

**MINISTERUL EDUCAȚIEI ȘI CERCETĂRII
UNIVERSITATEA DE ARTE TÂRGU-MUREȘ
ȘCOALA DE DOCTORAT**

AESTHETIC MODALITY OF THE BODY

Abstract of the PhD Thesis

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**Târgu-Mureș
2014**

TABLE OF CONTENT

Argument	3
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I. Body and Expression – an interdisciplinary survey of the history about the idea of body

1. The expression of the disguised body – the disguised embodiment	5
2. The expression of the ideal body – the embodied number	12
3. The expression of the sacre body – the embodied word	14
4. The decoded expression – the physiognomonic embodiment	15
5. The expression of the archaic <i>mimesis</i> – the futurist embodiment	15
6. The expression of the represented body – the artistic embodiment	17
7. The postdramatic expression – the <i>techno-phenomenologic</i> embodiment	18
8. <i>Fragments for a history of the human body</i>	19

II. Expression of the screen – prolegomena about the psychoanalytic reception of movie

1. Ideatic aspects of the mirror - <i>unconscious division, archetype, existentialism</i>	19
2. From the reflexion of the mirror to the expression of the screen – psychoanalytical transfer	19

III. Bodily expression – the pre-expressive embodiment

The body of the actor, body of expression – a phenomenological delimitation at the pre-expressive level	21
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Bibliography	26
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Argument

The theme of corporality had no substantial recognition offered by the history of philosophy, the only systematic attention along history coming from medical sciences, physiology and biology. In this sense the body had been pushed towards the periphery of rational thinking, being considered as second range, as an accidental matter, incomparable with the essence and axiology of rational knowledge. The binomial body-soul, inseparable from existential point of view, had been decoded on the basis of the antipode „master-slave” under the aspect of an axiological hierarchisation through the ontologic subordination of the body in front of the valorical essence given by the soul as a discursive reason. We may affirm that the body had been considered in a traditional way on almost three comprehensive levels: metaphysical, theological and scientific. Art did not deny the fanciful-naturalist exploitation of the body in the diverse forms of representation, but kept them in the spiritual-rationalist shadow of the European philosophy. The artist of the modern epoch inherits a dialectic tradition situated between the Roman-Greek background and the Jewish-Christian heritage. On the one side the body is a microcosm, a veritable projection of the world in miniature, on the other side, being created after the divine image, it becomes the obsessive remembrance of God. Finally, the body is remarked especially in the art of the Occident (Western art) The concept of „picture of history” is present in Leon Battista Alberti’s studies, whose *historia* projects the natural beauty of the body in painting.

An interdisciplinary survey of the history about the idea of body helps us to understand the diverse senses taken over, as this “big organism”, neglected or due to its hypermedialization, represented the basis of each human creation, indifferently of the domain. Such a review reproduces the most material experience, its density, its imaginary echo, an experience that situates it at the turn between the individual cover and the social experience, between the subjective reference and collective norm. The body remains the zero-point between social area and subject, subject and representation. The material sensibility, the intern representations, the expressive manifestations and the passive awareness do not always belong to the same register of reference and behaviour. The data are dispersed and separated because the distances abound from the intimate feeling to the social manifestation, from sexuality to alimentary taste, physical techniques, aesthetic criteria, imposed by the fashion and cosmetics of each epoch, behaviour models or fight against diverse diseases. In this

sense approaching the body from contemporary point of view takes into account more sciences, thus imposing a change of methods and epistemologies, connected with the study of sensations, techniques or expressions. This heterogeneity is in accordance with its object, as I. P. Culianu remarks in his review on the exhaustive study on the volume *Fragments for the History of the Human Body*, underlining the fact that these „fragments for the body” are in fact a „body of fragments”.

The simple inventory of Marcel Mauss reveals the „total man”, many of his values being incarnated in the most concrete forms of using the body. In this respect the theatrical art is no exception. Artaud prefigures the materiality of the „total actor” among other theatre creators, who, at their turn, neglected the importance of the body, or on the contrary, used it in excess, and studied the theatrical art “on the leading line of the body”, understood in terms of Nietzsche. Among the theatrical discussion the body is probably the most studied element of performance as a total ensemble that completes the unity of the artistic process and is integrated on the leading line of the body. Ironically this lively organism is very often under the sign of “death” and/or of “absence/presence”, suggesting a continuous rebirth present in the theatrical art. The constant element in the inherited tradition that unites the theatrical manifestations is the actor and due to the ancestral instruments and corporal techniques, as George Banu remarks, he enlarges the possibilities of expressive means. The actor, situated between his own interior and exterior expression, phenomenologic distinction of the binomial body-soul, pre-expression and scenic *bios*, expresses the materiality of the human spirit, the rich inheritance known by corporality nowadays. A. Mnouchkine understands this materiality as the essence of theatre, as she considers that „what is not physical, is not theatrical” and the body of the actor is in fact a „writer in the space”, in other words, in the temporal dimension the body of the actor becomes in fact the writer of history of the theatre.

This material essence in its psychosomatic relation is discussed by T. Vianu in his studies on theatre: „The actor is an artist of his body. The modification of physiognomy and corporal attitudes, the inflections of the voice and the variety of verbal flow are means which the actor uses in order to obtain that escape from a foreign individuality, characteristic for his art. His external apparition and his physical manifestation forms a kind of soft paste that has gives him the energy to create whatever form he wishes. The actor may annul the reactions, reflexes or his habits in order to substitute them with motric adaptations, tics or bodily own habits,

representative for that individuality. From this point of view one of the most essential characteristics of the acting gift is the physical mobility. No skill is too deep rooted for an actor; any of them can be easily deconstructed or replaced, if needed.”¹.

