

## ARTICLES

# RIO DE JANEIRO'S THEATRE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CONTEMPORARY: HYBRIDITY AND SCENIC PROCEDURES IN THE *LOVE TRILOGY*, BY THE COMPANY OS DEZEQUILBRADOS

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## ABSTRACT

By means of a critical study of *Love, Talk to me like the rain and let me listen* and *Kiss me like in books*, plays which comprised the *Trilogy of love*, a recent project by the theatre company Os dezechilibrados, I discussed how the work of these artists engage with a variety of artistic and literary references, besides their own previous works. After an examination of the concept of the contemporary – as an intertext or a past revisited – and of a brief background of the company, I suggested the understanding of the creative work of Os dezechilibrados as a hybridization process of fine arts and cinema. To this end, the analysis of the plays and of the creative process of the company was substantiated with theoretical studies put forward by art and contemporary theatre scholars, as well as with interviews with Ivan Sugahara, director of Os dezechilibrados.

**Key words:** Contemporary. Theatre Arts. Visual Arts. Hybridity. Theatre Companies.

In the essay “The conservative avant-garde”, from the book *Performed Imaginaries*, Richard Schechner has a critical view, in a negative sense, of the contemporary scene, which can be evidenced in the essay’s title. According to Schechner, the theatrical avant-garde started in 1879 with *The Doll’s House* by Ibsen, and ended with LSD<sup>1</sup>, by the New York theatre company Wooster Group. To the scholar, this avant-garde was connected to words such as “new”, “alive”, “aggressive”, “anti”, which intended “to destroy both the existing aesthetic and sociopolitical order” (SCHECHNER, 2015, p. 25).

As stated by Schechner, therefore, the current avant-garde should be understood as a niche-garde, in the sense of theatre directors and companies which can be described as a theatre niche, in which their names are an acknowledged trademark, a product, and are included in the market of the capitalist theatre business, hence one of their conservative aspects.

This, however, may apply to several US and some European countries<sup>2</sup> theatre directors and companies, but not to the Brazilian ones, since they are still part of the so called alternative cultural and theatrical circuit. While the companies from Rio de Janeiro, for example, have struggled to survive an increasing lack of investment in theatre mainly in the last two years, they have been showing consistent work for about 2 decades<sup>3</sup>.

In the city of Rio de Janeiro, the Sede das Cias, which comprised the Cia. dos Atores, Os Dezequilibrados and Pangeia cia.deteatro, besides Nevaxca produções, in an occupation project from 2013 to June 2016, has been an important resistance center. In addition to leading movements like “Teatro pela democracia<sup>4</sup>” and “Ocupa Minc RJ<sup>5</sup>” in 2016, it has invested in research, experimentations of artistic languages, workshops, residencies, and a variety of plays. They have hosted projects ranging from brand new groups to monologues such as the acclaimed *O filho eterno*<sup>6</sup>, by Atores de Laura and featured by Charles Fricks, to “O evangelho segundo Jesus, a

1 This play premiered in 1984 and caused controversies with Arthur Miller because of the way in which the group worked on his play *The Crucible*, leading to the playwright’s veto and a manifesto written by the group.

2 US companies such as Wooster Group, Elevator Repair Service, Mabou Mines and New York City Players, British such as Station House Opera, DV8 Physical Theatre, Complicité, imitating the dog, Gob Squad and Forced Entertainment; La Fura dels Baus, from Barcelona; Societas Raffaello Sanzio, from Italy, and Théâtre du Soleil, from France, can be conceived in this niche-garde identified by Schechner. Although they continue to rely on research work and on experimentation with languages, they have this acknowledged trademark which includes them in the cultural market discussed by the scholar.

3 Os Fodidos e Privilegiados, Os Dezequilibrados, Atores de Laura and Cia. dos Atores were created in the 1990’s, as well as Cia. Teatral do Movimento, Teatro do Pequeno Gesto, Cia. Ensaio Aberto, Armazém Companhia de Teatro (created in 1987 in Londrina, but based in Rio de Janeiro since 1998), Amok.

4 Translated as Theatre for Democracy.

5 Translated as “Occupy Minc RJ”. Minc stands for the Ministry of Culture.

6 Translated as *The Eternal Son*.

rainha do céu"<sup>7</sup>, which features the actress Renata Carvalho, victim of censorship in several cities of the country, including Rio de Janeiro through the preacher and mayor Crivella.

In this context where thinking about theatre is also a type of resistance, the objective here is to reflect upon how contemporary theatre – fragmented structures, use of technologies, hybrid forms, inspiration on visual arts, questioning of the concept of reality and fiction scenically, transposing dramaturgical and non-dramaturgical texts onto stage – is manifested in the current scene in Rio de Janeiro. The plays which comprised the *Love Trilogy*, last work by Os Dezequilibrados, will be analyzed, stemming from a theoretical consideration of what the contemporary is, an important task. Thus, the theatre projects in question are included in this perspective of the concept of the contemporary.

The way in which Os Dezequilibrados work collaboratively, explore conventional and non-conventional spaces and use visual arts language in the scenic construction will be analyzed here by means of mainly their two last plays. This examination of the work of Os Dezequilibrados was part of my doctorate dissertation entitled *O lugar das companhias teatrais cariocas no contexto do contemporâneo*<sup>8</sup> and defended in 2016 in the Post-graduation Program of *Literatura, Cultura e Contemporaneidade*<sup>9</sup> at PUC-Rio, and, for the purposes of this article, some updates were made<sup>10</sup>.

