

Space and Spectator in the Theatre of Griselda Gambaro: *Información para extranjeros*

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The structuring of space functions metaphorically in the theatre of Griselda Gambaro, as it does in much of modern drama. The theatrical space—that is, the bound region in which the dramatic action occurs—is manipulated to project the feeling of separation and confinement through barriers and enclosures. Objects within the stage space further isolate and imprison characters in the plays, thus reflecting and reinforcing the metaphor created by the stage set. The defining parameters of the stage action are converted into confining strictures, and props become the intensifying instruments of a threatening spatial scene.

In *Las paredes*, for example, the room to which the Youth is brought shrinks progressively, and even though the Usher ridicules the Youth's assertion that his quarters are growing smaller daily, the audience does see the walls move in on him. At first, the room is luxuriously large, but in the final scene, the Youth keeps bumping into the furniture, which barely fits into the remaining space. The fate which awaits the Youth at midnight is the collapsing of the walls. His confinement—the walls that enclose him—will become the instrument of his death.¹ In *El desatino* props serve to confine and isolate Alfonso, who, trapped by an iron object attached to his leg, is squeezed out of his bed by his wife's beloved dolls. Gambaro's *Los siameses* presents two men who are said to be brothers. Ignacio is rejected by Lorenzo from the beginning and physically shut from his life. First, Lorenzo locks Ignacio out of the house and refuses to let him in, even though he knows Ignacio will be beaten. The stage set becomes a physical barrier: the audience sees only the inside of the house. The spectator, as well as Lorenzo, is separated from Ignacio. Later, the police lock Ignacio in a jail cell, because Lorenzo leads them to suspect his "twin" produced counterfeit

money. In *El campo*, when Martín wants to take a walk to stretch his legs after his long trip, Franco, the director of the camp, forbids him to leave the office. This atmosphere of confinement is sustained in many ways throughout *El campo* and was underscored during the English-language premiere of *The Camp* by a great cage which enclosed the spectacle and projected onto the spectators the concrete experience of confinement.² An eerie sense of being trapped, as in Jean-Paul Sartre's *Huis clos*, pervades all four plays.

The characters in these plays seem to hope for physical release, but freedom from confinement is never realized. The Youth in *Las paredes* says he will go to the countryside after he leaves the room, yet he shows no interest in the open door offered to him at the end. In *El campo*, Martín, suspicious of the true nature of "the camp," is relieved when Franco allows him to abandon the scene. Emma accompanies Martín to his house, and just at the point when they think they are free from Franco, one of his henchmen enters. The oppressors, as represented by his henchman, have a strange respect for closed doors and locks. The henchman blames Martín for being trapped again by Franco: "¿Por qué dejó la puerta abierta? Cerrada, no hubiera entrado."³ One of the policemen in *Los siameses* promises Ignacio that they will leave the jail and visit the country, but the purpose of the trip turns out to be Ignacio's burial. Ignacio's body is awkwardly cramped into the restricted space of the wheelbarrow, the confining object that has replaced the confining stage space as the focus of dramatic attention and which provides an ironic visual contrast with the open countryside. He escapes confinement only through death, which leads to yet another physical enclosure: the grave. Confinement and separation in Gambaro's plays stress the divisions which humans construct to victimize their fellows and to barricade themselves from others. The structure of the stage set itself and, at times, the nature of the props, suggest this feeling of confinement and separation to the audience.

