

Narrativity as Transmediality - Dancing Literature: a Reverse *Ekphrasis*

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Abstract

As a form of reverse ekphrasis, a piece of music or a dance may re(-)present a literary text. This paper proposes an analysis on the measure in which the semio-narrative categories and the Greimasian actantial model are relevant for the understanding of choreographic discourse as reverse ekphrasis. In particular, the study considers choreographies inspired by literary (pre)text or pre-established narrative frames. In dance, gestural statements can be narratively semantized, caught – and thus clarified – within a story and within a constitutive aesthetics of ambiguity.

Key words: intermediality, transmediality, narrative, lyric, visual semiotics, ekphrasis, dance, literature, actor, actant, actantial structure, predicate.

The concept of intermediality “covers any kind of relation between different media” (Grishakova & Ryan 2010: 3), with two types of “storytelling media”: the artistic (words, sound, and images used by writers, composers and visual artists) and the technological (channels of communication such as cinema, television, print, electronic books) (Elleström 2010; Grishakova & Ryan 2010: 3-4; Kafalenos 2012: 115). Marina Grishakova and Marie-Laure Ryan distinguish many types of relations between these media: “intermedial reference (texts that thematize, quote, or describe other media), intermedial transposition (adaptation), transmediality, multimodality (the combination of more than one medium in a given work: e.g., opera, comics, or the words and gestures of oral discourse)”, and “a generalized form of ekphrasis” (Grishakova & Ryan 2010: 4), “perhaps better known as remediation, in which a work in one medium is re-represented in another medium.” (Kafalenos 2012: 115). Similar to “transmediality” is the “framing borders” concept, already theorized by Werner Wolf (2006). This is related to phenomena, including narrative, which can be represented in more than one medium.

Depending on the author as sign-maker, the form of modal resources may vary. Gunther Kress (2003) argues that there are cases of transformations within a medial mode, and cases of transduction across modes, with ekphrasis (description of a work of art by a verbal text) being a form of transduction:

A new theory of meaning cannot do without the concept of transformation; it explains how the modal resources provide users of the resource with the ability to reshape the (form of the) resources at all times in relation to the needs of the interests of the sign-maker. Transformation needs to be complemented by the concept of transduction. While transformation operates on the forms and structures within a mode, transduction accounts for the shift of ‘semiotic material’, for want of a better word, across modes. (Kress 2003: 36)

In this sense, ekphrasis may be encountered in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, when he describes what Aeneas sees engraved on the doors of temple of Juno, in Carthage, or in Homer’s *Iliad*, Book 18 when the description of the shield of Achilles is simultaneous with its fabrication by Hephaestus, by request of the goddess Tethys. (As Lessing remarked, in his *Laocoon*, this is a dynamic description, which does not depict the manufactured object, but its spectacular making process.) By means of a semantic extension, ekphrasis becomes a rhetorical device in which one artistic medium relates to another medium: a painting may represent a sculpture, or a musical composition may evoke some Pictures at an Exhibition (the Moussorgski’s cycle of piano pieces “describing” – as a “remediation” – paintings in sound). Similarly – a form of reverse ekphrasis –, a piece of music or a dance re(-)presents a literary text: *Don Giovanni* by Mozart, *Romeo and Juliet* ballet by Prokofiev, *Don Quixote*, originally choreographed by Marius Petipa to the music of Ludwig Minkus; *Esmeralda*, inspired by Hugo’s Romantic Novel, *Notre-Dame de Paris*, originally choreographed by Jules Perrot, with music by Cesare Pugni; *Faust* and Ionesco’s *Les Chaises* choreographed by Maurice Béjart, etc.

