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When «the descendants of the ships» began to mutate. Multicultural corporalities and sonorities in the Argentine bicentenary

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the celebrations of the Argentine Bicentenary in 2010, and especially the historic-artistic parade organized by Fuerza Bruta in Buenos Aires. My hypothesis states that this parade was one of the most important performances of the Cultural Policies during the last decade to confront the traditional identitarian imaginary of White-European origin of the Argentinians, associated to elites, and legitimize a new multicultural imaginary, associated to the popular. Furthermore, I discuss the theoretical and methodological importance of analyzing music, dance and theater in order to understand the efficacy of this kind of celebrations. Therefore, I examine the ways in which these esthetic expressions bring about intense senses and emotions that operate as powerful iconic and indexical meanings among participants. In this way, the cultural meanings and values that the ritual tries to legitimize become desirable: in this case, a new imaginary about the Argentine identity, through a festive ritual of national commemoration.

KEY WORDS

Cultural policies, arts, sensuous experience, emotions, Argentina.

Introduction

The expression in quotation marks in the title alludes to a well-known saying that, from the first decades of the 20th century, is a common adage; especially in the middle and upper classes of Buenos Aires and other cities in Argentina: «Argentines descend from ships». This descent alludes not only to the Spanish colonization but above all to the subsequent immigration, mainly Italian and Spanish, that arrived in Argentina massively between 1880-1914, making up more than 60% of the population of the city of Buenos Aires, and 30% of the provinces of Buenos Aires, Córdoba and Santa Fe, in the central region of the country. An example of the effect of these sayings is that the recently elected president of Argentina, Mauricio Macri, in one of his first speeches in November 2015 stated that: «*We are one of the countries in the world with more entrepreneurial spirit, and there is a reason: our grandparents, our parents came by ship searching for an opportunity, and they built that wonderful stage in Argentina. It is our turn to take on that job*». Thus, the immigration component would explain the origin of the «entrepreneurial spirit» that Macri ascribes to the country. In fact, he is the son of an Italian immigrant who became one of the most powerful industrialists in Argentina.

Many authors have analyzed how since the end of the 19th century the ruling elites were constructing this imaginary identity of a «White» nation—mainly of the Western «European traditions»— which had as its counterpart military persecution and economic exploitation of indigenous peoples, and then, its political and cultural invisibilization (Bartolomé, 1987; Segato, 1999). Although the dominant narratives of the «melting pot» projected a «fusion» of different ethnic and racial backgrounds—which would blend their differences and give rise to a new and homogenous «national being»—, in this fusion the European components were the privileged ones, and the indigenous and mestizos were the invisible ones. Despite the hegemony of this imaginary in the ruling groups, some fissures can be seen during the last century. One case was the Administration of Juan Domingo Perón (1945-1955), which as Martínez Sarasola (1992) points out, promoted several policies that focused on the «protection» of the aboriginal, as well as the «social inclusion» of mestizo and peasant workers, who migrated mainly from the north of the country to Buenos Aires, to be employed in the industry, which at that time was beginning to develop. Precisely, those young ones were called «little black heads» by the urban elites of European descent; thus, showing the persistence of racist categories (Ratier, 1971). More recently, in cultural policies undertaken by the Administrations of Néstor Kirchner (2003-2007) and especially of Cristina Fernández de

Kirchner (2007-2015), some authors have analyzed the tendency to promote a «multicultural» imagery, which gave greater visibility to indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, mestizos and Latin American immigrants (Bayardo, 2008; Citro and Torres Agüero, 2015; Adamovsky, 2016). Going back to the statements of President Macri, it is interesting to note the criticisms that came up; especially in the journalistic media close to the previous Government, as they were interpreted as the return of that White-European imaginary that they had been trying to transform¹. These imaginary identities have been closely linked to the political and economic disputes of the last 40 years in Argentine history. These disputes, taking up the discourses of their own referents, could be summarized as two. On one hand, «neoliberal» orientation policies, «free market» claims, monetarist economic theories and «economic and cultural integration with the world» (mainly understood as the United States and Europe), during the last civil-military dictatorship (1976-1982), the Administrations of Carlos Menem (1990-1999) and Macri (2015-). On the other hand, «national and popular» orientation policies, «welfare state» claims, Keynesian economic theories and «integration with Latin America», partly during the ruling of Raúl Alfonsín (1983-1989) and Néstor and Cristina Kirchner (2003-2015). Paradoxically, «Peronism» operated as a historical-ideological matrix that was convened by both political orientations (by Menem and the Kirchners), which shows its complex heterogeneity, which also goes back to the violent disputes between its «right» and «left» sectors, especially in the 1970s.

Taking into account this complexity, I propose to analyze a case that, for its social and symbolic significance, is revealing to understand the reformulations of that imaginary White-European identity. I am referring to the «Bicentennial of 2010» celebration, in commemoration for the 200 years of the «May Revolution of 1810», and mainly to the «Central Artistical-Historical Parade» organized by the National Secretary of Culture, which had 2,000 artists, coordinated by the performance group, Fuerza Bruta. My initial hypothesis was that this Parade constituted one of the most important public stagings promoted by the Argentine State in the last decade, to legitimize a new national imaginary with «multicultural» and «popular» features. For more than three hours, through music, dramatizations, dances and scenographies, diverse representations were made on Argentine history, which were performed in the main avenues of the city center of Buenos Aires, fervently calling the participating crowd. The importance of this event was manifested in the presence of more than two million people,

1. For example: <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/las12/13-10244-2015-12-24.html>, accessed February 17, 2015.

in what several journalistic mediums defined as the «patriotic act» and «the popular festival» with the largest audience in Argentine history.

