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The Dance Body as an Arena of Values and the Chronotope of the Theater – An Exercise of Analysis / *O corpo da dança como arena de valores e o cronotopo do teatro – exercício de análise*

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ABSTRACT

The exercise of analysis of performance dance discourse is carried out grounded in Bakhtin's concept of chronotope. On the basis of the classical ballet genre, theater is established as a constitutive chronotope that materializes its social-aesthetic values spatial-temporally. The analysis of chronotopic transgressions allows identifying the emergence of modern ballet based on two choreographies by Russian artist Vaslav Nijinski.

KEYWORDS: Chronotope; Discourse genre; Values; Choreography; Theater

RESUMO

Exercício de análise do discurso da dança de espetáculo através do conceito bakhtiniano de cronotopo. A partir do gênero do balé clássico, estabelece-se o teatro como cronotopo constitutivo que concretiza espaço-temporalmente seus valores sócio-estéticos. A análise de transgressões cronotópicas permite identificar o surgimento do balé moderno com base em duas coreografias do artista russo Vaslav Nijinski.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Cronotopo; Gênero discursivo; Valores; Coreografia; Teatro

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Introduction

This article aims to continue a previously published study whose analysis of dance was conducted with the assistance of the concept of discourse genre discussed by Bakhtin and the Circle. The same methodological approach will be adopted here, as we will focus, in the multisemiotic discourse of dance, on the choreographic dimension. In the previous study we were able to establish typical utterances of different genres, such as romantic classical ballet and hip-hop. We could thus identify the social-aesthetic values of each discourse (Amorim, 2020).

The result of this approach is a partial analysis that does not intend to cover dance in its global-aesthetic condition,[1] a totality that is woven by several languages. We have chosen to call it an exercise of analysis as we aim to allow it not only to deepen our understanding of the production of meaning from a specific *corpus*, but also to concretely practice using one or more concepts of the theories we have adopted so as to confront their limitations and possibilities. Therefore, this exercise should bring theoretical contributions whether by specifying and deepening the concepts used or by broadening their scope of validity.

Focusing on the discourse of dance as an object of research entails accepting its verbal-visual nature. Although permeated by verbal components, such as the titles of the performances, which actively participate in the entire production of meaning, its visual component is undoubtedly predominant. On this material component, Grillo states that "(…) language is founded on an indexical matrix that includes either an iconic relationship or a relationship of resemblance with referents of the world" (Grillo, 2012, p.241).[2]

However, as we advance in the history of dance, we learn that, apart from the pantomime of the first classical ballets, the iconic dimension of visual discourse becomes more complex. In fact, if it is not inscribed in a universe of genres that hold their own values, it becomes more difficult to read and analyze the discursiveness of dance choreography. *Complex iconicity* is the term we have chosen to name this form of

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[1] As an example of an approach that contemplates multiple languages related to the discourse of dance, see Irene Machado's excellent article, whose reference is on the Reference list at the end of this paper.

[2] Unless otherwise indicated, the translation of quotations from Portuguese into English is ours. In the original: "[...] a linguagem visual funda-se sobre uma matriz indicial que comporta uma relação icônica ou de semelhança com os referentes do mundo."

meaning relation with which the visual discourse of dance operates. Thus, in our previous study, as we identified the recurrent forms of different dance discourse genres, we demonstrated that the utterances of each genre affirm and embody specific social and aesthetic values that inform and conform the iconicity of choreographic movements.

1 The Concept of Chronotope

The complex iconicity of choreographic discourse requires that we use another Bakhtinian concept, that is, the concept of chronotope. This is due to that fact that Bakhtin himself points to the importance of discussing the chronotope of the genre when the concept was first formulated.

For Bakhtin, the term chronotope, which is borrowed from biology and physics, defines certain conditions of inseparability between time and space within a narrative. In the literary analysis he carries out, space is marked by temporal indices and time is only embodied in that space; thus, a particular space-time corresponds to a specific discourse genre. For example, as Bakhtin analyzes Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, he shows the *form* of time as he confers to it a material density:

> Such towns are the locus for cyclical everyday time. (…) Time here has no advancing historical movement; it moves rather in narrow circles: the circle of the day, of the week, of the month, of a person's entire life. A day is just a day, a year is just a year – a life is just a life. Day in, day out the same round of activities are repeated, the same topics of conversation, the same words and so forth (…) This is commonplace, philistine cyclical everyday time. (…) Time here is without event and therefore almost seems to stand still. Here there are no "meetings," no "partings." It is a viscous and sticky time that drags itself slowly through space (Bakhtin, 1981, pp.247-248).[3]

At the end of his analysis of different chronotopes throughout the history of the discourse genre of the novel, he states that "Art and literature are shot through with

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[3] BAKHTIN, M. Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics. *In*: BAKHTIN, M. *The Dialogic Imagination*: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin. Edited by Michael Holquist; translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981. pp.84-258.

chronotopic values of varying degree and scope" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.243; emphasis in original).[4]

Bakhtin's concept of chronotope refers to the empirical extra-discursive reality. "A literary work's artistic unity in relationship to an actual reality is defined by its chronotope" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.243).[5]

However,

> As we have already said, there is a sharp and categorical boundary line between the actual world as source of representation and the world represented in the work. We must never forget this, we must never confuse – as has been done up to now and as is still often done – the *represented* world with the world outside the text (naive realism) (…). All such confusions are methodologically impermissible (Bakhtin, 1981, p.253; emphasis in original).[6]

This does not justify the idea that there is no relationship between them:

> The work and the world represented in it enter the real world and enrich it, and the real world enters the work and its world as part of the process of its creation, as well as part of its subsequent life, in a continual renewing of the work through the creative perception of listeners and readers (Bakhtin, 1981, p.253).[7]

We see that Bakhtin also relates the chronotope to the author's and the reader's space-time context as empirical units always inscribed in discursiveness:

> How are the chronotopes of the author and the listener or reader presented to us? First and foremost, we experience them in the external material being of the work and in its purely external composition. But this material of the work is not dead, it is speaking, signifying (it involves signs); we not only see and perceive it but in it we can always hear voices (even while reading silently to ourselves) (Bakhtin, 1981, p.252).[8]

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[4] For reference, see footnote 3.
[5] For reference, see footnote 3.
[6] For reference, see footnote 3.
[7] For reference, see footnote 3.
[8] For reference, see footnote 3.

