

# Teatro do Mundo



Teatro e Violência  
Theater and Violence



# **Teatro do Mundo**

Teatro e Violência  
Theater and Violence



## Índice

<i>Ficções do indizível: olhando ao longe a morte dos outros</i>	
Nuno Pinto Ribeiro.....	5
<i>Teatro e Universidade: um diálogo violento</i>	
Micaela Barbosa.....	15
<i>Da cénica vacina</i>	
Armando Nascimento Rosa.....	33
<i>Essencial violence in Greek tragedy: its necessity (for spectators)</i>	
John R. Lenz.....	51
<i>Sources of pure joy: the execution scene, orgies of violence and the empty moral space in Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine the Great, Part I and Part II</i>	
Nuno Pinto Ribeiro.....	105
<i>Confronting Nazism then and now: dialectical theatre and the problem of political violence</i>	
David Barnett.....	143
<i>Unbridled illusion – a brief history of Berlin's city centre</i>	
Christian von Oppen.....	179
<i>La France est morte Vive la France</i>	
Cátia Carvalho/Cristina Marinho.....	191

<i>Raison d'amour ardent: Marie Mancini, Héroïde de Mademoiselle de Blereau</i>	
Marie-Theres Kemper/ Cristina Marinho.....	229
<i>'The world becomes darker to me as I pass through it'</i>	
Michael Paller.....	257
<i>Approche pragmatique de la violence verbale de la pièce de théâtre – Le Bâillon, de Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt</i>	
Vlad Dobrou.....	281
<i>Roda Viva – o ataque</i>	
José Carlos Andrade.....	315
<i>Teatro e percepção da violência – administração das imagens como manipulação e como potencial de violência crítica</i>	
Shirlei Torres.....	343

## Nota de abertura

### Ficções do indizível: perigos na distância, visões da morte dos outros.

Nuno Pinto Ribeiro  
Universidade do Porto/ C. E. T. U. P.

Os textos da presente edição de *Teatro do Mundo* são o fruto do esforço dos congressistas que, reunidos no XII Encontro Internacional do Centro de Estudos de Teatro da Universidade do Porto (C.E.T.U.P.), em 7 e 8 de Julho de 2016, reflectiram sobre a violência no teatro e procuraram dar expressão a esta proposta temática. Os testemunhos aqui publicados iluminarão, na elaboração teórica ou na experiência concreta do estudo de caso, aspectos centrais do entendimento, sempre controverso, da representação da crueldade ou do excesso, alegadamente a *imitatio* que corrompe e contagia ou, diversamente, a emoção intensa no quadro de uma consciência estética que permite o confronto com as pulsões mais íntimas e a sua libertação e reconversão catárticas. Como nas edições anteriores, a referência estruturante do volume é o teatro, o princípio que lhe dá vida é

a partilha de saberes. Desta vez, contribuições dos Estados Unidos, do Brasil, do Reino Unido, da Roménia e da Alemanha juntam-se ao esforço de estudiosos nacionais na actualização do projecto do C.E. T. U. P. A ordenação dos trabalhos não corresponde a qualquer valoração hierárquica: será o leitor a fazer escolhas e a definir as suas prioridades.

Justo e oportuno será, em iniciativa de propósito interdisciplinar, que a abertura caiba a um breve exame crítico da presença dos estudos teatrais na Universidade do Porto, identificando-se esse tímido lugar que uma avaliação no contexto das universidades portuguesas torna especialmente flagrante, dificilmente compreensível e certamente inaceitável: **Micaela Barbosa** discute as razões de uma desconfiança mútua que divide académicos e artistas, de modo obstinado entregues a relutantes entendimentos pontuais quando deveriam partilhar, de modo sistemático e permanente, o terreno comum da investigação e da prática. Ao papel da violência e sua função na cena dramática se refere depois **Armando Nascimento Rosa**, que interroga os dilemas, já enunciados na rejeição platónica e na legitimação aristotélica e vivamente sentidos na longa experiência histórica do teatro ocidental, que a representação física e ostensiva em



palco envolve: a entrega entusiástica ao gesto literal, ainda a vibrar na inscrição sacrificial da cerimónia das origens, marca civilizacional alheia à percepção que lucidamente encare a experiência no palco enquanto espectáculo e enfrente as pulsões íntimas e perturbadoras do ser humano; e será esta revisitação da barbárie em registo dramático, e o distanciamento nele pressuposto, o que irá permitir, um pouco como a vacina que se instila no organismo e nele desperta a reacção de anticorpos, no paradoxo oferecido pela sugestiva metáfora do autor, a reapropriação e reorientação desse magma profundo. À dimensão universal e existencial da tragédia clássica grega se refere, em seguida, **John R. Lenz**, discutindo fórmulas e princípios de generalizada aceitação na tradição crítica, designadamente a prevalência de um sentido cívico e político para que o sofrimento e a violência haveriam de tender, ou o lugar que o sacrifício e a expiação supostamente ocupam na economia da acção trágica. Uma perspectiva redentora de intenção sociológica não explicará a configuração inconclusiva de muitos textos trágicos, e o papel dos deuses junto dos humanos hipotecará, com alguma evidência e frequência, a ideia de uma reconciliação cósmica, sendo que a própria teoria

fundadora de Aristóteles não se furtará ela própria a uma objecção que questione a pretensão universal de algumas das suas propostas mais decisivas e glosadas (*v.g.* a construção do herói trágico e a natureza redentora do sacrifício, sempre referidos a uma teleologia cívica e política, ou a compreensão da catástrofe e sua funcionalidade na expressão mimética do texto). O exame aprofundado desta construção clássica optimista, depois abundantemente recuperada por elaborações da mais diversa obediência teórica, cristãs ou hegelianas, entre outras, acentuaria, ainda na óptica do estudioso norte-americano, os fundamentos sombrios da tragédia, a imagem universal do sofrimento e da destruição, e no teatro e no drama residiria a possibilidade de confronto com uma realidade que, sem o filtro estético da representação, se assumiria como verdadeiramente insuportável na experiência humana. É, de resto, também desta ubíqua presença do sofrimento na vida, e da forçada e malograda resistência de Sísifo que contra ela vem sendo possível erguer, que fala a imagem da capa deste número da publicação. Segue-se um breve momento isabelino: **Nuno Pinto Ribeiro** procura examinar as duas peças de Christopher Marlowe protagonizadas pela esmagadora figura de Tamerlão, o herói titânico que rasga,

a golpes de espada e na vibração do verbo poderoso, espaços de admiração que se instituem em aberto conflito com o sentido e a tradicional dimensão ética da tragédia. Acto contínuo, **David Barnett** discute, a propósito do renascimento do nazismo na Alemanha e da tibia e ambígua reacção da opinião pública e das instituições a esses desenvolvimentos clandestinos da violência e do ódio, duas experiências dramáticas de incidência desigual na sua formulação crítica: a fixidez psicológica do estudo de caso alheio à interrogação de contextos explicativos, de uma delas, e a análise dialéctica na representação do estranho e da contradição que despertam a curiosidade e motivam no público o interesse pela pesquisa acerca da violência como construção social, da outra. É ainda a Alemanha o cenário da investigação que se segue: a permanente recomposição arquitectónica do centro histórico de Berlim, uma cidade em busca da sua identidade ao longo de uma história atribulada que a eleva da condição anónima ao estatuto de capital imperial, é o que dirige a atenção de **Christian von Oppen**, e nesse breve excurso quase telegramático o autor documenta, incisivamente, as inflexões na construção ou rasura da memória urbana, o que constitui, num registo do que é também episódio do grande teatro do mundo,

formidável testemunho de um percurso de violência. À contribuição da Arquitectura se segue a do Cinema e suas relações com a literatura: a memória de Madame de Lafayette e da sua narrativa *La Princesse de Clèves*, na versão de Christophe Honoré, o cineasta de *La Belle Personne*, de 2008, constituem a preocupação de **Cátia Carvalho** e de **Cristina Marinho**, atenta à inscrição no filme de uma corrente moral e afectiva que absolutiza o sentimento amoroso e a ele renuncia quando não vir cumprida a sua dimensão sacramental, em forte evocação de certa sensibilidade cultivada no *Grand Siècle*, e discreta mas poderosamente resistente, ainda segundo as autoras, na França contemporânea. É ainda a França de Luís XIV que **Cristina Marinho**, agora com **Marie-Theres Kemper**, convoca, em conciso depoimento sobre Marie Mancini e a violência de uma separação que cruza a história privada das nações e o sacrifício pessoal diante das razões de estado, episódio que a literatura, o teatro e a biografia abundantemente têm glosado. No regresso a preocupações mais específicas do teatro e do drama, somos conduzidos por **Michael Paller** a uma reflexão acerca de um período da criação de Tennessee Williams marcado pelo sentimento de perda e sofrimento: nos últimos catorze anos da

sua vida, correspondentes a uma experiência pessoal devastadora, os textos do dramaturgo norte-americano já não acolhem, como nas obras tornadas clássicas – *Um Eléctrico Chamado Desejo* ou *Subitamente, no Verão Passado* -, o protesto e o inconformismo que permitiam acalentar a esperança, e as personagens evoluem, diferentemente, no despojamento afectivo e no vácuo emocional, numa drástica ausência do sentido de identidade e no limbo existencial de uma alucinação que sugestivamente anuncia a morte. Da Roménia nos chega uma leitura de uma peça de Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt, (*Le Bâillon*, - *A Mordaça* - de 1999), e nela **Vlad Dobrou** procura esclarecer os sentidos de uma criação algo atípica na sua matriz comunicacional, na construção da personagem ou nas refacções que imprime ao tratamento do tempo e espaço, ainda às tensões e expectativas de um desfecho inconclusivo, e nessa interpelação descobre o eixo temático da violência inscrita na palavra que discrimina, oprime e, finalmente, destrói. Finalmente, duas contribuições do Brasil. Na primeira, **José Carlos Andrade** recupera episódio do teatro brasileiro contemporâneo e com ele um depoimento acerca da censura, o que constitui, de resto, matéria que os leitores de *Teatro do Mundo* puderam

acompanhar, em textos do mesmo estudioso, em anteriores edições de *Teatro do Mundo* (*vide* artigo sobre um momento atribulado da recepção de Jean Genet, em *O Estranho e o Estrangeiro no Teatro*, 2016, o episódio de resistência narrado em *Direito e Representação*, 2015, ou ainda a censura no teatro brasileiro durante a ditadura militar, em *Teatro e Censura*, 2013). Agora o autor lembra uma experiência de arte de massas, produção cultural de potencialidades subversivas (a que a figura de Chico Buarque de Holanda esteve, em princípio de carreira, ligado), a peça *Roda Viva*, estreada no Rio de Janeiro em 1968 pelo Teatro Oficina, cujo sucesso de pronto a sujeitou a pressões tendentes a reconvertê-la em produto para satisfação populista de emoções fáceis. Uma história de intimidação e violência. Na segunda, **Shirlei Torres Peres** reflecte acerca dos efeitos da representação, em quadro plurimediativo, da violência, a respeito de espectáculo argentino em grande medida construído na projecção de diapositivos, na superabundância do detalhe, na ambiguidade despertada pela natureza evasiva dos quadros ou situações representadas, e fundado na exigência de uma orientação do olhar centrado na escolha de quem vê (*Manifesto de Niños*); e anota ainda as impressões colhidas em *Arquivos*, criação

israelo-palestiniana, ainda a ficção do indizível no território de inscrição de efeitos de geografia variável determinados pela origem e identidade social, nacional e cultural do espectador.

Registamos o agradecimento aos autores das comunicações, todos eles tão empenhados na sua cooperação, e tão generosos na pronta cedência dos inéditos os que a tal foram solicitados; esta gratidão estende-se a quem animou o debate com a sua intervenção ou valorizou o Encontro simplesmente com a sua presença viva e interessada. Escusado seria dizer-se que os estudos que integram o volume apenas responsabilizam os respectivos autores.





# **Teatro e Universidade: Um diálogo violento**

**Micaela Barbosa**

**Porto, 2016**

Entenda-se por diálogo, uma discussão ou negociação entre duas ou mais partes, geralmente com vista a um acordo ou ainda uma composição em que as vozes ou os instrumentos de alternam e se respondem. Por violência o estado daquilo que é violento, abuso de força, constrangimento exercido sobre alguma pessoa/coisa para a obrigar a fazer um ato qualquer, coação.

Iremos centrar esta reflexão na cidade do Porto, pois é nesta cidade que desenvolvemos a nossa atividade teatral assim como se situa a anfitriã desta reflexão (o CETUP – Centro de Estudos de Teatro da Universidade do Porto).

Para que se entenda esse diálogo, há necessidade de compreender historicamente e geograficamente a relação entre a universidade e o teatro no nosso país, a presença do teatro na universidade, e de que forma este mapeamento sinaliza possibilidades.

A faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa em 1991 abriu um Curso de Especialização em Estudos de Teatro, dirigido por

Osório Mateus e em 1994 nascia o CET (Centro de Estudos de Teatro); em 2000 surgiu a Licenciatura em Estudos Artísticos – Artes do Espetáculo e em 2004 foi editada a primeira Revista Sinais de Cena; em 2006 a primeira edição do Doutoramento em Estudos de Teatro e em 2010 o Mestrado em Estudos de Teatro. Atualmente a Universidade tem ainda o Doutoramento em Artes Performativas e da Imagem em Movimento, em parceria com a Escola Superior de Cinema e Teatro de Lisboa. É na Faculdade de Letras que está sediada a APCT- Associação Portuguesa de Críticos de Teatro. Ainda na capital encontramos o Mestrado em Artes Cénias na Universidade Nova de Lisboa. Mais no centro do país, temos a Universidade de Coimbra com uma forte tradição de teatro e estudos teatrais. Desde 1938 que a Universidade tem um grupo de Teatro – O TEUC (Teatro dos Estudantes da Universidade de Coimbra) e desde 54 o CITAC (Círculo de Iniciação Teatral da Academia de Coimbra). Em 1994 abriu na Universidade o Instituto de Estudos Teatrais e em 2002 a Licenciatura em Estudos Artísticos. Atualmente tem em funcionamento um Mestrado e um Doutoramento em Ensinos Artísticos. Possui ainda uma biblioteca especializada em teatro – a Biblioteca Dr. Jorge de Faria. Sublinhe-se ainda a singularidade

desta academia possuir um teatro (espaço físico) - o Teatro Gil Vicente a seu cargo. A sul temos dois focos de atividade teatral na universidade: por um lado a Universidade de Évora que desde 1996 tem a Licenciatura em Estudos Teatrais e desde 2009 um Centro de História da Arte e Investigação Artística. Possui ainda uma estreita relação com o Cendrev (Centro Dramático de Évora) e Teatro Garcia de Resende, sendo que alguns dos docentes faziam parte destas estruturas. E com a própria BIME (Bienal Internacional de Marionetas de Évora) acontece um diálogo muito próximo. No Algarve, a Universidade tem desde 2007 um Centro de Investigação em Artes e Comunicação, e desde 2011 uma Especialização em Artes Visuais e Performativas. A Licenciatura em Estudos Artísticos teve a sua última edição em 2015. A norte do país temos na Universidade do Minho desde 2012 a Licenciatura em Teatro e na Universidade de Trás os Montes e Alto Douro a Licenciatura em Teatro e Artes Performativas. Na universidade do Porto desde 2010 funciona o Mestrado em Estudos de Teatro, que também já foi Mestrado em Texto Dramático e nesta instituição funciona o CETUP.

Em 2006 o CETUP (casa que me acolhe nesta reflexão), revelava já uma vontade de diálogo com os agentes teatrais da cidade: “Só

*o esforço concertado de docentes das Faculdades de Letras, Arquitetura e Direito da Universidade do Porto, assim como a distinta colaboração de outros investigadores universitários, tornaram possível, em indispensável espírito interdisciplinar, a constituição do CETUP, entretanto já ativo na relação com os Teatros da Cidade. Porque urge responder a novos interesses com a qualidade a que a nossa Universidade se obriga, o CETUP por certo aceitará responsabilmente este desafio para o Futuro que já começou” (Dr. José Marques dos Santos – Reitor da Universidade do Porto, 2006).*

No entanto apesar deste mapeamento e desta vontade ainda encontramos um grande atraso no nosso país na construção destas relações. E ecos vão chegando até nós deste diálogo muito pouco pacífico desde sempre: *“A relação do teatro com a escola e a universidade só ocasionalmente decorreu em território pacificado. Os momentos de tréguas nesta guerra surda entre as letras e o espetáculo foram mais o resultado da autoridade provisória de um campo sobre o outro do que consequência de um entendimento que pusesse fim às hostilidades. Sinal deste convívio difícil parece ser a generalização da estratégia de demarcação territorial. Com poucas exceções, tal demarcação tem recebido a aprovação tácita de ambas as facções, mediante uma divisão sobejamente conhecida: de um lado as letras*

*encontram acolhimento na grande família literária, sob a forma de estudo do texto dramático; do outro lado, a materialidade dos demais componentes do espetáculo, bom como o treino dos eles intérpretes, são objeto do investimento das escolas profissionais de teatro, sob a forma de cursos para encenadores e atores”* (Fernando Matos Oliveira, Universidade de Coimbra, 2003). Tentemos sinalizar algumas dessas dificuldades e consequências.

Iniciemos por analisar o caminho no sentido do Fazer Artístico para a Academia. A FCT (Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia) é responsável por muitas entradas dos artistas na academia através de bolsas de investigação académica no sentido da sua prática teatral. Ou seja, temos algumas pessoas que fizeram o caminho da criação artística para academia, sendo que grande parte são dramaturgos. Há alguns discursos, no entanto, vindos do meio artístico, muitas vezes reveladores de alguma resistência: *«aquando da entrevista de admissão para o mestrado, digo que isto nada tem a ver comigo, com o meu trabalho»* (anónimo, 2016), de alguma distanciação dos artistas com o meio académico.

Mas por outro lado, pensando no caminho da Academia para o Fazer Artístico, muitos destes artistas afirmam a importância da universidade para relacionar o seu trabalho com a investigação

científica, como forma de legitimação das suas práticas teatrais, assim como consequentemente assiste-se à inserção nos currículos novos paradigmas e abordagem a novas práticas e artistas emergentes. Com os graus académicos alguns artistas são convidados para lecionar nos cursos superiores de teatro. Mas mesmo assim ainda os podemos enumerar pelos dedos das mãos, revelando assim a pouca presença.

Os novos investigadores que vêm do teatro permitem criar novos paradigmas na formação e na investigação académica dos estudos teatrais. A academia também vai mudando com a entrada destes novos artistas. É uma relação simbiótica e orgânica. É fundamental a presença de gente do fazer teatral na academia. Comparando com a realidade de Lisboa, em que as pessoas que estão na academia são diretores, encenadores, dramaturgos (ou seja, gente do teatro), provocando uma organicidade e um diálogo muito profícuo, no Porto ainda encontramos uma rara presença de gente do teatro no meio académico.

Uma outra questão que refletimos é sobre a tensão (parece-nos uma falsa tensão) entre a teoria e a prática teatral que cria uma absurda apatia e vazio dialógico entre estas duas realidades que

de forma simplista e perigosa justifica o silêncio e a inação. «*Não está certo dizer que fazer é secundário e pensar é principal./ Não está certo dizer que falar é fácil e fazer é que é difícil/ Não está certo fazer de conta que não saber é mais criativo do que saber./ Não está certo fazer de conta que saber é criar.*» (Robert Storr, Regras para uma nova Academia). A estigmatização do outro não é exclusiva dos artistas, também nasce no seio da academia. A academia diz que os artistas são muitas vezes incapazes de pensar e organizar duas linhas de reflexão. E os artistas dizem que os da academia são um bando de teóricos, que são incapazes do fazer, apenas sabem pensar e ficam-se pelos paradigmas teóricos. E ainda os artistas colocam a tónica no processo de criação achando muitas vezes dispensável o saber e conhecimento sobre o objeto (aqui podemos nos reencaminhar para a morte do autor, conceito oferecido pela modernidade, em que a obra de arte vale por ela mesma, qualquer teorização sobre ela é contraditória à sua existência). Por outro lado temos académicos que muitas vezes se valem apenas do conhecimento para se considerarem legítimos artistas. Estão evidentes as opressões e constrangimentos de ambas as partes.

É importante perceber que ambas as práticas (porque teorizar é uma prática) são diferentes mas complementares. Temos alguns artistas a reconhecer a sua diferente forma de reflexão do trabalho feito, e a revelar capacidades diferentes de sistematização. O conhecimento deve ser feito tanto com base em informação científica, como com base na experiência. No universo anglo-saxónico isto já é prática há muito tempo, a ligação da pesquisa com a prática na construção de saberes científicos.

Um outro facto que nos parece importante refletir é a questão do ritmo. As duas realidades apresentam ritmos diferentes e um fechamento sobre si mesmas. O ritmo duma companhia de teatro é diferente do ritmo da academia, por vezes aparentemente inconciliáveis. É muito mais acelerado quem está a fazer teatro do que a construção do conhecimento académico, da reflexão síntese que muitas vezes exige ela própria alguma distanciação temporal. Os dois universos têm discursos, modos de ser diferentes, mas não deve significar que fiquem mudos e surdos entre si. A articulação por vezes é difícil nos tempos de trabalho, na concretização mas por exemplo os eventos de teatro (festivais,



bienais, etc.) podem ser uma porta de diálogo, como vemos por exemplo na BIME de Évora.

A interpenetração de outros, a entrada de artistas na academia, provoca que os ritmos se aproximem. Nada impede que a academia reflita sobre o que está a acontecer no momento, assim como nada impede que os artistas trabalhem sobre temas emergentes da academia. As pastas de criação e de investigação cruzam-se, apesar de serem diferentes. De forma a calibrar estes ritmos tem que haver um contágio profundo entre as duas realidades.

Encontra-se no *teatro texto* uma maior ligação à academia. Mas quando mudamos para um teatro mais performativo, emergente, com linguagens mais híbridas, há um quase anti-intelectualismo e por outro lado, por parte da academia um cerebralismo conceptual. Temos uma enorme desfasamento entre o texto dramático e o texto cénico que muitas vezes coloca a própria universidade desfasada da contemporaneidade.

Apontemos alguns sintomas na academia reveladores deste diálogo violento. Há uma questão fundamental a sinalizar e que se prende com a responsabilidade da academia de promover a formação de teatro. A Universidade do Porto neste momento não

tem cursos de teatro na sua oferta formativa, apesar de ter um Centro de Estudos de Teatro. Isto parece-nos muito importante de ser sinalizado aqui, porque é quase, usando um provérbio «querer fazer omeletes sem ovos». Como pode um Centro de Estudos de Teatro da Universidade se alimentar se não tem a própria universidade estudantes, pesquisadores em Teatro? Não tem uma licenciatura em Teatro e o mestrado em Estudos de Teatro definha (já não abriu no presente ano letivo). É urgente que a própria universidade equacione esta realidade. A Universidade do Porto carece de formação teatral e isso depois nota-se na própria implicação da instituição com o CETUP.

A universidade muitas vezes encerra-se no cânone e não consegue dialogar com o teatro que acontece hoje. Há muitas vezes um certo discurso opressor por parte da academia: «*aqueles senhores levaram ao palco Shakespeare mas nada entendem de Shakespeare. Shakespeare nunca quereria aquilo no seu teatro*» (anónimo, 2016). A própria reação da academia aos artistas muitas vezes é algo crispada e ouvimos não raras vezes afirmações como esta, dirigidas aos artistas que vêm para a universidade: «*o que está a fazer numa universidade? O seu lugar é no teatro*» (anónimo, 2016), ou mesmo algum desconforto perante

artistas que realizam trabalhos académicos. Há uma tensão entre ambos. Algumas pessoas oriundas do fazer artístico transmitem que os professores da academia são profundamente académicos (ignoremos a redundância), que o estudo que fazem do teatro é profundamente ligado à literatura, e nunca sobre as práticas, e que desconhecem profundamente como se transforma um texto em espetáculo, que desconhecem como se articulam as várias áreas, o que é uma encenação. Ouvir-se constantemente, por parte da academia, referência ao trabalho de interpretação como representação é sintomático da distância entre a academia e o fazer teatral. Volta-se muitas vezes a colocar os estudos de teatro baseados no texto dramático e portanto ligado intrinsecamente à literatura.

A academia não convoca as pessoas do teatro. A academia está mais longe do que se faz no teatro do que os do teatro longe do discurso académico. A academia não faz uma discussão para a comunidade mas sim para si própria, encerrada no seu mundo. A pesquisa académica ainda se faz de forma muito solitária, enquanto que o teatro é uma arte do coletivo, exige público. O facto de os mestrados de teatro se desligarem da universidade no final do mestrado é porque a universidade não consegue dar

resposta às necessidades de ligação da investigação científica, académica com a sua prática profissional de teatro.

Mas há exceções, académicos que se apaixonam pelo teatro, que fazem o caminho da academia para o teatro, o que é também muito interessante.

Se nos colocarmos agora do lado dos agentes teatrais, conseguimos também identificar vários sintomas que levam a esta distância, a esta ausência de diálogo.

As estruturas de teatro podem e devem convocar os académicos para a reflexão teórica; por exemplo, o TEeatroensaio, estrutura do Porto, é responsável por uma publicação de Estudos de Teatro («Ensaaios de Teatro»), onde já colaboraram várias pessoas vindas da academia.

A ausência, salvo algumas exceções, de reflexão teórica no seio das companhias poderá estar relacionada com a própria história do teatro na nossa cidade, onde grande parte das pessoas fez-se profissional de artes cénicas assente numa prática de muitos anos e não na sua formação inicial de teatro. Isto obviamente não significa que tenhamos no Porto estruturas incultas, ou desinteressantes. Muitos dos diretores de teatro do Porto são possuidoras duma cultura teatral invejável mas que não têm

uma tradição ou prática de sintetização, ou construção de conhecimento mais acadêmico. Ao contrário da maior parte dos diretores de teatro de Lisboa que sempre estiveram ligados à formação acadêmica, no Porto grande parte vêm de estruturas de teatro amador, ou apoiadas pelo antigo FAOJ (Fundo de Apoio aos Organismos Juvenis).

Da parte do teatro há também um olhar muito crítico à academia. Há poucas companhias no Porto que convocam os académicos para o seu trabalho. E muitas delas quando os convocam, não incluem na sua prática as suas reflexões ou visões, ignorando-os. Estruturas essas que a maior parte das vezes, convocam os académicos não para a sua prática artística, mas para colaborarem em publicações periódicas. E não nos podemos esquecer, um factor importante, as próprias companhias muitas vezes são incapazes de sustentar mais um elemento que se pudesse dedicar exclusivamente à produção de pensamento científico, por motivos claramente financeiros e estruturais. A questão da ausência muitas vezes do pensamento científico nas companhias de teatro tem que ver também com tempos de produção, hoje é tudo muito acelerado (a questão do ritmo que já falamos anteriormente).

O teatro, o trabalho artístico, só tem a ganhar com a convocatória dos académicos para o seu trabalho prático. O academismo não tem que ser um inimigo do fazer teatral. Por exemplo a estrutura teatral «Público Reservado», criada na cidade tem na sua génese e nos seus objetivos, a pesquisa e escrita científica sobre e de teatro. Publicam os «Cadernos de Encenação», onde sempre colaboram pessoas diferentes, algumas delas vindas da universidade. É evidente a mais-valia deste diálogo.

O TNSJ (Teatro Nacional de S. João) tem sido um bom exemplo na cidade, do diálogo entre a academia e o teatro, através da convocatória de gente do meio académico para a tradução, escrita de ensaios, etc., apoiando muitas vezes ainda as publicações existentes nas pequenas estruturas teatrais, sem que no entanto exista uma ligação institucional oficial evidente.

A criação de algumas escolas profissionais (Balletatro Escola Profissional, Academia Contemporânea do Espetáculo) fomenta principalmente a formação de pessoas para cumprirem uma função. A Universidade do Porto, com o seu vazio de oferta formativa, não tem peso nesta prática artística. O desenvolvimento de saberes mais académicos e profundos acaba por ser de iniciativa individual.

Apesar do panorama pouco efervescente, ainda proliferam no nosso país várias publicações sobre teatro, quer dentro das universidades, quer dentro de algumas estruturas. A este exemplo aqui nomeamos publicações de reflexão e análise em estudos teatrais existentes no nosso país: Revista Adágio (Cendrev), Cadernos de Teatro de Almada (Companhia de Teatro de Almada), Revista dos Artistas Unidos (Artistas Unidos), Sinais de Cena (APCT e CET Lisboa), Obscena (Tiago Bartolomeu Costa), PAR – Pensar e Representar (Escola Superior Artística do Porto), DRAMA (APAD - Associação Portuguesa de Argumentistas e Dramaturgos), Sete Palcos (Cena Lusófona), Ensaio de Teatro (TEatroensaio), Teatro do Mundo (CETUP).

Garrett, em 1836, é encarregado pelo governo de estruturar um «teatro nacional», não se referindo apenas a um espaço físico mas a uma estrutura completa – com serviços, dramaturgos, instituições. Em 15 de novembro desse mesmo ano sai em decreto a criação da Inspeção Geral dos Teatros e Espetáculos Nacionais, um concurso anual de dramaturgos, as bases da criação do edifício do Teatro Nacional e o Conservatório Nacional. Ou seja, já vem do século XIX a necessidade de ao

falar-se de um Teatro nacional, associar-se estruturas ao saber e formação académica.

Abrindo agora caminho às possibilidades de diálogo, a universidade poderia assumir um lugar de crítica de teatro, como o exemplo de Lisboa em que a APCT nasceu no seio da universidade. Mas ainda se nota muita resistência na universidade em ir de encontro ao teatro, de abandonar práticas estabelecidas e renovar-se. Uma boa forma de implicar a academia no teatro poderia ser, como disse atrás, através da crítica (que precisa de distanciamento dos fazedores), porque neste momento vivemos uma grande ausência de crítica na praça (existindo no entanto alguns blogues de crítica muito ativos). É importante que as pessoas que estejam a dirigir os estudos de teatro tenham uma relação muito próxima com o meio teatral, de preferência que façam parte das estruturas, que venham do universo da criação e produção teatral. Acabar com os constrangimentos de ficarem agarrados a preconceitos estéticos que podem fazer eco nos agentes teatrais e que depois se transforme numa bola de neve.



A universidade deveria ter a responsabilidade nas publicações, há uma desresponsabilização da universidade face a novos autores.

Fazem falta projetos a longo prazo entre a academia e o teatro, não basta momentos pontuais (colaboração em colóquios, em revistas, etc.).

Devem as companhias pensar e fazer germinar pequenos núcleos de investigação e teorização sobre o seu trabalho, e assim encontrar espaços de convocatória à universidade.

Em conclusão, haver uma ponte expressiva e clara entre a academia e teatro, valorizaria todo o percurso artístico e todo o processo teatral.

(Um agradecimento especial a todos os agentes teatrais e académicos com quem fui conversando, em especial a Carlos Costa, Fernando Moreira, Igor Gandra, Pedro Estorninho, Renata Portas, Mário Moutinho, António Júlio e Cristina Marinho)



## Da cénica vacina

Armando Nascimento Rosa

Escola Superior de Teatro e Cinema IPL

«Einstein assume que a humanidade tem uma pulsão obscura que, corporizada de tempos a tempos em actos de violência chamados guerras, leva a humanidade a esquecer toda a sua civilização e a rechaçar a comunidade que com tanto esforço estabeleceu. De acordo com Einstein, esta pulsão é desencadeada por relativamente pouco papel impresso e pugilato verbal. O seu surgimento não requer razões evidentes. Como um interesse real, sóbrio e discursivo pela guerra não é usualmente visível - como se poderia suspeitar que um povo pensasse poder melhorar as suas condições materiais na guerra? -, a motivação para a guerra deve ser procurada nos domínios de um comportamento sem propósito, impulsivo e obscuro.»

Bertolt Brecht, «Einstein-Freud» (1933), in *On Art & Politics*  
(2003)

«A tragédia grega nasceu realmente da música, mas no sentido original de tudo quanto é obra das Musas, as quais são já de si uma parada ao Inexpresso, ao tremendo, ao radicalmente-outro que o homem, no qual o trágico enraiza. De início, pois, a vocação da tragédia é *apaziguante*, é destruição daquilo mesmo que a alimenta. O trágico é apreendido – e aprendido... - e nesse mesmo movimento suspenso. Assim, a tragédia *enquanto obra de arte* não é outra coisa que o modo de abolição do trágico. Que o seu destino histórico tenha sido uma contínua degradação do trágico é consequência, não acaso. Por isso e ao contrário do que se pensa, os Gregos não foram um *povo trágico*, mas o primeiro dos povos nossos conhecidos *que o não foi*. É aliás neste facto que realmente consiste o tão famoso e tão superficialmente interpretado *milagre grego*.»

Eduardo Lourenço, «Do Trágico e da Tragédia» (1964), in *O Canto do Signo – Existência e Literatura* (1957-1993)

Na sua obra *The Life of the Drama*, leitura essencial (com uma primeira edição em 1964) à qual se me afigura sempre recomendável regressar, o a esta data já centenário Eric Bentley

aborda a questão da violência na criação dramática do modo mais directo possível: «a violência interessa-nos porque somos violentos» (Bentley, 1991: 8). E mais adiante adverte mesmo que todo o dramaturgo aprendiz deveria começar por ter presente «duas regras fundadas na natureza humana: se quiseres atrair a atenção do público, sê violento; se quiseres que essa atenção se mantenha, sê violento outra vez.» (Bentley, 1991: 9) Uma página depois, uma frase de literária ironia mereceu um sublinhado da primeira vez que a li. «As flores da arte dramática têm as suas raízes na acção bruta.» (Bentley, 1991: 10)

E mesmo sem o dilucidar neste momento, certamente que os terrenos onde florescem as *flores* da chamada *arte pós-dramática* partilham desse mesmíssimo húmus onde estão mergulhadas as raízes da flor do drama, originariamente cultivada em viveiro grego.

Na representação da violência, observamos como a criação dramática, logo em seus alvares helénicos, manifesta o triunfo da fruição simbólica, através do seu processo constitutivo assente na mimese. O teatro descobre-se na sua rejeição do literal. Literal é Édipo furar os olhos e Jocasta enforcar-se ou Clitmenestra assassinar o marido ou ser morta pelo filho. O teatro transforma

em símbolo cultural o que na sua raiz era violência literal, como que formulando em cena, de modo antecipatório, essa frase impressionante e tautológica de Walter Benjamin, que nos diz ser *todo o documento de cultura também ao mesmo tempo um documento de barbárie*.

E o espantoso é ver como o elemento civilizacional nuclear do teatro - aquele que ao mesmo tempo desde sempre produziu paixão e fascínio, reserva e suspeita, rejeição ou interdição - radica na sua condição de simulacro. Por isso, a cena está apta a representar a violência, dissociando-se em simultâneo dela, porque essa violência mostrada anula a literalidade destrutiva que lhe está na origem, mantendo o poder persuasivo e interpelante de a exhibir num conjunto encenado, ou seja, ritualizado, de acções.

A lição civilizacional do teatro está implícita na sua explicitude enquanto espectáculo: convida-nos a fruir a experiência do real como símbolo e não como literalidade. Se a literalidade tende a ser totalitária, por não nos deixar alternativa à via única que nos impõe, já a fruição do simbólico contraria essa unicidade cegante, porque nos incita ao exercício da subjectividade, condição basilar para a experiência estética. E a representação cénica da violência

é eloquente nessa lição. Se recusarmos a fruição do simulacro e em vez dela desejarmos somente a literalidade, o jogo da mimese desfaz-se e com ele o próprio teatro se desagrega. Porque a mimese - seja o seu regime doseado com maior ou menor grau de ilusionismo verosímil, ou então fugindo a ele, em intermitência ou declarada disrupção da ilusão - é em todo o caso o ponto de apoio arquimediano do teatro, porque ela é constitutiva do simulacro que o teatro nos oferece através da criação de uma partitura cénica.

A existência da partitura cénica é o elemento fixo que nos permite reconhecer tratar-se de um mesmo espectáculo, nas sucessivas sessões dele a que formos assistir. Isto tornou-se, significativamente, mais evidente, em termos contemporâneos, mercê da autonomização teórica e disciplinar da performance, como linguagem aplicada que, distinguindo-se do teatro, qual brava filha pródiga que ambiciona, no limite, despojar-se da mimese, isto é, da *re-presentação* teatral e celebrar o evento, na sua singularidade e no aleatório de energias que se rebelam face ao suposto despotismo rígido da partitura cénica. Hoje em dia, teatro e performance contaminam-se viralmente; e tanto o teatro se seduz pela vertigem pulsional do acaso irrepetível, próprio da

performance, como a performance manifesta desejos de revisitar o lar parental, nomeadamente através da fixação de partituras cénicas que a tornam por vezes e antes de mais uma criação eminentemente teatral.

A presença comparativa dos regimes de exibição da violência na performance e no teatro seria só por si um exigente *topos* para longa e laboriosa dissertação, visto que o pressuposto da recusa da representação na performance acentua a tentação da literalidade que decorre da rasura da mimese. E, por outro lado, tal como acontece com o teatro em nossos dias, também a performance é um fenómeno que se declina no plural e não no singular, numa variedade ampla de espectros. Ainda assim, é um dado comum, nas estratégias da sua auto-legitimação, que os actos de violência exibidos na performance (por exemplo, a violência literal que o *performer* inflige ao vivo sobre o seu próprio corpo como lugar de mostraçã) acabam por ser associados a metadiscursos simbólicos e/ou de manifesto ideológico que pretendem conferir leituras de inteligibilidade a isso que se deu como gesto literal, mais ou menos chocante ou provocatório junto das audiências que os testemunham.



Nesse sentido, e para confrontarmos de facto um sintoma de colapso ético e estético decorrente da recusa da mimese, um caso histórico de estudo a este respeito é aquele que poderá designar-se como *morte da mimese*, tal qual ela é operada nas arenas da Roma imperial, sintomaticamente a primeira cultura de massas da História. O contraste é tanto mais expressivo por ser a cultura romana uma herdeira do legado grego, onde o teatro conheceu a sua origem no Ocidente. Queixava-se Terêncio amargamente da debandada dos espectadores, que desertavam de assistir à encenação das suas peças, por preferirem o divertimento sanguinolento das lutas de gladiadores. Ou seja, este era um público sequioso pela violência literal em detrimento do simulacro cultural do teatro. E o teatro, na Roma antiga, foi repetidamente derrotado, em termos de procura, por outras formas de espectáculo que reuniam um número superior de adeptos, fossem eles as lutas de morte ou os sacrifícios humanos, mesmo se embrulhados num grotesco enquadramento designatório; como era o caso da popular e assim chamada pantomima de Ícaro, que consistia tão só em colocar um infeliz (escravo ou prisioneiro de guerra) ataviado com umas asas de adereço e fazê-lo precipitar-se do alto de uma estaca elevada,

para sucumbir da queda no solo da arena, para gáudio dos espectadores, eufóricos por presenciarem o sofrimento e a morte do outro – e que não dispunham ainda, no seu vocabulário latino, do moderno termo de sadismo, para caracterizar o prazer que recolhiam de tão lúgubre entretenimento.

O declínio, ou mesmo asfixia, da fruição do simulacro teatral é no caso romano, enquanto sociedade do espectáculo por excelência (mas não do espectáculo teatral) um sintoma de manifesta regressão civilizacional, e demonstra, ao mesmo tempo, como é frágil e precária a conquista do discurso simbólico face ao apelo totalitário exercido pela violência literal nas sociedades humanas. O teatro conserva em si os traços pertencentes a esses estádios anteriores dos quais a mimese o emancipou. É o discurso simbólico a falar-nos da literalidade, distinguindo-se desta, uma vez que nunca com ela se confundirá, na sua condição de simulacro que foi capaz de substituir a violência objectiva por uma representação ao vivo que se oferece à interpretação subjectiva.

O teatro trágico antigo incluirá em si, como o defende uma abordagem de cariz antropológico, a memória arcaica dos rituais de sacrifício humano, na figura do protagonista que sucumbe,

regra geral, no decurso da acção. Mas o eventual efeito propiciatório desse *sacro-ofício* dirige-se no teatro grego não já ao aplacar de divindades com cruéis apetites, mas antes ao olhar crítico (*logos*) e ao sentir empático (*pathos*) dos espectadores. A mimese teatral transforma a literalidade do gesto sacrificial numa simulação que é arte, mesmo que do contexto religioso mantenha o dispositivo ritualístico.

Porém, a inversão destes termos pode operar-se de forma mortífera, ou seja, quando a literalidade do fundamentalismo religioso e ideológico se sobrepõe e se substitui ao simulacro estético. Assim aconteceu nas execuções públicas, literalmente sacrificiais, da Inquisição, nas quais o título híbrido – que gruda o termo teatral (auto) ao teor devocional (fé) - de *auto-de-fé* mantém com o teatro apenas esta designação que lhe é comum, também de resto partilhada, ainda hoje, pela esfera judicial (auto), bem como o facto de se tratar de um evento oferecido em espectáculo, para público que, sob a bênção equívoca das *legalidades* eclesial e estatal, experimentava de novo prazeres bestiais (ou horrores visíveis) análogos aos dos espectadores das arenas romanas.

São exemplos regressivos em que a mimese se ausentou por inteiro, na sua sofisticada criação de segundas realidades reconhecíveis, alvos de prazer cultural, como o começou por dizer Aristóteles, nessa afirmação fundadora de que os humanos «se comprazem no imitado.» E a fruição do simbólico (porque se trata de um jogo com o reconhecível), possibilita, já o afirma a *Poética*, a nossa emancipação consciente de espectadores face ao jugo da literalidade. Obtemos satisfação através de uma realidade simulada. Mesmo que essa representação se reporte à mais crua violência, ela enquanto representação é de uma natureza que lhe é distinta. «Sinal disto é o que acontece na experiência: nós contemplamos com prazer as imagens mais exactas daquelas mesmas coisas que olhamos com repugnância, por exemplo, [as representações de] animais ferozes e [de] cadáveres.» (Aristóteles, 1983: 107)

Como é sabido, Platão e Aristóteles sustentaram posições antagónicas em face da avaliação do fenómeno teatral. Se para Platão o teatro é um veneno nocivo para a saúde da psique, para Aristóteles constitui um fármaco recomendável, altamente terapêutico. Refém do princípio da não contradição, um dramaturgo de juventude chamado Platão renega essa sua

vocação primeira por considerá-la incompatível com a actividade do filósofo. Para ele, se a verdade habita no *logos* do filósofo, ela não pode estar em simultâneo na palavra poética e na cena dramáticas. Na sua modalidade helénica (Platão sonhava por um teatro mental de exercício raciocinante do *logos* e não do *pathos*, e a dramaturgia filosófica vazada em seus diálogos é a prova escrita disso mesmo), a experiência do teatro é um perigoso veneno, porque incita a que o espectador, uma vez saído do anfiteatro, imite na vida de todos os dias as acções mais extremas que observou nos enredos dramáticos presenciados. É interessante observar que este argumento de Platão – dirigido sobretudo, neste aspecto, contra a mimese da tragédia - está na base daquilo que hoje se discute em termos da exposição à violência nos audiovisuais e em jogos electrónicos, por parte das crianças. O argumento platónico só nos parece hoje indubitavelmente válido quando aplicado a espectadores cujas vulnerabilidade e sugestionabilidade derivam da sua puerilidade e de um imaturo sentido de discernimento crítico consciente. Os actos de violência visionados no teatro promoveriam, segundo Platão, a obstrução do *logos* através da promoção anárquica de um *pathos* hegemónico, e por isso esse

tipo de espectáculos deverá ser banido da formação dos cidadãos para a sua utópica e altamente vigiada república.

Já o seu discípulo Aristóteles viria a mostrar-se um hermeneuta muito mais desperto para a natureza complexa da mimese do teatro; e se Platão infantiliza o espectador, Aristóteles encara-o na sua adultez. Onde Platão ficara cativo dos terrores da literalidade, alojados nessa *mimese bárbara* de cenários e acções circunscritos à «caverna» caótica do mundo sensível, Aristóteles compreende a capacidade do espectador fruir a natureza segunda que decorre do simulacro cénico e, por isso mesmo, de não se confundir com a ficção de tudo aquilo a que assiste em cena, porque por muito impressionante, verosímil e identificável que ela lhe apareça, nunca deixará de ser fruída enquanto acontecimento teatral. Aristóteles legitima o teatro, como fonte de um saber filosoficamente válido, por reconhecer as qualidades que ele desenvolve no espectador, enquanto fruidor cultural de uma linguagem simbólica. E a exposição à violência, nas acções mimetizadas em cena, apenas intensificará a possibilidade da experiência catártica do espectador. Este liberta-se pelo terror e pela compaixão experienciados diante da violência trágica, propiciados por uma simulação do ser com o

qual ele, projectivamente, se identificou; porque o ser se diz, para Aristóteles, de muitas maneiras, e uma ou várias delas delas exprime(m)-se pela arte dramática e cénica.

Numa metáfora biológica, de comprovada utilidade didáctica quando em aulas abordo esta matéria fundacional, o teatro, a partir da interpretação de Aristóteles, conserva em si o rosto da barbárie tal como a vacina integra na sua composição o princípio desencadeador da doença que se destina evitar. Onde Platão via somente o princípio patogénico (o teatro alimenta a doença na psique), Aristóteles entende a função farmacológica (o teatro opera uma cura profiláctica da psique). Tal como na vacina o princípio activo existe na sua forma benigna, assim no teatro a violência não é literal mas simbólica. Trata-se de um fazer-de-conta eficaz e provocatório para a experiência daqueles que o presenciam, à semelhança da capacidade que a vacina tem de estimular o sistema imunitário a produzir anticorpos que combatam a doença futura.

Que vacina é essa então que o drama, inventado pelos gregos, promete inocular nos espectadores/pacientes que a ela ficam expostos? Antes de mais, parece ser a capacidade da mimese em fazer-nos confrontar com a fonte obscura dos comportamentos

destrutivos, num processo de contemplação activa que nos leva a trazer à consciência o inominável capaz de vitimar-nos quando o ignorávamos. Ao fornecer-nos visões do inominável, o conhecimento do teatro traz à consciência o que permanecia inconsciente e indecifrado; é protecção da psique e libertação precária face aos nossos fantasmas mais temidos.

Na primeira epígrafe deste texto, Brecht, parafraseando um Einstein freudiano (num artigo onde deseja demarcar-se dele, porque a psicanálise é uma zona de desconforto para o marxismo que Brecht abraça), fala-nos dessa fonte de violência destrutiva que estará inerente à condição humana; fonte esta que é, por sua vez, espelho da própria natureza dos cosmos, na sua dimensão de cíclica e recorrente tragicidade. Como a argúcia de Eduardo Lourenço o reflecte, na segunda epígrafe, a capacidade de criar a tragédia enquanto realização estética é o sinal maior de que os gregos se descolaram da tragicidade em si mesma; isto é, nesse seu pioneirismo assente na mimese, eles concretizam já de algum modo uma modalidade de distanciamento/estranhamento que Brecht iria reclamar para o seu teatro épico-crítico no século XX, como se esse distanciamento não fosse já congénito ao processo da mimese. O simulacro cénico que a tragédia é distancia-nos do



trágico por forma a podermos ser testemunhas dele. Representar é um gesto de abstracção na concretude física da cena, apto a promover uma emancipação face àquilo que aí se representa. Se isto parece estar implícito na função catártica do teatro, prescrita por Aristóteles, Platão não o poderia entender assim porque o teatro do ser situa-se para ele num palco cósmico. O teatro mais impressionante do idealismo platónico é, numa compreensão metafórico-mitológica, de ordem existencial, ontológica e metafísica. Inconformado com a ficção menor do mundo que habitamos, o filósofo não se satisfaz com a arte do teatro porque para ele a mimese do devir sensível é somente sombra da sombra. O grande drama de Platão está afinal inscrito na concepção platónica da alma humana: o devir do inteligível. Em cada uma das nossas vidas, a alma enverga um diferente figurino carnal que nos individualiza temporariamente. Cada morte física é o despir de um figurino usado, que dá lugar a um entreacto no mundo desencarnado das ideias. O ciclo dos nascimentos corresponde a uma sucessão de personagens que a alma vai experienciando, num guião que se desenrola no cenário do tempo físico e entre vidas, quando ela em imaterial nudez se demora nos camarins e nas salas de ensaio do mundo inteligível,

nos intervalos da queda amnésica para a saga mais ou menos encenada que constitui cada vida; o tempo e lugar em que ela celebra núpcias com o corpo, tal qual Perséfone casada com Hades. A queda na matéria é o desporto radical da alma. O mito de Er, no Livro X da *República* pode ser lido como uma sinopse ética e mitográfica desta dramaturgia cósmica. Por exemplo, vidas que se entregaram deliberadamente à violência descem na cadeia do ser e regressam à cena do mundo físico no corpo de animais selvagens.

*O mundo como colónia penal para almas caídas* podia bem ser o título de inspiração platónica (que tomo aqui de empréstimo ao setecentista heterodoxo Jacob Ilive) para o drama de performance vivencial, com cargas diversas de violência, de que cada um de nós é protagonista.

## **Referências bibliográficas**

ARISTÓTELES. *Poética*. Edição e tradução de Eudoro de Sousa. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional - Casa da Moeda, 1986.

BENJAMIN, Walter. *A Modernidade*. Edição e tradução de João Barrento. Lisboa: Assírio & Alvim, 2007.