## On the contemporary

Unlike modernism, which proposed a rupture with the past and was based on the idea of progress, experimentalism and use of technology, the understanding of the contemporary in this study is, in the place of an idea of "new" and of rupture, a borrowing from the past, including modernism itself.

The dialogue of the contemporary with the past has been discussed by several theoreticians of diverse areas, such as the philosopher, curator and art critic Boris Groys, or the theatre professor and scholar David Román.

Boris Groys tries to move away from the idea of the "contemporary" as something recent, ever looking forward, to reflecting upon the relation of the contemporaneity with time itself. The essayist postulates that in order to answer the question "what is contemporary art?" (GROYS, 2009, p. 1), it is necessary to consider first the questions, "what is the contemporary?", "how could the contemporary as such be shown?" and "how does the present manifest itself in our everyday experience?" (GROYS, 2009, p. 1).

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7 Translated as *The gospel according to Jesus, queen of heaven*.

8 Translated as *The place of the theatre companies from Rio de Janeiro in the context of the contemporary*.

9 Translated as *Literature, Culture and Contemporaneity*.

10 Special thanks to David Zinno and Amato Zinno who helped proofreading the translation of this article.

At first Groys questions if being contemporary means to be immediately present, “being here and now” (GROYS, 2009, p. 1), and argues:

In this sense, art seems to be truly contemporary if it is perceived as being authentic, as being able to capture and express the presence of the present in a way that is radically uncorrupted by past traditions or strategies aiming at success in the future. (GROYS, 2009, p. 1).

Stemming from this first consideration, Groys tries to reflect upon how the present manifests itself daily, pointing out that it used to be seen in modernity as “something negative, as something that should be overcome in the name of the future, something that slows down the realization of our projects, something that delays the coming of the future” (GROYS, 2009, p. 2). However, the essayist sees the “doubt, hesitation, uncertainty, indecision” (GROYS, 2009, p. 3), as hallmarks of the contemporary; according to him, it is an opportunity for analysis and reflection. Thus, contemporary art, in his view, reconsiders and hesitates the modernist project, disbelieving, therefore, in its promises. An example of this would be the role of the museum nowadays, once a space for permanent collections and now a place for temporary exhibition. Thereby, Groys concludes: “The present has ceased to be a point of transition from the past to the future, becoming instead a site of the permanent rewriting of both past and future” (GROYS, 2009, p. 4).

To this time spent on hesitations and uncertainties which do not lead to a definite future, Groys credits something positive; it would be, therefore, an “excessive time” (GROYS, 2009, p. 4) and the act of repetition would indicate a rupture in the continuity of life “by creating a non-historical excess of time through art” (GROYS, 2009, p. 6).

Resuming the question from the beginning of the essay, Groys states: “to be con-temporary does not necessarily mean to be present, to be here-and-now; it means to be “with time” rather than “in time” (GROYS, 2009, p. 6). Thereby, the relationship between art and time, in the context of the contemporary, would also change the temporality of art:

Art ceases to be present, to create the effect of presence—but it also ceases to be “in the present,” understood as the uniqueness of the here-and-now. Rather, art begins to document a repetitive, indefinite, maybe even infinite present—a present that was always already there, and can be prolonged into the indefinite future. (GROYS, 2009, p. 7).

In thinking of the contemporary with an eye to the past, David Román shows in *Performance in America: contemporary U.S. culture and the performing arts*, by analyzing shows varying from the Broadway circuit to performances and plays in experimental spaces, how the North American theatre reactivated a broad spectrum

of his country's and England's culture between the years of 1994 and 2004.

According to Román, his research opts for the historicization of the contemporary, since he sees a relationship between the past and the present in theatre, in history and in North American culture (ROMÁN, 2005, p. 5). The author, therefore, explains in which ways the ideas of historical materialism put forward by Walter Benjamin influenced his writing:

With Benjamin's practice of historical materialism, the present becomes 'the time of the now'. In this poetic phrase, introduced in his influential and much quoted "Theses on the Philosophy of History", Benjamin sets out to conjure a process in which the historian breaks away from understanding history as a sequence of events and instead 'grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one'. [...] I argue that performance both embodies Benjamin's time of the now and exploits it to great effect. (ROMÁN, 2005, p. 21).

Román reminds us that the studies carried out by theoreticians such as Marvin Carlson and Diana Taylor have been relating theatre and performance with history and memory. Thus, he rejects the idea of presentification of some concepts of contemporaneity and prefers to see contemporary theatre as "an archive of past theatrical moments and an ongoing engagement with, and revival of, this history" (ROMÁN, 2005, p. 40).

Stemming from this idea of the contemporary retaking and rereading past moments, we notice how contemporary theatre has reread theatrical texts, practices and genres, many times within the same aesthetic proposal, besides the convergence of artistic languages. We can, thereby, verify in some scholars of theatre arts the understanding of the contemporary in theatre as a heterogeneous practice. Béatrice Picon-Vallin clarifies: "I consider that theatre exists in multiple forms; nowadays it's essential feature is that it is completely shattered, it is a landscape which is totally looking for something" (PICON-VALLIN, 2011, p. 194). This multiplicity of forms, of a shattered theatre, to Picon-Vallin, would define present theatre as a "hybrid theatre", a "multiple theatre".