As of the analysis of this case, I am interested in discussing a broader problem of growing interest in the contemporary socio-anthropological thought: the ways in which the States today use and mobilize «culture as a resource» —taking the well-known expression by Yudice (2002)— to actively intervene in the public space and consolidate, or sometimes try to transform, the national, regional or local identity imaginaries (also García Canclini, 1987; Lacarrieu, 2000; Ochoa Gautier, 2002; Bayardo, 2008). In this sense, and as Connerton (1989) has pointed out, the commemoration rituals that recall the origins of diverse social groups, are often privileged moments for constructing the many «imagined communities», enabling identities and collective memories to be transmitted and recreated through shared ceremonies. In Latin America, the rituals that commemorate the independence of colonial regimes, and therefore the beginnings of the nation-state, have been key for the symbolic construction of national imaginaries. This importance grew especially in the «centenarians» of the early 20th century, as well as in the «bicentenarians» of the 21st century, who mobilized substantial resources for their festivities, and in the case of Argentina, also many historiographical debates.

Lastly, with this analysis, I am also trying to contribute to the most recent theoretical-methodological debates in the field of ritual and performance studies. I am particularly interested in highlighting the ways in which imaginary identities are constructed, not only through textual inscriptions and verbal discourses, but also fundamentally in music, images, gestures and dances. In this sense, and as I proposed in previous works (Citro, 2009), I believe that music, dance and theatricalities mobilize intense sensory-emotive collective irruptions which, through mainly iconic and indexical connections, produce powerful meanings among the ritual participants. In this way, as Turner (1980) suggested, they make «*what is obligatory desirable*», that is to say, the meanings and values that each ritual tries to legitimize. Next, I will review this perspective, as well as its potential contributions.

Music, dance and theatricality: Challenges for an Anthropology of ritual and performance

The so-called «Performance Studies» —from Turner (1992) onwards—, the «Cultural Phenomenology of embodiment» (Csordas, 1994), as well as the fields of «Anthropology of Music», «Dance», and «Theater and

Spectacle» (respectively, Turino (1999), Reed (1998) and Beeman (1993), among others), highlight the need to address the aesthetic sensibilities and emotional aspects of cultural practices, which were often underestimated due to the prevailing logocentrism that is still in our discipline. In line with these concerns, in previous studies (Citro, 2009) I proposed a methodological articulation that combines a «cultural phenomenological approach», attentive to the ethnographic description of the sensibilities and affectivities present in rituals and *performances*, with a «genealogical-contextual distancing» that allows to unveil their broader sociocultural connections, and from there, their different meanings and «performative» effects (Butler, 2002) in social life. However, the analysis of the meanings and performativity of the so-called «non-verbal expressions» (sounds-music, embodiment, theater-dance), is usually a challenge for the socio-anthropological interpretation, more accustomed to dealing with linguistic discourses. Therefore, in the search for conducive theoretical frameworks for the interpretation of these expressions, several authors resort to Peircean semiotics. Unlike *linguistic structuralism*, Peirce proposed a three-fold model that distinguishes «sign, object, and interpretant», and as Turino points out, the concept of «meaning» is therefore «pragmatically simplified», in defining itself as the «*effect created by the union of the sign and the object*» by who perceives it: an effect which in turn takes the shape of a «*direct feeling, a physical reaction or a linguistically based concept*» (Peirce cited in Turino, 1999: 222 and 224). These definitions are linked to another known classification by Peirce, according to which sign-object relations can operate as «symbols, icons, and indices». In this respect, Turino remarks that «*symbols are signs about other things, whereas icons and indices are signs of identity [...] and direct connections*» and acknowledges that the musical sounds and body movements that function as signs usually operate at the iconic and indexical levels (1999: 228; italics in the original). Therefore, «*the affective potential of signs is inversely proportional to the degree of mediation, generality and abstraction*», signs that involve icons and indices «*are more likely to create emotional and energetic interpretants, whereas signs involving symbols are more likely to generate language-based responses and reasoning*» (1999: 234). Although iconicity in music and body movements have been more studied, Turino emphasizes that these can also act as indices whose power derives from the fact that «*sign-object relations are based on co-occurrences within one's own life experiences and thus become intimately bound as experience*» (1999: 227). Therefore, musical and bodily expressions develop their own special potential to produce emotional responses and social identifications, since the «*indices continually take on new layers of*

meaning while potentially also carrying along former associations —a kind of semantic snowballing» (1999: 235).

In sum, from this approach, one can appreciate how the perception/performance of music, dances and other *performances* usually generates *meaning-effects* (such as feelings, physical reactions and ideas), through two complementary ways: (a) linking their formal aesthetic- traits to other sociocultural and personal experiences, cultural meanings and values, through relations of iconic resemblance, and (b) connecting these movements and sonorities to the emotions-meanings embodied in previous performances, through indexical relationships (Citro, 2009).

