

ANTONIN ARTAUD AND REVERBERATIONS:

Introduction

*Luciana da Costa Dias*¹

*Tamira Mantovani Gomes Barbosa*²

Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) needs no introductions. His name stands out among the great creators and thinkers of the Performing Arts in the 20th Century, especially when it comes to the search for a theatrical language other than drama, but body-based in its expressiveness and movement – he discusses not only the body as a hieroglyph – matrix of meanings in his Theatre of Cruelty – but lately the body of the performer as a free, anarchic body as well (the famous, and many times misunderstood, body-without-organs). Artaud's contributions to construct the contemporary theatre are striking in their innovative and experimenting character, in all the multiplicity, untamedness, physics and intensity of the contemporary scene. In Artaud, there is room for the “non-western”, in that he sought for a path out of the West, just as there are elements in his work that point to the future performativity paradigm.

Poet, thinker, director, actor and playwright. Antoine Marie Joseph Artaud, worldwide famous as Antonin Artaud, was born in Marseille, France in 1896 and died in 1948. Artaud's life is embedded in his writings. “*I do not conceive any work (of art) separated from life*”, once argued this “*philosophical man of theatre*”, as Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca calls him in the text that we have had the pleasure of translating into Portuguese language, and opens this special issue. When it comes to Artaud, his *pathos* is his path and his “madness”: the profound criticism of modernity misleadings and his attempt to establish new possibilities for making theatre is also a war with metaphysics and its hall of mirrors, which he wanted to overcome so badly, in theatre and in himself. His seminal work proposed to radically transform theatre making in the 20th Century. Artaud took a stand for building a scene whose poetics do not depend on words. This and the crisis of reason, discourse and subject led to a turning point which would prove dominant throughout the 20th Century. This and the crisis of reason, discourse and subject showed a trend and led to a turning point which would prove dominant throughout the 20th Century. Such perception will be echoed by several artists and thinkers decades later, in and outside Theatre. From Artaud's work, later strengthened by others, rises a radical transformation of the actor's work and of Performing Arts research. Its influences will also be strong to directors like Peter Brook and to lots of theatre groups in Brazil and worldwide, like *Living Theater* and *Teatro Oficina* to name but a few. In addition, philosophers such as Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze will be deeply influenced by their writings. And curiously, *performance*



art, as called by Josette Féral, “will seem to paradoxically correspond to all points of this new theatre evoked by Artaud”. Artaud still reverberates, even in the performative turn followed by arts and humanities since the second half of the 20th Century.

In light of the numerous possible reverberations of Artaud's work, the editorial board of *Ephemera - Journal of Theatre and Performance Studies*, edited by Federal University of Ouro Preto, Brazil decided to launch the call to this special issue. Indeed, Artaud's reverberations are countless, multiple, assorted. Artaud reverberates strongly in this early 21st Century: so strong that we had received an unbelievable amount of papers to review in a relatively short time – especially when considering that *Ephemera* is a new-born journal, celebrating its first anniversary with this issue. And so strong Artaud still reverberates that we will have not one, but two special issues on the subject. This first issue counts with the participation of authors from Australia, Brazil, Italy, Spain and UK to become our first multilingual publication. The second one, also multilingual, will be issued in *Ephemera Journal*, vol 3, no. 4, to be published in March 2020.

Therefore, this special issue intends to widen the space for debate and connect scholars whose own works are pervaded by reverberations of Artaud's work. In this sense, we chose to open it with the translation of the paper *How Do You Make Yourself a Theatre Without Organs? Deleuze, Artaud and the concept of differential presence* written by Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca, one of the founders of *Performance Philosophy* research network. This paper, yet unpublished in Portuguese, represents a milestone for thinking of the inseparable relationships between theatre and philosophy, and Artaud's fundamental role in this process.

Next, we have *'Mirroring the Double and the Cruel' - Living, Uncaging, Offending, Celebrating, Analysing: considerations on a few artistic experiences that echoed Artaud's thought*, authored by the Italian performer and multimedia artist Andrea Pagnes, which discusses Artaud's reverberations on emblematic figures from the avant-garde of the 20th Century like *Living Theatre*, John Cage, Peter Handke, Klaus Kinski e Hermann Nitsch. On the other hand, the grotesque and its relationship with Artaud's work is the subject of the third paper of this special issue, namely *Antonin Artaud and the Grotesque*, written by the actor and scholar James O. Daly from Monash University, Australia.

From grotesque to sublime, is the passage which takes us to the next paper, from the Spanish scholar Carlos A. Segovia, which discusses *Artaud and the Revolution of the Body: Prolegomena to a 'Transcendental Erotics'* opposing it to all onto(theo)logy, an imaginary and symbolic capture of the real, in a very poetic form. And from sublime to digital, nothing more contemporary: in the sixth paper published here, Carolina Berger reverberates Artaud on contemporary intermedia performances with *Adaptations on Virtualities of the Double in Theatre: from Digital Double to Digital Self*.



In its turn, Talita Baldin e Paulo Eduardo Viana Vidal, in *Antonin Artaud in the Meantime of Invention: a possible way between Psychoanalysis and the transformation of Language*, discuss – in a psychoanalytic perspective – how the subversion that makes use of language demarcates the survival of his subjectivity. Yet we have a paper on the countless folds on which the friction zone between Artaud and Deleuze reverberates, discussed by Paulo Correia and Rodrigo Barbara in *Deleuze and Artaud: Cruelty Reverberations*. In the ninth and penultimate paper, Felipe Henrique Monteiro Oliveira discusses *The Propositions of Antonin Artaud on Stage: A Differentiated Body in Performance*, showing us that there are no boundaries to Artaud’s reverberations when it comes to multiplicity and differences of bodies. And the tenth paper which closes this special issue, from Marina de Nóbile da Silveira e Ricardo Gomes, starts a brief discussion on *The Gesture as Inner Pulsion in the Theatre of Cruelty*.

It is worth noticing that the multitude of themes covered in this first special issue evades any cataloguing or systematisation. If Artaud explained is Artaud betrayed, as Peter Brook would say, can the same be said about any attempt to systematise his reverberations? On the other hand, Derrida has also stated that fidelity to Artaud is impossible... Is it? Artaud, in a way, remains a hieroglyph to us. And being so, we hope, even in dark times, he keeps on reverberating and, who knows, walking us through paths and perspectives to be opened and mapped.

December 22nd, 2019

¹ **Luciana da Costa Dias** is an Associate Professor from Federal University of Ouro Preto, Brazil and founder of *Aporia: Performance and Philosophy Studies* research group. She is a member of *Performance Philosophy* research network and was a visiting researcher in Centre for Performance Philosophy at the University of Surrey, UK, for the academic year 2017-2018. She received her split PhD. degree in Philosophy from State University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, Germany. ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5627-5431>. E-mail: l.dias@ufop.edu.br.

² **Tamira Mantovani Gomes Barbosa** is an actress, performer and scholar. She received her Master’s degree from Federal University of Ouro Preto, Brazil, and her degree in Performing Arts from Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil. She is a member of *Aporia: Performance and Philosophy Studies* research group, and her research interests are the connections between performance and philosophy. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3967-9762>. E-mail: tamiramantovanigomes@gmail.com.



