

***The Camp : Annihilation of Body and Soul*****A research paper by HUSSEIN ABDU KADHIM KHALIFA****Supervised by Ass. Prof. MAY MOHAMMED BAQER TWAYEJ(PH.D)****English Department / College of Education For Human Sciences-Ibn-Rushd****Abstract**

For more than five decades, the Argentine dramatist Griselda Gambaro is a master at artistically demonstrating the social and political climate of her country. to criticize the abuse of authority and the consequent alienation of the individual.

Gambaro's simple message in all her plays, which is directed to the characters, the audience, her fellow citizens in Argentina and the world is "to use the power, to see and not say (Yes), but to know, act and change.

Though Gambaro began her career as a narrative writer, but she has become one of the most famous playwright in Latin America due to her political plays that awaken the national and international concern. For nearly half a century, Gambaro has been writing allegorical plays as well as novels that dedicated with the subjugation, complicity, and the violence of Argentine authority especially of the military junta during the Dirty War between 1976 to 1983 and their overwhelming effects on the moral framework of society.

*The Camp* is one of Gambaro's famous plays of 1960s that played a vital role in her international success. This play is written and staged in 1967 .

**Introduction**

The 1960s and 1970s were chiefly chaotic period in Latin America in general and Argentina in specific. Numerous governments reacted violently and inhumanly by the armed forces and death squads of the military juntas to their opposition of what they argued was the danger of communism branching from the Cuban Revolution of 1959. During this era, three coups by the armed forces replaced civilian governments in Argentina only, one in 1962, another in 1966 and the third in 1976 which led to the "Dirty War", a period which lasted for seven years and in which thousands civilians were abducted ,tormented and massacred. Griselda Gambaro, as a vital member of her Argentine society, is among the first dramatists to recognize changes in the political climate of her country to consider the role of theatre and theatricality in Argentina's criminalized society (Taylor and Townsend 220).

( I )

As a realistic dramatist, Gambaro's *The Camp*, 1967 is portraying the unusual environment of the Argentinians struggle with kidnappings and torturing camps of those who opposed the military junta, and the increase of the government's brutality, that would predict the atrocities to become ugly reality of the Dirty war in 1976 till 1983. In this play, Gambaro assigns the audience to have the assignment of comparing the dramatic action on stage to the circumstances of their real world offstage. Sandra Cypess in her article *Dramatic Strategies* related to Gambaro's theatre notes that *The Camp* is interpreted from a mental point of view or even as metatheatrical observations on the function of the writer in the community, though it is taken as "political allegory" (2). Supporting this idea, Tamara Holzapfel asserts that *The Camp* is a political play: it is "an allegory" that tells about the repressive authority and its association to "art" and citizen's liberty (9).

Though it is written and staged a decade before the brutal events of the Dirty War, *The Camp* predicts and portrays Argentina in its dishonorable period of totalitarianism from 1976 to 1983. It depicts the country as a concentration camp that the nation would turn out to be, a place for arresting, tormenting, and killing, during the ruling of the military junta which called itself "The Process of National Reorganization" (Puga 146). This junta produces an increasing disintegration of constructions in legislation of the society devised to keep violence covered and thus under direction (Taylor, *Violent Displays*, 163).

Gambaro's play *The Camp* is written and performed in 1967, a year after the oppressive military coup of 1966 by General Juan Carlos Onganía. As Thomas Elliot Skidmore asserts that the "deadly toxin" of violence "had entered the Argentine body politic," undermining distinctions between social, family, and personal space (103).

*The Camp* draws attention to repressive elements in Argentine government and discourse. It matches the Argentine dictatorship with some of the European depiction of the fascism and Nazism, which are intentional. In fact, Argentina has deep-rooted history and solid ties with European fascism on the principles of those dictatorships of Germany, Italy and Spain. *The Camp* evidently demonstrates that even after the collapsed of fascism in Europe, dictator "Franco", and the concentration camps lived on in Argentina by getting a welcoming home for those thugs and their principles expelled by Europe in 1945 (Taylor, *Crisis*, 120).

