



## **Entre the academic consolidation and the opening to the world: the group "Manojo de Calles" and the theatrical experiment.**

Between academic consolidation and openness to the world: the  
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### **SUMMARY**

The present work constitutes an approach to the period of aesthetic renewal, which occurred in the theatrical field of Tucumán, province of northwestern Argentina, since the democratic reactivation in 1983. We perform, on this occasion, an exploration of the first poetic stage of the theater group "Manojo de Calles", which enters the medium in the early '90s and stars in this movement of change. The experimental vocation of the collective is determined by two historical conditions: university education and the approach to Theatrical Anthropology. The group defines the uniqueness of its proposal – in the midst of this conjuncture – putting into practice a new dramaturgical conception, attentive to both the creative subject and the dramatic normative.



**Keywords:** Dramaturgy. Experimentation. University education. Theatrical Anthropology. Bunch of Streets.

## ABSTRACT

The present work constitutes an initial approach to the period of aesthetic renovation, which occurred in the theater of Tucumán (Argentina), from the democratic reactivation. We made, on this occasion, an exploration of the first poetic stage of the theater group "Manejo de Calles", which entered the medium at the beginning of the 90s and was the protagonist of this movement of change. The collective's experimental vocation is determined by two historical conditions: university education and the discovery of Theater Anthropology. The group defines the uniqueness of its proposal by putting into practice a new concept of dramaturgy, which includes the creative subject and the dramatic regulations.

Keywords: Dramaturgy. Experimentation. University education. Theater Anthropology. Bunch of Streets.

## Introduction

From 1983, with the democratic return, Argentina promotes a cultural change at the national level and Tucumán enters a new stage of renewal and affirmation of theatrical art and, especially, of its dramaturgy. The observation of historiography about the "profusion of local authors", who write and premiere in the province from the post-dictatorial reactivation (Tríbulo, 2006, p.118), to which are added practices such as collective creation and theatrical assembly, demands to recognize in the constitution of this movement an expansion of the concept of "dramaturgy". The understanding of the phenomenon, in contemporary conditions of production, is no longer defined exclusively by the work of the author, who writes his works locked in the limits of his cabinet, and requires making visible the work of other agents involved in the art of the spectacle: actor's dramaturgy, director's dramaturgy, group dramaturgy, etc.

The democratic return, in the theatrical field of Tucumán, promoted – among other factors – an academic consolidation and an opening to the world, which facilitated the circulation of new



theatrical and aesthetic discourses. As for the dramaturgy, the reactivation implied in principle the continuation and, in some cases, the consolidation of a dramaturgical production framed in the traditional meaning of the work, through the work of writers such as Oscar Quiroga, Carlos Alsina and Manuel MacCarini. On the other hand, along with this authorial panorama, new dramaturgical practices emerge, related to the free version, collective creation or theatrical assembly, which – in the new historical context – seek a "renewal" of the scenic language (Tribulus, 2006, p. 117). Groups such as "Propuesta" belong to this trend, which burst into the middle in the '80s, and, later, experimental collectives, among which "La Baulera", "La Vorágine", "Marfil Verde" and "Manojo de Calles" stand out. This renovation involves different aspects of the activity, including the use of space, acting techniques, the division of labor or the place of the spectator. Different ways of facing transformation coexist at this juncture and, therefore, the understanding of the phenomenon requires defining in each case the criteria that sustain the change.

This work constitutes an approach to the problem posed and, for this, we focus our attention on the work of the collective "Manojo de Calles", which installs its name in the theatrical panorama of Tucumán since 1993, under the coordination of Verónica Pérez Luna. This group defined the uniqueness of its proposal, based on the recovery of cultural repertoires ignored by the medium (*v.g.* themes and works of Classical Antiquity), the intervention of unconventional spaces (*e.g.* courtyards, bars and museums) and participation in meetings aimed at promoting emerging theatre (*e.g.* "Bienarte Córdoba '93"). "Manojo de Calles", in turn, stars in this movement of theatrical change putting into practice a new dramaturgical conception, attentive to both the creative subject and the dramatic guidelines. The reconstruction of this concept, as a renewing aesthetic criterion, constitutes the purpose of our reflection.