## **Os Dezequilibrados and the *Love Trilogy***

Os Dezequilibrados first arose in 1996 with the union of Ivan Sugahara, Bruce Gomlevsky, Paula Delecave, Rodrigo Maia and Ana Couto, during a theatre vocational course at Casa de Artes de Laranjeiras (CAL)<sup>11</sup>. The idea of the group's name happened from its member's understanding that the artist should seek imbalance, which was consolidated from the actor's knowledge of a theatre exercise worked

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<sup>11</sup> The five members of the group had already known each other since the times of the high school theatre course they took at Colégio Andrews.

by the director Antunes Filho in which the actor should place himself in imbalance, in difficult situations on stage. With the suggestion of the actor Bruce Gomlevsky to substitute the "s" of the word *desequilíbrio*<sup>12</sup> for "z", in case *dez*<sup>13</sup> members were part of the company, its members then chose the name Os Dezequilibrados.

After staging their first play *Uma noite de Sade*<sup>14</sup> based on the theatrical genre *Grand Guignol* and on Marquis de Sade's universe, the members of Os Dezequilibrados, unsatisfied with the result of the play, had an argument and decided not to continue with the group.

After directing Cristina Flores and Ângela Câmara<sup>15</sup> in the play *Quarto de crime e castigo*<sup>16</sup>, based on the Dostoievski's novel *Crime and Punishment*, staged in an apartment to five spectators in each venue, Ivan, Cristina and Ângela were encouraged to begin a research about the use of non-conventional spaces, subversion of the proscenium arch stage and, as a consequence, about other relationships between actor and audience. These elements, therefore, guide the company's work since its rebirth in 1999. In the following year Saulo Rodrigues and José Karini joined the group, followed by Leticia Isnard in 2001.

Following the line of the spatial investigation proposed, Os Dezequilibrados staged *Bonitinha, mas ordinária*<sup>17</sup>, their version of Nelson Rodrigues's play, and *1*<sup>18</sup>, an installation play based on the chapter "The grand inquisitor" from *The brothers Karamazov*, by Dostoyevsky, both at Casa da Matriz in 2001. In 2002, *Life*, the movie, inspired by the homonymous book by journalist Neal Gabler, was staged in the lobby of the movie theatre Estação Unibanco. In the following year they staged (How to play) *The love games*, written by Daniela Pereira de Carvalho, inspired by Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, and *Combinado*<sup>19</sup>, based on Robert Arlt's detective short story "An almost perfect crime", both at theatres, although there was no special distinction between audience and actors.

Due to the success of *Combinado*, a way was open to the trilogy *Assassinato em série*<sup>20</sup>, with *Cena do crime e outro combinado*<sup>21</sup> in that same year of 2003. In 2004

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12 Translated as imbalance.

13 Translated as ten.

14 Translated as A Sade's night.

15 The play also relied on the participation of other actors, Lucas Gouvea and Joelson Gusson, but they wouldn't take part in the company.

16 Translated as *Room of crime and punishment*.

17 The play's action was unfolded in an itinerant manner through the three floors and rooms of a night club. Translated as *Pretty, but wicked*.

18 The play's running time was fifteen minutes and had several venues a day.

19 Translated as Combination.

20 Translated as *Serial murder*.

21 Translated as *Crime scene and another*.

the company staged *Dilacerado*<sup>22</sup>, based on personal facts and reports by its members; in 2005, *Lady Lazaro*, inspired by the life and works of Sylvia Plath; *Quero ser Romeu e Julieta*<sup>23</sup>, inspired by the Shakespeare play, was staged in 2006; *Últimos remorsos antes do esquecimento*<sup>24</sup>, by playwright Jean-Luc Lagarce, was on tour in 2007, followed by *Memória afetiva de um amor esquecido*<sup>25</sup>, inspired by the movie *Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind*, at Espaço Oi Futuro, in 2008. In the years of 2011 and 2012 Os Dezequilibrados staged *A estupidez*<sup>26</sup>, by the Argentinean writer Rafael Spregelburd, and *A serpente*<sup>27</sup>, the last play by Nelson Rodrigues, respectively.

In 2014 the *Love Trilogy* started with the play *Amores*<sup>28</sup>, by Domingos Oliveira, at the Sede das cias' theatre, followed by *Fala comigo como a chuva e me deixa ouvir*<sup>29</sup>, by Tennessee Williams, staged in that same year at Casa da Glória, and *Beija-me como nos livros*<sup>30</sup>, in 2015, which premiered at CCBB (Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil) theatre in Rio de Janeiro.

### **Amores**

An urban middle-class group by the end of the 20th century. Around a table there are a TV Globo's writer who is about to lose his job; his daughter, with whom he has problems because he wants to control her freedom, which she finds excessive; a friends' couple whose marriage is hanging by a thread because they want to have children, but the wife can't get pregnant; and the latter's sister, a failed actress who is in love with a painter, who turns out to be HIV positive.

We are before a play with clearly outlined characters, as well as its dramaturgical structure. *Amores* was written by Domingos de Oliveira in 1997, had its cinema version in 2001 and was only staged for the second time by Os Dezequilibrados, opening the *Love Trilogy*.

Unlike the company's plays which are used to making a research work in which all artists involved decoupage the play text – when there is one – explore its thematic universe by means of other texts, images, films and music with an eye on a new text and elaborate physical score, Os Dezequilibrados opt here for a realist ap-

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22 Translated as *Lacerated*.