A very interesting example of complex intermedial relation – multimodality, transmediality and reverse ekphrasis (or “re-mediation”) – is Nijinski’s *Afternoon of a Faun*; both the music by Debussy and the ballet were inspired by a symbolist poem by Stéphane Mallarmé, *L’Après-midi d’un faune*. The costumes and sets were designed by the painter Léon Bakst. Rejecting classical formalism, it is one of the first modern ballets, inspired by ancient Greek artwork and Egyptian and Assyrian frescoes (Nijinsky wanted to evoke the image of a satyr shown on Greek vases). Bakst had collaborated with a remarkable theatre director, actor and theatrical producer, Vsevolod Meyerhold, whose experiments were focused on two-dimensionality, stylized postures, narrow stage, pauses and pacing to point up the most important moments of his productions. Meyerhold’s theatrical attempts were assimilated to Nijinsky’s choreographic idiom in *Afternoon of a Faun*, whose most important features were the angular, flattened body expression, emulating the poses on the Greek vases, and where stasis often replaced movement. Bakst recommended the two-dimensional staging to Nijinsky “as a way to solve the problem of recreating in three-dimensional space the rhythms of the flat, painted figures found on the sides of Greek vases” (Mayer 1977: 139). “This method of stylization signaled a radical departure from Isadora’s and Fokine’s renderings of ancient Greek dance in its move away from the free ‘hellenistic’ movement Nijinsky’s predecessors represented as Greek (what Levinson called the ‘simplified and vulgarized hellenism’ of our day.” (Scholl 1994: 70)

A transmedial relation between poems, dancing and drawings is established by Gigi Căciuleanu, Romanian dancer, choreographer and artistic director of The Chilean National Ballet. The genesis of his compositions is based upon the “dependency between the understanding of visual images, textuality and narrativity” (López-Varela 2011: 7) as a transmedial representation and construction of meaning:

- I saw in your choreography notebook a lot of poems and drawings. Is this another way of doing it?
- These poems are really just texts from which I started and towards which I’m going. The texts are just like the drawings that help me memorize the idea. A line or a word helps me memorize a movement or a mood that generates a movement more than writing it down word by word would help me. That’s why a poem is, to my mind, an essence, it is a text. A few words, a few lines scribbled on paper talk to me. They are there only for me. They are my tools. Take for instance Japanese calligraphy: you decipher it in a second, because you don’t just get the written word, but the philosophical concept, too... They are hieroglyphs. [...] the public will be carried towards some symbols that often unfold on more than one level, in different energy registers. (Căciuleanu 2002: 244).

Verbal expression does not exhaust the resources of narrativity, which is in fact, transversal and transmedial. Narrative structures influence meaning creation also in oniric ‘language’, figurative painting, and in choreographic composition. The story line is sometimes thin, without necessarily disappearing, as in the case of confessional, lyric dance. From a historical, typological and functional point of view, a distinction may be drawn between ritualistic, archaic dance, integrated in magical-religious practices and, respectively, “aesthetic” dance, partially derived from the first one. In aesthetic dance, the desecration of the ritualistic expression (kinesic transposition of the mythical, original narration) has entailed the “desemantization” or, rather, the demotivation of gestual statements (Greimas 1970, 1983). However, these are not left dissimilar, but can be narratively semantized, caught – and thus clarified – within a story and within the constitutive ambiguity of the aesthetic. Even acrobatic numbers carry narrative syntagms comparable to those originating in folk tales, as in the shows of the company Cirque du Soleil (see Greimas 1970, 1983). In other words, aesthetic gestuality may specify its meanings by integration into a (semio) narrative structure, which is manifested kinesically. The actantial model of narrative discourse comes from extrapolating a syntactic structure (formalized by Lucien Tesnière 1959) from the phrase to the transphrastic level. Thus, Étienne Souriau (1950) demonstrated the validity of the actantial scheme for the dramatic genre, Vladimir Propp (1970) built his formal model starting from epic texts, and Eero Tarasti (1996) applied the semiotic and narrative theory to a musical corpus. Tarasti supports his own approach with the Greimasian concept of “generalized narrativity”. Maintaining that human language has an immanent narrativity, Solomon Marcus (1989) traced the interdependence between lyric and narrative as two types of behaviour and discourse and, as he remarked, human language