### **Dramaturgical conception and aesthetic problems**

We take as a starting point the proposal of Joseph Danan, who – in his efforts to understand the concept in relation to contemporary scenic practices – conceives in a general way the dramaturgical praxis as the "organization of the action *according to the scene*" (2012, p. 50, italics of the original),



work that arranges "the action, orders a space and a temporality, and invents characters" for the viewer's vision (Danan, 2012, p. 50). In the restricted meaning of the term "dramaturgy", the task is reduced to the solitary work of the author, who elaborates a "dramatic work", understood as the "literary codification" of a drama, a text written a priori and with a certain autonomy with respect to the scene (García, 2001, p. 33); while in a broad sense – such as that proposed by Danan – dramaturgy integrates, according to the relevance of the case, the work of other agents involved in the creation of the show.

As Jorge Dubatti points out, the recognition of very diverse theatrical creation practices has extended the concept of dramaturgy:

It is recognized as "author's dramaturgy" that produced by "theater writers", that is, "playwrights proper" in the old restrictive meaning of the term: authors who create their texts before and independently of the work of direction or acting. "Actor Dramaturgy" is that produced by the actors themselves, either individually or in groups. "Dramaturgy of director" is the one generated by the director when he designs a work from the stage writing itself, often taking as a trigger the free adaptation of a previous text. The "group dramaturgy" includes various variants, from collaborative writing (binomial, trio, quartet, team ...) to the different forms of collective creation. (2003, p. 45)

In contemporary theatrical praxis, different ways of approaching dramaturgy coexist and, for this reason, the definition "must be recreated in each show" (Danan, 2012, p. 35). This reconstruction, which seeks to determine in each case where the weight of the scenic arrangement falls, "is the expression of a theoretical reflection on the theater" and, as such, constitutes a problem of an aesthetic nature (Naugrette, 2004, p. 34).

**The path of renewal: academic consolidation and openness to the world**



"Manejo de Calles" is an independent theater group from Tucumán, dedicated to scenic experimentation, with an extensive career of work in the province. Following the proposal of Verónica Pérez Luna, as coordinator, we can distinguish three poetic stages in the history of the collective: the "maturation" (1993-1998), the "consolidation" (1999-2005) and the "hesitation" (2006-) (2013, p. 37). In the present work, we will carry out an exploration focused on the first of these phases, conceived as the "group childhood" (Pérez, 2013, p. 41), at which time the group begins "the conscious elaboration of the technical procedures for the performance, the construction of the story and spatial innovation" (Pérez, 2013, p. 37).

Each stage, in theoretical terms, represents a "macropoetics or poetics of sets" (Dubatti, 2009, p. 7), a construct that relates a *corpus* of individual or "micropoetic" cases and offers a characterization of the whole, confronting similarities and differences. This panorama is defined by the main productions of the moment: *Antígona Vélez* (1993), *Mirando la luna* (1994) and *El país de las lágrimas o lamento de Ariadna* (1998). These shows, to the extent that they express a theoretical reflection on the theater, put to play a different dramaturgical notion that sustains the renewal.<sup>1</sup>

The foundation of the group is determined by two historical conditions: university education and the approach to Theatrical Anthropology, which restructured the practices of the field, circulated new aesthetic discourses and promoted the development of a local dramaturgy. It is appropriate, then, to place the group "Manejo de Calles", as part of the local scenic renovation, at the intersection of these events.

In 1984, the National University of Tucumán, facing a process of institutional normalization, created the School of Theater. In April of that year, classes began to be taught, according to a provisional academic plan, which offered a short career of three years. Subsequently, in 1987, the final curriculum was approved that increased the number of years and raised the training to the degree of "Bachelor of Theater". The implementation of the degree represented for the local

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<sup>1</sup>The appropriation of the Greco-Latin past, centered on female mythological figures (Antigone, Medea and Ariadne), constitutes one of the features of the initial poetic stage of the group. Far from representing an outdated or remnant dramaturgical practice, the use of the classic theme by "Manejo de Calles", in the specific historical and territorial matrices, supposes a space for experimentation (Risso, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2020).



environment a new space to "pursue systematic theatrical studies" (Tríbulo, 2006, p. 117). Taking into account that the Provincial Conservatory of Dramatic Art had been closed in 1976 by the military dictatorship and that the extinct University Theater – coordinated by Boyce Díaz Ulloque from 1964 to 1979 – had focused almost exclusively on production and not on teaching, the School came to respond to a set of needs of the theatrical activity of Tucumán – supported at that time by the Stable Theater and some groups independent–, among them, that of having agents instructed in the trade.