BENTLEY, Eric. *The Life of the Drama*. New York: Applause, 1991.

BRECHT, Bertolt. *On Art & Politics*. Edited by Tom Kuhn and Steve Giles. London: Methuen / Drama, 2003.

LOURENÇO, Eduardo. *O Canto do Signo. Existência e Literatura (1957-1993)*. Lisboa: Editorial Presença, 1994.

PLATÃO. *A República*. Tradução de Maria Helena da Rocha Pereira. Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1983.

ROSA, Armando Nascimento. «Violência ou Paixão: Do Teatro na Roma Antiga». In *Revista Actor*, série II, nº 13. Lisboa: Cassefaz, Outubro de 1991, [pp. XIV-XVIII].



# Existential Violence in Greek Tragedy

John R. Lenz

Drew University, Madison, NJ, USA

Existential Violence in Greek Tragedy: Its Necessity (for Spectators)<sup>1</sup>

"Ancient tragedy, ancient tragedy is as sacred and far-reaching as the universe's heart.

A demos gave birth to it, a Greek city, but it soared up at once, and in the heavens set the stage." C.P. Cavafy (1897)<sup>2</sup>

"Death is the sanction of everything the storyteller has to tell."

Walter Benjamin<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> I am most grateful to Cristina Marinho for her wonderful, generous hosting and organizing, and to her and several other participants for stimulating discussion at the Centre for Theatre Studies, University of Porto (CETUP), XII<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Theater and Violence in July, 2016; at home, I benefitted from discussions with Vishwa Adluri, Jack Clontz, and Jesse Mann. David Barnett (York) wanted me to historicize; I have tried to explain why I see other issues at stake.

<sup>2</sup> Constantine P. Cavafy, "Ancient Tragedy" (1897) in *Before Time Could Change Them: The Complete Poems of Constantine P. Cavafy*, translated by Theoharis C. Theoharis (New York: Harcourt, 2001), p. 312. Daniel Mendelsohn also translates the poem in his edition (2012).

<sup>3</sup> Walter Benjamin, as quoted by Peter Brooks, *The New York Review of Books* 63.12, July 14, 2016, p. 35.

"[There is] plenty of hope ... -- but not for us." Franz Kafka<sup>4</sup>

"I looked into the abyss." "Don't worry, we'll watch something else."

Woody Allen, dialogue in *Whatever Works*

## I. Introduction

Cavafy recognizes that tragedy sprang from democratic Athens, but it soared higher, into realms religious and metaphysical. What is this sacred or universal import of tragedy? He notably does not confine tragedy to civic ideology. In this he differs from the predominant trend of recent scholarship, which sees in the dramatic festivals a reinforcement of social, and thus of group, ideology.<sup>5</sup> Sociology or existentialism? For Classicists, this involves asking, what kind of a god is Dionysus (the god of theater, at whose festival the plays were performed in 5th-

---

<sup>4</sup> Kafka said this to his friend Max Brod who published it in his biography (1937).

Coincidentally, Loraux (2002) has a similar epigraph (p. v).

<sup>5</sup> Pucci (2002), pp. ix-x, gives a succinct statement critical of this tendency. Garvie (2007) also criticizes. See generally Mark Griffith, "Twelve Principles for Reading Greek Tragedy," pp. 1-7 of Griffith and Carter (2011).

century-BCE Athens)? For the most part, our age is inclined to sociological explanations.

Another way to see the dichotomy, besides political/metaphysical, is group/individual. If we focus on the sufferings and deaths of individuals, we may approach another understanding of tragedy (and of Dionysus), no less powerful for being encased in social and aesthetic rituals: the violence of human life itself. By "existential violence," I mean death, suffering, fate, the ravages of time, as defining constraints of human existence in the cosmos, of necessity (whether sent by gods or of our own doing).

The ancient Greeks invented drama as we know it; they invented tragedy. The problem of violence in Greek tragedy is a foundational one for understanding theater and the role of art. What do people get from watching a drama? What is the relation of tragedy to civilization and to human life? Greek tragedy is everyone's concern, because we are human. As one scholar wrote, "it is safer to stay in one's own field. But anyone who prefers safety is not likely to have much feeling for Greek tragedy

...."<sup>6</sup> Greek tragedy jolts us, it shakes us up. Reading Euripides' *Bacchae*, wrote a critic, "empowered [me] into a state of shock."<sup>7</sup>

Do we focus on the comfort, the closure, provided by the idea of the maintenance of social order (widespread in current views of the ideological function of drama), or are we, with Nietzsche, wise to be reminded of disruption and the abyss?

It is important to note that more is at stake than whether we historicize instances of violence in the plays. Do we choose the community over the individual, optimism over a bleaker realism; do we acknowledge tragedy, or close ranks (intellectually speaking) against it?

First, I'll give some examples of violence in Greek thought and in tragedy. I argue that tragedy is close to history in that both narrate the unfolding of events in time, some of our own doing and some not (fate, death and suffering). Next, I will attempt to come to terms with major modern theories. It is unsettling to find that these largely go back to Hegel. They do not face existential violence head-on or explain it adequately, being more concerned with group identity through ritual: "consolidating

---

<sup>6</sup> Walter Kaufmann (1979, orig 1968), p. xiv.

<sup>7</sup> David Denby, *Great Books* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1996), p. 144.



the social identity, maintaining the cohesion of the community.”<sup>8</sup>  
I then advocate a view sympathetic to Nietzsche's. He argued that violence in tragedy importantly conveys the terrors of the human condition, and that art is a way of presenting horrors safely.

## II. Violence in Greek Myth, Thought, and Tragedy

To understand Greek tragedy, let us consider a few examples, beginning with myths. To begin with Aristotle's ethical reading of tragedy may be quite misleading.

In myths of creation, chaos (disorder) preceded cosmos (order). Zeus won and established order, but this order is precarious; chaos was not eliminated but a constant struggle is required to keep it at bay. For example, creatures born in the earlier stages of creation, from the time before Zeus established order (these constitute most of the monsters of Greek myth), later pose a threat that heroes face.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Longo (1990), 14.

<sup>9</sup> I have always taught this using Barry B. Powell, *Classical Myth*, now in its 8th edition (Pearson, 2014). A wonderful study of the origins of apocalypticism (eschatology proves to be not irrelevant to this essay) is Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos, and the World to Come* (Yale University Press, 2nd ed., 2001).

Empedocles, a 5th-century-BCE cosmologist, speculated that two forces govern the world, with power over both the cosmos (nature) and human nature: love and strife.<sup>10</sup> Sigmund Freud formulated (in 1920) theory of two forces, using the Greek words Eros and Thanatos (Love and Death). Love and strife combined in the story of how the Trojan War began. The goddess Discord (*Eris*) crashed the wedding of Achilles' parents, causing the fight between the three goddesses that led directly to the seizure of Helen by Paris of Troy. The same wedding that resulted in the birth of Achilles (from an act of love, *eros*) set in motion the events leading to his death in the war. (W.B. Yeats expressed the same theme in his famous poem, "Leda and the Swan," about the conception of Helen by her parents.) Destruction and death are inseparable from *eros*, which unites things and gives birth. Whatever is born dies. Achilles, like Gilgamesh in the Sumerian-Akkadian epic, presents a didactic model of the mortal hero. Human life is ephemeral, literally of a day ("the dream of a shadow," said Pindar), the opposite of eternal.

---

<sup>10</sup> Empedocles uses the words *philia* and *neikos* (synonymous with *eros* and *eris*). Hesiod earlier spoke of good and bad *eris* (*i.e.* competition and strife), by the way (René Girard, discussed below, picks up on this with his theory of "competitive mimesis/imitation").

The intermingling of birth and death, the presence of death in life, and the basic fact that we are subject to the vicissitudes and necessities of time -- these truths are necessary for understanding violence in Greek tragedy. This cosmic or existential viewpoint precedes and overwhelms the political contexts of human civilization, which most recent literary criticism is concerned with. Nor is any city (state) eternal: not Athens, not Rome. (In the next section I relate such criticism, admirable as its political activism may often be, to an optimistic eschatology of Hegel and the Bible.)

Life is tragic, because time, "all-powerful time which submerges all" (Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus* 609), brings suffering and death. Tragedies, like histories, present the unfolding of events over time. Nicole Loraux wrote, in a self-styled Nietzschean refutation of the political reading of tragedy, of the importance of the mourning cry.<sup>11</sup> Homer's *Iliad* set the tone. The *Iliad* is a tragedy of human life for both Greeks and Trojans. At one point,

---

<sup>11</sup> Loraux (2002). Pucci, in his Foreword, calls hers "a renewed Nietzschean reading of Greek tragedy" (p. ix). He makes this point using examples from both Homer's *Iliad* and tragedy: "tragedy universalizes them [the victors], decontextualizes them from their position as citizens of the victorious city, and turns them into human beings who feel ... like mortal men ...." (p. xi, cp. xiii).

Trojan servant-women "mourned in his house over Hector while he was living still" (*Il.* VI.500). Likewise, Briseis and seven other Trojan women (all captives of Achilles) mourned outwardly for Patroclus, but also "for her own sorrows each" (*Il.* XIX.301-2). They grieve for both death and reversal of fortune. Greek tragedy is greatly influenced by Homer's *Iliad* and its humanity in the face of violence and suffering.<sup>12</sup> The *Iliad* transcends the particular war, in presenting a philosophy of mortal life. "Fate is the same for the man who holds back, the same if he fights hard. We are all held in a single honor, the brave with the weaklings," muses thoughtful Achilles (*Il.* IX.318-19). "Fate" means the *telos* (end), death. Victors and vanquished at the end of the day (so to speak) share humanity. The *Iliad* ends with Achilles forging a bond with Priam (king of Troy). He has arguably not fully been re-integrated into the quasi-political community of the Achaean (Greek) army led by Agamemnon, but he has attained a broader perspective. It is wise Achilles (the killer) who consoles Priam

---

<sup>12</sup> Kaufmann, discussing "the humanity of the *Iliad*" (165), argues for "the birth of tragedy from the spirit of Homer" (165). The translations from the *Iliad* are Richmond Lattimore's. This is less true for the *Odyssey*, in which justice triumphs (good and bad people receive their due rewards). Aeschylus called his plays "slices from Homer's great banquet" (Athenaeus 8.347d).

(father of his victim, Hector) with a philosophy of human life, as he explains that sorrows sent by the gods are inescapable for unfortunate mortals (*Il.* XXIV.525ff.). "For," writes Pucci about both Homer and tragedy, "this grief is inalienable: it grasps and defines human beings not as citizens of a political community but as mortal men and women."<sup>13</sup>

Sorrows sent by the gods? What Homer's Achilles says is true even in a purely secular world; we do not always need to puzzle over the inscrutability of the ancient gods. (What gods are not ancient?) To be sure, the tragedians probe how far human beings can understand the logic of events, and what role human agency plays. The plays present the unfolding of mini-histories. These events are presented adjacent to the sanctuary of the god Dionysus during his festival-days (the Dionysia).

Let us remind ourselves of a few examples from Greek tragedy. When we talk about tragedy, we are talking about the productions at the Theater of Dionysus in 5th-century-BCE Athens. The surviving 32 tragedies date from about 472 to 404 BCE. Of course, the Greeks did not depict violent actions, such

---

<sup>13</sup> Pucci (2002), p. xiii.

as murders, on stage. Murders were reported in words, not depicted,<sup>14</sup> although many problems of staging are still debated.<sup>15</sup> Clearly, violence, whether death or reversal of fortune, defines tragedy: primarily murder, usually against oneself, one's close family relatives, or sent by gods. We also see the effects of violence in war, even on foreigners, especially in Aeschylus' *Persians* and Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women*, which reflect contemporary experiences. But I am not going to historicize tragedy, myself; I am not now interested in a sociological study of interpersonal actions. I argue that "existential violence" transcends the political and is universal

---

<sup>14</sup> Violence in the plays: Sommerstein (2010) is concerned with stagecraft; Goldhill (1991) historicizes. Possible reasons for this apparent convention: Sommerstein; P.E. Easterling in Easterling, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy* (1997), p. 154. Roig (2014) concludes from the non-staging of violent acts that this shows less acceptance of violence; I don't see this. Taplin argues interestingly that the important action *is* on the stage, in the characters' responses: "not the blood, but the tears" (1978, pp. 160-61 and 1983, p. 2). Likewise Peter Burian calls this "a drama of words" (*Cambridge Companion*, p. 199). A supposed etymology (found in Varro) explains the word "obscene" as "off stage," but *The Oxford English Dictionary* calls this a "folk etymology."

<sup>15</sup> Four on-stage deaths occur (*Cambridge Companion*, p. 222). A three-day conference, "Staging Ajax's Suicide" (in Sophocles' *Ajax*), was held in Pisa in 2013: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6skbFY8qb7Q>.

and cosmic in the sense of defining the world human beings are born into. Tragedy offers a glimpse of this truth and a response both emotional and cognitive. What does an audience gain by viewing the playing-out of mythical violence on stage?

All Greek tragedies (except one) concern figures of myth, that is, mythic or legendary history, from a time when humans were close to the gods. In fact, tragedy is close to history. The first two dramas known by name, *The Capture of Miletus* by Phrynicus (c. 494 BCE; lost) and Aeschylus' *Persians* (472, the producer being young Pericles), both concerned contemporary events. The Athenian response to the former raises interesting questions. Herodotus (VI.21) says that the Athenians fined Phrynicus "for reminding them of their own evils" and banned the play. Too upsetting for a tragedy? I have not seen discussion of this paradox. As we saw in Homer, one can mourn for others and (really) for oneself at the same time. So perhaps what was missing was the mask, the artistic illusion that the tragedy was not about oneself. (Nietzsche said art makes terrors endurable.) In short, what was unnerving was the feeling of being a participant rather than a spectator (the *theatron* is literally the viewing-area; see below on the root *thea-*). All tragedy reminds

us of evils, unless (as I discuss below) we side with those who think the audience congratulated themselves on being unlike the aberrant characters onstage. I do not take that view of tragedy or of this story.

Nor does the Phrynicus story define a distinction between myth and history. It is not true (though often said) that from then on, contemporary events were banned from the stage, and only mythical subjects deemed acceptable. *Persians* (472; the first extant tragedy) confounds that. After that, for sure, no other tragedy explicitly mentions a contemporary character or event. But a clear myth/history distinction does not hold. The dramatic characters are figures from legendary history.

What Aristotle says about history and tragedy has set many on the wrong path. Aristotle says that history (the written genre) describes particular, unique events that have happened, whereas tragedy generalizes as to the kinds of things that certain types of persons may say or do, based on their characters, that is. Tragedy, he means, infers events from character. It is actually the broader exploration of differences of character that he draws attention to. The distinction is not one between myth (fiction)



and history (real). History and tragedy, in Aristotle's words, present the same type of events.<sup>16</sup>

In fact, we often say that both Herodotus and even the hard-nosed realist Thucydides, the two great fifth-century-BCE historians, narrate episodes using a pattern of tragedy. Numerous examples could be cited, besides (for example) the thematic resonances of the concepts of fate, *nemesis*, and necessity (*anagke*). This is true. But it may help our view of tragedy if we also phrase this the other way around: tragedy is like history. "For them it [myth] was history."<sup>17</sup> There is a reason the two genres share certain themes and structure. Both display the unfolding of events in time.

After *Persians*, all the surviving plays are about subjects of legendary history. They are mythical in that myth (it seems) always involves gods (as does *Persians*). Naturally, the relations

---

<sup>16</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1451b8-12. Janko (1987, p. 92) presents two interesting reasons to temper Aristotle's supposed dichotomy: (i) the characters of tragedy were thought to be figures of history; (ii) he does not give "a true philosophical definition" of what "particular" and "universal" mean "in the context of human action." The issue of character is a part of Aristotle's definition that has not been much discussed.

<sup>17</sup> David Asheri quoted by Oswyn Murray in *A Commentary on Herodotus Books I-IV* (Oxford, 2007), p. xiii.

of gods and humans are explored in different ways by different authors and works.

Aeschylus virtually invented drama as we know it (he added the second actor, according to Aristotle). *Persians* has been mentioned. The tragedy is less about the triumph of the Greeks than (arguably) the fall (reversal of fortune) of Xerxes' family and kingdom (seen from their perspective) through his own mistakes.<sup>18</sup>

Aeschylus' masterpiece *Oresteia* raises important issues for our understanding of violence in tragedy, and therefore of tragedy itself. *Agamemnon* (the first play of the trilogy) opens with the line, "I beg the gods to give me release from this misery." So says a watchman on the roof of the house (violence is implanted in this house of Atreus). When the sign arrives that his watch is over, that Troy has fallen to the Greeks, this news, however, brings not relief but greater troubles. Triumph turns quickly into tragedy as the returning hero Agamemnon is killed by his wife

---

<sup>18</sup> It is silly to argue whether *Persians* is a tragedy or not. Of course it is; see A.F. Garvie in his edition of Aeschylus' *Persae* (Oxford, 2009), pp. xxii-xxxii; Pucci (2002), xi. Discussion often focusses on the fact that tragic lessons apply to both Greeks and Persians in this play (with the *Iliad* in mind, again); I suggest another reason it typifies tragedy.

Clytemnestra. Violence begets violence. Shockingly, Apollo orders Orestes to kill his own mother, to avenge his father. The *Oresteia* asks, how can we ever end the cycle of violence? Furies (Erinyes), primitive deities, pursue Orestes to honor the mother's claims for blood-vengeance. The trilogy ends with Athena making peace. She establishes the first homicide court in the city of Athens and casts the deciding vote to acquit Orestes. She settles the Furies in Athens as tamed Eumenides ("kindly ones"). The goddess forged a civic solution to end the cycle of violence. While the main themes are clear, two large matters remain debatable.

Aeschylus himself offers a statement of what the violence of tragedy teaches. Early in *Agamemnon*, the chorus speaks of "Zeus who set mortals on the road to understanding, who made 'learning by suffering' into an effective law. ... violent grace [favor, gift] of [from] the gods [comes]" (182).<sup>19</sup> Gods send

---

<sup>19</sup> Aeschylus, *Ag.* 176-178 and 182, trans. Alan H. Sommerstein (Loeb Classical Library, 2008) with my translation for 182 (δαμνόνων δέ που χάρις βίαιος; Sommerstein has, "This favour from the gods ... comes, one must say, by force"). Robert F. Kennedy made this passage famous in his speech upon the death of Martin Luther King, Jr.: "Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, until, in our own despair, against our will,

suffering upon humans, in the form of dramatic reversals of fortune ending in death (168-172). They do so for our own good. Can anything so deep be as simple as this seems? Readers have perhaps been too quick to see suffering as redemptive, a rather Christian view that subtly pervades even the newest theories. That is, the sacrifice of a victim (the scapegoat) becomes a means to a greater good. In recent criticism, this good is the social-political community; in a slightly older Hegelian-influenced view, it is human progress;<sup>20</sup> for some, it is an improved soul (of the sufferer). But is the sufferer the one who learns? Not here, not in the case of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra (but compare below on Sophocles). Who benefits? The spectators do. According to the chorus, knowledge of the spectacle of changes of human fortunes leads to wisdom, and wisdom is shown by singing praises of Zeus (*Aga.* 168-175). This wisdom is knowledge of mortality.

---

comes wisdom through the awful grace of God." He quoted from a popular translation by Edith Hamilton, who obviously Christianizes the language.

<sup>20</sup> Along with those I discuss later, who take this as political-communal progress, Bernard Knox too writes, "Human suffering, in this all-embracing vision, has a meaning, even a beneficent purpose; it is the price paid for human progress." Knox (1964), p. 4. See next footnote.

The ending of the *Oresteia* has led to an overly optimistic reading of Greek tragedy. Many praise the resolution achieved by the Athenian civic order and generalize this in a political explanation of tragedy. The idea that the development of the three plays demonstrates the overcoming of suffering through the progression of both the individual and the state is a common one, evidently Hegelian but by no means confined to older critics (in whom it is more evident).<sup>21</sup> This is misleading. For one, such resolution is not typical of tragedies. Two, it acquiesces in the “sacrifice” and suffering of the individual victim (as just discussed). And it is fragile. Euripides later recognized this with jokes at Aeschylus' expense. In Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, some Furies refuse to accept the verdict and pursue Orestes still! In Euripides' *Orestes*, Orestes kills Clytemnestra even though a

---

<sup>21</sup> John H. Finley, Jr., *Pindar and Aeschylus* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1955), pp. 192-193. Coincidentally, Finley was an advisor of Helene Foley's dissertation (cited below in its book form). Finley's work on Aeschylus is pervaded with Hegelian language, e.g. "he sought the coincidence of private and public happiness"; "This optimism ... proclaims that the divine justice is realizable and at hand."; "The confidence of the West in morals and intellect" (p. 193); and other such sentiments (not only on the *Oresteia*).

lawcourt existed (he there refuses to take her to court for the murder of his father). Civilized institutions deal with but do not eliminate violence and suffering. Wisdom means to ponder on “violent grace” with the knowledge that human life is subject to time and pain and mortality. This wisdom can be called proto-philosophical (words used by the *Agamemnon* chorus are *prophronos, phronein*). As yet no salvific philosophical antidotes are offered (arguably). The lawcourt and the state of Athens manage the sociological problem of violence *but not the existential one*.

In Sophocles, we can understand this differently. Those who suffer do learn, sometimes. Oedipus survives to learn from his own sufferings. Even Creon does in *Antigone*. Oedipus is the paradigm of both suffering and of wisdom achieved. He was saved as a child, but “saved for the greatest evils” (1180). His birth (learning of his birth) is his destruction: literally, “This day (*hemera*) will engender you and destroy you.” (438, the seer Tiresias speaking) The word “day” and the compound “ephemeral” (“of a day”) best describe human existence, a point the chorus stresses (1186-1222, 1524-1530). Sophocles makes

clear that Oedipus' fate is that of everyman. Time itself is the enemy.

Is there a saving consolation or an antidote to suffering? In the "sequel" (so to speak) written much later, *Oedipus at Colonus*, Oedipus has become a wise man. He receives an apotheosis. This is a more philosophical story. (Compare the contemporary story of Solon and Croesus in Herodotus, where Croesus survives a near-death experience and becomes wise through suffering.) But genuine apotheosis is a rare fate reserved for mythic heroes, not one available to ordinary Athenians. How does the audience benefit from stories such as this? Sophocles is usually thought to present tragic heroes as moral exemplars. One can find many a tragic chorus speaking this way: may I avoid such a fate. Such sentiments reinforce a democratic ideal of moderation. In fact, however, the word "*sophrosyne*" or self-control does not occur in Sophocles.<sup>22</sup> And Oedipus did not, in the big picture, suffer his fate because of his own actions. Oedipus' fate is more existential than a moral failing. The audience hears some advice about proper behavior – ethical,

---

<sup>22</sup> Knox (1964), p. 167 n. 20.

social and political moderation, let's call it – in the face of the awesome reminder of the violence of time, a universal and cosmic truth.

In *Women of Trachis*, Deianeira, the wife of Herakles, kills him, though unwittingly. She has a magic robe she thinks will remedy her pain<sup>23</sup> but it leads instead to the deaths of Herakles and herself. The supposed cure for suffering only leads to more suffering. Love and destruction are intertwined.<sup>24</sup>

In *Ajax*, Athena herself has driven Ajax mad. He has committed atrocities and in the course of the play commits suicide. Sophocles introduced the emphasis on the tragic hero, and spectators might think the plays show the fall of exceptional characters with larger-than-life failings. The stories do not end there, however. Much of *Ajax* takes place after his death and is taken up with discussion of what to do with him and how to judge him. A few plays of Sophocles deal in large part with how

---

<sup>23</sup> *luterion lupema*, l. 554.

<sup>24</sup> Other instances in *Trachiniae*: love, *eros*, drove Herakles to destroy a town in order to get a beautiful girl, Iole (352ff.). The girl's beauty was her destruction. Likewise, Deianeira said she had earlier feared that her own beauty would bring her pain (24-25). And the supposed love-potion proved destructive.



the characters respond to a death (*Ajax*, *Antigone*, Herakles' in *Trachiniae*) or a social death (*Oedipus at Colonus*, *Philoktetes*).

Euripides also wonders when sorrows will ever end. Near the beginning of *Medea* (in which Medea kills her own children, among others), the nurse laments, "But no one has discovered how music and songs ... can put an end to men's [mortals'] hateful sorrows—which lead to deaths and dreadful misfortunes that overturn the house."<sup>25</sup> Art is not a remedy. Nevertheless this invites us to consider how art itself may be a way of expressing and dealing with omnipresent suffering (instead of being a means to another end such as political community-building). This too is found in Homer's *Iliad*: Helen, a cause of the terrible Trojan War, laments to Hector, "us two, on whom Zeus set a vile destiny, so that hereafter we shall be made into things of song for the men of the future." (*Il.* VI.357-8, trans. Lattimore) Such songs do not blot out the sorrows, Euripides says.

---

<sup>25</sup> Euripides, *Medea* 195-198, trans. by James Morwood in *Medea and Other Plays* (Oxford University Press, paperback, 1998), p. 6.

In Euripides, gods themselves sometimes send violence to mortals. We see gods doing this as characters, that is. This can be rather arbitrary (as it was for Oedipus). *Hippolytus* opens with the goddess Aphrodite (love?) promising to destroy Hippolytus because he does not honor her. She also destroys Phaedra for no reason. Most unusually, we see Hippolytus die on stage. Euripides presents this as deserved justice for him because he scorns women. Artemis in turn, at the end of the play, promises to destroy the next mortal Aphrodite loves. Equally or more shocking is the *Bacchae*. For refusing to recognize the god Dionysus, king Pentheus is torn to pieces by his own mother and other women, whom the god has driven mad.

Divine violence is not always justified or motivated by human agency. In *Herakles* the goddess Hera sends a goddess named Madness to cause the hero to go mad and murder his wife and children. No reason is given, no claim that the hero deserved this. Herakles had been good; now that he has ended his toils (his labors), Hera sends him a new one. Madness is the daughter of Night, so this might appear to be an irruption of a figure of primitive chaos. However, it is worse than that. Madness (the goddess) is reluctant to do the deed and wonders why Hera is so

harsh. It is more shocking that terrors come from the Olympian gods who uphold the order of our world. There is no escape. "The gods drive you back into the tragic condition."<sup>26</sup>

Zeus is once called, albeit bitterly, "savior of corpses": not saver or collector but savior (Clytemnestra at Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1387). The corpses remain corpses; to quote the Beatles' song, "No one was saved." Art has been mentioned as one possible, if imperfect consolation; imperfect, because art serves to remind us of terrors. Civic structures and moderate ways sometimes are advised, to soften the blows. But these too are subject to the violence of time. However, such a tragic view has not been at the forefront of recent understandings of tragedy. Dominant recent theories hold that theater, and ritual, and civic institutions, are ways of using violence to create order. I wish to offer a critique of some major recent theories that go back to Aristotle and Hegel.

### III. Theories of Tragedy: Politics and the State

What do audiences get out of tragedy? Something serious. The word "theater" (*theatron*) comes from the Greek root *thea-* which

---

<sup>26</sup> I quote Vishwa Adluri (in conversation, June 2016). In the play, *Amphitryon* harshly denounces Zeus. Roig (2014) says the gods' intervention usually implies violence.

means "viewing." The same root underlies the word "theory" (*theoria*), whose Latin equivalent, "contemplation" (*contemplatio*), is related to the word "temple." We need not commit to any particular view of ancient gods or religion, or puzzle over that too much as introducers of the plays often do, in order to say, first of all, that tragedy, for both an ancient and a modern audience, was and still is an awesome, reverential encounter with mysteries of existence: violent death, reversal of fortune, suffering brought by time.

However, the academic trend has been to make Greek tragedy political. To some extent, Aristotle began this. His legacy for the understanding of tragedy has not been entirely beneficial.

Aristotle thought reversal of fortune (*peripeteia*) from good to bad to be the essential plot-type of tragedy. But he limited this in two ways we are not bound to follow.

Aristotle asserted that a tragedy must not show the misfortunes of good men, as this would be offensive (*miaros*).<sup>27</sup> Tragedy causes fear, he thinks, but it can't be *too* fearful or shocking. The reversal must be due to an error on the part of someone who is

---

<sup>27</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1452b34-36. Janko translates "shocking"; S.H. Butcher (1907), "shocks us."

not extremely good or bad, but more or less average (like us), morally speaking. In other words, such a mistake is avoidable. As an explanation of why bad things happen, this is just too logical. Yes, what happens to the characters can happen to us; yes, Aristotle makes tragedy secular. But, while excluding gods as real agents, we should not forget they can serve as useful shorthand for what humans cannot control or comprehend: especially, the vicissitudes of time which carry suffering and death. In other words, things happen to everybody and it is not always because of a so-called tragic flaw or character flaw. Similarly, Aristotle's definition, that tragedy entails violence among family members, is too limiting.<sup>28</sup> He circumscribes human suffering too narrowly and defines it socially rather than existentially (likewise, he tames *eros* to *philia*, friendship).

Aristotle made suffering understandable and tragedy useful. By seeing plausibly presented mistakes on stage, the audience

---

<sup>28</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics* 1453b19-22. Of course, *philoï* means "dear ones," "friends," and translations usually convey this more general sense, but Aristotle's examples in that sentence all involve family members. How far this restriction (taken broadly, "friends") applies to all the tragedies, is debatable. Yes, *Persians* is as much about what Xerxes did to his people as what the Greeks did to the Persians; but in others, such as *Trojan Women*, the pain to family members comes as a result of what the title characters have suffered from enemies in war.

learned to avoid errors. Aristotle rationalized tragedy, he secularized it, he tamed it as part of an optimistic ethical-political discourse of good citizens, just as Athena had domesticated the Furies. Aristophanes in *Frogs* speaks of tragedy in the same way, that it teaches the Athenians.<sup>29</sup> He so justified his own comedies, in opinions expressed in the works themselves. One could argue that Aristophanes attributed to tragedy the view he wanted Athens to take of his own political satire. Comedy is more political than tragedy. To be sure, tragic performances do teach and do perform a civic function. It's significant that two great ancient authors think that and that sophisticated scholarship discerns that public role. What I'm exploring is getting behind the artistic, civic veil (so to speak) to reveal rather than delimit or overcome the terrors of human life.

Likewise, some responses prioritize the idea that tragedy teaches, by offering negative examples, the need for moderation, self-control (*sophrosyne*), endurance, justice (*dike*), or reason. The

---

<sup>29</sup> Aristotle: learn to avoid errors, avoid facing the worst (Halliwell 236-7). Aristotle praised works of "averted catastrophe" (Halliwell 235 n. 14, 236). Aristotle secularized tragedy: Halliwell's theme. Aristophanes said that tragic poets educate citizens: *Frogs* 1009ff., 1054ff.; he saw himself this way as a corrective satirist.

goal of watching tragedy is then to avoid violence and suffering, indeed to overcome tragedy. Ancient philosophy developed its own responses. Moralists, such as Socrates and the Stoics, taught self-control as a cure or antidote.<sup>30</sup> Highlighting this about the tragedies would miss the existential shock of violence in tragedy. Tragedy shows that life itself is violent and terrible. Does it function as a curative?

The consolation of art, I argue, is the reflection on mortality it provides through presenting horrors of life. Nevertheless, optimistic readings dominate in the past two centuries, based on two things: (i) that tragedy reflects a political hope for order in the community, or (ii) that tragedies are read with a Christian hope for redemption. Marcel Detienne writes of “the surprising power ... that Christianity still subtly exercises on the thought of these historians and sociologists.”<sup>31</sup> At stake, again, is more than

---

<sup>30</sup> Marcus Aurelius 11.6 (“First, tragedies. ...”) advocates this: these things will happen, don't be vexed, endure them as even the character has to. Halliwell 351-2 on a theory of catharsis (in Aristotle) as emotional fortitude. (There's also the theory, you'll feel better if you know others have suffered worse.)

<sup>31</sup> Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, *The Cuisine of Sacrifice among the Greeks* (English translation, Chicago, 1989), p. 20 (with p. 224 n. 85). Jacques Lacan said that when we ignore Hegel, he is always “sneaking up behind us” (quoted in Joseph McCarney, *Hegel on History* [Routledge, 2000], p. 5); that is, his influence is still present even when one does not realize it.

whether we historicize drama. Do we side with the suffering individual (e.g. Socrates) or with the ideology of a supposedly ordered community (Athens e.g.)? Do we admire Heraclitus' "all things flow" or the hope for permanence and eternity of Parmenides and Plato and Christianity (with its "eternal city")? Many discussions of tragedy still follow Hegel. Hegel took character out of the equation. Bad things happen to good people; it doesn't have to be their fault; we don't have to show that a character deserves a downfall. This is a useful advance over Aristotle. However, Hegel contributed two legacies I disagree with. Like Aristotle, he thought that tragedy offers a civics lesson.<sup>32</sup> Hegel used *Antigone* as his paradigm. He said the conflict in this play is between two loyalties, one to the family, one to the state. That is obviously partly true, especially of the opening of *Antigone*. But he read tragedy too politically. The main issue for him was obedience to the law; violence comes from the presence of divided loyalties to both the family and the state. In answer to the perennial tension between the individual and the group, resolution comes from having one law. The

---

<sup>32</sup> Schmidt (2001) p. 2, etc.



ethical-political goal is to build community by achieving complete harmony between individual and society.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the ordered state is a kind of salvation. Nature is left behind, although the Greeks still had contact with nature and this explains the conflicts in the tragedies and their dialectical fruitfulness.<sup>34</sup> Ironically, most scholars espouse a similar political reading of tragedy today; they glorify the *polis*, even while mocking Hegel's glorification of the state.

In the history of the German philosophy of tragedy, a central theme is the relation between the one and the many.<sup>35</sup> This actually corresponds to a religious issue (monotheism). In Hegel's teleological system, nature is left behind, and violence is ultimately overcome ("sublimated") through the triumph of the spirit ("god's nature," the Idea). This is an undoubtedly Christian

---

<sup>33</sup> On a Hegelian reading of Aeschylus, see footnote above on J.H. Finley, Jr.

<sup>34</sup> Hegel held that human life moves from nature to the state. The Greeks had a union with life, unlike the Hebrew transcendence exemplified by Abraham: George Steiner, *Antigones* (Oxford, paperback, 1986), p. 24. The *agon* (contest) represents contradictions in nature (at that stage of the development of the spirit).

<sup>35</sup> Schmidt (2001); Szondi (2002). Nietzsche works out the same theme.

scheme.<sup>36</sup> That is, violence in Greek tragedy, and contradictions in society, are part of our past. Tragedy is not about us. (Historicism can do that.)

Of course Hegel is the teacher of the arch-historicist, Marx. There is nothing inherently wrong with either Marx or historicism, where appropriate, and both may even be essential. I criticize giving pride of place to that method here because I wish to criticize the tradition of transcending tragedy through political community. Put another way round, paradoxically, a purely secular historicism misses what philosophies and religion and Greek tragedy seek to address: the parameters of mortal life and its subjection to higher forces (fate, gods, nature, birth and death, time). These (except for the gods) exist in a completely secular world. (This non-metaphysical seeming metaphysics is a challenge to explain, just as, philosophically speaking, a materialist is hard-pressed but bound to explain the mind as physical but different from the body. The issue is a similar one,

---

<sup>36</sup> Either quasi-Christian or an alternative Christianity, but nevertheless Christian. That the spirit leads to truth comes from Paul (McCarney, *op. cit.*, p. 18). Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History*, famously argued that all teleological philosophy of history comes from Christianity.

when it is a matter of keeping religious awe in a secular worldview.)

Durkheim himself, a founder of the sociological study of religion, explicitly sought in society something more enduring than the ephemeral individual.<sup>37</sup> Is society then the best lens through which to study the art of tragedy, which sings of ephemeral mortality? The ancient historian, Fustel de Coulanges, was a major influence on Durkheim. Fustel extolled “the omnipotence of the state” in ancient times; “the ancients knew nothing of individual liberty.”<sup>38</sup>

Moving to the twentieth century, we find theories, colored by experience of two world wars and the Holocaust, that violence is endemic in human civilization. Sometimes this is accompanied by a utopian and Christian call for redemption (an end to violence). Thoughtful thinkers trace the story back to Homer and tragedy.

Simone Weil (“vay”) (1919-43) wrote *The Iliad, or the Poem of Force* in 1940-41 in occupied France. This powerful essay defines

---

<sup>37</sup> R.A. Jones in W.M. Calder III, ed., *The Cambridge Ritualists Reconsidered* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), p. 110.

<sup>38</sup> *The Ancient City* (1864 etc.), quoted by R.A. Jones, *ibid.*, p. 103.

violence as a force that acts on men from outside. She admires Homer for showing this: there are no winners; the use of force does violence to one's soul. Hers is a truly tragic vision: "thought cannot travel in time without encountering death"; "all are destined from birth to endure violence."<sup>39</sup> This is an admirably Nietzschean and existential view of tragedy; she does not argue that a violent fate is justified for some reason. Where she betrays her Christian bias, quite overtly and not subtly, is in her call for a solution: the Gospels.<sup>40</sup> That is: Greek tragedy shows life as it is, but we must overcome that history.

René Girard's (1923-2015) theories of violence are somewhat similar.<sup>41</sup> In works such as *La violence et le sacré* (1972) Girard

---

<sup>39</sup> Weil (2003), para. 53, p. 59 and para. 34, p. 53. Weil said, "most of life takes place far from warm baths" (*ibid.* p. 46). The work was well known through the earlier 1945 English translation by Mary McCarthy.

<sup>40</sup> Weil also wrote *Intimations of Christianity among the Ancient Greeks*. See Wolfe (2015), 417-18; Marie C. Meaney, *Simone Weil's Apologetic Use of Literature: Her Christological Interpretation of Classic Greek Texts* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>41</sup> Girard (1977) and (1987). See Michael Kirwan, *Discovering Girard* (London, 2004), Ch. 2 on the scapegoat. In *René Girard and Myth: An Introduction* (NY: Garland, 1993), p. 129, Richard J. Golsan attempts to dissociate Girard's theories from Christianity, on the silly ground that they preceded his conversion. After 9/11, Girard faulted Islam for lacking the cross: Girard in *Le Monde*, Nov. 6, 2001, cited in Frederiek Depoortere, *Christ in Postmodern Philosophy* (A&C Black, 2008), p. 146.

argued that violence, specifically the sacrificial killing of a victim (the scapegoat), establishes order in the community. That is: violence is political, deliberate, and founds civilization. Humans apparently introduce violence into the universe. How does this explain violence in Greek tragedy? The tragic hero is a problem to be expelled, a scapegoat killed to strengthen the community. Critics with reason see Girard as a Christian apologist. The sacrifice of Jesus, for Girard, ends violence. Someone who emphatically stated “truth comes from the Jews” might seem a paradoxical teacher about Greek tragedy.<sup>42</sup> In fact theories of tragedy are closely intertwined with theories of ancient sacrifice deriving from Robertson Smith and Frazer. I draw attention to the political claim: if one “scapegoat” is eliminated, all will be well. This marginalizes suffering and strangely legitimates violence. The victim is a means to a communal end.

This line of thought would seemingly applaud Athens for killing Socrates. Another criticism is that a Greek tragedy often contains no one tragic hero. Many people suffer in a tragedy and other

---

<sup>42</sup> Girard in 1973, using italics for emphasis in his original, quoted in Detienne and Vernant, *op. cit.* (1989), p. 224, n. 85 (see also p. 20). Foley (1985), p. 51 n. 63 cites Detienne’s uncovering of the Christian bias in such theories, but still relies on Girard and Burkert.

people are left to ponder the events. We might look at each play and argue, who in it doesn't suffer? Tragedy can happen to anyone anytime. Salvation is elusive. The views discussed here are all teleological.

Similar theories were popularized by the most influential recent scholar of ancient Greek religion, Walter Burkert (1931-2015). Burkert related the suffering of a tragic hero to the act of violence in animal sacrifice. Animal sacrifice was a substitute for human sacrifice. (Deep in the background of modern theories of sacrifice and tragedy is the story in *Genesis* – also from legendary history -- of God commanding Abraham to kill Isaac.) His theory is flawed, but it has ruled the field for decades. He holds that killing is at the center of human society. Civilization brings increased violence.<sup>43</sup> After people kill an animal, they repent and wish to put the animal back together. He calls this (fancifully) an attempt at resurrection.<sup>44</sup> A Christian theme is clearly implicit, but never mentioned.<sup>45</sup> Here too we find a political *telos*.

---

<sup>43</sup> The growth of technology, mankind's use of tools, not natural instincts, caused more violence. Burkert (2001), p. 14.

<sup>44</sup> In the Buphonia festival in ancient Athens, the sacrificed ox is stuffed and harnessed to a plough; he calls this a "mock resurrection." Burkert (2001), pp. 13, 16, 33 n. 62.

<sup>45</sup> Years ago, Robert M. Price tipped me off to an implicit Christian bias in Burkert's works. The only place I have seen this mentioned by scholars is Detienne (cited above).

Sacrificing one victim -- say, Iphigenia or Antigone or Oedipus -  
- is a means to transcend to a higher common good. This must  
be repeated annually for the purpose of establishing order.  
Burkert does talk, in passing, of the ritual death in tragic terms:  
"the rites of sacrifice touch the roots of human existence" (*ibid.*  
16); "man faces death" (17); "ritual that comprises the mystery of  
death" (19). This is structuralist language of killing as a  
meditation on death and (therefore) on life; the point of  
structuralism (generally) is to find a resolution of the posited  
binary opposition. Here death brings new life. But the victim is  
unceremoniously left behind. The community, incredibly, takes  
on the power of creating new life,<sup>46</sup> meaning not individual life  
but the renewal of the community, the state. Violence creates  
community: "the community is ... [held] together in the common  
experience of shock and guilt."<sup>47</sup> Burkert is not even sure what  
the gods have to do with any of this: "However difficult it may  
be for mythological and for conceptual reflection to understand

---

<sup>46</sup> He thinks that the community (and before that the paterfamilias) takes on the power of life  
with the power of death (*ibid.*, p. 15) and demands repeated killing (pp. 18, 20). This is a revised  
version of J.G. Frazer's theory of the annual ritual death of the old king.

<sup>47</sup> Burkert (2001), p. 15. Foley (1985) applied Burkert to tragedy.

how such a sacrifice affects the god, what it means for men is always quite clear: community, *koinonia*"; "speaking about gods is a matter for poets--a highly unusual manner of speaking ...."<sup>48</sup> It is a problem that modern theories leave the gods out of Greek tragedy. Tragedy deals with cosmic matters beyond the human scale, of the kind that religion addresses: time, fate, destiny, death. Even for those of us who believe in a secular world, a sociological approach is not always sufficient. The parameters of human existence are defined by nature as well as by culture; the "big questions" are as much existential as social. Durkheim said that religion is a product of society. That does not mean that religion is *about* society. When we read that the story of the death of Hippolytus "may have functioned as a ritual narrative helping to prepare brides psychologically for marriage,"<sup>49</sup> we realize we are in the grips of a puzzling new myth-ritual theory characterized by social constructionism and functionalism. (Since the same story, of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, occurs in

---

<sup>48</sup> Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (English translation, Harvard University Press, 1985), pp. 58, 125. F.S. Naiden, *Smoke Signals for the Gods* (Oxford, 2013, p. 4), p. 4 calls Burkert "atheistic in method," but I think this applies only to his treatment of the Greek gods.

<sup>49</sup> Edith Hall, "Introduction" to Euripides, *Medea and Other Plays*, trans. James Morwood (Oxford University Press paperback, 1998), p. xviii, cp. p. xxx.



*Genesis*, although Joseph is not killed, what kind of historicism is this?) With or without gods, in understanding Greek tragedy it helps to maintain the existential awe that gods represent. Tragedy transcends the political. Violence ruptures the political community and forces us to face harsh truths of human existence. Expelling Oedipus does not make the city of Thebes and its inhabitants less tragic.

Froma Zeitlin argued that tragedies present Thebes (the house of Oedipus and Antigone) as a flawed city, unlike Athens. "Athens is not the tragic space."<sup>50</sup> (She presents many subtle examples, but, generally speaking, the iconic example favored by optimistic Hegelian critics is the final reconciliation in the *Oresteia*.) However true this may be (arguably), we must criticize this supposed Athenian self-image as a false ideology. But many critics do not go that far. They seem too congratulatory about communal order and overly idealize Athens. This again minimizes the existential element of violence, death and awe. Those belongs to bad cities which lack law and order and community. This distances tragedy, in the sense of the tragic

---

<sup>50</sup> Zeitlin (1990) 144.

nature of human life, not only from ancient Athens, which is cloaked in an illusion of permanence (Zeitlin speaks of it as a site of transcendence<sup>51</sup>) but from us, the spectators. Historicism perhaps tends to create this distance from past meanings. Ironically, in this and other cases, a transcendent and quasi-religious message is retained, but it is not the ancient Greek religion.

Ironically, the state (the *polis*) becomes the *telos*, but this particular *polis* gets a pass because it is democratic. In Nietzschean terms, society becomes a metaphysical solace. Other recent work speaks this way; we read that tragedy shows the “restoration of conditions” after some disabling predicament, and that Sophocles’ works concern “inter-familial relationships which affect public status, property ownership, and the continuation of individual *oikoi* [houses].”<sup>52</sup> These are social, legal topics and conclusions. What kind of a god is Dionysus then? Does tragedy have “nothing to do with Dionysus?” It

---

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 166-167. Recall here the myth of the “eternal city” (e.g. Rome and Paradise, the New Jerusalem).

<sup>52</sup> The words of Eleanor R. O’Kell (*sic*) and Sheila Murnaghan, quoted proudly by Carter in Griffith and Carter (2011), p. 13 in introducing their papers in the same volume.

seems he would be either a god of social personae or one irrelevant to tragedy. The idea that he is the god of masks, illusions, and transgression I find a little jejune as an explanation of tragedy.<sup>53</sup> Dionysus is a god of life and death.

All such theories imply a rather idealized conception of citizenship and community. Their philosophical roots going back to Hegel display an interest in the many being resolved into the one, with a clear Christian background of salvation through sacrifice, even though this notion becomes more subtle over time. After the Holocaust and two world wars, twentieth-century theorists came to terms with violence as a defining feature of human civilization; but most of these theories are marred by a political optimism deriving from Aristotle, Hegel, and Christianity. Sacrifice of a scapegoat ensures order (an idea deriving from theories of Hebrew and Greek sacrifice). The community trumps the individual. In fact, such modern theories seem to be acting with a prejudicial conception of what it means to be an individual (someone transgressive; perhaps someone acting from self-interest?). The community overcomes threats

---

<sup>53</sup> Simon Goldhill in Winkler and Zeitlin, eds. (1990), p. 128.

from private sources. I fear this teleological logic leads to a denial of suffering; more broadly, the city-state would be justified in executing Socrates, or Abraham in killing Isaac. How ironic that the trendiest theories today celebrate the group over the individual. A better solution may be found in the non-Christian, more individual (though not uncommunal<sup>54</sup>), self-styled Dionysiac, tragic thought of Friedrich Nietzsche.

#### IV. Alternative View Deriving from Nietzsche; Conclusion

Friedrich Nietzsche restored the tragic view of life in his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872). We don't need to accept all his theories, such as that every tragic hero represents the suffering Dionysus (sections 8, 10). Nietzsche surprisingly makes the Pentheus story beautiful (about merging with the Dionysiac universal oneness).<sup>55</sup> Perhaps all Nietzschean interpretation is

---

<sup>54</sup> Richard Wagner wished to promote a return to community with his festivals and tragic operas. Nietzsche speaks that way in his Wagnerian first book, although I take community non-politically there. One sees this in talk of "universal harmony" and "a higher community" (*Birth of Tragedy*, section 1, trans. Speirs, p. 18). Julian Young has shown Nietzsche's interest in actual community, in his biography (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>55</sup> He praises Agave and the "noble" maddened women of Thebes: "The Dionysiac World View" (1870 but unpublished then), in Nietzsche (1999), sect. 1, p. 124. He says Pentheus met his fate because he was enchanted by Dionysus (*Birth of Tragedy*, sect. 12; Geuss and Speirs Introduction, pp. xx-xxi.).

sympathetic paraphrase. It is important, however, that suffering happens to individuals, although it is experienced communally in the theater, and that Dionysus is a far deeper god. Generally speaking, Nietzsche drew attention to a view of the nature of existence, that is universal and prior even to the Olympian gods, and far different from the political and optimistic views I have described; he calls that kind of theory a "cultural lie" that masks "the genuine truth of nature," that destruction is eternal.<sup>56</sup> Dionysus, for Nietzsche, reminds us of the terrors of existence, namely, that everything that is born must die (sect. 17). Art enables "[r]ecognition of the terrors and absurdities of existence, of the disturbed order and the unreasonable but planned nature of events, indeed of the most enormous *suffering* throughout the whole of nature,"<sup>57</sup> by presenting these in a veiled form to make them bearable. Tragedy gives solace by allowing us to look into the abyss and survive, stronger. Nietzsche said, strive not to be happy but to live heroically (sect. 18). He wrote, "the problem of

---

<sup>56</sup> *Birth of Tragedy*, sect. 8, trans. R. Speirs (1990), p. 41. Destruction is universal, eternal: Silk and Stern (1981), pp. 266-67. On Nietzsche, see also Schmidt (2001), Ch. 5.