has an “immanent narrativity”, and “converting the lyric into language” means, at the same time, “narrativizing the lyric” (Marcus 1989: 94-95). Similarly, Galen Strawson (2004) studied the episodic and diachronic narrative styles as two distinct views on the existential process and project related to its temporal aspects (430). Strawson’s conclusion is that “Narrativity, it is in the sphere of ethics more of an affliction or a bad habit than a prerequisite of a good life. It risks a strange commodification of life and time – of soul, understood in a strictly secular sense. It misses the point. ‘We live’, as the great short story writer V.S. Pritchett observes, ‘beyond any tale that we happen to enact’.” (Strawson 2004: 450)

This paper proposes an analysis on the measure in which the semio-narrative categories and the Greimasian actantial model are relevant for the understanding of choreographic discourse as reverse ekphrasis. In particular, the study considers choreographies inspired by literary (pre)text or pre-established narrative frames. It is necessary, according to Algirdas J. Greimas, to draw a fundamental distinction between two levels of representation and interpretation: a) an ‘apparent’ level of the narrative, where its various manifestations are subjected to exigencies characteristic of linguistic or non-linguistic (particularly choreographic) manifestation substances; b) an ‘immanent’ level, which may constitute a structural core, where narrativity is situated and organized before its manifestations. Therefore, there is a semiotic level shared by all narrativities, distinct from the linguistic level, which it precedes (Greimas 1970, 1983, 1973; Greimas & Courtès 1979). The semantic level is configured by the projection of the narrative syntax. The semio-narrative categories organize the explicit, canonical forms of narrativity – epic literature or colloquial, quotidian narrativity –, but also narrativity dissimulated in seemingly non-narrative discourses, such as the political or the scientific discourse. Non-epic does not necessarily imply non-narrative. The “semio-narrative competence” refers to the fundamental grammar of the enunciation/ discourse, which precedes the enunciation and is implied by the latter (Greimas & Courtès 1979: 104); whereas “discursive competence” is constituted in the course of the enunciation and governs the enunciated discursive forms. (Greimas & Courtès 1979: 104) Narrative grammar is independent from the discursive manifestations, (Greimas 1973: 162) even if it is actualized by means of the latter. Narrative structures are general archetypes of the imaginary, whereas discursive (thematic or figurative) configurations are, to a much greater extent, dependent upon the culture in which they are manifested. Particularly the choreographic discourse is the syncretic – transmedial and multimodal – result of the general narrative structures and of the particular discursive configurations (bodily, rhythmic, spatial). There is, however, the other side of the shield: the excessive extension of the concept of narrativity presents the risk of its becoming brittle and inefficient. “If almost any discourse is narrative (Greimas 1983; Greimas & Courtès 1979), then the category of narrativity loses the ability of seizing a specific difference, distinct in the vast ensemble of discursive formations in Foucault’s sense”

The distinction between actants and actors enables the separation of two “autonomous levels” of reflection upon narrativity (Greimas 1973: 161). Actants are

related to a narrative syntax, whereas the actors “may be recognized in the particular discourses in which they occur”. An actant may be manifested through several actors, as well as one actor may manifest several actants (Greimas 1973: 161). The actantial scheme proposed by Greimas implies certain dissociations: subject vs. object, sender vs. receiver, adjuvant vs. opponent. It is supported by the formalizations of Propp (for the Russian fairy-tale) and Souriau (for the dramatic genre). The following lines focus on narrative coherence in dance, tracing a brief historic revision of choreographic expression in the West, from Romantic ballet d’action to modern (psycho)drama.

The so-called Italian and French ballets from the 16th and 17th-centuries were mosaic performances which interwove vocal and instrumental music, recitative and stage movement sequences. Although such an ensemble had a certain narrative organization, the dance – performed especially through mimic gestures – contributed but little to the unfolding of the action. In time, the dancing technique improved; the ballet sequences were included into composite shows without any other role but that of highlighting the mastery of the performer.