In this way, the appearance of the Theatre School constitutes one of the main events "propelling the theatrical reactivation of our province" (Tribulus, 2006, p. 117), which – among other effects – "provokes the incorporation of numerous agents in the regional scene and the development of new poetic fields" (Tossi, 2011, p. 7). Since its implementation, the career begins to provide new theories and practices that interact, in a coexistence not exempt from conflict, with the empiricism of the scenic trade, which until then sustained local stage production. José Luis Valenzuela highlights in this process those curricular proposals "that soon expose students to the dense pages of Lacan, Kristeva, Derrida or Deleuze, to the perplexity and bewilderment of those who were convinced that theater consists above all in learning a text and making it sound credible on stage" (2013, p. 7-8).

The School of Theatre represents for the history and scenic activity of the province the inauguration of a training space for actors, who are guaranteed an education that, on the one hand, instructs them in the Western artistic and cultural tradition and, on the other, exposes them to new problems and aesthetic trends. The centrality that the figure of the actor acquires in this institution constitutes a platform to redefine the division of theatrical labor and the responsibility of dramaturgical creation. The founders of the groups that star in the '90s the local theatrical transformation, in which the collective "Manojo de Calles" is inscribed, share – as a common denominator – the academic step, with different degrees of completion, for the recent university career.

The arrival of the "Odin Teatret" in Argentina and, especially, the tour of the group "Farfa" through Tucumán, in 1987, is another of the stimuli that intervene in this movement to renew the theater, in general, and dramaturgy, in particular. "Farfa" arrives in the province and presents the



following shows and demonstrations of work, to which they add seminars, barbers and video cycles:  
<sup>23</sup>*Marriage with God, The country of nod* and *Before Paris burns* (Masgrau, 2002). Within the framework of a process of technical improvement, the visit of the "Farfa" group, as "introducers of Eugenio Barba's work methodology" (Tríbulo, 2006, p. 117), enriched the creative arsenal of the medium and collaborated in the local scenic transformation.

As Silvina Díaz points out, although in Argentina there was already news about Barba and his theater:

[...] the most fruitful and direct contact of our theaterists with Theatrical Anthropology occurred from the visits of Eugenio Barba and his actors to our country. On these occasions, and through meetings, debates, public interviews, seminars, round tables, presentation of shows and samples of the training, the principles of Theatrical Anthropology and acting training based on pre-expressiveness were disseminated in a direct way. (2007, p. 3)

It should be noted that the principles of Theatrical Anthropology, designed by Eugenio Barba and operators in the practices of the "Odin Teatret" and the groups associated with him, clashed in part with the acting training, which at that time taught the Bachelor's Degree in Theater: <sup>4</sup>

The formation of the theater school at that time had great influence of Stanislavski's method, but already in 87 part of the "Odin Teatret" had passed through Tucumán leaving its traces. And also several of us took numerous courses with masters of the line of Barba [...] with

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<sup>2</sup>The "Odin Teatret" is a theatrical group, founded in 1964, by Eugenio Barba, in Norway and later moved to Denmark, in 1966. The training and production of this team is based on Theatrical Anthropology, a field of work designed by Barba, which studies the principles of the extra-daily use of the body and its application in the creative work of the actor.

<sup>3</sup>The group "Farfa" is a collective founded – within the orbit of the "Odin Teatret" – by one of Barba's disciples, the actress Iben Nagel Rasmussen. By 1984 this group was made up of its founder and her husband, the Argentine César Brie. "Farfa" was dissolved around 1988.