We insist on the quotations and the nuances each one brings because we understand, as Holquist (2010, p.19)[9] puts it, that "chronotope remains a Gordian[10] knot of ambiguities" due to its countless interpretations and uses. Holquist refers to the two parts of the essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope:" the first one written from 1934 to 1937 and the second, in 1973. The first part was written when Bakhtin was concerned about the theory of the novel. For example, he analyzes the way Goethe's understanding of time frames his narrative. The second was written when he had returned to the metaphysical interests of his youth and his dialogue with Kant. Holquist explains that Bakhtin adopts the Kantian notions of the divided self and the non-coincidence between consciousness and knowledge and the empirical reality of the world. This understanding breaks with the Cartesian idea of the "transparent I." Nevertheless, Bakhtin disagrees with Kant's categories of space and time, which are *a priori* and transcendental. For Bakhtin, space and time integrate the empirical and historical concreteness.

Holquist thus focuses on the complexity of Bakhtin's text and concludes that Bakhtin's discussion on the concept of chronotope during his mature years, that is, a few years before his death in 1975, delineates the limits of his analysis and places it in the discursive dimension. He compares Bakhtin and Kant once again.

> Another huge difference between Kant and Bakhtin (…) [is that] Kant famously never raises the question of language's role in negotiating appearance. For Bakhtin just the opposite is the case: he is as focused on language as Kant was dismissive of it. (…) if time and space have their "natural" home in logic and science, chronotopes have their natural – their only – home in language. In our daily use of chronotopes the abstractness of time-space is domesticated when we deploy them in speech (Holquist, 2010, p.31).[11]

We agree with Holquist and come to a first conclusion. We use Bakhtin's words in which the space-time unit of the chronotope is seen as expression and is endowed with the form of a sign:

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[9] HOLQUIST, M. The Fugue of Chronotope. *In*: BEMONG, N. *et al.* (ed.). *Bakhtin's Theory of the Literary Chronotope*: Reflections, Applications, Perspectives. Ghent, Belgium: Academia Press, 2010. pp.19-33.
[10] A knot that is impossible to untangle.
[11] For reference, see footnote 9.

We somehow manage however to endow all phenomena with meaning, that is, we incorporate them not only into the sphere of spatial and temporal existence but also into a semantic sphere. This process of assigning meaning also involves some assigning of value. But questions concerning the form that existence assumes in this sphere, and the nature and form of the evaluations that give sense to existence, are purely philosophical (although not, of course, metaphysical) and we will not engage them here. For us the following is important: whatever these meanings turn out to be, in order to enter our experience (which is social experience) they must take on the *form of a sign* that is audible and visible for us (a hieroglyph, a mathematical formula, a verbal or linguistic expression, a sketch, etc.) (Bakhtin, 1981, pp.257-258; emphasis in original).[12]

We also conclude, now from a methodological standpoint, that Bakhtin himself provides us with "the boundaries of a chronotopic analysis" and the definition of the limits of the research that uses this concept. He does it when he establishes that the object of the human sciences is discourse. Therefore, as we are not historians, geographers, philosophers, architects, or engineers, "our" chronotope must always be circumscribed to the dimension of language.

2 The Starting Points

We begin by stating that it is possible to use categories and concepts Bakhtin developed to discuss verbal language and literary art to analyze verbal-visual or visual materialities. Thus, we face the challenge of considering that, in general, it is possible to understand the performance of dance choreography as a discourse that can be pertinently analyzed through the concepts of discourse genre and chronotope.

As to the latter, which it the object of this study, a caveat is in order. We will not discuss the chronotopes of the represented stories of the different ballets. We approach the choreographies of *The Dying Swan, The Afternoon of a Faun*, and *The Rite of Spring* from the genre perspective and not from the specificity of each narrated story, for the same story that uses the same music can be represented in different choreographies and be inscribed in other discourse genres whose social and aesthetic values change radically. We know that, from a Bakhtinian standpoint, if values are altered, the aesthetic object is not the same anymore. This is the case of the street dance version of

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[12] For reference, see footnote 3.

The Dying Swan, created by choreographer and dancer John Lennon da Silva.[13] The same happened to *The Rite of Spring*, which was represented by different choreographers of the genre called contemporary dance. The most well-known radical transformation was carried out by German Pina Bausch's choreography to the company *Tanztheater Wuppertal*.

We take into account that the history of ballet and dance develops through the hybridization and creation of genres. Based on that, a task was assigned in our previous study, that is, to identify typical choreographic utterances. Such generic utterances recurrently occur in different choreographies and thus became an object of our interest insofar as they affirm the same social and aesthetic values. As we continue this line of methodological inquiry, we will work on the concept of chronotope in its close relationship with the values of genre as they are materialized in the spatial-temporal dimension.

The corpus of this study is comprised of three discursive fragments from YouTube videos. We analyze the tense dialogue between them and the genre that is conventionally called classical ballet. The analysis thus starts with the latter and its specificities to carry out the analysis of the former.

