

Manifiesto for childhood

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Last year (2007) we could attend a theatrical installation, directed by the group "Periférico de objetos". According to a critic: "A needed theatrical manifesto". (Saltal). The play "Manifiesto de niños" shows a reality and its representation faces the difficult theme of the different ways of abuse exerted on childhood by the adult world.

Once in the theatre, you find a closed, hermetic room where there are three actors that don't stop playing different roles. The action can be watched by the public through windows. Outside and distributed through the whole auditorium, there are screens displaying painful testimonies and heartbreaking stories suffered by children all over the world. A childhood taking up a rifle, starving to death, suffering plagues, working like slaves, children hit by enemy missiles, children that are human shields, that live by begging... On the screens and in the armoured room, a violent child animation.

The spectator needs to take part, even if he doesn't want to. He can't remain seated. He must go after the play, trying to put the story together because there, as in the world, time is a matter of urgency, simultaneity and juxtaposition.

At the beginning, the actress reads an address and she names one hundred children that were abused on different ways by adults. Meanwhile, another actor bothers her, he denies what she is saying making fun of her. The third one remains as an outsider. Denunciation, denial or indifference. Like a society's replica.

Toys are not missing. A camera captures them in different ways. They can turn out to be worrying, funny or sinister. New toys, old toys, wind-up toys, war toys, painted in the walls. As if war were a play, as if death were a play. And a puppets' scene where the actor makes his puppet perform a balancing act, anticipating us an inhuman, unwanted ending: the rape.

These theatrical scenes, audacious, poetical demonstrations showing what is not said what can't be said or what even doesn't finish to be said, intertwine with postulates of other members of the culture. R. Levin, an Argentinian psychoanalyst, holds that: "childhood has more power than politics because embodies the lack of response to the human condition questions". But, by definition, politics must rule out the power that challenges its own power. And the tragedy is the following paradox: the power of childhood is borne by the most fragile human being: "the child" He also postulates that as a result of that ideology, the child will be

reduced by educational, sanitary and food lacks, by economic policies in which he is neglected and left aside.

The contemporary child passes along through these vicissitudes, a child used as a toy, amputated, banned, fenced-in, disciplined, a child that doesn't play. According to the ideas of the Italian philosopher G. Agamben that says that the outside is produced by the insight exclusion and the inhuman animalizing the human, I propose the idea of a foreign child, excluded, carried to the inhuman. And in the future? A violent, destructive and cruel adult.

We, psychoanalysts, know what happens with a child that plays. Agamben, pursuing Heraclitus' ideas, concludes that a child that plays represents, as game, the temporalizing essence of the living being, his "historicity".

¿What kind of historicity an abused child represents?

¿How can he temporalize if violence has marked him?

¿Can he live with dignity and, someday, occupy the adult place that history provides him with?

Starting from the above-mentioned author's ideas, I think that adults must be reminded of all the manoeuvres they use in order to avoid children to become adults. "The fundamental rule of the game of history is that the signifiers of continuity accept to interchange themselves with those of discontinuity and that the transmission of the signifying function is more important than the signifiers themselves". (Agamben)

And, perhaps, one of our tasks should be to understand the process of dehumanization, to dimension, as psychoanalysts, what means for a child his historical continuity's cut, and to offer ourselves, provisionally, for the representation and the historization. Remembering that "Life gives us a lot, but it doesn't return all. For example, childhood" (Levín)

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