Gambaro's depiction of repression is obviously voicing her alarm at the new wave of dictatorship in Argentina and the country's current,

and increasing, captivation with totalitarianism. The irresistible violence, which extents by the backing of the repressive authority, further disrupted differences between social, family, and personal life. Each factor came to be an object to threaten, attack, and defeat by such violence. This play as her previous plays, reveals the escalation of the overwhelming brutality as borders totally wiped out between the personal and common.

*The Camp* is considered as one of the finest of Gambaro's plays in content and style. A play of two acts and five scenes depicts a world of absolute obscurity that confuses those who are unfamiliar with Argentine society. In fact, it is a prophetic of the destiny of Argentina in its dishonorable period of totalitarianism, from 1967 until the collapse of the last dictatorship in 1983. In *The Camp*, Gambaro shows the brutalities of Nazi concentration camp, which are displayed in the conversation, uniform and the actions taking place behind the scenes. It depicts a neo-Nazi concentration camp of the kind that was in fact to appear in Argentina a decade later; there is evidence of some 340 such camps operating during the Dirty War (Taylor and Townsend 220). This mount of indications helps to connect the current drama presented on the stage to the extensive background of brutal reality in society.

Gambaro increases disputations and misperception all over the play. She tries to make the real life look unreal and unidentified; those happenings in everyday life, which become acquainted to be abnormal and frightening as the world dissolves into a terrifying space whose factors retreat and shrink. The frequent symbols, impressions, figures and references in the play involve the downfall of borders splitting "inner from outer, private from public, self from other." (Taylor, *Violent Displays*, 164).

*The Camp's* main characters are "deformed" figures. They are mostly "anonymous, adolescent, passive and grotesque." (Taylor, *Crisis*, 99). They react to the crisis into victims to victimizers or oppressed to oppressors relationships. The victims, undermined by catastrophe, cannot adjust themselves. They have no idea what is happening to them. Martin, one of the main characters of the play, is the best depiction of such a deformed character. On the other hand, the victimizers, made by crisis, get used to it by redirecting the violence towards the victims. The hybrid, grotesque characters onstage are the products of adaption to a disintegrating system. Gambaro asserts that oppressed and oppressors "are made, not born" (Taylor, *Violent Displays*, 164).

One of the characteristics of this play is that the victims fail to identify their own subjection. Their direct response is to refuse the level or even the presence of threat. This refutation, subsequently,

permits for the confusion of duty and represented by passivity. They get ready excuses to make them be away of reality. With no ability to understand the reasons of the hostile environment that might lead to their destruction, their point is just to persuade themselves that it is not real and there is no way escape their distress. Such protagonists' passivity and impractical response to the terrible reality lead to the disappeared of thirty thousand Argentine in the Dirty War between 1976 to 1983 (165).

*The Camp's* scenery takes the opposite direction of the typical drama. The action begins in the concentration camp and ends at the home to return to by the false impression of the prisoners.

Gambaro practices conceptual symbol as a tactic to connect the local and western past in a particular annihilating portrayal of her country under Onganía's repressive regime. This portrayal stimulates audience to redirect on the false impression related to the sort of their military government (147).

Gambaro puts a slight cover of history to be compared with the recent Argentine reality to grotesque her play as a strategy to get rid of the authority's censorship. She uses the events of Auschwitz camp in Poland during the World War II to link them with some other events in recent Argentine in 1966-1967. Gambaro collects historical symbols of the German detention centers -costumes, signs, watch hounds, noise of firearms, odor of human bodies put on fire—and reassigns them in the assistance of a more complicated modern plot. Gambaro makes the setting of the camp as a parody to both Argentina and the Nazi death camp by which the audience is indirectly stimulated to think of the comparisons between the two backgrounds (147).

Gambaro produces situations based on a tension between words and deeds. Gambaro asserts on the important of the relationship between words and the other characteristics of drama: "action, props, scenery, costumes, make-up, noises, and smells both on and off stage." She also added "words almost always contradict the visual reality; therefore, words are important"(Garfield 63). In addition, in *The Camp* the contradicted expressions embrace the act itself.