To understand how these links operate, I also incorporate a genealogical perspective that explains the way in which different discursive, musical and dance genres are constructed over time in relation to other genres, such as the «dialogical and intertextual» character in any discourse, identified especially by Bajtin (1985). It is necessary to analyze how certain elements of a discourse, but also of a performance, are usually de-contextualized and re-contextualized in others, generating intertextual, intercorporeal and intersonic links that bring with them not only an formal aesthetic feature but also part of its context, summoning the emotions and linguistic meanings associated with them (Citro, 2009). Starting from the ways in which the subjects appropriate the characteristic elements of certain discourses or practices (citing them, giving them new meaning or transforming them), while simultaneously excluding others, the different meanings that converge in a performance are performatively constructed. In the Fuerza Bruta Parade, I will identify how certain elements that refer to genres of Indigenous, Afro-descendant, mestizo, Latin American and European origin, as well as «the popular», were cited and resignified, while others were ignored or invisibilized. In this way, I will try to reconstruct the potential sensory, emotional and linguistic «*meaning-effects*» promoted by this multitudinous performance.

Fuerza Bruta: Sensorial-emotional eruptions and «popular theater»

The central parade of May 25 was organized by Fuerza Bruta, with the advice of historian Felipe Pigna (who made numerous books and television outreach programs on Argentine history), and the supervision of the Ministry of Culture. Although Fuerza Bruta began in 2002, its director Diqui James was testing diverse esthetic languages with the «La Organización Negra» (1987-1992) and «De La Guarda» (1993-2006). These groups achieved an

important diffusion on a national level, and later internationally, as especially the performances of Fuerza Bruta were represented in the United States, Spain, Germany, England, etc.

In one of the interviews, James explained that, in the Bicentennial Parade, he did not seek so much «to tell the story» of the 200 years of the country, but to appeal to the «emotions» that some of these stories produce:

I did not want to do a show about our history but rather tell how we are made. I wanted to get out of the history book and make an emotional account on the pieces we are made of. Since you are very young, you get familiar with the Crossing of the Andes and that is part of your life, and we wanted to show it from that side, as emotionally as possible so that it hits you in the heart and not the head. That connection was very strong.

This emphasis on the emotional and physical impact has been a characteristic of the group's productions, as can be seen on its website²:

Fuerza Bruta is an immersion of the senses. The Fuerza Bruta experience wakes up one's senses and produces an explosion of great happiness [...] our mission is to generate an environment in which spectators connect with others and with their senses, free their mental control and are transported to a place of inspiration and creativity.

The senses are those that produce an emotional experience through creativity and inspiration. Allowing emotions and senses to guide our feelings is a key form of Fuerza Bruta and supports our mission to inspire the creativity of everyone in the world.

They also maintain that their mission «*requires a spirit of inclusiveness and diversity*» to achieve «*easy access*» regardless of any social condition, and seeks «*to build a free environment to foster interactive participation*». Hence in their shows, people sing, dance or use their cell phones to photograph or film what happens there.

This intention to generate a high impact sensory and emotional experience is achieved through a special aesthetic in a stage that involves a great technological deployment, through the assembly of large structures that are specially designed for each show, and for which performers not only act, dance or play musical instruments, but also hang, fly, run or even

2. In: <http://fuerzabruta.com.ar/>, accessed November 10, 2015.

dive into water. In addition, they include light effects and visual projections, as well as loud music, which resemble the raves of electronic music.

The insistence of Fuerza Bruta on the sensory and emotional impact is usually linked to the early proposals of Antonin Artaud, which inspired different «experimental theater and/or state-of-the-art theater». Artaud placed the theater in direct line of descent with ritual, and emphasized that «*the object of magic and rites, of which the theater is only a reflection, is to put sensibility in a deeper and finer state of perception*» (1979: 93). Thus, he insisted that theater should become a «*means to directly affect the body of the viewer...to bring it through the most subtle notions...*» (Artaud, 1979: 88-89). In this sense, it should be added that the Catalan group *La Fura dels Baus* has also been one of the key influences for Fuerza Bruta.

Lastly, one of the characteristics of the Bicentennial Parade that differentiated the previous productions of the group, was the inclusion of «popular or *amateur*» artistic groups (such as the Murgas of the Porteño Carnival, some musicians from indigenous peoples and migrant communities), and also from people from other trades beyond the artistic, such as taxi and truck drivers, police officers, soldiers and fire fighters. As Diqui James stated, in the above-mentioned interview, working with all of them «*was wonderful...it became a real gigantic popular play*». I consider that this proposal from a «popular play», —which mixed artists and non-artists in the streets and favored the understanding and active participation of a diverse audience, turned into a collaborator of an intense sensory and emotional experience—, aligned with the intention of the Government to construct a «popular celebration». In addition, the massive nature of the presentations by Fuerza Bruta, added to the monumental deployment of its stage productions, would also be fundamental to achieving what was projected as a «massive celebration».

