

Ói Nóis and Companhia do Latão: the courage to live with the mother-in-law, or memory, coexistence, and resistance in the experience of Brazilian theater groups

Ói Nóis e Companhia do Latão: a coragem de morar com a sogra ou memória, convívio e resistência na experiência de grupos de teatro brasileiros

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with theater groups as sons-in-law of a kind mother-in-law, Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory, and treat them therefore as important centers of the Brazilian Theater's memory, constantly restored and enriched. The concept of memory is observed not only as the artistic trajectory of these collectives but as an acquired knowledge that preserves many experiences that they have, their practical knowledge and their peculiar way of doing theater. Moreover, memory is taken as a dynamic force, acquired and improved essentially by living together in the group, due to the community character of the construction of knowledge and whose power depends on the stability of the formation of the collective articulated with strategies of documentary records that can be transmitted to subsequent generations and new participants, in order to keep alive the ethical, ideological and aesthetic principles of groups. This reflections were possible owing to the analysis of the trajectories of Oi Nóis Aqui Traveiz and Companhia do Brass. Therefore, artists from both groups were interviewed. Finally, it is observed how the groups in question faced the economic and political pressures as forces that try to disaggregate and destroy the memories of these organizations.

Keywords: Memory; Theater Groups; Resistance; Bond; Conviviality.

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RESUMO

O presente artigo aborda os grupos de teatro como os genros de uma *sogra nada indesejável*, Mnemôsine, a deusa da memória; por isso, são núcleos importantes da memória do Teatro Brasileiro, restaurada e enriquecida constantemente. O conceito de memória é observado não apenas como a trajetória artística dos coletivos, mas como um saber adquirido que conserva as diversas experiências vivenciadas pelos membros de um grupo, seu conhecimento prático e sua maneira peculiar de fazer teatro. Além disso, a memória é tomada como uma força dinâmica, adquirida e aperfeiçoada essencialmente pelo convívio no grupo, em razão do caráter comunitário da construção dos saberes e cuja potência depende da estabilidade da formação do coletivo articulada com estratégias de registros documentais que possam ser transmitidos às gerações subseqüentes e aos novos participantes, de modo a manter vivos os princípios éticos, ideológicos e estéticos das grupalidades. As reflexões foram possíveis através da análise das trajetórias do *Ói Nós Aqui Traveiz* e da *Companhia do Latão*. Para tanto, foram entrevistados atuantes artistas dos dois grupos. Por fim, observa-se como os grupos em questão enfrentam as pressões econômicas e políticas que são forças que tentam desagregar e destruir as memórias dessas organizações.

Palavras-chave: Memória. Teatro de Grupo. Resistência. Vínculo. Convívio.

The courage of those who live with their mother-in-law

[...]

FIRST CUSTOMER – Your house is well-frequented by theater people.

MONTEIRO – One could say I have no other clientele. This place is kind of a headquarter to our actors. Between these walls plays are discussed, entrepreneurs are crushed, critics are cursed, companies are made and unmade.

SECOND CUSTOMER – They’re always fighting each other.

MONTEIRO – This means nothing... You see two artists saying horrible things to each other: they seem irreconcilable enemies... But at the first misfortune that happens to one of them, they embrace, kiss. They’re good people, I tell them, good people, unfairly judged.

[...]

(Artur Azevedo)²

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AZEVEDO, Artur. Mambembe, First Act, Chart 2, Scene I. In: **Melhor Teatro Artur Azevedo**. São Paulo: Global, 2008, p. 176.

This article intends to reflect on the process of change in the Brazilian theater in the last forty years – an important portion of its history and praxis –, from the experience, trajectory, and perspective of the theater groups, in particular, of two of them, which testified and were part of this route; namely, *Ói Nós Aqui Traveiz*, from Rio Grande do Sul, and *Companhia do Latão*, from São Paulo. The first represents a series of groups that were born in the late 1970’s/early 1980’s, when the military dictatorship, hinting its breakdown, restituted the freedom of association and assembly. Even though, *Ói Nós* suffered authoritarianism and persecution from the exception regimen in force. The young *Companhia do Latão*, with “only” two decades of existence, shows the change in the cultural sector of São Paulo from the mid 1990’s, marking a resurgence of this modality of doing theater after a prior period of strong economic crisis which devastated initiatives of such nature.