The imperative of subjecting the choreographic movement to a coherent narrative technique is clearly stated by Jean Georges Noverre (see *Lettres sur les arts imitateurs en général et sur la danse en particulier*, 1760), the reformer of Western ballet in the 18th-century. A ballet d’action should consist of an exposition, a climax and a denouement, divided into acts and scenes, each containing an introductory part, a middle development and an ending. Noverre’s project is reflected in the great Romantic ballets from the first half of the 19th-century. Even before the dissemination of Noverre’s programmatic text, Franz Hilferding van Wewen, an Austrian dancer, had staged the play *Britannicus* by Racine, at Vienna, in 1740. His choreography had a clear narrative unity, anticipating the Romantic ballet d’action. At the turn of the century and by 1914, the increasing relevance given to virtuosity, at the expense of expressivity, determined Mikhail Fokine, choreographer of many performances at Diaghilev’s company, to resume the ideas-strengths of the reforming programme that Noverre had proposed, and among these, the principle of integrating each choreographic element into the logic of “dramatic action” (a narrative law). Dancing and mimetic gestures have no meaning in ballet, Fokine warns, unless they contribute to rendering dramatic action; they should not be used as mere entertainment or fun, unrelated to the plan of the entire ballet (see Fokine Estate archive)

The promoters of modern dance in America and Europe believed that ballet cannot express inner life, due to its artificial technique, depthless fantasy and narrative plot. However, a pioneer in modern dance, Martha Graham, has elaborated her choreographic language so that it may support her in expressing dramatic content. She has often appreciated her compositions as dramas. Besides the sociopolitical meaning, Pina Bausch’s creations have an element of psychodrama, manifested as the exteriorization as kinesic projection of a succession of inner events: the becoming of the ego, meaning, *lato sensu*, narrative coherence. Nevertheless, ballet is, according to George Balanchine (1988), such a rich form of art that it should not be merely an ‘illustration’ not even of the

most significant literary sources, and should speak for the self and about the self. Thus, in early modern dance, certain choreographers have tried to exploit procedures already tested in literature, showing how narrative is not the monopoly of literature. Fragmentary narrative, flashback or temporal dislocation, are among the techniques employed by Martha Graham in *Clytemnestra* (1958). Moreover, the semio-narrative categories transgress the verbal, and can be expressed choreographically, as I will show in the following lines.

Choreographic movement is, according to Rudolf Laban, the result of a certain “mood” or “quest” for a certain object of desire regarded as “valuable” (Laban 1994: 20). Even when dance renders an inner (psycho-emotional) path, it may be analyzed with the tools of the semiotics of narrativity, since narrativity may be understood, *lato sensu*, as an expression of processuality and of becoming, *par excellence*. Greimas formalizes the “absolute interior dramatization” as a “subjective actorial structure” (1973: 168). The narrative structure is not equally clear in all dance genres. Laban distinguishes between pure dance, on the one hand, and forms of stage dance such as ballet, mime and dramatic art (Laban 1994: 125). Narrative organization is pronounced in the ballet d’action and in the other forms of “theatrical” dance (Laban 1994: 125). Nevertheless, pure dance has no traceable story; even its movement may be described, it is often impossible to render its content through words (Laban 1994: 22). Artistic symbols are polysemic, connotative, programmatically “ambiguous” (a term that Jakobson uses to establish the specificity of aesthetic semiosis). “Non-sequential” (continuous), the emotional substance should, however, mould itself onto the “sequential” (discretization) capacities of (verbal or non-verbal) language, in order to achieve a representable shape: “The transition from lyric behaviour to lyric expression represents a real *tour de force*, because the emotional, by its non-sequential nature, should adapt to the sequential structure of language.” (Marcus 1989: 94) Hence, the relevance of the co(n)text in establishing significations.

