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THEATER AND CRISIS IN ARGENTINA: LANGUAGE AS RESISTANCE

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Article || Received on: 11/01/2016 | International Advisory Board's suitability: 20/05/2016 | Published: 07/2016

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Abstract || This article analyses the way in which the social, political, institutional, and economic crisis at the end of 2001 in Argentina struck in the theatrical field, specifically in the field of drama. In this context of crisis and instability, theater assumes and raises a debate about our identity, the need of memory, and the social function of art. We analyze some aspects of the work of two key playwrights during the years of crisis: Griselda Gambaro, linked with the poetics of critical realism, and Daniel Veronese, associated with a more experimental and innovative model. Both playwrights have appealed to different stylistic strategies, and poetic and communicative resources to symbolize and give visibility to social conflicts.

Keywords || Theatre | Language | Poetic | Crisis | Policy | Society

0. Introduction

The beginning of the twentieth century was, in many Latin American countries, punctuated by social movements and popular protests that claimed the right for greater participation in politics, denounced corruption and demanded a more just distribution of wealth. The reformist and progressivist governments that emerged in these years displaced the dominant economic strategies from the previous decade and posed new challenges and new action horizons for social organizations. At the same time, associated with these changes in the political orientations of some governments, social mobilization arose “con características regresivas, tintes derechistas y anhelos restauradores” (Modonesi and Rebón, 2011: 9).

In Argentina, in particular, Carlos Saúl Menem’s government created policies in the 1990s that destroyed national industry and submerged the nation in a deep depression, initiating the course of events that would lead to the socio-political, institutional, and economic crisis that would impact the first years of the following decade. In this way, the economic adjustments that responded to the mandate of international credit agencies, the privatization of national goods and the financial, industrial, and commercial liberalization that obeyed the market demands implied the loss of sovereignty and the dismantling of the state, as well as the impoverishment of the population and the alarming increase of unemployment.

The Alliance government (Unión Cívica Radical-Frepaso) continued with the economic policy brought forth by Menem in respect to economic adjustments, social exclusion, and the asphyxiating plan of convertibility implemented by the Minister of Economy, Domingo Cavallo. The decree 1570/2001 that precipitated the fall of the Alliance government denied wealthy people from withdrawing their money from banks and stopped workers from freely spending their salaries because the decree, called the *corralito*, limited their withdrawals. When the president decreed the state of emergency, popular reaction was on the rise and political repression was soon to follow.

On December 19th and 20th, 2001—the eruption point of the crisis that had begun to gestate in the previous decade—popular mobilization questioned the validity of traditional structures of economic and political power. Protests, *cacerolazos*, picketing, marches, and meetings of neighbors—that displayed “la convergencia entre la desobediencia civil y la democracia directa” (Svampa, 2008: 99)—attempted to redefine the function of politics as immediate and direct action, whose beneficiary should be the people. The impractical idea of the popular motto “Que se vayan todos” resulted in a profound disenchantment and disbelief in politics and, at the same time, an urgent call for change and a new beginning.

Public spaces were also home to artistic expressions and different forms of collective creativity. It may be true, as Andrea Giunta states, that it is not possible to horizontally transfer popular protest practices to the forms of artistic organization. In any case, both existed prior to the crisis, and it is undeniable that «todas las formas de organización colectiva se intensificaron inmediatamente después de la crisis y, en ocasiones, se vincularon en un mismo espacio» (Giunta, 2009: 16). Diverse social forums manifested opposition to the mercantilization of social relationships and culture as a product of neoliberal globalization, and at the same time, they promoted the defense and revalorization of cultural diversity. In this sense, the year 2002 was an extraordinary year, in that:

la Argentina se deslizó por la más grave crisis política, económica y social de toda su historia, al tiempo que se reconoció como una sociedad movilizadora que, oscilando entre la desmesura y la desesperación, (re) descubría su capacidad de acción, inaugurando lazos de cooperación y solidaridad que habían sido fuertemente socavados durante una larga década de neoliberalismo. (Svampa, 2008: 153)

In keeping with what happened in other artistic environments, such as in visual arts—which, in the middle of the country’s crisis, experienced notable growth— theater, being an art form that is fundamentally sensitive to its context, manifested its critical and creative potential. In effect, the *teatristas* developed a series of strategies to confront social impoverishment, such as: self-management, condensing of spaces, *a la gorra* theater, the reduction of the cost of tickets, mouth to mouth publicity, the abandonment of traditional spaces and the adoption of unconventional environments (houses, factories and streets).