Through these groups, it is possible to observe the operation of important concepts such as coexistence, resistance (especially political and economic), the construction of continuous knowledge, and the maintenance of the *memory* of the communities where they are based and of the Brazilian theater itself. Such analysis was possible with the interview of members who were important in the history of these groups. They gave their testimonies on the occasion of a research promoted by this same author, which emphasized, in that opportunity, three aspects of these associations: as mediators of the subjectification process of their constituent members; as artistic matrices whose raw material would absorb precisely such mediation; and as dynamic and creative organisms that constantly find alternatives to their diverse problems, because, according to Trotta, “the grouping requires

taking position and constantly elaboration of renowned survival strategies, which will necessarily entail dealing with the dynamics between the preservation and transformation of the self [...]” (TROTТА, 2011, p. 215).

Perhaps is in this need for survival that resides both the great flexibility and creativity developed in this kind of theater and the very fact of isolated artists decide, at some point in their lives, to form theater groups; since in the collective they find mutual support for the everyday difficulties and can better face the severe pressures that affect the unwanted profession they embrace. But the theater group phenomenon is not an artistic *jabuticaba*, i.e. not a national invention or exclusivity. Nevertheless, it is a mode of scenic realization that became typically Brazilian, very well-adapted and generating easy fruits in *tupiniquin* (Brazilian) lands. Although in Colombia, Argentina, France, and United States, for example, this theatrical constitution appears vigorously.

Unlike European theater companies, the groups are independent, not linked to governmental institutions and theatrical establishments. Groups present a character of resistance in the face of the difficulties and pressures they suffer; of rescue, for keeping and being themselves the memory of the testified times, constantly rescuing these reminiscences as a poetic source of their creations; and of coexistence, as they restore a manner of doing theater which is based on bonding and continuous socializing among the members, which enables the acquisition of a knowledge that is acquired from the mediation of the subjetifications in process on it.

Companies, in turn, usually have State and business characters associated. It might be difficult to understand, as this reality is more European than Brazilian, such as, for example: the *Royal Shakespeare Company*, which is maintained by the British government; the *Ópera Nacional de Paris*; the *Teatro Alla Scala*, from Milan; etc. Each of them has its activities related to the State, and the artists association is through a contract of employment signed by the State. In this point the companies strongly differ from the groups, which are formed in an almost spontaneous character by freely affiliated individuals and are disengaged of legally established institutions, even though in Brazil both terms are used for the same purpose, hardly showing antinomies and significant differences.

Finally, one question remains: what does the mother-in-law have to do with all this? Although the life of the scenic artists, grouped or not, is full of difficulties, to the point of, sometimes, having to live with the mother-in-law, the amusing allegory is

beside the point of this article. According to Greek mythology, after winning the battle against the Titans, Zeus decided to have daughters to sing the glories of his victory to remind them forever. Later, nine goddesses were born, Thalia and Melpomene among them – the deities of comedy and tragedy, respectively. Zeus has not had his daughters with any mortal. The Muses are daughters of none other than Mnemosyne, the deity in charge of facing the dangers of forgetting; that is, the mother-in-law of Theater, of the theatrical scene artists, she is the goddess of the memory. Living with the mother-in-law requires courage and resistance to answer the daily pressures, and anyone subjected to them would tend to give up easily along the way. In spite of this, the theater groups have remained steadfast and active as a major segment of the constructed of continuous knowledge, based on the maintenance of the Brazilian theater knowledge. These bigamists deserve, because of this, the blessings and support from the mother of their muses-wives, the goddess of memory.

Group Theater or Theater Group? Generalizations and definitions

Group theater is, undoubtedly, the most vigorous and productive form of organization of investigation process, transformation, and scenic creativity. Collective working is the only rigorously penetration and stimulation source that is able to deepen an artistic project, for the sake of keeping it permanently inserted in the social life and in constant confrontation with the reality, without losing the ability to reinvent itself, and searching for unexpected and diverse languages.
(PEIXOTO, 1992, p. 1)

Perhaps this confusion manifests, in practice, a conceptual discontinuity. The search for a definition or the establishment of parameters should dialogue with the practice, without promoting a useless elitism, since “[...] opting for a strict definition of group does not consist in excluding those it does not contemplate, but in projecting a possibility of future, no matter how Utopian it may seem to be today.” (TROTТА, 2008, p. 36). It would mean looking for a pluralist definition that is not a validation system, but a flexible system that reflects the theatrical praxis. In the words of Cabanchik, pluralism “emphasizes the diversity of perspectives that gives us our experience of the world, without deeming possible, convenient or necessary, a reductive

procedure that redirects such multiple experiences to a more basic or fundamental unity.” (2000, p. 100, our translation) ³

However, for some theater thinkers, this is an irrelevant discussion, the problem does not exist, and it is not justifiable to expend effort to find a definition that constitutes a validation system for a virtual conception that actually does not even exist since all gregarious theater, in group, is communal. The principle behind this positioning is the generalization of the concept of group theater. Its multiplication can be observed in the work of some authors and artists who take the expressions group theater and theater group as the full meaning by one of the parts that characterize them: “group” as collective, a congregation of actors, and the congregation of these with the audience, critics etc.