I. Body and Expression – an interdisciplinary survey of the history about the idea of body

1. The expression of the disguised body – the disguised embodiment

From historical point of view the first body that had established its place on the stage of the future theatre generated the revolutionary gesture of Thespis, the coming out from the choir, forcing thus people to sit down in a semicircle in order to see better the „image” of the performer, so that they became the audience, creating in this way the essence of the theatrical space – wherefrom the name of the genre derives, especially as the stage is attributed to Thespis² and his legendary car with masks, may be with costumes at his free disposal.³ Starting with this moment the body of the actor knew his historical development, beginning with the Roman-Greek and the Jewish-Christian background, the modern mechanisation, the return to the primitive ancestral rituals, up to the postmodern despiritualisation. The body of the actor of ancient Greece had been evaluated due to the mask and costume, elements that are important as means of expression, even more then gesture and mimic art, especially taking into account their double function as ornamental element and symbolic significance. As long as the mask amplified the voice and the use of cothurnus, the specific footwear of actors interpreting tragedies, and was underlined among the wig over the mask the exceptional physical dimension, a costume of a special volume was needed. Thus the dramatic figures used to look very huge. The extraordinary costume of the Greek theatre had two essential components, a multicoloured tunic and a mantle, both contributing to the gigantic apparition of the bodies. In order to hide the visible disproportion due to the height suggested by the cothurnus and the wig, the actors used to introduce all kind of „paddings” under their costumes, the effect being a harmony of the dimensions. It is to be noticed that the body expression in the ancient Greek theatre is taken into account under the aspect of

¹ Tudor Vianu, *Esența artei actorului*, in: *Scieri despre teatru*, Editura Eminescu, București, 1977, p. 35

² In 534 B.C. during the Major Dionysian Feasts organised by Pisistrate at Athens, Thespis had presented the first dialogue between choir and actor, *apud* Vito Pandolfi, *Istoria teatrului universal*, vol. I, Editura meridiane, Bucuresti, 1971, p. 61.

³ V. Camil Petrescu, *Modalitatea estetică a teatrului*, Editura enciclopedică română, București, 1971.

the alusive elements with symbolic character, in comparison with its major importance in poetry and sculpture of the respective epoch. The mask and the costume that covered the whole body of the Greek actor were far away from suggesting a representative realism, as their expressive force suggested something conventional and a special style. The oversize of the actor's body, achieved by the help of these stylistic elements, suggests the placement of the tragedy and the tragic choir in the domain of idealism (even if Platon refused the ideal dimension) through that what Schiller⁴ named the „living wall which tragedy rises around in order to isolate itself from the real life with the aim to protect its ideal domain and its poetic liberty.”⁵.

If we follow the historical roots concerning mask and costume, we may notice that this virtual wall of human overcostumed bodies had the function to suggest the ideal character of catching the essence through manipulation of the stylized appearance. Thus the forced stylized bodies became a means of expressing the poetic ideal. The effect of the tragedy consists in the opinion of Nietzsche⁶ in the fact that the state and the society, the abyss that separates human being from human beings, allow a feeling of unity that offers people the reidentification with nature.

The obsession of the Greeks for proportion we may find for example in the oversized body of the actor. G. E. Lessing remarks in *Laocoon* the exaggerated dimensions in the case of Greek sculpture, and discusses the Homeric inspiration as principal source of ideal representation of corporality. In this sense he remarks that Fidas recognizes that he had been inspired by Homer's verses using them as model for his *Jupiter the Olympic* and only due to this he managed to achieve the image of the god - *propemodum ex ipso coelo petitum*.⁷ Lessing completes this observation with the information that Homer had demonstrated since a long time ago that there exists a special aspect achieved by exaggerating the dimension of feet, present in the verses where he compares the statue of Odysseus with that of Menelaus.⁸ As both heroes had been sitting Odysseus was the winner due to his physical presence. Thus the body of Odysseus presented an excess in the upper part, while the body of Menelaus in the lower part. In Homer's literary works such kind of comparisons are very present, most

⁴ v. Schiller, Preface to *The Bride from Messina*

⁵ Apud Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nașterea tragediei*, in: Victor Ernest Mașek, *De la Apolo la Faust, dialog între civilizații, dialog între generații*, ed. cit. p. 207.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 208.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸ Homer, *Iliada*, |Cântul III, v. 210-211, p. 60.

of them showing an oversized character. Besides these aspects we may add the idea that the mask and the costume of the performers of tragedies are the expression of the deductive character of the tragedy. The audience accepts to be „destroyed” by hyperbolic bodies that „announce” the suffering of the heroes. A rational care could have as effect that the performance is interpreted as being improbable, even useless. In turn a docile reception of a representative illusion could prefigure the *Dionysian freedom* as Nietzsche comments in his *Birth of the Tragedy*. In order to find arguments for this aspect I brought a survey in the exegesis of Gianni Vattimo about Nietzsche’s philosophy.⁹

The problem of the relation of to be/to appear, central in the whole history of philosophy, is present in Nietzsche’s conception of „tragic” nature and around this concept his entire thinking system is concentrated. Beyond the idea of beauty or even over the formal canon he researches the relation between form-content, interior-exterior, essence-appearance. The human being of his epoch appears to him as being characterized by total lack of form and content, and this fact explains why he considers form being a kind of „disguising”. Disguising at Nietzsche is something that does not belong to us normally, because we adopt it deliberately with a special aim pushed by a certain need. If the decadent mask is the disguise of the weak person of the historical civilization, and in general each mask is born out of fear and uncertainty, Nietzsche adds a mask of undecadence - „born because of overabundance and free plastic force of the Dionysian principle.”¹⁰ It is known that the general thesis of Nietzsche’s capital work *Birth of the Tragedy* expresses the complementarity of the two principles – Apollonian and Dionysian. The Apollonian art is the art of beautiful images where representation proves to be a mechanism that creates illusions, deceiving reality. The world of the Hellenic gods is the floating veil that has hidden to the sight the horrors of existence. From this philosophic point of view the Olymp represents the paradise in comparison with the inferno of the human existence. The sublime image of gods proves to be the reverse expression of reality. Abandoning the world of the Apollonian appearance as escape from fear, conflict, grief reveals to be the substance of a tragic experience. This is present in the literary works where tragic

⁹ V. Gianni Vattimo, *Subiectul și masca, Nietzsche și problema eliberării*, trad. de Ștefania Mincu, Editura Pontica, Constanța, 2001.

