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The child as a model in clown pedagogy: in Jacques Copeau, Jacques Lecoq and Philippe Gaulier¹

Rodrigo Scalari²

Abstract

The article stems from my PhD research on the child as a model in theatre pedagogy. It reveals tacit relations between the child and the clown in Jacques Copeau's thinking and the way in which the child becomes a model for learning clown language in Jacques Lecoq's and Philippe Gaulier's pedagogies. The aim is to problematise commonplaces about the child-clown relationship through a dialogue with different disciplines (anthropology, psychoanalysis, psychology, performance studies), in search of an expanded understanding of notions such as innocence, authenticity, singularity and creativity in the clown's training within the French theatrical tradition of Copeau-Lecoq-Gaulier.

Keywords: Child. Clown. Theatrical Pedagogy. French Theatre. Acting.

L'enfant comme modèle dans la pédagogie du clown : chez Jacques Copeau, Jacques Lecoq et Philippe Gaulier


Résumé

L'article est issu de ma recherche doctorale sur l'enfant comme modèle dans la pédagogie théâtrale. Il met en évidence les relations tacites entre l'enfant et le clown dans la pensée de Jacques Copeau et la manière dont l'enfant devient un modèle pour l'apprentissage du langage clownesque dans les pédagogies de Jacques Lecoq et de Philippe Gaulier. L'objectif est de problématiser les lieux communs sur la relation enfant-clown à partir d'un dialogue avec différentes disciplines (anthropologie, psychanalyse, psychologie, études de la performance), à la recherche d'une compréhension élargie de notions telles que l'innocence, l'authenticité, la singularité et la créativité dans la formation du clown au sein de la tradition théâtrale française de Copeau-Lecoq-Gaulier.

Mots-clés : Enfant. Clown. Pédagogie théâtrale. Théâtre français. Jeu d'acteur.

¹ Spelling and grammar revision of the article by Rodrigo Monteiro. Graduated in Languages - Portuguese/English at the Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos (2007). Bachelor's Degree in Social Communication - Audiovisual Production with specialization in Scriptwriting and Art Direction from the same university (2008). And Master in Performing Arts at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (2011).

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El niño como modelo en la pedagogía del clown: en Jacques Copeau, Jacques Lecoq y Philippe Gaulier

Resumen

El artículo proviene de mi investigación doctoral sobre el niño como modelo en la pedagogía teatral. Destaca las relaciones tácitas entre el niño y el payaso en el pensamiento de Jacques Copeau y la forma por la que el niño se convierte en modelo de aprendizaje del lenguaje del payaso en las pedagogías de Jacques Lecoq y Philippe Gaulier. El objetivo es problematizar los lugares comunes sobre la relación niño-payaso a partir de un diálogo con diferentes disciplinas (antropología, psicoanálisis, psicología, estudios de performance), en busca de una comprensión ampliada de nociones como inocencia, autenticidad, singularidad y creatividad en la formación del payaso dentro de la tradición teatral francesa de Copeau-Lecoq-Gaulier.

Palabras clave: Niño. Payaso. Pedagogía teatral. Teatro francés. Actuación.

A criança como modelo na pedagogia do *Clown*: em Jacques Copeau, Jacques Lecoq e Philippe Gaulier

Resumo

O artigo é oriundo de minha pesquisa de doutorado sobre a criança como modelo na pedagogia teatral. Evidenciam-se relações tácitas entre a criança e o *clown* no pensamento de Jacques Copeau e a maneira pela qual a criança se torna um modelo para a aprendizagem da linguagem *clownesca* nas pedagogias de Jacques Lecoq e de Philippe Gaulier. Objetiva-se a problematização de lugares comuns sobre a relação *criança-clown* a partir de um diálogo com diferentes disciplinas (antropologia, psicanálise, psicologia, *performance studies*), em busca de uma compreensão expandida de noções como inocência, autenticidade, singularidade e criatividade na formação do clown dentro da tradição teatral francesa de Copeau-Lecoq-Gaulier.

Palavras-chave: Criança. *Clown*. Pedagogia Teatral. Teatro francês. Atuação.



Introduction

If, on the one hand, the child embodies the ideal spectator of the clown performance, on the other hand, the figure of the child is often evoked during the process of construction of the clown itself by the actor. It is in this second direction that I will develop the present text: in order to demonstrate the ways in which the figure of the child has influenced Jacques Copeau's understanding of clowning, as well as the teaching of clowning by Jacques Lecoq and Philippe Gaulier, three French theatrical pedagogues belonging to the same current of research on the actor's work and influential in Brazil and in the world.

This text displays part of the results of my doctoral thesis, entitled *L'enfant comme modèle dans la pédagogie théâtrale. Dans les approches de Jacques Copeau, Jacques Lecoq et Philippe Gaulier*³ (Scalari, 2021a), defended in January 2021 at the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris III, carried out under the supervision of Josette Féral and funded by the CAPES Full Doctoral Scholarship Abroad Programme. In the doctoral research, I investigated the way through which the child became a model from which Jacques Copeau, Jacques Lecoq and Philippe Gaulier rethink acting and formulate new questions in relation to the actor's training. The research had an ethnographic outlook, with a field work based on the practical training of the author at the *École Philippe Gaulier*, benefiting equally from a wide documental research carried out on unpublished material preserved at the *Fonds Copeau of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, from an extensive bibliographical research and from interviews with personalities involved with the work of the three theatrical pedagogues present in the research corpus⁴.

³ The child as a model in theatrical pedagogy. In the approaches of Jacques Copeau, Jacques Lecoq and Philippe Gaulier.

⁴ This article contains excerpts from interviews I conducted with Guy Freixe, Guy Langford, Nicole Kehrberger, and Pascale Lecoq. The full versions of the interviews can be found in the appendices of my doctoral thesis in the reference list at the end of this article.



Jacques Copeau and the discovery of the intact nature of clowns: the examples of Chaplin and the Fratellini Brothers

I would like to add that, in my opinion, it is perhaps the great virtue of cinema to make dramatic art return to its childhood and thus recover its principles (Copeau, 1995, p. 27, our translation).⁵

In the passage above, Jacques Copeau refers less to cinema than to one of its greatest 20th-century filmmakers, Charlie Chaplin. Through the writer Waldo Frank, Copeau met Chaplin in 1928, when the latter came to France for the launch of "The Circus", and the two spend an evening together when Copeau takes Chaplin to the *Cirque Médrano* to show him the work of the Fratellini Brothers. To Chaplin's creative genius, Copeau dedicates *Réflexions sur un comédien*⁶, a text in which Chaplin's tramp becomes the embodied example of those characters with which Copeau dreamed of updating the spirit of *Commedia dell'arte*, through the creation of his *Nouvelle Comédie Improvisée*⁷. In his text, Jacques Copeau wonders about the reasons for Chaplin's popularity. His hypothesis: "It is that Charlie is a character. He created a character. That character lives in him and he lives in this character. [...] he lives, he thinks, he acts, he suffers for the benefit of the characters he feeds every day with his own substance and that of his art" (Copeau, 1995, p. 27, our translation)⁸.