When I think of the expression “group theater,” and only of it, I imagine a redundancy. Theater is, by definition, an activity carried out in groups. Although under different forms of organization, the collective aspect imposes itself in the theatrical practice. There will always be an inevitable moment of collectiveness, whether in the relation with a team of technicians or in the encounter with the audience (ABREU, 2007, p. 58).

In a first moment, Picon-Vallin reaffirms this position and highlights a notion that ignores the practical reality of the distinct constitutions and manners to organize the theatrical practice, to focus on the obvious speech that considers the human reunion is at the very heart of theater. Thus, the boundaries, as pale as floating, of group theater dilute completely, because according to the author:

[...] the first thing that comes to mind is that “group theater” is one of the strangest tautologies – every theater should be “group theater” since the definition of a group, if we look at a dictionary, is as follows: “Assembly of beings, forming a set” [...] According to this definition, the theater is certainly and necessarily practiced by a group of artists and technicians, even in the case of a solo performance. (PICON-VALLIN, 2008, p. 82).

However, the researcher then attempts to build a definition that goes beyond the merely etymological issue and observes other parameters related to the topic, such as the presence of leadership in the assembled community; the professionalization of the collective; the aesthetic and artistic language research, on a continuous base; and the bonds between the individuals involved. Thus, the author relates in her concept of what a group is based on the congregation of individuals with affective ties to each

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“acentúa la diversidad de perspectivas que nos entrega nuestra experiencia del mundo, sin que se juzgue posible, conveniente o necesario, un procedimiento reductivo que reconduzca tal experiencia múltiple a una unidad más básica o fundamental”

other around an aesthetic project, with or without leadership, and endowed or not of professional concern.

[...] group theater can be defined, whether such denomination is explicitly attributed or not, as an artistic community assembled, most of the times, around one or more leaders, engaged in the same project. It can be amateur, semi-professional, or professional, and can choose, according to its status (which may evolve), the relation with the others, the artistic research, the impact on the society, the disturbing quality of the creation and, even, the foundation of theater. However, relationships of trust, understanding, complicity, and sharing, that give grounds to the group as such, have a reverse: the turning inwards, to the research work, because of the difficulties to be overcome and the intensity of work along the rehearsing process (PICON-VALLIN, 2008, p. 88).

Less tottering, Abreu (2008) states that the group theater sense seeks to point out a definition that precisely considers the qualitative elements of this theatrical form that may better reflect the reality of the groups. Such reality is composed of a continuous aesthetic project, and therefore extensive in time, surpassing the boundaries of an isolated montage, and is constructed and perfected through the process of collective work in a cumulative manner, forming its cultural patrimony. A theater group is, first of all, the cultural patrimony former that is based on its continuous collective experience.

[...] a theater group, in the logic we are organizing, is not the same as a grouping of artists who get together to do a particular work. What marks the existence of a group – at least in the sense that matters here – is a common experience placed in perspective. It is not about a punctual artistic event, although an event, a spectacle, for example, might be in the plans of the group, as in fact almost always is. It is, rather, an aesthetic project, a set of practices marked by procedural procedure and continuous activity, experimentation and creative speculation, which can even unfold or feed intervention desires of other range that not the strictly artistic (ABREU, 2008, p. 92).

In spite of the contradictory position of the French author, for the actor and director Neto, who is profoundly connected to the universe of theater practice, the topic is addressed with no theoretical subterfuges. With the experience of someone who lives and experiences the praxis of his art on a daily basis, knows the specificity and depth of the aesthetic project, continuous procedural procedure, and conceptual implications that are present in

the constitutive project of theater groups; this artist approaches the subject with such clarity that he almost seems to simplify it. This implies no prejudice to the approach presented, in fact, his answer leads to profound reflections on what is involved in making, thinking, and conceptualizing the group theater and the theater group.

The first [group theater], in my view, is what results from the continuous work of a theater group, which includes other activities beyond the scene, artistic or not, that promote aesthetic, ethical, and political discussions of the theater making. The second, a grouping of actors – circumstantial or lasting – to make theater. Theater groups may or may not have as result a group theater (NETO, 2007, p. 34).