23 Translated as I want to be *Romeo and Juliet*.

24 Translated as *Last stirrings of remorse before forgetting*.

25 Translated as *Affective memory of a forgotten love*

26 Translated as *The stupidity*.

27 Translated as *The serpent*.

28 Translated as *Love*.

29 Translated as *Talk to me like the rain and let me listen*.

30 Translated as *Kiss me like in books*.



proach. Thereby, Domingos de Oliveira's text was maintained in its entirety, including its references to the 1990's: Fernando Henrique Cardoso's presidency, TELERJ<sup>31</sup>, Lilian Witte Fibe at Jornal da Globo<sup>32</sup>, movies like Philadelphia and Thelma and Louise, as well as elements such as the answering machine. The set, props, costumes and soundtrack followed the realist line so as to set the play in the 1990's.

According to Ivan Sugahara, the group's objective at that moment was really to maintain the text closed, and even though it has clear references to two decades ago, he understands there are themes in the play which still resonate with the present day.

Although Os Dezequilibrados have given up on language research, a practice which crosses the company's trajectory, the exploration of the scenic space was accomplished, to a degree, in *Amores*. The play was staged at the theatre space of Sede das cias. There, Sugahara opted to bring the audience inside of the performance, avoiding the proscenium arch stage. The set resembled an apartment or loft, where the characters' three houses overlapped and the audience was, therefore, inside of them, close to the actors.

If the company wanted to start the *Love Trilogy* with a more traditional staging, the same wouldn't happen with the ones that followed it.

### ***Fala comigo como a chuva e me deixa ouvir***

In Morning sun, as well as in the majority of his canvases, the New York painter Edward Hopper portrayed solitary and reflexive figures, with distant looks. Even when there were couples in the paintings, they were usually absorbed in their own silence. The air of melancholy, disenchantment and delusion crossed these paintings which, according to several art critics, looked like a filmic fragment.

A reproduction of Morning sun is hung onto the wall in a scene of *Fala comigo como a chuva e me deixa ouvir*. Such as in Hopper's painting, the sunlight enters the bedroom through the window, while the Wife, Ângela Câmara's character, is looking outside, thoughtful and with melancholic looks. The Husband, played by Saulo Rodrigues, without talking to the woman, drunkenly falls asleep in bed.

Besides this scene, many others were inspired by Edward Hopper's painting, both with regard to the solitude and melancholy mood and to the framings and light of the pictures. When, for example, the Wife calls the audience to the house kitchen, the moment when she makes scrambled eggs for the couple, the Husband is found smoking, sitting at the kitchen window, pensive. She, in front of the window through which an external light enters, prepares the meal, also thoughtful and distressed. They do not look at each other, do not talk to each other and do not even eat together.

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31 A phone company of the time.

32 A famous TV anchor.



*Talk to me like the rain and let me listen* is a short play written by Tennessee Williams in 1953, a year after *Morning Sun* was painted by Edward Hopper. As well as in other works, Hopper's painting and Williams' play invoke the mood of the post-war world, despite not having any mention of political matters in these works. The intention of Os Dezequilibrados was to tackle one of the facets of love relationships, marital crisis, in this case. The play is not placed in any historical period, as the Wife narrates from the beginning, it can happen at any place, at any moment.

As it happens in the other works of Os Dezequilibrados, *Fala comigo como a chuva e me deixa ouvir* was created collaboratively with the performance's actors and with Samuel Toledo and Livia Paiva, members of Probástica Companhia de Teatro. Although Ivan and Livia sign the performance's dramaturgy, the scenic creation was made by means of a collaboration of all of those involved in the show through a composition work<sup>33</sup>, also used by the company in several works. As Ivan Sugahara explains, at first the text was divided by him and Livia in some units, decoupled and discussed. From there, the compositions proceeded, as explained by the director:

We have part A, everyone is going to make a composition of part A. Then, for example, Saulo works on a part. He casts the actors, he can only direct his composition and he can make it with two actors, with one actor, he will do it the way he wished. Because in the case of the process, Livia and Samuel also took part as actors. So Saulo casts who will act, he creates his dramaturgy, he creates the scene, chooses the space, the relationship with the audience. (SUGAHARA, 2016).

This composition process was made after the original play and after other texts which, in a certain way, communicated with it. One of these was "O Quarto de Hotel de Hopper em Madri"<sup>34</sup>, from the short stories book *A última madrugada*<sup>35</sup>, by João Paulo Cuenca. It was indeed because of this short story that the company got to the painter's works. Although Cuenca's text has been used as stimulus for compositions and has led the members of the company to explore Hopper's painting scenically, another text by the writer extracted from the short story "5 Segundos"<sup>36</sup> is used in an off-stage narration at the end of the performance.

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33 The composition work has come to light through the viewpoints and composition methods developed by Anne Bogart, and consists of the elaboration of a theatrical language by means of a research which explores possibilities beyond the play text. A variety of stimuli such as videos, movies, music and sounds are used in the compositions, and the actors experiment with gestures, movements and speeches.

34 Translated as Hopper's painting in Madrid.

35 Translated as Last dawn.

36 Translated as 5 seconds.

As it can be verified in the background of *Os Dezequilibrados*, some performances are based on play texts, others use novels and short stories, and some are inspired by the lives and works of writers. However, with a few exceptions, as in the play *Amores*, the texts are worked collaboratively, such as the compositions made in *Fala comigo como a chuva e me deixa ouvir*. Thereby, other texts and other references are explored, resulting, thus, in a polissemic staging.