<sup>57</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Dionysiac World View" (1870 but unpublished), in Nietzsche, ed. Geuss and Speirs (1999), sect. 3, p. 131.

existence" cannot "be altered or solved by a political event."<sup>58</sup> We are, he says, "tortured ... by the merciless necessity of having to live at all." Wisdom entails embracing "eternal suffering with sympathetic feelings of love" (sect. 18). Art provides a metaphysical solace; other imagined forms of salvation do not. Violent deaths in Greek tragedy, then, remind us that destruction is inherent in our existence, in the nature of the cosmos itself and thus in human nature. Dionysus is a fertility god (here I diverge from Nietzsche's language), and all such gods bear a close relation to death. Tragedy takes place in a theater adjoining a sanctuary of Dionysus; this location, and the plots of the plays which all concern myth, are sites where gods and mortals meet. Gods seem to be required in any definition of myth (arguably). If the subject-matter of the plays is mythic, myth is always religious.<sup>59</sup> Nietzsche brilliantly observed, in a polemic against a solely historical approach to religion, "the essence of religion

---

<sup>58</sup> "Schopenhauer as Educator," in *Unfashionable Observations*, trans. Richard T. Gray (Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 197.

<sup>59</sup> A Sophoclean chorus once famously asks, if we lose reverence for the gods, "why should I dance in the chorus?" (Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 896)

consists precisely ... in the power to create myths."<sup>60</sup> The presence of the gods in the tragedies (either as characters or, more commonly, spoken of) highlights the mortal nature of human beings subject to the vicissitudes of time. Time itself is violent. Violence is in the eternal nature of things. Tragedy shocks because violence happens with the gods watching and even participating (as in the *Iliad* and in the Indian *Mahabharatra*). Through art, drama presents shocking truths in a pleurably acceptable form. It

is not enough to talk about the pleasure obtained by viewing, or supposed resolutions, or civic rituals and establishment of order at the expense of the individual victims.<sup>61</sup> This domesticates tragedy. Tragedy is more terrifying than that. It is useful to remember that art functions as an illusion, in a Nietzschean sense, that knowledge of suffering is a useful truth, that horrors

---

<sup>60</sup>F. Nietzsche, *Unpublished Writings from the Period of Unfashionable Observations*, trans. by Richard T. Gray (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 157, Notebook 27[1], undated entry (Spring 1873), written against David Strauss' historical approach to Jesus.

<sup>61</sup> Foley writes that rituals create an "illusion" of stability according to Durkheim (p. 23), but then praises this order herself: the Greek gods "served to integrate man into the social order ... and into a sacred order." (34). Taplin similarly concludes that tragedy imparts "order to suffering" (see the last footnote below).

threatens to shatter political and cosmic order, and that the sacred itself causes shock. Tragedy provides a “corrective to civic optimism,” writes Robert Parker.<sup>62</sup> Tragedy (like religion) concerns the highest solemnities of birth and death. The most shocking tragedies display violence in the family, the site of generation.<sup>63</sup>

Ancient Greek tragedies presents a philosophy of life. They remind forcefully that all mortals are subject to the vicissitudes of time. Whether the plays (and the dramatic festivals) contain a cure or antidote to suffering, in the nature of a moral, civic, or communal consolation, is a secondary question, because in the end there is no solution to death. A tragic view of life comes about by recognizing the prevalence, the eternity, of violence and suffering in human life. The problem of violence in drama is related to the problem of violence in religion.

We “learn from suffering,” in the immortal words of Aeschylus (*πάθει μάθος*, *Aga.* 177). But what do we learn? We learn the necessity of suffering, death, and reversal of fortune. This is

---

<sup>62</sup> Parker (1997), p. 159.

<sup>63</sup> Cp. Schmidt (2001), pp. 95-98, on family, gender and generation as sites of conflict.



what Oedipus learned that made him holy in *Oedipus at Colonus*, and what Croesus learned in Herodotus' contemporary wisdom-story of Solon and Croesus. (The latter text contains the first certain use of the word "philosophizing"; we may call tragedy proto-philosophical.) Nietzsche said, art allows us to see these horrors without being destroyed. The civic setting makes safe and palatable the terrible truth for all mortal individuals. In Greek tragedy, attempts to escape from suffering only lead to more pain. Any real resolution to violence appears to be doubtful or transient. This is *not* violence whose purpose is to strengthen the community (the most common scholarly view today).

In fact, when people say, "the Greeks did not show violence on stage," this itself is an avoidance-strategy. It avoids the universality of violence. Characters in tragedy are "struck dumb" by what they experience.<sup>64</sup> So is the audience. Violent downfalls strike spectators with awe, horror, dread. The roots of existence are disturbingly anarchic, but not in a political sense.

---

<sup>64</sup> E.g. Sophocles, *Trachiniae* 24, 385-6 (both by Deianeira). Man is *deinos*, terrible, awesome, in Sophocle's *Antigone*. *Oedipus* ends in terror, not justice: Kaufmann (248); Kaufmann also uses the words "terrifying" (236), "shock" (248), and speaks of terrors of human existence (161, 165).

Nor can we relegate violence in Greek drama to our past. Then it would not say much about us or the world we inhabit. We cannot congratulate ourselves that we have reached a higher law or resolution. Tragedy shows not law and the gods grounding political unions, but the dark roots of existence.<sup>65</sup> It addresses the individual ultimately (with ultimate truths), but in a safe group setting.

Of course, many more questions need to be explored about Greek tragedy. Why is an accidental death, such as that of Laius in *Oedipus*, not as tragic as that of Jocasta or Oedipus? (Or is it, but just not highlighted?) One answer, with Aristotle, is that character contributes to the downfall. Another way to say this is, violence has both internal and external causes: human nature shares some of the violent nature of the world. Even more generally, it seems that a character must be conscious of what is happening. That contributes to realization of the horror, for both the character and the spectators.

---

<sup>65</sup> "Culture ... rests upon a terrifying ground": Nietzsche. I use "roots" instead; Vishwa Adluri, a student of Reiner Schürmann's, showed me the difference between grounds and roots.

It is not my intention to draw any political implications (and I regret these may seem to go in a direction I do not intend),<sup>66</sup> but rather to argue for a tragic reading of Greek tragedy and of the world humans inhabit, against a widespread type of salvific politics or religion. If it is true that "the fundamentally destructive nature of humanity is ... at the heart of Greek wisdom,"<sup>67</sup> this tragic wisdom preceded the historically influential philosophical and political antidotes. Following Homer, the Athenian playwrights (and the sometimes tragic historians, Herodotus and Thucydides) showed the violence that comes with being born. They dramatize the horror of mortal life itself which necessarily entails suffering and death and is ever

---

<sup>66</sup> The historical-sociological approach is allied with a perceived progressive politics (this includes Hegel), whereas an alleged a-historical advocacy of "the tragic view of life" can be found today in conjunction with conservative politics. (And some would say the alleged denial or transcendence of politics is itself offensive.) This happens more when Thucydides is thrown into the mix in advocacy of war. For example: Victor Davis Hanson on "the tragic nature of our existence" in "Raw, Relevant History" in *The New York Times*, April 18, 1998, mostly about Thucydides; V.D. Hanson and John Heath, *Who Killed Homer? The Demise of Classical Education and the Recovery of Greek Wisdom* (NY: Free Press, 1998). Roger Kimball in his Foreword, p. xv to David Stove, *What's Wrong with Benevolence*, ed. Andrew Irvine (NY: Encounter Books, 2001), likewise criticizes the allegedly politically correct orthodoxy: "The idea that some evils may be ineradicable is anathema [to them]." For me, existential and social evils are different questions.

<sup>67</sup> Hansen and Heath, *ibid.*, pp. 206. I do not draw the lessons about war that Hansen does.

subject to the violence of time.<sup>68</sup> As Nietzsche crucially said in *The Birth of Tragedy*, and as ancient Athenian playwrights inscribed in the first dramas, this is good to know.

### Bibliography

Aristotle. *Poetics*. Translated by Richard Janko. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1987.

Billings, Joshua. *Genealogy of the Tragic: Greek Tragedy and German Philosophy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014.

Billings, Joshua, and Miriam Leonard, eds. *Tragedy and the Idea of Modernity*. Oxford, 2015.

Burkert, Walter. "The Problem of Ritual Killing." In Hamerton-Kelly 1987. Pp. 149-188.

---

<sup>68</sup> Oliver Taplin (1990) praises Nietzsche, e.g. "tragedy demands that we see and hear the worst" (4), and pessimistically titles a chapter "No sex is safe sex." However, he himself (much like Foley, cited in a footnote above) concludes somewhat optimistically about the value of learning from tragedy: "the order and significance it imparts to suffering"; "it gives the hurtful twists of life a shape and meaning ... which can be lived with" (1983, p. 12 and 1985, p. 124). Sommerstein says, a bit flippantly, "the recognition that it *is* a rotten, stupid world" (2010, p. 169); Parker, "tragedy's recognition that the worst can indeed happen" (1997, 160).

Burkert, Walter. "Greek Tragedy and Sacrificial Ritual." Orig. 1966. Revised version in *Savage Energies: Lessons of Myth and Ritual in Ancient Greece*. Chicago University Press, 2001. Pp. 1-36.

Eagleton, Terry. *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic*. Blackwell, 2003.

Finley, John H., Jr. *Pindar and Aeschylus*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955.

Foley, Helene P. *Ritual Irony: Poetry and Sacrifice in Euripides*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985.

Garvie, A.F. "Greek Tragedy: Text and Context." In *Hesperos: Studies in Ancient Greek poetry Presented to M.L. West ....* P.J. Finglass, et al., eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. 170-188.

Girard, René. "Generative Scapegoating." In Hamerton-Kelly 1987. Pp. 73-145.

Girard, René. *Violence and the Sacred*. Orig. 1972. Translated by Patrick Gregory. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977.

Goldhill, Simon. "The Great Dionysia and Civic Ideology." In Winkler and Zeitlin, eds. (1990). Pp. 97-129.

Goldhill, Simon. "Violence in Greek Tragedy." In J. Redmond, ed., *Violence in Drama*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. Pp. 15-33.

Griffith, Mark, and D.M. Carter. "Introduction." In D.M. Carter, ed., *Why Athens? A Reappraisal of Tragic Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. 1-16.

Halliwell, Stephen. *Aristotle's Poetics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986, revised rpt. 1998.

Hamerton-Kelly, Robert G., ed. *Violent Origins: Walter Burkert, René Girard, and Jonathan Z. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987.

Kaufmann, Walter. *Tragedy and Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968, rpt. 1979.

Knox, Bernard M.W. *The Heroic Temper: Studies in Sophoclean Tragedy*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964.

Leonard, Miriam. *Tragic Modernities*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015.

Lloyd-Jones, Hugh. "Ritual and Tragedy." Orig. 1998. In *The Further Academic Papers of Sir Hugh Lloyd-Jones*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. Pp. 141-163.

Longo, Oddone. "The Theater of the *Polis*." Orig. 1978. In Winkler and Zeitlin, eds. (1990). Pp. 12-19.

Loraux, Nicole. *The Mourning Voice: An Essay on Greek Tragedy*. Trans by Elizabeth T. Rawlings. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002.

Lurie, Michael. "Facing Up to Tragedy: Toward an Intellectual History of Sophocles in Europe from Camerarius to Nietzsche." In Kirk Ormand, ed. *A Companion to Sophocles*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. Pp. 440-461.

Moreau, Alain M. *Eschyle: la violence et le chaos*. Paris, 1985.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Parker, Robert. "Gods Cruel and Kind: Tragic and Civic Theology." In C. Pelling, ed., *Greek Tragedy and the Historian*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. Pp. 143-160.

Pucci, Pietro. "Foreword" to Loraux (2002). Pp. ix-xiii.

Roig Lanzillotta, L. "Violence, Divine and Human." In Hanna M. Roisman, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Greek Tragedy*, Vol. III. Wiley-Blackwell, 2014. Pp. 1462-64.

- Schmidt, Dennis J. *On Germans and Other Greeks: Tragedy and Ethical Life*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001.
- Silk, M.S. and J.P. Stern. *Nietzsche on Tragedy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Sommerstein, Alan H. "Violence in Greek Drama." Orig. 2004. In *The Tangled Ways of Zeus and other studies in and around Greek tragedy*. Oxford University Press, 2010. Pp. 30-46.
- Szondi, Peter. *An Essay on the Tragic*. Orig. 1961. Translated by Paul Fleming. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002.
- Taplin, Oliver. "Emotion and Meaning in Greek Tragedy." Selection from Taplin (1978). In Erich Segal, ed. *Greek Tragedy: Modern Essays in Criticism*. NY: Harper, 1983. Pp. 1-12.
- Taplin, Oliver. *Greek Fire*. NY: Atheneum, 1990. Chapter, "Tragedy: Outstaring the Gorgon." Pp. 35-61.
- Taplin, Oliver. *Greek Tragedy in Action*. Orig 1978; rev. rpt. Routledge, 1985. *Note*: the page nos. differ in the 2nd ed. (2003).
- Van Looy, Herman. Review of Moreau (1985). *L'antiquité classique* 56 (1987), 312-314.
- Weil, Simone; Holoka, James P., ed. and trans. *The Iliad or the Poem of Force: A Critical Edition*. Orig. pub. 1941. NY: Peter Lang, 2003.



Winkler, John J. and Froma I. Zeitlin, eds. *Nothing to Do with Dionysus?* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Wolfe, Jessica. *Homer and the Question of Strife from Erasmus to Hobbes*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015.

Zeitlin, Froma. "Thebes: Theater of Self and Society in Athenian Drama." (Revised version of 1986 paper.) In Winkler and Zeitlin, eds., 1990. Pp. 130-167.



**Sources of pure Joy: the execution scene -  
orgies of violence and the empty moral space  
in Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the  
Great, Part I and Part II.***

Nuno Pinto Ribeiro

Universidade do Porto

Western dramatic tradition tends to disclaim the exorbitant performance of conspicuous violence in tragedy and to stress, in some of its qualified moments, restraint and moderation in the depiction of the physical brutal act. Aristotle attaches the production of the *catharsis* to the careful orchestration of the feelings of pity and fear in a plot designed by textual discipline and structural husbandry<sup>69</sup>. The same control on the stage and

---

<sup>69</sup> In his famous definition, tragedy aims at ‘...effecting through pity and fear the catharsis of such emotions’ (*apud* RUSSELL, D.A., and WINTERBOTTOM, M, eds., *Classical Literary Criticism*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, The World’s Classics, 1989, p.57. *Lexis*, or the literary text, is given prominence over *opsis*, the spectacle, and the reverse would negate tragic pleasure in favour of the monstrous (*idem, ibidem*, pp.67-68).

on the page – or a zealous adjusted version of both – was elaborated on by neoclassical theory and *praxis*, refashioning a controversial classical legate into the clarity of the classical rule and the apollonian composure of the *decorum*. The formal dictates of an ideal tragic configuration did not achieve universal observance, even when the cultural and literary frame of reference was decidedly marked by the enthusiastic return to the golden age of Ancient Rome and Greece.

The English Renaissance, even in its flowering moment, never surrendered without any reservations to the magnetism of the new learning and rediscovery: the cradle of the innovation, Italy, was the exotic land of vice and excess, treason and perversity, and the land of the Pope, the Archenemy of the reformed militant nation. Poets were attentive to novelty, but new standards in literary creation were introduced into an existing tradition and a peculiar national picture: the Petrarchan sonnet goes hand in hand with the Shakespearean one, the Spenserian stanza claims successfully a place among poetic forms, blank verse expresses the canonical lyrical – and, later, dramatic as well – rhythm and measure. Homer and Vergil, Tasso and Ariosto, are promptly adjusted in a conflated operation that commits them to the

service of contemporary interests (Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* is a case in point). Academic drama at court and the Universities obeys codes and conventions of recurrent Humanist erudition, but vernacular popular drama absorbs medieval heritage and is pervaded by the vividness of festivity and ritual. One certainly oversimplifies a complex process on highlighting the emergence of an urban culture interpreted by the London crowds clashing against the existence of the happy few of the sophisticated milieu of scholars and courtiers. Sir Philip Sidney, in his *Apology for Poetry* (1595), speaks for the new trends in dramatic creation when, in his brief report of the state of poetry in England, pays homage to *Gorboduc* or *Ferrex and Porrex* (1561), a play written by Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, of academic configuration and instructive intention, allegedly the one that, in spite of notorious aesthetic drawbacks, preserves in its abundant 'stately speeches' the 'height of Seneca's style' and 'notable morality', and embraces the unities of place and time, 'the two necessary companions of all corporeal actions' and the fulfillment of 'Aristotle's precept and common reason'; the same critical guidelines, based on the idea of 'delightful teaching' as 'the end of Poesy', make him reject the promiscuity of hybrid

genres and, above all, the so customary incongruity of the work of contemporary dramatists, 'neither right tragedies, nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns'<sup>70</sup> without any solid reason. Unrestraint in design; but also potential accomplices favoured by that poetic license beyond control and discrimination, the intemperate representation of passions and conflict. A similar attitude – more substantiated, however, by dramatic experience -, can be found among Elizabethan dramatists. Ben Jonson vituperates the extravagance of Marlowe and his school<sup>71</sup>, the original and duplicates of the Scythian warrior that, hand in hand with the famous revengers

---

<sup>70</sup> SHEPHERD, Geoffrey, ed. , *Sir Philip Sidney: An Apology for Poetry*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1973, pp. 133-135.

<sup>71</sup> MacLURE, Millar, ed. , *Christopher Marlowe: The Critical Heritage*, London and New York, Routledge, The Critical Heritage, 1979, p. 50. The ignorant are not excepted from 'The 'Articles of Agreement' celebrated between audiences and the author of *Bartholomew Fair*, as he wrote in *The Induction on the Stage* : 'He that will swear, *Jeromimo* or *Andronico* are the best plays, yet shall pass unexcepted at, here, as a man whose judgement shows it is constant, and hath stood still these five and twenty or thirty years. Though it be an ignorance, it is a virtuous and staid ignorance; and next to truth, a confirmeth error does well; such a one the author knows where to find him'. (CAMPBELL, Gordon, ed. , *Ben Jonson, The Alchemist and Other Plays*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, Oxford English Drama, Oxford World's Classics, 1995, p.330).

Hieronimo, of *The Spanish Tragedy*, by Thomas Kyd, or the desperate Roman nobleman of *Titus Andronicus* that in the late eighties and early nineties ravished London audiences:

‘The true Artificer will not run away from nature, as hee were afraid of her; or depart from life, and the likenesse of Truth; but speake to the capacity of his hearears, and though his language differ from the vulgar somewhat; it shall not fly from all humanity, with the *Tamerlanes*, and Tamer-Chams of the later Age, which had nothing in them but the *scenicall* strutting, and furious vociferation, to warrant them to the ignorant gapers’.

Shakespeare himself, whose plays would hardly be tolerated by Sidney’s judgement – one can imagine how shocked by the apparent outbursts of gratuitous fury and the conspicuous loosen structure of *King Lear* the accomplished scholar and courtesan would be, and how indifferent to the appeal to the redeeming role of imagination of the famous Prologue of *Henry V*, - urges, *via* Hamlet, the players to observe contention and *decorum*:

‘Suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o’erstep not the modesty of nature. For anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose

end, both at first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; ...'<sup>72</sup>.

Wise statements in the controversial picture of the 'war of the theatres' and the growing supremacy of players and spectacle over textual guidance and dictates of moderation. Not to run away from nature, not to overstep the modesty of nature: what's the use of such precepts when nature itself was infused with a vital energy of conquest, and the voracity of the crowds demanded the persistent supply of strong emotions? Tamburlaine proclaims the irrepressible vibration of his expansive essence -

'Nature, that framed us of four elements  
Warring within our breasts for regiment,  
Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds:

/.../'<sup>73</sup> -

---

<sup>72</sup> GREENBLATT, Stephen, general editor, *The Norton Shakespeare based on the Oxford Edition*, New York and London, W. W. Norton & Company, *Hamlet*, 3. 2. 15-18.

<sup>73</sup> BURNETT, Mark Thornton, ed., *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays*, London, J.M.Dent, and Vermont, Charles E. Tuttle, 1999, *Tamburlaine The Great, Part One, Act Two, Scene Seven*, ll. 18-20. References to Marlowe's plays concern this edition.



and Faustus, at the beginning of his quest, feverishly engages in a perilous exploit that will vibrate rather in the sound and fury of the personal resolution than in the cadence of any deliberate sense of balance endorsed by classical authority –

‘O, what a world of profit and delight,  
Of power, of honour, of omnipotence  
Is promised to the studious artisan!’

/.../

This night I’ll conjure, though I die therefore.’<sup>74</sup>

The enthusiasm of audiences encourages and regulates the growing commercial and popular theatre, and advertising testifies to the cross-fertilization of dramatic creation and production for the market, as the Prologue to *Tamburlaine the Great, Part Two*, among so many examples, eloquently illustrates:

‘The general welcomes Tamburlaine received  
When he arrived last upon our stage  
Had made our poet pen his second part,

/.../’<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> *Doctor Faustus* (1604 Text), *idem, ibidem*, Act One, Scene One, ll. 55-57; 168.

<sup>75</sup> *Idem, ibidem*, ll. 1-3.

Readers – ‘Gentlemen Readers: and others that take pleasure in reading Histories’ - might be spared the most prodigal expressions of delirious whim (a cautious measure directed perhaps against the unrestrained improvisation of actors) as carefully stated in the printer’s note to ‘the two tragical discourses of the Scythian shepherd, Tamburlaine, ...’ –

I have (purposely) omitted and left out some frivolous jestures, digressing and (in my poor opinion) far unmeet for the matter, which I thought might seem more tedious unto the wise than any else to be regarded – though, haply, they have been of some vain conceited fondlings greatly gaped at, what times they were showed upon the stage in their graced deformities.’<sup>76</sup>

Criticism focuses above all on improper representation and clumsy or defective conception, and even open enemies of theatre and drama, when scourging the stage, do not see in any mimetic effect of violence a qualified drawback. In Philip Stubbes’ *The Anatomie of Abuses* (1583), an emblematic exposure of performances and their nefarious consequences, what was at

---

<sup>76</sup> *Idem, ibidem*, p. 3.

a stake is a comprehensive range of vices 'such wanton gestures, such bawdy speeches, such laughing and fleering, such kissing and bussing, such clipping and culling, such winking and glancing of wanton eyes, ...' : murder, robbery, or treason (and for sure also their potential disturbing effects) are included in a wide catalogue more concerned with deceit and lasciviousness than with cruelty<sup>77</sup>. No wonder, violence was a fact of daily life: torture was merciless and savage, in spite of the selective operation of its proceedings<sup>78</sup>, public execution, an impressive public occasion, performed as a kind of bloody passion play, obeyed to a detailed choreography including ritual hanging and mutilation (beheading as an alternative, depending on the nature of the crime or the social condition of the convict), and heads of the victims were left on the walls of the Tower Bridge as a persuasive appalling deterrent. Dog fighting and bull fighting, or the famous bear-baiting, were popular entertainments, and

---

<sup>77</sup> *Apud* POLLARD, Tanya, ed. , *Shakespeare's Theatre:A Sourcebook*, Oxford and Victoria, Blackwell, 2004, p.121.

<sup>78</sup> Skepticism concerning torture seems, however, to qualify this practice in Elizabethan England (MAUS, Katherine Eisamen, *Inwardness and Theatre in the English Renaissance*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1995, pp. 82-5).

many theatre buildings were flexible enough in their structure to accommodate that kind of pastime (the Red Bull evokes in its very name such manifold possibilities). As a matter of fact, violence and its corrupting consequences seemed to be relevant in a most pragmatic view, when they jeopardized the established order, favouring riots and sedition, it was not of any special concern when related to the unscrupulousness of *mimesis*, so crucial in the thought of Plato and Augustin, among so many others. <sup>79</sup>In the crude performances of medieval *Miracle Plays*, bloodshed and brutality, finding its climax in the passion and crucifixion of Christ, depicted the ritual sacrifice of cleansing and served the devotional purposes of religious celebration as an instrument of moral exhortation, but what happens if the play, in the course of its emancipation as drama, gives full vent to the appealing force of excess and brutish sensation? It is at this juncture that violence on the stage, in its crudest expression, claims its rights: not as the companion to any organic conception of the excessive plot, duly depicted by congenial resources

---

<sup>79</sup> See, for a classical account of this issue, BARISH, Jonas, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 1981.

granting verisimilitude, rather in the sensationalist and populist activation of emotions and the sadistic manipulation of fascinated crowds served by the enticing power of words. This happens whenever depiction of extreme suffering or shocking brutality on the stage go openly beyond demands of intense action or the mere aesthetic illustration of ferocious conflict: the pure gratification of repressed desires or the redress by proxy of social frustration and resentment may be an easy alternative to imagination and criticism. How bracing is humiliation of our betters and defeat of our oppressors! And one should perhaps keep in mind that many of the dramatist's overreachers – Faustus, Tamburlaine, Gaveston, ... - rise above their class extraction and deliberately cross the boundaries of a humble origin. 'I am a lord, for so my deeds shall prove,/ And yet a shepherd by my parentage.', Tamburlaine proclaims at the beginning of his adventure, Faustus' parents are 'base of stock', 'that base and obscure Gaveston' rises in the court at the expense of the nobility. The morbid inclination of the provocative gesture in tragedy (or, for that matter, between 'scornful matters as

stirreth laughter' mixed with 'delightful teaching'<sup>80</sup>, and sheer and savage gratification in farce, as the case of *The Jew of Malta* might illustrate), tends to erase casualties from the picture and make them objects, make sacrifice banal and attractive, 'strange images of death' and horror 'normal', discharging audiences of any moral discrimination and providing them with the joyful indifference to suffering.

If one intends to examine moral and aesthetic dilemmas of tragic conception and achievement, 'execution scenes' and images of mutilation and suffering in *Tamburlaine the Great* may be a good starting point. The general moralistic reference to *the casibus virorum illustrium*, of Christian medieval extraction, or any decisive contribution of the classical comprehension of tragic vision and tragedy, would seem out of place in these *Tragical Discourses*: the hero transcends the condition of the poor shepherd to become a war lord and the builder and sovereign of a vast empire, and social, moral and political structure and place, world arrangement, cosmic order or providential design cannot dictate rules to the pure energy in motion that creates its own

---

<sup>80</sup> As Sir Philip Sidney lectured (SHEPHERD, Geoffrey, ed. pp. 136-137).

universe. Tamburlaine's choice is absolute, it lies beyond good and evil, such is the prerogative of the heroic voice, no conjecture can explain its ways and there are no general rules to discipline his course. That's why his behaviour can hardly be adjusted to common moral patterns: in fact he is unique in his inclination to come close to the gods and to share their nature, suggestively a powerful primitive myth, maybe strong and eloquent as Hercules, in the reference Eugene M. Waith elaborates on in his known study,<sup>81</sup> evoked since the moment he deprives himself of his shepherd's clothes before Zenocrate – 'Lie here, ye weeds that I disdain to wear!/ This complete armour and this curtle-axe/ Are adjuncts more beseeming Tamburlaine' , I. II. 41-43 – and assumes the providential role of the scourge of God and conqueror of the world.

The Turks follow the Persians in the stations of the hero's ascendant course. One of the illuminating examples of atrocities is to be found in the clash between Tamburlaine, the powerful warrior and cunning schemer, and the boastful and pompous Bajazeth. The lion and the fox, emblems of the versatile

---

<sup>81</sup> WAITH, Eugene M. , *The Herculean Hero in Marlowe, Chapman, Shakespeare and Dryden*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1962.

successful prince in Machiavelli's definition, had already been tested in the victory over Mycetes and Cosroe, and the persuasive orator that impresses Theridamas, or entices Zenocrate (Venus surrenders to Mars, with the intimidating frame of the victorious legions in the back – 'I must be pleased perforce, wretched Zenocrate', are her desolate words of resignation at the end of I.II.<sup>82</sup>) will now translate sublime dreams of potency into action: the formidable energy gives literal substance to hyperbole, and the unconquerable will is given a local habitation and a name. The Turk had been depicted as a proud tyrant and a vane collector of titles, in III. I. , and before the two antagonists come face to face, the Scythian warrior is, in

---

<sup>82</sup>The play's dialectic of cruelty and glory is acted out in the eyes of Tamburlaine's admirers, embodied at this point in the captured Zenocrate. It is the world's amazement that also helps transform the negative into the positive and validates Tamburlaine's role in the estimation of his worshipers; but what the worshipers are in fact kneeling at is the altar of their own pent-up aggression, the image of which they can freely applaud in the glorious conqueror Tamburlaine, the incarnation of their own 'base Scythian dreams' , PROSER, Matthew N. , *The Gift of Fire: Aggression and the Plays of Christopher Marlowe*, New York, Washington, Peter Lang, Renaissance and Baroque Studies and Texts vol. 12, 1995, pp. 75-76.



III. III. given the image of the liberator intending to rescue Christian prisoners:

'I am term'd the scourge and wrath of god,  
The only fear and terror of the world,  
Will first subdue the Turk, and then enlarge  
Those Christian captives which you keep as slaves,  
/.../

I.III.44ff

'The sympathy of the audience is enlisted for the hero in this short debate, for Bajazeth is represented as a man whose thoughts are solely of destruction, whereas Tamburlaine is represented as one who would choose to conquer by beauty rather than force. The same spiritual contrast is evident throughout the episode, for even when Tamburlaine boasts of his martial power, his images transcend those of Bajazeth', as Virginia Meehan argues at this juncture<sup>83</sup>. Zenocrate and Zabina replicate in low profile the combat that opposes the brave Scythian and the futile Bajazeth, and it is the conqueror's Muse

---

<sup>83</sup> MEEHAN, Virginia M. , *Christopher Marlowe – Poet and Playwright: Studies in Poetical Method*, The Hague/Paris, Mouton, 1974, p. 30.

who crowns the victor; the Turk and his queen will join the spoils of war. But this glory will not stop at that: before the walls of Damascus, Tamburlaine rejoices in the cruel humiliation of the captives. The impressive image that certainly ignited the feverish imagination of the crowds of *The Rose* or *The Fortune* will be revisited later, in 1597, by John Donne in his poem *The Calm* : 'Like Bajazeth encaged, the shepherd's scoff,/ Or like slack-sinewed Samson, his hair off, / Languish our ships. ...' : such is the resilience of qualified expressions of popular lore. To the procession of the conqueror's train attendance followed by the pageant of the prisoners in their cages, abused and vituperated by the crowd, certainly the echo of the ritualistic ceremony of public executions, is added the extravagant abasement of Bajazeth, now the footstool of the lord of life and death that ascends his throne, an impressive image that certainly spellbound the imagination of the populace. The gratuitous gesture may evoke the mysterious presence of an inflexible God in the submission of the tyrant and in the redemption of the oppressed Christians, along the tradition of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (1570) and the emblematic representation of the Pope prostrated before Henry VIII and used by the English king as a

stool; and the memory of the example provided by the episode, illustrating the precarious condition of Man and the mysterious ways of Providence, would revive in Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the World*:

'For seeing God, who is the Author of all our tragedies, hath written out for us, and appointed us all the parts we are to play: and hath not, in their distribution, been partial to the most mighty Princes of the world; ... that appointed *Bajazeth* to play the *Grand Signior* of the *Turks* in the morning, and in the same day the *Footstool* of *Tamerlane* ...; of which examples many thousands may be produced: why should other men, who are but the least worms, complain of worms, complain of wrongs? Certainly there is no account to be made of the ridiculous world, than to resolve, that the change of fortune on the great Theatre, is but as the change of garments on the less...'<sup>84</sup>

Tamburlaine shall not be moved by gold or intimidated by the garrisons of Africa and Greece Bazajeth threatens to activate against his captor. The speech of victory is, as expected, grandiose, categorical in its unshakable convictions (the future

---

<sup>84</sup> HAMOND, Gerald, ed. , *Sir Walter Raleigh – Selected Writings*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1986, pp.146-147.

tense anticipates the future in the instant) and the orator's prospect devoted to rewrite the map of the world vibrates in the catalogue of places evoking the fascinating age of discovery and the vast world of power and omnipotence promised to the scourge of god:

'Those wallèd garrisons will I subdue,  
And write myself great lord of Africa:  
So from the east unto the furthest west  
Shall Tamburlaine extend his puissant arm.  
The galleys and those pilling brigandines  
That yearly sail to the Venetian gulf  
And hover in the straits for Christians'wreck,  
Shall lie at anchor in the Isle Asant  
Until the Persian fleet and men-of-war,  
Sailing along the oriental sea,  
Have fetched about the Indian continent,  
Even from Persepolis to Mexico,  
And thence unto the Straits of Jubalter,  
Where they shall meet and join their force in  
one,  
Keeping in awe the Bay of Portingale

And all the ocean by the British shore:

And by this means I'll win the world at last'.

III.III.244-260.

What the triumphant hero has in store for his captives bursts all limits of sadistic imagination. 'Thy names and titles and thy dignities/ Are fled from Bajazeth and remain with me, / That will maintain it against a world of kings': Tamburlaine's words in IV.II.79-81 seem to embrace a cannibalistic logic of assimilation, in tone with the insidious suggestions of the banquet scene to follow. In a demented extravagance of nightmarish horror (IV. iv), Bajazeth is forced to eat scrapes of food from the point of the sword of his torturer, with the raucous laughter and uproarious joy of the victors, delighted with the suffering of the victim and his queen. How far we are from the classical dictates of *decorum* and the central role of fear and pity! And how embarrassing it is sometimes to feel this surrender to the brutal fascination orchestrated by an accomplished artist that translates into his creation his defiant and subversive inclinations! <sup>85</sup>J. B. Steane has

---

<sup>85</sup> One should resist, however, the temptation to identify this apparent inclination to destructive and perverse energy to an alleged brutal and

a point when, a long time ago, he commented on this iconoclastic moment of the theatre of cruelty and the awkward effects it is liable to have on readers and audiences :

‘There has been baiting, cursing, stamping, flinging food to the ground. The violence and distastefulness of the scene are the more marked in that they take place at a banquet, where orderly ceremony should prevail: this is a violation of everything civilized. The appeal is an appalling one. Nevertheless, it is an appeal: to those forces which make us bully, attract us towards the infliction of pain and discomfort upon others, make us want to kick over the traces and break things – in fact, to the evil and disruptive within our nature which civilization can normally

---

provocative temperament. Richard Baines, the author a famous note concerning Marlowe’s impious and blasphemous behavior, or Thomas Kyd, the dramatist’s friend and room companion in London, who wrote an incriminating account of the Canterbury’s dramatist, are, anyway, not reliable biographical witnesses: Baines was involved in counter-information activities most probably dictating the suppression of the poet and spy, Kyd produced his testimony under torture (relevant documents can be found, *inter alia*, in HONAN, Park, *Christopher Marlowe, Poet & Spy*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 374-381).

discipline or refine; and, in Marlowe's presentation it is this appeal which is uppermost.<sup>86</sup>

Suicide will be the expected reaction of a man beyond his senses and doomed to be kept in his cage as long as he lives: he smashes his head against the bars, and the poor Zabina, mad with grief, joins him into the abyss of death. The appalling scene will certainly inscribe the most vivid impression in audiences, and Zenocrate, that in the banquet scene had shared the comedy of evil, later on (V.i.), with Annipe, will be compassionate and vividly moved by the scene of those bloody spoils: 'Behold the Turk and his great emperess!' is the insistent verse in the litany of pain and regret. Damascus will not be spared, in spite of Zenocrate's entreaties, and the poor supplicant Virgins, sent to implore peace (too late, the unwise Governor had not surrendered in time), were to be sacrificed without pity: black is the colour, which means total annihilation, no more red, which would exempt inhabitants from the cruel death, or white, the first step in the sinister progression in the unwavering pronouncements of the conqueror, his 'common rites of arms',

---

<sup>86</sup> STEANE, J. B. , *Marlowe: A Critical Study*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1964, P.84.

his 'customs', 'as peremptory/ As wrathful planets, death, or destiny' (V.i.127-128). When the action of *Part I* closes, with the act of mercy that responds to Zenocrate's entreaties and spares her father, the Soldan of Egypt, and Tamburlaine celebrates his union with his paramour and 'takes truce with all the world', readers and audiences are not to recognize in the outline and nature of the action any traces of the tragedy or any echoes of the tradition of the *romance* or the *casus virorum illustrium* of medieval legacy. There is certainly no *catastrophe* and the hero is not hit by disgrace; he never repents, no pity and awe are suggested by his fortune, only admiration, and the heroic voice, beyond any moral code<sup>87</sup>, is still absolute, ratified by the final landscape of devastation beautified with his last victims:

'And such are objects fit for Tamburlaine,  
Wherein as in a mirror may be seen  
His honour, that consists in shedding blood  
When men presume to manage arms with him'.

V. 476-479.

---

<sup>87</sup> For chivalry and moral codes, see JONES, Robert, *Knight: The Warrior and World of Chivalry*, Oxford, Osprey Publishing, 2011, pp. 144-177 *et passim*.



But the show must go on. In *Tamburlaine Part II* Marlowe will restate the most exorbitant performance of the comedy of the grotesque. Zenocrate's death, in Act II, scene I, fittingly celebrated in the touching elegy opening with 'Black is the beauty of the brightest day;', seems to provide the conqueror with a ravishing and inordinate course of action. His Muse does not share his dreams of glory: when her death approaches, she is above all a mother protecting her sons and deeply concerned about their future. Calyphas, his mother's boy, declines the prospects of glory promised by his father and will pay that offence with his life. But meanwhile only a sequence of ruin and destruction can follow the loss of Tamburlaine's lady and love. Above the sounds of the battle his apocalyptic voice thunders dreadfully:

'So burn the turrets of this cursed town,  
Flame to the highest regions of the air,  
And kindle heaps of exhalations,  
That being fiery meteors, may presage  
Death and destruction to th'inhabitants',  
III.ii.1-5.

And so with the sinister background of Larissa in flames, Trebizon and Soria, the vanquished kings, and the rest of the captive potentates, will be debased to the condition of horses and forced to drive the barbarous conqueror to Babylon: 'Holla, ye pampered jades of Asia!' is the famous verse opening the savage discourse of the 'scourge of highest Jove'.

Also here the extravagant infliction of suffering, giving palpable substance to hyperbole and metaphor, may well put Tamburlaine's adventure in perspective, as J. R. Mulryne and Stephen Fender, among others, suggest:

'We might have expected to take all his talk about making Bajazeth his footstool, or harnessing the kings of Trebizon and Soria, as figures of speech for his assumption of their political power, or as metaphors for any number of ways in which he might humiliate them. But what the audience gets is Tamburlaine *really* making the kings pull his chariot, and again and again. His relentless turning of metaphor into fact is both glorious and ridiculous. His ability to carry out his word emphasizes his power and suggests its limitations, in that it forces him to carry out his promises literally. And we cannot resolve this ambivalence by choosing to interpret or produce the

play in one way or another. The ambivalence is built into the text'.<sup>88</sup>

And Mary Elizabeth Smith has perhaps a good point when she sees the *reduction ad absurdum* of a proclaimed liberty that physically is grounded in the circle described by the warrior's chariot, turning around on the stage while the proud victor delivers his long solemn speeches<sup>89</sup>.

Nobody escapes: every gesture of treason, or any evidence of pusillanimity or hesitation, will be punished with death, <sup>90</sup>no matter if transgressors are soldiers in the battlefield, captives,

---

<sup>88</sup> MULRYNE, J. R. , FENDER, Stephen, 'Marlowe and the 'Comic distance'', in MORRIS, Brian, ed. , *Christopher Marlowe* , London, Ernest Benn Limited, Mermaid Critical Commentaries, 1968, pp. 54-55.

<sup>89</sup> SMITH, Mary Elizabeth, 'Hell Strives with Grace; Reflections on the Theme of Providence in Marlowe', in MAGNUSSON, A. L. , MCGEE, C.E. , eds. , *Elizabethan Theatre XI* , University of Waterloo, Ontario, 1990, p. 147.

<sup>90</sup> In the web of structural homologies established between **Part I** and **Part II** , the unsuccessful attempt of Theridamas and the disgraceful lot of his unassailable mistress evokes the wooing of Venus by Mars, i. e. the union of Zenocrate and Tamburlaine. 'The most probable function of Theridamas and Olympia episodes is to insist on the spread of death around Tamburlaine', PAVEL, Thomas G. , *The Poetics of Plot – The Case of English Renaissance Drama*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, Theory and History of Literature 18, 1985, p. 58.

women or civilians<sup>91</sup>. Zenocrate's attendant, Agydas, had been directed to his suicide, in *Part I* Act III. II, and the brave Olympia, the widow of the unfortunate Captain of the unfortunate Balsera, immolates her noble son, in III.IV, and evades the advances of Theridamas, leading the frustrated lover to kill her, in IV.II. Damascus and their supplicant Virgins, as referred above, had also been sacrificed without mercy, in the first *tragical discourse* of mighty Tamburlaine, V. I. , and now the long pageant of atrocities is still on the way: the Turkish concubines are given to the joy division of Tamburlaine's soldiers<sup>92</sup>, the Governor of Babylon is hung in chains against the walls of the ruined town and shot to death, the inhabitants are tied and drowned in the bituminous lake. And then comes the fatal hour of Calyphas. 'Accursed be he that first invented war!'

---

<sup>91</sup> The massacre of civilians was very common when besiegers met fierce resistance and suffered many casualties: 'If attacking troops did carry the breach, and did break through to the town beyond, the massacre would be among the garrison and unlucky civilians; custom allowed a three-day sack for the troops to vent their fury. A timely surrender could prevent this final tragedy', ARNOLD, Thomas, *The Renaissance at War*, London, Cassell, Cassell History of Warfare, 2001, p. 66.

<sup>92</sup> And the cursed status of Calyphas entitles the concubines to bury him.

had Mycetes, the weak king of Persia, said on the verge of his defeat and capture (*Part I*, II.IV); when Tamburlaine lectures his heirs on the rudiments of war (*PART II*, III. II.), the degenerate son discloses his outrageous disqualification before the prospect of war action: 'My lord, but this is dangerous to be done:/ We may be slain or wounded ere we learn». And because 'Blood is the god of war's rich livery', Tamburlaine cuts his own arm and makes his sons wash their hands in the blood, but the appalling gesture does not impress the reluctant fighter, who comments on the cruel exhibition with disappointing and even, in such a context of exalting military virtue, ludicrous fallstaffian words: 'I know not what I should think of it; methinks 'tis a pitiful sight' (III. II. 131). During the battle, Caliphas remains in the tent playing cards and passing the time in idle conversation; his father wins the day and comes back from the field to settle accounts with him. The demi-god cannot be appeased by the entreaties of his soldiers or his son Amyras: such a weakness cannot be forgiven, that 'Image of sloth and picture of a slave' has to be erased from the picture of the triumphant hero. In a ritual gesture, as though he got rid of an 'unworthy part of

himself',<sup>93</sup> Tamburlaine, this time performing himself the execution ceremony on the stage, returns that fainting soul to Jove (IV.I). Performance would certainly bring to the fore the violence of the barbarous Abraham immolating his son in the name of the warrior patriarch, and the vulnerability of the victim, silent and pale before the tremendous speech that sentences him, would certainly be revolting, as Bruce R. Smith among others states<sup>94</sup>.

The homology established between the virtue of words and the power of the sword is a conspicuous one in these plays<sup>95</sup>: Heracles is traditionally an accomplished orator. Mycetes orders his ambassador to make the best of his rhetorical talents to

---

<sup>93</sup> WAITH, M. Eugene, *The Herculean Hero in Marlowe, Chapman, Shakespeare and Dryden*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1962, pp. 80-81. See also SALES, Roger, *Christopher Marlowe*, Basingstoke and London, Macmillan, English Dramatists, 1991, p.80ff.

<sup>94</sup> SMITH, Bruce R. , *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England – A Cultural Poetics*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1994, p.209.

<sup>95</sup> The homology of Tamburlaine's pen, that rewrites the map of the world, his sword and Marlowe's pen is examined by António M. Feijó in 'Inveigling writing in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great*, Part I', in ALVES, Isabel, *et alii*, *XVI Encontro da Associação Portuguesa de Estudos Anglo-Americanos*, Vila Real, Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, 1996, pp. 203-213.

prevail upon Tamburlaine ('Go, stout Theridamas, thy words are swords,/ And with thy looks thou conquerest all thy foes.', *Part I*, I.I. 74-75), but the deputy is dazzled by the warrior's eloquence ('Not Hermes, prolocutor of the gods,/ Could use persuasions more pathetic.', he admits in *Part I*. I. II. 210-211) and changes sides, Zenocrate is asked to keep Tamburlaine's crown during the combat against Bajazeth and challenges Zabina in a battle of words ('And manage words with her as we will arms', *Part I* III.II.131), the debate of poetic beauty and martial achievement is given a graceful dialectic expression (the speech beginning with 'What is beauty, saith my sufferings, then?', *Part I*, V. I. 160 ff), just to name some examples in the first *tragic discourse*. In *Part II*, however, those examples seem to dwindle as the imperious command of the protagonist fades: it is now Callapine, Bajazeth's son, who persuades Almeda, his jailer, to set him free, in I.II, and it is Olympia, in IV.II., who triumphs over Theridamas in IV. II., Tamburlaine's outbursts of pride and glory while riding his chariot are not very convincing, and he cannot impose his argument upon Calyphas, as also stated above. But *Tamburlaine the Great Part II* is not a tragedy: there is no *anagnorisis* and no retribution, and acceptance of death, when it finally occurs, is in

part transformed into a desired fulfilment, as Eugene M. Waith suggests<sup>96</sup> , and the scourge of God 'perceives death as a rite of initiation to a new life, the prelude of apotheosis'<sup>97</sup> and, ultimately, he never surrenders, blames the gods and falls in glory<sup>98</sup>. Fair global scrutiny would stress speech melody and rich imagery, energy and resonance of words, rich drapery of evocative names and places, the force of rhetorical assertion: the beauty of words may sway readers and audiences and drag them into the maelstrom of violence, above all when strangeness turns into the familiar and depicted atrocities becomes trivial. This is not the whole story: we are a long way from the old anti theatrical fears of imitation, the magical belief that *mimesis* defiles performers and audiences, stimulating them to give free vent to inordinate desires. Critical distance tells a different version of the effects of art upon life: studying circles and spheres do not make

---

<sup>96</sup> In WAITH, Eugene M. , *The Herculean Hero in Marlowe, Chapman, Shakespeare and Dryden*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1962, p. 82.

<sup>97</sup> ANDREWS, Michael Cameron, *This Action of Our Death – The Performance of Death in English Renaissance Drama*, Newark, University of Delaware Press/ London and Toronto, Associated University Presses, 1989, p.27.

<sup>98</sup> TRUCHET, Sybil, *Le Théâtre Médiéval en Angleterre et son influence sur l'oeuvre de Marlowe, Kyd et Lyly: contribution à l'étude du drame pré-shakespearien*, Lille, Université de Lille III, 1980, p.272.



you round shaped, you do not accommodate your body to a new physical configuration for studying lines and squares.

Dark thrillers or sinister detective stories, horror and violent action narratives or performances and hard boiled adventure stories: this is our daily experience of mass consumerism on standing demand. And the literary and dramatic canon has since a long time accepted provocation and excess, heterodoxy and impassioned controversy. Judgement does not depend on moral standards and dominant social values, and any work of art goes well without the prerequisites of authorized biography or moral biased considerations. The historical identity of Shakespeare and Keats do not help readers much to understand their work; the temptation to read Milton or Byron with reference to their lives is certainly more suggestive. And Marlowe, the sceptic and iconoclastic scholar, the heterodox poet and the adventurer in the service of the crown, the blasphemous and quarrelsome tavern figure, celebrated by a tradition written mostly by his rivals and detractors. Be as it may, Joe Orton, Pier Paolo Pasolini and Jean Genet, and Christopher Marlowe, for that matter, are studied in our Universities, and depiction of violence or the most brutal conflict is simply the product of the fertile and unforeseen

operations of poetic imagination giving birth to an aesthetic artefact not dictated by any moral order or any imperative *decorum*. Writers and dramatists are entitled to a wide range of choices, and so are readers and audiences, invited to judge and discuss controversial and delicate issues so often touching an unfamiliar conscience or unexpected points of view and wider unsuspected territories of existence. In Marlowe's time, the inclusive popular commercial drama joined people of different social extractions and different expectations; some were enticed by the appeal of language or to the rich play of connotations and classical allusions to Ovid, Lucan, Virgil or Juvenal; others, also attentive to the convincing energy and beauty of the Marlovian mighty line, could well go without the mythical or scholarly rhetorical devices, but they were certainly there for a good story. In our time *Tamburlaine the Great* still activates fantasies of power while opening for many a moral vacuum requiring critical engagement to fill in, and readers and audiences expect a good story in a piece of dramatic fiction that is also a source of absolute joy.

Bibliography:

ALVES, Isabel, *et alii*, eds. , *XVI Encontro da Associação Portuguesa de Estudos Anglo-Americanos*, Vila Real, Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, 1996.

ANDREWS, Michael Cameron, *This Action of Our Death – The Performance of Death in English Renaissance Drama*, Newark, University of Delaware Press/ London and Toronto, Associated University Presses, 1989.

ARNOLD, Thomas, *The Renaissance at War*, London, Cassell, Cassell History of Warfare, 2001.

ASIBONG, Emmanuel B. , *Comic Sensibility in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe*, Elms Court, Ilfracombe, Devon, Arthur H. Stockwell Ltd, 1979.

BARISH, Jonas, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press, 1981.

BURNETT, Mark Thornton, ed. , *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays*, London, J. M. Dent, and Vermont, Charles E. Tuttle, Everyman, 1999.