From the point of view of the followers of the classical tri-partition of genres (lyric, epic, dramatic), the ‘interference’ between the lyric and the narrative could be amended. Solomon Marcus argues, however, for the presence of a dialectic relation between the lyric and the narrative, as types of behaviour and discursive genres. Since human language has an “immanent” narrativity, “converting the lyric into language means ‘narrativizing the lyric’,” “[...] emotional content should metamorphose into a discrete structure” which could be, in particular, an organization of choreographic kinemorphemes. (Marcus 1989: 94-95) Thus, the tendency of the lyric to become imbued with a narrative structure is essential and unavoidable. Narrative is “referential” unlike the lyric, defined by its “pronounced hermeneutic nature.” (Marcus 1989: 96) This observation seizes, in a generalizing statement, an aspect which Jakobson had restricted to epic and verbal narrativity. Epic poetry, centred on the third person, engages the referential (“cognitive,” “denotative”) function, whereas lyric poetry, oriented towards the first person, resorts particularly to the “emotive” or “expressive” function (Jakobson 1963: 219). In Solomon Marcus’ view, the principle of “interference” of the lyric and the dramatic is inspired by

the dynamic logic of the contradiction (see also Lupasco 1935). It may be regarded as a confirmation of the complementarity of linguistic functions (Jakobson) or of the complementarity of the “cognitive” and “emotive” aspects (see Stevenson *Ethics and Language* 1944) in the operation of poetic signs.

Thus, the structure of the message is not restricted to any of the language functions, but is a result of all of them. Among them, one comes into prominence, varying according to the communication situation, as the “dominant” function (Jakobson 1963: 214). Concerned with the metaphorical expression, Charles Stevenson observes that the descriptive (referential) and emotive significations do not exist in isolation, but as distinct aspects of a “complete” situation. Emotive signification depends upon a descriptive signification, and also an emotive signification which depends upon a ‘vague’ situation. For Umberto Eco (1989), the difference between the referential and the emotive does not concern so much the structure of the expression, as it does its use and, hence, the context in which it is pronounced. According to Marcus, “the interference of the lyric and the narrative should be related to the general process of interference of the non-sequential and sequential activities [...] Hence, there occurs a natural tendency for balance between the lyric and the narrative [...] The lyric and the narrative tend towards each other as well as take their distance from each other.” (1989: 95 – 96) From this “dynamic logic” of opposites, the lyric may be “narrativized” by means of kinemorphemes (rhythmic and choreographic discrete symbols) and by the joint mobilization of the “referential” and the “emotive”, that projects the substance of interiority towards the exterior. Thus, the following lines look into the actantial structure of the musical and/or kinesic discourse.

According to Eero Tarasti, even “absolute” music, the opposite of “program music” and, unlike the latter, cleansed of all epic referentiality and intrigue (meaning that it does not attempt to ‘tell’ anything in its own language), has a narrative structure. In fact, a question he poses is “how can narrativity which is hidden in absolute music be disclosed?” (Tarasti 1996: 47) Tarasti supports his own approach with the Greimasian concept of “generalized narrativity”. For example, in the opera show – a syncretic ensemble, an “intertextual and polidiscursive” totality– music reflects the protagonists’ actions, meaning that the “musical themes function like actants.” (Tarasti 1996: 58) Based on this criterion, we may distinguish between “subject-themes, object-themes, adjuvant-themes, opponent-themes” in the opera music, (Tarasti 1996: 64). For Tarasti, these actantial categories reveal the “dramatic” dimension of the opera music. Subsumed under the same general theory, a semiotics of choreographic expression may be usefully connected to musical semiotics. Manifested autonomously or complementarily in the musical and/or (only) in the kinesic substance, the choreographic signification may be constituted on the basis of the same narrative-actantial structures.

For example, in *La Esmeralda*, a ballet in 3 acts, 5 scenes, inspired by *Notre Dame de Paris* by Victor Hugo, choreographed by Jules Perrot, with music by Cesare Pugni, presented for the first time at the Ballet of her Majesty’s Theatre, London on March 9, 1844, (and in 1994, by a Ballet and Symphonic Orchestra Moussorgsky from St.