As realistic dramatist, Gambaro's *The Camp* moves towards the certain details of life in the twentieth century. The vague title is revealing Gambaro's symbolic technique throughout the play *El campo* has various references in Spanish and this ambiguous title acts as the password to this world, from a rural area in which children play and leap in the fresh air, to military base, and to a place of detention just like the concentration camp (57). These three locations are joined together in the play to juxtapose the Argentine society. Martín moves toward that place to work, but the location soon is converted from its

ordinary indication to suppose the modern connotation of "a concentration camp" (Cypess, Spanish, 190). The indications that verify the delusion of the first inoffensive meaning of camp are screams of children and the singing of peasants at work, which are used as verbal symbols of a simulated life to misperceive Martin and the spectators. The terrorizing actions of the prison officers, the smell of burning meat and shouts of torment, and Martin's own persecution become the actuality of his situation. By which, Martin is converted into another casualty in the camp. The vague meaning of the play's title first implies the track of Martin's practice, from an employee to an inmate, from helpful to harmful (190).

The *Camp's* brutality is different from Gambaro's plays in 1960s for the persecution goes beyond the individual condition to embrace the past background of victimization, which is overtly portrayed in the Nazi costumes, the name Franco, the smell of burning flesh. In addition to the "mass" annihilation of the individuals by depriving them of personality and abstracting them into faceless "Jews" or "Niggers" or "communists" (58).

## ( II )

The play begins with Martin, one of the main characters of the play, who has just reached the office in his new institution where he has been hired as an official administrator. This office is so small and strangely decorated, but the strangest thing is not inside the room but outside it. Martin hears the loud growling of wild dogs as if they are chasing someone with blended voices of people's screaming and harsh authoritarian instructions. He uses the window to see, but he finds nothing; it almost seems an illusion. While waiting for his new boss, he finds a device, which seems to control all the sounds and actions he hears and sees put on the desk of the office. As Martin attaches the intercom device by his finger, the noisy sounds stop. This off-stage or behind the scene action actually controls and suspends the action on stage. This action symbolizes the reality or the unknown threatening in the world of reality deprived of Martin and the audience as well. It stimulates curiosity and imagination needed for the spectators to be associated with their daily life activities. Gambaro proposes the window on stage when Martin wants to see what he hears as if it is the visible reality of every day's life in Argentina, but it is invisible for people due to their passivity (Taylor, *Crisis*, 124).

Martin is so passive and he is unable to escape from his difficult distress he is in, if not impossible. He lacks determination, intelligence and expectations. Martin needs no long time to recognize the reality of this place. Later, going along with some actions and the presence of prisoners and jailers, he recognizes that behind the deceptive

administrative framework, he is in fact in a hostile environment as a victim in a detention camp.

When Franco, the manager of the establishment and one of the main characters in play first appears, his full shiny Gestapo uniform with boots and a whip in hand, seems strange, since his manner and deeds contradict his costume : " There seems to be nothing threatening about his demeanor. He is a young man, and his face is almost kind" (Gambaro, *The Camp*, 51). Franco's uniform gives Martin a negative impression though the manger's initial manners give some friendly and positive impression that makes Martin confused and enquire of the reality of the place he is in. He also gives his new member of staff a kindly smile, as he appears which gives Martin as well as the spectators the impression of good will and no danger of him at all (Taylor, *Crisis*, 125). Again, the senses do not match each other's. Martin is in a state of misunderstanding; he cannot comprehend what he sees with his eyes, which contrast with what he hears with his own ears. Franco's face seems kind in spite of his strange uniform and the whip in his hand. Martin falls into the wrong place thinking he has a legal work as an administrator at a "company" or a "summer camp" or even "school" in a rural area is deceived by the stage effects, false noises, and clothes that have been planned to make him with no protection (Taylor, *Foreigners*, 164). The dramatic action of the setting calms the oppressed to be confident that the toxic circumstances are not true and obscures no "actual danger" (Taylor and Townsend 222).