CAMPBELL, Gordon, ed. , *Ben Jonson, The Alchemist and Other Plays*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, Oxford English Drama, Oxford World's Classics, 1995.

CUNNINGHAM, J. S. ed., *Tamburlaine the Great*, Manchester, Manchester University Press/ The John Hopkins University Press, *The Revels Plays*, 1981.

DIEHL, Huston, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theater in Early Modern England*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1997.

EAGLETON, Terry, *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

EVANS, G. Blakemore, ed. , *Elizabethan-Jacobean Drama: a New Mermaid background book*, London, A & C Black, *The New Mermaids*, 1987.

GREENBLATT, Stephen, general editor, *The Norton Shakespeare based on the Oxford Edition*, New York and London, W.W. Norton & Company, 3. 2. 15-18.

HAMOND, Gerald, ed. , *Sir Walter Raleigh-Selected Writings*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1986.

HONAN, Park, *Cristopher Marlowe, Poet & Spy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005.

JONES, Robert, *Knight: The Warrior and World of Chivalry*, Oxford, Osprey Publishing, 2011.

KURIYAMA, Constance Brown, *Hammer or Anvil: Psychological Patterns in Christopher Marlowe's Plays*, New Brunswick, New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 1980.

MacLURE, Millar, ed. , *Critical Marlowe: The Critical Heritage*, London and New York, Routledge, The Critical Heritage Series, 1979.

MAUS, Katherine Eisamen, *Inwardness and Theatre in the English Renaissance*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1995.

MEEHAN, Virginia M. , *Christopher Marlowe – Poet and Playwright: Studies in Poetical Method*, The Hague/Paris, Mouton, 1974.

MORRIS, Brian, ed. , *Christopher Marlowe*, London, Ernest Benn Limited, Mermaid Critical Commentaries, 1968.

MAGNUSSON, A. L. , McGEE, C. E. , eds. , *Elizabethan Theatre XI*, University of Waterloo, Ontario, 1990.

PAVEL, Thomas G. , *The Poetics of Plot- The Case of English Renaissance Drama*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, Theory and History of Literature 18, 1985.

POLLARD, Tanya, ed. , *Shakespeare's Theatre: A Sourcebook*, Oxford and Victoria, Blackwell, 2004.

PROSER, Matthew N. , *The Gift of Fire: Aggression and the Plays of Christopher Marlowe*, New York and Washington, D. C. /Baltimore, Peter Lang, Renaissance and Baroque Studies and Texts, Vol. 12, 1995.

RUSSELL, D. A. , WINTERBOTTOM, M. eds. , *Classical Literary Criticism*, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, The World's Classics, 1989.

SALES, Roger, *Christopher Marlowe*, Basingstoke and London, Macmillan, English Dramatists, 1991.

SHEPHERD, Geoffrey, ed. , *Sir Philip Sidney: An Apology for Poetry or The Defense of Poesy*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1973.

SMITH, Bruce R. , *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England – A Cultural Poetics*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1994.

STEANE, J. B. , *Marlowe: A Critical Study*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1964.

TRUCHET, Sybil, *Le Théâtre Médiéval en Angleterre et son influence sur l'oeuvre de Marlowe, Kyd et Lyly: contribution à l'étude du drame pré-shakespearien*, Lille, Université de Lille III, 1980.

WAITH, Eugene M. , *The Herculean Hero in Marlowe, Chapman, Shakespeare and Dryden*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1962.

WEIL, Judith, *Christopher Marlowe, Merlin's Prophet*, Cambridge and London, Cambridge University Press, 197





# Confronting Nazism Then and Now: Dialectical Theatre and the Problem of Political Violence

David Barnett

York University

## Introduction

The resurgence of the far-right in Germany in recent years, as evidenced by attacks on migrant centres and demonstrations by the anti-Islam Pegida movement, has brought back the spectre of Nazism to German society. A more concrete example of Neo-Nazism came to light in November 2011 when two bank robbers botched a raid. Police tracked the assailants back to a campervan that had been burnt; the two men were found dead inside the vehicle, apparently having shot themselves. This incident of criminality opened the lid on a far greater range of offences. The two men, Uwe Böhnhardt (1977-2011) and Uwe Mundlos (1973-2011) had been members of a terrorist cell, the Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund (National Socialist Underground – NSU), together with Beate Zschäpe (1975 - ). On

hearing of their demise, Zschäpe set fire to their flat, went on the run, and distributed a video publicizing the NSU before handing herself in to the police. At the time of writing, she is standing trial for her part in the terrorist cell. The flat, which contained an archive of sorts, was not completely destroyed and the police found numerous items of evidence that revealed a series of violent acts. The NSU had carried out nine racially motivated murders (of eight Turks and one Greek, 2000-6); one murder of a German policewoman (2007); three documented attempted murders (1999-2004) one of which was a nail-bomb attack in which, remarkably, no-one was killed; and fifteen documented bank robberies (1998-2011).<sup>99</sup> As if these crimes were not shocking enough, subsequent revelations about secret-service infiltration, potential collusion, mass shredding of files and information, police failings to connect the murder victims and to identify the racist motive, and the media's uncritical acceptance of the police's narratives further pointed to systemic issues that

---

<sup>99</sup> All information concerning the NSU here and below is taken from Stefan Aust and Dirk Laabs, *Heimatschutz. Der Staat und die Mordserie des NSU* (Munich: Pantheon, 2014). This weighty volume draws on thousands of pages of official documents, inquiries and transcripts as well as a series of interviews.

cast a shadow over wider German society and its public institutions.

German theatre, however, has not shied away from this issue; on the contrary, there have been a number of plays and projects that have directly engaged with the NSU and its contexts. This essay will investigate an older treatment of Nazism before approaching two contrasting examples of the many works that have responded to the scandal with a view to understanding how they engage with two different categories of violence. The first is the obvious one, the use of physical force with the intention of hurting, damaging or killing. Theatre has had problems with representing this kind of violence since its origins in ancient Greece. Attic tragedy famously let most of its murders, suicides and woundings take place offstage while nonetheless occasionally showing their results on the mechanical *eccyclema*. Rush Rehm notes that while suffering was representable on the classical stage, as in the case of Ajax's suicide in Sophocles's play of the same name, the dominance of reported violence emphasises a 'reliance on the audience's imagination to visualize

and re-animate that violence in their mind's eye'.<sup>100</sup> Jonathan Hart agrees, with respect to the speeches that describe the terrible events, that 'narrative is indispensable and not a poor excuse for dramatic representation'.<sup>101</sup> Commentators seem to avoid the question of why this may happen, but the very act of representing violence may be significant: can performed violence have the same effect as the images that are conjured by the various reports proffered by ancient messengers? Additionally, one might ask whether onstage violence actually diminishes the power of violence. Here theatre acknowledges its inability to reproduce reality, something brought into sharp relief in the past century when compared with cinema or television. Yet this phenomenological difference, in which the one-to-one mapping of representation to reality breaks down, might prove a boon in that theatre, in that its complex systems for depicting the world can do more than simply reproduce surfaces. Its suggestiveness allows the horrors of violence and their aftermath to have effects that potentially exceed the shock of the deeds themselves.

---

<sup>100</sup> Rush Rehm, *Greek Tragic Theatre* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 62.

<sup>101</sup> Jonathan Hart, *Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011), p. 122.

The second category of violence is more subtle. Roland Barthes notes of himself:

he could not get away from that grim notion that true violence is that of the *self-evident*: [...] a tyrant who promulgated preposterous laws would all in all be less violent than the masses that were content to utter *what is self-evident, what follows of itself*: the 'natural' is, in short, *the ultimate outrage*.<sup>102</sup>

This notion suggests an internalized set of relations that convert the strange into the familiar. The process implicitly does damage to the subject because something malign is in play that passes itself off as something natural, inevitable or acceptable. In each case, the potential to resist a potentially disadvantageous process is reduced, and so is the likelihood of bringing about change.

The same analysis can be found in Bertolt Brecht's politicized theatre. His dialectical theatre focused on a critique of naturalized (and universalized) ideology and its effects on the subject. In one note he explicitly addresses the issue:

---

<sup>102</sup> Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, tr. by Richard Howard (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1977), p. 85.

The *self-evident* – i.e. the particular shape that our consciousness has given to experience – dissolves when it is negated by the *V-effect* and transformed into a new form of the *evident*. A process of schematization is thus destroyed.<sup>103</sup>

Brecht acknowledges that the execution of *Verfremdung* – making the familiar strange – is also an act of violence in that a certain way of thinking is actively ‘destroyed’. Yet a process in which violence is combatted by violence is not untypical of dialectical thought. Dialectics, the basis of Brecht’s theatre, is predicated on contradiction and conceptual untidiness of the results of its neutralization. As Fredric Jameson states: a ‘dialectic proceeds by standing outside a specific thought [...] in order to show that the alleged conclusions in fact harbor [sic] the workings of unstable categorical opposition’.<sup>104</sup> The dialectic’s mechanism

---

<sup>103</sup> Bertolt Brecht, ‘Second Appendix to *Buying Brass Theory*’, in Brecht, *Brecht on Performance: Messingkauf and Modelbooks*, ed. by Tom Kuhn, Steve Giles and Marc Silberman (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), p. 122.

<sup>104</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 2009), p. 26.

thus makes it an eminently useful way of approaching apparently self-evident concepts in order to open them up and present the messy conclusions to an audience. It is this kind of analytical drive that can be found in Brecht's own treatment of Nazism in everyday German life.

### Nazism and the 'Gestentafel'

Brecht chose to investigate the political ideas and actions that forced him into exile in 1933 not through a study of Nazi Party leaders (that came later in *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* - 1941), but a series of twenty-nine scenes, *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich* (1938), focused mostly on the everyday lives of German citizens under Nazi rule. In showing a montage of different figures and situations, he was able to bring out not only the contradictions between Nazi ideology and lived experience in the Third Reich, but also a set of values that allowed such a society to function. He was investigating Barthesian violence in order to understand the physical violence that arose from it.

In one, a family suspect that their young son is betraying their stray words to the Hitler Youth, although the question of his culpability is left open for the audience. There is no sense that the child is in some way 'evil' or even malicious; the scene documents an atmosphere of terror that pervades the home and is prevalent beyond it. The failure of the scene to reveal the child's guilt further undermines any sense that the child is wholly responsible if indeed he *has* informed on his parents. Brecht's dialectical theatre is not concerned with essences, but processes that lead to particular behaviours. The scene therefore points to the malign influence of social norms on individual subjects that make the prospect of a child informing on his parents possible. Yet something that is 'normal' in Nazi Germany hopefully strikes the spectator as profoundly strange, hence activating curiosity and reflection. In another scene, SA members bring in the zinc coffin of a worker they have tortured to death. A fellow worker insists that they open to coffin to confirm the dead man's violent end, but his wife insists that they keep the lip shut, for fear that her brother might be next if the deed is discovered and the worker acts on his findings. Yet the refusal to confirm the truth is not understood as cowardice on



the wife's part, but a material fear of the consequences, especially as the worker will only discover what is already known. The scene concludes with the wife's lines: 'We don't need to see him. He won't be forgotten'.<sup>105</sup> Out of defeat comes resolution. The scene approaches two concepts of violence: the murder of the husband and the apparent complicity of the wife in not uncovering the truth. However, the wife helps expose the processes by which the Nazis cover up their murderous regime, the violence of the self-evident, and shows how resistance can be engendered.

All the scenes are written in what one might call an unstylized realism and reveal no poetic artifice as such in the dialogue. The action of each scene, however, signals a tightly wrought series of contradictions that are there to be brought out in performance. Brecht understood the play as a whole as a 'Gestentafel',<sup>106</sup> a 'table of gestures', and this term requires further explication. The scenes of *Fear and Misery* are unconnected: figures do not

---

<sup>105</sup> Brecht, *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*, in Brecht, *Collected Plays*, vol. 4, ed. and introduced by Tom Kuhn and John Willett (London: Methuen, 2003), p. 183.

<sup>106</sup> Journal entry for 15 August 1938, BFA 26, 318. All translations are mine unless otherwise acknowledged..

reappear and there is no plotting that extends beyond any single scene. Yet what links them all is the pervading ideology and practice of Nazism. The gestures exhibited in every scene provide a continuity deliberately refused by the montage form Brecht adopted. The gestures also become the visual articulation of the scenes' contradictions. As a result, the realistic behaviours and opinions on stage were all contextualized by an oppressive system that was developed socially and politically offstage. Yet as John J. and Ann White note: 'what is rather surprising [...] is the sparse role allocated to stage directions in bringing out the *Gestus* in any particular incident'.<sup>107</sup> It is thus the task of the actors and the creative team to bring forth the 'showing': the texts are not prescriptive and thus encourage the company to emphasize the motifs of the play's title in order to create a network of elements that construct the scenes' contradictions. These include the defiance found in the second scene discussed above, as a way of viewing Nazism as a system that both informs the action and against which the figures can struggle.

---

<sup>107</sup> John J. and Ann White, *Bertolt Brecht's 'Fear and Misery of the Third Reich. A German Exile Drama In the Struggle Against Fascism* (Rochester NY: Camden House, 2010), p. 83.

This example of a play that is thoroughly focused on situations and actions points to the possibilities of dialectical drama: it can peel off the veneer of reality and excavate the processes that inform it. The play's focus on dialectical contradiction, that fear and misery are products of oppression rather than the working people's 'natural' disposition in any society, suggests that reality is always unstable and negotiable. Indeed, Brecht's motto to *The Threepenny Lawsuit* was 'Die Widersprüche sind die Hoffnungen!' ('Contradictions are our hope!').<sup>108</sup> This unashamedly optimistic sentiment is located in the category of a contradiction itself. That is, contradictions can be ignored or down-played, yet they persist until change has taken place. Contradictions are thus the motor of change, and a Brechtian theatre's main task is to identify them, lest they are passed over or naturalized. The fragility of reality is the source of hope, and any given situation is at least susceptible to alteration, perhaps for the better.

Yet while Brecht's play offers a model for how Nazism could be represented in the 1930s, society has changed since then, and

---

<sup>108</sup> Brecht, 'The Threepenny Lawsuit', in Brecht, *Bertolt Brecht on Film and Radio*, ed. by Marc Silberman (London: Methuen, 2001), p. 148.

new forms of Nazism have risen from the ashes. One manifestation that shocked Germany in recent years, the exposure of the NSU, meant that Brecht's approach to Nazism as system needed to be rethought and thus represented quite differently on the contemporary stage. The contradictions evident in contemporary German society point to the issues confronting theatre-makers in a different social and historical context. The clearest is that Germany is now a liberal democracy and no longer a totalitarian state. The presence of the spectre of Nazism thus opens a number of avenues for exploration, primarily focused on how an historical catastrophe can find a footing in an enlightened and progressive nation.

I understand the dialectical analysis, taken above, as an appropriate method for approaching complex realities for the following reasons. A dialectical view of social phenomena is anti-essentialist in that it does not impute fixed qualities to anything. Instead, the 'thing-in-itself' is banished and replaced with fluid entities that are contradictory. Dialectical dramaturgy also seeks to tease out the processes that lead to the phenomena encountered on stage, and so a single instance, such as a Neo-Nazi, may be accounted for in a variety of ways including social

position, dominant and subversive ideologies, social proscriptions and sanctions, etc. In short, a theatre that engages with a dialectical understanding of reality, either consciously, as in Brecht's case, or unconsciously can reveal much about the complexes that can bring about the crimes carried out by the NSU. In the following sections, I will consider two examples of theatre productions that confront the issue of Neo-Nazi violence from divergent thematic and dramaturgical perspectives. In doing this, I intend to indicate the ways in which a dialectical theatre might open up the question of violence and interrogate the processes that bring it about.

### Imagining Neo-Nazis Imaging Nazism

Among the many projects brought to life by the NSU affair, it is something of a rarity to find a playwright inventing action and figures without recourse to documentary sources. Lothar Kittstein's *Der weiße Wolf* (The White Wolf) appears to owe something to a Neo-Nazi fanzine of the same name, yet he contends that his decision was poetic and that he only found out

about the fanzine after he had written the play.<sup>109</sup> This detail reflects the construction of the play as a whole: the characters and action remind the audience of the real NSU, yet are not based in their real lives at all. In his play, the White Wolf is the name of a nightclub at which one of the characters works.

The three characters, Tosch, Gräck and Janine are versions of the NSU's two Uwes and Beate Zschäpe.<sup>110</sup> The central location is a rundown house. Tosch arrives in his campervan at the end of the first scene. The vehicle links the fictional life of this trio to the real events in recent German history: it was used by the two Uwes to traverse Germany and commit their crimes. Already, there is a familiarity with and a conscious difference from the real people and events that inspired the play. Over seventeen scenes, the three-way relationships unfold, combining predominantly new dramatic material with a sense that the three had been involved in violent affairs preceding the start of the play.

---

<sup>109</sup> See Lothar Kittstein, in Stephen Wetzel, 'Eine Geisterbeschwörung. Gespräch mit Lothar Kittstein', in *Programme to 'Der weiße Wolf'*, pp. 12-15 (12).

<sup>110</sup> I am grateful to the erstwhile dramaturgical assistant Henrieke Beuthner at the Schauspiel Frankfurt for sending me the unpublished manuscript of *Der weiße Wolf*. All references to and page numbers from the play are taken from this source.

The scenes' texture is disconcerting, as it mixes what appear to be real events unfolding before the audience with a strange, dreamlike quality. Janine, for example, is pregnant, yet Gräck starts to doubt her condition as she seems to be getting thinner over time. Dreams themselves also feature: in the opening scene, Janine recounts a recurring dream in which she has to recite a poem correctly to win a prize in a quiz show. The poem is 'Der alte Barbarossa' ('Old Barbarossa') by Friedrich Rückert. It tells of the sleeping Kaiser Friedrich who is kept underground in his enchanted castle. Written in 1817, the poem looks forward to the day when he will awaken from his slumbers in the post-Napoleonic era so that the as yet divided Germany will take its rightful place among the nations. The meaning for the characters is more closely linked to Nazi dreams of reawakening German greatness, something suppressed by democracy, immigration and capitalism. Literature also figures elsewhere in the play. All three refer to the pulp-fiction *Landser*<sup>111</sup> booklets that tell stories of military glory on the battlefield and the home front. They were

---

<sup>111</sup> A 'Landser' is a private in the army. Neo-Nazis like to see themselves as soldiers fighting for Germany. Landser is also the name of a Neo-Nazi rock band that was banned in the early twenty-first century.

published from 1957 and present nostalgic and positive portrayals of the German *Wehrmacht*. That literary sources inform the characters' ideologies already offers the audience an insight into the constructed nature of identity in the play. Myths of a sleeping Kaiser and rose-tinted stories of war fuel the ideas on stage and create a narrative for the ideas discussed and enacted on stage.

Other factors also inform the characters' thoughts and behaviour: post-industrial decline is linked to the influx of foreigners; motherhood is the goal of all German women; the value of 'Ordnung' ('order', p. 45) is placed above the laissez-faire tenets of democracy. Indeed, language itself is recognized as a means of nationalist self-expression. Gräck and Tosch correct each other's speech in different scenes in a bid to retain a German purity of expression. In short, the characters gain their values through a series of clichés, and the stage world that arises from such a linguistic texture becomes unreal in the sense that the characters may be spouting texts written elsewhere. The use of platitude and formulaic language makes the characters parodies of themselves for the vast majority of the play.



It is only by the final scenes that that the play's fictional underpinnings and unreal texture shed light on the architecture of the play as a whole. The men play a game of Russian roulette. They escape death when they press the trigger yet two shots are heard outside the house. The men leave to search for the source of the gunshots and they are not seen again. Janine delivers the final scene's lines, and in the production in Frankfurt, that premiered on 7 February 2014, she was made to look like Beate Zschäpe in this scene. The implication was that the two shots represented the real Uwes' deaths in the campervan and that the whole piece was a product of Zschäpe's imagination. This is what guarantees the uncanny texture of the play, and so the final revelation acts as a veiled explanation of the previous scenes.

Violence underpins almost all the scenes. The characters hit and manhandle each other, and there is an amount of stage blood in evidence. Nazi concepts, such as 'Blut und Ehre' ('blood and honour', p. 11), a one-time engraving on the knives of the Hitler Youth and now a motto used by Neo-Nazis, appear in the text. There is talk of a murder, casual mentions of beating people up, and the relationships between the three characters are marked by an interplay between easy friendship and equally easy

violence in the form of slaps and hits. However, the violence that precedes the play itself is only ever alluded to. Is there, then, a dialectic at work in the play that helps to approach the question of violence?

On the one hand, identity is presented as at least partially manufactured. The quotation of literary sources and the wholesale reproduction of racist and nationalist cliché suggest that the characters on stage need not be considered 'natural' and thus unchangeable. That said, there is little to suggest a link between far-right ideology and the characters' susceptibility to it. There is also no response to the onstage violence and it is treated as a normal part of the characters' lives. That is, the opportunity to show a dynamic relationship between idea and action has not been grasped, and so there is little to show how change may be possible. In addition, the playwright's conscious decision not to represent the real NSU, but fictionalized characters may also encourage the audience to compare the dramatic with the real, although this is a moot argument. An audience will not be familiar with the real relationships between the members of the NSU, and thus one set of clichés could well be replaced by another.

On the other hand, the action on stage may include social elements, such as the shabby state of society for those in a less privileged position, but the scenes themselves tend to remain at the level of the psychological. Regardless of how their ideology has been forged, there is little to suggest any dynamism in the characters: they remain fixed throughout the play and do not change when their circumstances change. Janine, for example, is at times praised and at others humiliated, yet her personality stays constant throughout. Dialectical characterization insists on a dynamic relationship between situation and behaviour, and this is not simply something found in Brecht's plays. Brecht was able to call Shakespeare 'a great realist' who 'always shovelled a lot of raw material on to the stage, unvarnished representations of things he had seen'.<sup>112</sup> The sense here is that realist playwriting is not in some way concerned with the reproduction of surface reality, but with the treatment of dramatic material. In *Der weiße Wolf*, Kittstein is perhaps a little too interested in the clichés concerning Neo-Nazis to probe the conditions under which they arise and so the dialogue between individual and society does

---

<sup>112</sup> Brecht, *Buying Brass*, in Brecht, *Brecht on Performance*, pp. 11-125 (92).

not take place on stage. The Barthesian violence, that is, the question of why the characters accept the relationships and behaviours performed, is never addressed thematically or dramaturgically, and so the play functions more as a flattened representation of violent characters rather than an investigation of them.

Another reason for the more static, undialectical presentation is to be found in the revelation of the final scene: the previous action seems to emanate from Janine's mind, that is, the play is essentially solipsistic. Such a dramaturgical conceit has a negative impact on the overall reception of the play in that the monolithic presentation of all the action only permits criticism of the mind from which the play has sprung. And as this mind is implicitly linked to Beate Zschäpe, the insights are few, if any. Indeed, the play's premiere met with a decidedly lukewarm response. The direction was roundly criticized for offering production that was performed 'without nuance'.<sup>113</sup> While this associates performative failure with the director, one could similarly contend that the play itself offered little to resist

---

<sup>113</sup> Alexander Jürgs, "'Schön braun! Kleine Nazikuchen'", *Die Welt*, 9 February 2014.

anything but a two-dimensional portrayal. Another reviewer noted that the text doesn't suggest 'why these three people drifted off into a Neo-Nazi body of thought. [...] It can only denounce them as stupid individuals'.<sup>114</sup> A further reviewer captured the undialectical failings of the writing clearly in observing that the play supports the 'lone-wolf hypothesis. There is no mention of the NSU's victims, nothing of the social climate in which the cell could flourish, nothing of the media'.<sup>115</sup> These two comments point to a fundamental weakness: the characterization was primarily psychological, a category in theatre that anchors characters in a set of behaviours that are fixed and static. There was little to invite speculation on the causes of the actions and beliefs. Indeed, the use of clichéd representations meant that the audience could sit back and have their own prejudices regarding the Neo-Nazis confirmed from the comfort of their seats. Politically, this is a significant problem because it sets up the perpetrators as inevitable by-products rather than as dynamic creations of a society. The dramaturgy of

---

<sup>114</sup> Bettina Kneller, 'NSU im harten Schlagschatten', *Main-Echo*, 12 February 2014.

<sup>115</sup> Cornelia Fiedler, 'Bei Nazis unterm Sofa', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 10 February 2014.

the play shut down the link between social cause and effect, and the audience could only gaze upon three misfits on stage that had little connection with the auditorium.

### The Semi-Documentary Challenge

Dramatic treatment of the NSU has more often been based on documentary research than relatively free invention. *Die Lücke. Ein Stück Keupstraße* (The Gap or The Divide. A Piece of Keupstraße) was a project initiated by director Nuran David Calis, a theatre-maker with Turkish, Armenian and Jewish roots, and it premiered on 7 June 2014 at the Schauspiel Köln. Calis responded to the nail-bomb attack in Cologne that took place in Keupstraße, a main thoroughfare with a predominately Turkish population, almost ten years to the day before the opening night. Keupstraße is very close to the theatre space, the Schauspiel Köln's Depot, and thus had a great deal of local resonance. Indeed, before the show started, audience members were invited to take a tour of the locale in order to understand the reality of the situation. Calis had attempted to engage with the incident in

2008, three years before the exposure of the NSU and, more crucially, when the police still believed the bomb was the work of a shady and never-proven Turkish mafia.<sup>116</sup> As a result, he met with resistance and rejection from potential participants because the street's residents were still considered a part and not the victims of a terrorist attack.

By 2014, of course, the situation had very much changed, and Calis was able to engage with local people and develop a project that explored the effects of the attack and relations between Germans and Turks. The role of the real was signalled from the outset in the tour of Keupstraße itself and was reinforced by the three genuine residents who performed against three German actors. Thomas Laue, the dramaturge for the production, told me that the speeches changed every performance.<sup>117</sup> That is, while there was a structure and a sequence of situations that were fixed, the interactions themselves followed a pattern, but were not strictly scripted. This allowed relationships to develop over the course of the run (the production is still in the repertoire at

---

<sup>116</sup> See Calis, in Hartmut Wilmes, 'Keupstraße spielt eine Hauptrolle', *Kölnische Rundschau*, 29 May 2014.

<sup>117</sup> Email from Thomas Laue to me, 11 August 2014.

the time of writing, winter 2016) and for themes to be confronted in different ways. The following analysis considers the piece in terms of its dramaturgical, performative and scenographic features in order to understand its treatment of the two kinds of violence discussed in the introduction.

The use of non-professional performers in professional productions is nothing new in German theatre. The group Rimini Protokoll is perhaps the most well-known exemplar of using what it calls 'Experten des Alltags' ('experts of the everyday'),<sup>118</sup> although the term has been subject to an amount of criticism. When, for example, Bettina Brandl-Risi contends that the amateur performers are 'experts of their own biographies',<sup>119</sup> one might counter that no-one is an expert on their own lives because we simply do not have that kind of distance to ourselves. Instead, one may prefer to view the non-professional performers as

---

<sup>118</sup> The term has become so firmly established with the group that it served as the title to the first collection of scholarly essays on Rimini Protokoll: see Miriam Dreysse and Florian Malzacher (eds.), *Experten des Alltags. Das Theater von Rimini Protokoll* (Berlin: Alexander, 2007).

<sup>119</sup> Bettina Brandl-Risi, 'Moving and Speaking through the Event. Participation and Reenactment [sic] in Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave* and Rimini Protokoll's *Deutschland 2*, *Theater* 40: 3 (2010), pp. 55—65 (59).



offering access to a specialist range of experiences that they continue to negotiate, not as 'experts', but learners. As such, the performances can transform over time. The performers' documentary authenticity is irreplaceable because only they can respond to new material, night by night, and so there is a freshness to each performance that even the most naturalistic actor cannot present, not having lived through the complex experiences of, here, the Keupstraße residents.

The three professional white German actors, on the other hand, are able to contrast themselves with their on-stage counterparts by performing a series of stock positions on the nail-bomb attack itself and on their relationships to the immigrants of the past decades. Their artificiality, their conscious performance of their roles as roles, signals to an audience the relationship between a standard set of views and their effects. For example, one of the actors does not pronounce the name of one of the amateur performers correctly at the start of the show. It is obvious that this is rehearsed and it serves to establish an opening problem in communication. The audience is able to appreciate that certain ideas are being explored, not in a spontaneous way, but in one crafted by a creative team and developed in rehearsal and

performance. This is not to argue, however, that *Die Lücke* represents a clash between the constructed and the naïve: the three Turkish performers are as socialized and as rehearsed as the German actors, and the more they participate in the show, the better versed they will become so that their own responses may lose their initial roughness or spontaneity with every successive iteration. Rather, the amateurs offer a glimpse of the Other to the predominantly German audience, and their lack of professional training and execution marks their performance as different and worthy of curiosity. They embody lived experience and make use of it in a theatrical setting that nonetheless does not pretend that they are acting 'naturally'. Their Otherness also affects the professional actors, whose more staged behaviour appears strange and thus also generates curiosity. As a result, everything that is performed may strike the audience as odd and stimulate the spectators into asking questions of *all* the action on stage. Already, then, the dialectic of Self and Other was clearly articulated.

Another feature of the project's approach, which diverges greatly from *Der weiße Wolf*, is that the NSU does not appear: this is a project that focuses on the victims *and* on a mindset that

enabled them to be blamed for so many years until the truth finally emerged. That is, while documentary footage that showed the build-up and aftermath of the attack was played between the scenes, the production was more focused on Barthes' approach to violence, the naturalization of the astonishing, than on the real physical violence itself, which always underlay the work, but did not need to be represented or re-enacted. The project used a variety of innovative theatrical means to interrogate the apparently self-evident and to expose its constructedness.

At the heart of the production was its scenography. The set consisted of two clinically white platforms that could be moved between scenes; they represented the gap or divide of the project's title. There was a bench on which the actors and performed could sit built into each platform behind which was a white wall onto which images could be projected. The divide between the two communities existed from the start, and the show itself sought to show how it may be bridged while indicating the many barriers to this aim.

The use of the screens exposed some important features about the dialectical relationships on stage. In one configuration, the

Turkish performers were projected as sitting on the German actors' bench. That is, the actors discussing their on-stage compatriots were projecting their own image of them. This visual metaphor was easily readable. The dialectical twist came when the actors were projected onto the screen on the Turkish performers' platform. The close-ups of the actors' faces, expressing puzzlement or accusation, were not the Turkish performers' projection, but the pervasiveness of the German Self in the lives of the Turkish Other. The use of the same technique to achieve different ends addresses the essential asymmetry at the heart of the relationships in question: simply inverting a particular strategy does not lead to an inversion of power relations. This dialectical point that 'the same thing twice is not the same thing' opens up the complexity of the tensions that run through the production. That is, in dialectical thought, what appears to be 'the same thing' is revealed to have its own dynamics and trajectory because the same phenomenon will have a different set of relationships underpinning it, as in the case here.

The performances by both groups were also inflected by a gestural clarity, something associated with Brechtian theatre.

The body becomes a visual index for a particular attitude, in Brechtian parlance, for a *Haltung*. The point of a *Haltung* is that it is a physicalized attitude that is primarily social in origin. The gestures of accusation or incredulity on the part of the German actors, for example, are no longer limited to a personal position, but extend to something larger, the social. This gestic approach to performance allowed *Die Lücke* to explore issues at the level of society rather than at that of the individual. As such, the arguments that were set out transcended their speakers. Here it is worth noting that the German actors did not represent the excesses of xenophobia. On the contrary, they offered themselves as liberals seeking to understand their fellow citizens. Yet as one reviewer noted, ‘an initial encounter takes place and quickly reveals the prejudices under the superficial tolerance as well as a proselytizer’s zeal that is so closely connected to western concepts of freedom’.<sup>120</sup> So, the attempt at engagement on the German side continually hit obstacles, as the Germans’

---

<sup>120</sup> Sascha Westphal, ‘Brücke über den Abgrund’, undated, [http://www.nachtkritik.de/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=9643:die-luecke-nuran-david-calis-schickt-das-publikum-auf-die-koelner-keupstrasse-und-bringt-ein-stueck-von-ihr-auf-die-buehne&catid=84:schauspiel-koeln](http://www.nachtkritik.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9643:die-luecke-nuran-david-calis-schickt-das-publikum-auf-die-koelner-keupstrasse-und-bringt-ein-stueck-von-ihr-auf-die-buehne&catid=84:schauspiel-koeln) [accessed 27 October 2016].

sometimes clichéd attempts at sympathy exposed fears, anxieties and uncertainties that then generated antagonism. Again, dialectical contradictions could be identified within single speaking subjects.

As the show progressed, the piece moved on to the attack itself and the inadequate response from the police and secret agencies. There was thus a telescoping of the project's reach, from the interactions on stage to the institutions that supposedly guarded each citizen's freedoms, but were inflected by attitudes already encountered on stage. Perhaps the most important conclusion to be drawn is that discursive practices and tensions that were given prominence in the production actually help to embed and propagate violence in both its physical and its Barthesian manifestations.

Other features of the set design also served to support the project's themes. A street lamp stood in-between the two platforms, but did not shine light on the situation. A bicycle also stood near the lamp. Here the bicycle represented the means by which the NSU transported the nail-bomb to Keupstraße, yet nobody responded to the object. The bicycle thus stood as an open question: this everyday item asked the audience whether

they would notice it and whether they would act upon the now-provocative object.

This inclusion of the audience was a central element of the project, from the tour of Keupstraße to its role in the show itself. The challenge of the piece was set firmly in the divided stage and the unsuccessful attempts at bridging it. The spectators were offered a situation that was not resolved and were asked to find a solution in their own behaviours and attitudes. One reviewer noted how the project shamed the audience in the face of the collective failures that were presented.<sup>121</sup> However, audience responses cannot be assumed in advance, and another reviewer noted with disappointment how someone sitting next to her nodded his agreement when one of the German actors stated that openness and tolerance were all very well, but that elements of a foreign culture will always remain foreign and thus unapproachable.<sup>122</sup> The differences in response, which is to be expected in any theatrical situation, reflected just how timely and pertinent *Die Lücke* was.

---

<sup>121</sup> See Eleonor Benítez, 'Anspielen gegen die Beschämung', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 8 June 2014.

<sup>122</sup> See Bettina Weber, 'Zusammenstehen', *Die deutsche Bühne*, 10 June 2014.

## Conclusions

The two productions discussed above confront the same phenomenon with remarkably divergent means, and the strengths and weaknesses of both reveal important points about reflections on real violence in the theatre.

First, representing real violence on stage has a limited reach. The violent interactions of the Neo-Nazis in *Der weiße Wolf* did little to challenge the stereotypical image of these people or to contextualize their behaviour. As a result, the spectators were not challenged to find elements of the extremists in their own attitudes and simply to deliver judgements on what can only be described as abhorrent behaviour. The absence of an open dialectic meant that a range of issues were not addressed, primarily concerning the interaction between individual and society. Instead, the characters were located in the underclass where a link between poverty and criminality can go unquestioned. A dynamic between society, ideology, language



and behaviour was notably missing, and so the issue of Barthesian violence failed to emerge at all.

Second, the investigation of Barthesian violence can only begin as a dialectical interrogation because its very nature is rooted in subtle processes of concealment. *Die Lücke* is predicated on contradiction, the engine of the dialectic, and the contradictions are clearly organized for the audience. The title of the project and its scenographic realization, the tension between liberal tolerance and prejudice, and the asymmetrical relationships on stage all point to fissures that help develop the Barthesian violence that underpins the physical violence of the nail-bomb attack. However, a dialectical treatment of human attitudes and behaviour is not concerned with explanation, but articulation. The project thus offered no answers, but sought to ask the right questions.

Third, asking questions and refusing easy solutions transfers the onus of the theatrical event from the stage to the auditorium. However, the dialectical set-up of *Die Lücke* means that the audience is challenged never to settle into a single position. The changing focus and the openness of the issues confronts an audience with different perspectives. As the report from the

audience, quoted above, reveals, there is most definitely an interpretive freedom when such issues are presented, and the stage cannot, and indeed should not, act as arbiter.

The treatment of real violent events does not necessarily require re-enactment or direct stage representation. Indeed, there are potentially ethical implications of such reproductions, and in all the theatrical treatments I have encountered that deal with the NSU and its crimes, none have attempted to re-present the NSU's murders themselves. This may be out of respect to the victims in that re-presentation may have the effect of trivializing or misrepresenting real crime by offering an audience something that is obviously fake. Instead, both projects discussed above have attempted to engage with the consequences of real violence. The question, however, is how they have sought to do this and to what ends. My analysis has indicated that a dialectical approach can organize different tensions that go beyond the individuals who committed the crimes in a bid to grasp the complexity of a Neo-Nazi terrorist cell. The social conditions, not only in terms on one's social position and background, but also the discourses circulating around society, all contribute to the individual's decision to perform atrocities. What is self-evident

to a terrorist is opened to question and exposed in *Die Lücke*, and one translation of its title as 'the gap' is symptomatic of the problems of it seeks to approach: there are gaps that can only be filled by a careful articulation of the multifaceted problems. Only then can Barthesian violence be discussed and, only perhaps, confronted.



# Unbridled illusion

A brief history of Berlin's city centre

Christian von Oppen

Center for Metropolitan Studies

Berlin

Being one of the late capitals in Europe Berlin still struggles with its stain. Driven by self-doubts it refuses its own identity. Each generation seems to take revenge on its predecessors. Again and again with frantic exorcism uncomfortable but meaningful repositories of memory had been and will be destroyed.

Berlin's hour of birth is unknown. No legend ennobles its founding. Instead an insignificant document, which mentioned Berlin in the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century for the first time, proved, it was a small unimportant city among others. In 1415 when the house of Hohenzollern took over Brandenburg the long and painful ascent of Berlin began.<sup>123</sup>

---

<sup>123</sup> Peters, Günter: Kleine Berliner Baugeschichte. Von der Stadtgründung bis zur Bundeshauptstadt. Berlin 1995, p. 26.

With very heated ambitions the young noble family concentrated on its social advancement. After a failed revolt of the people of Berlin triggered by the strict government style, the Hohenzollern made Berlin to their residential town. Now being under direct control Berlin's dream of becoming an autonomous civil town was for the time being over.<sup>124</sup>

In the mid sixteen century the House of Hohenzollern could implement the Reformation in Berlin without notable resistance. It was rather more a strategic decision than a question of faith. The house of Hohenzollern wanted to sneak out of the sphere of control of the Vatican.<sup>125</sup>

This decision - amongst other reasons - finally caused thirty years of war. This brutal civil war of dog-eat-dog devastated most of Brandenburg. Half of Berlin was destroyed and one third of its population got killed.<sup>126</sup>

However, despite this devastating political decision the Hohenzollern stayed in power. To repopulate the city a huge

---

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p. 48-49.

<sup>125</sup> See Müller, Helmut: Schlaglichter der deutschen Geschichte. Bonn 1988, p. 91

<sup>126</sup> Peters, Günter: Kleine Berliner Baugeschichte. Von der Stadtgründung bis zur Bundeshauptstadt. Berlin 1995, p. 52-53.

immigration program was launched. Dutch, French, Austrians and many others transformed Berlin to a cosmopolitan town. Thus, one fifth of its population was French.<sup>127</sup>

Arriving in silk stockings the displaced French were chocked by the backwardness of Berlin. Its streets were unpaved, littered and muddy. Slowly with the influence of the refugees Berlin's cultural life began to flower. Soon the political and cultural elite of Berlin spoke French. And Berlin got an idea of *citoyenneté*.

At the turn of the century in January 1701 the Elector Friedrich crowned himself in Königsberg in the far east of Prussia.<sup>128</sup> A humiliating secret pact with the Emperor of the Holy German Empire made this coronation possible. Despite of the bad conditions and the embarrassing mockery when the secret pact became public, the House of Hohenzollern finally got its royal dignity.

Becoming a capital by a self-coronation outside of Berlin was stigmatic for the city. However the upgrading to a royal seat was forced forward. Monuments, buildings and squares copied the

---

<sup>127</sup> Müller, Helmut: *Schlaglichter der deutschen Geschichte*. Bonn 1988, p. 115

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

artifacts of Paris. The castle and the city had been extended towards the west. It was the beginning of turning away from its old city center, the built memory of Berlin's unglamorous past.<sup>129</sup>



Design for a memorial for Frederic II by Friedrich Gilly, 1797. Even if the memorial was designed for a certain place in Berlin; the rendering did not show one existing building of its time. The existing city was not worthy to show.

Source: Blauert, Elke/Wippermann, Katharina: Neue Baukunst. Berlin um 1800, Berlin 2007, p. 122

A hundred years later when Napoleon Bonaparte victorious marched in Berlin the people enthusiastic welcomed the self-

---

<sup>129</sup> Bodenschatz, Harald/Engstfeld, Hans-Joachim/Seifert, Carsten: Berlin auf der Suche nach dem verlorenen Zentrum. Hamburg 1995, p. 73-74.



crowned Emperor hoping to become part of his new empire. In an excited atmosphere the myth spread that some of the most refined artifacts of Berlin will soon be displayed in Paris.<sup>130</sup> But Napoleon didn't show any of the looted art from Berlin in Paris. The message was clear Prussia was not important and its art not good enough.

In 1849 Austrian and Prussian troops quelled the March Revolution and its dream of a united parliamentary Germany.<sup>131</sup> Instead twenty years later in 1871 under the leadership of Prussia, Germany got partly united. After the defeat of the French army Germany proclaimed its Empire in Versailles. Wilhelm the 1<sup>st</sup> became "by the grace of God" German Emperor and King of Prussia. Berlin, the previously small town, was all of a sudden the capital of the German empire.<sup>132</sup>

But still, it was the *kleindeutsche Lösung*, which made Berlin to the capital of Germany. Another self-coronation was the starting-point of a vast redevelopment to an imperial city. Following the

---

<sup>130</sup> Conrad, Andreas: Schicksalsjahre einer Siegesgöttin. In: Der Tagesspiegel, May 11<sup>th</sup> 2014, p. 13.

<sup>131</sup> Müller, Helmut: Schlaglichter der deutschen Geschichte. Bonn 1988, p. 156.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., p. 182-183.

idea of monumentalization large sections of the city center had been replaced by parvenu architecture. After the death of the Emperor Wilhelm 1<sup>st</sup> in 1888 under the reign of Wilhelm 2<sup>nd</sup> the rebuild of Berlin even accelerated. It was a period of no limits: in growth, in opportunities, in stile etc. With out any point of historical or cultural reference, without a real noble class or old bourgeois families nothing seems to be impossible.<sup>133</sup>

With enthusiasm everybody designed its own history. First of all Wilhelm the 2<sup>nd</sup>, he turned the surrounding of the royal castle into a scenery of historicized eclecticism by building a huge monument for his Grandfather Wilhelm the 1<sup>st</sup>, by rebuilding the cathedral and other buildings in the neighborhood in a pompous neo renaissance style.<sup>134</sup> And while the destruction of the built memory of Berlin's modest past went on a brand new Romanic forum in the new western district had been built.

---

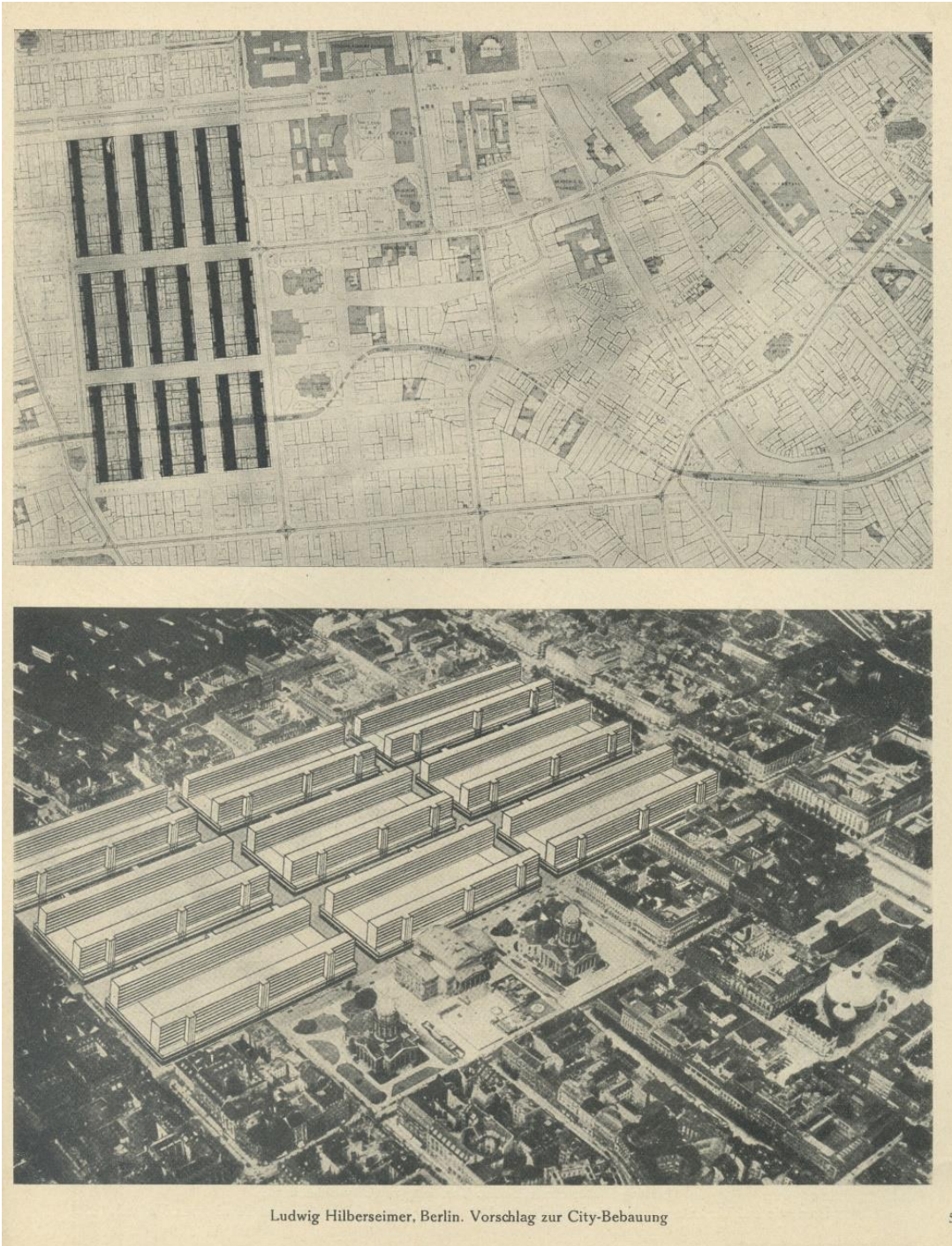
<sup>133</sup> Bodenschatz, Harald/Goebel, Benedikt: Berlin – Stadt ohne Altstadt. In: Nentwig, Franziska/Bartmann, Dominik: Berlins vergessene Mitte. Stadtkern 1840-2010. Bönen 2010, p. 21-25.

<sup>134</sup> Peschken, Goerd: Schloss und Stadt. In: Förderverein für die Ausstellung „Die Bedeutung des Berliner Stadtschlusses für die Mitte Berlins“ (Ed.): Das Schloß? Eine Ausstellung über die Mitte Berlins. Exhibition catalogue. Berlin 1993, p. 34.

This rush for sheer size culminated in WWI, which blasted the whole imperial dream. Being *kleindeutsch* and defeated the restless search for itself seemed to pause for moment. The emperor and his whole political system did resign. The new freedom was mirrored in radical new designs: social models, urban design but even life plans couldn't be radical enough. While the society was excessively searching for new moral and social values, art and architecture rid themselves of all pomp of the imperial time. Bared and honest was its philosophy. However its negative attitude to the urban heritage was the same as before. The radical renewal of the city center was the postulate like at any other time.<sup>135</sup>

---

<sup>135</sup> Bodenschatz, Harald/Engstfeld, Hans-Joachim/Seifert, Carsten: Berlin auf der Suche nach dem verlorenen Zentrum. Hamburg 1995, p. 84-85.



Proposal for a new city-development designed by Ludwig Hilberseimer, 1930. This plan and photo montage of the urban

renewal of Berlin's city center with high rises was the consequent continued development of his scheme for a high rise city published in 1924.

Source: *Moderne Bauformen* 3/1931, p. 57

In spite of the harsh poverty, Berlin's cultural scene seemed to blossom. – But just to tumble. Proclaiming the Third Reich, Germany was a late dictatorship. An atavistic program of constructing a capital worthy to compete with the other great dictatorships the old shameful past had to disappear. The buildings of the imperial time didn't comply with the aspired leading position in Europe; even less did the few testimonies of the Weimar Republic. A never seen before urban clearance started to make space for a brand new city center. Again an old town was needed but not the one, which existed. So the clear-cut demolitions in Berlin's historic center went on.<sup>136</sup> War was a welcomed companion in the dream of a resurrection of the capital.<sup>137</sup>

---

<sup>136</sup> Bodenschatz, Harald: *Berlin Urban Design. A Brief History of a European City.* Berlin 2013 (2010), p. 62-69.

<sup>137</sup> Paulsen, Friedrich: *Die große Aufgabe.* In: *Bauwelt* 3-4/1944, p. 19.