By means of research and experimentations carried out during the composition works, the actors happen to create what Patrice Pavis explains, based on the analysis put forward by Chris Balme about Robert Lepage's theatre, a scenic writing. To this respect, Pavis points out:

That which is constituted during rehearsals are scenic and texts happenings. These texts are set in the rehearsal process. [...] In this context, we could speak of scenic writing, in which the objective is not to accomplish without stitches a prefabricated text, nor deconstruct it as a strange body. The text is the necessary product of the staging and is continuously modified. This text is the verbalization of stage scenes, varies according to stage improvisations [...]. The staging is not an execution of the text, but its discovery (PAVIS, 2010, p. 384).

The stimuli used by *Os Dezequilibrados* during the composition and research processes in rehearsals make up for this scenic writing about which Pavis comments on. Besides Tennessee Williams's play, the excerpt from João Paulo Cuenca's short story, Hopper's painting, and music, the members of the company worked a lot with the reference of the element of water present in the playwright's text. Thereby, water is not only present in the play when it rains, as it is explicit in its title and in a scene where the couple is on a bench in the rain, but in the swimming pool, where a scene takes place, in the moment when the Wife, anguished in the kitchen while she prepares scrambled eggs, opens the tap and soaks her head in the sink. There is also the non-physical presence of water through sounds of the sea and rain.

The compositions were made, since the beginning of the project, at Casa da Glória, where the play was performed. Several rooms of the house are used. When the gate opens, the audience, as well as the Husband, walks up the stairs with a lot of empty bottles on the floor until they reach a garden at the entrance. There, the Husband, drinking beer, gets into a tub. It is implied that he has spent the night drinking. As he leaves the tub, the actor calls the audience to get into the house. There are scenes in a room whose set resembles a bedroom, in another room which represents a dining room, and in the kitchen. From there the audience is invited to leave the house and sit around the swimming pool and the actors get in for another scene. From the pool they go to another area of the yard where two scenes take place, one on a bench and the other on a couch.

The research of non-conventional spaces was initiated by *Os Dezequilibrados* from the performance of *Quarto de crime e castigo*. Since the company had been

rehearsing in the actress Ângela Câmara's apartment<sup>37</sup> in Urca<sup>38</sup> and couldn't get agendas in theatres, they decided to try performing it in her apartment. The play was well received mainly because of the unorthodox venue<sup>39</sup>. As a result, a number of the company's plays were subsequently staged in non-conventional spaces, such as at Casa da Matriz, in the eight floors of Oi Futuro Flamengo<sup>40</sup>, at the lobby of Estação Unibanco and *Fala comigo como a chuva e me deixa ouvir* at Casa da Glória.

The rise of theatre arts works engaged in intervention in the urban space happened due to the theatrical aesthetic renovation which took place in the 20th century. Theatre practitioners such as Brecht, Grotowski and Artaud proposed a new type of theatre making, trying to break with naturalism and with the illusion of the fourth wall. Thereby, these practitioners question the European model of theatre space characterized by the frontal relation distancing actors from the audience. In this context, the urban space out of the conventional theatre building turns out to be research and experimentation space and not only are other closed spaces used, but the streets also become places of theatricalization, as they were once in medieval squares. The closeness of actor and audience, mainly in spaces which are not initially taken as theatrical, makes the line which separates truth from fiction thin.

The conception of a play that takes into account the choice of a performance space which moves away from the traditional stage is, thus, the result of the transformations carried out by modern theatre and revisited in the contemporary scene. According to Hans-Thies Lehmann, while dramatic theatre preferred the "medium" space against a more intimate or large space, post-dramatic theatre takes advantage of any space dimension. Lehmann points out that

the dramatic space is always an isolated symbol of a world as totality, even when it is shown in a fragmented way. In post-dramatic theatre however the space becomes part of the world [...] thought as something that remains in the continuum of the real: an outlined cut in time and in space, but at the same time continuity and, because of this, a fragment of life's reality. (LEHMANN, 2007, p. 268).

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37 As explained by Ivan Sugahara, "we were rehearsing there, had no money, a bunch of kids, we rehearsed in our homes, had no money to pay for a rehearsal space. Sometimes we rehearsed in my house, then in Ângela's. After a lot of rehearsals, young people with no funding, we spent time there rehearsing, rehearsing, researching. Ten months was a lot of rehearsal time, so I said: 'Guys, it's ready!'. We had nothing, no theatre, terrible producers, starting our lives. But we had a finished play, with set, costumes". (SUGAHARA, 2016).

38 A neighborhood in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

39 An example was the theatre director Celina Sodr , with whom Sugahara had worked as assistant director and one of his main artistic references, highlighted that the best aspect of the play was really that it was performed in an apartment.

40 A cultural space in Rio de Janeiro funded by a telephone company.

*Fala comigo como a chuva e me deixa ouvir* is like this “continuum of the real” and “fragment of life’s reality” mentioned by Lehmann. When we move around the several rooms of Casa da Glória, a real house where the actors perform actions making use of real objects – Saulo smokes a cigarette, Ângela turns on the stove, beats the eggs in a bowl, cooks and eats the food, washes the dishes used – we are all witnesses of the solitude and melancholy lived by a couple in crisis. Although there is no direct intervention of the audience in the play, the actors always approach the audience to have it follow them along their ways, thus establishing a close relationship. As we leave the passivity of the conventional theatre chair and move along with the actors through the rooms of the house, we find ourselves inside the action. The way the actors call the audience to follow them, changing the environment, already suggests an invitation to witness the couple’s intimacy.