Gambaro's *Información para extranjeros*, written in the early 1970s and not yet performed or published, represents the coalescence of the dramatist's experimentation with the use of the theatre as space, with the physical metaphor of confined space, and with the experience of the spectator in relation to the dramatic event.⁴ In this play she radicalizes the traditional organization of space and attempts to involve the spectator in a dramatic experience that will also radicalize his perceptions. *Información* is a theatrical collage of vignettes, episodes, and spectacles in 21 scenes. Each episode takes place in a different room or passageway; actors serve as guides to lead groups of spectators from room to room. There is no plot development or progression of action because the sequence of action is variable; only the last scene, in which all the groups of spectators assemble in one area, must take place at a specified point in the performance. In some scenes, there is a dramatic act independent of the spectators. These scenes include the reporting and reenactment of kidnappings, murders, and trials of political activists;⁵ episodes of cruelty, beatings, torture, and scientific experimentation (which are not always tied to a historical reality outside the play); and representations of children's games and family life. In other tableaux, the action focuses solely on the spectators themselves. Often the guide addresses them directly in reference to what they are experiencing.

In terms of traditional theatre, not only is the dramatic structure of the scenes unconventional, but so is the physical structuring of the space in which *Información* takes place. Gambaro describes the play's ideal theatre-environment ("ambiente teatral") as a house of empty rooms, with stairs and corridors, that is, an enclosed space broken into duplicating and reflecting spaces, also enclosed.⁶ She suggests as another possibility a theatre where the seats have been removed and replaced by numerous compartments and narrow hallways. In such a setting, the dressing rooms, offices, storage rooms, and bathrooms could be used. Although Gambaro states that the play permits other setting interpretations, it is clear that she considers the physical setting a primary instrument in the formation of the spectator's experience. In this sense, *Información* is "environmental theatre," as defined by Michael Kirby: "Environmental theatre . . . can be viewed as a way in which the spatial characteristics of the stage itself as it is related to the spectator may become a specific aesthetic element of a particular presentation. . . . [Environmental theatre] makes use of an expressive dimension that is not exploited by traditional performance arrangements."⁷

The entire theatrical space becomes the staging arena, and therefore the spectator is engulfed by the dramatic action. The structure of *Información* forces the spectator to struggle with the confinement of space. The spectator's traditionally passive role in "going to the theatre" becomes active. While no audience reaction is fully predictable, every dramatic text functions to program a potential response; and while we have no performance data on *Información*, its script presumes performance. What we shall attempt to extract from the written text are responses that the spatial codes have been designed to trigger.⁸

The larger spaces in the set for *Información* are fragmented into smaller divisions, and the already narrow hallways are further restricted by the clutter of lockers of various sizes, each with a louvered door. Each guide maneuvers his group of spectators through these hallways, up and down stairways, in and out of rooms. At times, the guide starts to enter a room, only to find the door locked. As in a maze, when one path is blocked, another avenue must be found. The spectator is acutely aware of the labyrinthine quality of his surroundings when the guide, supposedly familiar with the house/theatre setting, becomes disoriented:

GUÍA: Vayamos a la planta alta, a ver si tenemos más suerte. Quien busca, encuentra. Dicen.

(*El grupo puede estar ya en la planta alta y bajar, o bien, subir las escaleras.*)

No, me equivoqué. Los hice subir al p . . . (*Se corta.*) En balde. Bajemos. (6)⁹

The guide warns his followers that they must watch their step: "Por acá, señores. No hay escalones. Pero tengan cuidado lo mismo. Un tropezón cualquiera da en la vida, dice el tango. Je, je. ¿Estamos todos?" (12). The perplexed spectator, confused by repeated comings and goings in darkened and illuminated rooms and corridors, feels threatened by his dependence on the guide and by the fact that he cannot see or comprehend the total space that encloses him.¹⁰

Neither can the spectator comprehend *Información* as a dramatic whole. For one thing, as active participant, he is deprived of the overview that the traditionally located audience can enjoy from its safe distance. For another, he is confronted by a succession of fragmented dramas which take place along a series of stations: literally, a "Stationendrama," whose very unity lies in its episodic, non-ordered nature. He may witness a kidnapping in the attic, then descend to see a psychological experiment in the basement. The individual spectacles are not tied together thematically or spatially for the spectator. He experiences a dramatic maze—a random mixture of performed events—as he follows a circuitous path which seems to lack an organized plan. For the spectator, *Información* is an exercise in orientation extracted from disorientation.