The classical ballet genre reaches its pinnacle and materializes its values in typical utterances and in the chronotope of the theater, constructed in several western countries during the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. We will specifically refer to the following theaters: *Mariinsky* in Saint Petersburg, Russia, and *Châtelet*, *Opéra Garnier*, *Théâtre des Champs Elysées* in Paris, France, constructed in this chronological sequence. The data from French Wikipedia are in the Appendix.

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[13] It was analyzed in our previous article.

Figure 1– Mariinsky (1860): "Baroque Renaissance" Style. A. Savin, September 20, 2012.[14]

Figure 2 – Châtelet Theater (1862): "Renaissance" Style Arthur Weidmann, April 03, 2022.[15]

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[14] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Spb_06-2012_MariinskyTheatre.jpg
[15]https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Th%C3%A9%C3%A2tre_du_Ch%C3%A2telet_Fa%C3%A7ade.jpg

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Figure 3 – Opéra Garnier Theater (1875): "Eclectic" and "Historicist" Style. Alexander Hoernigk, April 06, 2010.[16]

Figure 4 – Champs Elysées Theater (1913): "Art Déco" Style. Coldcreation, April 21, 2013.[17]

Although these places are not only different, but are from different dates and have different architecture, our first analytical hypothesis is that, in terms of the classical-romantic ballet discourse genre and the values that penetrate their typical

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utterances, they pertain to the same chronotope. We thus should analyze their characteristics.

The layout of concert hall of the four theaters is known as "Italian theater," which is a large U-shaped room with a wide and elevated stage. This ensures great visibility to the audience. The absolute boundary between audience and stage is concretely established.

Figure 5 – In *Châtelet* Theater. Marie Noëlle Robert, January 01, 2009.[18]

Figure 6 – In *Champs Elysées* Theater. Pierre Lannes, May 07, 2011.[19]

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[18] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Salle_du_Theatre_du_Chatelet.jpg
[19] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fichier:Theatre_Champs_Elysees_35.jpg

Another concrete element we find is the thick, usually velvet[20] curtains. They close the stage area and hinder the audience from having access, from an acoustic standpoint, to what happens to the artists when the performance ends.

Figure 7 – Mariinsky Theater's Curtains. Natalia Semenova, December 19, 2009.[21]

The specific characteristics of this space only work if they are intrinsically related to the specific characteristics of time: there is a scheduled time to start and end the show; there is a right time for the audience to enter and leave the room; there is a right time for the audience to applaud or otherwise to boo, etc. When the space of performance is coordinated with these moments, it is shown or hidden; it is closed or opened. Thus, we see that this chronotope outlines another important component of the genre according to Bakhtin: the relationship with the listener-spectator, which is entirely regulated as the regular audience knows the rules and adheres to them.

Another important element of the chronotope is stage lighting as it sets the time-space of the show: when the lights go down, the scene unfolds and the show starts; when the lights are turned back on, the show ends or an intermission of the show's discursiveness occurs. We should also discuss the space-time of the applauses[22] which

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[20] From an acoustic standpoint, the velvet fabric favors sound insulation.

[21] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File: Главная_сцена_Мариинского _театра._Занавес_художника_А._Головина _-_эмблема_театра._-_panoramio.jpg

[22] A variant of applause is the codification of classical ballets that are comprised of frames (*ballet à tableaux*): scenes are created to include a solo, a duo, a trio, etc. of a virtuosic nature whose end is marked by a pause in music playing or dancing. The paused scene signals to the audience that this is the right time

somehow can be understood as a small chronotope, related to the general chronotope described. In this chronotope, lights are on, but the performers and the audience are still in the theater. Although spatially separated, they establish a direct dialogue: applauses and shoutings of "bravo!" are responded with the performers' codified body movements of gratitude and possible expressions of smile or emotion. Going to and from the scene does not mean disappearance and appearance, but a response to the audience that continues to applaud. The *timing* of this dialogue is also conventional and understood by the audience: even when the applause is fervent and prolonged, it has to stop; after a series of applauses/gratitude movements, the performers do not return to the stage and the audience leaves the theater.

When a spectator leaves the theater during the show, not many interpretations can be offered. It is possible to say that his/her departure is equally codified. Unless there is a problem – for example, a spectator feels sick – his/her leaving the theater may be interpreted as his/her disapproval of the show. It is logical to state that if several spectators leave, the first hypothesis is discarded. In addition, the disapproval of some may somehow influence how the others will respond, possibly stimulating hesitant spectators to leave the theater as well.

What does the chronotope of the theater[23] typified here allow us to say? What aesthetic-social values of classical-romantic ballet genre are realized in it? To answer these questions, we resort to an example of the exemplary ballet genre, namely, the famous *The Dying Swan*, created in the *Mariinsky Theater* in Saint Petersburg in Russia. The theater is a center of excellence for Russian professionals of the art of ballet: dancers, musicians, choreographers, costume designers, etc. We focus on Mikhaïl Fokine, who is considered the great master of the transition to romanticism, valuing not only technique, but also dramatic expressiveness.

In our previous study we concluded that every classic ballet choreography affirms the idea of elevation as a value. The verticality to heights indicates a schism with the daily world. It offers an image of ideality in which the lightness of a nearly diaphanous body frees it from the weight and disarray of our daily gestures. This leads

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to applaud the dancers even if the lights are down. When the applause ends, the dancing and the plot resume. See, for example, the renowned ballet *Le Corsaire* by Marius Petipa (1818-1910).