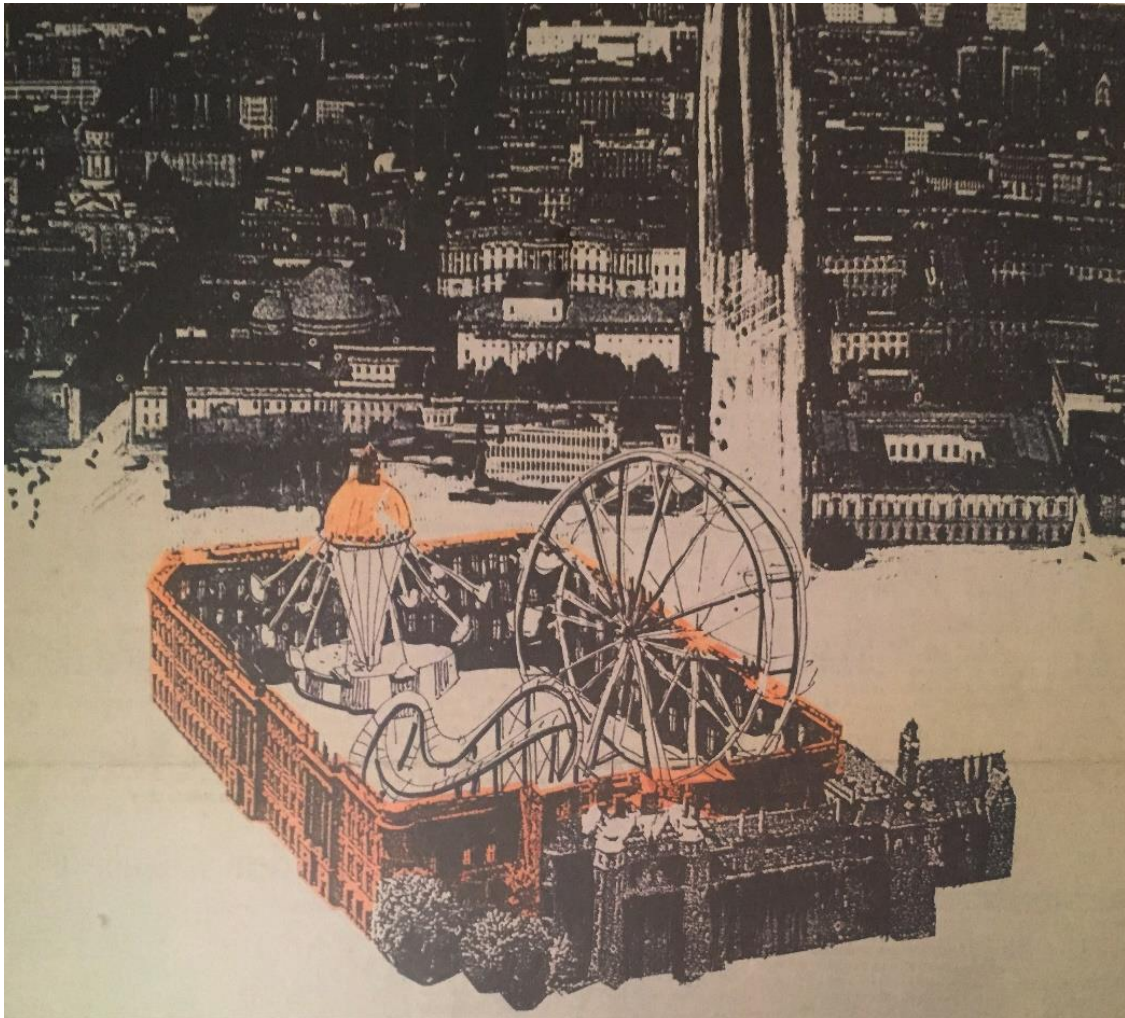
Bombs stopped this nightmare of preponderance. Pounded, raped and divided Berlin was reinventing itself again. Blowing up its past, bursting the buildings which survived the wary bloodlust, a new socialistic heartbeat tried to revitalize the city center. Berlin metamorphosed in a car-oriented city without cars.<sup>138</sup> The old city castle had been blown up without an idea of a compensation.<sup>139</sup> At the end a compromise of overburden leftovers from the imperial time and awkward urban components defined Berlin's center when *Friedensstaat* collapsed. Again, the new society ripped of Berlin's artificial heart to reinvent history. First the wall, than statutes were pulled down. The deconstruction of the socialistic urban heritage went on. Carefully house-by-house the incommode cenotaphs of Germany's second dictatorship disappeared. Instead new

---

<sup>138</sup> Bodenschatz, Harald/Goebel, Benedikt: Berlin – Stadt ohne Altstadt. In: Nentwig, Franziska/Bartmann, Dominik: Berlins vergessene Mitte. Stadtkern 1840-2010. Bönen 2010, p. 21-25.

<sup>139</sup> Bernau, Nikolaus: Der Ort des Souveräns. In: Förderverein für die Ausstellung „Die Bedeutung des Berliner Stadtschlusses für die Mitte Berlins“ (Ed.): Das Schloß? Eine Ausstellung über die Mitte Berlins. Exhibition catalogue. Berlin 1993, p. 75-77.

memorials were built. Trying to mask this cascade of violence the rebuilding of the royal castle began.<sup>140</sup>



Sketch of a temporary reconstruction of Berlin's city castle by Hilde Léon and Konrad Wohlhage, 1996. This ironic statement reflects the debate on the future of Berlin's city few years after

---

<sup>140</sup> Flierl, Thomas/Parzinger, Hermann: Humboldt Forum. The Project. The Point of Departure. In: Flier, Thomas/Parzinger, Hermann (Ed.): Humboldt Forum Berlin. Berlin 2009, p. 10-11.

the fall of the Berlin Wall. The architectural heritage of the German Democratic Republic had to make room for a new city center, whose image was still unclear.

Source: Der Tagesspiegel, September 28<sup>th</sup> 1996, p. 14

The idea of catharsis by brutal violence lives on. It seems Berlin can't escape its fate, of fighting against its demon of the past. The apparent vacuum caused by frictions in history and space seem to be the magnet which attracts many young people from all over the world.



# La France est morte vive la France

*Cátia Carvalho*

*Cristina Marinho*

*Université de Porto*

*Day once dawned*<sup>141</sup>



*La Belle Personne* met en abyme le *theatrum mundi* que *La Princesse de Clèves* de Madame de Lafayette aurait librement inspiré à Christophe Honoré en 2008; les cours du roi, du lycée, dont Molière dégagerait les sens de la vie et de la mort, du crépuscule et du baiser, rassembleraient l' espèce humaine hors

---

141

<https://youtu.be/Q2JjPDz3EE>

Nick Drake, *Fom the morning*

tout temps, pourtant à l'insu d'une existence trop concrète, sur un plateau éthéré de transition et de croissance. Moins privilégié que l'impassible Lycée Henri IV, fier de ne pas se remettre en question afin de régner, presque à côté du silence de Louis le Grand, notre monde des grands en évolution à l'intérieur de l'instabilité naturelle de l'enfance à peine quittée se représenterait, donc, dans la conscience de la tension entre notre vocation éternelle et la chute à laquelle personne ne saurait échapper avec joie. Trop littéraires pour se

*And it was beautiful*

vouloir superbes et inaltérables, au-delà de la science raide qui résout toujours toute guerre de religion, ces simples acteurs, par nature à se dépasser eux-mêmes, pour avoir absolument hérité le soleil, semblent regretter, dès leur sérieuse naissance, l'impossible avenir dans ce qu'ils préféreraient ne pas avoir à vivre afin de se bâtir une vie. Endeuillée, Junie s'avère la crise, celle de la perte, celle d'une mère, à l'origine de sa fuite, après une comédie aux larmes, dont l'engagement sans force et l'aventure dépourvue l'invitent à la contemplation: son nom s'

inscrit dans la souffrance du partage inévitable selon les pulsions de tous envers tous, une sorte d' expérimentation de l' avenir plus juste que l' erreur diminuerait jusqu' à ce qu' on grandisse hors les murs défrichant les vraies routes à peine entrevues. La quasi belle mademoiselle serait blasée, un corps inanimé dans son effort de tendresse sans issue, sa faute et son veuvage l'auraient perdue, celle, que Néron voudra et que Britannicus épouserait, échappe volontiers à la routine dont l' Italie éveille les sens que des poisons auront à parfumer sans cesser d'être létaux et sincères. La décomposition de la vie dans des disciplines qui contiendraient les orientations du monde constituerait le fragment d' existence accordé à chaque être, dans un cadre social de coïncidence vers la possibilité de partage d' un destin. Renfermés sur ces murs de ce qui nous est accordé, en lui-même, en partie, une conséquence ou même un choix, tous se meuvent sous l' autorité d' un canon plus ou moins vraiment remis en question et dans la conscience tacite, réinterprétée diversément, du privilège consentant ces jeux joués souvent en dilettant en vue de la réinvention. Brisés et par l' impunité infantine, hier la sienne, au fond vivant la veille encore au sein de l' invention, ultra-consciente et non sans faute comprise, et

par la coulée des nouveaux jours qui en découlent à peine sous un signe total de douleur et de plaisir et d' épreuves, ils traînent, s' adaptent selon la proportion de chaque expérience, d' après le talent, la grâce de chaque individu : l' expérimentation s' avèrerait l' antipode de l' excentricité, pile et face dont le métal, une lame de couteau, fondrait le danger, qui prévaut, du double, faute d' unité, le visage de Dieu. La première interpréterait, donc, un éventail de simple grossièreté humaine, finalement l' échec de la deuxième, dans le flou de la contamination mutuelle que seules l' exception ou la résurrection dévoileraient. Dans l' art ou la mort résiderait la cime, par leur intensité, de la révélation du sens vital (aussi critique) à suivre comme

*A day once dawned from the ground*

un art français de vivre que la fugacité des amours ne saurait épuiser dans le reniement effervescent de la responsabilité humaine pour la profondeur de chaque geste meurtrier, rédempteur envers l' autre qui nous bâtit et nous reflète. Chaque cours, chaque sentence de toute matière s' annulerait par l' incapacité tacite de

l' émetteur à illustrer l' impossible consistance de chacune de nos vies, à se faire respecter par une jeunesse, débussolée et avide de beauté, qui le giffle par le sarcasme d' une promiscuité non seulement reproduite mais aussi accrue jusqu' au sacrifice d' une simple bête se mourant dans la toile d' araignée universelle dont personne ne réussirait à être exclu. La frivolité, donc, de toute perte, dont le suicide même pas pleuré ne saurait cacher l' assassin glacial, la contingence de la survie quotidienne issue de la faiblesse compréhensible de nos petits plaisirs, des lacunes ainsi naturellement comblées, l' égoïsme général mêlant les pas vulnérables à la couardise qui ne dénoncera pas le beau nihilisme se perdent dans l' indifférence, s' anéantissent dans une tristesse majestueuse. Tous les garçons et les filles de mon âge, l' âge de plus en plus unique et prolongé dans l' impunité du calcul se confondant avec l' instinct, mériteraient de savoir reconnaître la tradition de la croix reniée par leurs maîtres, de la croix toujours passée sous silence, mais que tout petit signe à percevoir d' adorable humanité éveillerait : la dame vieillissant faute de baisers les comblant de tendresse, les jeunes amoureux prometteurs dans l' espace, le miroir l' un de l' autre, la vieille chanson dont la fillette sans innocence est nostalgique sans

pouvoir danser, l'attente dans l'espoir de la mère travailleuse et absente dans les rues de Paris contenant les regrets de sa fille, le travail pur des pommes de terre que l'énergie du jeune cuisinier affirme en tant que valeur quotidienne de l'éternité, un lit intact dans une impossible chambre d'hôtel de plus, du lin blanc que le sang a ici invisiblement souillé précédant le départ, l'écoute de l'annonce faite à l'ange dérouté, sans ailes, la souffrance, des adieux dans la solitude des itinéraires divergents dans la nuit, le dos tourné au petit ours, aux ombres jadis des demoiselles printanières, et la dignité sans larmes du pèlerinage nécessaire dont on ne se savait pas capable. Il s'initierait par la Littérature qui se passerait consciemment de l'exposition magistrale que sa musique rendrait nettement superflue et dont toute explication efficace constituerait un cynisme de plus dans le pêché endurci. Sa nature romaine renfermerait l'unité des croyants dans

*Then the night she fell*

la séduisance de la poésie et du chant virtuoses confondus nous soumettant au silence grave, mâle, de la découverte, à l'émotion incontrôlée, féminine, d'un deuil semant l'apprentissage

maternel d'un héritage que des changements triviaux n'exprimeraient point. Elle nous choisira ou nous rejettera sur sa route, dans l'atmosphère automatique des insensibles, par ses voix. Ceux qu'elle blessera seront ses élus, les esprits forts, et ils témoigneront de la portée de sa civilisation, elle ne pourra plus n'être qu'une discipline de plus que l'on touche même en spécialiste, elle révélera nos vies en mouvement par sa splendeur. Ceux qui mourront, et que nous avons sacrifiés, ne sauraient point accueillir la froideur de notre décadence que les faibles personnes subiront tout en aspirant à l'amour qu'ils croient avoir pourtant ainsi vécu. *Comme la pluie* expliciterait les limites moyennes dans ce qui aurait été littéraire s'il avait le talent de l'être, la petite tragédie sans forces de la pluie et du beau temps, de la caricature que l'on ne saurait pas refuser, qui nous effacera et dont on ne se souviendra pas, contiendrait la conscience de ce qu'elle n'est douloureusement pas, mais que la contemplation de son propre chagrin ne permettrait point de progresser ne serait-ce que vers *l'orage, une bagarre, un mélo, le noir. Toutes ces nuits à venir* nous effrayant tant qu'on attendra la nuit qui ne tombe toujours pas seraient la délivrance que l'on ne se permettrait pas d'anticiper car il fallait vivre toujours *quand on*

*ne s' aime plus, /.../ Comme le sable glisse, /.../ Mais c' est trop demander hélas, /.../ Ces étoiles comme au temps de croire/ Tout un ciel en deuil de nous.* Nous avons perdu la sainte pauvreté de tout perdre dans la contemplation simple de la beauté, l' esthésie étant elle-même douleur, mais c' est l' amour de l' autre et non de soi qui nous libérera; il ne sera point question, comme aujourd' hui, d'affreusement traverser la course, la vieille dame chastement dansera sur le vide généreux de son existence, sous la réflexion juvénile de ce qu' elle aurait pu être si elle savait l' être, *Elle était si jolie/ Que je n' osais l' aimer.* Ces deux pôles quasi littéraires divulguent l' action majeure dont ils constituent un état préparatoire des foules, le premier obéirait au principe de la gravité afin de s' ensevelir, le deuxième convertirait la fracture en respect de la tension précieuse que tout bonheur renferme sans pouvoir savoir l' avoir ainsi possédé, *Je ne l' oublierais jamais. Elle était trop jolie /.../ Elle fuyait ravie et l' aimer toute une vie, Tu ne pourras jamais promettre l' humble audace humaine de noblement aimer éternellement ce*

*And the air was beautiful*



que faute de noblesse l' on perd, *Oui mais elle est partie, / C' est bête mais c' est vrai*, car l' on a devant soi la femme d' Aragon, celle qui est l' avenir de l' homme qu' il, presque homme, en larmes, n' a pas osé vivre, *sa robe tourbillonne*, l' automne. La retraite serait, par conséquent, le parfait accomplissement, par paradoxe, de tout ce qu' on a pu vivre et que l' on vit toujours par le rayonnement de l' individuel vers tout et toute personne ; son choix ou son imposition, car la direction ne serait pas claire à un moment instable, constitueraient en eux-mêmes le salut dont la violence nous inflige l' examen nécessaire, perpétuel, l' apparent piétinement, jusqu' à ce que la beauté contemplée, l' action intérieure, puisse informer l' intervention, si l' on est appelé à blesser, pile et face de l' agression mondaine. Elle s' inscrit dans une proportion variable, personnelle du temps, peut être la disparition effaçant le sujet dans une existence discrète, reconnaît dans l' autre la possibilité de communication ou bien sa tragédie commune dont la parole serait au cœur. Cette habitation dans la transparence de *le vierge, le vivace et le bel* que nos jours déchirent sur *ce lac dur oublié hanté, un coup d' aile ivre des vols qui n'ont pas fui*, se bâtit sur le gel, condition fusionnelle, sorte de genèse de chacun jouant chaque réussite ou chaque

échec de synthèse pour n' avoir pas chanté la région où vivre. Elle, l' espace infligé, risque de se renfermer dans l' horreur du vol où le plumage est pris si le cygne magnifique d' autrefois ne dépasse pas le stérile hiver du mépris fondant l' exil du fantôme qui sans espoir, l' ennui resplendissant, se délivre par son pur éclat. Son silence contient le travail sur la disproportion de tout dialogue possible des adieux et de leur séparation concrète, le roman ne l' étant plus, pour en quoi faire ? dans cette blanche agonie où l' on peut simplement rester, le sens éclaté, pure perte, un jour pure rencontre ? du même et non de personne. La foule que nos mains \_ et toute main est la nôtre \_ ont sacrifiée énerve l' insuffisance de tout geste généreux auquel s' attaquent les circonstances du souvenir giflant notre visage, de la laideur générale l' anéantissant par la force gratuite, totalitaire de l' envie que seule la conscience, dans leur reconnaissance mutuelle, des élus pourra briser, acte de pure hérésie, par l' affreuse peur de l' humilité de toute tentative déchue érigeant un avenir. Il s' agirait d' un vol, le dénominateur commun du mouvement intégral, restituant la première vérité que

*The night she fell all around*

notre passé à peine dévoilait et dont rêve la détresse encore souillée épurant tout nouvel instant, tout petit pas quotidien et ferme jusqu' à notre incrédulité à résoudre : comment ne quitterait-on pas la larmoyante erreur que l' on doit quitter, son juste droit de réclamer le partenariat où nous ne saurions plus être avec grâce ? L' effort vertical de la foi, lorsque rien ne pullulle encore, ses règlements, sa trahison, presque sensible, quasi légitime, de ce qui simplement deviendra, la rosée du matin finalement partagé, et nous ne sommes toujours pas encore là, est le temps lui-même. Le courage, non confondu, nous manquerait-il d' *Ogni piacer piu grato* voir rigoureusement accompli sur terre, si le fantôme peut annuler la détermination, si la malice reste l' ombre du rite, la distance ne pouvant pas être l' origine ? La séparation semble se fonder sur l' asymétrie de deux parcours humainement inconciliables vers la rédemption ; la jeune femme, apparemment endurcie dans le pêché, glaciale dans sa façon de ne pas aimer ou de ne pas pouvoir aimer, cachant, honteuse, son visage face à la victime, semble se plonger dans sa conscience de la pauvreté du couple amoureux dont l' amour serait, selon elle, et fragile et éphémère. Véritable

deuxième chute, celle que la perte d' une mère aurait engendrée, cette déroute se terminerait sur un départ, la rupture que Nemours connaîtrait par une intensité prometteuse et très limitée, celle d' un vagabondage à Paris se perdant dans le spleen net d' une intimité qui reviendra sur une autre tension, l' attente annonçant son départ à lui. Ainsi devront-ils, plus ou moins sereins, se rendre à la solitude parmi des gens solitaires, sous la suggestion poignante et élégiaque de Boris Pasternak, des professeurs délaissés, une veuve jouant sur sa rayonnante prévaute maternelle, des mal aimés toujours quittant, l' objet remplacé que nous sommes tous dans la détresse d' y avoir été pour ne pas être gardé. Il s' agit inéluctablement d' une faible foule qui laisse deviner la platitude des figurants interprétant la mouvance d' une condition ou vulgaire (et on ne peut plus vulgaire par sa sociabilité, ses messages, c' est-à-dire des malentendus vrais) ou tragique qui leur a été accordée et dont la relation à l' art serait l' éclaircissement. Au fond, l' ironie synthétique de Bach, *Le Clavier Bien Tempéré* sur la mort, faute d' équilibre, sa mélodie constamment reprise dans l' antithèse du maître anglais, humble et isolé dans sa compassion authentique

qu' une belle compassion de soi, héroïque, ne saurait côtoyer face à l' impossibilité de l' autre

*So look see the days*

qui échoue. Sa santé triste irait de pair avec la survie du talent numérique se suffisant, non comme la danse nostalgique dans le café, au-delà de la médiocrité générale que toute petite fracture, la vente du pardon par l' Église, habiteraient, elle ne partagerait pourtant pas la fraîcheur du jeune cuisinier, l' allégresse unique de son sacrifice dans le plaisir, le regard parfait des jeunes amants purs auquel le cynisme, pauvre et doux, de Chiara Mastroiani ne saurait nuire. Le dialogue avec Manoel de Oliveira suggérerait cette femme mûre et plus libérée, vaguement célibataire et veuve, fuyante aussi dans sa quasi méchanceté complice. Il rejoindrait son fatalisme hors ses valeurs éternelles de la fidélité, outre l' infini juvénile, la parfaite persistance mutuelle des gens heureux qui n' auront pas d' histoire, le sacré consentement, la vertue très vieille sans instinct du couple d' enfants amoureux. Sa lecture de Madame de Lafayette semble, par contre, se réduire aux gens communs, comme nous tous,

dans le privilège stérile de leur malheur, la laideur d' un mari couvant l' épouse noyée dans sa propre faute sans que l' on atteigne la portée de l' intelligence dans la vie. Son honnête Chiara reste figée et amère, comme il faut, elle n' a pas osé coucher avec son fiancé certainement banal, elle a à peine un peu plus que souri, presque sans éclat, et elle a bien fait, car le duc le mériterait moins. La Mastroiani de Christophe Honoré peut être moins décalée, mais ses jeans rejoignent encore le mal sans le malaise ambitieux du cinéaste portugais qui l' efface afin de sauver la femme, ne serait-ce que modestement, si elle n' a pas mérité d' aimer, si elle ne l' a pas su, à choisir entre être à tout prix l' avenir de l' homme ou rien du tout dans le néant immense ou sûrement mineur. Son mouvement oblique semblant correspondre au songe intermédiaire post meurtre à Junie, Manoel Oliveira garde l' exigence universelle de la décence incontournable dont l' épouse s' avère le sacrifice inconditionnel. Son ancienne remise en question parisienne jugerait avec cruauté sainte la liberté sans proportion réfléchie, sa présomption de laïcité qui raterait la discipline épicurienne sans parvenir à refouler le Christ, passé sous silence. Sa longue existence lui a permis de dépasser l' effervescence de toute licence, le haut prix

des révolutions, le crépuscule de l' Occident que l' hypocrisie d' antan n' aurait pu sauvegarder, que les audaces n' ont pas promus, et il est heureux de condamner l' avenir et il est malheureux de l' avoir condamné. Sa respiration maritime serait toutefois la

*The endless coloured days*

vraie, aussi politiquement incorrecte soit-elle, mâle et repentis ?, elle décélérerait notre soumission à une discipline injuste ne tolérant que l' échappatoire à travers l' artefact du bonheur que l' art banal procure. Sans prendre à corps le libre arbitre, sans cesser, toutefois, de contempler ses sombres frontières, la destinée littéraire de *La Princesse de Clèves* serait notre limite invariable, mon frère, mon semblable universel, à laquelle nous n' ajouterions que des détails insignifiants, d' autant plus que l' époque printanière est elle-même par nature menacée. Sans accéder à ce qu' on aime, toujours puisque l' amour n' y est pas, sans aimer ce qu' on a, l' aimant davantage qu' on ne le croyait, toujours sans être suffisamment aimé, nous restons les prisonniers du concept et non du préjugé, aussi de leurs chagrins

à la fois. Néanmoins, le délicat scepticisme d' Honoré sur la sagesse, débouchant sur, quasi par paradoxe, son renforcement, rejoint la sagesse brutale, honnête du vieux maître lusitanien qui en souffre : il n' y a qu' un sens, il est lui-même l' humilité de rester, malgré nous, et sa raison n' y serait que le plus misérable règne par simple fidélité, une clivoyance unique. Si notre intelligence l' atteint, se dépassant elle-même dans sa misère, l' infidélité nous serait accordée comme un droit majeur afin, toutefois, de réaliser une rigueur majeure de l' amour, tellement fidèle que chaque couple robuste, transgresseur serait la vérité sans pile et face, comme le couple d' enfants oubliant cette sophistication qui s' embrasse. Si Manoel d' Oliveira semble nous renfermer, par une admirable intuition d' autre chose supérieure, dans la tradition, garantie intemporellement en partie par la stupidité nécessaire, l' épouse raide, le mari torturé, un autre insuffisant, qui resteront, Honoré semble s' efforcer de développer la chose d' Oliveira, tout en risquant d' être pris par ce pauvre visage portugais, vers une future résolution de la solitude, encore tristement irrésolue par *La Belle Personne*, celle d' une anthropologie inouïe : le génie de deux princes pauvres qui oseront ne pas rester revêt d' un tel blanc dans la symétrie



à venir. Si la Princesse du 17<sup>e</sup>, celle de Manoel, reste la chaste dame des bonnes familles, la cible de leur éducation éternelle, une sorte de moyenne, non géniale, donc, indispensable à la permanence géniale en elle-même, grâce à la triste princesse, sur laquelle vie et mort de tout est axé, Junie, par contre, risque de secondariser le jeu princier. La future épouse qui ne le sera

*And go play the game that you learnt*

probablement pas a gaspillé sa chasteté, mais elle ne cesserait pas d' être l' avenir de l' homme pour l' avoir perdue, elle renonce, faute de génie, à la symétrie qui ne se résoudra pas dans le présent, tandis que le jeune italien se maîtrise et reste et revient pour la prendre, si beau, dans ses bras qui seront vides. Junie ne serait plus (au moins) la raide aristocrate qui garde, elle est, sans être belle et sans pouvoir l' être , la conséquence de nos démagogies féministes, des laïcités, du salut qui s' achète comme une indulgence rendant toute perte vitale à nous élever l' indigente sentence de mort. Si l' épouse classique échoue le mariage heureux, auquel le simple consentement théologique du matrimoine ne suffirait pas, faute de l' évolution dont l' on peut

avoir besoin, elle ne se perdra pas pour autant que dans les bras de la lumière, sachant précisément rejeter la menace de la facilité afin de vivre la justice possible d' un dévouement souillé par l' inévitable chagrin infligé et l' impossible réciprocité. Notre lycéenne s' est prématurément condamnée et condamne toute jeunesse, car elle vivra sous son propre joug, celui de de s' être perdue sans critère, sans l' assumer que pour s' enfuir, la caricature de la retraite princière, au moins dans la conscience de ne plus se surestimer, mais afin d' apparemment trop mettre en valeur sa pauvre mauvaise conscience sans exiger d' elle-même le vol. Cette jeune femme commune se reflétera dans son insurmontable amour propre qui renferme *a principio* chaque couple dans le caléidoscope du remplacement continuél sans éternité, alors que la souffrance du jeune italien semble offrir l' évidence de la transformation qui le rendrait capable, les deux étant et à des stades divergents et des personnes divergentes. Cette révélation découlerait du décalage graduellement net entre le raffinement en puissance de Nemours qui se déploie et la belle personne actuelle dont le corps fané charitablement offert sur glace n' irait de pair qu' avec l' aumône du bouquin sur Otto, l' ours annonçant qu' il l' est, à qui la pluie manquerait parfois. Si

le mâle essuie fermement sa vie, éloigne sans hésitation les victimes dont il reste la cible sacrifiée, s' agite dans un silence concentré et ému dégageant sa beauté jusqu' à la maladie de sa persistance et de sa dignité, elle rêverait de la constance qu' elle ne saurait nourrir afin de disparaître sans éclat. Le duc se découvrirait dans la protection paternelle de ses étudiants affligés par l' erreur et sa menace et elle s' avèrerait une

*From the morning*

soudaine émergence de maturité personnelle que le dépassement, très réfléchi, quasi impossible du mode frivole et dégradant de sa vie compléterait. Cette princesse serait à la fois plus et moins bonne que lui, car le fait qu' elle, plus jeune, souffre tant et constitue sa lumière la promet secrètement, bien qu' elle semble ne pas parvenir à réaliser cette rencontre, enfin, dans le sens de la réussir ou de la perdre. Junie jouerait, donc, sur des proportions déterminantes, son côté exigeant une sévérité face au crime perpétré, à sa très humble conscience, une dérision continue, qui la renverrait aussi dans le sens de repropotionner la retraite de Dom Juan, peut-être plus léger et plus courageux

dans son action positive finalement freinée et tendue. Dans la pratique, ils sont seuls, articulés dans ce jeu, leur existence risquant d' être l' attente, le jeu lui-même. Il tendrait, il faut l' espérer, à la vie, à son sens original, reinterprété pourtant, puisque l' on incarnerait la joie du mariage, le rituel génuin et intact, sans se permettre de pousser vers les marges ceux dont la nature encore plus déchue serait, par notre vertue présumée et vraie, l' objet de viol, les vieux lubriques et les putes éternelles, l' existence, les, nous condamnant à jamais sur terre. Le couple annulerait, donc, l' individualisme tragique de la personne, notre temps, se renfermant sur lui-même pour le meilleur ( néanmoins, sans réussir à s' en libérer) et pour le pire , prolongé et sec, qui éteint la voie efficace du salut. À moins qu' ils ne s' épanouissent, braves et sans regret, au-delà de l' élu de notre cœur, les codes stricts des belles personnes de la cour d' Henri II donnent lieu plutôt à la femme d' aujourd' hui piétinant sur la déchéance de la femme libérée<sup>142</sup>, sur une soi disante complexité qui l' inhibe de vivre pour aimer.

---

<sup>142</sup> <https://youtu.be/DMhqKe5IKY4>

Le groupe strasbourgeois, *Cookie Dingler*, a, en 1984, produit *Femme libérée* (chanson écrite par *Jöelle Kopf* et *Christian Dingler*) qui rendrait compte de l' irrésolution de notre condition féminine : une femme cachant sa soidisante

*And now we rise*

Christophe Honoré a beau rejeter la responsabilité de l'adaptation romanesque dans le sens d'assumer « *une proposition de lecture du roman* » à partir de la mémoire de sa lecture, hors la correspondance recherchée de l'époque actuelle. Le cinéaste semble revendiquer ce sens tout à fait personnel « *des romans qui infusent les films* »<sup>143</sup>

---

superficialité, se nourrissant de clichés de prépondérance ne serait pas pour autant plus solide et plus aimée, « *Ne la laisse pas tomber/ Elle est si fragile* ». Bien qu'elle puisse dépasser les cadres traditionnels d'organisation sociale, le préjugé et le concept, inextricables, s'imposeraient, « (...) *Qui ne l'aimera pas plus loin que l'aurore/ Mais elle s'en fout elle s'éclate quand même* » et elle se découvrirait d'autant plus vulnérable puisqu'au fond elle n'a rien eu, « *Sa première ride lui fait du souci/.../elle a des avis de tout (...)* »

[https://youtu.be/E8fl8 -d hY](https://youtu.be/E8fl8-d_hY)

Les années 80, en France, décèlent les symptômes de la rupture contemporaine. Dans *Désirée*, une création de 1983, Gilbert Bécaud dénonce la malignité des émancipations fausses ou possibles, « *Tu es violence, cadence et décadence* », fondées sur le paradoxe froid, réciproque, « *Comme un ciel sans étoile* » /.../ « *T'as le spleen de ta génération* », très ancré sur le sexe facile et malheureux, « *Je n'ai rien demandé* » /.../ « *Tu pars, tu reviens /.../ On fait l'amour trop tôt, pas bien, mécanique* », débouchant sur la destruction de la femme : angoissée, inhumaine et faible :

« *Tu as l'angoisse de tout, de toi, de l'avenir  
Tu caches ta peur derrière ton rire  
Oui tu es belle comme le désir  
Désirée  
Comme je t'aimerais  
Si tu savais pleurer.* »

<sup>143</sup> <http://cinemalefrance.com/fiches/Bellepersonne.pdf>

afin de créer la typologie du cinéaste-écrivain qui lit, tout en rejetant la simple idée de transposition romanesque qui convertirait les cinéastes en lecteurs. Il appartiendrait au cinéma de lire le grand livre du monde et, au-delà de la lecture nouvelle sur la jeunesse la plus récente, dans un épuisant cadre sociologique, puisé aux sources classiques, il s'avérerait l'eau qui coule dégagée sur une toile, dans un mouvement antique de la conscience : jeunesse, amour, Paris. Ces distinctions semblent, toutefois, n'opérer qu'une gymnastique vaine de distinction

---

« Un roman au cinéma, ça n'existe pas. Ce qui existe, c'est un cinéaste qui a lu. Et pour les cinéastes-écrivains, la possibilité d'une lecture même d'un film. Car les cinéastes-écrivains détiennent ce secret que le cinéma c'est, possiblement et aussi, autre chose qu'une nouvelle écriture. Le cinéma est une lecture. Voilà une idée qui n'est pas exactement la même idée que les bons cinéastes sont des lecteurs. Je me méfie du côté sociologique des films, de l'idéologie qu'ils véhiculent. Pour moi, **La belle personne** n'est pas un film destiné à démontrer quoi que ce soit sur la jeunesse d'aujourd'hui mais porté par ce qu'il y a d'éternel dans la jeunesse. (...) »

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/06/movies/06bell.html>

A.O.Scott considère que « **La Princesse de Clèves**, Madame de Lafayette's 1678 novel of forbidden passions among the aristocracy, long a staple of high school French classes, has been adapted, loosely but conscientiously, into **La Belle Personne**, a film about present-day French high school students » suivant une tradition de transposition filmique des classiques sur l'adolescence. **New York Times** croit, d'une part, que Nemours, « an updated specimen of an old literary archetype », se réduit au « serial seducer tripped up by the force of his own irresponsible passion /.../and his messy life seems to trouble him more as a matter of logistics than of conscience in feeling ». D'autre part, Scott fonde « the magnetic attraction between Junie and Nemours » sur « the beautifully matched faces of the actors who portray them » et ils seraient tous les deux l'incarnation godardienne « of the twitchy young intellectuals ». Et encore...

entre les arts dont *the anxiety of influence* serait encore prisonnière sans savoir atteindre l'unité : vivre comme un art. *La Princesse de Clèves* de Madame de Lafayette est où l'on ne

*And we are everywhere*

voudrait pas qu'elle soit, outre l'intentionnalité d'ailleurs indéfinissable, car l'éveil de chaque intérêt porté sur elle l'institua en universel. *New Girl Comes to Town : Cue Adolescent Dramatics* classifie le film comme « *an exercise in style, mood and theme than a fully integrated interpretation* » de l'œuvre classique et juge que « *the comic swerves and dramatic twists feel at once dutiful and arbitrary, and supposedly intense emotions are explored with the arch, weary detachment of a school assignment* » afin de conclure que « *it's not so easy to take La Princesse de Clèves out of the classroom* », ce qui est toujours vrai. En ce sens, « *il n'y a évidemment rien de révolutionnaire* », car les fractures sociales seraient censées ne pas en être un des objets, « *à filmer la jeunesse lycéenne et les premiers tourments amoureux liés à cet âge*<sup>144</sup>, bien que

---

<sup>144</sup> <http://www.lesinrocks.com/cinema/films-a-l-affiche/la-belle-personne/>

Serge Kaganski met en valeur qu' Honoré « se recentre avec un certain courage sur le territoire a priori discret des sentiments, de l' amour courtois, de la passion comme 'cosa mentale' ainsi que le pourrait dire Nemours ». Michel Delavaud, dans son bel article *La Noblesse du Cœur*, mettrait l' accent et sur « les amours se révélant aussi dévastatrices et tragiques aujourd' hui qu' au temps d' Henri II » et sur la transposition exemplaire des divers épisodes du roman dans ce qui resterait « cette adaptation modernisant radicalement le roman originel »<sup>145</sup>. Il restreindra la portée politique du film à la

---

« (...) Ce qui est précieux ici, c' est la singularité du regard d' Honoré. Par exemple sa façon de rendre ce film intemporel en même temps de son temps et étranger à son temps, **La Belle Personne** pourrait se passer aujourd' hui, mais le cinéaste y a disposé certains accessoires typiques des années 1970 tel ce tourne-disque. /.../son propos, son champ d' investigation, c' est la croyance ou non en l' amour, autre sujet d' importance au XVIIe comme dans le XXe arrondissement, à Neuilly comme à Bobigny. (...) »

<sup>145</sup> <http://www.revue-eclipses.com/la-belle-personne/critique/la-noblesse-du-coeur-35.html>

« (...) L' adaptation redoutablement intelligente d' Honoré et de son scénariste Gilles Taurand souligne conjointement l' extrême modernité et l' universalité de ce roman primordial, démontrant que quel que soit le contexte spatial ou temporel dans lequel il est situé, le fond de l' histoire reste finalement le même. Car que raconte **La Princesse de Clèves** ? Les souffrances engendrées par les valse-hésitations de l' amour, provoquant jalousies, chagrins, rancœurs et trépas. /.../ Ce que décrit Madame de La Fayette dans son roman est le complexe réseau d' alliances maritales et politiques permettant aux courtisans concernés d' accéder à un pouvoir accru. La description de l' amour réciproque de Madame de Clèves et du Duc de Nemours, rendu impossible par la bienséance et par la vertu imposées par la Cour, peut-être vue comme un regard sur l' emprise de l' apparence sur les membres d' une noblesse enfermée dans ses principes et dans ses codes ; de ce point de vue, encore une fois, on peut dire que derrière le roman psychologique et la tragédie amoureuse se cache



contestation d' une position dite obsolète (une équivoque, à mon avis) de Nicholas Sarkozy sur le chef d' œuvre qui bâtirait, chez Honoré, d' une part, une pure

*And now we rise from the ground*



innocence de la relation amoureuse, sans calcul, sans alliance délibérée, sans « *le moindre signe extérieur d' un tourment intérieur* », tandis que la violence, d' autre part, s' en emparerait magistralement par contamination.

L' inversion contemporaine la plus poignante offerte par la lecture de Christophe Honoré serait, à mon avis, la malignité féminine, dont le non au duc de Nemours ne peut pas s' avérer l' analyse que toute pudeur constitue dans l' instinct. Au contraire, il contient toute destruction de la femme en tant que valeur humaine et Honoré est clair sur sa responsabilité

---

*un regard poliique et critique à l' encontre d' une noblesse que Madame de La Fayette connaît par cœur. (...) »*

satanique. Non seulement la femme actuelle tue, dans la tendresse aussi, dans l' ascension des larmes, dans l' assumption des vers, dans sa reconnaissance de la beauté avide de croissance qui la recherche, même pas dans la liberté qui ne l'est nettement point, elle est incapable d' évolution car ses meurtres sont insurmontables. Sa retraite sans possibilité de lumière la privera de vie tandis que l' homme irrespectueux ne dépassera pas non plus la solitude qu' il a bâtie par sa légèreté possiblement criminelle. Leur conscience \_ d' ailleurs relative \_ n' est pas en elle-même une rédemption et le cinéaste les jette clairement vers le châtiment : sans émotion, froide comme la mort, la jeune femme anéantit la rencontre avec son professeur italien, sa source de mouvement qui éprouvait apparemment et, en fait, la tension de la croissance. Le deuil mythologique de Junie met en valeur finalement une vocation avouée de l' amour infini refusant tout couple réel et Dom Juan l' illustrerait d' une certaine façon aussi par la conscience de mille et trois expériences, encore l' épouse française de Dieu et son reniement. La déception de Nemours, sur un lit qui ne connaîtra pas ces amants, contient et l' anxiété de sa direction blanche et le silence

*And see she flies*

grossier envers une femme mineure. Comme Char, *\_ dans les rues de la ville, il y a mon amour, peut importe où il va dans le temps divisé*<sup>146</sup> Nemours se perdra dans les rues de Paris. Pourtant le poète a perdu et gardé *une épave heureuse* et sait que *dans le grand méridien où s'inscrit son éssor, ma liberté le creuse* et le mauvais amant de Madame de Lafayette n' a rien vécu d' heureux, ne connaît pas de méridien. Le fait qu' il n' y a même pas de transposition du mariage de *La Princesse de Clèves*, aussi blessé soit-il, est axial e le fait que ce mariage n' a point d' enfants est d' autant plus déterminant. J' en soulignerais également l' aveu de l' épouse que la tradition critique considère invraisemblable et que ce film effacerait par son impossibilité historique de sacrement. Un couple sans enfants est sec, la stérilité pouvant être ou un trou ou tout le ciel que les deux délivreront un jour, ce qu' il est peut être décidé sans que les conditions (aussi de joie, toujours suscitant du pragmatisme) de leurs enfants dominant sur le couple : l' ouvrage français du 17<sup>e</sup> appauvrit, par conséquent, ces princes

---

<sup>146</sup> CHAR René, *Fureur et mystère*, Paris, Gallimard, sans date, poème *Allégeance*.

de Clèves et leur permet l'analyse pure du bonheur humain dans les circonstances du compromis formel. L'aveu de la princesse que Nemours écouterait dégagerait du mari et de l'enchantement en puissance et le pire des deux, ce qui permettrait l'éclaircissement du malheur de tous et, donc, la connaissance. Il est bon et, donc, il sera invraisemblable.

La jalousie d'un mari rongé par la mort libérerait l'épouse sûre de la médiocrité de Clèves, la grossièreté de la séduction qui ne saurait pas dépasser la circonstance ne confirmeront que l'intégrité de la princesse ainsi vouée au dépouillement que le chef d'œuvre classique couronne de sainteté. Le malheur et sa conscience se convertiraient en vertu par le don de soi dans l'amour du principe. Elle ne pouvait pas se permettre de correspondre à un fol amour qui ne lui plaisait point, l'attraction n'a pas su être grâce, un mari (un tel mari) reste une convention familiale, un stade de maturité à accomplir, aussi l'expression noire à la fois du préjugé et de la femme honnête. La destinée individuelle s'exprimerait, par conséquent, dans cette contingence de conditions qui ne sont pas insurmontables, mais que l'on rêve de vaincre dans la grandeur. Les héros sont certes vaincus par leur destinée et leur sérénité dans la

*And she is everywhere*

souffrance vaut tout triomphe des autres qui les envieront éternellement : savoir vivre serait, donc, lutter contre l'insurmontable et recevoir chaque forme, la meilleure. Temps de facilité, le nôtre, sous la perspective d' une mutation, sans mariage, sans enfants, libéré au-delà de l' honneur et des préjugés maternels, des compromis, leurs tensions, produirait la séparation du roman du 17<sup>e</sup> par le meurtre de l' humanité minimale aussi sous un masque d' exigence d' éternité. Temps, par conséquent, de solitude désespérée et d' inertie funeste, de dé-couplés (fréquemment dans l' irréalité d' une vie partagée par paradoxe), dont les hommes ne peuvent pas aimer les femmes et dont les femmes ne peuvent pas aimer les hommes, dont les hommes cherchent, donc, des hommes, faute de femmes (et où sont les hommes, à vrai dire ?), il s' anéantit. La fameuse retraite de la veuve, par contre, la soi-disante cime du manque d' épanouissement sexuel, fréquemment confondu avec de la chasteté sainte, est un fait intemporel de maturité ; il s' agit d' une aristocrate. Incomprise dans une frustration algide qu' une

misérable critique féministe<sup>147</sup> dénonce à peine, de Clèves vit ce qu' elle doit vivre, des principes qu' elle ne sacrifiera pas et que sa foi en Dieu identifie avec la chrétienté. Ils ne s' épuiseront point dans les limites criminelles imposées par sa mère dont elle saura, pourtant, dégager de l' inspiration par son respect, ils la limitent à une existence moyenne volontaire impliquant une sorte de sacrifice de son exception, car elle a connu ce que la vie ne lui a pas donné. Nemours aurait pu, aurait su, il n' est pas à la hauteur, la promesse que sa beauté contient blessant une

---

<sup>147</sup> <http://revuepostures.com/fr/articles/dubois-15>

**La construction d' une posture féministe *a posteriori* : le cas Madame de Lafayette**

« (...) On comprend bien que, si l' intérêt que l' on trouve à *La Princesse de Clèves* repose en partie sur le témoignage historique d' une volonté féminine de s' affranchir du joug masculin, la déliaison de l' œuvre et de son auteur peut menacer en quelque manière les constructions de la critique féministe.

(...)

Encore faut-il préciser les choses, au risque de rappeler des évidences : les femmes dont il est ici question, ce sont d' abord des aristocrates qui ont le loisir et surtout, l' éducation nécessaires à la production d' un discours littéraire. Toute division par le genre, dans le domaine, est précédée d' une division par le milieu social.

(...)

(...) Proche de la préciosité féministe, amie des femmes indépendantes, femme forte et libre elle-même, lesbienne si l' on veut, fréquemment des doctes qu' elle surpasse dans la postérité, Madame de Lafayette présentait au féminisme, on le voit, une figure de légende à laquelle il est d' autant plus difficile de résister que son œuvre supposée est riche également de circonstances semblables. (...) »

princesse ne reste qu' une voie et si elle était sacrée, Marie-Madeleine Pioche de la Vergne l' aurait

*See she flies all around*

rapprochée de la veuve. Tout commérage courtois, tout adultère et son pêché de mort (qu' un mari met tristement en relief aussi afin de protéger l' épouse, hors la belle proportion), des stratégies et des envies doivent être vidées à tout prix par l' indépendance de soi. La faute qu' elle éprouve est celle des femmes immenses qui non seulement ont été touchées par la perfection divine comme, par conséquent, ont une conscience très élevée de ce qu' elles peuvent exiger d' elles-mêmes dans le sens de rendre parfaites les circonstances que la vie leur ont accordées. Le remords n' existe pas dans la retraite finale et si la solitude, au sens amoureux du mot, a hélas triomphé, la promiscuité n' a pas su la vaincre<sup>148</sup>. La mort de Monsieur de

---

<sup>148</sup> DUBOIS François-Ronan, *Pertinence et apories d' une lecture féministe de La Princesse de Clèves au regard de la théorie queer*, in *Romanica Silesicina*, 2013, 8 (1), pp. 129-137. L' auteur, page 4, considèrera que :

« (...) Le rejet de l' amour est un rejet du monde et de ses logiques de pouvoir. Le renoncement est un acte héroïque parce que tragique : certes, Madame de Clèves échappe à la société patriarcale, en n' étant plus ni l' épouse ni la fille de personne, en se soustrayant à l' organisation érotico-politique de la cour, mais elle paye sa liberté au sacrifice de son existence et sa mort prématurée souligne plus que jamais

Clèves est nettement la conséquence directe de ce que Madame de Clèves est, elle n' a pas pu s' empêcher d' être ce qu' elle était et ce qu' elle était le tuait, cette princesse le savait non sans tristesse. Néanmoins, ce deuil a sa beauté dans notre vie faite de toute chose et tout lui offrant la joie car tout est sacrifice. Le fait

---

*l' oppression subie par les femmes, que d' autres personnages du roman, à des degrés divers, ont pu également incarner. (...) »*

Il affirmera également, page 3, que « *plutôt qu' un personnage, Mademoiselle de Chartres semble être un objet qu' il s' agit de vendre ou plutôt d' échanger contre un prestige social. Parée des bijoux qu' elle achète lors de sa première rencontre avec le prince de Clèves, entièrement réduite à son apparence séduisante et à l' ampleur de sa fortune personnelle, Mademoiselle de Chartres est une marchandise qui circule dans l' économie patriarcale et sert à contracter, renforcer ou défaire des relations de pouvoir. (...) »* Encore, page 4, « *(...) Le mariage finalement arrangé entre Mademoiselle de Chartres et Monsieur de Clèves n' a rien de l' union amoureuse d' une jeune femme à son amant ni rien non plus, et il faut le souligner, du mariage tumultueux et humiliant de la même jeune femme à un mari méprisable ; en d' autres termes, ce mariage n' a absolument rien de romanesque : il n' est que l' expression banale des jeux de pouvoir au sein de la cour royale et, à ce titre, une illustration par l' exemple des principes généraux développés dans les premières pages de la nouvelle. (...) »*

François-Ronan Dubois est le paradigme, non seulement dans cet essai, de la vacuité critique parée de terminologie abondante. Il est évident que Madame de Clèves ne rejette point l' amour dont il n' est pas question dans les termes définis par cet auteur ; nous sommes tous des objets économiques, la conscience et la destinée dépassent, sans les nier, les conditions patriarcales, dont les hommes, d' ailleurs, sont aussi les victimes. Nous sommes tous des opprimés et des marchandises, nos mariages, le sien, sont tous d' une certaine façon romanesques, le sacrifice étant lui-même une liberté fantastique.



que l' épouse reconnaît quotidiennement aussi bien le cadavre d' un mari que ce qu' elle ne vivra pas s' avère une épreuve de

*So look see the sights*

grand bonheur à lire en tant que telle. Tout est bonheur : le bonheur l' est, ne pas l' avoir l' est, y renoncer (ce qui n' est pas une décision au sens pur) dégage la majesté de l' être. Le Jansénisme en France, à l' âge classique comme actuellement, éclaircira le tissu et de l' ouvrage et de l' Europe : plus que prendre un cercle pour le caresser<sup>149</sup>, Ionesco nous dira qu' il deviendra vicieux, en matière critique, une toile d' araignée comparée de la production de Madame Lafayette renvoyant plus que clairement à l' Angleterre (à Henriette d' Angleterre, plus

---

<sup>149</sup> DUBOIS François-Ronan, *La Princesse de Clèves est une oeuvre sans avenir*, Université Stendhal- Grenoble 3, Unité de Formation et de Recherche Lettres et Arts, Département de Lettres Modernes, s.d., 1. *Deux discussions sur La Princesse de Clèves (1678-2009)/ 1.1 Les discussions des années 1678-1679*, page 18 :

« (...) En janvier 1678, le numéro ordinaire du journal comporte une nouvelle intitulée « la Vertu Malheureuse », dont l' histoire ressemble à celle de la Princesse de Clèves et comporte même une scène d' aveu de l' épouse à son mari, épiée par son amant (celui de l' époux). En avril de la même année, après la parution de la nouvelle, le **Mercure Galant** propose à ses lecteurs une question galante, fondée sur l' histoire de **La Princesse de Clèves**. Il s' agit pour les lecteurs d' envoyer à la rédaction du journal leur sentiment à propos de la scène de l' aveu, d' expliquer si, selon eux, la Princesse a bien fait d' avouer à son époux qu' elle aimait un autre homme. (...) »

Ce chercheur développe, dans ce travail, une étude indispensable.

concrètement) s' impose. John Campbell tiendra à une position critique sur ce que Bernard Pingaud considérait arbitraire, le roman se résumant en une phrase « *M. de Clèves aime sa femme, qui aime le duc de Nemours et qui est aimée de lui.* » et des lectures « *aucune/.../ne s' imposant, toutes sont plausibles, en tout cas discutables.* ». Dans **Questions of Interpretation on *La Princesse de Clèves***<sup>150</sup>, il soulignera :

« (...) *Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore, each new reading comes crashing down in its predecessor, only to be itself engulfed by its successor. Wave after wave of intelligence, sensitivity imagination and ingenuity keep pounding down on a seemingly unrelenting text. Could we all be reading the same book ? (...)* »

*The endless summer nights*

---

<sup>150</sup> CAMPBELL John, **Questions of Interpretation on *La Princesse de Clèves***, 1986.