In this case, the differentiation by mode and form appears; group theater would be a *mode* of collective work, which is founded on artistic-aesthetic belief or motivations, formed from the construction and deepening of bonds among its direct members, established in the coexistence and in the theatrical event, and supported by a number of creative and collaborative processes and methods⁴. It is noteworthy that is the distinction that says collective creation is every one that involves, regardless of hierarchies, more than one individual; while collaborative processes require the sharing of decision-making power on the creative solutions to be adopted, and, consequently, a hierarchical softening in the group. In turn, theater group is a *form* of organization or institutionalization of this practice.

Group as a qualitative result of bond, coexistence, and theatrical event⁵

The theatrical strength of a nation is not measured only by the work of its artists, but also, and especially, for its coexistences.
(JORGE DUBATTI)

The Swiss-Argentine psychoanalyst Henry Pichon-Rivière devoted part of his career, and subsequent work, to investigate and reflect on *interpersonal relationships*, and the bonds, groups, and processes coming from it. Bond can be explained as follows: the individual develops a mechanism to internalize, in its psyche, the objects existing in the world. The bond is this relational structure, whose goal is the learning; to internalize to know.

4. For the concept of collaborative process, see Fischer (2010) and Silva (2008).

5. For Dubatti, “theatrical event” refers to the “theatrical presentation,” i.e., it is when theater happens; before is rehearsal, after is memory.

Object relationship is the internal structure of the bond. [...] It is a dynamic structure, in continuous movement. [...] We can define the bond as a particular relationship with the object. This particular relationship has as consequence a more or less fixed behavior regarding such object [...] (PICHON-RIVIÈRE, 2007, p. 17).

This relational structure occurs at two levels; the psychic level, which refers to the mental process of the individual, and the social level, based on how the individual will express this internal relationship through his/her behavior. Bond deepens and enhances from the coexistence that is enabled by events that encourage encounters. Specifically, the “theatrical event” is the first goal of theatrical making, with temporal boundaries (time to start and end), encounter structuring between those attending the event, and articulation between its production relation and *poiesis* reception.

In this sense, the event comprises *poiesis*, *presence*, and *expectation*. Since presence produces “coexistence,” this event installs groups that, because their character is given by time, are ephemeral. Thus, these transient groups operate in the installed space-time, creating and sharing poetry, to be extinguished afterward. The difference between a group installed in the “theatrical event” and other more stable groups is, at the most obvious level, in the durability that does not constitute bonds, opposed to stable groups that do it.

The “theatrical event” reproduces microscopically in its duration, but not less in the intensity, tensions, conflicts, and crises alike any group. The making of this relationship is the very coexistence. Thus, coexistence is a presential sharing of the collective experience phenomenon, or, simply: being together. “The starting point of the theater is, then, the ancestral institution of coexistence: the reunion, the encounter of a group of men in a territorial center, in a point of space and time; that is, in the terms of Dupont, the ‘living culture of the ancient world’” (DUBATTI, 2007, p. 47, our translation)⁶.

The coexistence is a reunion with no obligation to continue, i.e., the participants can live without a reunion, without establishing a coexistence habit. However, undertaking the building and strengthening of bonds until achieving a complex model of interpersonal relationship, such as the ones existing in a theater group demands the need for coexistence habits, for a routine of encounters or meetings.

Coexistence implies being with other(s) but also with oneself, a dialectic of me-you, of leaving oneself to meet the other/self. What matters is the dialogue from presence to conversation: the recog-

6. “El punto de partida del teatro es, entonces, la *institución ancestral del convivio*: la reunión, el encuentro de un grupo de hombres en un centro territorial, en un punto del espacio y del tiempo, es decir, en términos de Dupont, la ‘cultura viviente del mundo antiguo’.”

inition of the other and of oneself, to affect and to be affected in the encounter, leading to a suspension of loneliness and isolation (DUBATTI, 2007, p. 47, our translation)⁷.

Dubatti identifies three types of coexistence: prior-theatrical, theatrical, and post-theatrical. The first type is where the *interpersonal relationships* are located and come into friction, organizing the group tasks; it is where the learning and training processes occur with greater time availability; where the encounters take place and the rehearsals create, perfect, and simulate the theatrical event. The relationship of stability between bond improving and coexistence regularity lead to the consolidation of a structure that results in teamwork, in a group:

[...] at the extreme of stability are closed sets, with fixed members, and there is no permeability or movement in their constitution; at the extreme of renovation are the open groups, whose constitution changes every spectacle, with only a central core remaining (TROTТА, 2011, p. 220).