Nevertheless, other resources—such as the creative utilization of materials, the placement of the actor in the center of the creative process, and the valorization of stage language—were not only decisions forced by the economic situation but were also voluntary and conscious aesthetic choices. For its part, as a display of complicity and support, the audience backed these initiatives by attending theatrical performances, museums, concerts and dance performances, perhaps motivated by the need to understand what was happening, but also as a form of recuperating direct communication and strengthening community interaction.

In reaction to the impoverishment of values and the disbelief in politics as a tool for civic participation, theater¹ assumes a social function and establishes a debate about the necessity of memory and about our own identity as subjects and as a society. This reflection was manifested in pieces that comprised a wide spectrum: both in dramatic texts of a clearly political nature that utilize direct, explicit stylistics, as in very hermeneutic texts that resort to a notably dense,

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1 | When we speak about theater, we mean two things: theater as a broad phenomenon, a cultural and social product, an artistic practice that elaborates its own critical discourses on reality that resignifies and gives new language to social happenings that it influences and proposes, from its own medium and internal logic, readings and interpretations regarding the historical-political contexts. Secondly, theater is understood as the final artistic product—this is, the *mise-en-scène* or dramatic text—that implies, beyond the dramatic text represented on stage, other forms of expression: setting, costumes, acting, music, lighting, a “density of signs” that generates different meanings simultaneously producing a true “informational polyphony” (Barthes, 1972: 262). As in the articulation of text- representation of theater is shown as a social practice that requires the simultaneity of the moment of production and reception and demands the physical and psychological participation of the actor and the viewer.

metaphorical and poetic language or that shift the politico-social discourse from language to other representative elements—acting, direction, spatialization, and different stage symbols—integrating it in a thick, symbolic net of meaning. Our purpose here is to analyze, in this sense, aspects of Griselda Gambaro’s dramatic work—closely tied to critical realism poetics—and Daniel Veronese’s, associated with an “alternative” and innovative model. Turning to different aesthetic processes, poetic and communicative strategies, both playwrights elaborated a critical discourse that metaphorized and created space for the expression of social conflicts.

1. Griselda Gambaro: The word as an act of rebellion

The works that Griselda Gambaro would begin writing in the 1990s foretold the thunderous collapse, in our country, of the first-world dream and manifested the urgent necessity of creating a new national identity. In this sense, *Penas sin importancia* (1990), *Falta de Modestia* (1997), *De profesión maternal* (1997), *Mi querida* (2001), *Pedir demasiado* (2001) and *Lo que va dictando el sueño* (2002) are pieces that represent the different stages traversed by Argentinian society.

These texts propose a series of changes with respect to previous works. One of them is the focus on the private life of characters, who drive the story from their own subjectivity. The critique of the sociopolitical reality, then, is relegated to the second tier, which, far from reducing its efficacy, potentiates its corrosive force.

The theme of power constitutes a central axis in Gambaro’s work—both in narrative and in playwriting²—and configures an omnipresent nucleus that structures the systems of characters, their relationships and conflicts. However, such power is perverse, understood as the faculty of governing and prohibiting, subduing and punishing that interferes and regulates the actions of subjects, creating asymmetric bonds between those that exercise power and those that suffer the abuse. Victim and killer become antagonistic and irreconcilable forces, both in the public eye and in daily life, as such, power enters into the private sphere of life, generating relationships based around humiliation and subjectification that lead to an intolerant and oppressive society.