<http://www.stepsquare.com/Questions-of-interpretation-in-La-Princesse-de-Clèves--or--cJohn-Campbell/8/hgdbgg>

Cette approche est mise en valeur par Campbell qui part du jugement de Madame de Lafayette, 1678, selon lequel “*On est partagé sur ce livre-là à se manger.*”, et de celui de Roger Bussy-Rabutin, le cousin de Madame de Sévigné et l’ auteur de l’ ***Histoire amoureuse des Gaules***, piétinant sur le fameux aveux de l’ épouse le jugeant “*extravagant; hors le bon sens d’ un roman à plaisir, à son tour hors une histoire véritable*”. Bussy ajouterait qu’ “*Il n’ est pas vraisemblable qu’ une passion d’ amour soit longtemps, dans un coeur, de même force que la vertu.*” Déjà le ***Mercur*** ***Galant***, deux semaines après le succès éditorial, dans sa rubrique consacrée aux “*questions galantes*”, aurait exploité le sujet.

« *A novel of experience and refusal* »<sup>151</sup>, le roman de Marie-Madeleine mêlerait toujours l' amour aux affaires dans cette cour aux belles personnes, Henri II ayant un fils qui épousera Marie Stuart, la Reine Dauphine, charmante, le noyau des intrigues. D' un côté, il y aurait les De Guise et le Cardinal de Lorraine, de l' autre, Antoine et Louis de Bourbon, princes de sang, le prince de Condé, ce dernier devenant le chef de file des protestants sous les Guerres de Religion, tous les deux soutenant le connétable Anne de Montmorency, le favori du roi, le duc de Guise étant toujours le préféré de la Reine, alors que la duchesse de Valentinois favorise, par rivalité, le connétable...En effet, la « *Première Partie* » du roman s' établit sur l' éloge superlatif de la

---

<sup>151</sup> Idem, *ibidem*, passim.

Campbell affirmera que l' "on peut parler indéfiniment de la princesse et de ses raisons" et que Madame de Lafayette aurait elle-même noté, en 1678, qu' "on est partagé sur ce livre-là à se manger. Dans le *Mercure Galant*, après le succès éditorial, de juillet à octobre 1678, des correspondants, des jeunes futurs mariés qui craignaient de ne pas être si sûrs de leurs sentiments, un autre soutenant qu' une femme "ne doit jamais se hasarder à donner des alarmes à son mari", la confidence étant pernicieuse, "car elle trouble la paix des ménages". Une porte-voix féminine traduirait, en plus, l' unanimité de ses amis sur le fait qu' une femme doit "éternellement combattre et mourir même dans les combats/.../plutôt que de désoler un époux: elle devrait garder la "suprême galanterie" du silence et ne pas procéder comme le "dernier bourgeois" qui ne saurait point soutenir avec élégance une belle passion dans la "simple tendresse respectueuse."Fontenelle, sous anonymat, varierait sur la logique du récit, outre la réduction à la bienséance. L' intervention de Fontenelle devrait être l' objet d' une lecture très fine.

magnificence de ce règne , aussi celui du dessin des personnages. Henri II est galant, bien fait et amoureux, sa passion pour Diane de Poitiers est violente au bout de vingt ans, admirable dans tous les exercices du corps, l'oisiveté de la cour étant extrême, des parties de chasse et de paume, des ballets, des courses de bagues ou de semblables divertissement..., les couleurs de Mme de Valentinois étant partout, la reine partageant volontiers le roi. Le texte mettra en valeur l'absence de jalousie de la reine, mais il en soulignera sa profonde dissimulation, le jugement de ses sentiments dirigés par la politique s'avérant difficile, obligeant la reine à s'approcher de la duchesse afin d'approcher ainsi le roi et un cercle de ce qu'il y avait, d'après le roman, de plus beau et de mieux fait, une cour de tant de beaux sujets, d'hommes admirablement bien faits, la nature accordant aux princes et aux princesses la beauté suprême. Elizabeth de France, à l'esprit supérieur, incomparablement belle, Marie Stuart, parfaite dans le corps et dans l'esprit, sensible aux arts et à toutes belles choses, vivront dans une atmosphère favorable aux exercices du corps pratiqués par

*And go play the game that you learnt*

un nombre infini de princes et de grand seigneurs d' un mérite extraordinaire : le roi de Navarre était proche du duc de Guise, un prince aimé de tout le monde. Le prince de Condé contraste par son petit corps peu favorisé de la nature, à l' âme grande et hautaine, pourtant, aimable aux yeux des femmes. Le duc de Nemours est un chef d' œuvre de la nature et le moins admirable en lui était sa beauté, sa valeur le mettant au dessus des autres, outre son agrément, son engouement plaisant à tout le monde, une élégance de vêtement suivie de tout le monde, sans pouvoir être imitée, un air unique qui concentrait toutes les attentions, il avait beaucoup de maîtresses, mais on ne pouvait pas deviner celle qu' il aimait véritablement, était proche de la reine Dauphine, on ne peut plus belle, maîtresse de sa personne et de l' Etat, était la nièce de M. de Guise, dont la grandeur inquiétait cette duchesse. Elle avait retardé le mariage du dauphin avec la reine d' Ecosse. Les de Guise, dont le prince de Condé est le chef de file protestant, aspiraient à s' égarer aux princes de sang, le roi reposant son pouvoir sur la confiance du duc de Guise, mais devait se soumettre aux yeux de l' amant, la duchesse de Valentinois et quoiqu' elle n' eût plus de beauté, elle gouvernait

le roi. La cour était partagée entre MM. De Guise et le Connétable, qui était soutenu des princes de sang, catholiques et protestants avaient toujours songé à gagner la duchesse de Valentinois, qui n' y pouvait graduellement rien, mais retardait le mariage du dauphin avec Marie Stuart, les de Guise épousaient les Connétables, le duc de Guise avait de plus en plus de grandeur. Le prince de Clèves racontait à son épouse quasi pécheresse les intrigues de Sancerre et de Mme Tournon, finalement peut-être un personnage fictif, pour lui faire voir la réalité où les apparences sont toujours trompeuses, M. d' Anville, deuxième fils du Connétable, marié à la petite-fille de la Valentinois, était très amoureux de Marie Stuart, l' histoire peut-être enjolivée, d' Anne de Boleyn longuement racontée par la dauphine à Mme de Clèves. Sous la bienséance et son débat apparent se dissimulent des enjeux politiques, des Croisades, ignorés et cachés, comme de nos jours, où les gens beaux perdent leur bonté. Dans les rues de Paris il y a mon amour.

*From the morning*

## Raison d'amour ardent : *Marie Mancini*, *Héroïde de Mademoiselle de Blereau (1762)*

Marie-Theres Kemper

Université de Porto

« Vous êtes empereur, Seigneur, et vous pleurez ? »<sup>152</sup>. C'est ainsi que Racine se souvient du moment dramatique qu'a été la séparation publique de Louis XIV et de Marie Mancini, à une période où les négociations nuptiales avec l'Espagne avaient déjà eu lieu. Par le biais de ces fameuses paroles autrefois prononcées par Marie, « Vous êtes roi, vous pleurez, et je pars ! », lors de son départ définitif en exil, Racine évoque dans la tragédie de *Bérénice* la fin d'un amour idyllique. Malgré la simplicité de l'action, cette séparation amoureuse a été touchante et est devenue la trame principale d'une tragédie.

À part Racine, une certaine Mademoiselle de Blereau a repris l'amour impossible entre Marie et le roi, dans l'Héroïde *Marie*

---

<sup>152</sup> *Bérénice*, acte IV, sc.5.

Cet essai est le brouillon d'une longue recherche sur Marie Mancini et Louis XIV dans les traditions historiographique et littéraire que nous développons ensemble.

*Mancini, nièce du cardinal Mazarin, à Louis XIV.* Plus que la raison d'État et la grandeur du roi, n'est-ce pas plutôt le « caractère altier & vertueux de Mancini » (Blereau 1762: Préface) qui se trouve au cœur de cette Héroïde?

*Une certaine De Blereau*

« *le caractère est neuf, & le sujet important* »

*Cristina Marinho*

*Université de Porto*

Nous ne connaissons qu'une édition de *Marie Mancini* de De Blereau : *Nabu Public Domain Reprints, Bibliotheca Regia Monacensis*, « *a reproduction of an original work published before 1923 that is in the public domain in the United States of America* ».

Mademoiselle de Blereau est un nom universel, si l'« *Avertissement à l' Editeur* » suggère son anonymat classique, elle existera d' autant plus en tant que voix indésirable d' une jeune quasi reine dont l' Histoire de France a effacé la vérité. *Marie Mancini, Nièce du Cardinal Mazarin, à L\*\*\*\*XIV. Heroïde* est toujours sans tradition critique et l' « *Avertissement...* » réfère « *les Censeurs* » priés de « *ne point relever avec aigreur les Fautes qui*



*peuvent se trouver dans cette Pièce » dont la parution à Paris, espace de liberté, se confronterait avec celle de De Blereau, la jeunesse inexpérimentée, notre compagnie, qu'il faut encourager. La « Préface de l'Auteur » définira également « le fondement » de l'Héroïde, les paroles de Marie lors de la cérémonie des adieux, « dont l'énergie n'étonne pas moins que la précision ». « Le caractère est neuf, et le sujet important » osant ne pas passer la nièce de Mazarin sous silence afin de déclarer de façon claire, au XVIIIe siècle, ce que les actuelles ombres du Roi Soleil n'admettent que trop discrètement, ce que la voix commune historiographique ne sait toujours pas accueillir. Marie « n'est point une femme altérée de plaisir, qui ne mesure le mérite de son amant qu'au degré de volupté qu'il lui procure, & qui meurt de regret de ce qu'avec la figure d'homme il n'en a pas conservé les heureuses prérogatives ». Mancini « n'est point une Didon moderne, qui veut enlever son cher Enée à la gloire, & qui ne peut concevoir qu'une âme bien née préfère les plaisirs meurtriers de la guerre, aux plaisirs si doux, si paisibles de l'amour ». Il ne s'agit point d'«une sœur passionnée pour son frère, qui ose lui demander avec des cris de fureur, & même lui ravir des plaisirs dont le seul soupçon outrage la nature ». La grandeur de Marie est nette, « l'Amour ici fait entendre sa voix, ses paroles sont toujours dictées par la raison,*

*avouées par la sagesse* », « *C'est une fille jeune, aimable, éprise d'amour pour un Roi jeune, aimable.* » Il est clair que « *La Politique, ou plutôt l'Envie s'oppose à leur union.* » et que Louis XIV non seulement a détruit sa vie, sa personnalité était faible et la composition de De Blereau mettra l'accent sur l'incorrection et la lâcheté du Roi Soleil qui « *consent laisser passer son Amante dans les bras d'un Autre* ». Le sujet poétique exprimera son indignation face au « *déshonneur qui /sappe/ le fondement du Trône sur lequel il est assis* », elle évoquera aussi l'intimité, « *Mais ses sentimens, quelque impétueux qu'ils soient, ne choquent jamais les Lois établies par la décence* » puisque « *ses fautes sont des faiblesses et non des forfaits.* » Cette Préface saute sur des amants du Roi sans expliciter leurs noms dans le sens de déclarer l'intégrité de Marie, son « *caractère altier&vertueux* », son « *âme fière* », quoique des jugements hostiles, selon cet Auteur, comme ceux de M. de la Beaumelle, y soient d'une certaine façon considérés : Marie préférerait la gloire de Louis et moins Louis.

Si l'univers garde son mouvement, « *le tout, pour Mancini, languit dans le silence !* » parce qu'elle n'entend toujours pas la voix de son « *cher Louis* », « *prodigue de sermens* », à « *la bouche brûlante* », qui éveillerait ses sens, « *par ses baisers* », à l'aube. Marie

« idolâtre », « aime avec fureur » Louis, admet « l'excès de mon ardeur », mais ne pourrait pas lui exiger « un pareil sacrifice ». Elle s'adresse, donc, aussi bien au « cher Amant » qu'à elle-même afin de reconnaître qu'avant tout « il est Roi ! », s'il doit « tout au plaisir... & plus encore à toi », peut-être qu'il devrait, il pourrait, « abjurant la Majesté suprême », renoncer au Trône dont les degrés seraient cachés « sous des Fleurs », « Du Bandeau de l'Amour surmonter la Couronne », et « Oublier, dans mes bras, le poids du Diadème » dans le but d' « Au milieu des Plaisirs, surprendre le Bonheur ! », comme à l'époque où Louis était fidèle (et que les deux ne le sont plus). Elle nourrit la haine à l'intérieur de son adoration qui garantit (rêve de garantir) encore l'amour du Roi, le tutoie pour rallumer les flammes dans « le silence profond » actuel de Louis « augment/ant mes terreurs... », « Le parjure Louis a comblé mes malheurs ! ». Elle est consciente du fait que c'est son amour délaissé, poussé, donc, au désespoir, qui détermine la réaffirmation de l'amour du roi envers elle, d'une certaine façon il est une fiction à Marie : Anne d'Autriche, par l'envie et la froideur, et son oncle, par la stratégie politique et la méchanceté, auraient détruit ce mariage, d'après une note. Elle, autrefois sereine personnalité, a été la cible des attaques d'une toujours

malheureuse Couronne et la victime de la faiblesse de Louis, « *plus heureux de régner sur mon cœur, / Que fut un Monde entier qu' habite le Malheur.* », finalement soumis, comme « un fantôme couronné » à qui elle n' est plus sûre d' adresser son discours car il n' est un roi altier, comme elle l' a bâti, puisque sa mère a usurpé sa grandeur et Mazarin a obscurci le trône, sa tyrannie l' éloignant d' elle et de Dieu. Mancini éduquait le sens de la gloire d' un roi à l' intérieur de l' amour qu' ils nourrissaient ensemble, dans la lignée des rois de France, de Louis XIII et du roi Richelieu, tout en soudant plaisir et guerre parce que « *L' Amour sied au Héros, il pare le Guerrier* » et « *L' Amour est, en un mot, la vertu du grand Homme.* » Louis, « *un Mortel qui soupire en tremblant !* », \_ lui-même, ou la voix de Marie se confondrait-elle avec celle de Louis pour assumer la faiblesse, soumise entre Anne d' Autriche, Mazarin et le peuple français, qui brise et a sacrifié « *ma fidèle tendresse* »? \_s' en est fait l' esclave, par respect, l' Espagne juste suivant le regret de la France. Elle anticipe, avec horreur, le retour sans honneur en Italie afin de vivre une vie « *Que la Haine&l' Amour n' ont que trop poursuivie !* », d' épouser douloureusement Lorenzo Colonna et de s' exiler avec honte dans son lit. L' ardeur du mari italien serait rejeté par « *Un cœur*

*plein de Louis & qui n'est plus à moi !* », l' évocation de l'intimité riche avec celui qui ne sera qu' « *un Esclave odieux* » et acceptera qu' un homme profane la maîtresse de l' amant : « *La source de nos maux, Louis, c'est ta faiblesse !* » Marie est très claire quant aux jeux politiques de son oncle qui, d'une part, lui assurait, d' abord, la faveur du peuple et son rôle dans l' Empire, d' autre part, après, « *serre, par ton bras, le nœud de nos malheurs* ». Séduite, Marie pleurera le « *Fatal aveuglement !* » et toutes les merveilles, aussi « *les baisers charmans* », « *Le respect, l'amitié, l' innocente tendresse,* » que l' on envie. Elle considère que l'amitié est la route certaine du bonheur, « *ne suit pas de l' Amour la pente téméraire ;* » qu' elle connaît, ayant perdu tout plaisir, car « *Un Amant qui me suit, me condamne & m' adore !/ Qui pourroit, d' un seul mot, ordonner mon bonheur/ Qui, pour dire ce mot, a trop peu de valeur !* » Mazarin l'avait conduite auprès du trône, Louis retraçait le règne de Titus, suivait les conseils utiles, « *Supportoit de l'Etat le fardeau difficile/.../ Sans asservir son âme, écloiroit son erreur !* », sans que Marie perçoive « *la pompe étrangère* » et Bourbon dont elle ne voudra que l' homme, le mortel. Louis restait aimable, quoique « *Maître absolu* », il faisait preuve de l'art de charmer oubliant l'ardeur extrême (et moins certaine) que les charmes de Marie

avait asservie et dont l'intégrité constituera le cœur de sa vie. « *Vertu farouche, austère Politique* » considèreront cet amour un crime et porteront l'infortune aux amants dont l'aube du « *jour pur et serein* » contient le déclin, « *le Bonheur ; c'est un rapide éclair,* » Leur volupté, qui dévorera Marie, « *une Amante craintive* », dévoilera le néant, la nuit du partage interdit, celles des âmes trop tôt plus unies que les corps qu'une Mère et un Ministre censureront. Louis pleurera et ne sera moins lâche : « *Je ne lis que l'effroi, que la peur sur son front !* » Les ennemis, « *leur fureur nous sépare* », ne sauveront pas Marie, qui s'égare vers la mort, de leur rage. Bien que perdue dans la honte et l'outrage, le malheur blessant le courage, elle punirait, aimerait maîtriser le destin, et fuit la mort tout en dépassant « *ma fureur mourante* ». L'Autrichienne détruit son fils et méprise la France, le sang pur de Mancini est conscient des chagrins de ces mariages sans les grâces de l'amour. Brouage, pour un exil en prison, ou Paris, pour le dédain du « *vain nom d'une Epouse impuissante* », n'épargneront pas « *la race future* ».

Notre effort est une étude préparatoire sur les représentations de Marie.

Marie Mancini a été l'objet de plusieurs ouvrages, non seulement écrits par des historiens et des biographes, mais aussi par des romanciers, ce qui illustre, d'emblée, l'importance et l'intérêt accordés à cette jeune Mazarinette. Mais avant d'avoir inspiré plusieurs auteurs et de devenir l'enjeu principal de quelques tragédies écrites, ces paroles ont d'abord été vécues... et de quelle façon !

Dans cet essai, nous éveillerons le passé et l'histoire de Marie Mancini dans le sens de reconstituer le portrait de cette jeune Italienne, nièce du cardinal Mazarin et premier amour de Louis XIV<sup>153</sup>. Il s'agira, d'abord, de dresser le portrait du Roi Soleil et d'évoquer sa forte et incontestable liaison avec les femmes de la cour de France. Ensuite, nous nous concentrerons sur le rôle des femmes à cette époque, plus spécifiquement sur le « caractère singulier » de Marie Mancini. Il sera question surtout de délimiter les différentes représentations de cette jeune Mazarinette, tout en les articulant avec les événements les plus

---

<sup>153</sup> « (...) elle [Marie] peut garder dans son cœur la conviction qu'aucune femme n'inspira à Louis XIV le sentiment pur et chevaleresque qu'il ressentit pour celle qu'il aima la première. Elle fut son amante selon le langage, du temps, les autres [La Vallière, les Montespan et les Maintenon] furent ses maîtresses » (Perey 1894: 574).

marquants de sa vie dans le but de repérer son évolution historiographique.

Encore jeune et avant de faire la connaissance de Marie, Louis XIV fut déjà admiré par des jeunes dames de la cour qui le considéraient un homme d'une grande beauté et d'une élégance suprême. Très galant et toujours entouré de belles femmes, – toutes femmes d'esprit – Louis préférait s'amuser et ne semblait guère s'intéresser à la littérature et à la culture, il serait incapable d'assumer toutes les responsabilités et d'être le roi de France<sup>154</sup>. Dans ce contexte, il est indispensable de réfléchir au rôle non secondaire des femmes. Mais ne semblait-il pas que Marie a pris une place plus décisive et primordiale, si ce n'est qu'auprès de cette femme que Louis a appris à aimer et à régner ?<sup>155</sup> Pourrait-on même aller plus loin et parler d'une inversion des rôles, ne

---

<sup>154</sup> François Régis Chantelauze écrit à cette occasion : « Il avait jusqu'alors passé sa vie au milieu des fêtes et des ballets peu soucieux des choses de l'esprit, dont l'avait détourné la politique ombrageuse du Cardinal. » (1880: 25, 26).

<sup>155</sup> « E convém recordar ainda que, no século em que Luís escolheu como símbolo o Sol – « a mais vigorosa e mais esplêndida imagem de um grande monarca » –, um dos atributos declarados do astro era « a luz que faz incidir sobre as outras estrelas que o rodeiam como uma corte ». E essas estrelas, as mulheres da sua vida, por sua vez, iluminaram a corte do Rei-Sol » (Fraser 2008: 345).



fut-ce que pour s'apercevoir du désintérêt que Louis prouvait avoir vers l'éducation formelle tandis que Marie exprimait une insatiable curiosité, la volonté de tout lire ? Sophie Gay semble vouloir renforcer cette idée quand elle souligne que le caractère de Louis XIV « (...) devait se réveiller à la voix de la femme supérieure qui lui parlerait de puissance et de gloire » (1864: 124). Le moment du départ de Marie vers La Rochelle, lorsqu' on l'éloigne de la cour, nous semble assez révélateur à ce sujet, car n'est-ce pas Marie qui, à ce moment tragique, démontre une majesté et une parfaite maîtrise de soi, contrairement au roi, qui semble même avoir versé des larmes de profonde tristesse, mais aussi d'indécision ? Stanis Perez remarque à cet égard, qu' « [à] la rigueur, c'est la jeune femme qui fait preuve de fermeté, voire de sévérité, face à un prince qui est en train de *perdre la face* en ne parvenant plus à contrôler son visage (2008: 629, 630) ». Plus loin Perez constate que « [l]es différentes réécritures de cette crise sentimentale et politique montrent la richesse thématique de l'incident avec Mancini parce qu'il met à l'épreuve les qualités du jeune roi » (*ibidem*).

Quoi qu'il en soit, Elizabeth Goldsmith reconnaît le caractère singulier et audacieux de cette jeune femme et de sa sœur

Hortense, qui ont su, chacune à sa façon, attirer l'attention des sociétés italienne et française (suite à la publication de leurs Mémoires<sup>156</sup>, on pourrait même dire de toute la société aristocratique européenne), tout en révélant une grande originalité face au modèle comportemental de l'époque : « The roman gazettes recorded the public fascination with these two sisters, who had introduced a "French liberty" to the lives of roman woman » (Goldsmith 2012: 89).

Liées par une amitié forte, les deux sœurs – partageant les mêmes intérêts, la lecture, le théâtre et l'astrologie, mais surtout les mêmes idéaux de liberté personnelle et l'égalité – décidaient un jour de quitter leurs maris et familles en quête d'une vie indépendante ; un pas audacieux et non sans risques à leur

---

<sup>156</sup> Très populaires à cette époque, ces écrits intimes ont rapidement éveillé l'intérêt de plusieurs auteurs anonymes (Gérard Doscot souligne notamment que les Mémoires d'Hortense ont été rédigées par l'abbé de Saint-Réal et que la première publication des Mémoires de Marie fut publié par « un plumitif anonyme » (1965 et 1987: 28) sous le titre de *Mémoires de la connétable Colonna*), qui commençaient à les imiter, tout en les réinterprétant. D'après cela, plusieurs falsifications ont été écrites, ce qui met en cause la véracité des Mémoires. Ayant toujours quelqu'un comme destinataire, ces écrits sont d'emblée changés et une omission ne peut non plus être exclue. Même si ces souvenirs nous racontent seulement une réalité transfigurée, il s'agit de documents anciens qui attestent de faits historiques et nous donnent, en fin de compte, accès à la vie intérieure, comme c'est aussi le cas pour l'*Apologie ou les véritables mémoires de Madame la Connétable de Colonna Maria Mancini, écrites par elle-même* (1678).

époque. En ayant choisi la fuite, les sœurs Mancini ont suscité l'attention et la curiosité de leurs contemporains, ce qui les exposaient simultanément à de profondes critiques, autant positives que négatives :

« Yet both sisters had decided, early in life, to pursue adventures that were unprecedented for woman of their time, and that they knew would lead, inevitably, to more exposure to public condemnation than they could even dream of. They embraced the notoriety that came to them, publishing their own memoirs in response to the many accounts of their lives being circulated by a European society that found them fascinating. They were frequently at the center of public controversies, admired by libertines, feminists, and free-thinkers but viewed by others as frivolous at best and threats to civil society at worst » (Goldsmith 2012: 225)<sup>157</sup>.

---

<sup>157</sup> Antonia Fraser tient également à montrer que le comportement de Marie était tout à fait inattendu pour ce temps, mais en même moment séduisant pour un homme tel que le roi : « Na opinião comum, a maioria das mulheres não tinha necessidade de se dedicar a actividades frívolas como a leitura e a escrita. (...) Resumindo, o jovem Luís XIV não conhecia muitas jovens brilhantes. Por isso Maria Mancini foi a sua porta de entrada tanto nas artes, que o impressionaram para toda a vida, como num determinado tipo de amor cavalheiresco » (2008: 67,68).

Qui se cacherait plus concrètement derrière cette femme qui a su influencer et déterminer la vie de Louis XIV d'une façon si remarquable ? Avant d'esquisser les différents portraits de Marie, restitués par les historiens et biographes, il nous a semblé tout d'abord important et nécessaire de montrer comment la jeune femme était vue par ses contemporains.

D'après Antonia Fraser, la plupart des observateurs de son temps s'accordent à considérer que Marie, la brunette, n'avait pas une beauté classique, ayant même été considérée à plusieurs reprises comme la plus laide des sœurs Mancini. En plus de cette constatation physique, on s'apercevait également de la supériorité d'esprit de Marie et de son influence culturelle et intellectuelle sur le jeune roi, ce qui, selon la comtesse de La Fayette, l'élevait quelque temps plus tard au rang de « l'amante absolue » du roi<sup>158</sup>. Longtemps ignorée, voire même sous-estimée par le cardinal et la reine, Marie restait d'abord à l'ombre<sup>159</sup>. Dominé et contrôlé par le cardinal, Louis XIV ne commença à développer sa propre opinion et curiosité que par l'influence de Marie, ce qui semble avoir altéré la perception que

---

<sup>158</sup> Cf. Fraser 2007: 66.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Mackenzie 1935: 33.

le cardinal avait de sa nièce, la prenant de plus en plus sérieusement, tout en la considérant comme un obstacle à la réalisation de ses propres objectifs. Craignait-il que le roi puisse se laisser submerger par cette femme prodigieuse ? On peut dire que Mazarin avait une opinion plutôt instable (plutôt dynamique, selon ses stratégies) sur Marie, laquelle change curieusement au moment où elle renonce(ra)it définitivement à l'amour du monarque. Selon nous, il la caractérise différemment avant et après avoir réussi à unir Louis XIV avec l'Infante d'Espagne : d'abord, il ignore et méprise Marie, la considère follement amoureuse, prête à tout faire pour gagner le cœur du roi, tout en mettant consciemment en danger la paix de la France ; plus tard, il change son discours, la décrivant comme une personne très sensible, au cœur brisé, mais raisonnable<sup>160</sup>.

---

<sup>160</sup> Voici les deux extraits (le premier est une lettre de Mazarin adressé au roi et le deuxième une lettre du cardinal à sa nièce), qui nous ont fait croire à ce changement important: « Enfin, je vous dirai sans déguisement ni exagération qu'elle a l'esprit mal tourné, et qu'elle n'a jamais tant cru certaines folies comme elle fait à présent. (...) Croyez-moi, vous devriez entièrement mettre fin à ce commerce qui rendra assurément cette *personne* [Marie] la plus malheureuse créature qui soit au monde (...) » (Chantelauze 1880: 114). ; « Je vous réplique de nouveau que j'ai la plus grande joie du monde d'avoir une telle nièce, voyant que, d'elle-même, elle a pris une si généreuse résolution et si conforme à son honneur et à ma satisfaction (...) » (*idem*: 136).

Le portrait que les contemporains de Marie ont peint nous est paru, par conséquent, contradictoire et flou ; il s'impose, donc, d'approfondir cette recherche et de faire l'examen critique de ses représentations historiques. Ayant été avant tout sincère et exceptionnellement ferme, il faut reconnaître que Marie a elle-même définitivement renoncé à l'amour en 1659, lors de la ratification du traité des Pyrénées, en écrivant une lettre très brève et directe au cardinal, dans laquelle elle a annoncé la fin de la correspondance et de tout autre contact avec le roi. Cette rupture décisive de la part de Marie confirme ses qualités personnelles et ses traits de caractère. Au profit de l'intérêt public, elle a su mettre de côté ses propres sentiments et désirs ; une décision certainement difficile qui démontre la vertu de Marie<sup>161</sup>.

Contrairement à d'autres historiens et chroniqueurs qui valorisent surtout la contenance du roi face à cette rupture, François Régis Chantelauze met en valeur cette résolution de

---

<sup>161</sup> Elizabeth Goldsmith le souligne: « Isolated and unable to investigate the rumors for herself, and fully aware that in any case she had lost Louis to the Spanish marriage, Marie did not take long to understand what her own role had to be. She wrote a pleading and submissive letter to her uncle » (2012: 19).

Marie qu'il considère comme un acte héroïque et plein de fierté (1880: 135)<sup>162</sup>. En outre, l'auteur en question présente Marie comme « la principale héroïne [du] récit » (*idem*: 6,7), en la décrivant comme une femme puissante, déterminée, voire même capable de détourner le roi du bon chemin, celui qui était imposé par le cardinal Mazarin. D'après Chantelauze, il s'agissait d'un amour tout à fait menaçant pour la paix de France, car Marie assumait un rôle fondamental dans la vie du roi et l'influençaient de plus en plus (*idem*: 25,26). À part quelques exceptions près, l'historiographie a surtout reconnu, au fil du temps, la grandeur et la magnificence du roi qui a su sacrifier son amour à la Raison d'État<sup>163</sup>. Selon nous, Faith Compton Mackenzie fait partie de ces exceptions, en valorisant la détermination de Marie, notamment après le mariage de Louis XIV. L'auteure semble vouloir donner un éclat nouveau à la biographie de Marie, en ce sens qu'elle

---

<sup>162</sup> Mallet-Joris valorise également la fermeté de la jeune Italienne quand elle souligne qu'« (...) elle [Marie] s'était par raison d'État sacrifiée » (2010 : 128).

<sup>163</sup> Voltaire signale notamment que « L'attachement seul pour Marie Mancini fut une affaire importante, parce qu'il l'aima assez pour être tenté de l'épouser, et fut assez maître de lui-même pour s'en séparer. Cette victoire qu'il remporta sur sa passion commença à faire connaître qu'il était né avec une grande âme » (*Le Siècle de Louis XIV*, chap. XXV).

soulève surtout des aspects positifs de sa personne, la décrivant comme une femme joyeuse, compréhensive et philosophique (1935: 91). Globalement, nous pouvons affirmer que les différents auteurs abordés dans notre étude mettent tous en valeur, en somme, l'attrait puissant de la jeune Italienne, son génie de la communication et son brillant esprit : que ce soit en politique, en astrologie, en musique, en peinture, en littérature, Mademoiselle Mancini trouva de l'intérêt et du plaisir dans les domaines les plus divers. En outre, Marie est décrite, à plusieurs reprises<sup>164</sup>, comme une femme destinée à bouleverser sa vie et celle des autres :

« She [Marie] was a strange creature, yellow and scraggy, dumsy, with enormous dull eyes and a flat mouth, the ugly child of the family. She was destined to make trouble in the world, her father Lorenzo Mancini had predicted, and he had always been right, even prophesying his own death with precision. Marie would hardly make a good marriage, but some sort of mischief. She was sure to do, because Lorenzo Mancini had it seen in the stars » (Mackenzie 1935: 12).

---

<sup>164</sup> Ce point de vue est partagé par exemple par Antonia Fraser (2008: 61,62).



Claude Dulong approfondit ce trait mystique et chimérique, dont Mallet-Joris s'apercevait aussi (2010: 232), et va même plus loin, jusqu'au point de la considérer comme une femme excessive, déséquilibrée et folle. Vers la fin d'une émission radiophonique sur Canal Académie, l'historienne affirme notamment que Marie « n'avait pas la tête solide », et commettrait plusieurs erreurs, comme l'abandon de son mari, le connétable Colonna, entre autres. En s'appuyant sur une biographie plus récente de Claude Dulong, qui inclut des lettres et documents inédits du Palazzo Colonna, Elizabeth Goldsmith se montre méfiante vis-à-vis de l'opinion de Claude Dulong qui considère Marie une personne imprudente et sans limites, incapable de contrôler ses propres sentiments<sup>165</sup>.

Contrairement à Lucien Perey, Sophie Gay<sup>166</sup>, François Régis Chantelauze ou encore Françoise Mallet-Joris, qui s'intéressent

---

<sup>165</sup> « At each turn in the complicated route of Marie's life, Dulong admonishes her for her recklessness, her unpredictability, her lack of restraint » (Goldsmith 2012: viii).

<sup>166</sup> Sophie Gay, quant à elle, décrit l'histoire de Marie comme un roman. À l'exception de quelques citations contemporaines, l'auteure se sent libre à inventer des dialogues, elle-même, qui exposent la passion de Marie et de Louis comme « une passion folle » (1864: 235), tout en renforçant l'idée du « caractère exalté » et de la « conduite compassée » (1864: 77) de Marie, sans en préciser les raisons.

surtout aux différentes étapes de la vie de Marie<sup>167</sup>, Elizabeth Goldsmith remet en cause quelques affirmations, notamment celles de Claude Dulong. En outre, Goldsmith souligne le caractère singulier de Marie et reconnaît sa vie imprévisible et vagabonde comme étant la seule possible pour une femme aussi libre (2012: 225)<sup>168</sup>.

« Historians and chroniclers of the age of Louis XIV have tended to refer to Hortense and Marie either as scandalous pleasure-seekers or pathetic victims, usually pleasure-seekers who became pathetic victims. I saw them as bold, energetic, fascinating woman who certainly loved pleasure but who also

---

<sup>167</sup> Le parcours de Marie Mancini est souvent conforté par l'allusion de plusieurs sources et lettres contemporaines, comme l'atteste par exemple l'ouvrage de François Régis Chantelauze qui évoque les Mémoires authentiques de Marie, les lettres de Mme de Villars, les Mémoires de la duchesse de Mazarin, quelques lettres de Mazarin au roi et encore d'autres. La mention de documents illustre l'effort de l'auteur, de vouloir réunir des écrits authentiques de l'époque, et l'empêche ainsi de tomber dans une description trop romanesque, car, autant le préciser d'emblée, la vie de Marie ressemble plus à un roman qu'à une histoire véritable : « Ces héroïnes de roman [ il est question de Marie et d'Hortense] ne craignaient pas de s'habiller en homme, de courir la poste, de scandaliser le monde » (Doscot 1965 et 1987: 24).

<sup>168</sup> L'esprit indépendant de Marie est également mis en valeur par Faith Compton Mackenzie (1935: 147,148).

fought for their personal liberty and overcame obstacles so great that in the process they inspired other woman of their generation and beyond » (Goldsmith 2012: vii).

Au fur et à mesure de la lecture, nous nous sommes également rendues compte d'un discours essentiellement négatif et péjoratif concernant, surtout, les dernières années de Marie, commentées, voire critiquées par quelques auteurs. Selon Françoise Mallet-Joris, Marie, – « au bord de la folie » (2010: 182) – se heurtait à une « fragilité nerveuse » (*idem*: 211) et à une « contradiction interne » (*idem*: 232) qui l'ont enfin incitée à fuir sa vie décevante, l'amenant à une errance et inquiétude constantes. Mais ne faut-il pas reconnaître que Marie était prise par la liberté et avait le besoin de mener une vie inconditionnelle, dont le voyage et la fuite étaient le seul apaisement ? Dans une étude récente (2007), intitulée *Les nièces de Mazarin : des aristocrates face à la quête d'indépendance*, Claire Bernard thématise des aspects indispensables à notre analyse. Ainsi l'auteure met-elle en avant la place prépondérante de Marie au sein de la société aristocratique européenne (80), tout en la présentant comme une figure féminine incontournable du Grand Siècle ; fort en avance sur son temps. En dehors de la mise en valeur de la jeune

Mazarinette, cette étude fait planer le doute sur quelques constatations historiques au sujet de Marie et met en lumière des « jugements moraux explicites concernant les deux nièces de Mazarin » (108). Selon l'auteure, les faits historiques ont été, au fil du temps, altérés et mélangés de jugements de valeur et de nombreuses critiques négatives et elle conclut, par la suite, que « [c]ette analyse nous amène donc à relativiser l'image négative que les historiens et les biographes ont souvent attribuée à ces personnages féminins, dans le cadre des conceptions sociales et morales du statut de la femme sous l'Ancien Régime. (...) En effet, les conventions morales et religieuses constituaient le cadre traditionnel de cette période » (112).

Bien que les différents récits historiques et biographiques auxquels nous avons pu avoir accès aient été restreints, sous la perspective de notre étude, ils ont été très parlants, tout en nous suggérant des pistes de recherche et de réflexion qu'il fallait, certes, étendre et approfondir. D'une façon générale, les historiens et les biographes ici abordés suivent un modèle classique dans leurs récits, où sont décrits les étapes et de multiples épisodes de la vie de Marie Mancini : ils s'appuient partiellement sur de documents inédits qui sont, pourtant,

considérés comme des sources viables et non pas remis en question. L'historiographie a-t-elle effacé des détails cruciaux pour la recreation de Marie de Mancini – la femme qui a failli être reine, d'une influence sans égal sur le règne de Louis XIV ?<sup>169</sup> Après avoir envisagé et comparé quelques représentations de Marie, offertes aussi bien par des historiens français que par des auteurs anglais et américains, nous pouvons conclure que la représentation faite par les derniers nous offre un portrait plus détaillé et complet de cette jeune Mazarinette. À part Stanis Perez qui, plus récemment, valorise la figure de Marie de Mancini et son amour absolu pour le roi, tout en remettant en question des aspects importants, les historiens français ont tendance à produire une description plutôt chronologique, romancée et classique. Même si les historiens français reconnaissent la

---

<sup>169</sup> Marie a dû passer longtemps à l'ombre, quand elle aurait joué un rôle primordial à côté du roi, ce qui est également souligné par Faith Compton Mackenzie : « Marie, for all the madness of her love and her father's predictions, was going to be the finest influence of his youth » (1935: 38). Sophie Gay, en donnant le titre de *Marie Mancini...*, suivi par une réticence (délibérément ou pas), démontre selon nous, que la figure de Marie n'a pas été suffisamment explorée ni par les historiens ni par les biographes, qui, sans avoir achevé la représentation dans sa totalité, ont laissé beaucoup de choses à dire, un imparfait portrait de Marie.

grandeur de l'esprit de Marie, ils semblent, selon nous, éviter d'admettre l'influence qu'elle a eue sur le roi, la décrivant, notamment après le mariage du roi avec l'infante et plus visiblement suite à sa séparation conjugale, comme une femme excessive et démesurée. Ce sont, donc, surtout les aspects négatifs de sa vie qui sont mis en avant<sup>170</sup>. Bien que la liaison entre Marie Mancini et Louis XIV n'ait pas été tout de suite valorisée et approfondie par les historiens<sup>171</sup>, nous sommes persuadés qu'il s'agissait là bien plus que d'un simple « plaisir royal », mais d'une leçon de vie; il a été question d'une véritable histoire d'amour, malgré sa fin tragique, comme le souligne

---

<sup>170</sup> « Cependant, bien plus que des critiques précises sur des actes ponctuels, c'est une image générale d'échecs qui se dégage des nombreux jugements, aussi bien des contemporains que des historiens ou biographes » (Bernard 2007: 106). D'après notre lecture, cette affirmation se reflète plus concrètement chez Sophie Gay: « Après avoir fait retentir l'Italie et la France du bruit de ses actions scandaleuses, elle a été mourir inconnue, isolée dans un couvent de l'Espagne, laissant au monde le grand exemple d'une nature supérieure dégradée par une passion humiliée, par les tortures flétrissantes d'un abandon prévu, inévitable, enfin par tous les malheurs attachés à l'amour d'un roi (1864: 314, 315) ».

<sup>171</sup> Stanis Perez souligne que « [n]ombreux sont les historiens à avoir laissé de côté ce revers sentimental du souverain en y voyant un non-événement de plus dans la longue chronologie des amours royales » (2008: 617).

d'ailleurs Stanis Perez: « Or, derrière l'apparente banalité de ce fait divers, les sources révèlent des enjeux autrement plus importants qu'une tocade sans portée ni signification particulière » (2008: 617).

## Bibliographie

- AMÉDÉE, Renée (1857). Marie Mancini, connétable Colonna. *In* Les nièces de Mazarin: études de mœurs et de caractères au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle (pp.257-316). Paris : <http://archive.org/stream/lesnicesdemaza00renuoft#page/268/mode/2up>
- BARINE, ARVÈDE (10<sup>ème</sup> éd.) (1910). *Princesses et grandes dames : Marie Mancini, la reine Christine, une princesse arabe, la duchesse du Maine, la margrave de Bayreuth*: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k4114419/f5.image>
- BERNARD, Claire (2007). *Les nièces de Mazarin : des aristocrates face à la quête d'indépendance*. Université Grenoble Alpes - UFR

Arts & Sciences Humaines: <https://dumas.ccsd.cnrs.fr/dumas-00281513>

- CHANTELAUZE, François Régis (1880). *Louis XIV et Marie Mancini d'après de nouveaux documents*. Paris: Librairie Académique.

- DECKER, Michel de (2000). *Louis XIV: Le bon plaisir du roi*. Paris: Belfond.

- DOSCOT, Gérard (éd.) (1965 et 1987). *Mémoires d'Hortense et de Marie Mancini*, Mercure de France.

- DULONG, Claude (1994). *Les dernières années de Marie Mancini et son inventaire après décès* : [http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/bec\\_0373-6237\\_1994\\_num\\_152\\_1\\_450724](http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/bec_0373-6237_1994_num_152_1_450724)

- DULONG, Claude (2005). *Marie Mancini, la première passion de Louis XIV*. <http://www.canalacademie.com/ida306-Marie-Mancini-la-premiere-passion-de-Louis-XIV.html> (émission radiophonique sur Canal Académie).

- FRASER, Antonia (trad. 2008). *Luís XIV e o amor : as mulheres na vida do Rei Sol*. Oceanos.

- GAY, Sophie (1864). *Marie de Mancini*. Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, Libraires Éditeurs.



- GOLDSMITH, Elizabeth C. (2012). *The Kings' Mistresses: The liberated lives of Marie Mancini, Princess Colonna, and her sister Hortense, Duchess Mazarin*. New York: Publicaffairs.
- MACKENZIE, Faith Compton (1935). *The Cardinal's Niece: the story of Marie Mancini*. M. Secker.
- MALLET-JORIS, Françoise (2010). *Marie Mancini: Le premier amour de Louis XIV*. Paris: Pygmalion.
- MLLE DE BLEREAU (1762). Marie Mancini, nièce du cardinal Mazarin, à L\*\*\* XIV. Brouage/Avignon : <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5463115b>
- PEREY, Lucien (1894). *Le roman du grand roi: Louis XIV et Marie Mancini, d'après des lettres et documents inédits*. Paris: Calmann Lévy Éditeur : <http://www.archive.org/stream/leromandugrandro00herp#page/n11/mode/2up>
- PEREZ, Stanis (2008). « Passion, pouvoir et vérité à l'âge de la raison d'État. Note sur la séparation de Louis XIV avec Marie Mancini », *Dix-septième siècle* 2008/4 (n°241), pp.617-632) : <https://www.cairn.info/revue-dix-septieme-siecle-2008-4-page-617.htm>

- PRAH-PEROCHON, Anne (2013). « Louis XIV et Marie Mancini amours interdites pour raison d'État » *France-Amérique*. May2013, Vol. 6 Issue 5, (pp. 22-23): [https://issuu.com/france-amerique/docs/france\\_amerique\\_mai\\_2013](https://issuu.com/france-amerique/docs/france_amerique_mai_2013)
- RACINE, Jean (1671). (éd. par Paul Fièvre) (2015). *Bérénice*. Paris: [http://www.theatre-classique.fr/pages/programmes/edition.php?t=../documents/RACINE\\_BERENICE.xml](http://www.theatre-classique.fr/pages/programmes/edition.php?t=../documents/RACINE_BERENICE.xml)

“The World Becomes Darker to Me As I Pass  
Through It”

Michael Paller

American Conservatory Theatre de San Francisco

Tennessee Williams was always alert to the new. His early plays of the 1930s were inspired in part by the Group Theater, whose insistence on connecting art to the concerns and crises of daily life during the Depression was a bracing challenge to the way American commercial theater did business. Echoes of Clifford Odets and Irwin Shaw can clearly be heard in *Honor the Living*, *Candles to the Sun*, *The Fugitive Kind*, and *Not About Nightengales*, as can the voices of the avant garde and often-censored D.H. Lawrence Eugene O'Neill. The social-conscience films being made by Warner Brothers-First National – the sort of movies that didn't afford the audience the escapism of musicals – also made left their mark on the young playwright, and he absorbed their hard-boiled sound, as well. These voices would recede as his own grew clearer in the great plays of the forties and fifties. In

the late fifties he heard the new voices of Beckett and Ionesco, followed Pinter and Albee (who had very clearly heard his), and in the sixties, the camp of Charles Ludlam. All of these found their way into his later work.

However, the greatest influence over the plays Williams wrote after 1963's *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* wasn't literary. The death of his partner Frank Merlo from cancer that same year precipitated the disasters of addiction and depression that lasted the rest of Williams's life, and set off the chain of events that culminated in his confinement in the psychiatric ward of Barnes Hospital in St. Louis in September, 1969. Most of the plays he wrote from then until his death in 1983 were attempts to express, to find a shape for, the pain, loss and terror of those years.

Merlo's love and the attention he gave to the details of daily life made it possible for Williams to devote so many hours of his day at his typewriter. With Merlo gone, Williams sank into a depression that he sought to alleviate with alcohol and drugs. Controlling his drinking was not a new problem for Williams, but following Merlo's death he added an increasingly complex regimen of pills, as well as injections of amphetamines and other

drugs provided by the notorious Max Jacobson, known to his clients and the gossip press as Dr. Feelgood, whose clientele ranged from Truman Capote to Mickey Mantle to John F. Kennedy. These substances may have provided the basic fuel necessary to get him to the typewriter every morning, but they couldn't alleviate the depression, which was compounded by the increasingly hostile reaction to his work. Finally, fearing for his elder brother's health and safety, Dakin Williams admitted him to Barnes, where he was confined until December. The enforced stay supplied many of the images and circumstances that filled the plays of his last fourteen years, and also led to distinct changes in his characters' inner lives and the worlds in which they existed.

Perhaps reflecting his own feelings of chaos, anger, and helplessness, the world of many of the post-Barnes plays grew increasingly chaotic and dangerous. The characters in these plays usually have fewer inner resources to draw on than their predecessors, who carried within themselves a desire for survival and the strength to fight for it.

For these earlier characters, survival on their own terms is all. The four people who populate *The Glass Menagerie* are all going

to survive. Tom will flee his home at great cost; his mother, Amanda, who has held the family together by the strength of her own hectoring will, will find a way to go on because there isn't another choice; her equally willful daughter, Laura, will cling to the fantasy world she's built around herself; Jim, the Gentleman Caller, will draw strength from his drive for knowledge, power, and money. In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Stella and Stanley Kowalski expel her intruding sister Blanche and will continue to make love and babies beneath their colored lights. Blanche is led away to the asylum, defeated less by the brutality of Stanley and the callousness of her sister than by the implacable power of her own conscience, which never lets her escape the memory of the night that her husband killed himself. It requires the guns, rope, and fire of the small-minded men of Two River County to extinguish the urge for life in Lady and Val in *Orpheus Descending*; Catherine Holly's desperate connection to the truth may be her only salvation in *Suddenly Last Summer*.

In these pre-Barnes plays, the strength of Williams's characters is their connection to strong inner lives and a will to live that's extinguishable only by death. This will finds expression not only through action but also through vigorous language that

unfolds in skeins of multi-thought, multi-clause sentences often expressed with an urgency that belies an apparent southern languor. Their speech, heightened by circumstance and inner necessity, expresses a full, deep range of feelings and desires.