<sup>4</sup>Theatrical Anthropology, around the extra-daily use of the body in a situation of representation, identifies four feasible principles to guide the professional practice of the actor, namely: a) alteration of balance, b) opposition of forces, c) simplification and d) accumulation or waste of energy (Barba, 1990a). Generally speaking, an "extra-everyday" behavior involves a maximum expenditure of energy to achieve a minimum result, unlike habitual or "everyday" behaviors, which follow an inverse formula. Following Barba's words, these principles "[s]on means to *remove* to the body the daily automatisms" (1990a, p. 29, italics from the original).



the purpose of deepening the study of anthropological theater and its principles around the pre-expressive. (Perez, 2013, p. 39)

The anthropological model "[p]lantea a strong critique of conventional theater, especially the mimetic and psychological conception of the realist tradition" (Díaz, 2007, p. 7), in which Stanislavski's methodology, especially taught in those years by the University, can be inscribed. If in the realistic paradigm, the work of the actor seeks fundamentally to reproduce social behaviors on stage, guided by the psychology and history of the character (Barba, 1990a, p. 32); Theatrical Anthropology, on the contrary, through its principles, strips the body of everyday automatisms, thus rejecting from the poetics of actorism mimesis and "the idealistic conception of art as a reflection" of the world (Díaz, 2007, p. 8).

In this sense, Theatrical Anthropology promotes a series of changes and deviations, not only in relation to the art of the actor, but also around the notion of dramaturgy. In the first place, as a theatrical practice, the Barbian model questions "the traditional conception of *dramaturgy*, which [...] defines the task of the playwright as the elaboration of a text, a priori and independently of the staging, to be represented" (Díaz, 2007, p. 8, italics from the original). This discipline challenges the widespread "idea that there is a dramaturgy identifiable only with the written text" (Barba, 1990b, p. 76), which will then be staged, according to the logics of traditional theater. On the contrary, the guidelines of this anthropology point to a new definition of the concept: every spectacle is the result of a network of actions, an organization that is called "dramaturgy" and that "only exists at the end of the work process and cannot be transmitted" (Barba, 1990b, p. 77).

The production of the "Odin Teatret" in Tucumán, through the group "Farfa", once again challenges – in a second movement – the local scenic empiricism, where the theatrical practice consists of representing a text and, in this same direction, proposes a new look at theatrical art, regardless of the realistic tendency taught from the university.

It is important to clarify that both the principles of Theatrical Anthropology and the other theories and practices, learned in the career or in a self-taught way (v.g. *clown*, *acrobatics*, *dance*),



appear mixed and the poetics of "Manejo de calles" gives an account of a process of productive reception that resignifies and transforms these stimuli.

### The experimental vocation

In the first stage, "Manejo de Calles" undertakes a process of scenic experimentation and assumes the project of building an "own aesthetic" that problematizes the "regional hegemonic discourse" on the theatrical (Pérez, 2013, p. 71). The adjective "experimental", with which the group qualifies its praxis, implies the establishment of an alternative space or sub-field, with respect to other manifestations of the local scene, mainly, the official and commercial theater, which work with proven and profitable conventions. As Pavis points out, experimentation fundamentally adopts a different position or "attitude" towards what has been instituted: "The term *experimental theatre* [...] it opposes the traditional, commercial and bourgeois theater that *seeks* economic profitability and is based on safe artistic formulas, or even the theater [...] that only mounts works or authors already consecrated" (1998, p. 453, italics from the original).

This modality, to the extent that it avoids "reproducing existing forms and techniques", encourages creators to take risks and look for new options (Pavis, 1998, p. 453-454). In Pérez Luna's terms, "[i]xperimental, then, assumes that art accepts to try, and even to be wrong. It means opposing the search for something new and different from tradition and convention" (2013, p. 23). This innovative attitude, to the extent that it tends to emphasize difference, deliberately transgresses the rules. Experimentation, finally, constitutes an "internal provocation to the history of a certain artistic institution" (Eco, 1988, p. 104), in this case, the theatrical history of Tucumán. The search for new languages implies following "the footprint of the masters of contemporary theater" and, in turn, building an "artistic philosophy" that sustains and bases the elections (Pérez, 2013, p. 22).

The praxis of the group based on a new concept of dramaturgy constitutes a strategy, attentive to the history of the local theater, to place itself in a field of singularity, in front of the conventions of its time. This pretension of change entails, in the proposal of "Manejo de Calles", on the one hand, a revision of the traditional theatrical mode of production, based on the staging of a



previous text, and, on the other, a distancing from the conventional dramatic regulations, as a creative guideline. These directions, in the perspective of the group, aim fundamentally to question the survival of Aristotelian thought in performing art.