Nevertheless, if in previous phases of Gambaro’s poetics the “enemy” was clearly identifiable (always in the oppressor’s position), in the pieces from this period it appears vague because of a certain ambiguity only identifiable by looking closer. In effect, if the ambition of power and despotism constitute the central motive that initiated

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2 | With the concept of playwriting we refer to the composition of theatrical works and dramatic texts by a dramatist or by another kind of writer. The *dramatic text* is a type of literary text that possesses a theatrical virtuality, that is to say, certain “marks” of writing that demonstrate its ability to be represented. Juan Villegas confirms this by saying “Los mismos elementos singularizadores de lo teatral manifiestan su presencia en el texto dramático [...] como integrados en un mundo que se configura en la imaginación del lector—el destinatario— fundado exclusivamente en signos lingüísticos. Por lo tanto, su recepción se produce en la lectura” (2005: 20). Both the dramatic text, which possesses an autarchical entity, and the theatrical or enacted text—this is, the *mise-en-scène*, which stems from the dramatic text, incarnated in the words of the actors— “son entidades ontológicamente diferentes a pesar de sus semejanzas e interrelaciones en determinados momentos, y por lo tanto es legítimo su estudio como dos productos culturales diferenciados” (Villegas, 2005: 21).

the character's actions, beginning in the 90s the texts revolve around the topic of love, dreams and ambitions, interpersonal relations and internal conflicts. Nevertheless, far from evasion, this shift in point of view can be read as an intimate relationship with the environment: the social and political problems invade the private life of individuals, deeply conditioning their relationships, their projects and their dreams.

In *Penas sin importancia*, the piece that inaugurates this productive phase of the author, we see the germination of the stylistics and ideologies that will appear consistently in posterior works. In this case, Gambaro incorporates intertexts from Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, the dramatic situations of which she alternate and fuse with a plot based in Buenos Aires. In a parodic wink, Gambaro maintains Chekhov's inaction—the "position of stalemate" that characterizes Chekhov's characters (Williams, 1989:101) and that evokes moments of crisis, contradictions and dark areas of the bourgeois order from that era. Chekhov's theater is, as Williams defined it, the theater of a "group as victim" of a "negative group" that lacks effective identity; the encounter of a multitude of strangers whose real conflict is the incapacity to communicate and relate to others. As happens with characters from Gambaro's works, this "enunciation and construction of limits [of communication]" (1989: 101) is manifested in the creation of superficial connections, defined by an exacerbated verbalization that revolves around irrelevant situations and that covers up or hides true feelings, avoiding the establishment of deep connections with others. It is the occurrence of *deliberate triviality* that demonstrates a dissolvent language that, in place of communicating, encloses the characters in their own worlds. This creates space for scenes without any apparent dramatic relevance and configures *transitional sequences* that, in realist poetics, usually flow into personal encounters in which the characters "unmask" themselves and expose their internal truth.

It is precisely the inertia of the subjects and the metaphoric potential of Chekhov's textuality that interests Gambaro in order to show a situation of domination, while evading its determinism. The author appeals, in this way, to the diverse forms of resistance that suppose, if not concrete solutions to the conflicts, at least certain actions that are possible in response to exploitation. This essential difference between Chekhov's text and Gambaro's can be seen in the development of *Penas sin importancia*, in which, after Sonia declares that "ya no hay esperanza" for Vania, the dialogue continues in the following way:

Rita: No importa la esperanza, no importa la desesperanza.

Sonia: Y entonces, ¿qué nos queda? Qué cansada estoy. Años que espero... Morir.

Rita: (*Le acaricia la cabeza. Triste y lentamente*): Pero ahora esperarás conmigo. En este mundo, vamos a esperar juntas. Sonia, pobrecita Sonia,

ahora esperarás conmigo. Llama a tío Vania. Vamos a esperar juntos los débiles, los robados. Antes de que llegue nuestra hora, vamos a aprender juntos cómo ser fuertes, cómo vivir. De otra manera.
(*Se asoma Vania. Sonia levanta la cabeza y mira a Rita. Se oye la voz de Pepe que grita: ¡Rita! ¡Rita! ¡Rita! Los cascabeles vuelven a sonar, se alejan y cesan. Suena el aria de Mozart*). (Gambaro, 2002: 20)