Despite his frightful Nazi uniform, Franco attempts to satisfy Martin that he wears this strange Nazi uniform to please himself, he announces that he is not hurting anyone. When Martin asks of the reason: "The uniform...But why that uniform " Franco's reply is : " What other uniform is there? Why? I like it...I don't harm anybody with it (Gambaro, *The Camp*, I, i, 52). He is inoffensive; he points to it as a piece of clothing he likes and it shows simply a private fantasy and " A harmless little quirk" (58).

Franco stresses on the "pleasure" he has to wear such a uniform rather than thinking of its history because "I like it. And you dam well better indulge your taste while you're alive!"( 52). Gambaro spots the uniform of the Nazi German concurrently to indicate two messages. "One is the horrifying history of Nazism. The other is a "harmless" obsession, yet definitely strange feature related with erotic "taste," commonly in combination with "somasochistic sexual practices" (Taylor, *Crisis*, 125).

By time, the mask of kindness is removed and Franco's behavior quickly fits to his uniform. At first, his views of incongruity with Martin are marginal, but later his demands steadily come to be orders directing Martin's manners (Cypess, *Revolt*, 104).

In spite of the grotesque enfolding Franco's dictator decorations, which have been extricated from their past background, they have not been drained of the demonstrative responsibility. In contrast, the intense harmful relations of these elements assist to form the play's viewpoint of fear (Puga 151). He also discloses his deep disrespect for Martin in different ways. He first mishandles Martin's overcoat, next by taking off his own boots and then, by placing his bare feet on the desk to be in Martin's face. Franco removes his boots and then his socks: "Just my socks. My feet are clean, and I'm not going to wiggle my toes under your nose, if that's what you're afraid of". (Gambaro, *The Camp*, 58). Such encounters give the impression to be more illogical to put Martin's life in danger; however, they perform to put him in a situation as an enemy to Franco when the real game arises with the arrival of Emma (Cypess, *Revolt*, 104). Wiggling Franco's toes in Martin's face is a horribly comic sign of disrespect that suggests much greater aggression to come.

The SS costume is the living form or the embodiment of Nazi and fascism to claim publically the use of violence as a means to establish their own dictatorship by total power terminating others with low-grade treatment (Taylor, *Crisis*, 125). In fact, during the Nazi-German dictatorship, there is a real fancy about SS military uniform which proposes "order, community, and identity" besides the "legitimate exercise of violence" that is done by the elite army units that do the task extremely violent and be completely wonderful (125). For Franco with his Gestapo uniform is a way to show off his copy of power and sexual ability. This would be obvious in referring to his uniform, enjoying himself with it, displaying himself, loosening the buttons and putting off the coat, the boots and the socks, all are just to call attention to the sexual nature of the fantasies associated with it. The setting turns out to be crudely demonstrational, "a grotesque striptease" (125).

To be a tactic of tempting "the victims and spectators", Gambaro concentrates mostly on the "sexualization or eroticization" of cruelty as a way of defusing "the victims and spectators". "The act of torture" is converted to appear as if it is a sexy imaginary, which is shown in all the three scenes of, act one of the play (125).

Gambaro's *The Camp* is neither about romance nor about erotic aggression, it is a confront by the dramatist to portray the violence of Argentina's authority. Gambaro concentrates mainly on the sexualization of cruelty as a means of neutralizing the oppressed and audiences. The performance of torture can be altered as if it is sexy imaginary as a tactic to hide the acts of torture (Taylor and Townsend 222). Gambaro uses this strategy to repulse oppression committed by authority as the

oppressors use it to disguise their acts of terror. Franco tells Martin that he brings a woman to entertain them together in the evening:

I invited her just for you. I am just trying to be pleasant. . after a hard day's work, among unfamiliar people ,far from home, a woman, Venus, a frivolous element.(Gambaro, *The Camp*, 61).