Gambaro's experimentation with space in *Información* extends beyond the more obvious manipulation of the general theatre space to further innovation in the metaphorical manipulation of enclosed space. Physical confinement is used as punishment in several episodes. In Scene 13, an actor, posing as a spectator, follows a group of men who are carrying off the body of a young woman who has just been killed. The actor is hit with a club, and the guide angrily shoves him into one of the lockers. Being cramped into a small space is a sign of worthlessness in *Información*. At one point, the guide discovers four men trapped together in a locker. He amuses himself by making a cruel joke out of their crowded predicament: he places a dish of food on their shoulders and laughs as they scramble to eat, dropping the food (16). People, as well as structures, form physical enclosures in *Información*. In a game, a deformed child shoots a playmate, and the other players censure him by forming a circle which tightens around him (18). Similarly, in another scene, a lawyer who has defended political prisoners is surrounded by a group of kidnappers posing as policemen. They form two circles and quickly close in on him, like the pair of handcuffs they later force him to wear (12).

The physical sensation of being the trapped victim, expressed by the Youth in *Las paredes* as "la opresión del espacio, el no poder abrir una puerta y salir,"¹¹ is stronger in *Información* than in Gambaro's previous plays because of the spectators' proximity to the action. They, too, experience the feeling of being trapped. In Scene 8, for example, the spectators are pressed against the wall by some men carrying another man who is tied to a frame. One scene takes place in the catacombs, which, as the guide warns, are claustrophobic: "Imaginen, señoras y señores, la fe, el heroísmo de los primeros cristianos. Rezar en estas porquerías. A mí me da claustrofobia" (6). The remains which the group finds in the catacombs are not those of early Christians, however, but the bodies of those who have been tortured and killed in other scenes of the play. This sequence in the tomb-like catacombs is designed to add to the anxiety felt by the individual spectator as he is again reminded of his physical situation. The lack of distance between the spectator and the action becomes a physical threat. Under normal circumstances, a spectator in a theatre can open a door and escape, but the spectator in *Información* is not free to leave: he is trapped by the stage space, the actors' space, and the other spectators' space. This concept of confinement of the spectator was exploited by Jerzy Grotowski in the Theatre Laboratory in Opole, Poland: "the actors may build structures among the spectators and thus

include them in the architecture of action, subjecting them to a sense of pressure and congestion and limitation of space."¹² The involvement of the spectator in *Información* brings into question the true nature of the spectator's role.

Gambaro indicates that the public—the theatregoers, as they arrive—will be divided into groups of 30 to 35, each with a guide. Because there is no set sequence of scenes, each group moves from room to room in a different order. Many scenes are performed simultaneously in different locations. However, all scenes cannot take place at the same time because several involve the same actors or the same room; therefore, some spectators may not see all of the scenes. In spite of Gambaro's highly-detailed script, *Información* may seem like an improvised performance to the spectator because of the play's open structure.¹³

The action begins even before Scene 1, as the guide collects the admission fee and gives some preliminary information about the play: "El espectáculo es prohibido para menores de 18 años. También es prohibido para menores de 35 y mayores de 36. El resto puede contemplarlo sin problemas. Ausencia casi total de violencia, obscenidad, palabras fuertes. La pieza responde a nuestro estilo de vida: argentino, occidental y cristiano." Even though the spectator must depend on the guide to lead him through the series of rooms and spectacles, he learns from the beginning that he cannot trust the guide. The performance is prohibited to people of all ages, except those who are 35 or 36 years old, yet the guide lets all who pay enter. Contrary to the guide's statement, the play is full of violence and obscenities. These acts of cruelty and inhumanity are an ironic response to the culturally refined and altruistic lifestyle the guide supposedly means by the Argentine, Western, Christian way of life. *Información* challenges this society's view of itself. Grotowski explains how the theatre makes this challenge: "In order that the spectator may be stimulated into self-analysis when confronted with the actor, there must be some common ground already existing in both of them, something they can either dismiss in one gesture or jointly worship. Therefore the theatre must attack what might be called the collective complexes of society, the core of the collective subconscious or perhaps superconscious, the myths which are . . . inherited—through one's blood, religion, culture and climate."¹⁴