The bond is conditioned to affective, ideological, economic, and political issues related to the collective. On the other hand, provisional casts assembled for a determined theatrical work configure a temporary group mode, where the coexistence is not necessarily marked by the consistency on the same issues. The second type of coexistence is the theatrical one, which determines the factor of auratic presence in the theatrical events, and establishes the real experience of the phenomenon. It is produced according to the theatrical practices – with some essential characteristics: physical presence and, consequently, the non-transferability; and the ephemerality, due to the solitude-encounter alternation. Dubatti advocates the presential characteristic as follows:

A reunion of auras, the theatrical coexistence extends the Benjaminian concept of auratic art to the maximum. The encounter of auras is not enduring, what remains is the result of coexistence: consequently, it is also an empire of the ephemeral, of a historical experience that happens and immediately dissipates, later becoming unrecoverable (2007, p. 62, our translation)⁸.

This vision of Dubatti does not harmonize with the contemporary notions of virtuality, affected as they are by the most modern technologies, and encloses a living theater and a live experience. For the Argentinian author, it is unfeasible to experiment or to attend the coexistence experience of theater by virtual means or

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“el convivio implica estar con el otro/los otros, pero también con uno mismo, dialéctica del salirse de sí al encuentro con el otro/con uno mismo. Importa el diálogo de las presencias, la conversación: el reconocimiento del otro y del uno mismo, afectar y dejarse afectar en el encuentro, generando una suspensión de la soledad y el aislamiento.”

8.

“Reunión de auras, el convivio teatral extiende al máximo el concepto benjaminiano de arte aurático. El encuentro de auras no es perdurable, permanece lo que el convivio: en consecuencia, es también imperio de lo efímero, de una experiencia histórica que sucede e inmediatamente se desvanece, para luego tornarse irrecuperable.”

by third parties. “The coexistence event is a non-transferable vital experience (not communicable to those who do not attend the coexistence, not countable in its vastness, nor rebuildable or restorable), one must live it” (DUBATTI, 2007, p. 63, our translation)⁹

The last type of coexistence is the post-theatrical, which refers to the formation of any group, regardless of duration and meeting location, necessarily motivated and stimulated by a theatrical event. Therefore, it is about ephemeral groups that, after a theatrical presentation or experience, gather on the theater stairway or exit, on a bar, a restaurant, a square etc. to speak about the theatrical aesthetic experience they lived minutes or hours before.

The memory of a group lies not only in archived records and documented materials, but mostly in the reminiscence of its coexistence that shares and fragments the collective coexistence memory under the perspective of each one involved. Which is why the greatest asset of each group, including the theatrical ones, is its members. In them lies the Mnemosyne mystique.

Ói Nós Aqui Traveiz and Companhia do Latão! *Memories in transit*

Ói Nós was founded at the end of the 1970’s by a group of artists with a strong artistic spirit of transgression and innovation. The group presents an aesthetic questioning characteristic that “dares to go beyond resistance,” is porous to its time and sensitive to issues in vogue at its surroundings. The artists’ staff is movable and the group is relatively open, i.e. artists can participate in the group after joining in the workshops, but its juridical constitution and its social board is not as open and movable. The group of Rio Grande do Sul tries to take alternative spaces and performs bold montages through collaborative method. Even when they start from a ready text, they express in the final work the characteristics of all involved in the process.

Ói Nós is the fruit of a period, is to always be aware of what is going on here and now. This makes the Ói Nós to dialogue, the entire time, with these transforming forces, because we actually were not lucky enough to see this forces simply disappearing – they changed faces, clothing, but they are still out there; for example, we participated in the protests in July 2013 and took gas bombs in the face, even though we are on the side of very old people, carrying posters, singing beautiful songs on the street, feeling a wonderful civic force, everybody together, and all of the sudden we are being assaulted by the police (FARIAS¹⁰, 2014).

9. “El acontecimiento convivial es experiência vital intransferible (no comunicable a quien no asiste al convivio, no se puede ‘contar’ en su vastedad, ni reconstruir o restaurar), hay que vivirlo.”

10. All the interviews with members of the groups Ói Nós Aqui Traveiz and Companhia do Latão, cited throughout this article, were conducted in 2014 and published in 2015 on the master’s thesis of this author. The full thesis is available from: SILVA, Carlos Eduardo da. **A dinâmica das relações interpessoais em teatro de grupo: pressões externas e tensões internas na experiência de coletivos teatrais brasileiros**. Master’s degree in performing arts. Bahia: Drama school, Federal University of Bahia, Salvador, 2015.

Considering its degree of porosity, and how much it allows itself to reverberate the issues in vogue at the social context in which is inserted, Ói Nóis tends to be a source of memory not only of its artistic processes, but also of the society as a whole. At the time in which the military regimen was still in force, even in decline, the group of Rio Grande do Sul faced severe persecution, responding to this stressful context with passionate discussions, breakdowns, and visceral artistic achievements.