In this final development, the characters partially break with their state of passivity that impeded them in acting and they establish a pact centered on the desire for and the idea of resistance: at the heart of the pact is learning to be strong, learning to live. The mixture of the local—the relationship between Rita and Pepe, clearly identified as being from Buenos Aires, in particular through the usage of certain expressions and linguistic turns—and the foreign—the story of uncle Vania—attempts to universalize both the conflict and the solution, since the development joins everyone together—“los débiles”, “los robados”. But we should clarify here that the material divestment is associated with an elevated cultural level of the victim-characters, which contrasts with their opponents’ lack of culture. In this sense, the personality of Pepe is characterized, in addition to the machismo and laziness, by an evident lack of education that becomes an emblem for barbarity.

As we see, in this creative phase of Gambaro’s work, the “monsters” no longer belong to the outside world, since each subject has his or her dark side, frustrations and fears. An example of this is the extensive feminine from *Mi querida* in which the protagonist, unable to accept her role as a subject, ends up animalizing herself. Olga states “Mientras se me caían las lágrimas de los ojos cerrados, oí mi voz ronroneando como mi gata Briska, a la que ya no echaba” (2002: 38). In this way, the author brutally paints the risks implicit in the negation of reality, as a clear announcement to the society of her time.

Likewise, in *Pedir demasiado*, Mario is constructed as his own opponent, as his self-compassion drives him to annihilation:

Cuando ella me dejó, no sólo grité. Enflaquecí, bebí de más. No como esta noche, mucho más. Sin placer, por abandono, quizá despecho. También pensé en acostarme sobre las vías del tren como quien va a dormir la siesta, quedarme ahí, quietito. (2002: 69)

It is not, then, the former oppressors that lead to death, but rather it is the impossibility of finding an exit in a hostile reality that, for the first time, the characters have had the bravery to face. If in previous works dreams constitute the only possibility of escape in a tragic world, in this phase, dreams become an obstacle that must be avoided in order to subsist. The encounter with truth necessarily requires the bravery of renouncing self-deception.

De profesión maternal turns to, in the same sense, the process that spans from the frustration of certain dreams to the painful ascent of the truth. The work posits a thesis that questions the supposed universal regulators of interpersonal relationships and dramatizes the path that Matilde and her daughter must traverse towards mutual recognition. The action advances from an encounter that is fulfilled only when both of them are able to extract themselves from the fantasies that they fostered about the other.

Lo que va dictando el sueño also reflects on the danger of evading reality. The need for understanding, tolerance, and love forcefully manifests as a distinct reality, that of yearning, opposing the cruel, cynical and indifferent world. This suffering, nevertheless, leads nowhere, as Ana and the Viejo finally understand. On the desolate path of their lives, these characters found no better resource than inventing nonexistent worlds to be able to tolerate the asphyxiation of their frustrations. When they finally realize that solitude can be confronted from the tangible perspective of another, real and not fictitious, it opens up a hope-filled panorama. Just as the necessary step for the acceptance of the painful truth resides in the possibility of naming it, the third aspect that we see in these works is the revalorization of the word. Again, the parallel with the collective demand to “llamar a las cosas por su nombre” becomes evident. After the eagerness of the political leadership to cover up Argentine reality, society started to celebrate the entity of a word that no longer insists on relativizing gravity and that, for this reason, creates hope. In the dramatic texts from this period the possibility of a future is able to be configured only from the characters’ ability to *recognize* and *name* their personal tragedies, until the point that, those that resist doing so—Olga in *Mi querida* or Mario in *Pedir demasiado*—end up destroying themselves. As two counterpoints, in *Lo que va dictando el sueño*, Ana is faced with solitude, while in *De profesión maternal* the future lights up in the possibility of Leticia calling “mum” the woman who, even if not the woman Leticia dreamed of, it is her mom.