Petersburg), a series of musical tones mark the character of the protagonists and the scenes. It is, for instance, deep, grave and sombre, as a background for the scene in which Frollo and Quasimodo plan the kidnapping; suave, graceful and tonic in the following scene as a background for the heroine, as well as in the previous one which illustrates the saving of the poet at the Court of Miracles; rhythmic, parade-like for the occurrence of the soldier (Phoebus), changes abruptly when Phoebus sees Esmeralda lying on the ground; and discreet and spiralling when anticipating the idyll. Thus, musical-kinesic syncretism manifests the actantial roles of subjects and objects, protagonists and opponents. The musical actors (the sonorous marks of the protagonists) and the choreographic actors (with their kinesic-postural marks) cover various positions within the actantial scheme.

In agreement with the stage action that they imagine, the musical preferences of the choreographers, are not once eclectic, going, as Maurice Béjart does, as far as the shocking mixture of certain stylistic extremes, usually regarded as incompatible: “Let’s say today I do a ballet on music by Beethoven, then by Pink Floyd, then on Indian music, on music by Bach, but I mix Bach with Argentinean tangos – as I did in *Faustus*.” (Béjart interviewed by Silvia Ciurescu 2002: 190) Why this mixture? A seemingly gratuitous extravagance, a diagnosis which dance-chronicles have repeatedly applied to Béjart, mixing Bach with Argentine tango is, actually, an ingenious musical transposition of the skill of full knowledge, as a mark of Faustian personality. It is a way of suggesting, by the musical themes selected, the extremes which define it: the evil and the angelic, experiencing fall and ascent, sensual passion and spiritualized abnegation. Between Argentine tango and Bach, the history of *Homo fausticus*, tormented with deep descents and great impetus, is inscribed on a musical scale. Tango evokes passion, sensuality; at the other extreme, Bach’s music connotes spiritualization, the satisfactions of contemplative asceticism. We believe that by choosing this surprising combination, Béjart concentrates the duality of the Faustian being (in search of himself between Heaven and Earth, between redemption and fall, or even “beyond Good and Evil”) in an intentionally heterogeneous musical discourse. Bizarre, seemingly random and gratuitously eclectic, the music of the show supports, in reality, the logic of its actantial organization. The subject confronts the anti-subject within the space of individuality of the same ‘actor’ (the Faustian hero). The musical themes of Béjart’s show, those of the subject and the anti-subject (Greimas 1973: 162-63, 166-67), reflect the assumption of this actantial scheme. In a sequence from another of Béjart’s shows, *Ballet for life*, the same relation between subject and anti-subject – confrontation in the space of the same actor – is achieved through musical-visual syncretism (or multimodality). The dominating semantism of associating music with image results from intersecting the semantic axes of the two “discourses”. The soundtrack – the song *I want to break free*, from Queen’s album *The Works* – meaningfully repeats the statements: “I’m falling in love, / God knows what I’m falling in love. / (...) I want to be free, / I want to break free. / God knows how I want to break free.” With this soundtrack, in the sequences which serves as background, *Jorge Donne*, the famous dancer, appears as a crucified clown, laughing,

while nails are driven into his palms, and returning with a diabolical mask on his face. At the figurative level of discourse, the postures, mimics, accessories unfold two thematic symbols reunited in the potentiality of the same individual. This reconciliation probably means the gaining of the coveted freedom; Christ and Lucifer, meaning Love and Rebellion. The tragic clown reunites both valences: the subject and the anti-subject, meeting and clashing in the inner forum of the same actor, in the Greimasian, narratological meaning of the term.

