THE NEED TO PUT DOWN ROOTS FOR WEAVING DRAMATURGY

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As heirs of modernity, we live increasingly disconnected from our environment. Uprooted, we lose the notion of inhabiting a given space, and therefore the possibility of a dialectic between *Continent* and *Content*, and we also lose the notion of belonging to a network of interactive relationships. Thus, we lose two basic notions for dramaturgy.

As an introduction, let me share a story by the Poet Enric Cassases that describes, the character of the Artist.

> *He goes up or climbs or he finds himself or is at the top*
>
> *of the cliffs and throws himself into the abyss, as if he were*
>
> *heading towards certain death, but he has a*
>
> *knitting needle in each hand and in the few seconds*
>
> *the fall lasts he makes them go with great agility and*
>
> *speed, click-click, click-click, and makes an immense bunch of*
>
> *colourful wool flowers that stop his fall and*
>
> *gently, gently, with almost no fuss at all,*
>
> *he puts his foot down and heads slowly to the bar*
>
> *of the station to see if they want to serve him a coffee.*
>
> E. Casasses. *Nus la flor*.Edicions Poncianes, 2018

This poem tells us about someone who lives by taking risks; about someone who –faced with the unexpected– reacts genuinely. And in the end, about someone who dives into the landscape and generates a fertile dialectic with their environment.

In our contemporary world, we too often look at our mobile phones to find out what the weather will be like instead of looking at the sky. Little by little we are uprooting ourselves. We are filling ourselves with supposed information to gradually empty ourselves of experience. In this process

of uprooting, we lose the ability to act in the world and with the world. This, which I already consider terrible in general terms, is especially tragic in theatrical terms.

With uprooting we lose the capacity to generate dialectics between Continent and Content, and precisely this dialectic is the first seed of any dramaturgy. The Scenic Space is the context of the dramatic action. As such it is the first thing capable of generating tension on the stage derived from the opposition between itself and what it contains; between background and form; between landscape and action. If we lose the capacity to listen and experience with the landscape or continent, we lose the possibility of making it become eloquent, and therefore we lose an essential basis of dramaturgy.

But with the crisis of uprooting, we also lose the capacity of weaving a network. A network of interactive relationships where the *Actants* have the characteristic of being materially heterogeneous. The idea is that in a landscape –or on a stage– we are all actants. Therefore, we erase this idea that establishes a boundary between the active and the passive. Everything is susceptible to change, and everything is potentially a driver of a change. And it is precisely the confluence of these different actants and the relationships that are established between them that makes it possible to consolidate a rich network and generate this idea of the landscape as a whole. In other words, if we apply Bruno Latour sociological theories to the field of performing arts, actants –alive or not–, and their network is what consolidates the dramaturgy and generates the meaning of the living scene. Therefore, if we lose this richness of belonging to a network, we also are losing the tools to weave solid dramaturgies.

Perejaume, son of farmers, is a Catalan artist from my hometown. Despite working a lot in the field of conceptual art, he is someone who cannot work without touching, living and experiencing what he wants to transform with his artistic activity. He invites us to think of space, not as something that *is* categorical, but as something that is born, grows and evolves. He speaks of places as seeds that germinate and that, taking life from the earth, transform into new realities.

Bearing all this in mind we could think about practical exercises that force to connect us with the landscape to work on dramaturgy, based on the idea of the *Experiential Promenade*, or walk, or the adventure of being.

The idea is to think of playful sense as a main tool for artistic research. In this case I like to brink to students a collection of situations and actions, which do not necessarily have to be written beforehand, and which aim to explore the dramatic potential of the space.

The aim is to be faced with the unexpected and explore many kinds of possible reactions with it. And it is important that this kind of exercises are done by actors, but also by stage designers or dramaturgists students.

Or another idea could be *Experimental Drawing*, with the aim of speculating with atmospheres and rhythms through drawing. For example, I often propose the exercise of drawing a graphic novel, that means to generate a collection of images that, even if they are poorly drawn, capture the atmospheric and rhythmic intuitions that come to mind when we start thinking about visual narrative. It is not so much about drawing a storyboard of the scene that is not yet designed, but more about speculating with the possible visual dramaturgy.

Weaving dramaturgies from the experimental drawing, gives us the chance to transform the reality, to superimpose layers, to generate strange relationships, and therefore gives us the chance to avoid the obvious. And that's an important point. Curiously, the more inhabitants there are on the planet, the less diverse we are. We need to think about exercises that bring out our genuine language. Because the more specific the language is, the stronger and therefore the more universal the effect will be.

As you can see, I like to invite students to work on dramaturgy through experience. Learning from the playful sense and the stage practice, keeping the conceptualization in mind, but avoiding the processes of rationalization of art.

What we need, to guarantee the quality of the our studies, is a living pedagogy that goes with no fear through unknown paths, and that at the same time has clarity to pursue the object of research. And in this sense, I wonder if the percentage of doctors in a drama school, and the number of publications, is important to guarantee the quality of our studies.

I am not against PhD programs, and I am neither against academic research with their the resulting publications. What concerns me is that university evaluation system only evaluates this type of knowledge, leaving out other learning that in our field represents the basis of the profession.

The Institut del Teatre has just signed the agreement to enter the University system and that's why I'm concerned about this topic. I wonder if is it good to adapt our artistic research to university pedagogical models, or are we suffering from a kind of academic colonization.

I would like to end by quoting again the author of the story with which this presentation began.

Enric Casasses tells us:

> *"I don't want any preconceived or prefabricated ideas or mindsets and even less so any lack of preconceived or prefabricated ideas or mindsets, but rather for you to put your hand in your hole-filled pocket and each time to take out a different microcosm but always with the same idea of finding it lush, and abundant in a thousand and one ways."*
>
> E. Casasses. *Nus la flor*.Edicions Poncianes, 2018

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Degree in Dramatic Art from the Institut del Teatre, specialising in Scenography. She studied also architecture at the UPC.

She has been working as scenographer since 1998, designing the scenography for around sixty performances, directed by Israel Solà, Ramón Simó, Àlex Rigola, Carol López, Josep Maria Mestres, Magda Puyo, Rafel Duran, Anna Estrada, Mario Gas or Sven Erik Bechtolf, among others.

She has been part of the teaching team at the Institut del Teatre since 2007, where she was head the of Scenography Department between 2013-2017 and 2020-2023. At the same time she has been invited to teach scenography intensive courses in places such as El Teatre San Martín de Buenos Aires (2006), the University of the Basque Country (2007, 2008, 2010 and 2011), the BUNKA Foundation of RCR Arquitectes (2019), the Center Cultural Juan de Salazar in Paraguay (2023), and at the University of the Arts in Targu Mures (2024).

She was curator, together with Marta Rafa, of the exhibition that the Institut del Teatre presented on behalf of Catalonia at the PQ19, where they won one of the three prizes for the best exhibition in the section professional.

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