Între cele două femei sunt coborâte patru geamuri rotunde prin care femeia albă va privi ca printr-o fereastră spre public. Femeia albă „îmbracă” atunci negresa într-un lichid argintiu, construindu-i o armură protectoare; un steag negru în mâna negresei e fluturat amplu, iar gestul primește o dublură sonoră. În același sistem de corespondențe audio-vizuale, o rază laser țintește creștetul femeii albe, iar în paralel, pe un ecran, sunt derulate tot mai rapid cuvinte ce concretizează verbal o lume întreagă. În final, cele patru geamuri se sparg simultan, iar femeile se regăsesc, printre cioburi, în îmbrățișare. Procesul de transformare e acum încheiat iar Femeia e liberă să trăiască. Un portret întors al lui Jan van Eyck (*Bărbatul cu turban roșu*, trimitere la perioada renesanțistă) e dezvăluit treptat, amintind că decapitarea simbolică e absolut necesară transformării.