After the introductory speech, the guide continues to show that he is untrustworthy. He gets lost, has to ask directions of other actors, and enters rooms at the wrong time. For example, in Scene 1, the guide leads his group into a darkened room. He shines his flashlight around the room, only to embarrass a scantily-clothed man. The guide rushes his group out of the room: he has evidently made a mistake. His credibility is further undermined in Scene 4, where the spectators watch a psychological experiment at the Max Planck Institute. The experiment involves two people: one is given the role of teacher and the other is the student. When the student responds incorrectly to a question, the teacher gives him an electric shock which increases with each application. The purpose of this experiment is to discover to what point one person, given a position of authority, will knowingly inflict physical pain to punish another human being. Even though the guide informs the group before the experiment that the young man acting as the student is involved as a researcher and not as a subject, when the group enters the hallway after the experiment they come

upon a sheet-covered body. The identity of the body is never revealed and the spectators are left bewildered as to whether the student could actually have been killed. The spectator experiences confusion and doubt throughout the play. When the guide argues with another guide about which direction to take, the spectator wonders what is happening elsewhere in the theatre-space that he is not able to see. At one point the group's guide is actually replaced by another. The spectator has no one to trust in *Información*. Consequently, he thinks much more about himself than does the spectator of a conventional play.

One of the functions of vanguard theatre according to Gambaro is to demythify the concept that the spectator has of himself.¹⁵ She executes her subversive thrust in *Información* as the spectator, unable to withdraw from the action, becomes a necessary part of the events. This is one of the Artaudian techniques of *Información*: Artaud actually wrote of a theatre in which the audience would follow the spectacle on mobile chairs and the spectator would be engulfed by the action.¹⁶ This experimentation with the spectator's function is underscored in *Información* as the guide—and occasionally the actors—refer to the presence of the spectators. In Scene 3, the action is suspended until the spectators are seated in the room. The guide motions to them to be quiet, and only then is the room's center part, which functions as the stage for this particular spectacle, lit for action. A man with a pistol stands above a girl, who is soaked to the skin. He asks her why she is so sad, then points to the audience: "No te pasará nada. Hay mucha gente. Nos miran." Later in the same scene she admits she has to go to the bathroom but refuses to, because there are people watching. The man responds, "¿Y? Somos todos adultos, ¿no? Por lo menos, miran." In Scene 13, a group of men put the body of a dead girl in a sack, reciting: "¡Y a la mierda la mandaremos!" Outraged, the guide reprimands them: "¡Qué grosería! ¿No ven que hay gente?" Gambaro indicates that various groups may run into each other in the halls. By encountering other groups like his own, the spectator receives a physical reminder of his unique role in this fragmented dramatic event.

The spectators are forced to realize that they are not only witnesses to the scenes, but also critics and evaluators. As they leave the enactment of the kidnapping of a couple who were members of the "Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias," the guide casually asks: "¿Les gustó?" (14), thus pressing them to take a stand. In Scene 8, the guide expresses his hope that the spectators will be interested in what they see: "En la habitación tres vamos a encontrar algo interesante. ¡Por fin! (*Ríe.*) Ustedes se dirán . . . Para esto, nos quedábamos en casa. ¡Ay, qué peligro! A ver si dicen que sí. Pero, no, señores. No está todo perdido." In addition, the guides comment frequently on the dramatic impact of the spectacles, as happens when the second guide in Scene 10 shouts to the first: "¡Va a empezar allá! ¡No se lo pierdan! Yo lo vi. ¡Excepcional!" Watching the mother in Scene 9 say goodbye forever to her two sons, the guide gulps: "¡Es emocionante! ¿No?" In Scene 5, the guide reacts like a drama critic to the father's bedtime-story version of a kidnapping: "¡Qué mal actuado! Perdonen. Mejor busquemos otra cosa. No todo el espectáculo es así. . . . ¡Vamos! ¡Vamos, señores! Por lo menos, necesitan un mes más de ensayos." These words emphasize the performed, theatrical nature of the event. The spectator is caught in the middle: he feels immersed in the action but he is forced to see himself as