¹⁰ *Apud. G. Vattimo, op.cit.*, p. 38

characters reveal their tragedies and where Dionysos is present (typical characters whom Nietzsche considers tragic are Oedipus and Prometheus).

Through the participation at the Dionysian procession the man of cotidian life suffers a first process of transformation: he feels as living as a satyr, as a foremost human-divine creature. To this vision comes another, that of the choir of the Styrias, seeing in it the fulfilment of an Apollonian state.¹¹ In this process the birth of the Apollonian appearance has special fictional and disguise features, rooted in fear and weakness – the transformation of common man into satyr is a form of a „mask”, a transformation of his own into another being, corresponding to the need of flight from Dionysos. From now one can notice that the tragic actions of the typical characters of the Greek tragedy are totally Dionysian and not the escape from the world of limits. On the contrary, they mark as the transformation of man into satyr, a break from a rigid way of thinking, a break with any rules and limits, even from the „sacred” ones as family.¹² The genesis of the tragedy is a game of identification with something else then with oneself.

The discussion about the genesis and the significance of tragedy shows that in fact the release from art is the release from the Dionysian principle. In the tragedy the world of defined appearances is brought to a crisis on all levels, and only in this way man that became satyr conquers the possibility to produce appearances, unconditioned by fear. The thing from which Greeks run away is the world of consolidated *reality*, namely hierarchies, social and familial taboos. Only through this preliminary operation of reunion with the Dionysian essence of life and nature the basis for a world of appearances that are not disguises or false fictions for him can be taken over, as they are adherent through the thousands of faces which Dionysos may have, represented by the masks of different tragic heroes. What Nietzsche calls in Schopenhauer's terms „unity” of the essential being is only the force that produces the mask, like Dionysus who dies and revives, overcoming through himself the domination of individuality, regaining it and losing it again, like a mask.¹³

Vattimo remarks that the mask does not characterize the decadent man, but only the civilization, including the „tragic” one that becomes in Nietzsche's thinking a system that functions as a model. The relation between Dionysian and Apollonian

¹¹ V. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nașterea tragediei*, ed. cit.

¹² G. Vattimo, *op.cit.*, p. 40

¹³ Vattimo, *op.cit.*

principle is not the same as the relation between two distinct historical moments, because the Apollonian principle is an intern configuration of the Dionysian principle. The bad mask is born thus inside the good mask as an answer to some needs that, after been satisfied, get a „historical legitimacy”.

The affirmation that the tragedy dies through Euripides is translated by adding a rigorous rationality of action, of a pathetism and search of representative effects whom Nietzsche considers to be big rhetoric-lyric scenes where passion and the dialectic of the protagonist is amplified in a large and powerful stream.¹⁴ Thus results that the Euripidean characters start the process of disguise adopting the bad mask of passional conflicts predicting the domination of rationalism.

An attempt of disguising the Dionysian liberating force is tested by a series of theatre creators by trying to reintroduce metaphysics into theatre, in fact a voyage towards the mystery of the „unknown”. In this sense Monique Borie remarks that Gordon Craig and Antonin Artaud are searching for a form of theatre that should not be any longer an instrument of representation, but of revelation. A theatre of *manifestation* capable to insert the presence of invisible in the visible and capable to open the realm beyond reality is a magic or metaphysic theatre.¹⁵ We notice that the comeback of the original mask is intended, a disguise that announces the comeback of metaphysics as an ”artistic image of compensation”, prefiguring the invisible image of god, of the unknown and of absence. But this metaphysic disguise does not restore the original tragic unity, but brings to the „individual” inherited together with the death of the tragedy a „psychic voyage” seen through the prism of the disguised voyage of death.

In theatre the disguised death is shown through the disguise of the cadaver in the „empty grave”. In fact this is suggested by Jean Genet through the figuration of empty catafalcs whose monumental gravity suggest the unenivoque presence of disguised death. Borie remarks that Genet distinguishes between the monumentality of the solemn imobility of an inalterable figure that is defined by death and the monumentality as expression of a disappeared civilization that builds only false graves.¹⁶ The „big parade” with its pomp is organized around a simulacrum: the

¹⁴ *Ibidem*

¹⁵ Monique Borie, *Fantoma sau îndoiala teatrului*, trad. de Ileana Littera, Editura Unitext și Editura Polirom, București, 2007, p. 264

¹⁶ Jean Genet, *Fragments et autre textes*, Galimard, Paris, 1990, citat în: Monique Borie, *op. cit.*, pp. 302-303. Următoarele pasaje încadrate în ghilimele sunt din același context

empty grave. The theatre is nothing else than a solemn act lacking the veritable efficiency, an act that creates an appearance always cold and sterile, whose construction, retaken over and over, is never finished.¹⁷ Thus results the definition given by Genet to the performance - it is like to raise a tomb that never exists, that never had existed and will never contain anything. And thus never renounce to build it, at the beginning in secret, then without pity and also with special ceremony reveal the pretext that stands at the basis of the construction: a cadaver.¹⁸ The act of „carving a stone in front of a stone”, as called by Genet, is connected with the idea of suicide and of final silence. This act is also connected with the original *colossos*, the simple funeral form as essential grave, present around a cadaver disguised in stone through the prism of a *ceremonial simulacrum*. Theatre is, in the vision of Genet, on its way towards invisibility aspiring to it as the statues of Giacometti, because the actors do not get the massivity of statues only when they are confronted with death. Thus his dramatic figures need the materiality of theatre in order to fuse with their reflected image, that of ceremony and disguised death. During the game of the reflected theatricality the body loses its „reality” affirming through the disguise the force of images. If the Greeks imposed the superdimension and the monumentality of the body through mask and costume, Genet imposes the disguised body as a reflection of death, of absence, revealing thus the disguise of the tragic monumentality. The body disguised by ornaments is a statue like body, clothed, covered, but without life and his hand „dreams” in the vision of the playwright a „vague gesture” reminding of the flap of a wing.