In addition, Ói Nóis was marked by the gentrification process that forced the eviction of the group. This process mobilized social support movements and cause internal breakdown, with some important members leaving the group. To Flores, the property speculation process has seriously weakened the group, causing a dismantling. According to Paulo Flores, that was the worst crisis in the group history:

What really affected me during my path in the group was when people, overnight and on top of their personal interests, betrayed the group idea. In those 36 years, what deeply affected me was the moment in which Ói Nóis was in a confrontation with the city hall [...] and several people in the group left, left the group, and soon after were hired to work at the city hall. [...] I wasn't expecting, since I always believe that people are involved in Ói Nóis because of the ideological issues in this collective work, or similar political ideas... And that was a moment of knowing that people are leaving because they are being hired, they're criticizing the group procedure without proposing changes before [...] That, for me, was the greatest group crisis, when this person left and with the backing of three, four, five more people (Paulo Flores, 2014).

By the very nature of the artwork, the constant pressure and possible frustration involved, the crises are daily present and serve mainly as process records, marking the memory of certain events, associating occurrences. The combination of common events experience (albeit under distinct perspectives) somehow reinforces the bonds of the involved; hence, the shared memory deepens ties of group members, being traumas and victories the ballasts of a path which is present in these people affective dimension.

Companhia do Latão is part of a recent generation of groups in the Brazilian movement of group theaters. They were formed after the economic crisis of the 80's and the Collor government, which decimated initiatives as such, and correspond to the cultural revival spurred by the first laws of culture promotion. Curiously, these artists met in or through the universities. Undergraduate courses in performing arts are a recent phenomenon, dating

back to the mid-20th century. Post-graduate degrees, in particular, come from the 1980's. And the group from São Paulo is an example of a collective born from an academic environment.

Perhaps that is the reason why this group has an aesthetic and language research that attempts to unite theory and practice, not as a result of their artistic projects, but as an initial motto. The aesthetic project, however, is not above bonds and coexistence relations, whose memory is also marked by "our daily crisis." But Sérgio de Carvalho, the *Latão's* Director, defends the importance of the Director role in the creation of circumstances for the individuals to feel welcome and comfortable to express themselves and to create. These moments are, indeed, relevant in the memory of the group, says the director. The artists must act with freedom for errors and hits, in order to conduct experiments and explore its aesthetic potential instead of just reproducing on stage and in the creative process the same market pressures they suffer outside.

[Conflict] pops up all the time, the difficult thing is to create an environment where people respect each others' works, where they are interested in the work of others, in watching the scene of others, that's the most difficult... it is a rare thing in our work to see an actor really giving himself to his work, watching a scene with pleasure, creating... This is not the rule, it's an exception; the rule is the actor worrying about his little scene, is the actor giving an opinion on the scene of another in a way that favors his own scene (Sérgio de Carvalho, 2014).

Group memory resisting political and economic pressures

Pressures from political or economic forces tense the process of constitution and maintenance of the groups' memory, as they cause destabilization in its members, departures, and a constant change in the artists' board that, if not well managed, might result in loss of group knowledge and experiences. A coherent conciliation between economic pressure and the ideological position of a group is essential to its project consolidation and to the stability of its artists' board. Otherwise, the tension causes collective breakdown and, eventually, the practical result is a discontinuity in the group human formation. On formation stability, Carreira reflects:

The projects duration and the maintenance of stable teams can be indicated as characteristics that contribute to structuring the symbolic space of the work based on groups. This does not prevent several groups [...] to suffer constantly with members flow [...]. So

we can see groups that have a long history based on a reduced permanent core, around which circulate participants who are periodically renewed. Such permanent core constitutes then the link between the different moments of the group, which guarantees the very notion of work continuity (2007, p. 10)

Ói Nóis was founded in 1979, despite its formation being articulated since the previous years. Therefore, the group suffered direct pressure from the military regime that dictated Brazil (1964-1985). This authoritarian period had serious consequences for the organized movements of civil society, the group theater movement among them:

[...] the country is crossing dictatorial repression, with the dismantling of universities, trade union movements, society resistance foci, with the murder of workers, teachers, journalists, and militants in torture basements, and the asphyxia of creative potentials [...] (FERNANDES, 2011, p. 68).

Three words sum up this period for the Brazilian theater groups: resistance, repression, and clandestinity. Resistance against censorship and difficulties in financing artistic projects; oppression and persecution of independent artists, or of those united in a group against the regime; and clandestinity in the realization and presentation of works. One of Ói Nóis founders, the playwright Júlio Zanotta, reveals some of his memories about that young group of actors that lived the first years of the collective under the military dictatorship veil.