As Barba points out in this regard, in relation to the first question:

The distinction of an autonomous dramaturgy of the spectacle goes back to the way in which Aristotle faced the tradition of Greek tragedy – a tradition already distant even for him – indicating two distinct fields of research: the written texts and the way of presenting them. (1990b, p. 76)

This way of identifying dramaturgy with the work of an author, who writes a text *a priori* and independent of the scene, will gradually be questioned in the Manojian praxis, which gives centrality to the figure of the actor and the intervention of the director and, in this change of hierarchies, disseminates the old authorial function among the members of the collective.

In a second movement of change, the new dramaturgical conception challenges a set of theatrical assumptions, condensed into the ideal type of drama, namely: 1) conflict, sustained in an interpersonal relationship; 2) dialogue, as an essential component, and, fundamentally, 3) action, as a decisive and transformative act (Szondi, 1994, p. 17-22). This set, which operates as an aesthetic guideline to "judge dramaturgy" (Szondi, 1994, p. 23), as Lehmann warns us, is the result of a historical process, oriented – among other factors – by Aristotelian *Poetics*:

The authority of Aristotle, who was godfather and accompanist of the drama of the Modern Age [...] directed and refined, but, at the same time, constrained the gaze towards this genre in a singular way, since he declared that what in the poetics of the Attic tragedy was only called *epeisodion* – that is, the scenes acted between the songs of the choir, "action" – it was the most important thing. (2017, p. 262, emphasis added)

This hierarchy determined a "dramaturgy of action and logical and necessary intrigue", a system in which Aristotle's formulas of unity and totality exerted influence (Lehmann, 2017, p. 279), and defined the rules of the "dramatic paradigm". The production of "Manojo de Calles", attentive to



contemporary theatrical trends, explored a creative form that resists being measured exclusively with the rod of the dramatic, appealing – among other procedures – to simultaneity, fragmentation, accumulation and lyricism.<sup>5</sup>

As we will see below, the adoption of a dramaturgical conception of renewal constitutes in the case of "Manejo de Calles" a gradual process, to the extent that each show of the initial macropoetics rehearses a new distribution of work, different from the traditional one, and, in turn, alternatives of composition, with respect to the conventional dramatic pattern.

### **The free adaptation (*Antigone Velez*)**

On June 11, 1993, the cast – which will later be formed as the theater group "Manejo de Calles" – premieres *Antígona Vélez* by Leopoldo Marechal, with adaptation and direction by Verónica Pérez Luna. The choice of the work is the result of a general investigation around the myth of Antigone and arises, in particular, from the confrontation of a <sup>6</sup>*corpus* of dramatic versions, starring the heroine, in which are included – in addition to the piece of Marechal – the works of Sophocles and Anouilh. In this comparison, Pérez Luna recognizes that the text of the Argentine, and especially the love scene between Antigone and Lisandro, which the author places in the central part of the text, between transgression and punishment, defines the uniqueness of the mythical approach. This originality, noticed around the love interlude, distinguishes Marechal's rewriting from the work done by his predecessors and, for this reason, the group's proposal emphasizes this difference.

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<sup>5</sup>It is important to clarify that, apart from all poetic experimentations, the shows included in the period 1993-1998 retain a basic dramatic premise: the creation of an autonomous fictional cosmos, separated from the spectator (Szondi, 1994, pp. 18-19). This principle will be systematically dismantled, through the theatricality of the party, in the second stage of the Manojiana production (1999-2005), a phase that assumes – among other foundations – the superposition of the real/fictional planes and the incorporation of the spectator as creator.

<sup>6</sup>The show initially constitutes a work for the chair "Theater Direction" of the Degree in Theater. This association of young actors, organized around an academic requirement, represents the basis for the subsequent foundation of the collective.



The adaptation, while retaining in the foreground the entity of the previous work, carries out a radical (re)organization of the source text. The changes account for an intense dramaturgical work that is not limited to an a *priori* textual work, but this instance of writing, according to the conventional model, generates only a sketch. This initial script proposes a provisional arrangement of the action and, for this reason, acquires – through the work of the director – a strong and definitive structuring during the staging. Pérez Luna fulfills in this dynamic both roles that by necessity are complementary. We are, on this occasion, facing a dramaturgy that combines the textual facet (author's dramaturgy) and the scenic one (director's dramaturgy).