The semio-linguistic reinterpretation of the traditional concept of *dramatis personae* is relevant for the actantial organization of choreographic discourse. The actantial roles may be assumed by different dancers or by the same dancer. In an actantial relation, the body is distributed to the metonymic actors, that is, the different segments of the body involved in the discursive performance (on this see Greimas 1983). Even a 'solo' dance may manifest an actantial, polemic structure or, on the contrary, a contractual structure, corresponding to the moods or emotions expressed. The duality of emotions may be represented by two different dancers or by a single one; thus, the inner tensions of the same individuality are being projected (Laban 1994: 22).

The game of actantial functions is a "mobile constellation" (see Groupe 1 1972) which refers to two aspects. First, although the discourse reduces the story-telling to one single point, each character may occupy the privileged position and orient the other functions differently. Structurally speaking, the actantial constellation is invariable. In terms of performance, through the distribution of concrete characters on the standardized actantial positions, it is variable. Secondly, the other type of narrative 'mobility' introduces process in the analysis upon the actantial relations. For each participant, the game of relations may change; an opponent may provide help, and a friend may turn into a rival. For example, in the ballet *La Bayadère* (The Temple Dancer), staged in four acts and seven tableaux by French choreographer Marius Petipa to the music of Ludwig Minkus, in the last show produced by Rudolf Nureev and staged at Paris National Opera (the ballet was first performed at the Imperial Bolshoi Kamenny Theatre in St. Petersburg, Russia, on 4 February 1877), the High Brahmin oscillated between the hypostasis of opponent and that of adjuvant. These actantial roles are actualized by choreographic predicates, manifested, in their turn, through kinesic figures. As opponent, he performs a sign similar to the one which means 'death' in the French gestural code of the deaf-mute. As adjuvant, he also assumes the prerogatives of the 'referee who attributes good', according to the actantial typology of Étienne Souriau (1950). Nikyia, the Bayadere, performs a detour of the stage with arms wide open. By means of mimics and posture, she signals unavailability: the body or face towards the public or backstage, the eyes fixed offstage. The High Brahmin's circular movement shows hostility towards the heroine. His gesture redraws the protective circle of mages and alchemists: with the arm and the palm stretched forward, a sign of interdiction and/or imposing distance. Several actantial functions may merge in the same character; in this case, those of the opponent and adjuvant. Functional syncretism finds appropriate ways of expression, in non-verbal (kinesic or proxemic) codes. To manifest the actantial

isotopies, each choreographic text/discourse selects its own means of expression (see Popa Blanariu 2008). These may be integrated into a restrictive system, such as the code of classic ballet, or, on the contrary, may be open, like modern dance.

As mentioned, the globality of discourse (verbal or non-verbal) is constituted like a network of actants and predicates. The concepts of actant and actor enable the establishment of two classes of discursive isotopies: predicative and figurative, thematic, affective isotopies etc. The former ensure the identity of the actants, whereas the latter that of the actors. We may distinguish between two situations: a) the same actant corresponds to an entire class of predicates, which he assumes throughout the discourse; b) each predicate may manifest several actants (Fontanille 1998: 142). The same kinesic "figure" may manifest, in the discourse, different predicates, by means of which distinct actants are performed. An illustration can be provided with a sequence from *Cartea lui Prospero* (UNATC, 1994), Sergiu Anghel's choreography of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. In this case, raising one's arms is an act distributed both in the discourse of the adjuvant – the ethereal spirits, loyal to Prospero, as well as in that of the opponent, Caliban, the beastly spirit (Fluchère 1960). The opponent raises his arms to beg for mercy, to announce his surrender, while the adjuvant raises his arms as a sign of threatening power. The mimics and the emblematic objects constitute, in this case, distinct elements. The presence/absence of thyrsi – a sign of punitive authority – marks the gesture of raising one's arms: (threat, victory) in the case of the adjuvant, (defeat/ surrender) in the case of the opponent. The homokinesis (which we have named in this way by analogy with verbal homonymy) may be solved only contextually. The same (semiotic) figure is distributed to several distinct semantic units (predicates and actants). The opposition of the signs euphoria/dysphoria corresponds, in this case, to predicative (sememic) oppositions: to succeed/ to fail, to conquer/to be defeated. Taking into account the semantic level, the predicative and actantial isotopies may be identified only in context.