The introspective path suggested in these pieces asks us to examine our own responsibility as subjects and, in extension, as a society. In this sense, Olga says in *Falta de modestia*:

Yo recibí la vida como una camisa demasiado estrecha para mis deseos. Y ahora, que estoy aquí, me pregunto cómo no me di cuenta de que ésa era la vida. No mi sueño de una cuna con lazos y moños, sábanas finas, sino esa cuna sobre la que debió inclinarse mi madre [...]. Debí hacerlo muchas veces, pero nunca la vi porque sentía vergüenza de su rostro ancho, sus manos toscas. No supe tragarme las lágrimas de desilusión para mirarla. [...] Ahora, cuando salga, trataré de ver el día como es. ¿Por qué pretendí tanto?

(2002: 77)

The works of Gambaro in this stage are made up of metaphors regarding Argentinian reality. Three fundamental aspects of her work—the renouncement of the deceitful dimension of dreams, the recognition of the enemy in their own illusions, and the recuperation of the word—knit together, forming a web that, in place of attempting to trap us, would instead liberate us. The characters in these works follow the same path of society, sliding gradually from the forced passivity of victims towards rebellion and then towards the painful ascent of reality as the first step in starting to think of a possible exit.

2. Daniel Veronese: *el teatro de la desintegración*

The dramatic texts that Daniel Veronese writes in the years of crisis maintain the beginning composition of the previous phases: the combination of modern forms of dramatic texts with postmodern elements and the appropriation and resignification of interrelated texts from the world scene: Heiner Müller, Philippe Minyana, Valère Novarina, Raymond Carver and absurdist theater. In placing himself apart from modern realism, his works distance themselves from realist psychological verisimilitude. His work pieces together fragmentary, inconclusive, intertextual texts—with artistic genres, social and political discourse—that come together in the unmasking of their self-referential nature.

Veronese conceives of dramatic texts as simulacra and recuperates the playful dimension of theater, which attempts to recognize it as an autonomous world, parallel to reality that is governed by particular rules and generates its own referentially and feelings, always ambivalent, imprecise and contradictory. Adhering to the postulate of Alain Badiou (2005), the Argentine director defines the theatrical act as an “acontecimiento de pensamiento” that produces “ideas-teatro” and whose true existence is representation. As for its own logic, the logic of the stage realm, theater is limited in representing its own discourse, without turning to external referents to confirm it.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that Veronese’s texts exist outside the socio-political context. In the first place because, imprinted by the contradictions of our reality, they are presented as a practice of resistance towards the Argentine crisis and towards the homogenization that comes along with globalization. In the second place, because the social criticism in his poetics enters in an oblique, indirect way. In this way, far from bringing about explicit references to the immediate socio-political environment or positing socio-political theses, the referent leaves its tracks through an amalgamation of events from the absurd and from the theater of postmodern intertextuality. In this sense, ambiguity, the apparent

ahistoricity of the significant, the fragmentation, the break with coherent language, and the self-textual character of the works constitute features of a superficial reading that, in being transcended and deepened, demonstrates a strong critical sense in respect to certain aspects of the local reality. In consequence, all the dramatic symbols that assume a self-referential or parodic sense, can be read simultaneously as allusions to the social referent.

His works question the traditional concept of the dramatic text; that is to say, of a text that exists before the *mise-en-scène* and that has been written by a playwright to eventually be represented. The transgression of Veronese in this concept must be understood in relation to his role as *teatrista* (Dubatti), a figure that unites, in himself, more than one theatrical function. As a playwright, Veronese writes his texts before the *mise-en-scène*, nevertheless, in his role as a director he subjects them to a process of rewriting, inspired by the acting and stage design.