As we will see, the «people» and the «popular» have been key signifiers in the historical discourse of Peronism, and they were insistently reiterated during the Bicentennial, both in the discourses of its protagonists and in the signs built in the Parade's performance. Usually, in Peronism these signifiers mainly refer to the working sectors with lower economic resources, as well as those who claim them, expressing their opposition with the high class or elite sectors. However, following Laclau (1966), we recognize that the concepts of «people/popular» operate as those «empty signifiers» that tend to structure the political discourse, that is: key signifiers that are objects of disputes between different groups or factions, while attempting «to fill them» with their own network of signifiers, and so to fix and give them a hegemonic meaning. In Argentina in the past

decade, the signifier «people-popular» has been a subject of complex political disputes that fluctuate, with its multiple variants and debates, between these poles: on one hand, positions critically labeled as «paternalistic» or «populist», as they tend to reproduce the «dependency» of the popular sectors on the State, through «welfare», «authoritarianism» and «political clientelism», and even «onerous» public celebrations (as some criticized the Bicentennial); on the other hand, «vindicating» positions as they would tend to favor «social advancement», «empowerment» and «self-determination» of the popular sectors, through the development of different public policies, and even encouraging their participation in «multitudinous cultural events» organized by the State (as others approved of the Bicentennial). I will analyze how the Parade of Fuerza Bruta reveals a political-cultural strategy to legitimate these last signifiers about the «popular», intertwining it with a «multicultural» Argentine historical genealogy, although some of the tensions and ambiguities that cross these imaginary identities were also present.

The «Week of May» of 2010³

The Parade of Fuerza Bruta was included in a week of previous celebrations, which began on May 21, in the Plaza de Mayo (in front of the National Government House), with a concert of «Tribute to the 40 years of national rock». It continued on May 22 with a «military parade», then «a federal parade» with representatives from each province of Argentina, including different native peoples, and finally, a recital of «Latin American music».

On May 23, the «integration parade» took place: 4,000 people wore traditional attire and performed music and dance from the various migrant communities in Argentina, while the official announcers provided information on the history of each community. This parade had the feature of concluding with the «Afro Rioplatense community», who carried a large poster with the text, «*Argentina is also Afro*», and the logo of the National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI), an institution that since 2005, has been working on the recognition and promotion of this population, as well as its cultural traditions. That day ended with a show of «tribute to tango» and also «Argentine and Latin American folklore».

On May 24, many activities took place: a parade of «200 old vehicles for the 200 years», driven by their owners, which was presented as a «pas-

3. A summary of the celebrations, put on by public television, can be seen on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUDzVpzFXCQ>. Accessed February 14, 2015.

sion for the irons...typical of the Argentines;» later a friendly soccer match of the Argentina National Team, broadcasted on giant screens; and finally, the inauguration of a theater and cultural center. I will analyze these inaugurations in more detail, as they showed the political tensions between the different imaginary identities. The then Head of the city Government, Mauricio Macri, who also was one of the main political opponents of the National Government, as part of the Bicentennial acts, reopened the Teatro Colón: the oldest, luxurious, and most important lyrical theater of the city of Buenos Aires, belonging to the Municipal Government, which had been closed for three years for reconditioning. For its reopening, a historical-musical documentary in 3D was first projected on the façade of the theater, which went through the story of the theater, starting from the performances of international artists and some national ones. Then, inside the theater, the «gala evening» was celebrated, which was only attended by a select audience, by invitation. The program included the Ballet *Swan Lake* and one of the acts from the opera *La bohème*, but no work by Argentine or Latin American authors. Therefore, this luxurious theater associated with the upper middle classes and high classes of Buenos Aires, and named after the navigator who «discovers» our America and begins its colonization, was the scene chosen by the City Government to celebrate, with Classical European Music, the Argentine Bicentennial.

At the same time, from the National State, President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner inaugurated a first sector of the Bicentennial Cultural Center: a gigantic work of renovation and remodulation of the old building of the Central Post Office, which turned this Center into the most important cultural infrastructure in Latin America, which was characterized by offering free cultural activities open to the general public. After that, a concert was performed in the street by the National Symphony Orchestra, in which music from Argentine films was performed, while some scenes were projected. Even in one of the performances, the orchestra conductor wore a soccer hoodie of the national team.

In sum, in these differences in the repertoire elections (European Classical cannon/Argentine National Film Music), the forms of access to cultural goods (selective and costly/open and free) and spaces designated to the generation and enjoyment of these goods (traditional elite theaters/new popular cultural centers), it is possible to appreciate clearly the different imaginaries and cultural policies that each Government chose to make visible in the Bicentennial.

On the morning of May 25, the traditional Catholic ceremony of Tedeum was held, although it was split into two churches and with two different modalities, which again exposed the tensions between both

governments. The Tedeum attended by the mayor of Buenos Aires, Mauricio Macri and other authorities such as the president of the conservative Argentine Rural Society, was carried out in the traditional Catholic way and in its usual historical place: the Cathedral of the city of Buenos Aires. In contrast, the Tedeum attended by national representatives of the National Government, was celebrated in the Basilica of Our Lady Luján, a very popular pilgrimage site in the province of Buenos Aires. For the first time in history it included Jewish religious leaders, Muslims, Evangelicals and Orthodox Christians. Thus, the main traditional role of the Catholic Church in commemorations of the Argentine State was relativized here, upon being recontextualized with the participation of other religions: a multi-religiosity that accompanied the multiculturalism of the Bicentennial.