In the same text, Copeau does not spare words of exaltation for Chaplin's art, of which he is clearly an admirer. However, what surprises him most is the moderate personality and untouched nature of an actor who does not fall into the temptation of extravagance even when worshipped by crowds.

To escape the ovations, he had to hail a taxi. Later I realised that the crowd frightened him. And I made this simple reflection, which

⁵ J'ajoute que, selon moi, ce sera peut-être la grande vertu du cinéma de faire retourner l'art dramatique à son enfance et de lui faire retrouver ainsi ses principes.

⁶ Reflections on an actor.

⁷ New Improvised Comedy.

⁸ C'est que Charlie est un personnage. Il a créé un personnage. Ce personnage vit en lui et il vit en ce personnage. [...] il vit, il pense, il agit, il souffre au profit de personnages qu'il nourrit chaque jour de sa propre substance et de celle de son art.



at first did not come to mind, that this idol of the crowd is never in contact with it, that he gives it his image but not his person or his nerves. His work is studio work, always done in recollection. This would be enough to explain why Charlie, as he matures, not only does not deform, but always asserts himself with greater measure, style and distinction: "I could never - he explained to me - perform on stage.... The only thing I like to do is play charades with some friends." I saw him, one evening, amusing himself with a child, making graceful faces with her, which he knew how to put within his reach, and which were much less the work of a professional actor than of a delicate improviser (Copeau, 1995, p. 26, our translation).⁹

The nature preserved from self-centred deformations arising from success is what Jacques Copeau also sees in other comedians, notably in the *Fratellini Brothers*. Regarding the family of clowns, Copeau expresses his admiration for their style and their gentleness and emphasises the importance of the support that the three brothers give each other when they perform together, a perfectly balanced tripod that Copeau wishes not to see eroded by vanity and frivolity.

Always, with your modesty, keep this emotion at work. Never let success distract you from your true beauty. Remain always together, all three of you. It is your trinity that is sovereign. Three great actors, knowing how to play well together, can alone play the whole drama of the universe. [...] You will always be distinguished by two inimitable characteristics: *your purity of style and your gentleness*. I call "purity of style" technical perfection and in particular muscular perfection at the service of a spontaneous and sincere feeling. And I call "gentleness" in everything you do, the smile of your intact nature (Copeau, 2012, p. 217, our translation).¹⁰

⁹ Pour se soustraire aux ovations, il fallut héler un taxi. J'ai compris plus tard que la foule lui faisait peur. Et je fis cette réflexion, bien simple, mais qui ne vient pas tout d'abord à l'esprit, que cette idole de la foule n'est jamais en contact avec elle, qu'il lui livre son image, mais point sa personne ni ses nerfs. Son travail est un travail d'atelier, exécuté toujours dans le recueillement. Cela suffirait à expliquer que Charlie, à mesure qu'il mûrit, non seulement ne se déforme pas, mais qu'il s'affirme toujours avec plus de mesure, de style et de distinction : « Jamais – m'expliquait-il – je n'aurais pu jouer sur la scène... La seule chose que j'aime à faire c'est de jouer des charades avec quelques amis ». Je l'ai vu, tout un soir, s'amuser avec un enfant, faire avec lui de gracieuses grimaces qu'il savait mettre à sa portée et qui étaient bien moins d'un acteur de métier que d'un improvisateur plein de tact.

¹⁰ Gardez toujours, avec votre modestie, cette émotion dans le travail. Ne vous laissez jamais détourner par le succès de votre vraie beauté. Demeurez toujours ensemble, tous les trois. C'est votre trinité qui est souveraine. Trois grands acteurs, sachant bien jouer ensemble, peuvent représenter à eux seuls le drame entier de l'Univers. [...] On vous distinguera toujours à deux traits inimitables ; votre pureté de style et votre gentillesse. J'appelle chez vous « pureté de style » la perfection technique et notamment la perfection musculaire au service d'un sentiment spontané et sincère. Et j'appelle « gentillesse » dans tout ce que vous faites, le sourire de votre nature intacte.



What Jacques Copeau admires in clowns are precisely the same attributes that he always admitted he recognised in children. Like children, for Copeau, clowns preserve the innocence and sincerity of their nature: "Clowns do not have the pedantry of actors. They are sincere and naïve. They do difficult and modest work" (Copeau, 1999, p. 178, our translation)¹¹. Therefore, it is not in default of his theatrical interests that Copeau approaches clowns, because, as in the case of children in their games¹², clowns seemed to him to point in the right direction to renew the actor. In fact, Copeau's ambition was to transform his actors into improvisers who were as good at reacting to the present moment as the clowns are.

However, Copeau was unable to conduct systematic pedagogical research on the art of the clown within his company or his theatre school. This would only happen much later, in the work of Jacques Lecoq, who definitely introduced the search for "one's own clown" in the universe of practices concerning the training of actors.

Jacques Lecoq and the search for "one's own clown": meeting the child who has grown within us

According to Lecoq, clowns appeared in his school in the 1960s, when he wondered about the relationship between commedia dell'arte and circus clowns. A man of practice, Lecoq could not have formulated a more concise and galvanising question to trigger an experimental approach around the clown: "the clown makes us laugh, but how? (Lecoq, 2009, p. 152). By focusing on the 'how' rather than the 'what', Jacques Lecoq immediately pushes his students into practice, without any concern for the historical reconstruction of the figure of the clown, but with a view to its discovery. Lecoq thus allowed the emergence of a

¹¹ Les clowns n'ont pas le pédantisme des comédiens. Ils sont sincères, naïfs. Ils font un métier difficile et modeste.

¹² Childhood and children's play were objects of observation and experimentation in the research of a new pedagogy of the actor in Jacques Copeau. For more information, I recommend reading four other articles of my own: Quand le théâtre rejoint l'enfance: Apports de la Children's School à la pédagogie de l'acteur au sein de l'École du Vieux-Colombier (Scalari, 2021b); Copeau e os laboratórios da infância: as brincadeiras de seus filhos, ou, melhor dizendo, le tout rond (Scalari, 2022a); Jacques Copeau e o instinto dramático da criança (Scalari, 2022b); Copeau and Bing's Childhood Laboratories: a group of children, the embryo of the École du Vieux Colombier (Scalari, 2023).



new clown language, the theatrical one, while inventing a pedagogy for it.