Craig's *supra-marionette* is a disguise imposed to the body of the actor, deprived of his artistic nature because in the vision of Craig „acting is no art!”¹⁹. Implicit the body of the actor cannot be an artistic reflection of itself. Craig eliminates all actors and actresses²⁰ with the aim that the art of theatre could revive and thus he reminds of Flaubert's solution. Flaubert considers that the artist should be in his work like God: invisible and almighty; he should be felt everywhere and be never seen. He should be beyond personal emotions and nervous susceptibility.²¹ Craig inherits the Euripidean tradition of „killing” tragedy. While Euripides attributes emotion and

¹⁷ *Ibidem*

¹⁸ *Ibidem*

¹⁹ Edward Gordon Craig, *Despre arta teatrului*, trad. de Adina Bardaş și Vasile V. Poienaru, Fundația „Camil Petrescu” și Revista *Teatrul azi*, prin Editura Cheiron, București, 2012, p. 72

²⁰ *Ibidem* p. 83

²¹ G. Flaubert, apud: Craig, *op.cit.*, p. 83

passion to gods and mortals too, a fact that prefigures the decline of tragedy installing *realism*, Craig eliminates these emotions, feelings and passions in the name of a new disguise of realism, which he considers useless and perverted by the emotional state of the actor. This new disguise of realism prefigures the *super-marionette*. We notice that the instauration of the super-marionette projects the actor not as human being, but as a symbol of human being, a degenerated image of god (may be one pre-Euripidean), just like the marionette symbolizes the human body, without flesh and blood, may be only bones, suggesting in this way the super-marionette (Über-Marionette).

Artaud²², describing the statue-body of the Balinese dancing-actor, does not appeal only at the image of the lively body evolving in its overwhelming materiality, but also appeals at the image of the mummy-body, the petrified body with linear, dry gestures, a body in which bone as dominant element becomes an equivalent of stone.

Distinguishing Craig's super-marionette and Genet's ornamented body Tadeusz Kantor brings a new element, the duality of disguise of the actor's body, fact present in his manifest *The Theatre of Death*, a text impregnated with the echoes of the performance in the 70-ies, namely *The Dead Class*. The performance decodes the duality of disguise by the help of the mannequin as a prolongation of the actor's awareness, or even consciousness itself, a clear answer given to the searches of the stage director in a space where the body and the object, the lively and the inanimate become inseparable. Kantor affirms in his manifest-text that the mannequins are doubles of the lively characters as if they had a supreme consciousness gained after consuming their own life. Mannequins had been wearing the sign of DEATH.²³ If the mannequin is for Kantor the same as the super-marionette for Craig, the procedure of disguising the transcendent, and thus a model for the actor, the difference consists in the fact that Kantor is not interested in the prestige of the ancient sacred idols, specific for the disguise of the English stage director, but in the banality of the degraded, inferior modern object. The model offered by Kantor to the actor is a transgressive disguise of the artistic canon, as these creatures are created after the image of man in a

²² v. Monique Borie, op. cit., p. 277

²³ v. Tadeusz Kantor, *Le Theatre de la mort*, L'Age d'Homme, Lausanne, 1977, pp. 215-224, in: M. Borie, op. cit., pp. 277-296

merely „cvasicladestin” way, marked by the obscure, revolted human approach²⁴, conceived in the contrary sense of ideal embodiment given by the symmetry and harmony of proportions.²⁵ Kantor believes that the mannequin is indispensable for his theatre, a theatre of death, because of its loaf of materiality due to these appearances, being a kind of „model” for the „lively actor”, having the chance to become an object of art.”

We remark that the mask of the actor is only a sign of compensation, prefigured by the absence of its divine model, absence/presence through its metaphysical disguise under the sign of the „unknown” and of „death”. In the center of this experience the audience is involved in the revelation and fear to be face to face with the mask of god (tragedy) or with the absence or death (Artaud, Craig, Kantor, Genet etc.). Francoise Frontisi-Ducroux affirms that the mask proposes to sight an expression of possession and identification - „If man looks into the strange eyes of the mask, he can't see himself up to that moment. In contact with the queerness he lives the feeling of his own queerness.”²⁶ This visual queerness suggests a double liberation of the Dionysian in the theatre *ceremony* that alternates between discharge, cathartic stillness and *mania*, that divine revelation and at the same time destructive madness.

2. The expression of the ideal body – the embodied number

The notion of beauty designs in the antiquity a different meaning in comparison with the present, as it is closer to the notion of harmony, symmetry and eurhythmy, signifying at the same time more moral and less aesthetic virtues. Beauty had no autonomous statute being associated with other qualities. Greek aesthetics was first of all embodied in sculpture, and only later on expressed in words, sung by Homer and Hesiod, then taken over by the Pythagoreans. The canon of sculpture had been numeric and depended on a fix proportion. That who carved the wellknown statue called *Canonul*, Policlet, imposed the rules that will lead to a good proportion, and the principle that formulates the canon won't be based in the same way on the balance between these two elements. The canon of the carvers will follow in reality nature and not art, and the measure will follow the proportions as they appear in

²⁴ v. T. Kantor, op. cit.

²⁵ About the ideal embodiment see chapter: *The Expression of the ideal body – the embodied number*

²⁶ V. Francoise Frontisi-Ducroux, *Le Dieux-masque, une figure de Dionysos d'Athenes*, Paris, Roma, 1991, p. 13

nature, especially a well proportioned body, then the proportions of a statue. Fact is that the Greek carvers had been interested in the canon of nature and used it in their works, demonstrating that it had been obligatory for art too.

Vitruv affirmed later on that nature made the human body so that all members correspond to certain proportions of his whole image; so it can be noticed that the ancients arranged their works of art in such a way that the members had common dimensional relations with the whole image.²⁷ The Greeks considered that nature, and especially the human body, reveal definite mathematical proportions, so that art imposes for representation similar proportions. And Vitruv understood this aspect as he remarked that the wellknown ancient painters and carvers used these proportions which are in fact the proportions of a handsome person, obtaining big and infinite merits.²⁸ The Greeks sustained the idea that the ideal body may be placed into a quadrat: *aner tetragonos*, or *homo quadratus* in Latin. Vitruv will present a draft in this sense, placing the body into a quadrat and a circle; this is a draft taken over along the history of art, especially in the famous drawing done by Leonardo da Vinci known as *The Vitruvian Man*.