[...] the dictatorship period, for those who lived it, has a subjective character that is hard to explain, it is a kind of collective fear provoked by the repression forces, you were afraid to listen to a song inside your house, you policed what you were saying, you were constantly on the defensive, before crossing a street you would look at the dark corners, you could not know if you were going to be tackled, beaten; you were in a bar and there was a police raid and you did not know if that raid was against you and your group or if it was a coincidence... Ultimately, this collective fear established in the society, it held, hampered the artistic actions, the expressiveness when you were in opposition. And, at the same time you felt hunted and persecuted, you received sympathetic support from many sectors, in small gestures [...] (ZANOTTA, 2014).

Faced with such a serious situation, the interpersonal relationships of the groups naturally internalize this pressure on the internal structures, through tensions of various orders. Thus the memory is sedimented by exception facts. Questioned

on how the group relationships stood in this situation, Júlio Zanotta answered:

[...] it even ripped the group, on the contrary [it did not aggregate]. This outside pressure contributed even more to a kind of stampede. [...] I guess Ói Nóis just has not been more violently repressed because it was a public affair, there were actors, there were journalists, I was a journalist at the time, had the press coverage, then it protected us a little. During rehearsals, Paulo Flores, Silvia Veluza and Rafael Baião were arrested [...] We received in the Ói Nóis Aqui Traveiz an orchestrated action of the repression organs, which ranged from the censorship department of the federal police to the armed forces' service of information, there came DOPS, it came DOI-CODI [...] (2014).

The group disintegration was a consequence of a pressure that forced many artists into exile such as Zanotta himself, into clandestinity, or into unjustified prison. In addition, the altered tension state produced clashes and inflamed breaks among the Ói Nóis members. On the other hand, the ideological foundations of the group from the Rio Grande do Sul were strengthened and reinforced the resistance posture, the aesthetic questioning, and the questioning of the established social order itself. These combative and courageous positions were already very clear in the first works of the group, a behavior that was not lost over the years, as testifies Tânia Farias: "it is a fundamental aspect of the work, even because Ói Nóis does not deprive of putting itself politically. Ói Nóis is a group that always has an opinion, will never stay neutral just because it is more convenient" (2014).

In contrast, *Companhia do Latão* did not live a political experience of such extent. The group from São Paulo adopts an imminently Marxist ideological posture, contrary to the hegemonic economic system. The meeting point between the memory of these two groups seems to occur at the report of Tânia Farias, from the Rio Grande do Sul group, for whom the situation is renewed, the democracy was restored, but the repression forces of the old regimen also changed to continue their existence through other forms of authoritarianism and control. According to Tânia Farias: "keeping the due proportions, the very fact of us being able to speak here makes evident that we advanced in several issues; I'm not saying that all remains the same, I'm saying that there is an oppressor that is still there, he transformed to continue existing" (2014). The same capital concentration with which *Companhia do Latão* fights acts by causing the gentrification process that affected Ói Nóis.

The economic pressure, in turn, comes from the common and immediate need for subsistence. The scenic artist lives permanently with the economic conflict, according to Ney Piacentini, “[...] it is said that you need to make money, to have a life with resources and materials of such order, etc., etc. The adult life sometimes involves family, children... and how to stay in a theater group in a context like this?” (2014). Individuals need financial resources for the maintenance of their lives (housing, health, entertainment etc.), and groups need to defray the costs of the projects they want to accomplish. A group will never be stable if it criticizes an economic system while its members have, in their personal lives, dreams established by that same system: consumption, capital accumulation, workforce exploitation etc.

Ói Nóis, over numerous crises and diasporas, noticed the need for dealing with the constant flow of participants. Marta Hass reports, “this state of constant renewal has always been part of what Ói Nóis is [...]” (2014). The group assigned itself a character of movement and not of a static group, according to Paulo Flores, “perhaps Ói Nóis has more of a characteristic of movement” (2014). The solution encountered by this group to not lose its memory, to perpetuate its knowledge, and to pass it from generation to generation were the workshops. In Ói Nóis, the participant does not join but is formed, which explains, in a way, the intensity of maintenance of the system of beliefs and values of this group.

[In Ói Nóis,] people that end up joining the group participated in workshops before, and this means these people have an affinity with the work of the group and with the way the group works. A person starting to work in the group without knowing the very dynamics of our work is something that doesn’t happen, in the workshops this will happen and affinities are created; we are even used to saying that is not the group that chooses the people but the people that choose the group, because it is a work that happens a lot out of affinity (HASS, 2014).