( III )

As soon as Franco goes out to have his Nazi clothes changed, a female character is pushed onto the stage. From the very beginning, violence is associated with Emma, the third main character in the play. Apparently, it looks as an arrangement to make Martin meet a young woman for a visionless date or even an act of sex (Taylor, *Crisis*, 126). "Frightened and defensive", a thin "young woman" stands by the door wearing " a prison smock of rough gray cloth" with "shaved" head... "The palm of her right hand is marked by a livid wound. And her face bears the ravages of long suffering. She is barefoot"(Gambaro. *The Camp*, 62). Emma is so weak in body and character. She is full of contradictions. Her visual appearance-shaven head, bare feet, prison garb, wounded hand-does not conform to her gestures or words. She seems as if she is acting a role. On the contrary, of her miserable condition, her manner is that of a self-confident and mature woman. Her looking is apparent by extensive misery which contradicts her grin and her false impression to be "a lady dressed in a party gown" or to speak " in a sophisticated and worldly manner "(62) She makes her steps towards Martin as if she is a hostess and he is a welcomed guest. She announces herself as "a pianist" with assertion that Franco as her" friend" and "guardian" since childhood (I, ii, 63-64). She tells Martin about her creative activities without ever referring to her humiliated state. The awful habit of itching shows Emma's intolerable condition. She has nonstop addiction to scratch herself, particularly in Franco's attendance (Holzapfel 10).

Martin is confused by the gap between Emma's story and her appearance and he does not know how to react. Her wounds and prison markings, however, arouse his sympathy so that he finally becomes involved in her dilemma. Emma observes Martin as a trespasser in her relationship with her tormentor Franco, in her judgment her guardian (Cypess, *Revolt*, 104).

Gambaro makes use of the stage effects distribution to change the characters role or bodily nature, therefore, these effects depict painful jokes on the characters who try to use them. Emma pretends to cultured manner when she tells Martin "What beautiful fingers! I'm a pianist" claiming that her focus on fingers is due to her career (Gambaro, *The Camp*, I, ii, 62). Even though she speaks in a stylish

and experienced manner, but "her real voice" sometimes lets her down, declaring "the anguish and desperation of her appearance "(62).

The play evokes that the theatre occurs in an immoral circumstance can support , freely or by force, masking violence. Theatre, as an official brilliant place ,veils its counterpart, attempts to distance dehumanized bodies into past, concrete and even the absence of traditional space. Depicting cruel and brutal performances in theatre turns out well in redirecting concern from the real force or supremacy behind the display. Though that the tyrants may originate peculiar and vicious pleasure from the control and oppression of others, they are in fact exclusively, or even mainly, in charge of the actions. Even though they run the display, but not set up procedures or eventually profit from them. Thus, there are "producers" who are responsible for setting up procedures or getting benefit from them, but they are referred to indirectly (Taylor, *Crisis*, 131). The producers are among the audience, the fourth set, in the concert with indirect allusion to them, which is mentioned in scene I when Martin asks Franco about the owners of the establishment:

Martin : " Is this establishment yours" Or are there other owners?

Franco: Professional curiosity...A corporation (Gambaro, *The Camp*, I, ii, 57).

Emma's body, supposedly to be used to seduce Martin, actually has been transformed into an outward of alive pain which the script of the play compares with the concentration camp itself . She explains to Martin that her itching is not related to 'lice' ,but related to ' bugs' or 'fireflies':

The light goes on and off, as though they were calling for help. What help? No one knows. The night goes on, dark and silent, and we look on (Gambaro, *The Camp*, I, ii, 63).

It is the best exemplary of this hopelessness of the victims or the oppressed to have their distress be resolved in which her talk becomes more ambiguous to distinguish between her body and the camp.

Martin tries to know what help does she mean but she does give him a logic reply saying: "It is such a nuisance" (63). Emma and all the like victims know and feel the absence of reactions to their suffering and atrocities due to the weakness and passivity, they are in and the iron fist of the oppressed authority. Then she refers to her arm as if she is talking about her itching body. Despite Emma's terrible situation and her body itself which has become a source of pain, she expects to seduce Martin as being a pianist or even as a movie star. Actually, she tries her best performance to get Martin's attention by smiling, talking with artificial and mannered spirits and even by raising her dress a little bit to seduce him "as though she were about to act a role"(62).