Mujeres soñaron caballos (2001), *La última noche de la humanidad* (2003), and *Apócrifo I. El suicidio* (2003) form a series that responds to what Pellettieri names “teatro de la desintegración» (2001: 487) and oscillates between sense and its absence.³ The “teatro de la desintegración” is postulated as an aesthetic-ideological continuation of the absurd, a poetic which incorporates the abstraction of language, the immobility of dramatic situations, the crisis of the traditional characters, and the suspension of action. These pieces parade a deconstructive usage of language at the same time that they question the traditional spatial-temporal categories and direct causal logic, multiplying the possibilities of non-realistic, chaotic representation of a present in crisis. It is wrapped up in a semantic based on the dissolution of everything that previously operated as a substrate of modern theater, the universal laws that constituted and explained reality: rationality, determinism, truth, progress, unity, continuity, and the communicative capacity of language. In this sense, Lyotard (1984) sustains that the postmodern rupture with the great narratives and legitimations also implies a rejection of forms of totalizing thought and of utopias of unity, with the resulting acceptance of the pluralism of language and the local character of discourse, agreements and legitimations.

The works referenced here present a character that is heterogenous, fragmented and discontinuous, with dramatic situations that do not conclude. New stories open within the storyline and create a network of interconnected references. The nuclei of meaning—that later the reader/viewer must put together—are scattered throughout intertextual folds, in the parodic and deconstructive elements of the text. In opposition to the traditional dramatic text, the formal organization of Veronese’ texts respond to a non-linear future. In

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3 | We have approached Veronese’ poetics from a position of having attended various performances of his works, and from the analysis of different documents: programs, recordings of performances, published texts (*Mujeres soñaron caballos*). To understand his conception of theater we have kept in mind in reflections on the creative process, the dramatic text, and the process of enacting the text on stage (2000).

this way, *Mujeres soñaron caballos* configures an open, fragmentary structure, determined by independent situations that do not offer a conclusive meaning, permitting a greater sense of freedom in actions, movements, and rhythms in the stage work. On a semantic level, a new thematic axis, from the previous phase, is developed and resignified: the dehumanization of connections. In this case, it turns to the personification of animals with the purpose of uncovering the sinister side of social relations. The characters, cynics and disenchanting people live in a world that is similar to them and that ends up engulfing them: a devastating and indifferent universe that condemns them to isolation, lack of communication and alienation. In this way, in the moments of *racconto* that direct the transitional sequences, the speeches become lyrical, neutral, and impersonal until the point in which *the other* disappears. For this reason, all intents of dialogue end up frustrated by the suppressed violence of the characters, allowing us to see the instability of close relationships.

The dramatic structure of *La última noche de la humanidad* offers a similar level of fragmentation. The work is divided into two parts, each one of which is made up of three different moments. In the first, the bodies of human beings and mannequins—which visually allude to the Dantean figure of hell and incarnate the representation of the subdued and punished universal subject—are dislocated, moved around, and tortured like toys of an overwhelming and irrational force. In the second part the characters relate to one another through a voiceover—the voice of god or destiny—that utilizes linguistic code-switching between Spanish and English. The setting, as described in the text—a white room, bare and cold—assumes an ambiguous symbolism as refuge or dungeon in which the characters cannot do anything except wait for death, and underlines the idea of a world that is hostile, cold, impersonal and aesthetic, perhaps alluding metaphorically to a country bereft of values and ideals.

If in *Zoedipus* (1998) the members of *Periférico de Objetos*—a group that Veronese directed and for whom he wrote his works—played with the idea of a sinister humanization of animals, *La última noche de la humanidad* is penetrated by a poetic analogue inspired by entomology. In an obvious reference to Kafka's universe, alluded to in provocative images, we see a group of cockroaches in their desperate flight from death, with the artifice of a transparent box that reproduces the room in which the characters are trapped. In the same way, a literary allusion to the artifice of Chinese boxes reminds us of Borges' poetry, while simultaneously evoking certain nationalist features—novel in the work of the group—reinforced by tango music. As in all the works that Veronese writes and directs in the years of the crisis, causal, direct logic is questioned, presenting a fractured narration stemming from self-reflective spaces that depart from psychological-realist verisimilitude. The fragmentation is potentiated

thanks to the incorporation of literary, theatrical philosophical, social and political quotes. This intertextual game, characteristic of postmodernity, consists of a type of quote that includes many types of aesthetic models, genres, or corpus of texts that appear to be incorporated and disseminated without being cited as coming from other works. The intertextual discourses become constitutive and structural in the text, though they do not operate actively in it nor do they function as explicit motives of reflection, rather as purely aesthetic formulations.