The influence of the ideal body in the development of the Greek art is remarked by W. Tatarzewicz who asserts that the precision of measures may be debated, but there exists with certainty a general correspondence. Sculpture and architecture had similar proportions, and those of sculpture were at the Greeks synthetic proportions of lively persons. Thus the proportions applied in architecture and sculpture too were their own proportions. All used proportions were related to the human scale.

Along certain cultural periods man considers his own scale of proportions being the nicest, modelling his artistic works taking them as pattern. This is characteristic for classical periods: the preference for natural human proportions, creating works of art at human scale. But there exist also other periods that avoid these forms and proportions looking for bigger objects than the human ones, more perfect proportions than the organic ones. Thus taste, proportions, art and aesthetics are subdued to fluctuation. The Greek classical art had been the result of an aesthetic that equalized the perfect forms with the natural forms, the perfect proportions with

²⁷ Wladyslaw Tatarzewicz, *Istoria estetici*, vol. I, trad. de Sorin Mărculescu, Editura Meridiane, București, 1978, pp. 103-104.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 100.

the organic proportions. The direct expression of this aesthetic was present in sculpture and indirectly in architecture. The Greek classical sculpture represented gods only under human form; the Greek classical architecture produced temples for gods, but their scale based also on human proportions.²⁹

3. The expression of the sacre body – the embodied word

Another important aspect concerning the bodily expression is represented by *embodiment*. The Christian religion took over with succes corporality from the ancestral rituals as being the basis of cult and integrated it in the eucharistic ritual. The whole liturgic ritual is in fact connected with corporality: the body of the officials, the believers, the saints, the transformation of bread and wine etc; bodies that are part of a sacre „perfromance” in which the actants repeat infinitely in the same scenery with a vaste specific property and grandiose costumes the metamorphosis of Christ’s body. From the baptismal service, first holy communion up to the wedding etc. the Christian cult confers a major importance to the passing of the body through earthly life, as in and through the body the way towards this world and the other one is done.

The hierarchic tradition between body and soul has its origin in the Hellenic world, being succesfully integrated in the Christian tradition. The ascetic ideal of subduing the body for a future liberation of the soul from the slavery of the original sin is one of the fundamental principles on which spiritual life is based. Many references concerning the body are present in the *Old and New Testament*, but they won’t represent a major source to be analysed by theologians. The spiritual thinking does not refuse the contribution of corporality, although it takes a central position in the Christian ritual, transforming it into a subject of history.

The relation between the Catholic church and the theatrical activity had been from the beginning up to the recent homily of Pope Pius the XIIth very complex and often contradictory. The attitude of the church oscilates between strictness that damned any kind of exhibitions and the decision, only partially maintained, to make out of the theatrical activity an instrument for religious aims, without allowing any artistic autonomy. During the Middle Ages can be observed a certain enrichment of the religoius theatrical performance by placing it at the entrance of the big cathedrals

²⁹ Wladyslaw Tatarzewicz, *op.cit.*, pp. 116-117.

or even on stages in marketplaces. In the studies that inform about these aspects the taste for artistic transfiguration is to be noticed.³⁰

4.The decoded expression – the physiognomonic embodiment

Marin Cureau de la Chambre elaborates in the second half of the XVIIth century a dissertation of decoding the body signs and languages, called *The Art of Knowing Mankind*. It is a treatise about the science of physiognomy known as the art of decoding the body language, a kind of archaic physiology, that had a great influence on the history of ideas, history of art etc. The arts and sciences have a very old anthropological basis, rooted in the Roman-Greek antiquity, traditions of the Middle Ages in the Occident and Arabia, all of them being interested to systematize the link between body and interior being, namely between what can be perceived as superficial subject and that what is profound, exposed and hidden, visible and invisible. This refers to the specific inside of psychological nature perceived through the prism of the character, passions, feelings, emotions etc. and the corporal perception through signs, marks, traces, indicators, physical aspects etc. The metaphor that translates the paradigma of the human expression is based on the physiognomic system – the eyes are the mirror of the soul, thus the gate or window of the heart being „opened” by the help of the glance, and emotions, passions, obsessions, hidden thoughts will be decoded through gesture and mimicry, the basis of expression through body language.

Regarding the bodily/corporal expression we may notice that there are two main directions: the first refers to fundamental sciences, especially comparative anatomy, that registered different forms of body language; the second refers to the sensitive way of expressing by the help of physiognomy, to the play of emotional expression under the aspect of an individual and autonom language of feeling.

5.The expression of the archaic *mimesis* – the futurist embodiment

Further on we propose an analysis of two fundamental aspects referring to the series of polemics concerning the corporality of actor, mingled along the centuries among realistic and non-realistic theatre. The originary character of expressive corporality in archaic Greece has a long ritual tradition. We may distinguish two

³⁰ V. Ion Zamfirescu, *Istoria universală a teatrului, Evul mediu și Renașterea*, Editura pentru literatură universală, București 1966, vol II, p. 113

distinct levels in the organisation way of arts, a „constructive” and an „expressive” level, both of them having different components. The constructive art has at its basis architecture, completed by sculpture and painting, while the expressive art consists of a mixture of poetry, music and dance. The components of the second formed the so called „*triuna horeia*”³¹. This kind of „art” expresses the feelings and impulses of man through words, melodic gestures and rhythm.³²

The stimulating force of dance, the expressive character (word, gesture, rhythm), the kinesthetic experiences as the implicit „purification” prefigure the origin of the theatrical performance that will undergo during history a dissociative metamorphosis on the *realistic* plan and reversible in a *non-realistic* frame. Although the enunciations that formulate the series of polemics on theatre and its role placed between the „academic” classiscal realism and the „digital” apostasy suffer a kind of „exhaustation”, this is in many cases like in the non-realistic theatre definitive, as Sorin Crişan³³ remarks. Taking into account John Gassner’s explanation, according to which the modalities of the realistic theatre are materialized in a „solid dramatic form”, while the non-realistic creations had been experimental, evasive and out of joint, thus evanescent. Sorin Crişan concludes that nevertheless the theatricality that is preferred by modern creators becomes very often an operating means of renewing mentalities, even ideologies and morality. Through theatricality performance is estranged from the principles of narrativity, the attention being shifted from the *ways* of creation towards *creation* for itself.³⁴

Concerning the *mimesis* we will notice a significant shift provoked by the explosion of the imaginary and the techno-scientific progress. Besides *catharsis* it will gain visceral valence, while the second will assimilate purification through art on a transgressive, may be even imoral basis. And the *triuna horeia*, the concept that led to their appearance, is redefined in the contemporaneity of the performance through the „expression” of *media*.