[23] The expression "chronotope of the theater" will be used throughout the text to always refer to large western national theaters that were built until the beginning of the 20th century.

to the use of pointe shoes, which elongate the body and place it at a higher level. Legs and arms, feet and hands reach for heights. The same happens with the use of light fabrics, such as the tulle of tutus. The hierarchization between both worlds is clear as the elegance of the forms and the delicacy of the colors point to a sublimated and purified humanity.

Body measurements are entirely proportional and harmonic. Nothing is off or out of place. In addition, there is a predominance of line over volume. The body is combined with a costume that highlights length and slenderness. Specifically in *The Dying Swan*, the dramatic nature of the proximity to death is expressed and emphasized through the tension between high and low, flight and the immobility of death.

The device of the stage establishes a play of presence/absence, visibility/invisibility, aided by light effects and scenography as well as the alternation between getting on and off the stage. The darkness, which the performer penetrates to disappear to the audience and from which he/she emerges without being seen, engenders apparition and mystery theatricality in which, once again, the value of breaking with the everyday world is consecrated.

The stage is immense in all dimensions: width, height and depth, which accentuates the magical nature of every technical device – sets, costumes, lighting, etc. The large velvet curtains, a noble and imposing fabric, not only intensify theatricality but also isolate and protect the performers. The relationship between the interlocutors, viz., the performers and the audience, is thus established, contributing to thematizing the separation between the ordinary and the extraordinary.

The access to the world of art as a sphere of elevation starts with the entrance to the theater and continues through the luxuriously decorated corridors, staircases, halls, etc. The monumental internal staircase leads the audience to their seats, which are hierarchically arranged according to their purchasing power and class. This hierarchy is inverted: the highest level (balcony) corresponds to the lowest purchasing power whereas the lowest level (orchestra), to the highest purchasing power.

The façade of the buildings itself indicates that the special world one enters has nothing in common with the everyday and banal reality. At the *Opéra Garnier* Theater in Paris, the external and internal staircases highlight the very sense of elevation. All these spaces to be walked through acquire meaning in the temporality that crosses them:

the time before the show, the waiting time, and the expectation time that advances towards the great moment when the lights go down and the show begins.

Figure 8 – Staircase of the *Opéra Garnier* Theater. Benh Lieu Song, June 29, 2007.[24]
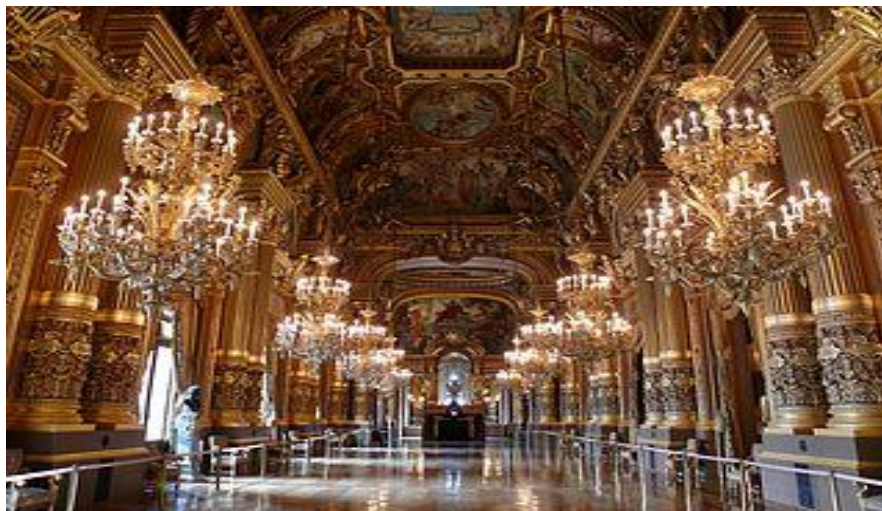

Figure 9 – Hall of the *Opéra Garnier* Theater. Degrémont Anthony, October 26, 2009.[25]

We consider the chronotope of the theater as constitutive of the classical ballet discourse genre. The author integrates it in his/her process of choreography creation similar to the dancer in his/her interpretation. The same can be stated about the spectator: his/her gaze is informed and enformed by the characteristics of this space-time continuum. Regarding the chronotopic condition of the author and the listener as "real people," Bakhtin states that they

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[24] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Opera_Garnier_Grand_Escalier.jpg
[25] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Op%C3%A9ra_Garnier_-_le_Grand_Foyer.jpg

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are all located in a real, unitary and as yet incomplete historical world set off by a sharp and categorical boundary from the *represented* world in the text. Therefore we may call this world the world that *creates* the text, for all its aspects – the reality reflected in the text, the authors creating the text, the performers of the text (if they exist) and finally the listeners or readers who recreate and in so doing renew the text – participate equally in the creation of the represented world in the text. Out of the actual chronotopes of our world (which serve as the source of representation) emerge the reflected and *created* chronotopes of the world represented in the work (in the text) (Bakhtin, 1981, p.253; emphasis in original).[26]

Although Bakhtin is referring to the novel and possibly to the dramatic text or poem, the quotation seems to apply to ballet and dance as theatrical shows.

3 Modernity

The birth of the so-called modern ballet,[27] as staged in the aforementioned great theaters, is a result of a true event of meaning. From its origin, Nijinski[28] has been considered a genius until today. A dancer who became famous not only in Russia, but also in Western Europe at his time, he was acclaimed for combining virility and grace and for his athletic and technical skills to perform unparalleled high leaps with which he crossed the whole length of the stage. Still as a dancer, he shows his rebel nature when he decides to free himself from the expectations of the audience. In documents of the time and in his diaries we find his criticism of choreographies that were totally predictable with highly skilled leaps that were performed as if in a circus show or with sentimentalism of sappy affectation. He then decides to create his own choreographies.[29]

His desires and courage were supported by equally daring Russian impresario Serge Diaghilev. He founded the company *Ballets Russes*, with which he toured around Western Europe and presented the best ballet dancers of the *Mariinsky* Theater. Both

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[26] For reference, see footnote 3.