To Lehmann, the post-dramatic space concerns an “essentially imagetic-spatial experience” (LEHMANN, 2007, p. 272), varying from stages that separate actors from audience to the interactive or integrated ones, or even heterogeneous ones, although the symbolic visual charge is always present in all of these types of stages. Lehmann also reminds us that the production and use of environments we see in contemporary fine arts are part of the post-dramatic theatre:

Many of the works show the intention of enabling a certain temporal experience by means of specific spatial conceptions, of choice of historically meaningful places or of construction of installations” (LEHMANN, 2007, p. 277).

This contribution of a new spatial conception of the fine arts to theatre is known as site-specific. About the way in which theatre has absorbed site-specific aesthetic elements, Hans-Thies Lehmann states:

Theatre looks for an architecture or a place not so much because the “place” corresponds particularly well to a given text, but above all because it is aimed that the place itself be brought to the speech by means of theatre (LEHMANN, 2007, p. 281).

From Lehmann’s analysis, it can be implied that site-specific theatre concerns theatre which is conceived from or considers, essentially, the symbolic character of the performance space.

However, there is a type of site-specific theatre in which the play is staged in a space which refers to the chosen text, like a staging of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in a forest or *Hamlet* in a castle<sup>41</sup>. In this theatre making there would be, in Lehmann’s words, two variables:

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41 To this respect, some practitioners and theoreticians prefer the term site-generic or site-responsive.

On the one hand, the specific place can be used in its own configuration: the actors simply act in between the machines and equipment of a factory shed or of a railroad maintenance garage and the audience is simply positioned there – there may be chairs or steps without making this basic feature of the spatiality projected as scenes alter. The second variable is the staging of a scene with the disposition of decorations and objects in the place. In this case, a scene within the scene is introduced and it is created a relation between both that can suggest, in a more or less clear way, contradictions, mirrorings and correspondences (LEHMANN, 2007, p. 281).

In the works carried out by *Os Dezequilibrados*, where the performance happens outside of the traditional theatre, the chosen space does not always have a precise historic or symbolic meaning brought to speech within the performance or in connection with the daily lives and the surrounding reality, as Lehmann points out<sup>42</sup>. *Casa da Glória*, where *Fala comigo como a chuva e me deixa ouvir* was staged, is a historic 18th century house, next to Outeiro da Glória<sup>43</sup>, but its historic meaning is not contemplated by the play's staging. Nonetheless, as the house was used since the beginning of rehearsals, the artists not only drew on the physical spaces, but also on the daylight which broke into the windows when the scenes happened inside the house or in the open areas, next to the yard, in the pool or on the second floor balcony. Thus, an artificial scenic lighting was created so as to work with the natural lighting. Therefore, the house was not used as a mere set, but all the dramaturgical construction took these characteristics into account.

In this play, the dramaturgical writing elaborated collaboratively by the members of the company and its guest artists was based not only on the study of the play text, but also on other texts, stimuli and experimentation with the chosen performance space and research of cinematographic language that permeates the works.

The intersection of alternative medias with theatre has been gaining several conceptualizations, such as intermedia, transmedia, multimedia, digital theatre, in addition to a recent post-cinematic<sup>44</sup> theatre. Besides some specifications of each term, Philip Auslander notes:

Artistic or cultural forms that bring different media together on the same platform, a development prompted in part by the capacity of digital technology to combine sound, video, graphics, animation, and other media in a single artifact (AUSLANDER, 2016, p. 217).

42 Which is the case, for example, of the play *Apocalypse, 1, 11*, third part of the Bible Trilogy by the group Teatro da Vertigem, staged in spaces which already contained a symbolic and historical charge, such as the jailhouse of Hipódromo, in São Paulo, and the building of the old DOPS, in Rio de Janeiro, both centers for political imprisonments during the military dictatorship.

43 One of the oldest and most famous churches of Rio de Janeiro.

44 This term was coined by the theatre scholar and professor Piotr Woycicki from the concept of the post-dramatic, to refer to a branch of intermedia theatre.

If the historical avant-gardes created the conditions for technological innovations to interact with arts in general, theatre has been presenting new dramaturgical strategies that could be noticed in the projected images, in the relations with time, and in the movement of bodies in the space. It is an artistic expression that was born from the influence of media in contemporary society but that, besides nomenclatures, it is more important to identify the ways in which the contemporary scene has been experimenting with and using digital technological resources.

Although Os Dezequilibrados have already used projections in several of their performances<sup>45</sup>, in *Fala comigo como a chuva e me deixa ouvir* the borrowing from cinematographic language is noticed in the sound landscape, with off-stage narrations, from monologues with the actors' voices recorded to the final excerpt of Cuenca's short story; music which sometimes set the scenes, at other times are played so that the actors dance in several moments; sounds of the sea and rain. All of these sounds, besides the actors' own dialogues, are interspersed by long pauses and moments of silence, in a similar way to cinema, in which the sound landscape influence the comprehension of the movie dramatically and narratively.

In addition to this sound landscape, the cinematographic language is present in the dramaturgical construction and in the actors' movement. While in Tennessee Williams' text the play starts in the bedroom, in Os Dezequilibrados' performance it starts in the yard, with the Husband in the tub and several bottles of booze spread out. This scene, explained right at the beginning of the original text, should be staged later on as a flashback.

Although the use of flashback is already very common in theatre, the cinematographic language becomes more explicit in the performance through the actors' movement. In a register similar to rewind, the actors, in several moments, move backwards, as a rewind tape. Sometimes, indeed, the sound of the rewinding tape highlights the actors walking backwards.