³¹ V. Wladyslaw Tatarkewicz, *op.cit.*, p. 40.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 40.

³³ V. *Teatrul teatral. Stilizare și convenție conștientă* în: Sorin Crişan, *Teatru, Viață și Vis*, Editura Eikon, Cluj-Napoca, 2004, pp. 53-86.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 53.

6. The expression of the represented body – the artistic embodiment

In the study *The Look of the Artists*³⁵ Henri Zerner proposes a debate on a series of prolegomena concerning the artistic modalities of the body, emphasizing the imagistic shifts prefigured during the essential passing from the XIX-th to the XX-th century. Zerner points on two aspects: the first refers to the „transparency of photography”, distinguishing the difference between „looking” at the material and „seeing” its content³⁶; the second aspect refers to the aesthetic effect resulting from the body images on Delacroix, a still retrograde example for that period of time. The body turns into a visual „poem” that cannot be invented or described in words because through its imagistic content it is an expressive, legible body.

In order to understand the perceptual force of the expressive legibility we will appeal on Rudolph Arnheim’s theory.³⁷ Thus he postulates that through the process of seeing the conditions of forming concepts are satisfied, those who are accepted as being „preceptual concepts”, in spite of the tradition of limiting senses at the area of concreteness, while the concept aims abstractness.

Cinema will impose the model through the reproductive image, spreading in this way the criteria of beauty, the precision of make-up or the aspect of the visage, the veneration of slim, tanned bodies. The fascinating relation with the model, accessible and at the same time remote, inimitable and also „human”, urges the wish of beautification, transforming slowly the modality of dreaming and of achieving beauty.³⁸ Thus cinema will renew the world of the imaginary from point of view of the aspect, being inspired by the specific tendencies of each epoch.

7. The postdramatic expression – the *techno-phenomenologic* embodiment³⁹

During the era of information and digital technology the human body knows a series of transformations in the imagistic of performances, imposed almost by the logic of the actual media.

³⁵ V. *Istoria Corpului*, vol. II, ed. cit.

³⁶ Henri Zerner, *Privirea artiștilor*, în: *Istoria corpului*, ed. cit., vol. II, p. 92.

³⁷ Rudolph Arnheim, *Arta și percepția vizuală: O psihologie a văzului creator*, trad. de Florin Ionescu, Ed. Polirom, București 2011, p. 55.

³⁸ G. Viggarello, *O istorie a frumuseții*, ed. cit., p. 223

³⁹ A part of this subchapter had been published in: Petru-Silviu Văcărescu, *Redefinirea tehnofenomenologică a corpului în era postdramatică*, în: *Symbolon*, Editura Universității de Arte din Târgu-Mureș, Nr. 22/2012, pp. 121-127

Starting with the development of the aesthetic surgery and the practice of modifying the body, from the bio diet and *body building* up to doping, the contemporary media accords a special importance to the examination of the body from the „techno-phenomenologic” perspective. Grafting, sex transformations through surgery, improvement of performances through doping, „biotech” intervention etc. allow the apparition of a structural modified being through the association of a mutant-body. Thus a Sisyphus of performance is projected, whose modified body is a simulation of features and natural functions of the human organism aimed for an advanced functionality. If the mutant-body is claimed due to simulation of the natural, his imagistic representation manifests its expression through simulation of reality. Thus the imagistic representation of the body on the postdramatic stage presents an immersion in the virtual reality, a space without surface where the limit between exterior and interior is mingled because that what is interior lies outside, and what is exterior lies inside. The bodily expression does not tend anymore towards imitating a real action, only a simulation of it. Hypermediatisation of the body in the field of „reality-web-theatre-environments” as the *webcam* in the private medium that offers the experiment of somebody else's intimacy or the virtual games that simulate universal-human activities like „The Sims” or „SecondLife” etc., show the need of an immediate transparency of the real by the help of technical means, and also the need to simulate reality by the help of digital bodies.

Performance art always manifested on the visible form and moving, being also present in the structure of the being – thus the audience is not interested in the pure geometry of space, but imposes an active seeing and a way of accommodation of ratio and memory in concordance with the sensibility of the stage; the playground is a space of doubtless forms, but also of the probability of a sensitive world. Seeing depends on movement and thus we see only what we watch.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, apud: Crişan, Sorin, *Teatru şi cunoaştere*, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 2008, p. 161.

8. Fragments for a history of the human body

Ioan Petru Culianu⁴¹ underlines in his review *Corpus for the Body* on the exhaustive trilogy *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, edited by Michael Feher, Ramona Naddaff and Nadia Tazi⁴² that this publication presents three main subject groups: the first he calls the vertical axe – „The Body and the Divinity”; the second is called „The Body and the Souls” – a transversal axe or what the body of a subject reveals about his interior qualities; the third called „The Body and the Society” or organic metaphors applied to the politic organism. At the same time there could be applied many other criteria in order to form other groups. The „fragments of the body” are in fact a „body of fragments”. Culianu concentrates also on some subjects of special interest present in diverse studies, all of them concerning the history of the body and the new dimensions.