[27] It is important to differentiate modern ballet form the so-called contemporary dance, which has been around since the 1960s. German Pina Bausch is the most representative choreographer of the genre.

[28] Vaslav Nijinski was a Russian ballet dancer and choreographer of Ukrainian origin (1889-1950).

[29] Other artists have contributed to the emergence of modern dance. This is surely the case of American Isadora Duncan (1877-1927), who performed in Europe with great success as early as in 1902. Her performances, however, took place in private venues and were not institutionalized or put on by state companies or theaters.

decided to create a ballet based on Debussy's composition titled *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* [Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun], which is based on Mallarmé's poem *L'après-midi d'un faune* [*The Afternoon of a Faun*]. Together they visited museums – especially the *Louvre* in Paris, where they meticulously observed vases and other objects from Antiquity so as to identify features of the aesthetics to which myths and the character of the Faun belong.

Mallarmé's very poem is based on poet Ovid (43 AC) and the legends in which the faun and the nymph fall in love but cannot consummate their idyll. Both the poem and the ballet suggest that everything might be the faun's dream, or his drunkenness, or his music that conjures up magic. Satyr is an incarnation of Dionysus, the god of dance and drunkenness. He appears in the ballet, eating bunches of grapes and playing the flute.

The faun or the satyr is a combination of a man and an animal. His lower body resembles a goat. In the choreography recorded by Nijinski's writing, the *pas de deux* place animality in the faun's relationship with the nymph and reveal extreme sensuality. At the end, the nymph gets off the stage and leaves her scarf. The faun sees himself alone and gets sexually excited with the nymph's scarf. He lies facing down on it, clearly evoking a sexual act. The ballet ends when the faun reaches an orgasm.

Figure 10 – The Faun and the Nymph. *Fair use:* A Freeze-Frame from the Ballet "L'Après-midi d'un faune."[30]

Despite its explicit nature, the aesthetics of the Faun's ballet does not aim at a realistic representation. To choreograph the legend of the Faun and his nymph, Nijinski

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[30] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fx6i7sXcRqo

reproduced the body postures as they appear on Egyptian vases: side view of faces, arms, and hands, and frontal view of the torso. Instead of long and continuous gestures of classical ballet, here the animality is highlighted by the heavy aspect of the lower body of the faun and his oblique and interrupted gestures. Along with set and costume designer Léon Bakst,[31] the scene was idealized to reduce depth and create a surface aspect similar to paintings on objects of ancient art. Dancers are basically on the same plane: no effects of perspective and ascending verticality are used.

Nijinski showcases a true and concrete aesthetic reflection: art referring to art. Instead of repeating and celebrating the values of the traditional aesthetics of ballet, he questions the very notion of aesthetics, making it plural.

This is a highly meaningful example of the principle of otherness that operates within the aesthetic form: art speaks to (or fights) art. Does it mean that this is a purely abstract form of art or, as one may put it, "art for the art's sake"? Absolutely not. This is a *tension of form* that attests to a clash between social-aesthetic values. In "The Problem of Content, Material, and Form in Verbal Art," Bakhtin criticizes what he calls "material aesthetics" and states that

> Form, understood as the form of a given material solely in its natural-scientific (mathematical or linguistic) determinateness, becomes a sort of purely external ordering of the material, devoid of any axiological constituent. What fails to be understood is the *emotional-volitional tension of form*—the fact that it has the character of expressing some axiological relationship of the author and the contemplator (…) (Bakhtin, 1990, p.264; emphasis in original).[32]

The value of discursive openness and plurality of *The Afternoon of a Faun* is confirmed in the following year's choreography of the ballet *The Rite of Spring*, whose music was commissioned from Stravinsky.[33] The theme now is the pagan Russian myth about the cycle of renewal of life and the earth through the seasons of the year and the alternation between old age and youth, birth and death. Bakhtinian readers immediately refer to the popular aesthetics of the carnival, and in this ballet, in fact, this aesthetics is

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[31] Léon Bakst (1866-1924) was a Russian painter, decorator and costume designer.
[32] BAKHTIN, M. The Problem of Content, Material and Form in Verbal Art. Translated by Kenneth Brostrom. *In*: BAKHTIN, M. *Art and Answerability*: Early Philosophical Essays by M. M. Bakhtin. Edited by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov; translated by Vadim Liapunov. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990. pp.257-325.
[33] Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) was a Russian composer.

found in the re-creation of dances and rites of the popular and profound Russia. However, the laughter and irreverence of the Bakhtinian theme are not found. Despite its popular and peasant origin, this is a religious rite: the most beautiful young woman from the village is chosen to be sacrificed: her death is an offering to the gods.

Figure 11 – The Chosen Young Woman. *Fair use:* A Freeze-Frame from the Ballet "Rite of Springs."[34]

If we compare the young woman's death in Nijinski to the death of the swan in Fokine, we see the clash of two aesthetics.[35] In the *Swan*, there is no discontinuity of gesture or line – not even at the final moment of death: even death is harmonious and sublimed. In Nijinski, however, the agony and panic that lead up to the final moment are expressed through nonsensical and asymmetrical gestures and movements as if the young woman's body were falling apart. Everything seems to emphasize the violent nature of the scene: obsessive and strenuous repetition; punches on the floor; trembling legs; arms that swing frantically, and long and clumsy steps as if one leg no longer

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[34] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_7ndqgwxcM
[35] Nevertheless, Fokine and Nijinski were contemporaries and members of the *Mariinsky* and the Diaghiliev company. This attests to the fact that, from a historical standpoint, the modern and the classical are not values that are tightly separated, whether chronologically or institutionally.

moved. Since it evokes a body that is out of control, nothing resembles the melancholic, delicate, and harmonious nature of the swan's agony.