This is how Val Xavier, the young musician, describes himself to Lady in *Orpheus Descending*, as a man who can never be branded: You know they's a kind of bird that don't have legs so it can't light on nothing but has to stay all its life on its wings in the sky? That's true. I seen one once, it had died and fallen to earth and it was light-blue colored and its body was tiny as your little finger...and so light on the palm of your hand it didn't weigh more than a feather, but its wings spread out this wide but they was transparent, the color of the sky and you could see through them. That's what they call protection coloring. Camouflage, they call it. You can't tell those birds from the sky and that's why the hawks don't catch them, don't see them up there in the high blue sky near the sun!...They fly so high in the gray weather the goddam hawks would get dizzy. But those little birds, they don't have no legs at all and they live their whole lives on the wing, and they sleep on the wind, that's how they sleep at night, they

just spread their wings and go to sleep on the wind like other birds fold their wings and go to sleep on a tree...”

The speech comes at the beginning of a high-stakes love affair in which he rekindles Lady’s desire to live, and she provides him with shelter and tenderness. The play’s trajectory follows two people reaching fiercely for life until they are murdered by the bigoted, uncomprehending men of Two River County.

Williams worked on this play, which emerged first in 1940 as *Battle of Angels*, throughout the forties and fifties, until its premiere in 1957. It was, he wrote, a play about the unanswered questions that people ask themselves, and the price they pay for living among those too fearful to ask or answer them.

A dozen years later, and four months before Williams was incarcerated in Barnes Hospital, *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel* opened and closed on Broadway after 25 performances. In place of *Orpheus*’s aria-like speeches are simple declarative sentences and sentence fragments. Val Xavier himself is replaced by another artist, a middle-aged painter with only one name: Mark. Val existed easily with his music, and his guitar was a natural extension of his arm; his struggles were with the outside world. Mark is dying of the anxiety created by the unceasing demands



of his inner world. He tries to describe his condition to his disaffected wife Miriam: "I feel as if I were crossing the frontier of a country I have no permission to enter but I enter, this, this! I tell you, it *terrifies* me!" In *Orpheus* we meet Val and Lady at the beginning of something. Mark and Miriam are at the end, and there is no sympathy between them. They talk at each other with little comprehension. Where Val reached out to Lady, who was reborn in his love, Mark admits, "I've always felt that. After the work, so little is left of me. To give to another person." Miriam is untouched by his pain and fear. Before the play ends, he is dead, not at the hands of the cruel world, but of his own inner confusion and loss of confidence.

Shortly after his release from Barnes, Williams wrote the one-act "I Can't Imagine Tomorrow". Now, the characters are nameless. They're called simply One and Two. One, a woman, is dying a painful death; she can barely climb the stairs to her second floor bedroom. Two, a man, is in a deep depression; he can barely summon the strength to talk and is in danger of losing his job as a junior high school teacher. The sentence fragments of *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel* have become more numerous and more fragmentary:

One: You can walk one street every day and feel secure on that street, and then one day it collapses under your feet and the sky goes black.

Two: – We have to –

One: We have to what?

Two: – try not to –

One: What?

Two: – think about that. It doesn't –

One: What?

Two: – help to –

One: What?

Two: – think about that, it's better to –

One: What?

Two: – to feel –

One: What?

Two: – protected, even if –

One: What?

Two: – the feeling can't be –

One: What?

Two: – trusted.

In these two plays which bracket Williams's stay in Barnes, the characters' inability to speak even short sentences suggests not merely a loss for words, but a numbness to feeling, and a lack of desire even to speak, to make themselves heard: a situation utterly unknown to Williams's earlier characters.

In *Menagerie*, Tom's wish to escape the stifling confines of the St. Louis apartment is so great that he's willing to sacrifice the futures of his mother and sister. Carole Cutrere, the young woman brave enough to defy the men of Two River County in *Orpheus*, tells Val of the dead in Cyprus Hill Cemetery who chatter like birds, saying one word over and over: "'live,' they say, 'Live, live, live, live, live!'" Even in *Tokyo Bar*, while Mark is terrified to enter the new country of an unknown form of art, he enters, nonetheless, and pays for it with his life. In "Tomorrow", however, Two can't bear the thought of living without his friend, and One tells him repeatedly that she can't imagine tomorrow. Survival is no longer an affirmation; it's a punishment.

Shortly after his release from Barnes, Williams told a gathering at the London Poetry Festival that in the years between Merlo's death and his own enforced hospitalization, he had "elected the cool death". And indeed, many of the plays that followed his

three months in Barnes replaced a yearning for life with the growing presence of death. In the essay he read at the Festival, "What's Next on the Agenda, Mr. Williams?", he recalls saying to a doctor, "I'm not afraid of dying, I'm more afraid of *not* dying."

## II

Just as the inner lives of the post-Barnes plays differ from their predecessors, so do the worlds they inhabit. What we see in *The Glass Menagerie* may be confined to the tiny apartment where the three Wingfields live on top of each other, but the outside world makes its presence felt. The play opens with Tom's evocation of a world on fire, from Guernica in Spain to violence in formerly peaceful cities of the Midwest. There are sharp descriptions of the Continental Shoemakers warehouse where Tom ekes out a living, with its celotex interior and fluorescent tubes, and of the bustling movie theater to which Tom escapes at night. His description of the Paradise Dance Hall across the alley, with its large glass sphere that, turning slowly, creates delicate rainbow colors, and Amanda's of a vanished Delta world of jonquils and gentleman callers, together create a world which works on, and provides a context for, the characters' desires and the actions they take to get them. It's a world beyond the apartment, beyond St. Louis, that the characters either yearn to discover, retreat from, or regard as a danger to be overcome.

The rich world of *Orpheus*, its terror and its small refuges of fantasy (Lady's confectionary and Vee Talbot's paintings), are evoked not only by vivid description but through its vivid, teeming characters, who range from the passionate Val and the repressed Lady, to the visionary Vee, the wild Carole, the deadly Jabe and his cohorts, and the mysterious Uncle Pleasant. Each is different and specific; taken together, they suggest a Two River County that is a cosmos unto itself. Similarly, the lush world of *Suddenly Last Summer* resides not only in its setting but in the small but specifically delineated cast of characters, all of whom have a life-or-death need for freedom, money, or reputation.

The imaginative energy that Williams invests in these worlds, and the significance he attaches to their specific physicality, derives from his own attachment to sensuality: to the look, feel, sound, and smell of things. So specific is the physical world of *The Glass Menagerie* that it requires almost two pages to describe the building in which the Wingfields live — “one of those vast hive-like conglomerations of cellular living units that flower as warty growths in overcrowded urban centers,” — and the dark alleys that surround it. Before a single word of dialogue is

spoken, we've gained crucial information about the physical and emotional qualities of its world.

The page-long description of the set of *Orpheus* is similarly detailed though more concise — just over a page of specific imagery — with its dark walls streaked with moisture and cobwebs, “black skeleton of a dressmaker’s dummy”, ceiling fan draped in flypaper, and sinister-looking artificial palm tree on the landing of the stairs. It’s a dark, claustrophobic world with only two hints of intimacy and touches of warmth and life: the offstage confectionary, “shadowy and poetic,” and the alcove where Val will sleep, hidden by the “Oriental” tapestry with its “gold tree, with scarlet fruit and fantastic birds,” that covers the entrance.

Mrs. Venable’s garden in *Suddenly Last Summer* is perhaps the most specific world of all, conjuring both a physical and metaphorical world where every living thing contests a high-stakes game of eat-or-be-eaten. The colors of this jungle-garden are violent, especially since it is steaming with heat after rain. There are massive tree-flowers that suggest organs of a body torn out, still glistening with undried blood; there are harsh cries and sibilant

hissings and thrashing sounds in the garden as if it were inhabited by beasts, serpents and birds, all of a savage nature...

Compared to these, the worlds of most of the post-Barnes plays are radically attenuated. The physical world of *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel* barely exists beyond a round table and "a bar of polished bamboo." The most striking elements as the play begins are two bright, tightly-focused pools of light surrounding Miriam and the Barman, illuminating and imprisoning them. The description of One's home in "I Can't Imagine Tomorrow," is slightly fuller. Williams calls for upholstery on the living room furniture and suggests that it be satin, perhaps pastel-colored, "light rose or turquoise." But to the extent that Williams describes it at all, the room is generic. He calls for only, "such pieces of furniture that are required by the action of the play," providing only the bare minimum of imagery needed to imagine this small world in which the characters again are enclosed in the lights from follow-spots. Where the detailed descriptions of the settings for *The Glass Menagerie*, *Orpheus Descending*, and *Suddenly Last Summer* are also metaphors for the multi-textured worlds in which they take place, the set descriptions in *Tokyo Bar* and "Tomorrow" are just that: descriptions of a place. If there's



a metaphor in these descriptions, it's for emptiness. They could take place in a bar in Milwaukee, in any living room anywhere. By early 1983, when he wrote what the scholar Annette Saddick has determined was his last complete play, "The One Exception," about a mentally fragile artist terrified of being confined in a mental institution, Williams described the world in a single sentence: "The front room of a private home which looks as if it's not ready for occupancy."

In an interview in 1961, he said that his long and "pseudo-literary" plays no longer interested audiences; he felt ready to embark in new directions. By then, many of the post-war playwrights whom he admired were creating similarly empty worlds. Perhaps Williams was merely trying to keep up. After all, he was as interested in the new in 1961 as he'd been in the thirties. Still, when writers write authentically, they respond to the new in themselves as well as what's new in the air around him. If an increasingly desperate and barren landscape had not been growing inside Williams's imagination, would he have responded to similar exterior worlds?

Not all the worlds of the post-Barnes are as empty of specifics as "I Can't Imagine Tomorrow". The one-act "Confessional," and

its full-length version, *Small Craft Warnings*, have specific physical worlds that also function as metaphors. In those plays in which he looks back from the sixties and seventies to the thirties when he dreamed of fame and success, the world he imagines lies somewhere between the crowded, specific, metaphorical universes of *Menagerie*, *Orpheus*, and *Suddenly Last Summer* and the desolation of *Tokyo Bar*, "I Can't Imagine Tomorrow," and other later plays. The world of *Vieux Carre* conjures up the boarding house he lived in at 722 Toulouse in the French Quarter of New Orleans in 1939. The descriptions of each room are perfunctory and without much detail, like the empty rooms of a fading memory, but Williams populates them with a cast of characters both larger and more diverse than he had for several years: the tight-fisted, desperate landlady Mrs. Wire, the starving crones Miss Maude and Miss Carey, the lovers Jane and Tye, the dying poet Nightingale, the clarinetist with in love with long distances Skye, all wanting to live and all circling around Williams's memory of his younger self, The Writer. The unseen French Quarter itself is as much a presence here as it is in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, music from its bars and streets filling the transitions between scenes.

Perhaps the most interesting world in this context is the one he created for *The Two-Character Play*. This memory play-within-a-play, on which he worked for several years before and after Barnes, is set on the stage of an abandoned theater where the brother and sister actor-managers, Felice and Claire, deserted by their company, find themselves trapped. The set for their production, "The Two-Character Play," is the parlor of an old Victorian house in a town in the deep South called New Bethesda. Though he calls this set "incomplete," Williams describes it with some of the old specificity: there is an external garden, furnishings including an upright piano, and "various tokens of the vocation of the astrologer, who apparently gave 'readings' in this room"; he suggests the wallpaper be patterned with astrological symbols, as well.

Surrounding this set for the inner play is the one for the outer play, where Felice and Claire contend with the revolt of their company, the absence of an audience for their work, and each other's implacable natures. It's not quite an empty space, but it reflects the broken world of a failing imagination:

About the stage enclosing this incomplete interior are scattered unassembled pieces of scenery for other plays than the play-within-a-play....Perhaps this exterior setting is the more important of the two. It must not only suggest the disordered images of a mind approaching collapse but also, correspondingly, the phantasmagoria of the nightmarish world that all of us live in in the present, not just the subjective but the true world with all its dismaying shapes and shadows . . .

It's a world that represents both the terrifying external world in which Williams increasingly found himself, and the scarcely more comforting one of his imagination where, in the years just before and after *Barnes*, he strived to give that world a satisfying artistic shape and meaning. "The world becomes darker to me as I pass through it," he wrote in a program note. The dual set for *The Two Character Play* reflects that darkness, and what seemed to audiences and critics, and at times to Williams, an increasing inability to shed on it any light.

### III

The post-Barnes plays do not fit any one model or type of style or genre and employ multiple kinds of worlds. There is much more variation of tone and convention in the post-Barnes plays than there are in the pre-Barnes ones — which, if hardly examples of typical American realism, didn't, for the most part, depart so radically from it as to be unrecognizable to his Broadway audience. It's as if his experiences in the hospital released something in him or removed something from him that gave him access to a wider range of worlds — of experiences — that he'd had before. Something in his experience in Barnes changed his way of seeing. "This is the Peaceable Kingdom", "Now the Cat With Jewelled Claws," "The Destruction Downtown," "A Cavalier for Milady," "The Pronoun 'I'" and many other of the late plays employ different styles and techniques, explore different manifestations of worlds interior and exterior beyond the halting, depressed, defeated characters of "I Can't Imagine Tomorrow".

That so much of the late work took the form of small-cast one-act plays suggests, perhaps, a retreat from what he saw as an

increasingly violent, dangerous world into the intimacy of chamber plays, populated with only a few characters. Even here, however, the violence of the world, no longer softened by lyrical language and the possibility of love, intrudes, all the more powerfully for operating in such confined quarters and in a single painful or absurd tone.

The world of *Orpheus*, deadly as it is, is softened by Lady's confectionary, and by the safe haven of the alcove where she and Val make love, separated from the rest of the store by its delicately decorated Oriental curtain. How different this is from the world of "The Remarkable Rooming-House of Mme. Le Monde," of 1982. This play, too, takes place in a room with an alcove. Like the alcove in *Orpheus*, it is separated from the larger space by a curtain. Unlike the Oriental one, however, this curtain is semi-transparent, and provides no privacy for the acts committed behind it, the daily rape of Mint by the landlady's son. The larger room is called the "rectangle with hooks". The hooks hang from the ceiling and perhaps the walls ("The whole attic is equipped with curved metal hooks," Williams writes) and provide the only means of locomotion for the room's resident, Mint, a "delicate little" man who has lost the use of his legs. He

is confined to this room without the ability to flee, as Williams was in Barnes. To get around the room, Mint must swing from hook to hook with his arms. The hooks, the alcove and the curtain are the sum total of the physical elements of the brutal world of this play.

The new directions in which Williams struck out just prior to and after Barnes weren't an entire break from his past, however. *Tokyo Hotel* takes as its starting point, as Allean Hale has pointed out, the Noh dramas he discovered in the fifties, the techniques of which he had begun adopting in "The Day on Which a Man Dies," and *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore*. The flattened-out cartoon world of *Kirche, Küche, Kinder* has its roots not only in the Warner Brothers cartoons he saw at the movies in his youth (preceding the social-conscience Warner Brothers-First National films on the bill) but also in *Camino Real*, his earliest Broadway effort that departed so decisively from traditional realism that the audience rejected it after 60 performances.

When he was first admitted to Barnes, as Armando Nascimento Rosa shows in *Doctor Feelgood – A journey back to Belle Reve* (2012), Williams experienced hallucinations. People whose reality he was uncertain of came and went, and he said later that he

couldn't always tell when he was awake and when he was dreaming. He reproduced that kind of hallucinatory experience in *Something Cloudy, Something Clear* in 1981, in which a writer named August sees and talks with people from several decades of us life, who come and go freely, across time and space. Characters from various periods of Williams's own life mix with fictional ones, and fictionalized characters based on people he knew well. The play is not a hallucination, but it is hallucinatory. Perhaps it was while he was in Barnes that he first experienced the phenomenon that August describes in *Something Cloudy*: "Life is all—it's just one time. It finally seems to all occur at one time."

Although *Something Cloudy, Something Clear* deals in the predatory ways with which people use each other and jockey endlessly for position, the world it portrays isn't the brutal one of so many of the late plays. Characters may use others as pawns, but there is understanding and, occasionally, forgiveness. While there can be so much violence and despair in the plays that Williams wrote after Barnes, so little warmth or comfort, not all was hopelessness. That he kept writing almost everyday until the end was itself a sign of hope, a refusal to



surrender – even if the last play he finished was likely “The One Exception”, its final image that of the terrified artist locking herself in the room so that she won’t be taken away. In it, the struggling artist Viola states a credo that could have been Williams’s own: “If one has a life and a creative impulse—no, I’ve never, never, and I hope I will never *ever*—comprehend *giving up!*—that’s just not what an artist’s life is about as I can possibly conceive it.” Even in so many of his post-Barnes plays, where characters are stripped of language and desire, and exist in a barren landscape, sometimes there still existed the will to go on.



# Approche pragmatique de la violence verbale de la pièce de théâtre

## *Le Bâillon* de Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt

Vlad Dobrou

Centre de recherches en linguistique romane et analyse du  
discours (CLRAD)

Facultatea de Litere, Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai (Cluj-Napoca)

« À l’instar de notre civilisation qui éprouve le vertige à disparaître mais aussi à être, le théâtre ne cherche pas la maîtrise et l’achèvement ; il cultive l’accident, la défaillance, la fugacité des instants vivants et mortels qui immobilisent la douleur ou une émotion du corps. Instants rares où un être fait entendre l’écho douloureux de sa voix à ceux qui l’écotent. Instants uniques où un corps singulier advient dans l’éphémère comme un événement irremplaçable, suspendu entre vie et mort. »

(Franck Évrard, *Le théâtre français du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Éditions Ellipses, 1995, p. 87)

## 1. Préliminaires théoriques : le monologue

Suite aux remarques de Dominique Maingueneau (2007) visant les possibilités de classer les discours tout en tenant compte des typologies communicationnelles, des typologies de situations de communication et des typologies linguistiques et discursives, nous soulignons, à notre tour, la nécessité d'encadrer les textes dramatiques dans les catégories génériques et discursives appropriées.

Publiée chez Albin Michel en 1999, la pièce de théâtre *Le Bâillon* de Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt peut être incluse dans le sous-genre « monologue » qui relève du genre dramatique à l'intérieur du sous-type de discours « de théâtre » qui appartient au type de discours « littéraire ». Afin de procéder à une analyse plus approfondie de la violence verbale de cette pièce de théâtre, il faut mentionner que le concept de « monologue » peut également être compris comme l'équivalent textuel d'un spectacle « one man show ».

Le théâtre est associé, en général, à deux vastes secteurs d'activité sociale – le théâtre comme représentation (scénique, radiophonique, etc.) et le théâtre comme œuvre littéraire. Parmi

d'autres différences qui séparent la représentation scénique d'une pièce de théâtre et le texte même de cette pièce de théâtre, nous voudrions mettre en évidence la possibilité du lecteur d'avoir accès direct aux didascalies, accès qui facilite l'interprétation du texte grâce à la possibilité de contextualiser assez facilement le discours envisagé :

À côté du *dialogue dramatique* les autres composantes interviennent de façon essentielle dans la construction du sens : si le dialogue et le monologue recouvrent tout le domaine du verbal, les *didascalies* portent d'une part sur le paraverbal (prosodique et vocal) et d'autre part sur le non verbal tant cinétique (proxémique, postural, mimo-gestuel) que statique (physionomie, maquillage et costumes). (Florea, 2012 : 101)

Étant donné que toute production discursive implique la présence d'un sujet qui construit ses énoncés, par l'intermédiaire du signifiant explicite ou implicite d'un « je » énonciateur qui adresse son message à un allocataire présent ou imaginaire, il faudrait, peut-être, préciser qu'une grande partie des

monologues dramatiques sont construits justement à partir de ce dédoublement inévitable de l'instance énonciative.

André Petitjean (2012) réfléchit sur « la pluralité générique » du texte dramatique en partant de l'interaction des deux couches textuelles qui le composent, plus exactement les dialogues et les didascalies. La problématique de « la pluralité générique » d'un texte dramatique peut également être analysée non seulement à partir des phénomènes de « poétisation » ou de « romanisation » des didascalies, mais aussi à partir de la fusion entre le narratif et le dramatique et l'alternance de ceux-ci au sein de la même pièce de théâtre.

D'après Jean-Michel Adam (2011), le monologue narratif au théâtre se trouve à mi-chemin entre le récit et la conversation et cela justement à cause de ces deux formes textuelles qui se chevauchent dans le même discours. Néanmoins, il souligne que la narrativité sous-jacente d'un texte théâtral concourt, en général, avec les monologues délibératifs des personnages ou les dialogues de ceux-ci à la formation, compte tenu des théories de l'analyse conversationnelle, d'un mode dramatique de composition textuelle à part.

Classer une pièce de théâtre dans la catégorie des récits revient à privilégier un contenu, l'histoire racontée, la *narrativité* sous-jacente au détriment de la matérialité du signifiant textuel (écrit) et de sa représentation (oralisée). [...] En d'autres termes, ce n'est pas le *quoi* de la représentation, mais son *comment* qui distingue fondamentalement le drame (tragédie ou comédie) du récit (épopée). (Adam, 2011 : 248)

## **2. La composition textuelle du monologue *Le Bâillon***

**2.1.** La pièce de théâtre *Le Bâillon* de Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt représente la confession d'un jeune homme atteint du SIDA. D'un point de vue intradiégétique, David raconte ses souvenirs à un autre personnage, c'est-à-dire à un homme invisible, qui n'intervient pas de manière directe dans son discours. Les événements évoqués sont des moments essentiels de sa vie, à partir de sa jeunesse et jusqu'au moment de sa mort. Arrivé dans l'autre monde, il parle à cet homme qu'il ne connaît pas. Les raisons pour le faire pourraient être très diverses : il a besoin, peut-être, de faire le bilan de sa vie, il voudrait tout simplement

faire passer plus vite le temps pendant lequel il attend son bien-aimé, etc.

La vie, on la boit au quotidien, on en oublie donc la saveur : « *J'ai longtemps vécu sans m'en rendre compte* » déclare le personnage de ce monologue en racontant son histoire à un interlocuteur imaginaire. L'histoire d'un homme atteint d'une maladie incurable, une maladie honteuse au regard des autres, comme si l'amour et ses conséquences – même tragiques – pouvaient avoir quelque chose de honteux.

C'est bien parce qu'il en aperçoit la fin que sa vie va devenir précieuse, et face à l'incompréhension de son entourage proche, c'est en forêt qu'il finira par trouver refuge...<sup>172</sup>

Dans *Le Bâillon* de Éric Emmanuel Schmitt, l'énonciateur, David, remémore certains événements de sa vie en présence d'un autre personnage, qui remplit le rôle de confesseur. Sa vie peut être ainsi résumée aux moments où il a découvert qu'il est atteint de

---

<sup>172</sup> Pour avoir accès aux autres présentations des œuvres de Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt, à consulter le site Internet de l'auteur : <http://www.eric-emmanuel-schmitt.com/Theatre-Courtes-pieces-en-un-acte.html>.



SIDA et aux événements connexes. Plus exactement, David restreint son existence d'une vingtaine d'années aux fêtes foraines auxquelles il participait fréquemment, aux activités à la campagne (faire les foins et monter les bêtes aux alpages) et à ses rencontres amoureuses.

Il avait une vie assez tranquille et il ne se posait pas de questions existentielles. Toutefois, après avoir attrapé cette maladie, son quotidien change radicalement et ses parents commencent à le regarder avec mépris. Un jour, il entend même son père dire à sa mère qu'il le mettra bientôt à la porte. Cette réaction violente de son père a été causée par le fait qu'un voisin lui avait souri un petit peu trop dans la rue.

Quant à la sélection des items lexicaux utilisés, nous voudrions attirer l'attention pour l'instant sur deux constructions nominales : « “ma maladie” » pour désigner le SIDA et « “mon agonie” » pour sa vie. L'analyse de ces constructions ne doit pas s'arrêter à l'idée d'une possession assumée tout simplement de sa condition de malade (compte tenu des déictiques de première personne du singulier), puisque l'emploi des guillemets et le cotexte immédiat suggèrent le contraire. Plus exactement, ses

parents considèrent que cette maladie est une honte, tandis que, d'après lui, le SIDA n'est pas une raison pour haïr autrui.

Eh, bien, voyez-vous, Monsieur, je me posais la même question au sujet de ce que mes parents appelaient "ma maladie". Si ma maladie c'était moi, alors je ne devais pas la haïr : je ne suis pas l'ennemi de moi-même. Mais si la maladie était une violence venue d'ailleurs, alors je devais la considérer comme un adversaire. Or c'était moi, ma maladie, puisqu'elle m'avait été donnée pendant que je faisais l'amour. Je n'étais donc pas hostile à ce qu'ils appelaient ma maladie. (Schmitt, 1999 : 233)

Mes regains de santé les agaçaient, cela n'allait pas assez vite ; ma vie – pardon : ce qu'ils appelaient « mon agonie » – leur devenait odieuse. (*Ibid.*)

En faisant appel aux guillemets, ce qui à l'oral correspondrait à une intonation à part, l'auteur montre au lecteur qu'il ouvre une faille dans le monologue. Plus précisément, le dramaturge indique qu'il existe une distanciation de la part de David vis-à-vis des paroles de ses parents. Celui-ci présente ensuite

l'évolution de son état en concordance avec ce que la maladie représente pour lui, et respectivement, pour ses parents.

Afin de faire référence au SIDA et à sa condition de malade, il a recours à d'autres constructions nominales et verbales qui comportent des termes subjectifs, affectifs ou évaluatifs, tels que cette suite de verbes exprimant son état de confusion qui contraste avec le comportement violent de ses parents : « ils s'impatientaient, ils ne me voyaient plus » (*Ibid.*), « mes regains de santé les agaçaient » (*Ibid.*), « un soir, j'entendis mon père hurler » (*Ibid.*). La différence de perspective que les personnages ont sur cette maladie est suggérée aussi par l'intermédiaire de certains items lexicaux à valeur axiologique défavorable, comme « maigreur » ou « fièvres » qui contrastent avec ceux à valeur axiologique favorable, tels que « délivrance » ou « amour ».

**2.2.** En ce qui concerne la composition textuelle de ce monologue, il faut bien différencier les parties narratives du récit des parties effectivement conversationnelles, qui relèvent du discours direct. Il s'agit donc de deux niveaux de repérage temporel, celui de la fiction fondamentale et celui de la fiction marginale.

Marcel Vuillaume affirme que la plupart des récits comportent deux fictions : une fiction qui correspond « à ce qu'on appelle communément *l'histoire* » et une autre « qui met en scène le narrateur et le lecteur et les présente comme témoins oculaires des événements narrés » (1990 : 109). En partant de ce point de vue, il est plus facile à comprendre la pluralité générique de la pièce de théâtre de Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt. Il existe un « je » qui narre les événements les plus importants de son passé et un « je » qui s'adresse directement à l'homme invisible (et, indirectement, à nous, les lecteurs).

Dans *Le Bâillon*, le personnage-énonciateur s'adresse directement à un deuxième personnage qui remplit le rôle d'allocutaire. Celui-ci semble répondre à David par l'intermédiaire du non verbal, plus exactement en faisant appel aux gestes communicationnels. Il faut préciser que c'est le personnage principal qui nous révèle les actions de cet homme inconnu, car celles-ci ne sont pas mentionnées dans les didascalies. Toutefois, les gestes de David envers cet homme sont décrits explicitement dans les indications scéniques.

À propos des didascalies méta-interactionnelles, André Petitjean (2012) distingue les gestes praxiques des gestes

communicationnels tout en soulignant que les gestes praxiques sont des activités physiques que le locuteur peut faire pendant l'interaction et qu'ils sont dépourvus, le plus souvent, de contenu informationnel. D'autre part, les gestes communicationnels, nommés également gestes co-verbaux, ont la fonction d'organiser l'expression verbale :

Parmi les gestes co-verbaux on relèvera les « illustateurs », gestes parmi lesquels on peut distinguer, entre autres,

- les mouvements déictiques désignant un sujet ou un objet présents [...]
- les kinétographes, mouvements qui miment l'action corporelle [...]
- les synchronisateurs qui assurent le bon fonctionnement de l'interaction verbale sous la forme de « régulateurs », gestes et mouvements de demande ou de cession d'un tour de parole.

(Petitjean, 2012 : 93)

David s'imagine que cet homme lui répond à travers des gestes communicationnels. C'est ainsi qu'il a l'impression que l'homme invisible l'invite à s'asseoir, qu'il lui demande la permission de

garder son chapeau, etc. À noter qu'il y a aussi quelques interpellations sans réponses ou annulées par David même qui dynamisent l'acte de confession.

*(A l'homme invisible)* Vous l'aviez décidé avant que je ne vous le demande ? (Schmitt, 1999 : 225)

Oui, c'est cela : asseyez-vous. *(Se corrigeant :)* Asseyons-nous ? *(Ibid.)*

Non, non, bien sûr, gardez votre chapeau. *(Ibid., p. 227)*

Vous avez été blessé ? *(Ayant peur que l'inconnu ne parte :)* Mais je suis indiscret, pardonnez-moi. *(Ibid., p. 228)*

Vous m'écoutez ? Vous vous ennuyez ? C'est normal... Mais ici on s'habitue à tout, même à l'ennui. Disons plutôt qu'on manque de points de comparaison, vu qu'il ne se passe rien... *(Ibid., p. 230)*

Quelle que soit la forme d'organisation textuelle de cette pièce de théâtre, on doit se poser la question fondamentale de tout texte dramatique : *qui parle à qui et pourquoi ?*

### **3. *Le Bâillon* : une confession sans confesseur**

**3.1.** Dans *Le Bâillon* de Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt, l'allocutaire (l'homme inconnu) n'a aucune intervention verbale – il est, en fin de compte, invisible. Toutefois, on peut considérer qu'il remplit le rôle du confesseur, car David organise ses énoncés et raconte sa vie d'une manière cohérente en tenant compte des gestes, c'est-à-dire des réponses non verbales, de cet homme. Il faudrait peut-être affirmer que c'est le jeune homme qui investit l'allocutaire des actions pour créer l'impression qu'il participe effectivement à son discours.

Il est difficile, cependant, de s'imaginer cet allocutaire étant donné qu'il n'a pas de traits cognoscibles : « *un interlocuteur que l'on ne voit pas* » (*Ibid.*, p. 225), « (*À l'homme invisible*) » (*Ibid.*), « (*Ayant peur que l'inconnu ne parte*) » (*Ibid.*, p. 228). En dépit du fait qu'il est invisible, ce monsieur est présent dans le discours de David et les embrayeurs pronominaux le montrent

clairement : « Oh, Monsieur ! Monsieur, s'il vous plaît ! [...] Vous... vous vous arrêtez ?... Oui ?... (*Étonné* :) ...c'est justement... ce que je voulais vous demander... » (*Ibid.*).

C'est seulement en ayant recours aux paroles et aux gestes de David que nous pouvons, en fin de compte, arriver à imaginer la présence de l'homme inconnu, car il n'a aucune intervention concrète et les didascalies ne contiennent aucune information révélant son identité. Il sert cependant de point de retour au moment présent de l'énonciation, il est l'allocutaire nécessaire pour que la confession puisse avoir lieu.

David lui raconte sa vie, y compris le moment de sa mort. Il se souvient, ainsi, de son enfance et, malgré les violences domestiques auxquelles il devait assister fréquemment, il croyait avoir les meilleurs parents du monde entier. En réalité, son père buvait beaucoup et frappait souvent sa femme. Ayant peur de lui, elle n'avait pas le courage de le confronter directement. Alors, elle prenait l'enfant dans ses bras et lui disait de ne battre aucune femme quand il serait adulte. Elle criait des reproches à David, mais en fait elle s'adressait à son mari.



Je ne m'étais sans doute jamais posé de questions. J'avais un père, une mère, je ne les jugeais pas. Si l'on m'avait soumis à un interrogatoire, j'aurais sans doute répondu que j'avais le meilleur des pères et la meilleure des mères, car c'est ce qu'ils disaient eux-mêmes. Je n'ai jamais eu d'imagination. Ma mère avait de grands gestes vers moi, quand mon père la giflait parce qu'il avait trop bu ; elle me prenait dans ses bras, me serrait très fort et me criait, en regardant mon père : « Tu ne me ferais pas cela, toi, n'est-ce pas ? Tu ne battrais pas une femme ? Tu ne lui ferais pas de mal ? » Mais il suffisait que les yeux de mon père brillent, qu'ils lui fassent signe de le rejoindre dans la chambre, elle m'envoyait dehors ou bien à l'écurie, estimant sur-le-champ que je n'avais rien à faire dans ses pattes. Je me sentais vaguement de trop, mais c'était tellement vague, ce sentiment, une haleine dans la brume (*Ibid.*, p. 226-227)

À travers ce trope communicationnel, elle se venge sur son enfant de l'humiliation infligée par son époux. Elle demande à David de ne pas lui faire du mal quand il serait adulte, mais c'est elle-même qui lui fait du mal en le serrant trop fort et en l'agressant psychologiquement. Quant au comportement violent du

mari envers son épouse, ses agressions physiques sont, en effet, des actes menaçants pour la « face » de la femme. C'est justement à cause de cela qu'elle abuse à son tour l'enfant, car elle veut renégocier sa place.

**3.2.** En pragmatique, la notion de « trope communicationnel » renvoie à l'adresse indirecte et concerne la hiérarchie des participants au discours. Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni, qui a d'ailleurs beaucoup travaillé sur la notion de trope, affirme que, dans certaines conditions, un locuteur peut s'adresser directement à son allocutaire, mais que ses paroles visent plutôt une troisième personne.

Il y a « trope communicationnel » chaque fois que s'opère, sous la pression du contexte, un renversement de la hiérarchie normale des destinataires ; c'est-à-dire chaque fois que le destinataire qui en vertu des indices d'allocution fait en principe figure de destinataire direct, ne constitue en fait qu'un destinataire secondaire, cependant que le véritable allocutaire, c'est en réalité celui qui a en apparence statut de destinataire indirect. (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1998 : 92)

Dans la séquence tirée de la pièce de théâtre *Le Bâillon* de Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt, le destinataire direct (l'enfant) occupe une position secondaire, tandis que le destinataire indirect (le père) occupe une position principale. En criant à son enfant, la mère crie en fait à son mari. À cause qu'il l'a frappée, elle se sert de David pour attaquer indirectement son homme et sauver sa « face ».

En ce qui concerne la notion de « face », elle se trouve en étroite liaison avec la théorie de la politesse linguistique, qui a été développée, au milieu des années 1970, par des chercheurs comme Robin Lakoff, Geoffrey Leech, Penelope Brown et Stephen Levinson (cf. Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1992 : 160).

Lors de la négociation de leur relation interpersonnelle, les participants au discours peuvent se trouver dans la situation de produire des actes verbaux et non verbaux à visée blessante pour garder leur prestige et leur dignité suite aux attaques directes ou indirectes des autres locuteurs. Ces actes menaçants pour la face des interactants sont nommés en anglais *Face Threatening Acts* (FTAs). De l'autre côté, il existe, bien sûr, la possibilité de produire des *Face Flattering Acts* (FFAs) pour permettre à autrui de garder son honneur et son estime de soi, comme c'est d'ailleurs le cas des compliments ou des remerciements.

Bref, tout locuteur possède deux faces complémentaires : une face positive (images valorisantes de soi-même) et une face négative (son « territoire » corporel, spatial, matériel ou mental). Cependant, ce qui peut être considéré à un moment donné comme un compliment peut passer dans d'autres circonstances pour une insulte. Une remarque telle que « Comme tu es aimable aujourd'hui ! » peut être un compliment si le sujet parlant est vraiment sincère ou une insulte si l'allocutaire se rend compte de l'ironie implicite.

La formulation d'un acte de langage dépend donc fondamentalement de sa valeur par rapport au « système des faces », valeur qui dépend elle-même du *contexte social et culturel* dans lequel se réalise l'énoncé (à la limite, un même énoncé peut valoir pour un FTA dans un contexte donné, et pour un FFA dans un autre contexte, et inversement). (Charaudeau & Maingueneau, 2002 : 260)

Dans le cas de la séquence dramatique déjà présentée, le mari cherche à neutraliser les effets négatifs de ses offenses en faisant signe à sa femme de le rejoindre dans leur chambre. Il essaie de

lui demander pardon. La femme a l'impression que son époux l'aime et qu'elle a réussi à renégocier ainsi sa place. Une fois qu'elle gagne l'attention de son mari, elle n'a plus besoin de son enfant et le met dehors.

David se souvient avec amertume des agressions physiques de son père envers sa mère, ainsi que des agressions émotionnelles de sa mère envers lui-même. Ces violences domestiques ont eu un fort impact sur lui et ont profondément marqué son enfance. En utilisant le terme dépréciatif « pattes » pour faire référence aux bras de sa mère, il fait des jugements de valeur et souligne le manque d'empathie du parent.

**3.3.** Après une visite chez le médecin de la ville, David découvre qu'il a attrapé le SIDA et son existence prend depuis un tout autre tournant. Il dit à l'homme inconnu que la maladie l'a réveillé puisqu'il a commencé à apprécier encore plus la vie. Toutefois, le moment où il révèle à ses parents le nom de la maladie est remémoré avec tristesse. Il est de nouveau victime des violences domestiques.

Je rentrai chez moi et je leur dis, calmement, à mes parents, d'une voix lente, une voix posée que je ne me connaissais pas, une voix presque savante... je leur dis cette maladie, son nom et que j'allais mourir, sans doute, dans les mois à venir, même si l'on n'y croyait pas encore, car on ne croit pas à ce qui n'existe pas, et qu'est-ce qui existe moins que la mort ? Mon père buvait, ma mère se taisait. Puis ses lèvres sifflèrent, en griffant le silence : « Comment l'as-tu attrapée, cette saloperie, hein, comment l'as-tu attrapée ? » [...]

Je répondis à la question de ma mère. Elle jura, d'une langue sèche, comme un fouet, et mon père cracha par terre. J'allai dans ma chambre, parce que la marche depuis la ville m'avait finalement épuisé. (Schmitt, 1999 : 230-232)

Le comportement violent des adultes, qui contraste d'ailleurs avec l'attitude calme du jeune homme, se manifeste à travers des marqueurs discursifs verbaux et non verbaux, c'est-à-dire à travers des paroles et des gestes communicationnels. Après avoir dit à ses parents qu'il est atteint du SIDA et qu'il mourra en quelques mois, il décide d'aller se reposer dans sa chambre. De

cette façon, il se réfugie dans un espace protecteur pour se mettre à l'abri des agressions des adultes.

En apprenant le nom de la maladie, les parents ont de nouveau des réactions violentes. L'homme crache par terre, tandis que la femme commence à jurer. David approche les jurons de sa mère des coups d'un fouet, bien qu'il ne comprenne pas exactement la raison pour laquelle ils sont tellement agressifs. Le conflit ne prend pas cependant d'ampleur, car David monte dans sa chambre.

Quant au geste à la fois agressif et symbolique de son père, il pourrait suggérer le mépris du parent envers le SIDA et envers ce qu'il signifie. Dans ce cas, la maladie révèle aux adultes l'orientation sexuelle de leur jeune et ses relations amoureuses. Le mépris de son père concerne, par conséquent, les aventures de David et, implicitement, David lui-même.

Le geste de cracher par terre représente, en fin de compte, une insulte dont le destinataire est évidemment le jeune homme. Dans l'article « Les injures et les jurons : agressions verbales vs. jeux de langage », Iuliana-Anca Mateiu et Marius-Adrian Florea analysent en détail les types et les fonctions des injures, des jurons et des insultes. Selon eux, les insultes ne se réduisent pas

seulement aux paroles, car le ton ironique et certains gestes symboliques peuvent parfois passer pour des insultes :

Alors que les injures sont une forme d'agression éminemment verbale, les insultes peuvent relever du verbal ou du paraverbal, voire du non verbal. [...] Lorsque les mots ne suffisent plus à dire ses sentiments envers l'autre, on peut utiliser d'autres moyens : *des insultes gestuelles*, dont certaines sont plus proches de la violence physique que de [la violence] verbale. (Mateiu & Florea, 2014 : 595-599)

Les actes menaçants des parents rendent le jeune dans une position basse, d'infériorité. Quoique sa « face » positive soit attaquée, il ne répond pas, à son tour, de manière violente, mais il choisit de se réfugier dans sa chambre, autrement dit il choisit de quitter le conflit.

**3.4.** Les jours passent et le jeune devient de plus en plus malade. Il commence à avoir des fièvres et sa mère le soigne attentivement. Selon David, elle ne se souciait pas vraiment de son état de santé, car elle cherchait plutôt les ravages de la



maladie que les signes de guérison. Arrivé dans l'au-delà, David avoue à l'homme inconnu qu'il avait l'impression que sa mère prenait soin de lui seulement pour se consoler et rien de plus.

Ma mère appelait cela : mes fièvres. Mes fièvres furent un véritable bonheur pour ma mère. Elles lui donnèrent l'occasion d'exercer sa bonté, son dévouement, des sentiments nouveaux dont elle semblait se griser. Elle arrivait au-dessus du lit, me dévisageait attentivement, guettant plus les ravages du mal que les traces de la guérison, humant la progression de ses petites narines avides, se donnant à elle-même le spectacle de son bon cœur de mère. (*Ibid.*, p. 228)

En racontant sa vie à l'homme inconnu, David fait en réalité un examen de conscience. Il juge ses actions, ses décisions, ainsi que celles de ses parents. Les violences domestiques occupent une place très importante dans son discours, car elles l'ont profondément marqué.

Après qu'il lui a dit le nom de sa maladie, son père est devenu encore plus violent et plus irascible que jamais. Un jour, le parent a eu l'impression qu'un voisin lui avait souri un peu trop. Ce

geste l'a mis immédiatement en colère, car il l'a perçu comme un affrontement. Il est possible qu'il crût que son image de soi a été dévalorisée à cause de David et de sa maladie. Nerveux, il est rentré à la maison et s'est déchargé de sa colère sur sa femme en la menaçant qu'il mettrait David dehors. Se venger sur son fils, le renier, était, d'après lui, la seule solution pour regagner son statut social.

Suite à ces menaces, David décide de quitter la maison parentale et il retourne à l'homme de la forêt. Le jeune lui dit qu'ils sont atteints du SIDA et il passe les derniers moments de sa vie à côté de son bien-aimé. Celui-ci ne le soigne pas comme le faisait sa mère, mais il l'aide à mourir en tranquillité d'esprit. Les forts sentiments qui existent entre eux mènent l'homme de la forêt à faire son mieux pour conforter le jeune moribond.

Parfois je criais ; ce n'était pas de peur – je n'ai pas d'imagination –, c'était le corps qui criait, la bête stupide en moi, la bouche qui grimace, les poils qui se dressent, et ma peau suant sous la griffe des frissons. Alors, pour étouffer mes cris, il mettait sa bouche en bâillon contre la mienne. Et pendant les longues heures où je devais mourir, ses lèvres burent mes cris. Puis, au dernier

moment – comment le savait-il ? il savait tout de moi –, lorsque mes yeux se tournèrent en arrière, il enleva sa bouche et murmura : « A bientôt, je viendrai te rejoindre. » (*Ibid.*, p. 234)

Arrivé dans l'au-delà, David remémore avec tristesse les derniers moments de sa vie. Il avoue à l'homme inconnu que son bien-aimé n'a personne à côté de lui qui facilitera son passage vers l'autre monde. Ne pas être près de lui à la fin de sa vie l'attriste profondément. Il commence à se faire des soucis et à s'imaginer des choses douloureuses qui l'angoissent terriblement.

#### **4. La violence de la contrainte**

L'identité de l'énonciateur est construite brique par brique notamment à travers les interactions qu'il a eues avec ses parents et avec l'homme de la forêt. Une fois qu'il révèle à ses parents qu'il est atteint du SIDA, sa vie change radicalement parce que ceux-ci changent, en fait, leur attitude envers lui.

Son père est plus irascible et plus violent, tandis que sa mère paraît plutôt agacée par les regains de santé de David. Elle le soigne journalièrement, mais David a l'impression qu'elle cherche

en réalité les signes de la maladie et non pas les signes de guérison. Le jeune homme croit même que ses parents attendent le moment de sa mort pour qu'ils puissent le regretter :

Mais je ne comprenais pas – je n'ai jamais eu d'imagination – que ma maladie, c'était leur honte, et qu'ils lui préféreraient ma mort. Ils s'impatientaient, ils ne me voyaient plus, ils fixaient derrière moi l'ombre qui me guettait, je devenais transparent. Mes regains de santé, les agaçaient, cela n'allait pas assez vite ; ma vie – pardon : ce qu'ils appelaient « mon agonie » – leur devenait odieuse. Je crois – car ils ne sont pas mauvais – qu'ils attendaient que je sois mort pour pouvoir me regretter. Un soir, j'entendis mon père hurler : « Je vais le foutre dehors, je vais le foutre dehors ! » (*Ibid.*, p. 233)

L'hostilité de ses parents est perçue comme une menace. David croit qu'ils le considèrent une honte pour leur famille. Le foyer familial ne lui offre plus la protection dont il a besoin pour se sentir en sécurité, par conséquent il choisit de le quitter aussitôt possible. Il est soumis à nombre d'actes violents qui le déterminent de retourner chez son bien-aimé. Il trouve dans la

maison de l'homme de la forêt son refuge, sa tranquillité d'esprit. Il sait qu'il mourra bientôt et il veut passer les derniers moments de sa vie en compagnie de quelqu'un qui peut l'aimer tel qu'il est.

Ayant des affaires amoureuses avec un autre homme, David ne respecte pas les règles de « l'hétérosexualité obligatoire » (cf. Adrienne Rich, 1986) et se voit dans la situation de trouver un nouvel abri pour murir en tranquillité. C'est ainsi qu'il choisit de s'échapper de ces contraintes et de se réfugier dans la forêt.

À propos des règles à respecter dans une société, Judith Butler affirme dans l'article « La question de la non-violence » que l'individu est socialement formé par la violence, étant donné que des normes lui sont assignées contre son gré. En d'autres mots, l'individu est formé dans une matrice de pouvoir qui règlemente ses actions tout au long de sa vie. Cela ne veut pas dire, toutefois, qu'il soit obligé à respecter les normes imposées, c'est-à-dire à répéter la violence de sa formation :

En effet, il se peut que précisément *parce que* quelqu'un est formé dans la violence – ou plus exactement, *quand* quelqu'un est formé dans la violence, sa responsabilité n'en est que plus grande et

plus urgente de ne pas répéter la violence de sa propre formation. Par conséquent, il se peut que nous soyons formé(e)s dans une matrice de pouvoir, mais cela ne veut pas dire que nous reconstituons cette matrice fidèlement ou automatiquement tout notre vie durant. (Butler, 2009 : 197)

Les normes sociales forcent les individus de réguler leurs actions dans le respect de l'hétéronormativité. Toutefois, David ne suit pas les principes de ces normes et ses rencontres amoureuses provoquent des réactions violentes de la part de ses parents. Il devient un paria, il est méprisé par sa famille.

Son père, qui était de toute façon très agressif, surtout envers sa femme, est devenu encore plus violent et voulait que David quittât le foyer familial. D'après lui, cela était la seule solution pour rétablir l'équilibre initial et pour regagner le respect des autres membres de la communauté. À son tour, le jeune homme ne considérait plus que sa place fût près de ses parents. Aussi a choisi-t-il de fuir chez son bien-aimé. Ce dernier lui a offert le confort émotionnel nécessaire pour passer en tranquillité d'esprit vers l'au-delà.

## 5. Conclusions

Arrivé dans l'autre monde, David remémore les principaux moments de sa vie et il les présente à un monsieur dont l'identité n'est pas connue. Entre deux mondes, celui passé, de la vie terrestre, et celui présent, de l'au-delà, David attend l'arrivée de son bien-aimé. Il a des idées noires, il souffre et il s'inquiète terriblement, puisque, finalement, « le mal c'est l'imagination ! » (Schmitt, 1999 : 234).

*Le Bâillon* de Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt comprend deux types de textes : un texte à raconter et un texte à dire. Le discours de David se partage, en fait, entre récit et conversation. C'est ainsi qu'on retrouve dans la textualité monologique de cette pièce de théâtre des moments narratifs sous-jacents. En d'autres mots, les séquences hétérogènes de conversation alternent avec celles de récit : des moments narratifs sont insérés, donc, à l'intérieur du discours.

Les narrations incidentes sont des réflexions et, dans un même temps, des évaluations portant sur des événements qui se sont passés hors la scène. Formé dans la violence des normes hétéronormatives, le personnage principal quitte le foyer familial pour murir en tranquillité près de son bien-aimé.

Étant donné qu'il s'agit d'une sorte de confession, David a besoin d'un partenaire de discours afin que son acte réussisse. C'est ainsi qu'il s'imagine la présence d'un autre homme qui l'écoute. Vivant, il prenait la vie telle qu'elle était, mais, dans l'autre monde, il commence à se poser des questions tout en attendant l'arrivée de son partenaire.