Marechal's piece takes special distance from conventional dramatic parameters when it introduces deviations into the unit of action. As Monges observes in this regard: "As for the unity of action, the work exposes a central, condensing conflict, but there is also an almost parallel instance on the plane of values [...]: the revelation and consolidation of the love between Antigone and Lysander" (2000, p. 30). The adaptation work in "Manojo de Calles" is stimulated in part by this type of readings, which conceive the development of the love interlude as a rupture of linearity and a possibility of escape. This proposal can be recognized in the press report prepared for the dissemination of the show in 1993:

The adaptation [...] has sought the point where the plot of *Antigone Vélez* speaks of itself and this has been found in the love scene between Antigone and Lysander [...]. At this moment a dynamic tension is introduced that puts in crisis the Aristotelian unity of action.

We can identify, in this assessment, an attempt to "deconstruct" Marechal's theater, to the extent that the adaptation – focused on the love interlude – seeks to exploit those "aspects that had not been considered in the previous plays and criticisms" (Pellettieri, 2000, p. 21). The political-social conflict of *Antígona Vélez*, organized around the desert campaign, loses entity and acquires a diffuse existence in the version concretized by Pérez Luna, in contrast to the emphasis placed on the erotic dimension.



The adaptation reduces the original action – arranged in six paintings – to the love interlude between Antigone and Lysander (table IV) and condenses the rest of the episodes, such as the prohibition of Facundo, the transgression of Antigone and the death of the couple, through a story, uttered by a female choir. The version then reverses the hierarchy established between the lines of action in the source text: the conflict between Antigone and Don Facundo Galván takes a back seat, while the relationship between Antigone and Lysander acquires a central character.

The version also includes the interventions of the Painter that are woven simultaneously, throughout the show, with the performance of the choir and the couple:

The painter, who was located in a marginal sector of the space and whose only action was to paint what he saw or tell the story according to his version, sometimes painted someone from the audience establishing with it a game of seduction that escaped the traditional relationship of public-actor. (Perez, 2013, p. 84-85)

In this dramaturgical concern, to generate parallel actions, we can recognize the productivity of Theatrical Anthropology that, unlike conventional theater, questions "the superiority of linear relations (the plot as concatenation) to the detriment of the plot understood as a fabric of actions present simultaneously" (Barba, 1990b, p. 78). The attention that this methodology pays to the pole of simultaneity, seeking a balance with linearity, has to do with the possibility of "making complex meanings emerge in the show" (Barba, 1990b, p. 78), independent of that of the usual cause-effect progression.

### **Group Dramaturgy (*Looking at the Moon*)**

On December 9, 1994, the group premiered the play *Looking at the Moon*, built from a reading of Euripides' tragedy *Medea*. The dramaturgy of the show results from the articulation of two instances, simultaneous and practically superimposed, both of a group nature: a) a literary codification, in the conventional way, as a shared desk task between Verónica Pérez Luna and Jorge Pedraza, a moment that results in a dramaturgical sketch, unstable and precarious, and b) the improvisation of actions,



with the purpose of elaborating a body sequence, by the actor and under the guidance of the director; driving also divided between Pérez Luna and Pedraza. At a later stage, the written text comes into confrontation with the composition of the actors and the action of the show acquires a definitive organization. This "structuring in the second term" (Danan, 2012, p. 36), in *Mirando la luna*, is in charge of Verónica Pérez Luna, who assumes – according to the hand program – the "coordination" of the work and, therefore, the integral direction of the assembly, through the articulation and arrangement of all the components depending on the scene.

The work bases its structure on "metatheatricality", that is, on the form "theater within the theater": "a real actor representing a theatrical actor representing a dramatic character" (García, 2001, p. 232). The drama, at its primary level, is about a group of comedians who come to the city to perform the pieces of their repertoire. On a second level, the metatheatrical, two parallel lines of action develop: 1) the story of Medea, based on the tragedy of Euripides, and 2) the story of the Man who fell in love with the moon. These stories are arranged in the form of a "drama of seasons", to the extent that the presentation of "a central plot line is displaced by a series of paintings in which the protagonist character is facing the main structures / institutions that make up his world" (Dubatti, 2009, p. 134). This organization that fragments the action and advances by leaps summons a new questioning of the Aristotelian pretensions about the unity and the totality of the drama. We are interested in highlighting, within this structure, the composition of two paintings in which the dramaturgical work prioritizes simultaneity to obtain artificial scenic constructs: the "Banishment III", starring Medea, and the "Idyll I", by Man.