It is through the actor's body exploration and the improvisation that, following a practical approach, Jacques Lecoq begins his research on the clown. One of his first observations is that the clown involves the actor's subjectivity in a way that was unheard of in his school, more than in any other dramatic territory studied by him before.

I'm going to tell you now about another sector. [...] Which is the search for 'one's own clown'. But this should not be understood in the sense of the traditional circus clown [...] But in the sense of the search for ourselves through our clown. Because there is a child that has grown in us that we can no longer express in social relationships. It was with us when we were small, but it is not the child in us, it is the child that has grown in us, with its own gestures, with its own voice. And these are extremely personal to us. [...] And it is this, bringing it to the surface, that will give the represented clown a human, sensitive value. Then we realise that our own clown is us (Jacques Lecoq apud Patrick Lecoq, 2016, 0'27", our translation).¹³

Placed at the end of the training in the schools of Lecoq and Gaulier, the clown takes the opposite path to the neutral mask, a technique figuring at the beginning of the training in both schools. If, in the neutral mask, the work consists of allowing being impregnated by the external phenomenological world, by the experience of what is outside, of the things, of the elements of nature, in the search for "*one's own clown*", the actor exposes to the others what is intimate and personal in him, in many cases his own fragilities. In the neutral mask, it is necessary to open up to let the world imprint its marks on us. In the clown, the actor also opens up, but to seek in himself his singularity, to show it to the audience and thus leave his personal mark in the world.

Search your own child, but avoid infantilism

From now on, about clown teaching in Jacques Lecoq and Philippe Gaulier,

¹³ Je vais vous parler maintenant d'un autre secteur. [...] Qui est la recherche de son propre clown. Mais il ne faut pas l'entendre dans le sens du clown traditionnel du cirque [...] Mais de la recherche de nous-mêmes par son clown. Car il y a un enfant qui a grandi en nous et qu'on ne peut plus exprimer dans les rapports sociaux. Il était avec nous quand on était petit, mais ce n'est pas l'enfant qui est en nous, c'est l'enfant qui a grandi en nous, avec ses gestes propres, avec sa voix propre. Et qui nous sont extrêmement personnels. [...] Et c'est ça, à le faire ressortir, ce qui va donner au clown représenté, une valeur humaine, sensible. Alors, on s'aperçoit que notre propre clown c'est nous.



we can start from the following premise: the child model is extremely important in the clown's pedagogical practice, and its application in no way represents the actor's fall into what we might call *infantilism*.

The mark we leave as clowns is the revelation of something personal which, for Gaulier and Lecoq, has to do with the childhood of each student and not with the exteriorisation of a supposedly childish behaviour. Although the clown belongs to the universe of the theatrical mask, the clown's mask, as "the smallest mask in the world", Lecoq underlines, "gives the nose a round shape, lights up the eyes with naiveté and makes the face seem bigger, robbing it of all defences" (Lecoq, 2006b, p.116).

In the same vein, Gaulier states, "As a teacher, I like to work with a red nose because when a student is with one, I see better how he was as a child" (Gaulier, 2016a). Therefore, worse than not finding the "repressed child that grew up in you", is to willingly assume an immature attitude that is pretentiously childish.

Philippe Gaulier and childlike ingenuity/innocence in clowning

Nicole Kehrberger, a former teacher at *École Philippe Gaulier*, tells us about her discomfort when she engaged in clown training at another school, before arriving at Gaulier's school as a student.

I learned a lot about fake acting. I call it fake acting. A fake smile... Even in the clown workshop, it was about gags, but I did not see any humanity and I did not know myself how to approach to change that, to make it differently. I learned to be effective on stage on doing a gag and to smile at people in a fake way, to be funny enough... And for me, the audience who used to go [...] they accepted it and they liked it. Maybe because they don't know it better. Maybe because that's what they like. I don't know, but I hated it. I felt bad in my skin. [...] what I mean with this fake, it's you put a grimace on your face, you put a mask, not a real mask, but it's like people that have a mask on their face, and I cannot see their soul. I cannot see the human being. And seeing the human being is what which makes life beautiful because everybody is so different. Probably I went to Philippe, amongst other things, [...] but probably one of the points was that I was looking for something else. I was looking for a teacher or a school or anything that could help me out of this prison. (Kehrberger apud Scalari, 2021a, p.662).

Kehrberger's testimony can be related to clown-training processes in which



a connection between the comic figure and an overly romanticised view of the child is used by a pedagogue supposedly to help an actor discover his clown. The behaviour which Nicole refers by the term fake acting, which she claims to have become a prison for herself, is related to the idea of a "childlike naivety" of a type that is severely criticised by Gaulier.

Members of the audience admire the pleasure, the tactics and the fantasy which a clown employs to make them believe something. They couldn't care less if it's true or false. They admire the naivety, which the dictionary defines as simplicity, a natural grace imbued with trust and sincerity. The naivety I'm referring to has nothing to do with the shabby false naivety which street performers put on when parading themselves as sweet, asexual, pure, foolish characters begging for loose change. This is ugly naivety. It makes the performer an insignificant little nothing. The naivety I'm referring to has the freshness of freedom. (Gaulier, 2012, p. 289).

Report of a day of the clown course at the École Philippe Gaulier:

Wednesday, 27 November 2013, at around 6.30pm, École Philippe Gaulier, Étampes, France

We are in the last weeks of the clown course. This is the clown course of the second year of the school, which lasts a total of ten weeks. Juan¹⁴ is an Argentinian actor who has come especially for the clown course. This is a common occurrence at the school as it is internationally known for its training of clowns. Juan has had many difficulties so far, but, in the last days, he has made remarkable progress. At this point in the course, in addition to the improvisation exercises that Philippe proposes for the class, we can perform clowns' numbers, individually, in pairs, in groups, in any way we like, in order to try to find a place for our numbers in the final showcase of the course. Juan has a proposal to make today.