Later, in the National Government House, the president inaugurated the «Gallery of Latin American Patriots», with portraits of Tupac Amaru, Simón Bolívar, Augusto Sandino, Eva Perón, the «Che» Guevara, Salvador Allende, among others. However, shortly after Macri assumed the National Government, the portraits of Hugo Chávez and Néstor Kirchner, who also integrated this Gallery, were taken down, and their dismantling was announced.

Finally, on the evening of the 25, an artistic-documentary video in 3D was projected on the two hundred years of Argentine history, in the façade of the Cabildo of Buenos Aires, and then, the Parade began...

The historic-artistic Parade

In the manner of popular carnivals, the floats of 19 moving scenes moved through the avenues of downtown Buenos Aires, surrounded by fences behind which the audience was, and flanked by large screens that reproduced in video the passage of each scene.

The first scene represented the «pueblos originarios» (native peoples) with three rows of enormous floats; those on the sides had constructions that imitated buildings in stone, and from their interior (which by their red lighting seemed to allude to a burning lava), people emerged and submerged. From behind, another great structure in the form of a tower was raised and lowered. In the top of the tower there were couples with clothing and objects typical of the main original towns that inhabited the Argentine territory. In the middle, in the third float, musicians played indigenous instruments, such as Kolla *caja*, Mapuche *kultrun* (tambourines), and Toba *nviq*ue (a kind of tin violin)s, crowned by a person wearing a great headdress on their head, inspired by the Kolla carnivals. The

musical proposal consisted of an assembly of diverse indigenous music with characteristic sounds of electronic music, and also of phrases in indigenous languages and Spanish.

Although the represented native peoples were not identified with their names during the parade, some were mentioned in the broadcast made by public TV, by historian Felipe Pigna, who referred to: «*the people who lived in the mountains and in the plains...the comechigones...the Guaraníes, Onas, Pilagás, Tobas, Wichis*». In the pairs of towers, we were able to identify the *Selk'nam* or *Onas* from Tierra del Fuego, with hunting bows, body paintings and masks of their male initiation roles; the groups from the Chaco region, with their fishing nets and clothing made from *chaguar* cloth, typical of the Wichi; the Chiriguano-chane, of Guaraní-Arawak origins, wearing their body paintings and masks of the «jaguar and bull», which represent the indigenous and Spanish world in their annual *ring* ritual, and the «devils» of the Kolla carnival of the Andean Northwest, with their masks and whips in hand.

I would like to introduce here a brief reflection of some exotic resources that are common in the artistic representation of the indigenous in Latin America. These are often associated with a traditional past, more or less timeless, thus invisibilizing their historic transformations and their contemporary conflicts. In addition, their otherness is often emphasized, focusing on those aspects that are most different from the Western observer's own culture and/or capture their attention the most (Citro and Torres Agüero 2015). In the Parade, we find some traces of these resources, because the indigenous were predominately represented in the opening scene, emphasizing their original character as the first inhabitants of the territory. Likewise, the couples of towers wore their ancient attire and ritual masks, very similar to those documented by local ethnography and archeology. It was a rather «realist-naturalist» representation, which probably also operated in the manner of a «strategic essentialism». Because of their visual impact, these outfits were showier for a mass parade and, in part, facilitated the identification of each town. A similar intention can be noticed in the election of the towers, which because of its iconicity with the Kolla Andean constructions, referred to the grandeur and splendor of the ancient Inca Empire, this being the indigenous tradition that has been most visible in Argentine cultural policies. Thus, between «the towns of the mountains and the towns of the plains», the former was chosen as the privileged setting from which to show the other native peoples of Argentina.

Beyond these resources of exoticism, the scene also included many performers belonging to the native peoples, whose music combined indigenous documentary records of the past with current ones, and whose

movements also incorporated citations from modern Western dance, as was the case of those who emerged from the liquid-lava. On one hand, the rise and fall of the towers was interpreted by historian Pigna, in his televised program, as a «*symbol of the rise and collapse of our native cultures*». Thus, it operated as an icon which alluded to the persistent movements of the indigenous histories: their emergence and splendor, but also their invisibilization and collapse as a result of the colonization. In conclusion, I believe that this traditional and sometimes exotic past that could be seen in the body images of the towers, was also recontextualized through this sonorous-body-visual interplay that referred to the historic transformations of the native peoples, as well as to their present day.

The second scene was entitled «The Argentine Republic». A young woman with a long white dress with a blue top (the colors of the Argentine flag), was located in the end of a high crane that moved in different directions, while she spread «shredded paper», characteristic of the carnival. The young woman danced, applauded, greeted and incited the audience to dance, and at times, hanging from a harness, flew and run over the audience. A band of musicians accompanied her, dressed in 19th century style, combining Kolla musical instruments and Spanish guitars. The band first performed festive rhythms of the «carnavalito» («little carnival») of Kolla origin, one of the few indigenous genres recognized by traditional musicology as part of the Argentine folk repertoire. Later, this music accelerated and turned into the «murga» of the Rioplatense carnival, one of the genres of African origin that persists to present day, which ended up transforming into a powerful electronic music, in the style of raves, of European origin. This musical becoming in *crescendo* particularly excited the younger audience who danced, jumped, applauded, shouted and waved Argentinian flags. After this *climax*, the music slowed down, and the scene started again. It is interesting to note that the two young women who played the role of the Republic, were selected after a casting which featured 1,500 actresses and dancers, and in which, according to the official news agency Telam, these young women «*morochas and of autochthonous traits*» were opted for. It is worth noting the ruptures but also the subtle continuity of this staging, with the usual pictorial and sculptural allegory of «The Republic», inherited from the French Revolution, and of the Greek-Latin Renaissance traditions. I call them ruptures because a mestizo body image was chosen, in front of that white-European. In addition, a moving image that radiated enthusiasm and joy was also chosen, in front of serenity, moderation and seriousness of the gesture of the traditional image. However, we also appreciated a

subtle continuity, because the dress that the young woman of the Bicentennial was wearing referred to that traditional Greco-Latin image.

