

Writing Sample #2

Article Title: Degraded Subjects and Dramaturgies in the Art of Action in Colombia

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English Translation (original attached)

The degradation of material relates to the drama that has degraded it, and so the ruinous materials of our action art refer to a drama that saw them fall, and at the same time to a degraded dramaturgy, without dramatic texts, without decorations, without trained actors and even without a public. The dramaturgy of Colombian performances exceeds the limits of disgust, pain, fear, law and ecstasy, although not the limits of representation - despite its intentions - because those dramaturgies that have named as presentations they are nothing more than representations, that is to say, double presentations; presentations presented, and if two times present, with more reason than re-presented; exceeded in its presentation, no longer real but hyper-real.

That ruined dramaturgy, which has decayed, is at the same time a residue due to excess of representation, the discarding of the drama of the Theater in capital letters and waste, devanation and vane of the Plastic Arts that, tired of representing the world in the traditional Fine Arts (sculpture, drawing, painting and engraving), have decided to radically oppose any attempt at dramatic representation since the middle of the last century. In this way, a meteorological inventory of our Action Art is an inventory of waste, matter and materials used in excess both in the Theater and in Plastic Arts to recreate, trying not to represent, a simile of the catastrophe, of poverty, war, abuses of the State, desecration of bodies and abuse over the weak.

Residues that create through the forcefulness of its presence or through its ferocity, an effect of reality, but only that, an effect, a simulacrum, a view, a hyper-real spectacle as in any of the hyperrealisms of the History of Art, despite the discourse that sustains them. A spectacle also simulated by the media creating effects of reality with their materials "without editing" the raw reality. Thus, live catastrophes resemble their representations, even more so if they are hyperreal, or what the footnotes explain. From the Persian Gulf war broadcast live on CNN to the last of the wars in the poorest and most remote regions far from the first world, Colombia, Sudan, Rwanda, the Balkans, etc. Life is more like its hyper-representation than reality itself. The wars seem like "movies" and not "the truth".

It is presumed that the rests, the pieces, the vestiges, the used and abused objects bear a certain similarity with their raw reality. In other words the vestige is given the status of document because it is not edited or because it does not go through "as much" editing as in the Theater and Visual Arts, forgetting that if "reality" is edited beforehand to make it appear in the rough, masking the contexts so that they do not clash with the official discourse, then the rest is also edited and therefore the document to which we give value for the truth is a hyper-real or hyper-simulated document.

Today we are witnessing a re-presentation of multiple realities that are juxtaposed and self-instituted as "reality", but they are mass-mediated realities, spectacularized, simulated, created, that do not imitate life, nor resemble it closely. We will say that life imitates them and recreates them in them. Hence, many public demonstrations, civil actions or social claims, which do not seek the spaces of art to sustain their tasks, are instead found by art to sustain themselves in them, in such a way that art needs to be represented in life, in lives, to look like them or that lives find a way to represent themselves in it.

Thus, action art in Colombia today, and thanks to its rich immersion within our war, proclaims itself as real and present, but in my opinion, it is not like life, nor even closely, and it is not experience but rather survival. It is sustained with little, poor and impoverished, it is also survival, and becomes more like a Neo-povera that attends the deterioration of the matter, the materials and the bodies that in turn describe the landscape and the context that saw them decay, and resists classification and the market and returns to nature for sacred purposes, to the place where the raw material speaks.

"[...] Matter is expressed and the artist listens avidly. Everything speaks: water, fire, earth, air, materials that help man to survive, bales of hay, tow, coal, as well as modern ones, electricity, neon." (Fernández, 1999, p.27)

Exchanging to the Latin American avant-garde postulate that says that Art is equal to life, Art = life to Art is different to life Art * life, as the title of the Museo del Barrio exhibition that compiles the actions of the artists of the Americas between 1960 and 2000, we now say in Colombia that Art resembles resistance, survival and survival of bodies, but not life. We will say then that Art resembles the vestiges, survival, the trace of life and not its hyper-real representation.

In the theatricality and not in the theater, in the performativity of life and not in performance art the vestigial only functions as a document, minimum fragments describes the disaster, all the actor's accompaniments, the transcendental or abject performance artist, the activist or the profane, are hyperbolas that provide meanings and symbols to debris and pieces: fear of emptiness, a baroque representation of a reality. The vestige as a material or the allegorical figure of the disappeared as end and beginning between two states of matter, survive today in the action art in Colombia, leaving a trace as an indexical trace evoking its presence; no longer the life of the matter, but its survival, the material become material, the disappeared (almost

nothing) converted into material, a Neo-póvera recharged now with socio-political contents apt for a ritual valuation of the bodies.

As if in Colombia the political always crossed the ritual circulating again but sacralized. As if the most atrocious political events, especially those that filled our territories with mass graves, tortured or disappeared, had to be read again under the sacred light of the ritual and the materials returned to their contexts but re-sacralized, in order to return them but loaded with a holiness attributed to the objects and their pieces, to the men and their secretions, to the historical discourses and their stories, to the materials and their remains. As if while human beings survive barbarism, materials survive in time, both resisting a force that oppresses them. Turning the body into dispossession and dispossession into material. And thus in Colombia from so much fragmenting the body into pieces and from so much object left adrift by its owner, we filled our action art with allegorical representations where all those spoils and all those pieces and those orphan objects, and those orphans dispossessed of objects and territory are exhibited for more than three decades without being satiated.

Finding re-creation in an aesthetic of deterioration, impoverished, abused and that recurs again and again paradoxically as a counterpart or antithesis of a grotowskian approach, that is, now itself a theatrical representation by excess and not austere as in Grotowski's "Poor Theater"; and a representation of the "Holy Act" model because of the exacerbation of suffering on stage and not because of transcendence. In other words: The art of action in Colombia represents by excess what the grotowskian theater intended to represent by austerity; and that the majority of Colombian performers represent by excess of corporal suffering what the model of "Holy Actor" pretended to represent by transcendence. We speak here of excess of poverty and of martyrdom on the scene, of voluntary sacrifices, or better, we speak here of other ways of representing the bodies crossed by the Judeo-Christian religion, through Eastern rituals. In spite of the explicit discourse of Grotowski, we will speak here of what exceeds. In addition we speak of Maria Teresa Hincapie and how a grotowskian speech, such as austerity, transcendence of the body, and sacralization of everyday life managed to create an unquestionable aesthetic, repeated until now without too many variations by the contemporary and subsequent performers. Speech accompanied on stage with abundance of poor objects, not austerity, the presence of a man forced to withstand a force that oppresses body strength, not transcendence of the body and slowing down of scenic time, survival, not sacralization of everyday time. *Una Cosa es Una Cosa, Hacia lo sagrado, Divina proporción, El espacio se Mueve despacio* etc were the performances of reference of almost all the performers in the country and those who built the aesthetic canon of the action art in Colombia in terms of representation, but at the same time they were a privileged place of objects, matter and materials in terms of documents. It would suffice to analyze the materials, materials and objects that were exhibited in *Una Cosa es Una Cosa* over a decade of presentation of the work, to have a very complete meteorological inventory of the art of action in Colombia in general, and to defend the thesis that now this Art is instituted as a Neo pó vera that gives value to almost nothing.

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