The "Banishment III" concretizes the appropriation of a canonical episode of the tragedy of Euripides: filicide. Unlike the classic hypotext, which places the killing out of sight, *Looking at the Moon* stages crime through a complex sequence of actions:

Medea took out of a violin case a white headless doll, whose hands attached to an arch allowed the actress to sing to her children with a chilling vocal work as if the sound came from the doll-violin that she herself played imaginatively resting the bare neck of the doll on her chin. (Pérez, 2013, p. 44)



The sequence seems to synthesize the different instances of filicide: a) the song with which Medea summons the children, b) the strident suffering of the children when they are killed and c) the bodies decapitated as a result. Again, at this point, dramaturgy leans towards simultaneity, while several dramatic actions, each endowed with a simple meaning, make up a framework, in a unit of time (Barba, 1990b, p. 78). This type of dramaturgical composition moves away from the linear exposition of the events, avoiding a comfortable recognition and enhancing a complex significance, attentive to the different planes of the montage.

In the case of the Man who fell in love with the moon, the dramaturgy arranges the idyll through a synthesis that articulates a verbal story and, in turn, a bodily sequence, which agrees – in part – with the actions and character narrated. The physical work, in this dramaturgy, does not directly illustrate or represent the content of the diction, but composes an artificial relationship, putting to play – in parallel and without hierarchy – the different elements of the scene. The "Idyll I", for example, is composed of the superposition of a body score, determined by the fragility of a lit candle, and the narration of the encounter between the moon and Man. The different subtexts (corporal and verbal) are intertwined, in a "simultaneous plot, in a new dramatic synthesis, of elements and details", which overcomes linearity and the communication of a univocal sense (Barba, 1990b, p. 79).

### **The Director's Montage(*The Country of Tears or Ariadne's Lament*)**

On November 28, 1998, the group "Manojo de Calles" premiered *El país de las lágrimas o lamento de Ariadna*, at the Salón Spilimbergo (Museo Timoteo Navarro). This show takes as its main reference the myth of Ariadne, closely linked to the figures of the Minotaur, Theseus and Dionysus. The dramaturgical work, in this case, can be framed within the modality defined as "montage". Pavis, from a general perspective, conceives the practice as "a dramaturgical form in which textual or scenic sequences are mounted in a succession of autonomous moments" (1998, p. 299). In this form of creation, we can especially notice the productivity of Eugenio Barba's methodology, which underlies



the practices of the collective. Theatrical Anthropology understands montage as "composition": "'compose' (put with) means 'to mount', to unite, to weave actions: to create drama" (Barba, 1990c, p.188).

The dramaturgy in the montage is not determined by an *a priori* literary codification (dramatic work) but is the result of a "synthesis of materials and fragments" (Barba, 1990c, p. 188). These elements, which the dramaturgical work interweaves with each other or – using Barba's metaphor – "orchestra" depending on the scene, come from different contexts, among which we can highlight, despite the variety: the sequences of actions or scores of movement improvised and elaborated by the actors, the texts written by the agents involved in the show or the set of "sources", references, points of orientation" (Barba, 2010, p. 140, italics from original). Unlike the "staging" that requires "working <sup>7</sup>for the text", that is, transposing a dramatic work scenically and following the provisions of literary codification; the montage implies "working *with* the text" and this means "choosing one or more writings, *not* to put oneself at its service, but to extract a substance that feeds a new organism: to the spectacle" (Barba, 2010, p. 185, italics from the original). This work of composition falls mainly on the director, who is concerned "with guiding the attention of the viewer", is the "author of the montage" (Barba, 2010, p. 159).

The dynamic adopted by "Manojo de Calles" responds to the particular division of labor proposed by the assembly. In the hand program of *El país de las lágrimas...*, Pérez Luna assumes both the "coordination" of the show and the "creation" of scenic material and the "compagination" of the "fragments" that the dramaturgy articulates and transforms scenically. The theatrist then assumes at first the task of guiding both the work of the actors (creation of physical-verbal actions), work to which she adds the writing of her own texts and the selection of other people's texts; and then, in a second movement, in charge of the direction of the assembly, weaving all the components.