II.Expression of the screen – prolegomena about the psychoanalytic reception of movie⁴³

In the aesthetic of cinema⁴⁴ there are a series of theories that bring the audience closer to the subject of psychoanalysis due to different analogies and psychic mechanisms. In the psychoanalytical theory a central place is occupied by the concept of identification, elaborated by Sigmund Freud in his theory on the psychic apparatus. Identification represents among others the basic mechanism of constituting the image of the ego and nucleus, the prototype of a certain number of instances and subsequent psychological processes that allows the ego to continue its differentiation. The primary identification marked by the oral process of integration would be the most original form of an affective relation with an object. Identification with the object is inseparable from the experience called „the stage of mirror”.

⁴¹ v. Ioan Petru Culianu, *Un corpus pentru corp*, în: *Jocurile minții, Istoria ideilor, teoria culturii, epistemologie*, Polirom, București, 2002, pp. 293-323.

⁴² *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, ed. Michael Feher, împreună cu Ramona Naddaff și Nadia Tazi, New York, Zone Series, 3 părți, 1989.

⁴³ A part of the present chapter had been published in the study: Silviu Văcărescu, *Dubla identificare în film ca politică de receptare psihanalitică – „Omul cu aparatul de filmat” de Dziga Vertov*, în: *DramArt*, Editura Universității de Vest din Timișoara, volumul I/2012, pp. 113-119.

⁴⁴ V. J. Aumont, A. Bergala, M. Marie, M. Vernet, *Estetica filmului*, Editura Idea Design & Print, Cluj, 2007.

For this stage Jacques Lacan⁴⁵ forecasts the instauration of the possibility of a dual relation between subject and object, between the ego and the alterego. The experience with the mirror, basic for the primordial form of the ego, is a form of identification where the ego starts to show itself from the beginning as an imaginary form. For Lacan this stage of the mirror corresponds to the primary narcissism putting thus an end to the phantom of a fragmented/fractal body that precedes it, narcissism being thus initially connected with identification. This narcissist identification with the object brings us back into the heart of the cinema viewer, but also to the other types of media. Jean-Louis Baudry underlined a double analogy between the situation of the „child in the mirror” and that of the audience.⁴⁶

A double identification is present in the movie *The Man with the Camera* of Dziga Vertov.⁴⁷ The film director discovers the benefice of the mechanic reproduction of the world in an epoch of constructivist enthusiasm when the „march of lights”, formulated two centuries before, went forward in an alert rhythm towards modernity. Reducing art to the material dimension of the world had been a moment of revelation for Dziga Vertov, then when he discovered the *cine-eye*, that natural cinema born far away from any scenario.⁴⁸ It is important to remark the fact that in the psychoanalytical reception of the screen the body is only an element that mingles with other means of expression. In movie not the body is significant but his fragmentation: detail of a face, hand, eyes etc. The body suffered a metamorphosis becoming the essence of movie, movie apparatus, as had been observed in the case of Vertov, with his *cine-eye* of the world, an interweaving of the visual perception field with the mental one.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem.*

⁴⁶ *Ibidem.*

⁴⁷ Dziga Vertov, *Omul cu aparatul de filmat*, experiment cinematografic, URSS, 1929.

⁴⁸ Marius Șoptorean, *Memorie și film, Introducere în stilistica și istoria spectacolului cinematografic*, Ed. Clusium, Cluj-Napoca, 2008, p. 44.

III. Bodily expression – the pre-expressive embodiment

The body of the actor, body of expression – a phenomenological delimitation at the pre-expressive level

Cristian Ciocan analyses in his study *Embodiment, Study about the Phenomenology of Corporality*⁴⁹ the phenomenon of corporality starting from the studies of Husserl, Heidegger and Levinas. The first part of his work traces the most important thematic items connected with the phenomenology of corporality proposing a characterisation of the specific in the phenomenological analysis of the body. Our question is if we may discuss about the phenomenological distinction between the body and corpus of the actor? And if we establish it then we ask ourselves how it may influence the corporal training of the actor? Thus we propose to differentiate between the body of the actor and the scenic body.

For phenomenology⁵⁰ not the „object body” is of interest, but the corporal experience, the sense of the fact *to be* embodied, the significance of the fact *to have* a body and *to be* a body – thus not the material composition of the body, his organic structure or biological function is of interest, but the way of revealing during a spontaneous experience day by day. The theme of the human organism enters under the auspices of scientism which sees in the body an object among other objects having diverse structures, features and functions.

While the investigations concerning consciousness, what it is, how it is structured became dominant in the scientific world, phenomenology⁵¹ with its accent on the experience of the audience and performer attracted the interest as a frame for philosophical work in the analysis of performance. Phenomenology disputes semiotics and other systems of analysing performances based on understanding because the attempts to rationalize and explain in a certain way communication in theatre as a system of codes proved to be limited. Phenomenology accords priority to sensations, feelings and other emotional phenomenon and as consequence reevaluates the descriptive modalities.

⁴⁹ V. Cristian Ciocan, *Întruchipări, Studiu de fenomenologie a corporalității*, Ed. Humanitas, București, 2013.

⁵⁰ V. *Ibidem*, p. 17.

⁵¹ V. și *Ghidul Routledge de teatru și performance*, ed. cit., pp. 327-329

Nietzsche⁵² proposes the body as a leading methodic line as the ego becomes through it the own model for all kind of knowledge of the exterior world and this discovery of ones own detects the illusory character of cognition. The subject that opens the horizon of the world and that of possible experiences is not ratio, but the body that experiments. This aspect reminds of the surrealist metaphor of Antonin Artaud according to whom the skin is the one through which metaphysics enters our spirit.⁵³ Nietzsche implicates a materialistic reduction which may induce the idea that spirit is an instrument of the body, and the spiritual activities are thus reduced to physical activities, to movements of the body. To experiment intimate in the body means to invent by „intuition” the expressive body. The moment of spontaneity, essential principle of scenic improvisation, reveals out of that unconscious „non-text” (terms described by Nietzsche) through „intimate” experiment and „invented” through the expression of the scenic body. Thus we talk about a first stage of selfdiscovery of the embodied corpus, a simple somatic stage based mostly on immediate perception then on rational implications.