Juan arrives with an air of Latin chivalry. A song begins to play; Juan expresses surprise in his eyes. As if he didn't know what was going to happen; he continues to look at us with a strange face until, as soon as the lyrics begin, we discover that it is Julio Iglesias in one of his romantic songs. Juan pulls a microphone with a cable from his pocket, which is not connected to any power source, and starts

¹⁴ Fictitious name given in order to respect the privacy of the actor mentioned.

dubbing the song. Philippe interrupts him a few seconds later. Then, as always, he asks one of the students in the audience if he found Juan's act funny or if it would have been better not to have watched it. The student responds by saying that he would have preferred not to watch. This is what we call the Flop, a feeling of failure accentuated by Philippe's words. After leaving the actor in this state of failure, Philippe says: "You can see that his microphone cable is nowhere connected. We don't see him playing the clown who wants us to believe he is Julio Iglesias."

This is a basic rule of clown teaching in Gaulier's approach: the clown, in all his acts, wants to make the audience believe that he is something he is not.



Le jeu et l'émancipation s'entendent
Samuel Gaulier dressed as D'Artagnan. Photo in the commemorative program of 25 years of the school, 2005.

Philippe then recalls a situation experienced by his son, Samuel, when he was six years old. Preparing to celebrate his sixth birthday the next day, Samuel was determined to dress up as D'Artagnan. But he made one very important request: Daddy, I have to dress in a hidden place, because if people look at me while I am dressed up, no one will believe that I am really D'Artagnan. Philippe turns back to Juan: "Maybe if we saw that his microphone was disconnected only at the end, it could be funny. It would also depend a lot on the actor. Now it's a disaster."

To be naïve, innocent, refers to the clown's inability to adapt to the conventions of the ordinary world within which he presents himself as an outsider. The idea of the clown as a little butterfly walking through a garden of beautiful and delicate flowers has nothing to do, at least in Philippe Gaulier's pedagogy, with the clown's sense of naivety or innocence. From a completely different perspective than that of idealized innocence, actor and researcher Guy Freixe¹⁵, witnesses an anarchist personality revealed by Gaulier's own clown, this time as an actor and on stage.

¹⁵ Actor, director and teacher, Guy Freixe is also a university professor of theatre theory and practice at the Université de Franche-Comté. He graduated from École Jacques Lecoq and was an actor at the Théâtre du Soleil from 1981 to 1986.



Childhood, in Gaulier, was in his clown. The dirty child, the one who cannot express himself, the transgressor child. There are all kinds of clowns. There are ugly faces, frowns, imps or even clowns whose origins are unknown. Gaulier's clown is very rude, very anarchist, he must come from a part of childhood that in adulthood no longer appears, and that, suddenly, reappears through the clown (Freixe apud Scalari, 2021a, p. 598, our translation).¹⁶

If, in the territory of the clown, as Lecoq proposes, it is about relating to the child that has grown within us, nothing prevents the discovery of the clown himself from revealing a child with characteristics contrary to delicacy and courtesy. It is quite possible that the approach of the clown himself reveals the child as narcissistic, brutal, rude. And all this without losing its innocence.

Another situation that occurred in our field research at École Philippe Gaulier complexifies the idea of the type of innocence present in the clown.

Wednesday, November 13, 2013, at around 6.30pm, École Philippe Gaulier, Étampes, France

When two clowns were about to make us lose interest in their improvisation, Alice¹⁷, a Swiss student, did not hesitate to look at the audience and with a serious expression of indignation in her eyes, asked: "You fuck my wife?" This is a classic Robert De Niro sentence in a scene from the film "Taxi Driver". The sentence was so unusual that it surprised us and made the audience laugh out loud. Stimulated by the laughter of the audience, seeing her strategy of "saving the show"¹⁸ working, Alice repeats: "You fuck my wife?" Once again, we started laughing, Alice was like a child who played with her parents and made them laugh. The fact that Alice kept repeating the phrase made us laugh and the more she repeated it, the more we laughed. From that day on, the phrase became a strategy thanks to which, in all

¹⁶ L'enfance, chez Gaulier, était dans son clown. Le sale enfant, celui qui ne peut pas s'exprimer, l'enfant transgressif... Des clowns, il y en a de toutes sortes. Il y a des sales gueules, il y des teigneux, des petits diables ou même des clowns dont on ne sait pas d'où ils viennent. Le clown de Gaulier est très mal poli, très anarchiste, cela doit venir d'une part de l'enfance qui à l'âge adulte n'apparaît plus, et qui, tout d'un coup, réapparaît par le clown.

¹⁷ Fictitious name given in order to respect the privacy of the actress mentioned.

¹⁸ This is one of the principles we learned in Gaulier's clown course. Like a child who wants to retain our attention, when playing clown we have to keep the audience's attention and love at all costs, without which we have to leave the stage. As the clown's ambition is to never leave the stage, we have to do anything to "save the show".



the following improvisations, when the attention of the audience dwindled, Alice was able to save her improvisation. All she had to do was look at us seriously and ask us, "You fuck my wife?"

What was interesting in Alice's strategy was not the phrase itself, but the way she said it, a twinkle in her eye appeared when she noticed that what she had said had provoked frantic laughter from the audience. We had the impression that in fact this clown did not even know the meaning of what she was saying, an impression reinforced by the fact that the actress in question had French as her mother tongue, and that she, in the vast majority of cases, had improvised in French. In praise of Alice's strategy, Gaulier commented, "It was good! It's like a child who saw the film and liked this phrase without understanding what it means. And who only retained this phrase from what he saw".

As Pascale Lecoq points out about the clown, "it is linked to a state of enormous availability [...] a state of openness. Just as a child is available to the world [...] Being innocent, seeing things without judgment"¹⁹ (Pascale Lecoq apud Scalari, 2021a, p. 616, our translation). In this way, the clown can utter a cheeky phrase like "You fuck my wife?" emptying it of its sexual connotation because, without understanding what it means, the clown just wants us to believe that he is Robert De Niro's character in this scene from Taxi Driver. To be naïve in the clown means not conforming to the norm by not understanding it, a characteristic that gives the clown a certain degree of stupidity, quite human, but which, in ordinary life, we often try to hide. In this sense, Guy Langford, former professor at the École Philippe Gaulier, draws a parallel between the ingenuity of the child and the clown.

There is something about the naivety of a child that is the same as a clown. [...] that naivety is great because it means that a clown doesn't [...] really know what a doctor does. So, when it's asked to be a doctor, he does a very simplistic idea of a doctor and then it's very kind of charming to watch. [...] It's funny because we see a child pretending to be a doctor, it's not really like a doctor, but it's really lovely to see what the child thinks the doctor is (Langford apud Scalari, 2021a, p.702).

In order to make more concrete the kind of simplistic idea that, like the clown,

¹⁹ Il est lié à un état de disponibilité énorme [...] un état d'ouverture. Comme l'enfant est disponible au monde [...] Être innocent, regarder les choses sans jugement.



a child can have of any activity, we could not resort to a better example than the one given by Nicole Kehrberger talking about her granddaughter.