The metatheatrical dimension, present in the dramatic text and in the dramatization, exhibits and dismantles the artifices of writing, from the *mise-en-scène* and the statute of the characters. The text retracts around itself in a game of mirrors, whose function is the demonstration of the theatrical mechanism and the resources of composition. If the word is granted great importance, this is valued in its metaphoric, ironic and parodic capacity. The word is also seen as completely molded and conditioned by the non-verbal languages of the scene, that potentiate it and resignify, in «una verdadera perturbación recíproca entre el texto y la escena» (Lehmann, 2013).

In *Mujeres soñaron caballos*, *La última noche de la humanidad* and *Apócrifo I. El suicidio*, we observe a notable absurdist intertext, manifesting in particular in the circularity of situations, that do not present changes or exits, and in the creation of an oppressive scene and a disturbing setting, generally linked to a violent socio-political context. The metaphorical representation of violence exercised by the dictatorship and the pessimism that the socio-economic crisis causes are expressed in identities and broken bodies. We see here the deepening of issues that Veronese proposed in previous pieces: about an overwhelming world, inhabited by dehumanized, obscene, indifferent and perverse characters that have lost their identities. On the other hand, the criticism and parody of social institutions alludes, by extension, to a country in crisis that, in this case, finds an aesthetic correlate and symbolic continuation in a demolished and deteriorated set design.

The drama of Veronese maintains, as we said above, a nature that is relatively provisional and transitional in that it is *traversed* by the symbols in the set design. In effect, the director bursts the polysemy of writing, stemming from a “set design poetry” that, in some way, questions, transgresses and reformulates it, avoiding the crystallization of a definitive form. In this sense, his conception of theater as an instrument capable of questioning the common meaning of the receiver, tries to interpret it not just from his intellectual capacity but also from a sensorial dimension. This notion supposes an extreme valorization of a fundamental feature of theater as an artistic and social practice: its convivial and auratic dimension (Benjamin).

If living together is a practice “de afectación comunitaria” it is also a vital experience that appears to be subject “a la imprevisibilidad de lo real y lo posible, a la fluidez, al cambio y la imposibilidad de repetición” (Dubatti, 2003: 18). This idea of a production and an emotional reception, directed to the senses of the reader/viewer, agrees with Artaud’s notion of theater, “a concrete physical place which asks to be filled, and to be given its own concrete language to speak. I say that this concrete language, intended for the senses and independent of speech, has first to satisfy the senses” (Artaud, 1958: 37).

3. Conclusion

Let us say, by way of synthesizing, that in reaction to the political, social and economic crisis that Argentina experienced in 2001-2002, the world of drama multiplied its questioning potential, its resources, and its degree of creativity. In the case of poetics that occupy us, drama appears as a phenomenon of resistance and, in this sense, as a social and political praxis.

Both the pieces of Griselda Gambaro—of a clearly modern tradition—and those of Daniel Veronese—whose poetics are associated with postmodern drama—present unstable subjects in crisis as links in a society in constant transformation, that display their incapacity for communication and the impossibility of establishing deep, stable affective connections.

On the other hand, the importance of the narration and the central role of the poetic language coexists, in both cases, with a greater amplitude towards the referential playing field. In Gambaro’s works this is seen in indirect allusions to the social context that appear screened in the individual experiences of the characters. In Veronese’s case we see a framework of multiple literary, cinematographic, musical, cultural, historical and political references that not only refer to the theatrical universe but rather exceed it, hoping that the reader will recognize them quickly. We no longer see the disintegration of dramatic structure—as in his previous works—but rather the multiplication of narrative and semantic centers in the same piece.

One more time, confronting a globalized, depoliticized and deideologized world, this theater highlights its community spirit and its social dimension, not only making visible its political metaphor—even when this metaphor appears blurry, opaque, complicated—but also taking on its tireless critical capacity to bring the conflict to the center of the stage, to make a place for it to be expressed and seen, supporting a vision of recuperating a central place for theater in the cultural debate.

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