This staging of the Republic operated inside of the parade as a complex icon that condensed the new multicultural imagery that was sought to legitimize. From the visual approach, Argentina appeared as a mestizo woman, whose body was wrapped in clothing that recontextualized her in that Western European republican tradition but, in addition, she was a young woman who gave vitality: thanks to technological devices, she danced, flew through the air and strongly encouraged the public to participate in a popular party. From the sound, the music incited intense sensory-emotional irruptions from sources that indexically referred to the local carnival traditions: that of the indigenous Kollas and that of the Buenos Aires carnival of Afro origin, which eventually turned into transitional electronic raves. Lastly, if we bear in mind that this woman, as well as the whole parade that followed, advanced along a path flanked by large light balloons that named all the Latin American countries, we can see that all the cultural quotations constitutive of the new imagery, became present in this scene, hence its condensing character.

Then three scenes came that evoked some of the historical milestones of the struggles for independence in the 19th century, including indigenous, mestizo and Afro-descendant soldiers. In such cases, the theatrical representation, scenography and costume had a more realistic-naturalistic style.

I believe that these first scenes especially show the change toward a multicultural imagery, in which, although the European component is recognized, gives a greater visibility to the indigenous, mestizo and Afro-descendant components. It should be noted that, during 2010, there were other important symbolic transformations, in that same direction: the previous one known as the «Day of the Race» on October 12, officially became known as «Day of Respect for Cultural Diversity», and in the «Casa Rosada», the headquarters of the National Executive Branch, the hall that bore the name of «Christopher Columbus» was renamed «Pueblos Originarios» (Native Peoples). Later, after several judicial and media disputes, in 2015 the great statue of Christopher Columbus was removed from the back of the government headquarters, to place there the monument of Juana Azurduy, a mestiza revolutionary who participated in the fights for independence. This statue was a gift from the government of Bolivia, and its indigenous president Evo Morales.

Going back to the Parade, we find that the later scene, about «immigration», particularly touched the audience, since it consisted in the reconstruction of one of those great ships that, as I pointed out in the introduction, brought the immigrants from Europe. The replica of the ship,

almost 40 meters long, was surrounded by a structure that simulated water, and showed different migrant groups greeting on the deck, with flags and music from their regions. Other shocking elements were the women who went around dancing on the imitation water, as well as a couple who did it on the sail of the boat, combining acrobatics with modern dance. Although the stereotype of the Argentines «descend from ships» was reproduced here (because of the showiness of that great ship, icon on the migratory process), it is interesting to note that, as historian Pigna pointed out in his television commentary, «*the other immigrants, the ones that did not come by ship*» were also represented. Thus, the ship was followed by representatives of Chinese and Korean groups, as well as Bolivians and Paraguayans, dancing with their traditional attire. These migratory groups that arrived mainly from the second half of the 20th century, in many cases have tended to be stigmatized and/or discriminated against, hence the importance of their visibility in this parade. In summary, these multiple immigrant presences, along with the performers, who creatively danced with the waves of the sea and the wind that swayed the sails, re-contextualized that traditional ship that arrived from Europe. In addition, as we saw, the way through which the ship flowed was flanked by large light globes representing Latin America. This indicated that the way this story went was fundamentally Latin American and no longer just one of European origins.

The subsequent scenes focused not so much on cultural diversity, but rather on «popular participation», in the political and economic history, from the beginning of the 20th century to present day. Through a «popular demonstration» of workers, there was a representation of «social and political movements» associated with the workers struggles of anarchists and socialists, of «Yrigoyenist *radicalismo*» and Peronism. The people were dressed in their own clothes of every period, carrying banners and handing out pamphlets to the public, which contained the historical slogans driven by these political movements.

The next scene was dedicated to «the national industry». In this scene, two of the first mass consumer products manufactured by an Argentine industry appeared: the Siam refrigerator and the Di Tella automobile. In a large structure dominated by white colors, industrial sonorities and light effects, this automobile hung in the center, turning on itself and moving to the sides, while the performers, dressed in industrial clothes and hanging on harnesses, performed weldings and other tasks. In another sector, a group of women climbed two rows of hanging refrigerators. Thus, these objects and the labor gestures, which indexically referred to industrialization, were combined with the artistic display of the performers,

who with their acrobatic and modern dance movements, re-contextualized and creatively gave new meaning to the tasks of the workers, and generated a strongly spectacular scene, due to their high visual impact. It should be added that both products became emblems of the paradoxical process of the industrialization of Argentina: the Siam-Di Tella company had the support of the Perón Administration in the mid-1940s and by the end of the 1960s, it became the largest metal-mechanical company of Latin America. However, it later began to collapse, and with the economic policies of the last civic-military dictatorship, it was dismantled.