I just have a remembering on my grandchild. She's a child really thin. Her mum is tight and she's small. [...] she's a really tiny person this girl. And she saw her father exercising, her father is totally mad about sports and my other son as well, both sons. So, they exercise. So, they do push-ups, and they pull, and they put [...] techno music to push themselves. And, and the funny thing is [...] especially my youngest son, he always takes out his shirt. So, he does it with the body naked and I always laugh about it. But he loves it. And he does like this probably because he sees his muscles better. [...] And my grandchild observed how the big man, they do exercise. And she knows the word exercise, because often she asks: "what are you doing?" And Milan, my youngest son, he says I'm doing exercises, I'm exercising. And one day I discovered her, she was alone in the room, she asked me to put techno music for her. This music from Milan, she asked. So, I put the music and I left her alone and I came back, and she was without t-shirt, trousers. And she did. (Nicole makes straight movements with her arms) (laughs) And I said: what are you doing? It was totally ridiculous what she did, her movements, you know, and I said, "what are you doing?" And she says, I'm doing exercise. So, she understood you have to have no t-shirt to exercise, to do straight movements. She doesn't know the meaning of the movement; she doesn't understand what it is about. But she understood she has to do like this and like this and no t-shirt on, you know? For me this is the perfect clown. It's the perfect clown. So probably if she has a good teacher and she wants to do this kind profession, then maybe she will be a superhero in her costume. I don't know. Because that makes it totally ridiculous. Especially being such a fine female body, you know, it was absolutely ridiculous (Kehrberger apud Scalari, 2021a, p. 666).

The clown, the child and the problematic of the "authentic self"

According to Jacques Lecoq, "Only children display their feelings directly" (Lecoq, 2006a, p. 16). To exemplify, Lecoq imagines the potential embarrassment he would cause if he decided, like some children, to show his tongue to another adult he did not like, which, if done by a child, even if it generated some embarrassment, would be easily forgivable because such behaviour is seen by us as something inherent to the child condition: "Oh! Pay no attention, he's just a child!" (Lecoq, 2006a, p. 16). However, for Lecoq, the processes of education and socialisation cause the child to gradually lose the gestural spontaneity that he manifests before incorporating social codes of behaviour.



To show one's feelings is not polite. Society comes along with its rules of conduct and corrects such spontaneous behaviour. Society fights against natural, instinctive gestures which appear vulgar (Lecoq, 2006a, p. 16).

The struggle evoked above is not without consequences on the corporality of the human being educated to live in society. For Lecoq, a kind of split is created between the natural state of the body, where internal motivations would be in conformity with its external expressions, and a state of the body "flattened" by culture, a state that becomes a *second nature*.

A number of our movements are quite involuntary and we frequently express our intimate feelings by means of instinctive gestures: I clench my fist or I tap my foot because I am angry, because I object to something or because I detest it. Through observing the effect produced on others by these uncontrolled gestures, we become aware of them and begin to use them deliberately in order to obtain the desired reactions. Little by little, these gestures acquire clarity. By force of habit, we end up assimilating them into our own being and using them without noticing. They have become second nature. We smile – almost all of us – mechanically without really wanting to, when someone is introduced to us for the first time. This smile is an expression of polite greeting. It is far removed from the reaction of the child who cries when faced with an unknown lady who frightens him. Smiling has become a structured language (Lecoq, 2006a, p.6).

To a large extent, the different techniques applied in Lecoq's school – movement analysis, neutral mask, identification with elements and subjects – contribute to the deconstruction of this corporal language structured for social conviviality purposes and aim to make the student experience new corporal qualities (new behaviours and new corporal states), different from those with which he is used to. The difference here is that, if the application of the mentioned techniques provokes the actor to perform a corporal deconstruction from his encounter with an exterior technique, that is, "from outside to inside", in the clown one of the first objectives of the work is precisely the awakening of the gestures which were repressed during the actor's childhood, to bring such gestures "from inside to outside", since, when repressed, for Lecoq, such gestures disappear only exteriorly, but remain deep inside the body of the child from before and of the actor in the here and now.



At the same time, we do technical work on forbidden gestures, the ones which an actor has never been able to express in society. “Walk properly!”, “Stand up straight!”, “Stop scratching your head!” – such are the injunctions that lead us to keep certain gestures buried deep in our childhood bodies without ever allowing ourselves to express them. This is work of a very psychological nature and gives the actor great freedom in his playing. It is useful for the students to experience this freedom, finding themselves stripped of all defences, in what I call the primary clown (Lecoq, 2009, p. 157-158).

We can see the influence of the thought of the anthropologist of gesture Marcel Jousse in Lecoq's work. In his turn, Jousse did not spare criticism to the gestural castration to which the child is submitted when he/she begins to be more directly educated, becoming the object of a socialisation that, in his opinion, often takes place prematurely.

But man, by force of circumstances, has become not only a miming animal, as we have studied, but a *social animal*. [...] The Child is not social at first. The Child is the most selfish being there is. She/he is right, because she/he absorbs in herself/himself all the wealth of the world. The Child plays things his own way without caring what is said or done. But we arrive with our formulas, with the weight of our authority, and we say that the child doesn't understand us. No, it is you who impose yourself on the child, from outside, who inflict your gestures on the child, as you want to impose them socially on your neighbour (Jousse, 1935, p. 5).²⁰

Thus, in Lecoq's work, the clown's first task is to free the student from the gestural limits set by his "social animal", to free him from the corporal codes that privilege, for example, politeness over spontaneity, so that the student can bring out the "undisciplined child" once repressed.

This search for one's own clown resides in the freedom to be oneself, to accept this truth and use it to make others laugh. There is a child within us, that has grown up within us, and which society forbids us to show; it is more permissible on stage than in everyday life (Lecoq, 2006b, p. 116).

We can see that, for Lecoq, the clown as language and the stage as a

²⁰ Mais l'Homme par le concours des circonstances s'est fait, non seulement animal mimeur comme nous l'avons étudié, mais animal social. [...] L'Enfant n'est pas social au début. L'Enfant est l'être le plus égoïste qui soit. Il a raison, car il monte en lui toute la richesse du monde. L'Enfant joue les choses à sa manière sans se préoccuper de ce qui se dit, de ce qui se fait. Mais nous arrivons avec nos formules, avec la lourdeur de notre emprise et nous disons que l'enfant ne nous comprend pas. Non, c'est vous qui vous êtes infligé à l'enfant, par le dehors, qui avez infligé vos gestes à l'enfant, comme vous voulez les infliger socialement à votre voisin.



framework are ideal conditions for this repressed child, who constitutes, as said above, "the truth of oneself", to be revealed. We come then to the idea of the child as the authentic self.