On the other hand, an interesting detail seems to be a type of Nijinski's signature. The *Faun*'s ballet ends with a spasm of joy whereas the last scene of the *Rite*'s ballet, marked by a powerful musical chord, is the spasm of death: the sacrificed young woman's arm falls abruptly and the lights go out. The body of this aesthetics is a body of spasms – a living body that pulsates. Although nothing here is realistic, the dance discourse does not aim to be sublimed by the ethereal. Nijinski's choreography totally breaks with the values of the classical romantic ballet of his time.

One of the remarkable features of this 'other' aesthetics in *The Rite of Spring* is the position of the feet as dancers have not only to wear the pointe shoes skillfully but also to move – better yet – dance inwardly. As to the leaps, although existent, they do not produce movements across the stage: they are compulsively fixed at the same point. Movements are not soft or gracious; they are vigorous and repetitive, evoking the violence of the irruption of life and the rite of death. Instead of upward verticality, it is the earth that is valued: many movements are performed low to the ground and the dancers, accompanied by intensely rhythmic music, hit the floor with their hands or feet.

Instead of long, upward movements, lines are made at wrist height and hands point flatly downwards or upwards. Clenched wrists point upwards in collective scenes, evoking fight gestures. Movements of accentuated dissymmetry are also made as upper and lower limbs move disorderly. Bodies are in a state of madness, or – if we want to cling to the literal theme of the ballet – they are possessed by the operating forces of the pagan ritual. The emphatic marking of the rhythm with marching or jumping feet produces sounds that, unlike classical ballet, do not hide the weight and strength of the bodies. These valued choices by the artist point to an aesthetics usually called primitivist.

Nijinski's first choreography premiered with a Russian troupe of ballet dancers and the role of the Faun was played by him. The premier show was held in 1912 at the *Châtelet* Theater in Paris, the same theater where Diaghilev's company had performed Russian creations of classical ballet. The second choreography, *The Rite of Spring*, also premiered in Paris with the same company at *Champs Elysées* Theater in 1913. The

ballet's premiere in May, after musical concerts in March, marked the inauguration of the newly built theater. As we have discussed before, although it is located in a different space, was built on a different date, and has a different architecture, the theater's chronotopicity can be analyzed as being the same as that of the other theaters based on the relationship established with the discourse of classical ballet genre. The *Champs Elysées* Theater has innovative architecture of a markedly Art Deco style; however, this does not change the chronotopicity that makes it possible to realize the values characteristic to the hitherto established genre.

If this analytical hypothesis is plausible, we need to try to understand the effect produced by both ballets, namely, *The Afternoon of a Faun* and *The Rite of Spring*. The former provoked negative reactions by spectators and newspaper critics of the time. The latter caused a real scandal.

We have discussed that the choreographed body of *The Afternoon of a Faun* dialogues with other arts and material that had focused on the same object. It is noteworthy that the subtitle of the ballet is *A Choreographic Poem*.[36] The faun, as a discursive object, speaks through many voices – of the representations on Antiquity vases, of the myth, the poem, the musical composition, etc. There are at least five references of artists who addressed it in the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, namely, Mallarmé, Manet, Gauguin, Débussy, and Nijinski. All of this, however, seems to have been disregarded in the interpretation made by most spectators.

From a dialogical perspective, we can still state that *The Afternoon of a Faun* and *The Rite of Spring* respond to the aesthetics of classical ballet by polemizing with it and questioning it. Without the reference to classical ballet, it would be impossible to understand the schisms they create. If so, the event of meaning can be understood as a *chronotopic transgression*.

We thus understand that without the chronotope of the theater it would be difficult to understand Nijinski's scandal. In her celebration to nature Isadora Duncan danced almost naked in private salons and that did not produce the same event of meaning. The *Faun* and the *Rite* transgress the values supposedly shared with their spectators, and his admirers are frustrated because Nijinski denies them the value placed on spectacular virtuosity. Instead, the *Faun* proposes extremely slow gestures and

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[36] The complete title printed on the program and the poster was *L'après-midi d'un faune. Poème chorégraphique* [*The Afternoon of a Faun: A Choreographic Poem*].

movements that encourage the idea of a dreamed scene, a daydream in a hot afternoon. The stage's reduced depth and perspective evoke the aesthetics of flat paintings more than grandiose theatricality. In the *Rite*, the rhythmic violence, asymmetrical bodies, vigorous gestures, and the attractive force of the stage floor from which the movements seem to be engendered erase any image of lightness, softness or purity that come from an idealized world of the heights. During the performance, the rules of interaction between interlocutors were also broken. Although this is a theatrical device based on which the relationship between stage and audience should follow the rules of the classical genre of performance, boos and whistles hindered dancers from hearing the music; in addition, Diaghilev, who was in charge of the show, was forced to turn on the audience lights several times.

The transgression we have identified requires that we discuss the role of the listener or addressee as it was elaborated by the Bakhtin Circle. Vološinov (1983, p.14)[37] states that

> (...) the whole formal structure of speech depends to a significant degree upon what sort of relationship the utterance is in to the implied identity of evaluations of that social milieu to which the utterance is directed. Creatively productive, assured and rich intonation is possible only when a 'supporting chorus' is assumed.