The exploration of Edward Hopper's painting also points towards the company's hybridization of theatre, cinema and fine arts. As in Hopper's paintings, each scene in *Fala comigo como a chuva e me deixa ouvir* looked like a framing, a captured and amplified detail, like a cinema camera, made possible by the closeness of the audience with the actors and by the way they were all positioned in each scene.

### ***Beija-me como nos livros***

Os Dezequilibrados' use of intermediality can also be noticed in its recent play. In several moments of *Beija-me como nos livros*, Ângela Câmara – sometimes in character, at other times as herself – reads from her phone's screen the description of the scene which happens beside her. This device was used throughout the whole

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45 *Vida, o filme* is a notorious example, since it was staged in a cinema (Estação Unibanco) lobby and discussed the influence of movies and television in human behavior and used videos and images filmed live.

play in a way to break with the illusion of the scenes. Although this break that the use of the phone makes resembles Brecht's distancing effect, it does not have in the performance the critical distancing element of epic theatre, being more one of the company's aesthetic tools to bring the audience closer to the real.

*Beija-me como nos livros* tackles the historical process of romantic love through literary myths: Tristan and Isolde, *Romeo and Juliet*, Don Juan and Werther. As in other plays, Os Dezequilibrados also made use of research and the scenic creation process by means of compositions. The initial source used in the research by the artists was *O Livro do Amor*<sup>46</sup>, by Regina Navarro Lins, in addition to *Love in the Western World*, by the historian Denis de Rougemont. Since this play would end the *Love Trilogy*, the group's objective at first was to stage the history of love. However, as Ivan Sugahara states,

The book starts there in pre-history, we name improvisations, everyone down on all fours, as monkeys, and then Roman orgies. But there came a moment when I said: "this is crazy, it is impossible to make the history of love, it is a lot, everything is too broad", we would go crazy, we wouldn't manage it, it wouldn't be good. So there was a readjustment of the project. Since the initial idea was the history of love's feeling, we changed when there was the idea of romantic love. Nowadays when we talk about love, we are thinking in general of romantic love, we changed when the idea of romantic love arose. Nowadays when we talk about love we are thinking in general of romantic love, a specific idea of love, western, that was consolidated two hundred years ago. The idea of romantic love started to be encouraged in the Middle Ages, with the courtesan love and all its unfolding until the time of German romanticism, consolidation of a certain way of loving, very strong up to the present. This was a way, since there is a world of possibilities (SUGAHARA, 2016).

Although the play deals with love myths from a variety of historical moments, that is, the Middle Ages (Tristan and Isolde), Renaissance (*Romeo and Juliet*), French Enlightenment (Don Juan) and German Romanticism (Werther), the company wanted to give a contemporary touch to the performance. There was an understanding of the members of the company that our way of loving, the way in which we understand romantic love is, to a great extent, due to this construction of romantic love, as Sugahara explains:

We had this idea of dramaturgy, of having a contemporary plot, of the real (in quotations), and during the whole time this connection of the myths to what we live because in fact we live the same thing. It is this idea that our way of loving was based on these myths, by this romantic construction, and we are hostages to this, in our lives, in our way of loving, for good and for bad (SUGAHARA, 2016).

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46 Translated as *The book of love*.



Thus, besides the use of the cellular phone, the element of the real and of the contemporary is shown in the play when the actors call each other by their own names, since the audience distances itself, at this moment, from the historical characters, and sees itself before the actors. The myth's scenes are always shown from the book which one of the actors reads, suggesting that they are reading that story being staged. Therefore, there is, at the same time on stage<sup>47</sup>, the performed myth and the reality of the one who reads it.

*Beija-me como nos livros* continued the cinematographic language research carried out by the company. As in *Fala comigo como a chuva e me deixa ouvir*, in several moments the actors move around in rewind, in a choreography highlighted by the effect of strobe light and by the sound of a rewinded tape. There are also elements of silent movies, as it can be seen in the last scene. Another resource used which refers to cinematographic language was the work with the idea of cinema's perspective and angles.

The actors' work, in the embodiment of cinematographic language as well as in the physical scores of movements, gestures and dance, stands out in the performance, since the company's intention was to show the myths through action instead of words. Some difficulties were found for some scenes, as explained by Ivan Sugahara regarding the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet*:

We took a long time to solve that scene because it couldn't be left out, since it is the most famous scenes of all time, but it is a scene that is resolved entirely with words. She is up there, he is down here, and they keep talking, basically. There are some very beautiful things, but it is really a scene that is only resolved by the word. This is totally different from the ball scene, since the latter has choreography, they look at each other from a distance, flirt, kiss. There is the hand's score which is described in the text. In the death scene [...] you do not need the word. The balcony scene, thus, was a problem, it had to be there, we took a long time to solve how to stage that, how to turn that into action, into an expressive action. (SUGAHARA, 2016).

The first text of the play was written and its lines learned by the members of the company and guest artists from the research and composition experimented by the actors. The only play used was Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. To the other myths,

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47 The play has been staged, since its première in 2015, at CCBB, in a proscenium arch stage. Os Dezequilibrados did not intend to stage it in a non-conventional stage for their understanding, according to Ivan Sugahara, that "the play talks about theatre, about the myths. The idea there was to talk about romantic love, of the idealization of the other, of the romanticization of the other, you see what you want to see. So there is a certain illusionism of the proscenium arch stage which is related to the very own idea of the perspective in the painting, in the cinema. There are paintings that create the illusion that you are getting into them. There is an idea of projection which is very strong, the idea of romantic love, the idea of the proscenium arch stage, the idea of simulacrum. So I found the idea of a proscenium arch stage appropriate" (SUGAHARA, 2016).

the group worked with several novels and myths' plays, such as Molière's *Don Juan* and Goethe's *Werther*, and built a composite of texts, dividing each myth into four main scenes. After the writing of the scenes, with the collaboration of the vocal coaches, the initial text in Portuguese was translated to an invented language<sup>48</sup>.