## BIBLIOGRAPHIE

- Adam, Jean-Michel, 2011, « Raconter en co(n)texte dialogal : le monologue narratif au théâtre », dans *Genres de récits. Narrativité et généricité des textes*, Louvain la Neuve, Academia, p. 245-296.
- Butler, Judith, 2009, « La question de la non-violence », dans *Pourquoi des théories ?*, Judith Butler, Michel Deguy, Thomas Dommange, Denis Guénoun, Sarah Kay, Bernard Stiegler et Marcello Vitali Rosati (éds.), Besançon, Les Solitaires Intempestifs, 195-216.
- Charaudeau, Patrick & Maingueneau, Dominique (Coord.), 2002, *Dictionnaire d'analyse du discours*, Paris, Seuil.
- Évrard, Franck, 1995, *Le théâtre français du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Éditions Ellipses.



- Florea, Ligia-Stela, 2012, « Discours dramatique et communication piégée. Analyse du IV<sup>e</sup> épisode de *La Soif et la Faim* d'Eugène Ionesco », dans C. Ubaldina Lorda Mur (coord.), *Polifonia e intertextualidad en el diálogo*, Madrid, Arco/Libros S.L., p. 97-113.
- Kerbrat-Orecchioni, Catherine, 1980/2002, *L'énonciation de la subjectivité dans le langage*, Paris, Armand Colin.
- Kerbrat-Orecchioni, Catherine, 1990/1998, *Les interactions verbales. Approche interactionnelle et structure des conversations*, tome 1, Paris, Armand Colin.
- Kerbrat-Orecchioni, Catherine, 1992, *Les interactions verbales*, tome 2, Paris, Armand Colin.
- Maingueneau, Dominique, 1998/2007, *Analyser les textes de communication*, Paris, Nathan Université.
- Mateiu, Iuliana-Anca & Florea, Marius-Adrian, 2014, « Les injures et les jurons : agressions verbales vs. jeux de langage » in *The Proceedings of the International Conference "Communication. Context. Interdisciplinarity"*, tome 3, Tîrgu-Mureş, « Petru Maior » University Press, p. 594-610.

Petitjean, André, 2012, *Études linguistiques des didascalies*,  
Limoges, Lambert-Lucas.

Rich, Adrienne, 1986, *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985*, New York, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Schmitt, Éric-Emmanuel, 1999, *Le Bâillon*, dans *Théâtre*, volume I,  
Paris, Albin Michel.

Vuillaume, Marcel, 1990, *Grammaire temporelle des récits*, Paris,  
Minuit.

CENTRO DE ESTUDOS TEATRAIS DA UNIVERSIDADE DO  
PORTO Porto – Julho – 2016 TEATRO E VIOLÊNCIA

Prof. Dr. Zecarlos de Andrade Escola Morumbi Coordenador  
Pedagógico São Paulo – SP – Brasil

## RODA VIVA – O ATAQUE

José Carlos Andrade

Escola Morumbi

Coordenador Pedagógico

São Paulo – SP – Brasil

Muita gente se pergunta: Mas o que é RODA VIVA? Vamos tentar esclarecer a metáfora, para que possamos compreender como esse dito popular se aplica ao contexto político nos difíceis anos da ditadura militar. A composição musical homônima de Chico Buarque de Hollanda, nascida em meio ao vendaval imposto pelo regime repressivo que varreu o Brasil de 1964 a 1985, representava, fundamentalmente, o fim da liberdade de expressão.

Nesse período a censura avaliou tudo que lhe caiu em mãos com severidade, inúmeras vezes reforçada por uma inegável ignorância, em seu aspecto mais amplo. Uma forma encontrada por quem desejava passar despercebido pelo crivo da censura era valer-se da linguagem figurada, da cifra, ou de uma coisa que quer dizer outra, quando essa coisa não pode ser dita

abertamente, com clareza e objetividade. Foi necessário buscar atalhos, já que não era permitido ir direto ao assunto, sob pena de desagradar os intolerantes juízes impostos pelo governo para apreciar a produção artística nacional.

Mas, enfim, o quê queria dizer o compositor com o título dessa música? Vamos à resposta: RODA VIVA é uma fala corrente no linguajar do povo brasileiro, apesar de não aparecer nos dicionários formais. RODA VIVA, na maioria das vezes em que o termo é aplicado, significa um movimento incessante, um corrúpio, um redemoinho intenso, uma corrida labiríntica, uma força estranha e incontrolável que, superior às nossas forças, nos afasta de propósitos e objetivos.

Na letra da música RODA VIVA, assim como no texto teatral criado pelo mesmo autor, a ideia desse turbilhão está curiosamente associada à morte, à extinção, ao ponto final que se coloca diante de grandes ideais. É a RODA VIVA que força o indivíduo a abortar a capacidade de decidir o próprio destino, ou de adquirir autonomia plena.

Até hoje há alguma dificuldade em dizer o que nasceu primeiro: a música, ou a peça. É indiscutível que a música participou do III Festival da Música Popular Brasileira, produzido pela Rede Record de Televisão em 1967, tendo se classificado em terceiro lugar nesse certame. A peça apareceu apenas no ano seguinte, mas temos a sensação de que as duas coisas sempre andaram lado a lado no âmbito da criação.

A música agradou ao público instantaneamente e em muito pouco tempo estava nas paradas de sucesso. Chico Buarque, um jovem autor-intérprete, praticamente estreante, tinha vários atributos que, combinados, poderiam convertê-lo, em pouquíssimo tempo, em um ídolo nacional, pronto para agradar a todas as camadas da sociedade. Faz-se necessário destacar algumas das características que colaboraram para que se fixasse na imagem de uma mesma pessoa as representações da juventude, da beleza, da simpatia, da ingenuidade, da inteligência e também da passividade da população brasileira.



Chico, muito jovem, (tinha apenas 24 anos na época) estudava arquitetura em uma das melhores universidades do país e, além da fina estampa, ostentava encantadores olhos verdes, que impressionavam logo à primeira vista. O promissor artista não escondia sua timidez, própria de pessoas sensatas e recatadas. Ao se expressar, Chico deixava que transparecessem suas raízes fincadas na alta burguesia paulistana. A soma desses ingredientes era a fórmula mágica para que um novo ídolo brotasse em estado de graça para arrebatrar multidões.

Produtores, divulgadores, empresários e todos os demais que emprestavam sua força para que se movesse a esmagadora máquina midiática não contavam com a consciência do artista e sua acentuada visão crítica das engrenagens que começavam a triturá-lo.

Usando como ponto de partida sua própria experiência de vida, nasceu a peça que, talvez, já estivesse esboçada na mente do criador, no momento em que a música era composta. Logo na primeira estrofe, a letra da música refere-se ao esforço necessário para sobreviver a esse processo de desumanização e do quanto a voracidade do motor propulsor se alimenta da energia vital do artista, despersonalizando-o e utilizando-o como matéria prima consumível e descartável.

“Tem dias que a gente se sente Como quem partiu ou morreu,  
A gente estancou de repente Ou foi o mundo então que cresceu.  
A gente quer ter voz ativa, No nosso destino mandar, Mas eis  
que chega a roda viva E carrega o destino pra lá. Roda mundo,  
roda-gigante, Roda-moinho, roda pião, O tempo rodou num  
instante Nas voltas do meu coração.”

Tanto a música quanto a peça RODA VIVA traduzem fielmente o espírito do final dos anos 60, quando assistimos ao nascimento de uma indústria cultural, apoiada pelo poder televisivo, narrando a trajetória de um indivíduo comum que, descoberto pelos veículos de comunicação, é, da noite para o dia, transformado em ídolo das massas.

Estávamos naquele instante, quatro anos distantes do golpe militar que havia derrubado o vice-presidente eleito, João Goulart, que assumira o cargo após a renúncia de Jânio Quadros.

O teatro foi um dos veículos mais duramente atingido pela censura, que o transformou no alvo preferido para os seus ataques. Há que se acrescentar que, para mascarar a verdadeira face da ditadura, alardeava-se, por meio da propaganda paga pelo governo, que o Brasil vivia um momento de incomparável progresso econômico, chamado então de “milagre brasileiro”.

Nesse mesmo instante, forças de oposição organizaram-se em grupos de resistência que, reproduzindo um esquema de



guerrilha urbana, visando a obter fundos para o movimento, assaltaram bancos, sequestraram embaixadores, assim como altos executivos do mundo dos negócios, que foram posteriormente trocados por presos políticos, que se amontoavam nas prisões da ditadura.

O objetivo maior desses militantes, sem dúvida, era derrotar o governo militar, destituí-lo do poder por força das armas (se preciso fosse) e instalar um governo socialista em todo o país.

Durante esse processo, enquanto as forças repressoras tornavam-se cada vez mais severas, asfixiando por completo o direito de expressão, o teatro brasileiro, valendo-se da metáfora, atravessava uma de suas mais criativas fases, com espetáculos memoráveis que, apesar dos esforços da censura, foram levados aos palcos, principalmente nos teatros de Arena e Oficina.

Hoje, quase meio século depois, observando a rota percorrida, percebemos que RODA VIVA, a peça teatral dirigida por Zé Celso Martinez Corrêa, mentor oficial do Teatro Oficina, colocou

o Brasil entre os países que traziam algo de novo por meio de suas experiências cênicas.

Com o caos político imperando no território brasileiro, o espetáculo adquiriu um providencial tom de insolência e implícito protesto, porque conseguia apresentar sobre o palco, por meio das personagens criadas por Chico Buarque, uma exposição dos vícios oriundos do regime militar, tais como a repressão religiosa, a brutalidade das autoridades à qual se encontravam expostas as classes marginalizadas, reforçada pela hipocrisia própria das famílias burguesas, dispostas a compactuar com a consolidação do novo sistema.

O espetáculo RODA VIVA, valendo-se da insubordinação, do humor, da galhofa, da alegria carnavalesca e da crítica ácida e contundente, levava para o palco os ecos das multidões das ruas, que não encontravam um escape para manifestar sua insatisfação.

Muito antes da estreia oficial no Rio de Janeiro, em 15 de janeiro de 1968, o espetáculo já despontava como um embrião da

revolução cultural que, desafiando o poder autoritário da censura, insistia em dar seu testemunho sobre a situação política do país, com o intuito de conscientizar a população e, automaticamente, incitá-la à reação.

RODA VIVA, a peça, fundamentalmente conta a história de um indivíduo comum, chamado Benedito da Silva; um nome tipicamente brasileiro. Benedito da Silva, operário de ocupação modesta, acredita que pode ser cantor, mas desconhece os caminhos que podem conduzi-lo ao estrelato. Em busca dessa estrada, nosso herói cai nas mãos de um inescrupuloso agente que, disfarçado de anjo da guarda, acena-lhe com um futuro luminoso. Benedito da Silva deixase levar e, sem opor resistência, é convertido em Ben Silver que, apesar de estar coberto de prata da cabeça aos pés, representa uma figura opaca, sem vontade própria, inteiramente manipulada pela indústria fonográfica e pelas mídias, propondo ao espectador uma reflexão em torno do surgimento e dos efeitos da sociedade de consumo.

A peça escrita por Chico Buarque possui uma estrutura frágil, linear, sem grandes complexidades dramatúrgicas. O enredo apresenta sobre o palco o calvário de um ídolo, devorado pelo seu próprio público.

Sob o ponto de vista da uma análise histórica, observamos um paralelo inquestionável com os autos medievais europeus, nos quais o caminho dos mártires cristãos, da materialidade terrena até a eternidade celestial, é marcado pelos inúmeros sacrifícios que lhes são impostos para que, finalmente, possam alcançar um estado de santidade. Ainda como nos autos, duas personagens de capital importância destacam-se ao longo da trama em RODA VIVA: o anjo e o diabo.

O ambicioso e demoníaco empresário, que lhe abre todas as portas e o transforma em outra “persona”, é representado por um anjo da guarda, assim como o demônio é a encarnação da consciência do artista, que se recusa a permanecer em silêncio.

As coisas parecem estar indo muito bem para todos. Ben Silver é aclamado quase como uma divindade de norte a sul do país e

com isso perde sua individualidade, passando a ter uma vida pública que, até então, havia permanecido restrita aos limites de sua intimidade.

Como na letra da canção, “o tempo rodou num instante, nas voltas do meu coração”, alguns meses depois de excessiva exposição, os consumidores estão cansados daquela imagem cintilante que, a partir de um determinado momento, parece incompatível com a miserável realidade do país. Algo precisa ser feito com a máxima urgência, para que a máquina continue em andamento.

O diabólico anjo da guarda concebe um plano para salvar e redimir o ídolo recém-criado: convertê-lo em outra persona, em concordância com as novas tendências sociais. Ben Silver é posto de lado e, em seu lugar, surge Benedito

Lampião, um cantor de esquerda, entoando canções de protesto e apregoando a guerrilha urbana, a reforma agrária e o socialismo como salvação para o país.

O figurino de prata rutilante é abandonado e o novo ídolo cobre-se de material cru, identificando-se com as classes menos privilegiadas. A estratégia de substituição de um ídolo por outro não funciona e o público, revoltado, devora Benedito Lampião em um ritual canibalesco. O anjo da guarda, sempre em estado de prontidão, de imediato apela para a viúva de Benedito da Silva e, com a ingênua concordância da jovem senhora, converte-a em uma cantoracelebridade, coberta de referências religiosas, intencionalmente criadas para difundir uma ideia de perdão e piedade. O novo ídolo agora é uma santa e já está pronto para ser consumido pela massa faminta.

Mais do que o texto, enquanto dramaturgia, o que se sobressaía na encenação era a irreverência e o humor corrosivo e escancarado imposto pelo diretor da montagem, Zé Celso Martinez Corrêa. A encenação desse consagrado diretor revelava e apontava o ridículo de todos os que favoráveis ao golpe militar implantado há quatro anos, possuíam alguma representatividade na cultura brasileira. Zé Celso convidou Flávio Império, arquiteto, cenógrafo e figurinista de projeção

nacional, para conceber a ambientação cênica e os muitos trajes utilizados pelo numeroso elenco.

Flávio lançou mão daquilo que era o estilo corrente no final dos anos 60: o Tropicalismo - um movimento de ruptura que subverteu os valores estéticos em todos os segmentos das manifestações artísticas.

O Tropicalismo, desde o lançamento de suas raízes, recebeu uma notável influência das muitas transformações pelas quais passava a cultura brasileira e internacional, assim como de algumas correntes de vanguarda como, por exemplo, o Concretismo, conduzido mais notadamente por artistas plásticos. O Tropicalismo, que também ficou conhecido como Tropicália, teve um caráter revolucionário ao fundir as características mais tradicionais da imagética nacional com inovações estéticas vindas de outros territórios, como a Pop Art, por exemplo. Propagou-se pelos ares uma necessidade de legitimação da brasilidade, que se traduzia pelos seus ícones mais significativos, tais como abacaxis, papagaios, coqueiros,

baianas e tudo o mais que fosse parte do imaginário popular nacional das camadas mais baixas da população.

Flávio Império misturou esses ingredientes com espantosa criatividade, dosando os elementos para que nada ultrapassasse os limites do verossímil, sem no entanto abrir mão das muitas metáforas que, devido à sua clareza, eram imediatamente decodificadas pelos espectadores. Exemplo notório é a representação do público consumidor, apresentado no espetáculo como um coro de macacos irracionais, que se deixavam levar pela voz de comando que soasse mais forte. Graças ao inspirado talento de Flávio, o visual de RODA VIVA tornou-se um marco inesquecível para todos que tiveram o privilégio de assistir à montagem.





A anárquica direção de Zé Celso, sublinhada pela concepção surrealista de Flávio Império, foram responsáveis por um surpreendente resultado final que saltava aos olhos e despertava os sentidos. Anjos e demônios, santas e prostitutas, libertinos e puritanos, o sagrado e o profano, assim como a direita e a esquerda foram postos lado a lado em um espalhafatoso e colorido carnaval. Mais do que o próprio conteúdo, a forma empregada para levantar o espetáculo, por si só, já era um

elemento de provocação que impedia a plateia de permanecer indiferente.



Desde a sua primeira apresentação, o espetáculo foi considerado pela censura como "degradante" e "subversivo". Segundo o censor responsável na época, Mario F. Russomano, o autor, Chico Buarque de Hollanda, fruto de uma família tradicional paulistana e, supostamente, um elemento visto até então como inofensivo, "criou uma peça que não respeita a formação moral do espectador, ferindo de modo contundente todos os princípios de ensinamento de moral e de religião herdados de nossos antepassados". Era como se o ídolo estivesse apunhalando pelas costas, da maneira mais ingrata possível, todos aqueles que haviam hipotecado sua confiança e contribuído para que o artista atingisse o desejado estado estelar. Este era um pecado

imperdoável e algum castigo deveria ser imposto ao infiel para que a ordem e o equilíbrio imaginados pelo sistema ditatorial fossem mantidos. Impossibilitadas de agir às claras, em plena luz do dia, as forças repressivas atacaram na calada da noite. Vinham protegidas pela máscara de uma organização que defendia os interesses governamentais e não hesitava em punir, física e moralmente, aqueles que se rebelassem contra as regras estabelecidas. Nascia assim o CCC – Comando de Caça aos Comunistas.

De acordo com as revelações feitas por alguns dos elementos que compuseram essa facção, o CCC surgiu por volta de 1963, quando o mundo ocidental atravessava uma fase conhecida como Guerra Fria. A oposição de forças entre os Estados Unidos e a União Soviética, polarizando o planeta entre o capitalismo e o socialismo, levou à difusão generalizada, do lado mais ocidental do planeta, de um temor irracional, representado pelo avanço do comunismo.

A classe média foi o solo preferido para que se plantasse a semente de que o avanço da esquerda no Brasil representava uma ameaça a todos os valores até então constituídos.

Não há dados oficiais, mas estima-se que, só no Estado de São Paulo, o Comando de Caça aos Comunistas, podia contabilizar em suas fileiras um expressivo número de mais de 5 mil integrantes. Este contingente compreendia desde aqueles que eram apenas partidários das mesmas ideias reacionárias, até atingir outros elementos mais inflamados, dispostos a conter o perigo vermelho, valendo-se para isso de qualquer meio.

O CCC era composto na sua grande maioria por rapazes bem nascidos e bem alimentados, produto de uma burguesia acomodada que temia pela perda de suas regalias. Muitos eram estudantes dos cursos superiores da Universidade Mackenzie, da Faculdade de Direito do Largo de São Francisco e da Pontifícia Universidade Católica. Essas três colunas, é preciso que se diga, representavam a base de sustentação dos nichos de formação da intelectualidade acadêmica brasileira, que crescia acobertada pelas forças reacionárias do sistema.

Mas o CCC não era integrado apenas por jovens estudantes. Em suas fileiras encontravam-se também policiais e membros de organizações da direita católica, como a Opus Dei e a Tradição Família e Propriedade. Esta última tinha posição de destaque por aliciar jovens, que se deslocavam do interior em direção à capital, seduzidos por promessas de um futuro grandioso, no qual agregariam à sua pessoa os papéis do cidadão bem sucedido, assim como o do salvador da pátria, que livraria a nação da rubra invasão. Muitos dos seus membros agiam como delatores ou espões a serviço dos órgãos oficiais, recebiam treinamento militar e frequentemente andavam armados.

Toda a documentação que se tem desse período permanece ainda obscura e a história vem sendo constantemente reconstruída, conforme vão surgindo novos dados. O pouco do que se sabe está baseado em relatos, sendo que muitos deles são oriundos de fontes não identificáveis.

Um desses relatos informa que em 1964, logo após o golpe militar, os integrantes do CCC invadiram e destruíram a Rádio MEC, no Rio de Janeiro. Pode-se dizer que esta foi a primeira ação "oficial" do Comando, na defesa do novo regime.

Protegido pela impunidade, o CCC estendeu suas garras e, em uma de suas lúgubres empreitadas, fez de RODA VIVA um alvo fácil. O intuito primeiro era asfixiar a continuidade do espetáculo, por entendê-lo como um foco de oposição ao sistema, que, pelo sucesso da encenação, ganhava a cada dia um número maior de simpatizantes.

18 de julho de 1968. Esta foi a data previamente estabelecida para que se desse o ataque ao espetáculo RODA VIVA. Nesse dia, aproximadamente 30 rapazes componentes do CCC estavam infiltrados na plateia. Usavam terno e gravata, destoando da vestimenta casual usada pela maior parte dos espectadores. Atores da encenação lembram que aquela sessão em particular, sem que se soubesse exatamente a razão para isso, foi tensa e nervosa. O público reagiu diferentemente da forma habitual e havia um clima de perigo suspenso no ar.

Ao final do espetáculo, friamente aplaudido pelo público, os componentes do CCC esperaram que todos os espectadores se retirassem da sala, enquanto se distribuía pelo espaço, ocupando posições estratégicas para o ataque. Assim que o teatro esvaziou, como em um ritual, os 30 atacantes calçaram uma luva na mão esquerda, que serviria como instrumento de identificação entre o grupo. Um apito estridente soou por todo o ambiente e este era o sinal combinado para desencadear o ato de agressão.

A primeira ação programada foi contra as condições materiais do teatro em si. Cinco jovens armados, ocupando os fundos da sala, se incumbiram de destruir o suporte técnico do auditório, incluindo refletores, mesa de luz, equipamentos de som, assim como os instrumentos musicais utilizados pela banda que se apresentava ao vivo. Outros se dirigiram rapidamente para os camarins, surpreendendo o elenco que ainda não havia se dado conta do que estava acontecendo. Cinco minutos foi o tempo necessário para que essa ação conjunta depredasse as instalações do teatro e agredisse atores e técnicos da montagem.

Armados com cassetetes, socos ingleses por baixo das luvas, os invasores destruíram tudo que encontraram pelo caminho, obrigando os atores, semidespidos, a atravessar um “corredor polonês”, onde sofreram agressões físicas e verbais de todos os tipos.

Decorridos cinco minutos, da mesma forma como havia entrado, o grupo em uníssono abandonou rapidamente o teatro, deixando um rastro de destruição atrás de si. O saldo desse assalto de surpresa foi deplorável: atores e técnicos da companhia receberam golpes tão fortes que provocaram fraturas severas. Atrizes tiveram suas roupas rasgadas, receberam insultos de toda ordem e alguma delas, em um gesto que demonstra requintes de crueldade, tiveram os seios queimados por cigarros. A maior parte dos componentes do grupo responsável pela encenação de RODA VIVA passou por alguma espécie de afronta, sendo que muitos foram levados a um hospital próximo para atendimento imediato e posterior exame de corpo de delito na delegacia mais próxima.





Marília Pera, notável atriz brasileira recentemente falecida, foi agredida enquanto ainda estava no camarim. Primeiro golpearam-na no estômago, em seguida rasgaram suas roupas e a arrastaram seminua para a rua em frente ao teatro. Em um jornal da época, a atriz declarou que estava próxima a um espancamento coletivo e tal não se deu porque sua camareira, uma senhora com mais de 60 anos, jogou-se em cima dela na tentativa de protegê-la do ataque.

Fazendo um balanço final, constatamos que as instalações do teatro foram depredadas e o elenco covardemente agredido, mas, certamente, ainda que isso não fosse o objetivo consciente, o grande atingido era Chico Buarque de Hollanda que, por meio dessa ação, recebia o castigo merecido por ter se voltado contra aqueles que o haviam ajudado em sua vertiginosa escalada rumo ao sucesso.

O ataque ao espetáculo RODA VIVA foi intensamente repudiado pela classe teatral paulistana que, liderada por Cacilda Becker, exigiu das autoridades constituídas que providências cabíveis fossem tomadas, para que os agressores fossem identificados e punidos. O governo prometeu dar início às investigações mas, em síntese, nada de concreto foi apurado e nenhuma detenção realizada. O espetáculo cumpriu sua temporada até o final de setembro, com casa lotada, considerando-se que as notícias sobre a agressão haviam despertado ainda mais o interesse do público.

As ameaças continuaram brotando de diversas fontes e nunca mais os atores conseguiram recuperar o clima de segurança,

representando sempre como se estivessem pisando em um terreno minado, que poderia explodir a qualquer momento.

Porto Alegre, capital do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul, era a próxima cidade a ser visitada pela companhia, agora com outro elenco, mas ainda com o mesmo impacto que havia provocado desde a sua estreia no Rio.

O espetáculo no Teatro Leopoldina teve apenas uma apresentação na noite de estreia na capital gaúcha. Com a casa lotada, durante o intervalo entre o primeiro e o segundo ato, algumas pessoas não identificadas distribuíram em larga escala ao público presente um panfleto com os seguintes dizeres: “Hoje respeitamos a integridade física dos atores e da plateia, mas não nos responsabilizamos pelo que pode acontecer amanhã.”

Além dessa contundente ameaça, pichações igualmente assustadoras surgiram da noite para o dia nas paredes externas do teatro. Temendo que o episódio ocorrido em São Paulo se repetisse em Porto Alegre, ainda com mais intensidade, a produção da montagem optou por encerrar a carreira do

espetáculo. Mais uma vez, as sinistras forças da repressão tornaram-se vitoriosas e, em um certo sentido, conseguiram calar as vozes de um enorme coro de descontentes, que não hesitava em manifestar sua posição oposta aos rumos determinados pelo regime.

Quase 50 anos depois, o ataque ao espetáculo RODA VIVA ainda representa mais do que uma simples agressão a um alvo específico. O gesto covarde prova que não havia limites para que as forças armadas levassem adiante seu plano de poder.

O texto de Chico Buarque, assim como o espetáculo esteticamente concebido por Zé Celso Martinez Corrêa e Flávio Império, após sofrer um dos mais horríveis e violentos atos de autoritarismo, tornou-se um símbolo marcante e inesquecível da resistência da classe artística brasileira.

Este trabalho tem por finalidade não apenas narrar os fatos, como também sublinhar o poder das forças repressoras, que ainda continuam em andamento, para que nada semelhante volte a acontecer e assegurar, em definitivo, a liberdade de

expressão para todos aqueles que dela quiserem fazer uso, indistintamente, hoje, agora e sempre.

Prof, Dr. Zecarlos de Andrade





# Teatro e percepção da violência – administração das imagens como manipulação, e como potencial de vivência crítica

Shirlei Perez

PUC SP – Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo

Talvez uma das ideias mais imediatas, ao associar teatro e violência, seja a de deflagração, em diversos níveis; a manifestação da agressão, relações abusivas e situações-limite, tensão, e muitas vezes uma estética que busca expor e extrapolar essas imagens. Imagina-se o ato ou a tensão da violência em cena, como, em geral, se faz frequentemente essa associação explícita como forma de reconhecer a presença cotidiana dos atos ou estruturas violentas.

As formas de violência são múltiplas, e nem sempre evidentes. Muitas vezes, fica mais fácil identificar sua presença e discuti-la, quando vem ampliada ou destacada, apropriada, no sentido mais amplo, pelo teatro.

As ações violentas podem ser abertas e diretas, ou, ao contrário, envolver dispositivos que redundem em desigualdades e

segregações, sem, no entanto, causar desconforto fora dos âmbitos em que são praticadas, ou mesmo ser desconsideradas, como tal, pelos próprios agressores ou vítimas, uma vez que podem estar incorporadas às dinâmicas já conhecidas e absorvidas. Podem constituir hábitos violentos e ter sua presença diluída. No entanto, hoje torna-se especialmente premente também a discussão da visibilidade e da administração da imagens e das reverberações dos atos e das estruturas violentas o que, como dispositivo de submissão e manipulação, já constitui, por sí, uma poderosa modalidade de violência e agressão veladas.

No âmbito da cena, esse reconhecimento em relação à violência - de forma geral - pode ocorrer pela criação de situações de desconforto na direção do próprio espectador. Uma imagem de violência, em geral, ampliada confere determinado grau de agressão. Isso pode se dar, no entanto, de forma irônica ou enfraquecida, oferecendo a desestabilização pela negatividade, ou apresentando como verdadeira violência essa normatização e incorporação desses mecanismos de agressão ou de falta. De toda forma, a presença de uma relação violenta implica o exercício de desigualdades, ou de hábitos perversos, muitas



vezes impensados, ou não intencionais, mas frequentemente, também, deliberados, como forma de sujeição ou controle, e trazê-la à cena abre a possibilidade de seu reconhecimento. Em tempos de pós-verdade, redes sociais administradas e mídia seletiva, certamente ampliam-se as reverberações desse tipo de dispositivo.

Ao tratar da violência em cena, determinadas experiências performativas podem abrir também a discussão ética em torno do processo do artista e de sua posição em relação ao espectador. Automutilações ou ferimentos, o uso de alteradores de consciência como facilitadores de ações-limite, agressões ou comportamentos constrangedores e invasivos dirigidos ao público, exibicionismo e outras questões colocam-se eventualmente em jogo, ampliando o campo da discussão crítica. Incluem-se aí as questões relativas à produção da vertigem e do abjeto na busca de uma fruição estéril, embora contundente. Nesse caso, a desestabilização alimenta um círculo negativo em relação à percepção da violência como a algo a ser combatido e superado.

Todos os aspectos citados, e infinitas possibilidades que se apresentem nessa discussão são imprescindíveis, e o teatro

alinha-se como momento de especial oportunidade, em função não apenas de formatos e conteúdos, mas ainda pelo fato de oportunizar uma vivência de deslocamentos, no momento do espetáculo. Diante disso, discutimos aqui experiências que tratam da relação entre a violência e a administração do olhar e da percepção a respeito dela. A criação de visibilidades e a possibilidade de escapar, ou não, a essa rede de redesenho.

A partir das tessituras e construções das criações que buscam extrapolar o texto como centralidade única, a ocupação do espaço e os recursos técnicos constituem uma vivência que ultrapassa a simples determinação dos locais da cena e posições na sala, ou o suporte em que serão trazidos outros elementos de sensação ou informação. Transformam-se em uma negociação processual dos limites entre ator e espectador com aptidão para interferir no perfil dessa relação, e essa co-presença no espaço incorpora questões que se apresentam à própria natureza da cena e ao indivíduo (artista ou plateia) imerso na situação que põe à prova as questões da visibilidade do outro (sujeito ou instituições) e de sua interferência na vida e no espaço comum, em estado de disputa ou compartilhamento. Quando o foco é a

vivência, é essa complexidade que garante a potência da negociação entre espetáculo e espectador.

Nessa condição em que a relação se afirma como experiência, o palco pode deixar de ter caráter metafórico-simbólico, em que a observação é idealmente feita a distância mediana. Tal distância permite uma relação de espelhamento e identificação das imagens, construções e proporções com seus equivalentes do mundo “real” para a apreensão dos significados propostos. A espacialidade cênica pode ganhar uma dimensão metonímica, em que a parte pode ser tomada como todo, ou o todo como parte. Ficam hipotecados os limites entre sua dimensão real e ficcional. Esse espaço não é uma porta para um mundo fictício, mas um recorte numa relação de contiguidade entre o mundo e o teatro. A relação com o espaço não se dá pela apreensão do que ele pode demonstrar como significado, mas pela experiência mediada por ele. Além disso, o entendimento da ação no espaço como mediação é ampliado pelo sentido da espacialidade expandida, contemplando uma tangibilidade que ultrapassa aquela proporcionada pela organização do espaço, mas que incorpora toda a natureza de ação que influi na relação entre os corpos, na cena e na plateia.

Não se trata apenas das mediações suscitadas pelas organizações de espaço além do convencional, já que em determinadas montagens, as ações no palco interferem na relação entre as presenças, ou seja, quando elementos que não diriam respeito exatamente à espacialização despertam embates que tocam ao corpo, como o convívio entre ator e espectador no compartilhamento do ambiente da sala, de forma a trazer novos mapeamentos nas relações palco-plateia, seja num cenário alternativo ou na caixa preta, a depender das mediações criadas pelo espetáculo.

Em Manifesto de niños, espetáculo do grupo El Periférico de Objetos, da Argentina, há um cruzamento nos ângulos de visão: o próximo, o distante, o íntimo e o indiferente, e a violência surge e permanece simultaneamente, em diferentes suportes. O espectador acompanha a performance, que acontece dentro de uma caixa, por suas janelas, mas também, afasta-se um pouco, pelos telões em que são exibidas as imagens escolhidas pelos atores, que se relacionam, em tempo real, com os objetos filmados, esses, sim, em princípio, os protagonistas do espetáculo. No entanto, não há acesso direto aos sentimentos e sensações. Tudo o que é apresentado é sempre filtrado, relido.

De perto não se pode penetrar no que se passa; de longe, vê-se pelos olhos da câmera, que produz ângulos mais íntimos ou detalhados, mas que é manipulada, eventualmente até pelo próprio agressor.

El Periférico de Objetos foi fundado em 1989, por atores vindos do Grupo de Titiriteiros do Teatro San Martín, incluindo os que vieram a se tornar a trinca de diretores do Periférico: Ana Alvarado, Emílio García Wehbi e Daniel Veronesi, também dramaturgo da maioria dos trabalhos do grupo. Com componentes formados no teatro tradicional de bonecos, o grupo tem por objetivo explorar essa linguagem de forma inovadora, com espetáculos voltados para adultos. Seus trabalhos resultam em grande impacto visual e abordam temas como a violência, a tortura, os jogos de poder e as diferentes formas de dominação e submissão. Entre suas discussões estão as diversas formas de violência, velada ou aberta, que circundam o indivíduo, e suas relações com esse cenário. O grupo investe na exploração dos limites da relação entre boneco e manipulador, entre ator e forma manipulada, buscando um teatro de objetos em que o objeto pode ser o protagonista, e os atores podem ser apenas mais um objeto em cena.

A ação se passa dentro da instalação, colocada no centro de um grande espaço vazio ou num espaço de passagem. O público pode observar a cena ou através de janelas estreitas, ou pelas telas instaladas do lado de fora da caixa, como observador sempre impossibilitado de ter acesso pleno à performance. É preciso fazer escolhas, deslocar o olhar em diferentes ângulos e graus de proximidade, para observar as cenas, que chegam sempre fragmentadas, seja pela escolha dos ângulos das câmeras, seja pelo pequeno espaço disponível nas janelas.



Manifesto de niños, Mostra Sesc de Artes 2008 – foto El periférico de objetos

Dentro da caixa estão velhos brinquedos – incluindo bonecas de porcelana, marcantes nos trabalhos do grupo, outros mais novos, máscaras, além de objetos espalhados pelo espaço. As paredes, teto e chão trazem inscrições e desenhos, rabiscos coloridos, além de câmeras e mais telas de projeção. Estão também três atores, que fazem parte do emaranhado de informação. Protegidos do contato direto do público, mas vulneráveis por inteiro aos olhares. As telas exibem imagens detalhistas, enquadramentos invasivos, ampliados em exagero. Aparelhos de televisão dentro da caixa exibem desenhos e animações violentas. O público dispõe de tempo para se relacionar com esse cenário, e dar-se conta de que muito do que vai ver dependerá de sua própria condução, de como e para onde desejar dirigir seu olhar.

Dado esse tempo, uma das atrizes se aproxima da câmera e começa a leitura de uma lista de nomes de crianças reais, mortas em épocas atuais e passadas, em circunstâncias diversas e trágicas. O rol contempla também crianças da mitologia e da ficção, numa alusão ao significado épico ou à atribuição de uma dimensão ficcional dessas mortes. A lista de cem nomes será lida em trechos ao longo do espetáculo, intercalada a versos e textos poéticos que tratam do tema.

Os atores manipulam os objetos e as câmeras, estabelecendo pequenos jogos de submissão e violência, ou simples brincadeiras, num caleidoscópio em que os próprios atores são como brinquedos, ou como pequenos animais confinados, executando às vezes ações repetidas. Qual a natureza real dos jogos, ou dos indivíduos envolvidos? Os atores são livres para escolher as cenas e ângulos, mas não podem sair do confinamento, a não ser pelas imagens que produzem. O grau de violência de um ato não é o mesmo que aparece em sua imagem. Assim como não se pode apreender todas as intenções e significados das ações ambíguas, também não se pode ter noção do que é real – ou, no contexto da performance, o que se pretende mostrar e o que é visto furtivamente, o que no trabalho do ator é intencional e o que lhe escapa, mas não à câmera. Cabe observar que os atos de violência não se completam, exceto no texto lido. A agressão é contextual, sugerida, mas não menos presente como imagem e como intenção.





Manifesto de niños, Mostra Sesc de Artes 2008 – foto El periférico de objetos

Finda a leitura da lista, os atores/crianças passam a entabular jogos para o espectador. As câmeras passeiam pelos textos e desenhos, e vão se constituindo relatos de cada ator para o público que o assiste. O público nesse momento não é mais um voyeur, mas, dentro do jogo proposto, efetivamente um espectador, já que as cenas são construídas levando-se em conta sua presença. Um último texto poético encerra a função, sem que seja possível determinar um enredo, mas apenas um conjunto de

impressões, formuladas por cada espectador a partir do que escolheu ver, ou do que mais lhe chamou a atenção.

O exercício de excesso, aqui, é o excesso de detalhes. Um jogo entre o máximo, o excesso, e o mínimo, a natureza minimalista do detalhe. Quanto mais mergulhos num ângulo íntimo, porém sem efetiva proximidade já que o contato é sempre mediado pelas telas, ou ao menos pelas janelas, que também recortam os ângulos, já que há pessoas e objetos convivendo no mesmo espaço, mais filtros se impõem à visão. É o excesso do incompleto, suscitando emoções curtas e intensas, e esgotando rapidamente a capacidade de se inquietar, em função das interrupções e mudanças de ângulo.

“Avisa-se aos pais e mães, tios, tias, tutores, tutoras, professores e professoras, e a todas as pessoas em geral que tenham meninos preguiçosos, gulosos, rebeldes, revoltados, insolentes, briguentos, dedos duros, charlatães, sem religião, ou com qualquer outro defeito, que acabamos de instalar uma máquina semelhante a esta, e que recebemos todos os dias, das nove às onze da noite, neste mesmo estabelecimento, todos os meninos maus que merecem ser castigados. “ (Manifiesto de Ninõs)

Além da discussão da violência como apontada na performance, é subjacente à experiência a percepção de um estado de violência em relação ao olhar que se lança ao outro numa realidade mediatizada, em que as relações se dão antes pelas imagens, ou pelas ideias construídas a partir de imagens, do que por uma vivência real. Aliás, qual o espaço para a vivência efetiva e qual a dimensão do real, em situações extremas, ou extremamente sutis? A que distância se pode efetivamente perceber a intensidade e o caráter de determinados fatos? Como acessar determinados acontecimentos, se nos chegam filtrados por impressões dirigidas e alterações de formato (como através da câmera), a ponto de terem desgastado seu potencial de causar choque ou mobilização?

Se, por um lado, o espetáculo expõe e discute a violência factual, por vezes trazendo imagens fortes e contundentes, com potencial desestabilizador em torno dessa visão de tortura e constrangimento, por outro, mostra a impossibilidade de compreender a dimensão dantesca desse assédio. Apresenta o fato de não poder mensurar o que sofre o outro, mas também indica a condição de *voyeur* a que nos submetemos pela

manipulação e superexposição de imagens e situações semelhantes.

A interpretação traz atores operadores de ações, e não personagens. Em alguns momentos, pergunta-se quem manipula quem: os atores manipulam os bonecos e imagens, ou são instrumentos? Nesse caso, instrumentos da situação à qual estão expostos, obviamente de forma voluntária, porém, às vezes se deixando levar pelos impulsos que surgem das próprias situações que criam na manipulação.

Trata-se de uma experiência que propõe a questão do lugar e do protagonismo da ação, mas também do olhar, e essa percepção permeia todo o espetáculo, e caracteriza a presença do espectador claramente como ação, que determina sua apreensão do que se passa na cena.

Embora tenha em foco a violência manifesta e identificada, contra a criança, o espetáculo trata das micro-violências do cotidiano. Não apenas nas relações abusivas, estruturais e individuais, em relação à criança, mas na manipulação e dependência das imagens, nas limitações de aproximação, e nas possibilidades de sujeição do olhar pelo não reconhecimento sistemático desses dispositivos.

Em *Arquivo*, trabalho do coreógrafo Arkadi Zaides, o artista enfrenta e corporifica a diferença e a inviabilidade, de forma diversa. A coreografia é baseada em vídeos filmados por voluntários palestinos do Projeto Câmera de B'Tselem (Centro de Informações Israelense pelos Direitos dos Territórios Ocupados). São registros de pessoas comuns que residem na linha de fronteira. Um telão ao fundo do palco mostra as imagens dos vídeos, e o coreógrafo, em cena, reproduz, no palco vazio, os movimentos de pessoas escolhidas: passantes, soldados, alguém que atira pedras, um pastor que toca suas cabras. Eventualmente reproduz também, com um microfone em cena, sons ouvidos nas gravações. Não há tradução: as falas são mantidas em seus idiomas originais – Israelense e árabe –, determinando mais um estranhamento e mais uma divisão, criando outra camada para a fruição da performance: para os que falam árabe, hebraico, ambos, ou nenhum dos dois idiomas. De fato, há uma diferença de compreensão primordial na impossibilidade de tradução, considerando que existe, também, uma inviabilidade primordial nas traduções. A apreensão da performance é diversa, conforme a possibilidade de compreensão dos idiomas, que se relaciona de

forma bastante imediata com o local e modo de vida de cada sujeito da plateia, e seu lugar político na situação exposta

Arkadi Zaides nasceu na Bielo-Rússia, em 1979, e mudou-se para Israel em 1990. Dançou na Batsheva Dancy Companie, fundada por Martha Graham, e foi dirigido, ali, pelo coreógrafo Ohad Naharin, cuja metodologia fez parte de sua formação. Separou-se da companhia há cerca de 5 anos, quando entrou em contato pela primeira vez com as imagens de Arquivo. Em 2012 apresentou em Avignon e diversos festivais pelo mundo a coreografia *Quiet*, uma das primeiras experiências na organização desse material, com bailarinos israelenses e árabes, montagem que antecedeu *Arquivo*.



Arquivo - MIT Mostra Internacional de Teatro de São Paulo 2015  
- foto Lígia Jardim

Além de postura política e de criação na realização da performance, o artista assume também uma parcela de invisibilidade de sua condição artística, na medida em que se apresenta com roupas cotidianas, e que abre mão de simbolizações ou outros recursos dramáticos ou estéticos de elaboração. A nudez de recursos busca potencializar o impacto, pela anulação do uso desses recursos disponíveis para esse reforço. Zaides expõe a vivência do corpo, aplicando ao corpo o gesto da precariedade da situação dos corpos representados.

Abrem-se discussões como a da viabilidade de colocar-se no lugar do outro, ou a finalidade de aproximar-se da experiência de outro corpo de forma crua, apenas revisitando seus movimentos, de forma que esse exercício exponha a inviabilidade, colocando em xeque a própria natureza do processo artístico, em relação a seus resultados estéticos. A opção de Zaides é indicar a presença da violência que se manifesta no corpo. Independentemente de releituras ou simbolizações, a representação da relação violenta é vivida no corpo, e a reprodução da ação desse corpo expõe a natureza dessa

violência. A presença do gesto, mesmo que repetido em outro corpo, evoca a manifestação violenta que o originou. Pode-se questionar, então, a propagação das violências e submissões, reverberando fora de seu contexto primário.

O espetáculo expõe e multiplica as zonas de indistinção na relação com o diverso e com a violência sofrida pelo outro, na medida em que submete o público às ambiguidades pertinentes a sua própria condição de espectador de uma situação que conhece à distância, e cujo nível de conhecimento e informação irão impactar a leitura do que se passa no palco. Os distanciamentos não são dados mas compulsórios; e a não tradução, ou não organização estética do material, não direciona, pelo menos *a priori*, a homogeneização das compreensões. Coloca-se a questão: em que medida aproximam-se as possibilidades de abordagem da diferença, e em que ponto se dá o afastamento delas? Não se trata apenas de contemplar uma obra a respeito da relação truncada, mas de vivenciar indistinções e possíveis ambiguidades. Como é possível posicionar-se, ou ao menos saber do que se passa, sem o atravessamento das versões, e do viés determinado pelo ponto de onde se vê?



Por outro lado, a distância e suposta neutralidade dessa relação de repetição/imitação transfere, de certa forma, a responsabilidade sobre a percepção da intensidade da agressão ao próprio espectador, já que o espetáculo não oferece uma partitura a esse respeito. A distância do olhar, que muitas vezes nos faz neutros, ou enfiados de tanta imagem, ao nível de não mais nos sensibilizarmos, pode agora trazer, ao contrário, a percepção do grau dessa indiferença, assim como sua gravidade, talvez.

#### BIBLIOGRAFIA

LEHMANN, Hans-Thies. Teatro pós-dramático. São Paulo: Cossac Naify, 2007.

MARTÍN-BARBERO, Jesús. La educacion desde la comunicacion. Bogotá: Grupo Editorial Norma, 2003.

MORIN, Edgard. Os sete saberes necessários à educação do futuro. Brasília, (DF): Unesco, 2002.

SANTOS, Boaventura de Sousa. A crítica da razão indolente: contra o desperdício da experiência. São Paulo: Cortez, 2006.

RANCIÈRE, Jacques. O espectador emancipado. Lisboa: Orfeu Negro, 2010.

## Volumes Publicados de *Teatro do Mundo*

MARINHO, Cristina, e RIBEIRO, Nuno Pinto, eds. , *O Teatro na Universidade, Ensaio e Projecto*, Porto, Faculdade de Letras, Centro de Estudos Teatrais da Universidade do Porto, 2007.

MARINHO, Cristina, e RIBEIRO, Nuno Pinto, eds., *Linguagens Barrocas do Teatro Europeu*, Porto, Centro de Estudos Teatrais da Universidade do Porto, 2007.

MARINHO, Cristina, e RIBEIRO, Nuno Pinto, eds. , *What's our Life? A play of passion: Lugares do palco, espaços da cidade*, Porto, Centro de Estudos Teatrais da Universidade do Porto, 2008.

MARINHO, Cristina, e RIBEIRO, Nuno Pinto, eds., *Teatro e Justiça, Afinidades Electivas*, Porto, Centro de Estudos Teatrais da Universidade do Porto, 2009.

MARINHO, Cristina, e RIBEIRO, Nuno Pinto, eds., *Tradição e vanguardas: cenas de uma conversa inacabada*, Porto, Centro de Estudos Teatrais da Universidade do Porto, 2011

MARINHO, Cristina, e RIBEIRO, Nuno Pinto, eds. , *A reescrita de mitos no teatro*, Porto, Centro de Estudos Teatrais da

Universidade do Porto/ Lisboa, Centro de Literaturas e Culturas Lusófonas e Europeias, 2012.

MARINHO, Cristina, e RIBEIRO, Nuno Pinto, eds., *Da página à cena, da cena à página*, Porto, Centro de Estudos de Teatro da Universidade do Porto, 2013.

MARINHO, Cristina, TOPA, Francisco, e RIBEIRO, Nuno Pinto, eds., *Teatro e Censura*, Porto, Centro de Estudos Teatrais da Universidade do Porto, 2013.

GUIMARÃES, Clayton Santos, MARINHO, Cristina, e RIBEIRO, Nuno Pinto, eds., *Law and Compassion, Drama and Pity: The Search for a Common Ground/ Direito e Compaixão, Teatro e Piedade: A Procura de um Lugar Comum*, Porto, Centro de Estudos Teatrais da Universidade do Porto, 2014.

CRUZ, Tiago Lamolinarie, MARINHO, Cristina, e RIBEIRO, Nuno Pinto, eds., *Drama and Performance/ Direito e Representação*, Porto, Centro de Estudos Teatrais da Universidade do Porto, 2015.

CARRONDO, Carla, COSTA, Suellen Cavalcanti, MARINHO, Cristina, e RIBEIRO, Nuno Pinto, eds., *Strangeness and the Stranger in Drama/ O Estranho e o Estrangeiro no Drama*, Porto, Centro de Estudos Teatrais da Universidade do Porto, 2016.

MARINHO, Cristina, RIBEIRO, Nuno Pinto, eds. , *Teatro e Violência/ Theatre and Violence*, Porto, Centro de Estudos Teatrais da Universidade do Porto, 2017.



**Titulo**

Teatro do Mundo  
Teatro e Violência

**Edição**

Centro de Estudos Tetrais da Universidade do Porto  
Centro de Literaturas e Culturas Lusófonas e Europeias

**Capa**

Cristina Marinho

**Impressão e Acabamento**

Tipografia Fonseca, Lda. - Porto

**Tiragem**

20 exemplares

**Depósito Legal**

439138/18

**ISBN**

978-989-95312-9-1

Os artigos publicados são da inteira  
Responsabilidade dos respetivos autores





Ficções do indizível: olhando ao longe a morte dos outros.

*Nuno Pinto Ribeiro.*

Teatro e Universidade: um diálogo violento

*Micaela Barbosa.*

Da cénica vacina

*Armando Nascimento Rosa.*

Essencial violence in Greek tragedy: its necessity (for spectators)

*John R. Lenz.*

Sources of pure joy: the execution scene, orgies of violence and the empty moral space in Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine the Great, Part I and Part II

*Nuno Pinto Ribeiro.*

Confronting Nazism then and now: dialectical theatre and the problem of political violence

*David Barnett.*

Unbridled illusion – a brief history of Berlin's city centre

*Christian von Oppen.*

La France est morte Vive la France

*Cátia Carvalho/Cristina Marinho*

Raison d'amour ardent: Marie Mancini, Héroïde de Mademoiselle de Blereau

*Marie-Theres Kemper/ Cristina Marinho*

'The world becomes darker to me as I pass through it'

*Michael Paller.*

Approche pragmatique de la violence verbale de la pièce de théâtre

Le Bâillon, de Éric-Emmanuel Schmitt

*Vlad Dobrou.*

Roda Viva – o ataque

*José Carlos Andrade.*

Teatro e percepção da violência – administração das imagens como manipulação e como potencial de violência crítica

*Shirlei Torres.*