The following scenes had a more tragic character, which contrasted with the previous ones. On one hand, in the scene titled «Democracy and Coups», a crane carried large metal sculptures: the Argentine Constitution, ballot boxes, scales and a torso that broke the chains that held it with its arms, representing the traditional republican icons of democracy, justice and freedom. The monumentality of the objects, added to the fact that these were hanging up high, reinforced the visibility and importance of these icons, to which deep metallic sounds, and sirens were added, which generated a climate of expectancy and tension. Precisely, what shocked the audience was when these objects began to burn with great flares, along with intense and fast percussion music. That great fire that burned on the Constitution referred indexically to the violence of those repressive methods applied throughout history: from the death in the medieval bonfire to the burning of the books or even forbidden films, which was practiced during the last Argentine civic-military dictatorship. Thus, the successive coups d'état and the dictatorships of 20th century Argentina seemed to be re-contextualized in that long history of violence and repression.

Then, the scene of the «Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo» continued, with a group of women dressed in long overcoats, who carried photos of their missing children from the last dictatorship, in addition to the white handkerchiefs on their heads, which became a distinguishing marking of this group. Perhaps for that reason, that handkerchief was the icon that the scene chose to highlight, from a system that intensely illuminated the artifact in the form of a handkerchief worn by women, and that made them stand out vividly in the darkness that dominated the scene. The women walked in a circle on the platform, in silence, while an artificially produced rain fell, accompanied by the sound of thunder. The scene thus referred to the act of protest for their missing children, which the Mothers repeated every Thursday, since the beginning of the dictatorship, walking around the pyramid of the Plaza de Mayo, without being stopped by the rain or cold. This scene was one of the simplest performances in terms of technical deployment, as well as stage work. However, it was one of the

most applauded by the public. Something similar happened with the following representation, with the soldiers who participated and died in the war to recover the Falkland Islands, in 1982.

Later, the scene entitled «The Return of Democracy» contrasted with the tragic nature of the previous ones, because of the joy of the recovery of democracy was represented through the carnival of Afro roots, a popular festivity that was banned by the last dictatorship. More than 300 *murgueros* and *murgueras* of different ages, paraded dancing with their traditional attire and musical instruments, carrying a large sign with the inscription «democracy». The impressive presence of hundreds of *murga* musicians and dancers, as central protagonists of that democratic return, referred to the role of social criticism and political resistance in favor of freedom, which the carnivals of Buenos Aires have had historically (Martin, 1997).

Another one of the scenes was referred to «The economic crises». People dressed in attire from different periods and social classes were shown counting, collecting and/or keeping replicas of bills, which were scattered through the air and ground. In a moment, they began to argue and fight over the bills, and then they hung desperately from some harnesses that lifted them up and moved from one side to the other, until everything ended violently fallen on the floor, and then everything started again.

The last scene was called «Present and Future». The scene took place on a large transparent circular structure, where one could see a classroom with children and teachers with white coveralls (like the ones used in Argentine public schools), and also a scientific laboratory (with people working with similar coveralls). In the Kirchner Administration, the areas of education, science and technology showed considerable growth as a result of public investments. Therefore, this parade which defined itself as «historical», also included the projections «towards the future», especially in those areas most emphasized by the Government, as part of its State policy.

Lastly, a structure appeared that transported three DJs who combined different songs of «national rock» and light effects as from a rave, which was followed by the audience dancing.

As I pointed out at the beginning, the approach to these types of commemorative rituals should not only address the contents that the performances recreate, but also those that are excluded or invisibilized. Compared to previous «patriotic celebrations, the Bicentennial Parade did not evoke the traditional heroes of Independence nor the main political leaders of the 20th century, but rather the social groups that, with their

struggles, promoted these political processes. Such was the case of soldiers of mestizo, indigenous and Afro origin, in the scenes of independence; the workers and popular sectors that promoted the main democratic and labor demands during the Administrations of Yrigoyen and Perón; the group of mothers of the Plaza de Mayo and the *murgas* in the democratic return. Thus, the emphasis was not on highlighting the «individuals» who emerged as political leaders in those historic moments, as traditional conservative historiography was used to doing, but on popular groups that promoted these historical changes with their struggles. Therefore, I believe that this Parade sought to visibilize «the people» as a key signatory of the Peronist political discourse as the main architect of Argentine history. In this same sense of vindication, some of the celebrations of the previous days can be interpreted, such as the football match of the Argentine national team or recitals of «popular» music (folklore, tango and national rock). It should also be remembered that, some time later, Cristina Kirchner inaugurated a «Gallery of Popular Idols» at the Government Palace, which included portraits of musicians, athletes, actors, cartoon characters and devotions of «popular» religiosity.

Within this «popular» imaginary, another of the Parade absences is also understood: that of the upper classes; for example, in the representation of the «industry» were the workers, but not the industrialists, just as in the float of the «field» they showed rural workers working and dancing, but not the landowners of the Rural Society. We only find traces of the elites and, from a critical tone, in the scene of the «economic crises». There, the desperation for the possession of money evoked not only the suffering of the popular and middle classes by the impact of the economic crises, but also the voracity of financial speculation. Because of that, in the times of crisis, the upper classes that were tied to the financial sector became richer.