Although this language has been referred to in the play reviews as a type of gibberish, it is a different type of gibberish that we commonly know, an improvised one. In *Beija-me como nos livros*, a language was created based on English for *Tristan and Isolde*, on German for *Werther*, on French for *Don Juan* and on Italian for *Romeo and Juliet*. According to Sugahara, the creation process of these languages happened in the following way:

We created these languages, in this case, Ricardo, with each language's phoneme, and taught the actors how to speak them. German, for example, was the hardest, since nobody spoke German there. English, French and Italian are more in our imagination because of the musicality (SUGAHARA, 2016).

## Final considerations

In most of the performances by Os Dezequilibrados, mainly those studied here, aspects of the postdramatic theatre and of the performative as proposed by Lehmann, Fischer-Lichte and Féral, which means a scene which moves away from text centrism and suggests an egalitarian relationship between a collage of texts, the distinct language of the scene and of other arts, generating a visual dramaturgy. Whether it be through an itinerant play, bringing the audience to the inside of the play, or on a proscenium arch stage, but using resources which break with illusionism and bring the spectator into the present in which the play is staged, this theatre also suggests a new type of the "real".

Postmodern, postdramatic and performative theatre theoreticians have shown caution when tackling the issue of realism in theatre, once the 1960's to the 1980's scene was not concerned with this matter. However, some scholars have been noticing a return of the real in theatre since the 1990's. Patrice Pavis comments that the return of the real has been happening without, however, "returning to any total representation, as Hegel, Marx and Lukács once demanded" (PAVIS, 2016). As opposed to the effect of the real, present in the XIX century realism theatre, what characterizes these theatres of the real to Pavis is "the ability to construct and explain the real on the basis of the artistic devices in works of art" (PAVIS, 2016) and adds "this means that the other side of theatre is not illusion, fiction or theatricality, but social life, politics, class struggle, economic survival and everyday life" (PAVIS, 2016). Thereby, Patrice Pavis asserts that the theatre of the real is generating renewed interest throughout the world in the past years.

48 Ivan Sugahara explained that it was necessary that the actors first learned the text lines in Portuguese to then learn the lines in the invented language so that they knew exactly what they were saying.

This return of the real in the contemporary scene can be noticed, therefore, in the works developed by Os Dezequilibrados, whether it be in a more traditional way, as in *Amores*, a more physical way as the itinerant play *Fala comigo como a chuva e me deixa ouvir*, or by the breaks of illusionism in *Beija-me como nos livros*.

In addition to the elements of the real taken from the past but worked in a different way in the contemporary scene, Os Dezequilibrados also appropriate from past artistic movements, such as the silent and analogical cinema, the painting by the modernist painter Edward Hopper, and from classical and traditional texts, such as those by Shakespeare, Molière and Goethe.

The relationships that scholars such as Boris Groys and David Román, mentioned in the beginning of this work, identify the existence of the past in the present, be it a citation or a rereading, can be totally perceived in the plays examined here. Thus, Os Dezequilibrados show a way of how to communicate with the past, with dramaturgical and non-dramaturgical texts, with languages such as the silent movie, with the issue of the real and with the exploration of non-conventional spaces. Thereby, some procedures are reworked by the company and others discarded to be used later. We see that, for example, when they performed *Quarto de crime e castigo* in 1999 in one of the actresses' apartment, *Bonitinha, mas ordinária*, in the rooms of Casa da Matriz in 2001, and revisited the idea of occupying a house in 2014 with *Fala comigo como a chuva e me deixa ouvir*. The incorporation of cinematographic elements can also be identified, for example, in *Vida, o filme*, from 2002, in *Memória afetiva de um amor esquecido*, from 2008, and in their two last plays.

This artistic intertextuality with its own past is close to what Marsha Kinder coined as retroseriality. Although the scholar coined and used the term when referring to procedures in Woody Allen, Ingmar Bergman and Pedro Almodóvar cinematography, the idea of retroseriality, a branch of intertextuality, can be applied to this identity or aesthetic language of Os Dezequilibrados.

Marsha Kinder understands retroseriality as a set of intertexts which makes a database to which these film directors refer. They are elements and themes which are found in these reused databases and are usually resumed in difference, such as we see in Almodóvar's first movies representing defiance and in *Volver* it is used for medicinal purposes.

Thus, the work of Os Dezequilibrados is retroserial in the sense that there is in each performance a research work directed to that specific project, but in which elements and procedures already used previously are applied again. It is possible to state, nonetheless, that this idea of intertextuality and retroseriality in the body of Os Dezequilibrados' work is related to the fact that the company has a stable core and carry out work backed up by a collective, in spite of the varied interests and professional activities of its members. Because of this, they have managed to establish an artistic project with its own hallmark, confirmed in each performance and acknowledged by the audience. Continuing with the work of scenic research, the company will make a late celebration – due to the difficulty in obtaining finan-

cial resources – of its twenty year anniversary in 2019, with an original text by Pedro Brício provisionally entitled Rio 2066.

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