a passive viewer. The tension between the spectator's belief and disbelief, between his involvement and distance is harshly underscored: this is the play's game.

The emphasis on the role of the spectator contributes to the deliberate theatricality and dramatic self-consciousness of the play. On this level *Información* can be seen as a metaplay.¹⁷ In the self-reflexive realm of metatheatre and specifically in *Información*, "the world is a stage": the guide and his group are refused admittance into one room because the actors inside are rehearsing (16). A play-within-a-play takes place in Scene 17 when the spectators watch a rehearsal of *Othello*, a drama by a playwright whose use of a play-within-a-play in *Hamlet* is perhaps the best-known example of that technique. The police come in to arrest the Shakespearean actors, and the guide comments on the situation of the actor in society. The theatre itself becomes the subject of *Información* at this point: "¿Alguien necesita realmente una explicación? ¡Gente torpe! Si Uds. se las dan de actores, se meten en un conventillo y aúllan como perros, la gente se asustará. Si no tienen plata, la gente se asustará más. ¿Por qué gritan? ¿Qué pretenden? . . . No tenían dónde actuar, dónde caerse muertos." The guide manipulates the experience of the spectator in the same way that the playwright manipulates the lives of characters; and the spectators, deprived of the security of their usual distance as audience, become living witnesses to the recreation of a stage space-within-a-space where the frontiers between stage and life have become blurred.

Scene 4, where the spectators are ostensibly watching an experiment on the pedagogical effects of punishment, reveals the multiple levels of performance/observation in *Información*. The spectators watch several actors who play the roles of participants in an experiment: a coordinator, a man, and a youth. Within the experiment, the man plays the role of an instructor, and the youth plays the role of a student. The actor who plays the youth is actually involved in a third role: he is also a researcher only pretending to be a subject for the purpose of the experiment. On another level, the play itself is an experiment on the spectators and their view of human nature. In the research room in Scene 4, a cage of white mice, a metal console of electric cables, and a microphone are on a table. These objects serve as physical representations of the participants in the larger experiment, the play. The spectators are the human counterparts of the mice, subjects of an experiment, enclosed in a confined space; the electric cables produce impressions and shocks as do the series of scenes the spectators witness; and the microphone is like the voice of the guide. Through this microphone, the subject of the experiment receives directions from a researcher/guide who cannot be trusted.

The effect of *Información* is undetermined, much in the same way as are the results of a scientific experiment. The drama comes to a close as all groups converge in a larger area for the final spectacle. A group of men bring several blindfolded prisoners into a brothel, and one of the prisoners becomes the brunt of a cruel game. He is hit on the head and falls dead. Suddenly the lights come on, the actors disperse (except the prisoners against the wall), and the screen used as a prop in the last scenes is dismantled. A guide dryly announces to the combined groups: "Señoras y señores, ¿qué esperan? La función ha terminado." However, tension continues to grow, because police sirens begin to wail as the

public moves toward the exit. The end comes abruptly and offers no resolution to the turmoil of the play. The spectator is left with the responsibility of interpreting and reacting to what has been experienced; there is no prescribed interpretation or forced message. Richard Schechner, director of The Performance Group, explains the role of the spectator as synthesizer of a multi-focus performance such as *Información*, where there are many different spectacles to be interpreted: "A performance using multi-focus will not reach every spectator in the same way. Individual reactions may be affectively incompatible with one another because one spectator will put events together in a different way than will the man next to him. In multi-focus, the director's job of controlling meaning is turned over to the audience. The performers and technicians control the sensory input . . . , but the mix of elements is left to the audience."¹⁸

