

Only the dancer does not have them*

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This reflection interweaves aspects of the study of body image and my dance practice in the Dancer-Researcher-Performer (DRP) ¹ method, which was created by Prof. Dr. Graziela Rodrigues. The subject explored here focuses on the dermatological aspect of the body image, watching the skin of the dancer as a supporter of metaphors and symbols in search of his or her "own skin", fingerprints and traces of his or her identity.

According to Koo and Yeung (2002), the skin represents a "packing of the living being." The authors state that a discussion on body image would not be complete without considering the dermatology field. The cutaneous surface is the first thing that society perceives about us, so the look of it is relevant in the development and maintenance of a healthy body image. In this reflection, the skin is the exponential organ in the dynamic of development of the body image of the person who dances.

The romantic sylph with porcelain complexion still hovers as one of the most perfect translations of the word "dancer". In contrast, in the dance of group Dança Burra ² on the show Estábulo de Luxo (1995), the face skin is literally cut with a razor blade: the blade sharp, the dancers draw the mouth of a clown on their faces. It puts forth the living flesh, a red smile that soon fades. How far can a dancer get with his or her body, support of his or her own life? Scars, itchings, warts, skin wounds, marks of life exposed or hidden. Searching further, the dancer ...

Chorus of the music Ciranda da Bailarina, by Chico Buarque and Edu Lobo. This song alludes to the idealized figure of the dancer, citing many human defects and dermatological diseases that, supposedly, only the dancer would not have.

One of many resources used by a dance artist for his or her creation is working with the sensations and images that costumes or props cause in contact with

¹ Translation of BPI (Bailarino-Pesquisador-Intérprete)

² Founded by Marcelo Gabriel e Adriana Banana.

the body. It is "playing" with the body image. But according to the degree of consciousness in the use of this resource, there is the risk of "masking" the true speech of the body. The costumes are objects that dialogue and expand the senses of the natural skin, in a game of revealing and withholding, packing and unpacking the interior, the emotional content.

To illustrate this idea, I open here a little autobiographical study case. During some periods in my career, I've experienced the stigma of the "chubby dancer". Because I don't give up so easily, I ended up creating dances in which my body remained veiled by layers of tissue, large objects, exoskeletons, cloaks. One day, I dressed in a big white mantle with a movie was projected over it. I became a dancing movie screen. The film was linked to many places and people of the world; it was a crowd of faces and bodies. But my body only reflected them. The edges of this body were fluid, defined, but extrapolated in relation to my own skin. Until I came close to a tempting limit: the idea of turning myself invisible. I've tested the erasure of my body through a game of mimicry with the scenario. Then, scared of disappearing, I've stripped the cloak of invisibility. Regardless of my aesthetic appreciation of the work, I've realized I could "dissolve my fingerprints."

Years later, when initiating work in the DRP method, I realized the importance of the consciousness of the dancer when performing operations on his or her body during the artistic speech, in order to not become invisible to him or herself. It was necessary to go back to my "normal size". So I've started diving in reverse, going, little by little, to meet my "nakedness", my contours and my own skin. Is there such a thing? What would be this skin? How many layers would be discovered until I found it? And in what state would it be?

I learned about the studies of body image from the DRP method to develop my master's thesis project, entitled: The dojo of the DRP: A place where paths bloom (2008)³. In this group I have understood the mechanisms of idealization of the body image, not only in the professional sphere, but also interlaced to the social and familiar sphere.

According to Turtelli (2009, p. 28), the concept of body image in relation to the DRP method helps "[...] to understand the movement as an individual phenomenon that integrates many experiences, memories and desires. And it is connected to a body identity of the performer". Graziela Rodrigues points out

that: "The studies about body image make us attentive to the demands of a body model by the media, the situations of projection and the catharsis experienced along the scenic mount that privileges the product and not the artist; the crises triggered from this relationship between the idealized models and the reality of each individual".⁴ Regarding this, Rodrigues and Tavares (2006, p. 126) define as the ideal body the person who "dances the path of development of narcissism", while the real body, "dances the path of development of the body image" which is the dance "in possession of its own identity."

For the DRP, the identity question passes through emotional experience. I refer again to Rodrigues: "It is not possible to work the creation in dance with just the referential of the performance and without the emotion referential. One thing is to perform the emotion, another is to live and elaborate it to have a support in acting. The emotion is a flower that opens itself. The work is needed so there is a better and greater consciousness of it."⁵

³ Translation of: *O dojo do BPI: Lugar onde se desbrava um caminho* (2008).

⁴ Verbal information collected in the study group BPI, *Imagem Corporal e Dança do Brasil* (29/5/2008).

⁵ Verbal information collected in the study group BPI, *Imagem Corporal e Dança do Brasil* (29/5/2008).

The DRP method proposes the dance to develop the body image of the dancer in the search of originality and individuality, of his or her reinstatement. As mentioned earlier, this movement is done in the emotional experience, including the way of being in the world in relation to the other. For example, according to the DRP, the senses represented in the movie and projected on my mantle (people, places) would be present in my body in a less conceptual and more incarnate way: the body would receive a "crowd" in a conscious exchange of body images. More specifically, as per Dolto (1984), in the relationships that occur *between* the body images.

Through my experience with the DRP, under the orientation of Graziela Rodrigues, I created a dance named jaguar body. The jaguar body brought to the surface deep emotional experiences, taut in the cells. Its senses were unfolded by (un)dressing the costumes. The clothing of the jaguar body has

appeared in a moment in which my process was still ingrained in my cultural matrices: a kimono and a western shirt. These clothes are eloquent extensions and meanings of my body image elaboration, while descending in the first degree of Japanese and Brazilian northeastern cultures. One aspect of the relationship between self-esteem, "stages of ethnic identity" and body satisfaction treated by Kawamura (2002), would be the question of "identity conquered". It is the acceptance of the positive and negative sides associated with the cultures question, as a more balanced and positive body image attitude.

In principle, stripping itself is a painful process because it requires the dancer to contact the marks and internal scars, skin wounds, rashes of self-image of the things we hide, plasticize, to show always the best side. It's like unwrapping a gift that you cannot return, but host its content and be able to transform, not necessarily the body itself, but the relationship you have with it.

The jaguar body performs actions such as peeling, tearing the various skins, scratching it, recognizing its textures, layers, moorings, volumes, folds, marks and senses. The skin of the jaguar body sweats, shivers itself up and speaks. It is a renewal effort in which skins come off inside out, in a "plastic" from internal displacement of armors. Gradually, the clothes will be released, to reveal a naked torso. The clothes are still interlaced. The naked body projects itself to the space.

What is born from unpacking this dancing body? Revealing itself does not mean, necessarily, to reach full nudity, and eroticism is strengthened in the juxtaposition between clothing and skin. The jaguar body helped me to glimpse layers and recognize other projections unconsciously internalized. This body is a third thing that is born from a relationship between the interior and the exterior. It is an important moment in the differentiation of the self.

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