The predicative value of a figure may be established only within discourse. Critics of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* believe that its fundamental theme is the victory of spirit over matter, of melos over chaos, of man over himself. Prospero, who enslaves the beastly and ethereal spirit, finds no rest until he accomplishes the regeneration of his enemies. It is the ultimate victory, the victory of spirit over matter, of love over hate (on this see Fluchère 1960). In Anghel's choreographic adaptation, these major thematic isotopies from Shakespeare's text enable the subsuming of the kinesic figures under two predicative isotopies by means of these, two distinct actantial categories, the adjuvant and the opponent, are manifested. By 'cosmotic predicates' I designate those predicates which are achieved through ascending, rhythmic, synchronized figures. They correspond to the thematic isotopy melos – harmony and order, imposed by the power of the demiurgic spirit. The chaotic predicates are those which are manifested through descending, arrhythmic figures. They are subsumed under the thematic isotopy chaos: crude, instinctual nature. The class of cosmotic predicates generates the adjuvant; that of chaotic predicates, the opponent. Cosmotic predicates are achieved through figures such as: jumps, wielding thyrsi, as well as through the consistently straight

posture of the head, neck, back (in ancient ritualistic dances, the displaying of weapons had an apotropaic function, protecting against forces which threatened the order of the world). The chaotic predicates are rendered through figures of decline: steps staggering sideways and backwards, heavy balance, shaking, walking/crawling on all fours, collapsing.

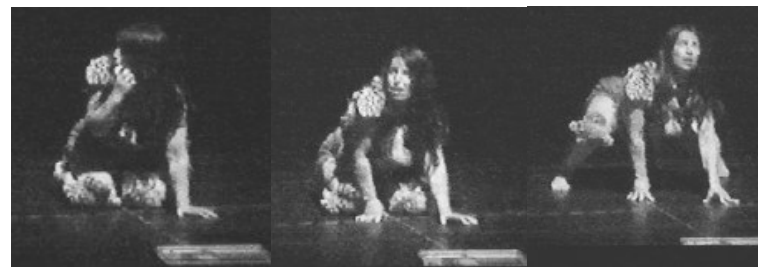


The Tempest - choreography and dramaturgy: Sergiu Anghel (Anghel's youtube channel >><http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jkAa7bUk-Is>)



In the scene of Caliban's surrender, kneeling is, apparently, an act through which the adjuvant, as well as the opponent, is manifested. However, verbal polysemy may constitute a source of confusion. Despite designation by means of the same (verbal) term, there are two distinct kinesic figures, which manifest their own predicate and, correlatively, their own actant. It is an obvious distinction between the way in which Caliban kneels humbly and the way in which the spirits loyal to Prospero kneel threateningly and victoriously. Caliban, the beastly spirit, collapses heavily on his

fours, like a wild defeated animal: with his hands and both of his knees on the ground, and his head lowered. The good spirits place one knee only on the ground, keeping their backs straight and heads upwards. How one supports oneself (on one or both legs) constitutes, in this scene, a distinct postural trait which serves for actantial individualization. Adjuvant – winner, in a posture which compensates (by the ascending posture of the back and head) the downward meaning of kneeling. Opponent – defeated, bending his entire body towards the ground. Kinesic figures verbalized through the same term (“to kneel”) correspond, on the semantic level, to different predicates (to conquer/ to be defeated) and different actants. The semantic (predicative) value of the two figures is established in the co(n)text.



Ariel, the ethereal spirit: ascending movements Caliban, the beastly spirit. Low movements

To conclude, even when dance renders an inner (psycho-emotional) path, it may be analyzed by means of semiotic tools as applied to narrative, since narrativity is an expression of process. By means of choreographic kinemorphemes and the joint mobilization of the referential and the emotive, the inner substance of dance can be projected towards the exterior.

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