In both of Nijinski's ballets, the supposed addressee is understood as a spectator of a high social class and *habitué* to great theaters; a subject who has been introduced to ballet references, or rather, to a discursive memory in which several aesthetic references that traverse the bodies could be mobilized to produce meaning. The choreographic discourse equally addresses the intellectual and artistic vanguard of the time, once Mallarmé's poetry and Debussy's and Stravinsky's music had been identified and adopted as precursors of modernity at the end of the previous century. From the perspective of an amplified scope of chronotope,[38] we are in Paris, in the theater that introduced the Art Deco style, and the winds of modernity blew stronger and stronger in

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[37] VOLOŠINOV, V. N. Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry: Questions of Sociological Poetics. Translated by John Richmond. *In*: SHUKMAN, Ann (ed.). *Bakhtin School Papers*. Oxford: RTP Publications, 1983. pp.5-30.

[38] A methodological issue arises: to discuss this broad-scope chronotope we need to focus on the discursiveness engendered in it before analyzing it. For example, we could have investigated the newspapers of the time and articles on literary criticism and other arts, but this has not been done for this study.

the first decade of the 20th century. A proof of this change is the fact that, in 1913, the portrait of Isadora Duncan was engraved in high relief in the same *Champs Elysées* Theater.

We would thus have the "supporting chorus" that seems to have participated internally and inherently in the created form. Some intellectuals of the time, such as Jean Cocteau, highly valued Nijinski's creation. Some established a relationship between the *Faun*'s ballet movement and Cubist painting. But they were few. Even Stravinsky and Debussy expressed their lack of understanding of the choreographies Nijinski created for their compositions.

Addressing as a relation of otherness is one of the axes of the Bakhtin Circle's conception of language. The *other*, who is summoned and to whom one responds, intrinsically participates in the discursive construction and its production of meaning. In our analysis, the difference between supposed addressee and real addressee is bluntly revealed. Most of the audience that actually and effectively watched both shows disapproved of Nijinski's work and did not become thus a "supporting chorus."

In Vološinov's reflection on the relationship between the artist-creator and his/her listener, we notice that he does not leave much room for the presence of creative transgression. Although he admits the possibility of a disagreement and a tone of irritation in the utterance, he does not elaborate on the possible richness proper to transgression. On the contrary,

> When this [supporting chorus] is absent, the voice breaks off and its wealth of intonation is reduced, as happens to the joker when he realizes that he alone is laughing. The laughter either ceases or dies away, becomes strained, loses assurance and clarity and is unable to produce any funny or jovial words (Vološinov, 1983, pp.14-15).[39]

We believe that in art it is impossible to understand transgressive and avant-garde creation without the concept of superaddressee. Voloshinov outlines elements to define this concept when he mentions the "third participant" (Vološinov, 1983, p.15),[40] but it is Bakhtin who clearly defines it.

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[39] For reference, see footnote 26.
[40] For reference, see footnote 26.

> The author can never turn over his whole self and his speech work to the complete and *final* will of addressees who are on hand or nearby (after all, even the closest descendants can be mistaken), and always presupposes (with a greater or lesser degree of awareness) some higher instancing of responsive understanding that can distance itself in various directions (Bakhtin, 1986, p.126; emphasis in original).[41]

We can say that the superaddressee frees the work from the interpretive limits of its context, its evaluative purview, its "supporting chorus," and takes it to a time beyond its time. Bezerra (2016, p.163) sums it up well: "It is in the great time that the superaddressee reinterprets it in the light of new achievements (…)."[42]

Regarding "Nijinski's scandal," we conclude that the choreographic discourse introduced values that transgressed those embodied in the chronotope of the theater. Thus, it went beyond the space-time unit in which it was engendered; it danced towards the great time and addressed its art to the emerging purview of modernity. A future chronotopicity? One thing is for certain: Nijinski broadened the purview of values of the chronotope of the theater so as to open it to new values of dance discursiveness. Today contemporary dance is performed in *Champs Elysées* and *Châtelet* Theaters – some performances are extremely radical in their discursiveness, such as the ones by the Brazilian company *Grupo Corpo* or by Pina Bausch.

Conclusions

We want to conclude this article focusing on the issue of transgression, revealed as the main element of our analysis. We brought a historical example of chronotopic transgression produced by a radically innovative choreographic discourse, the precursor of a new genre that would later be known as Modern Ballet. We would like to end with an example of the inverse process, that is, the transgression of the meaning of a classical choreographic discourse, produced by the change of the chronotope.

We need to contextualize it first. We are in France, in January 2020, when huge popular protests took place against ultraliberal reforms of the Macron government,

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[41] BAKHTIN, M. The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis. *In*: BAKHTIN, M. *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*. Translated by Vern W. McGee. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986. pp.103-131.

[42] In the original: "É nesse grande tempo que o supradestinatário a reinterpreta à luz de novas conquistas (...).""

especially the reform of the pension system. Almost every single category of waged workers is on the streets, and a transportation strike paralyzes the country for over a month. Taking into account that in large cities of France life depends entirely on public transportation, the daily life of self-employed workers who are not on strike becomes deranged. For them to go to work, they need to ask for rides, ride bicycles, rollerblade, or walk, which doubles or triples commuting time. Despite the disturbance caused, 65% of the population supports strikers. Besides rallies, several types of protests were staged. Truck drivers closed roads; port workers shut down ports; electrical workers cut power supplies for a few hours; lawyers tossed their black robes on the steps of the Palace of Justice… and ballet dancers from the *Opéra Garnier*'s corps de ballet danced outside this traditional theater.