A man from the first half of the twentieth century, Jacques Lecoq's discourse on the "true self" bears the mark of the modern theatrical conceptions of his time, essentialist ideas that cut across approaches by many other great theatre pedagogues and directors belonging to Lecoq's generation or generations before him, as Auslander identifies.

The problematic of self is, of course, central to performance theory. Theorists as diverse as Stanislavski, Brecht, and Grotowski all implicitly designate the actor's self as the logos of performance; all assume that the actor's self-precedes and grounds her performance and that it is the presence of this self in performance that provides the audience with access to human truths (Auslander, 1997, p. 30).

The clown, in particular, is possibly the language in which this demand for authentic exposure of the self is most evident, and often researchers and practitioners maintain that the clown is not a character, since it is always the actor himself exposing his own ridiculousness and subjectivity: "What is the clown or the clown? It is you magnified, it is not a character, it deals with your questions, with a magnifying lens, it is a technique that revolves a lot around that" (Concá apud Brum, 2018, p. 466, our translation)²¹ or still "The clown needs to undress; the actor needs to dress" (Sperber apud Ferracini, 2006, p.327)²².

In this sense, in clown pedagogy, the smallest mask in the world is used to try to reach the point where the social mask disappears in favour of exposing characteristics that one tries to hide in everyday social life because they are considered ridiculous or signs of weakness. We are here in the counter-current of the Sartrean aphorism according to which "existence precedes essence", because, in a certain way, the clown's work is considered as the taking of a subjective path full of obstacles so that the actor can unveil a certain authenticity, repressed in

²¹ O que é o palhaço ou a palhaça? É você ampliado, não é um personagem, trata das suas questões, com uma lente de aumento, é uma técnica que gira muito em torno disso.

²² O clown precisa se despir; o ator precisa se vestir.



childhood, in front of the audience. This whole mystique around the figure of the clown, through which the actor must "be himself", is marked by metaphysical and essentialist considerations typical of those whom Philip Auslander calls "modernist performance theorists".

The problem is not that modernist performance theorists, especially Grotowski, fail to acknowledge that the body is encoded by social discourses, but rather that they suggest that these codes are only an overlay on the body, that there is an essential body that can short-circuit social discourses. This essential body is a metaphysical, even a mystical, concept... (Auslander, 1997, p. 91-92).

Lecoq certainly does not carry the same interest in the actor's self as Stanislavski and Grotowski. However, from the perspective of subjectivity, the territory of the clown in particular brings Lecoq closer to the other two researchers. From the theories of pedagogues and directors classified by Auslander as "modern", as well as from the "the freedom to be oneself" (Lecoq, 2006b, p. 116) proposed by Lecoq in *Clown*, stems the difficulty of answering the question, "what does it mean to be yourself?" This is a question hardly answered by any of the modern masters. Perhaps because practice is more effective than theory when it comes to presenting answers to questions such as this, that is, that which many times escapes the discourse not rarely imposes itself on stage as irrefutable evidence of affectation and contact between the actor and the audience, between the clown and the public.

Let us allow ourselves, however, a brief theoretical approach to the challenge imposed by the reckless question: what is to be yourself? As far as Lecoq is concerned, it is interesting to take into consideration what Marcel Jousse proposes on the subject, given the anthropologist's strong influence on the man of theatre. In his anthropology of gesture²³, the closest Jousse comes to a definition of what "being yourself" means is when he refers to the experimentation present in the

²³ Anthropology of Gesture and Rhythm, or Anthropology of Mimicry, is a field of study created by the French priest and anthropologist Marcel Jousse in the first half of the 20th century. For Jousse, man is an "interactively miming animal". In short, man elaborates the world in which he lives to the extent that he "mimes" ("imitates") it, consciously and unconsciously. Critical of bookish formal education, Jousse would be an advocate of children learning in contact with nature and through their play, with as little adult intervention as possible.



child's play.

To play, to awaken, to understand oneself, to understand oneself with one's own mechanisms, because this is a wealth of "infinite power": to know oneself because we know that we are very rich... But let us be careful! This game needs solitude. This game needs purity. This game needs spontaneity. It is in the child that lies the secret of the search for oneself (Jousse, 1937, p. 20, our translation).²⁴

For Jousse, this authenticity can be developed through the play, thanks to which the child, driven by the force of mimicry, gets to know the world through itself and its receptor mechanisms, while forging itself through the re-signification of the strongest impressions that the cosmos has left in it. In this way, "being oneself" has less to do with revealing a supposedly immutable essence of being than with producing a creative interaction with a world whose meaning and rules of operation are not all given a priori. And here we can also refer to Donald Winnicott, for whom it is only in play and in creative interaction with the world that a person can discover himself/herself: "It is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self." (Winnicott, 1975, p. 110, our translation)²⁵. Thus, the figures of the child and the clown meet through a common activity, play. The clown's clumsy subversion of reality is anarchic and represents the extreme of his "non-adaptation" to pre-existent rules, condition for all creative experience for Winnicott. We will resume.

The clown or the theatrical existence of the child: subjectivity, singularity, stylisation, improvisation, repetition of the same game, creativity

Lecoq was, above all, a man of practice and it is not possible to measure the power of his work by limiting ourselves to what he said or wrote. The learning of the clown in Lecoq, and also in Gaulier, is more a question of intense practice of

²⁴ Se jouer soi-même, s'éveiller, se comprendre, s'orienter avec ses propres mécanismes, parce que nous avons affaire à une richesse « d'une puissance infinie » : se connaître parce qu'on se sait soi-même très riche... Mais faisons bien attention ! Ce jeu a besoin de la solitude. Ce jeu a besoin de la pureté. Ce Jeu a besoin de la Spontanéité. C'est dans l'enfant que réside tout le secret de la recherche de soi-même.

²⁵ C'est en jouant, et seulement en jouant que l'individu, enfant ou adulte, est capable d'être créatif et d'utiliser sa personnalité tout entière. C'est seulement en étant créatif que l'individu découvre le soi.



play than of theoretical discourses on the clown figure. We are here far from psychodrama, since it is not enough to let "your inner child come out", but, as Guy Freixe proposes, it is necessary that the "child-clown" exists through his relationship and his play with the audience.