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<sup>7</sup>In the latter group, *The Land of Tears...* includes different types of texts, not necessarily "dramatic", such as fragments of poems (*Leaves of grass* by Walt Whitman), short stories ("La casa de Asterión" by Jorge Luis Borges) and novels (*The Lover* by Marguerite Durás).



*The land of tears...* it has an episodic structure, to the extent that the moments lack antecedent and consequential, in favor of a markedly open construction of action. As a result of the assembly, "the principles of unity, integrity and hierarchy are broken, with a tendency to accumulation and relative autonomy of the parts and preference for smaller units, such as the painting" (García, 2001, p. 78). In effect, the show is composed of a series of paintings, organized from monologues and arranged on the axis of mere temporal succession, without there being an explicit causal relationship between them. This panorama questions two basic dramatic conventions: on the one hand, the unity of action and, on the other, the dialogue structure.

In dramaturgical work, it is also possible to observe a tendency to lyricism in the composition of the paintings, to the extent that diction exploits the poetic function of language – considered optional in the theater – and inhibits the basic functions: dramatic and characterizing (García, 2001, p. 58). The word draws the viewer's attention to itself and stops involving the character in any action or contributing to its characterization. In Pavis' terms, the intrusion of poetry into the theater brings, among other effects, "a modification of fictional status, a change in perception and, therefore, an effect of strangeness" (2016, p. 244). Minotaur monologues, for example, are mainly composed of this type of diction:

With your eyes in my eyes  
I have discovered the void  
the nothing sweet, seductive,  
and also, with your eyes  
nailed to my eyes,  
I have known everything I want,  
the spent life of hybrid lovers,  
suicide allowance,  
full death" (Pérez, 2001, p. 8-9).

The progressive advance of the poetic function on the verbal plane constitutes – in this context – a case of "lyrical transgression", to the extent that it prevents (or hinders) the fulfillment of the basic



dramatic scheme: "The lyric is [...] a specific way of transgressing any type of discursive scheme, be it narrative, descriptive, reflective, argumentative, etc." (Reisz, 1989, p. 88). This rupture implies a problematization of the linearity of the discourse, since it tends to the simultaneity of contexts, through operations such as metaphor, organization by jumps, enigmatic details and unusual associations.

If in the dramatic context the work provides for an action (physical and / or verbal), with a mobile objective and transformative capacity (beginning, middle and end); by the effect of lyrical transgression, instead, dramaturgy conceives the event, whether corporal or linguistic: "'event' [we call] the performances of the characters that do not alter the situation in which they occur, due to lack of intention, capacity or possibility" (García, 2001, p. 74). The emergence of lyricism implies a new distancing from conventional dramatic conventions, since it entails the abandonment of a key element in the Aristotelian definition, namely the mimesis of action (Reiz de Rivarola 86). This rejection brings with it the scenic quietism, posing a situation that seems not to evolve and that is focused on the representation of a state rather than on the creation of an intrigue (Lehmann, 2017, p. 447).

## Conclusion

Considering dramaturgical work in the praxis of "Manojo de Calles" implies assuming the complexity of creative processes in the contemporary theatrical field. Understanding the phenomenon requires delving into the dynamics of production and reconstructing the possible scope of the concept of "dramaturgy". The nature of the *corpus* broadens the meaning of the term, to the extent that the dramaturgical activity involved in the shows considered exceeds the traditional modality of the theatrical author. The reflection on the conceptual premises that underpin the practices constitutes an aesthetic problem and, accordingly, the reconstruction of these principles allows us to understand the criteria that underpin the change.

The dramaturgy of the group, at the crossroads of artistic discourses, is presented to us in practice as a network of actions or episodes, depending on the scene. This work gradually engages



both the director and the actor, figures that in the process acquire centrality, and, therefore, the authorship of the show is disseminated in a collaborative task. Likewise, throughout the period 1993-1998, the collective conformed a progressive distancing from the conventional dramatic norm, questioning the demands of intrigue, unity and totality, through the emphasis placed on simultaneous relationships, the accumulation of paintings, the fragmentary disposition and the lyrical expression. This new dramatic conception, attentive to local history, defines – among other aesthetic variables – the belonging of "Manojo de Calles" to the movement of renewal of the theatrical field of Tucumán.

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