Información has been compared to works performed by The Living Theatre and The Performance Group.¹⁹ These groups encouraged the audience to participate in the performances, or happenings: in theory there is an emphasis on freedom. For example, The Performance Group's *Dionysius in 69* is introduced by the stage manager, much in the same way the guide opens *Información*. However, whereas the guide speaks of restrictions, the stage manager stresses the freedom of the spectator to explore: "You will be admitted to the theatre one at a time, and if you're with someone you may be split up. But you can find each other again once you're inside. Take your time and explore the environment. It's a very interesting space, and there are all different kinds of places to sit."²⁰

Gambaro seems to protect the spectator by stipulating that the public never be forced to participate, and although there are ample opportunities for the spectators to engage themselves in *Información*, there is no discussion of ways in which the performance could adapt to spectator participation and initiative. For example, in Scene 11, the guide asks a member of his group to look into one of the lockers as they pass through a hallway. Inside, there is a frightened man with anguished eyes. The guide greets him with a quick hello and shuts the door. Will the spectators suggest that he let the man out? In Scene 10, the guide takes the chair from the girl in the room and offers it to a woman spectator. Will she accept it? Pausing to listen at a door when he hears someone panting, the guide asks his followers: "¿Entramos? ¿No entramos? ¿Qué opinan? La elección es libre. ¡Órdenes a mí! ¡Entremos!" Although he seems to give the spectators a choice, he refuses them time to respond. His questions are rhetorical; apparently he has already chosen for them.

There are actors among the spectators. These actors blend into the public as they enter the theatre and only take part in specified scenes. Therefore, from the public's point of view, it is meant to appear that spectators, just like themselves, are spontaneously taking part in the action. In Scene 13, for instance, a girl lies in a bed, reciting a poem about love, torture, and dying. Silently, an actor steps out from among the group, approaches the girl and gently suffocates her. He rejoins the group, "como un espectador más." These *ersatz* spectators (or actors playing the role of spectators) are in most cases punished in some way, either for their curiosity, their self-expression, or for no apparent reason at all. As mentioned earlier, the curious actor-spectator who tries to follow the

men who carry off the girl's body is hit, verbally rebuked by the guide: "¿Para qué se metió? ¡El guía soy yo!" (13), and stuffed into a locker. During Scene 6, a group of men rush in on an actor-spectator who is talking to another actor-spectator. The men beat him and drag him down the stairs. The other tries to intervene after a few seconds of paralyzed surprise; then he too is beaten. This series of events is repeated, with other actor-spectators, several times. An anguished cry, "Dios mío, ¿por qué corrí?" is heard again and again over a loudspeaker. In Scene 7, as the guide is offering wine to the spectators, someone lets out a terrible scream. The guide turns accusingly on the spectators: "¿Quién gritó? ¿Quién fue el imbécil que gritó?" As the police break up the children's game of Martín Pescador (15), they beat the actor-spectators while the guide warns the police not to strike members of his group. The true spectators and actors may or may not be able to distinguish between other spectators and actors posing as spectators. In any case, *Información* aims to threaten the members of the audience through their physical proximity to those who are scolded or beaten.