We notice that each immediate experience is not produced on the level of ratio, but has to pass first of all through the filter of the body. During this stage of forming the scenic body the work of the actor tries to reduce the mental perception to a perception *in* and through the *body* of sensorial experiences. The phenomenological observations on the own body, of the own way of perception and the perception of the surrounding reality constitute the basis in forming the scenic body. The dimension of the proposed method on the leading line of the body determines a better knowledge of the original phenomenon of the body, of their implications in the field of perception and the determined senses, being in fact the dough from which the expression of the scenic body will emerge and grow. Looking for rational explanations concerning the work of the actor with himself without experimenting through his own body and original perceptive senses will result in a rigid scenic body, lacking expression and an authentic behaviour on the stage.

Rediscovering and selfawareness of ones own body projects the essence of the acting art. Without his own body the actor does not exist, but without expression he risks to have no body. Expression is the result of a bodily pre-expressive experience

⁵² v. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Voința de putere*.

⁵³ Antonin Artaud, citat în: Ariane Mnouchkine, *Arta prezentului. Convorbiri cu Fabienne Pascaud*, trad. de Daria Dimiu, Fundația culturală „Camil Petrescu”, Revista *Teatrul azi*, supliment, București, 2010, p. 160

in the perceptive field. The work on the pre-expressivity of the actor is useful in creating a „living body”, as Eugenio Barba⁵⁴ postulates. We may affirm that the study of the own corporal body will become a means to restore the movement of the scenic body offering him authentic means of expression.⁵⁵

In terms of phenomenology the body is first of all a sensorial experience: pain, fatigue, hunger, thirst, cold, excitation etc. or as impulsive expression: amorous aesthetic, artistic, performative pulse etc. All these prove that we are embodied beings and that our presence in the world is co-determined by our body, that we action on the surrounding reality by its help and that exterior reality actions upon us also through the body.

The analytic autoreflexive approach of phenomenology is a kind of reconstruction from zero of all that we are given, but always starting with the absolute data of consciousness. This is the starting point of the phenomenology of the body. We start from the primordial field of perception that is left after we had done the reduction of the world and of all its objects, including the other people, and then we may explore our original field of experience. Inside of this transcendental sphere we discover a certain kind of body that distinguishes in relation with the other bodies.⁵⁶

Another problem of phenomenology is the constitution of spatiality in relation with the corporal body. Husserl postulates that the own body is the single reality from which we cant go away/depart. This anthropocentric vision will become in another context through the original sense “I can” the value of absolute master of the own bodily *center*. The problem of the relation between the center of a corporal body, spatiality and bodily corp of the other supposes an opposite direction to the phenomenological perception. The scenic body will look for the center (the here) in the other scenic bodies, points or objects towards which he is moving. If a scenic body remains pitched in his own center perceiving the distance from the *here* of his own body, then exists the risk that the scenic relation is happening *parallel* altering the conflict. Avoiding the parallel play means to redirect the body (muscular principle at Stanislawski) by changing the own center of perception towards the subject of the relation.

⁵⁴ Eugenio Barba, *O canoe de hârtie, Tratat de antropologie teatrală*, Editura Unitext, București, 2003, p. 181

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 182

⁵⁶ *Idem*, p. 30.

At the pre-expressive level the actor tries to maintain the energy in the sense of what Barba postulated in connection with the scenic *bios*. Starting from Barba's thinking on the pre-expressive seen as a virtual level of organization⁵⁷ we may investigate and identify how the releasing of the corporal *bios* is produced. To feel inside that the body may mould itself beyond the limits of the perceptive horizon can be an imaginary pre-expressive experiment through which the actor prefigures a "phantom body", a prolongation of the inner *bios*.⁵⁸ Manipulating the perceptive field may differentiate the duality corpus-body; the lack of tactility may give the sensation of enstrangement of the body and seeing may action in favour (with closed eyes) or detriment (with opened eyes) of the eidetic vision.

A. Mnouchkin proposes the scenic action as the manipulating basis of the symptoms of the inner state – all these actions make possible the manifestation of the symptoms. Playing is a complex of symptoms. If there are no symptoms there are no diseases of the soul, no feelings, no state. Important is to give a form to these symptoms and thus action helps to reveal them.⁵⁹

The pre-expressive substratum is enclosed at the level of the global expression perceived by the audience. But it must be kept separate during the process of work so that the actor may interfere at the pre-expressive level as if in this phase the major objective would be energy, presence, the *bios* of his actions and not their significance. In this sense the pre-expressive is an operative level (that cannot be separated from expression), a pragmatic category, a practice that tends to develop and to organize during the process the scenic *bios* of the actor and to give birth to new and unexpected relations.⁶⁰ The difficulty to achieve the value that can be assumed by the notion of pre-expressive derives mostly from the reticence to take into consideration the point of view of the process. Our conditioned reflexes, when we speak of artistic products, push us to be preoccupied only by the way how the result functions. But it is necessary to be aware that understanding how the result functions is not enough to understand on which way we achieve that result.⁶¹

In conclusion joining the phenomenological distinction between corpus and body with the formula of pre-expressive acting art will be a translation of Barba's

⁵⁷V. Eugenio Barba, *O canoe de hârtie...*, ed. cit., p. 159

⁵⁸C. Ciocan, op. cit., p. 103

⁵⁹Arianne Mnouchkine, introducere, selecție de prezentare de Beatrice Picon-Vallin, trad. De Andreea Dumitru, Fundația „Camil Petrescu” și Revista *Teatrul azi*, prin Editura Cheiron, București, 2010, p. 91

⁶⁰E. Barba, op.cit., p. 164

⁶¹*Ibidem*, p. 165

observations concerning the Oriental and Occidental actors.⁶² Thus we understand the phenomenological coordination between the corpus and the body of the actor, similar with the dance of positions. The scenic *bios* is born only by releasing the inner *bios* and the corporal immobility releases the mental movement and that of the body as a living auto-affected and respectively hetero-affected organism, being in the sphere of a perceptive field given by the scenic reality.

⁶² Eugenio Barba, Nicola Savarese, *Arta secretă a actorului, Dicționar de antropologie teatrală*, trad. de Vlad Russo, Editura Humanitas, București, 2012, p. 13

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