Figure 12 – Protest Ballet. *Fair use:* A Freeze-Frame from the Video "L'Opéra en greve."[43]

We can identify the chronotope of the square or the street, a central element in Bakhtin's work on Rabelais and popular culture. We are in open space, the distance between the stage and the audience is relativized, and time breaks free from the codified regulations of performances that occur in the theater. The orchestra, which is also there, plays "Swan Lake," composed by Tchaikovsky for the namesake ballet,[44] which is the most renowned classical ballet. At the same time, the sounds from the street break free

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[43] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVueDU8uw1I

[44] It was created in the Bolshoi Theater Ballet in Moscow in 1877 by different choreographers.

from any control and affect the scansion of "listening" by altering the measurement of music *time*: horns, sirens, voices.

The source of lighting is daylight, which falls on everyone – artists and audience alike – and does not produce an effect of magic or mystery. In the gray cold of Paris, the scene is clear and transparent. The values of the popular chronotope are imposed on the ballet discourse, introducing it in the collective discourse. On the imposing arcades of the theater, protest banners are hanging. They take the role of a new component of verbal discourse, replacing the programs distributed before the shows: "Opera On Strike," "Culture in danger." The façade, the entrance, the arcades, and the staircase are the same, but now they have a new chronotopic dimension. The verticality of the imposing noble stone arcades is reduced by horizontal banners whose material, layout, and verbal content point to a popular origin with fighting value.

We thus see the political dimension of the chronotope, once *polis* is the space for living together; in addition, the way places and positions are distributed within it configures a political regime of shared artistic sensibility. In this Parisian "protest ballet," the space-time of the theater is reconfigured, and the tension between the values of the two chronotopes is the one that produces meaning intensity and density. Here we can identify the relationship between the chronotope and the empirical reality as Bakhtin points out.

The relation of otherness is the core of discursive meaning production: it is because that place refers to an art of the "heights" that the "lowness" of the street can be given voice. It is insofar that the entrance to the *Opéra Garnier* conventionally means an index of the values of the art of elevation that the difference with the chronotope of the street and the values of the social movement of protest is contrasted. As the choreography, music and costumes of the classical genre are maintained, the voice of traditional art joins the voice of popular manifestations, and the dance body joins the collective body. Here the artist not only serves a political cause, but also adheres to it. It is the very presence of classical and traditional forms of the body and the theater that gives force to discourse, establishing an effective dialogue between the popular and the cultured through the articulation between the ethical and the aesthetic.

Should we conclude that every single transgression is creative? Not really. We need to consider if transgression only undoes what is established or if it allows

affirming new values. In case it does, what discursiveness does it assume? In any case, because of values, this discussion will always go beyond the methodological dimension: it requires that the researcher have a *non-indifferent thinking* in face of the new affirmed values. To illustrate it further, the image of the façade of the *Opéra Garnier* Theater below dates from the Nazi occupation of Paris. We have chosen to end this article with a striking illustration of the problem we have discussed in order to prompt the reader to formulate new questions.

Figure 13 – Opéra Garnier Theater under Nazi occupation
Unknown Author, March of 1941.[45]

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[45] https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bundesarchiv_Bild_183-1985-1216-509,_Paris,_Oper.jpg

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Research Data and Other Materials Availability
The contents underlying the research text are included in the manuscript.

Reviews

Review I

The title is appropriate to the development of the article, which focuses on analyzing the choreographies created by Nijinski as transgressors of the chronotope of classical theater. It refers to the generic classification of classical ballet proposed in a previous study and to the notion of chronotope as a "chronotopized" matrix of a set of social and aesthetic values, which the author conveniently illustrates. He/She carefully analyzes the staging of two ballets, namely, *The Afternoon of a Faun* and *The Rite of Spring*, to show which aspects of the classical understanding of the body in motion are transformed and questioned. He/She thus proposes the hypothesis of a cultural change towards modernity through the Russian dancer's provocative transgression of corporalities and other

choreographic languages. The study is also concerned about pointing out the public's negative responses to this new interpretation of meaning in the performance of the fable. It is evident that the Bakhtinian theory about the theoretical concept of chronotope is known and quoted in a convenient and updated way in relation to the created world and to the creative and receiving image on that difficult border between the reality of the author and the audience and its textualized representation. This becomes very complex in the theatrical text. In my opinion it should at least be pointed out as *a conflictual issue* between the creative consciousness and the created world and between the potential and the real receiver. Finally, I highlight the adequacy of the paper to the format and language of a scientific work in its development and rigor in many of its facets. My evaluation is positive as I understand it as a successful intent to transfer a somewhat ambiguous theoretical category to other artistic discourses that are thought within a diachronic development, as Bakhtin does with the novel. As a suggestion, I propose that Nijinski's production not only be presented as a reference to previous social aesthetics, but that it be given a new name that takes into account its intrinsic and synchronous characteristics in order to evaluate, as Bakhtin puts it, the form of "assimilation," that is, to artistically compose Nijinski's real historical chronotope and bear witness to that space-time in the very performances. ACCEPTED WITH RECOMMENDATIONS [REVISION]

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Reviewed on October 31, 2022.

Review II
The article presents an important and up-to-date discussion on the performing arts (dance and theater) theoretically and methodologically grounded in the studies of the Bakhtin Circle. The language presented is scientific and its analyses and results will greatly contribute to the areas of knowledge with which the text dialogues. The title and abstract are adequate and fully relate to the content of the work. The publication of the article in *Bakhtiniana: Revista de Estudos do Discurso* will certainly offer possibilities of non-stigmatized readings on classical ballet, once the path chosen by the author is provocative in the sense that he/she mobilizes meanings and not simply affirms or categorizes them. The density and rigor dedicated to the work not only justify, but also encourage its approval for publication. I noticed, on the list of bibliographical references, that Voloshinov is spelled with an 's' and not with a 'c,' as it is found in the referenced work. ACCEPTED FOR PUBLICATION

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