The most forthright invitation to participate is extended by the guide at the beginning of the game of Martín Pescador: "Ninguna coacción, por simple gusto. Grotowsky decía: A mayor distanciamiento, mayor proximidad espiritual. ¡Qué macana! ¡Participen sin miedo, señoras y señores! (*El público participa o no, a voluntad. El juego continúa*)" (15). Perhaps Gambaro wants to test the spectators, to see what effect the punishment of others may have on their will to participate. In an interview in 1964, Grotowski underscored the importance of the proximity between actor and spectator: "There is only one element of which film and television cannot rob the theatre: the closeness of the living organism. . . . It is therefore necessary to abolish the distance between actor and audience by eliminating the stage, removing all frontiers. Let the most drastic scenes happen face to face with the spectator so that he is within arm's reach of the actor, can feel his breathing and smell the perspiration."²¹ Gambaro abolishes this distance and experiments with the power of the theatre itself, in a manner very similar to Grotowski's in the Theatre Laboratory production of Calderón's *The Constant Prince*. Raymonde Temkine describes the position of the spectator in this performance: "One can imagine here that the spectator might reach a limit. Outraged by the evil treatment inflicted upon the prince, he would jump into the ring and interpose himself. That is what a feeling human being would do—if he could forget he was in the theatre. He who understands that what is happening under his very scrutiny is a performance will contain within himself this involuntary start, but once having experienced it, and not acted on it, he has chosen his side. It remains for him to interrogate himself on the decision he would take if life implicated him in an analogous situation."²² It is this act of reflection, this analysis of self that Gambaro wants to provoke—a goal she shares with Grotowski. Not only does Gambaro strive to make the spectator reason, but she also insists that he first be shocked into feeling. In this respect, Artaud's words are pertinent to *Información*: "One does not separate the mind from the body nor the senses from the intelligence, especially in a domain where the endlessly renewed fatigue of the organs requires intense and sudden shocks to revive our understanding."²³ Although Gambaro's plays do not follow to the letter the precepts of Artaudian Theatre

of Cruelty, their goals are the same. Artaud wanted to show the "terrible cruelty which things can exercise against us. We are not free. And the sky can still fall in on our heads. And the theatre has been created to teach us that first of all."²⁴

So, too, has it been Gambaro's purpose to use the theatre to awaken the spectator to the dangers of intellectual and physical confinement. She has said that "desde *Las paredes* a *El campo* quise expresar siempre el peligro de la pasividad, el hecho de ser lo que Lukács llamó un 'respondedor' activo a determinada situación político-social."²⁵ Gambaro's plays warn against passivity and blind acceptance of the power of the system, which can lead to intellectual and physical entrapment.

Commenting on Gambaro's plays, Ricardo Monti notes that in order to capture the essence of reality, she uses detours, side roads, cover-ups, and false starts.²⁶ In *Información* these detours and false starts are realized physically in the setting and dramatically in the spectator's experience. Here Gambaro uses fragmentation to demonstrate the wide spectrum of realities that exist in our world, the infinite variety of points of view and experiences: "Ampliamos en el espacio las múltiples posibilidades de la realidad de los otros."²⁷ An aware and open mind is protection against intellectual entrapment by any doctrine. The spectator must remain sensitive to others' viewpoints. The physically and dramatically fragmented spaces of *Información para extranjeros* shape the spectator's experience. The challenge of the play is for the spectator, the "extranjero," to examine his own experience during the course of the performance, and to reflect on the ultimate effect of that experience on his view of himself and his world.

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Notes

1. See Sandra Messinger Cypess, "Physical Imagery in the Works of Griselda Gambaro," *Modern Drama*, 18 (1975), 357-64.

2. Drummond Studio, Cornell University Theatre, Ithaca, New York, 1970. Director Margaret P. Goldsmith.

3. Griselda Gambaro, *El campo* (Buenos Aires: Insurrexit, 1967), p. 96.

4. Dick Gerdes touches on the use of space and the relationship between actor and spectator in his article, "Recent Argentine Vanguard Theatre: Gambaro's *Información para extranjeros*," *Latin American Theatre Review*, 11/2 (Spring 1978), 11-16. The emphasis of his article is, however, on "the juxtaposition of acts of human violence and references to children's games." Most literature on Gambaro's theatre is either in the form of reviews or critical articles which do not have any direct bearing on the issue of space and spectator, with the exception of the Cypess article on physical imagery mentioned above. I wish to extend my thanks to Prof. Cypess for graciously assisting me in gaining access to the *Información* manuscript.