Besides the formation of new artists for the groups, which results in ideological, ethical, and artistic maintenance of the collective, this pedagogic project gives back to the society a countless number of artists that follow a career in other groupings, or even solo. This makes Ói Nóis not just an incubator of itself, but of other groups and artists that may arise from it.

[...] there is a lot of actors, a lot of groups in Porto Alegre that were formed from the work of Ói Nóis, people who met in workshops or

within the group itself, worked with the group for some time and went off to create other group, and this is very beautiful as well. (HASS, 2014).

Groups have been adopting a functional productive structure that demands structure and specialization, in which the economic system calls professionalization. This adjustment serves to the market of cultural projects, of the search for sponsorship and maintenance subsidies, from which the groups will materialize their works. The challenge for these collectives is to not let their creative relations be contaminated by the productive market relations. Creation relations, in turn, do not comply with the same logic of the economics, because even with the adoption of productive functions, the specialization in defined roles, and the hierarchization in a structure, the creation relations can continue to be subjected to horizontal and participatory methods, as in the collective creation or in the collaborative process, for example.

According to Sérgio de Carvalho, “a theater group such as ours is not thought of as a business unit but as a formation of another type, freer, not driven by market criteria” (2014). According to Paulo Flores, “It is a clear ideological issue, of believing in certain values that oppose, that are distinctive of what society offers us as life practice or survival possibility, the dominant thinking that’s out there” (2014).

The posture of resistance to the market structure does not mean that these collectives are against promotion and sponsorship, as long as it is not a funding that is associated with issues that confront the ideological principles of the group. However, this choice comes from a decision which is based on the ideological relationship the group maintains with the society, from how strong its memory, ethical values, and aesthetic continue to live, and from how the group conciliates the market productive pressures in its work process. Even when the group decides to loosen its work ties and to refute the functional productive system, the economic pressure continues to act on its artistic projects. Its productive structure has no obligation of raising funds constantly for the payment of wages, but it still has to provide the necessary financial correspondent for the realization of artistic projects. *Latão* attempts to consciously internalize these economic forces, and through its ideological project tries to keep the group united even in monetary conditions that are not always favorable.

[...] that’s the point, a theater group is at the same time in the periphery of the art market, and will have to support itself on some

level. I think the question of difficult consensus for a theater group is, to what extent the form-merchandise and the economic pressures will be internalized or not by this group? (CARVALHO, 2014).

Alternatively, the groups choose their own productive models that reflect their values and reverberate in their working methods. As well as the economic pressure is permanent, also its internalization is constant, whether through the improvement of the functional productive model or through the resistance and improvement of the alternative productive model or even in the intermediate or mixed models. Anyway, it is impossible to qualify the artistic efficiency, the ideological criteria of a structure in comparison with the other, neither to point a model as being more or less critical of the society in which is inserted. In fact, that is not a question of establishing simple oppositions or competition among models, but of presenting the choices that better represent the thought of the collectives under scrutiny and that have, as the main objective, the strengthening of the group to deal with economic pressure. Thus, interpersonal relationships will transit among productive relations – of functional or alternative models – and creative relations.

However, regardless of how the economic pressure is internalized, a possible consequence to be avoided is the individual becoming more competitive and eager for monetary gains, and power, or the activation of frustration mechanisms when it does not turns reality. This is the deepest form of assimilation of economic vulnerability, an unaware internalization that manifests itself through individualism, or corrosion mechanisms of the ethical and ideological work basis of the group, according to Sérgio de Carvalho:

When this disintegrating force is unconscious and is not handled or approached by the group, it emerges in the form of a discomfort, a restlessness, manifested through intrigues, fights, and disagreements. When this disintegrating force is brought to the conscious and discussed by the group, it might bring up solutions that build other paths, other exits to the same problem and, instead of disagreeing, it strengthens the relationships (2014).

The analysis of the *Latão's* Director exposes, in my view, a perception of the invisible mechanism through which the pressures and conflicts existing in a group are linked in a relation of cause and effect. Hence the importance of searching for constant reflection and observance over the disintegration forces, and over the ways the group can act to develop creative strategies in order to

face them. The big question in that thought of Sérgio de Carvalho is how to bring up such forces and which strategic actions they may raise. The combination of repression with lack of funding is the resistance mark in a large part of the group initiatives in the Brazilian theatrical movement. Such forces represent a desire for grouping that erupts from time to time in the numerous initiatives of group theater arising in the 1980's, 1990's, and 2000's, enlarged by the modern promotion laws.

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