Lastly, although the Armed Forces were present at the previous parade on May 22 and in the scenes of the struggles for independence, they did not occupy the central role that they once had in the patriotic celebrations; they were one more social actor, within a heterogenous collective group.

Conclusions

The historic-artistic Parade of the Bicentennial, along with the previous celebrations, visibilized an identity imaginary in which various social groups were represented: indigenous, Afro-descendants, Europeans, mestizos, Latin Americans and Asians. The analysis carried out revealed

that Fuerza Bruta combined three great types of aesthetic-performance resources to construct these identity representations. On one hand, more or less fragmentary quotations of musical and dance dramas, as well as theatrical languages and stagings of a realistic-naturalist type, which allowed to identify, via iconic-indexical connections, these groups, including certain exoticizations (as in the indigenous case) or stereotypes (like the traditional folklore in the country float or the immigrants' ship). On the other hand, many of these traditional quotations were also re-contextualized and re-signified through their combination in creative stages, as well as their intertextualization (which operated here more by means of inter-sounding and inter-embodiment) with contemporary artistic languages, such as acrobatics, modern dance or electronic music. A third resource that permeated most of the scenes was the appeal to strong sensory stimuli aiming to affect the viewer's corporality-affectivity. For example: when observing people climbing that hanging car or the big ship that was moving through the streets of the city; seeing, smelling and feeling on the skin the heat in the air provoked by the great fire that burned the Constitution; when feeling on one's body the cold and the rains that accompanied the scenes of the last dictatorship; when listening to the explosions of the war bombs and smelling the gunpowder; when listening to powerful festive music, at high intensities, that encouraged dancing; when smelling the scents and evoking the tastes of the great barbecue, and the fruits and cereals that accompanied the rural field float... That transit through spectacular images and intense sensations, caused a display of emotions that was shown through the faces and gestures of the audience, and I also noticed this in the conversations that I had with some spectators later on. They spoke of the «astonishment», the «impressive», the «joy» and the «party» that the Parade generated, but also of the «sadness» and «pain» that the scenes of the dictatorship provoked. Even from my initial role as a «participant observer» of that audience, I could experience and feel how we were led to travel through these representations-signs that used powerful symbolic, iconic and indexical connections (instilled in our cultural universes of the local middle and popular classes), and so, managed to convey the meanings of a national history that was reconstructed as multicultural and popular.

However, the fruitful distance that enables the genealogical-contextual analysis, also allowed to appreciate the tensions and ambiguities present in these reconstructions. On one hand, the parade marked a clear difference with the previous paradigm of the «melting pot» —that used to show the harmonious evolution of the fusion of diversities toward a single national identity, with a predominance of European Whites—, and visibilized the

«diversity» of ethnic groups and cultures, which usually proclaims «multiculturalism». However, the persistence of some exoticized stereotypes also showed the tensions of the postmodern multiculturalism, which as several authors noted (Segato, 1999; Zizek, 1998), tends to present identities as a «mosaic» of closed fragments, purged of ambiguities and faithful to the origins. But, on the other hand, these identities were also recreated in a novel way, creatively resignifying those stereotypes and, above all, exposing some of their social conflicts throughout history. Therefore, in this last aspect, I consider that the work of Fuerza Bruta has moved away from that merely «celebratory» vision of multiculturalism that, as Zizek (1998) and other authors pointed out, usually masks the persistent economic inequality of neoliberal capitalism. Precisely, the ethnographic analysis demonstrated how multicultural policies, globalized by international organizations and legislations, are reconfigured locally, in this case, when articulated with the Kirchner Peronist policies, which tended to visibilize the historic conflicts and inequalities between the «popular» and «elite» sectors.

Finally, this analysis also emphasized the «meanings» embodied in the performances of the commemorative rituals, not only appealed to the «linguistically based senses», but above all and, as Peirce pointed out, to «sensations and feelings» that are expressed in sonorities, gestures and body movements. In this way, I tried to contribute to the theoretical-methodological debates in the field of anthropological studies of ritual and performance, highlighting the importance of addressing aesthetic-sensory and affective aspects to understand their role in ritual efficacy. In this sense, and to conclude, I would critically like to resume the aforementioned metaphor, from the director of Fuerza Bruta, about «*hitting the chest or the head...*» I consider that the «effectiveness» of the commemorative ritual created by Fuerza Bruta was based not only on prioritizing that «hitting the chest», but also on making «the chest» effectively lead to the «head». Enlarging the metonymic meaning of these expressions, I propose that the intense sensations and emotions provoked by that performance aimed at all the senses (condensed here in wanting to «hit the chest...»), managed to transmit the ideas-concepts, intellectually signified, of a specific historical-identity story (managed «to hit the head...»). For that, a «popular and festive» theater was convoked, which, as Artaud (1979) states, «*affects the viewer's body*» and, through it, «*brings it to the most subtle notions*». Therefore, it was the powerful sensory-emotional irruptions created by Fuerza Bruta that made intelligible and desirable (at least for the ritual participant), that identity imaginary, that the Government tried to legitimize.

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