5. The work carries the subtitle, "Crónica," which emphasizes the importance of the real-life events that are reported throughout the play as information for foreigners, technically stated thus: "explicación: para extranjeros."

6. Gaston Bachelard, in *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 6, suggests that "the house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories, and dreams of mankind. The binding principle in this integration is the daydream. Past, present, and future give the house different dynamisms, which often interfere, at times opposing, at others, stimulating one another." Gambaro perhaps would play upon these dynamisms, creating a violent nightmare for the spectator, rather than a daydream.

7. "Environmental Theatre," in E. T. Kirby, *Total Theatre* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1969), p. 265.

8. The successes and failures of modern experiments in environmental and ritual theatre

and their dependence on the vagaries of spectator reaction have elicited extensive commentaries. See Margaret Croyden, *Lunatics, Lovers and Poets* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1974); and Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (New York: Atheneum, 1968).

9. References to the text of *Información* are by scene number.

10. Susan Sontag, writing about Happenings, points out that "There is no attempt to cater to the audience's desire to see everything. In fact this is often deliberately frustrated, by performing some of the events in semi-darkness or by having events go on in different rooms simultaneously" ("Happenings: An Art of Radical Juxtaposition," in *Against Interpretation* [New York: Noonday Press, 1966], p. 265). Sontag goes on to indicate that "abusive involvement of the audience seems to provide . . . the dramatic spine of the Happening." The kinship between *Información* and the Happening genre is evident, but a significant distinction lies in the fact that for *Información* there exists—preexists—a written text.

11. Griselda Gambaro, *Teatro: Las paredes, El desatino, Los siameses* (Barcelona: Argonauta, 1979), p. 14.

12. *Towards a Poor Theatre* (Holstebro, Denmark: Odin Teatrets, 1968), p. 20.

13. Given Gambaro's prefatory note that the play permits other staging possibilities, it is conceivable that there be an audience outside the play, observing from a level of distance from the play similar to that of the reader before the literary text. This potential audience, watching actor-spectators playing roles on a stage divided into cubicles, would see *Información* in a context completely different from that of spectators who go from room to room. Distance from the action drastically diminishes the feeling of disorientation and confinement inherent in the Gambaro staging. The metaphor of confinement replaces the experience of confinement.

14. Grotowski, p. 42.

15. Griselda Gambaro, "Teatro de vanguardia en la Argentina de hoy," *Universidad*, No. 81 (1970), 329.

16. Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double* (New York: Grove, 1958), p. 96.

17. See Lionel Abel, *Metatheatre* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963); and Susan Wittig, "Toward a Semiotic Theory of the Drama," *Educational Theatre Journal*, 26 (1974), 441-54.

18. *Public Domain* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), pp. 175-76.

19. See Gerdes, pp. 11-16. For a description of performances by these two groups, see Pierre Biner, *The Living Theatre* (New York: Horizon Press, 1972); and Richard Schechner, ed., *Dionysius in 69: The Performance Group* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970).

20. Schechner, *Dionysius in 69*, p. 1.

21. Grotowski, pp. 41-42.

22. *Grotowski* (New York: Avon, 1972), p. 88.

23. Artaud, p. 86.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

25. Griselda Gambaro, "Siete autores en busca de una comunicación nueva con el pueblo: El teatro argentino de ahora en adelante," *La Opinión Cultural* (July 29, 1973), 3, as cited in Martha Martínez, "Seis estrenos del teatro argentino en 1976," *Latin American Theatre Review*, 11/2 (Spring 1978), 96.

26. In Griselda Gambaro, *Teatro: Las paredes, El desatino, Los siameses* (Barcelona: Argonauta, 1979), back cover.

27. Griselda Gambaro, in private conversation, Ithaca, New York, April 25, 1979.