From a psychological point of view, this is very strong, because with the clown there is both the stylisation of the theatre and, at the same time, a very deep appeal to the subjectivity of each individual, which was set aside, so to speak, in the first year of training. At the end of the training, something finally appears which does not resemble the common poetic background of the neutral mask, but which is singular to each individual. This is where the great journey of the school comes in: at a point where our own hidden child can use the power of the theatrical transposition to appear. With a little colour here. That is Lecoq's great creation. That pedagogical path did not exist in Copeau. Therein lies the whole strength of Lecoq's pedagogy: to take the student through this whole journey, towards this zone where the child can exist theatrically in complete connection with the audience. Because the clown only exists through the eyes of the audience. It's not a self-centred child. It is the strength of the child that is seen on stage (Freixe apud Scalari, 2021a, p. 598-599).²⁶

The wealth of elements contained in the above quote compels us to unfold three fundamental lines of thought.

The first concerns the *technical structure that will allow the actor's subjectivity to blossom in a theatrical dimension*, preventing him from falling into a psychologising or self-directed approach. If the clown invokes the actor's subjectivity, one must take into account that the fact that the clown work is strategically placed at the end of two years of training allows this subjectivity to emerge in the bulge of a theatrical technique that the actor has built since he

²⁶ D'un point de vue psychologique, cela est très fort, car avec le clown il y a à la fois la stylisation du théâtre et, en même temps, un appel très profond à la subjectivité de chacun, qui était mise de côté, en quelque sorte, dans la première année de formation. À la fin de la formation, quelque chose apparaît enfin qui n'est pas similaire au fond poétique commun du masque neutre, mais qui est singulier à chacun. C'est là où le grand voyage de l'école arrive : à ce que notre propre enfant caché puisse utiliser la force de la transposition théâtrale pour apparaître. Avec un petit bout de couleur là. Cela est la grande création de Lecoq. Ce cheminement pédagogique n'était pas chez Copeau. Là il y a toute la force de la pédagogie Lecoquienne: amener l'élève à travers tout ce voyage, vers cette zone où l'enfant se trouve propulsé vers une zone où il existe théâtralement en lien complet avec le public. Parce qu'il n'existe que par le regard du public. Ce n'est pas un enfant qui serait autocentré. C'est la force de l'enfant qui se donne à voir sur la piste.



entered Lecoq's or Gaulier's school²⁷. This technique favours the theatricality of a mime body which dedicated itself for two years to transpose elements of daily life to the artistic sphere through tools and diverse explorations: neutral/larval/dell'arte masks, masking of the body in the buffoon, research on the tragic chorus, etc. Furthermore, at this stage of training, the student is expected to have a minimum command of theatrical elements such as the management of time and rhythm on stage, the use of space, the precision and clarity of their own physical actions. In a certain way, it is ensured by this technique, that the "child of the actor", understood as a subjective element, is invited to show itself, limited by a series of concrete and objective principles. This technical structure then organises a subjectivity which, if invoked otherwise, could lead to egocentric experiences of a more therapeutic than theatrical nature.

However, because it is at the end of the training courses proposed by both Lecoq and Gaulier, the clown pedagogy suggests that the mastery of technique does not count for itself. Thus, our second line of thought concerns the promotion of the *actor's singularity* through clown. The work on this child, grown within the student and brought out through the clown, seems to be Lecoq's invitation to the student so that, in possession of the technical and poetic baggage learned, he can leave school charged with a personal and singular creative impulse, without allowing himself to be limited by the training obtained, avoiding the risk of doing shows dedicated to displaying his technique. Working with the technical baggage acquired, the student uses it as a support for artistic desires that are personal to him and which he will be able to find by carefully observing the echo of the outside world in himself. Thus, it is through laughter and comedy that Lecoq invites the student to express, upon leaving school, his uniqueness in the theatre.

The third line of thought is the one to which all the elements of the first contribute and which will be explored in particular within the clown's territory - the quality of the contact he establishes *with the audience*: "The power of the clown's imaginary, unlike the child who plays in solitude and for himself/herself, comes from the fact that the clown exists only in relation to the audience" (Freixe

²⁷ However, it is important to note that, unlike in Lecoq's school, in Gaulier's school, a student may, if he or she wishes, take any of the workshops, regardless of whether they are in the first or second year of teaching, on a stand-alone basis.



apud Scalari, 2021a, p. 599)²⁸. Thus, the "child of the actor" is invited to show himself or herself so that - although aware of the theatrical transposition he or she must make to escape from a self-centred play, so that the play may amuse the actor/actress himself/herself, but also his or her audience, a commitment that the child does not have - the student may rediscover the freshness of the play in childhood so that his or her play is perpetually renewed.

This is where he [Lecoq] comes into contact with Copeau's other great intuition: his fascination with the Fratellini clowns. In other words, the presence of total improvisation, improvising a number in a different way every night. Copeau was fascinated by the Fratellini clowns, going to see them every night for a period of time and thinking, "my god! They can improvise according to the audience's laughter, the laughter of such and such a lady..." In other words, taking every moment really as a moment when you have to react. And this brings us back to the great power of the child. The child can play the same game twice, but each time he will play it differently (Freixe apud Scalari, 2021a, p. 599, our translation).²⁹

And here we touch in another aspect of childhood worked by the actor in all the dramatic territories, but focused in the clown in a particularly special way: the creativity. We can base ourselves on the notion of creativity proposed by Donald Winnicott as a quality inherent to human nature and recognisable in any child whose "environment has been good enough" (Winnicott, 1988, p. 56) so that, during its life, it is not limited to submit itself to the rules of a world that precedes it. On the notion of creativity, Winnicott states:

It is above all a creative mode of perception that gives the individual the feeling that life is worth living; what is opposed to such a mode of perception is a submissive relationship of complacency with external reality: the world and all its elements are then recognised, but only as that to which one must adjust and adapt. (Winnicott, 1975, p. 127).³⁰

²⁸La puissance de l'imaginaire du clown, à la différence de l'enfant qui joue dans la solitude et pour lui-même, vient de ce que le clown n'existe que dans la relation au public.

²⁹ C'est là où il rejoint l'autre grande intuition de Copeau : sa fascination pour les clowns Fratellini. C'est-à-dire, un présent de l'improvisation totale, improviser tous les soirs un numéro de façon différente. Copeau était fasciné par les clowns Fratellini, il allait les voir tous les soirs pendant une période et il se disait « mon Dieu! Ils arrivent à improviser en fonction du rire de la salle, du rire d'une telle dame »... Autrement dit, prendre vraiment chaque moment comme un moment où il faut réagir. Et cela nous renvoie à la grande force de l'enfant. L'enfant a beau reprendre deux fois le même jeu, à chaque fois il va le rejouer différemment.

³⁰ Il s'agit avant tout d'un mode créatif de perception qui donne à l'individu le sentiment que la vie vaut la peine d'être vécue ; ce qui s'oppose à un tel mode de perception, c'est une relation de complaisance soumise envers la réalité extérieure : le monde et tous ses éléments sont alors reconnus, mais seulement comme étant ce à quoi il faut s'ajuster et s'adapter.



Also:

By creative life I mean not being killed or annihilated continually by submission or reaction to the invading world; I mean looking at things in a new way (Winnicott, 1988, p. 57).³¹

An example of the renewed gaze can be found in the child who asks us to sing a song repeatedly, to listen to the same story a tenth time, to play the same game for hours if possible. This is a natural behaviour for children, for their enjoyment of life itself is completely new. More difficult for adults, this state is currently sought through meditation, mindfulness and yoga practices. Japanese Zen Buddhism, for example, uses the word *shoshin* (Suzuki, 1977, p. 29) to refer to the "beginner's mind", an empty state of mind, ready to accept, to doubt, but, above all, to be equally open to the unknown and to what we think we already know: "The beginner's mind contains many possibilities; the expert's mind contains few" (Suzuki, 1977, p. 30, our translation)³².

Let us resume Winnicott's phrase "I mean the fact of looking at things in a new way" (Winnicott, 1988, p. 57, our translation)³³. Like the child, the clown is an example of this new and curious way of looking at the world, in which, through incomprehension, he or she relates to things with his or her clumsy way of being. Thus, if the lamp in the ceiling of the room burns out, the clown may ask for a ladder, climb up empty-handed and try, by the most varied means, to lower the ceiling to put the new lamp that he/she left at the foot of the ladder. It is at this precise point, that, like the "child of a sufficiently good mother", the clown does not submit to the ordinary logic of a reality that precedes his own presence. He becomes a creator when he extracts things from their ordinary logic and instates the chaos with which he imprints his world on ours: "Creativity, then, means retaining throughout life something that is, properly speaking, part of early childhood experience: the capacity to create the world" (Winnicott, 1988, p. 55, our

³¹ Par vie créatrice, j'entends le fait de ne pas être tué ou annihilé continuellement par soumission ou par réaction au monde qui empiète sur nous ; j'entends le fait de porter sur les choses un regard toujours neuf.

³² L'esprit du débutant contient beaucoup de possibilités ; l'esprit de l'expert en contient peu.

³³ j'entends le fait de porter sur les choses un regard toujours neuf.



translation)³⁴ .

Thirst for love, birth of humour in the clown and the child.

One evening my son (Samuel) saw twelve seconds of Swan Lake on a bad television set whose aerial never worked. When he wouldn't go to bed, to gain time, he would dance the lake and the swans. He even added elephants. He moved his legs, his arms and his bust and jumped, fell and twisted his feet in such a complicated way that a stranger would have, after a moment of bewilderment, wondered what it all meant. He would dance until I shouted. "Alright, ten minutes more! Then you're off to bed!" He was happy. He had won some time in the light. We love Samuel when his invented gestures, his ridiculous and complicated attitudes, suggest his thirst for being loved, his hope not go to bed (Gaulier, 2012, p. 283).

Present in his book, Gaulier also uses the above account in the clown course to exemplify the need to obtain the love of the audience that motivates the clown to do anything to stay on stage. This relationship between the child and the clown that Gaulier detects in his son raises an interesting question for our reflection: is there a relationship between the child and the clown in terms of humour itself?

We could think that an insurmountable limit between the child and the clown is the very idea of humour, that is, the fact that the clown, unlike the child, plays and does silly things so that the other person can laugh, while, normally, in the child we do not necessarily find this relation of intentionality. However, the relationship between the child and the clown seems to be more complex from the point of view of the intentionality of the child when he makes his interlocutor laugh, especially if we approach the funny situation not through the text of his act, but through the context of his response.

A study by Indian psychologist Vasudevi Reddy identifies clown-like behaviour in children from an early age. Reddy points out that studies on humour in children to date are often limited to the domain of verbal humour, ignoring non-verbal participants such as infants. According to the researcher, the modern account of cognitive development broadly agrees that mood perception does not emerge until 18 months. However, in a study on the development of humour in infants,

³⁴ La créativité, c'est donc conserver tout au long de la vie une chose qui, à proprement parler, fait partie de l'expérience de la première enfance : la capacité de créer le monde.



specifically in the first year of life, Reddy concludes from observation and interviews with parents of 7-11 month olds that most infants are capable of provoking laughter, deliberately reproducing clowning in order to sustain laughter in others.

The prevalence and nature of clowning acts. Parents had little difficulty in identifying instances when their infants did things intentionally to elicit laughter from them. Of the parents who gave clear responses to the question, 87% of 8 month olds, 87% of 11 month-olds (and 100% of 14 month- olds)–were reported to have shown at least one instance, with details, of clear clowning with no significant age differences in the presence of clowning. Some of the parents at 8 months reported only simple acts such as splashing and banging, which increased in frequency and intensity when others laughed. Other parents, even at 8 months, reported more complex and idiosyncratic acts [...]. There were increases with age in the obviousness of the attempts to re- elicit laughter (Reddy, 2001, p. 250).

In this case, it is not the child who appears in the clown, but the clown who presents himself through attitudes intentionally made by the child to not only provoke laughter in the adult, but also its repetition.

The most frequently reported acts were actions of the head and face, mainly head shaking, nodding or wobbling, and screwed up faces. The infant actions shown in Table 1 were all ones which we as adults would recognise as being funny, and fall without difficulty into categories of actions derived from adult clowning. [...] the infants' sensitivity to and interest in the laughter and emotional reactions of others that then allowed these acts to be repeated as clowning (Reddy, 2001, p. 252).

In a direction contrary to ours, Vasudevi Reddy opens ways not to think about what the clown may have of the child, but to think about what the child from an early age possesses of clown in his behaviour. For this researcher, "Clowning as an activity which is sensitive to and plays upon others' laughter appears to be present in the second half of the first year of human infancy" (Reddy, 2001, 254). Thus, as with adult clowns, for children, "the play with others' reactions is the crucial emotional key to such engagements" (Reddy, 2001, 254). Extremely stimulating, although Vasudevi Reddy's study is not explored in depth here, it opens up a whole new perspective for future questioning and assures us of the richness that attention to the child, this human being full of possibilities, presents for theatrical research, and, more specifically, for clown research. A richness that others before



us were also able to highlight, which we try to demonstrate here.

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