Being rejected or not got his attraction, she starts to walk in the way of a movie actress talking of her admirers, her secretary, and her impossible social schedule. The setting is a painful "parody of the sex symbol" who must entertain her admirers; but she is worthy nothing without them (Taylor, *Crisis*, 126).

The scenario also awfully reveals the sexual characteristics state of woman as preferred body, as a deficiency figure to be complete by the male. Emma seems to be "nothing" if she is unable to make Martin "like" her or find her "attractive" (126). Emma as a person has been converted into a place of torment and her womanliness is dropped in a bizarre suggestion of the failing linked with an "adaption of an annihilating situation" (126).

Emma tries to seduce Martin by pulling up her skirt, but Martin covers her body saying: " It hurts just to look at you" (Gambaro, *The Camp*, 66) The reason behind this play-acting is to keep Martin in the camp. Franco strikes at Martin through Emma's femaleness who is the " bait, live bait"(Taylor, *Crisis*, 128). Though Emma is a victim herself, but Martin is the target in this part, who comprehends from this scene that Emma is a prisoner in this camp " ...and you look like someone who's escaped from a.... " (Gambaro, *The Camp*, 65-66). He could not face her of her horrifying reality as most of the Argentine people do at that time; he rejects to talk and have any idea associated with violence. In fact, Emma "catches" Martin, as the latter is a human being who has the senses and feelings towards another one in distress, but not "through the grotesque sexuality"(Taylor, *Crisis*, 128). Humanity has a call inside Martin and the atmosphere of sympathy towards Emma begins to rise. Gambaro never romanticizes the relationship between Emma and Martin. The latter takes her side as human being who feels her suffering and seems angry at her oppressors. He realizes the pain she has suffered from. After seeing and realizing the nature of the place, Martin is involved and has no longer allowed being out of the camp, as he has become an inmate as well. The torture is horribly clothed as a sexual fantasy reverses the association between pleasure and sadism in sexual parody. Gambaro wants to tell her audience that the demonstrating of this sexual fantasy is to defuse Martin and to mask the danger in front of him not to that danger "as a delicious illusion"( Taylor, *Crisis*,128). Though, Martin is the proposed victim of this scene, but Emma is hurt and demeaned more than he is. Emma is not willing to tell Martin the truth either by her will or she fears the Franco's punishment. Martin who appears to show his pity starts to ask Emma of the pain resulted by the mark in her arm. Again, Emma lies and tells that it is long ago when she was so little:

Martin: Did it hurt?

Emma (dryly)" Not a bit. I was so little. (Then , almost in a fury)  
And it's

not a tattoo! It's ink, indelible ink! (66)

Martin's feelings of pity and his expression of tenderness mark both his humanity and his inevitable victimization by the same forces that worked upon Emma (Cypess, Revolt, 105). In addition, Martin's questioning of beating is responded by tensed "Shut up" of Emma (Gambaro, *The Camp*, 66). Emma tries to change the subject and talks about her fans who almost destroyed her. But this sentence makes Martin ask the reason behind the fans' destruction, the one who is in charge of her head shaving, the smock, the shoes and the last thing he mentions is "And those teeth?", which is a reference to the amount of torture she has suffered to have her teeth broken (66).

Emma tells Martin that she is "giving a concert tomorrow for a very small, select group of friends to stay "Oh, stay darling. Please stay. The language of music is the language of ...the soul!)(69) Suddenly, Martin tells Franco that he changes his decision and he would stay.

Enjoyment arises from expectation of pleasure with a component of risk and danger. In *The Camp*, the enjoyment predicts real danger. Gambaro's purpose of the erotic fantasy in this play by Emma is not to present danger as a pleasant delusion, but to "disarm" Martin of the real danger facing him and Emma (Taylor, *Crisis*, 129). Gambaro portrays the torture in this play in a form, which is widely used in Argentina as well as in Latin America, one that annihilate the oppressed and the audience as well. This form is called "Family Torture" as it involves "raping", abusing, and assassinating the "woman" in her house and in the presence of her family members (128). The chauvinist and "misogynist" torturers believe that women are entities, which are existed only for men by which they torture the female in the presence of her husband and children rather than to torment the male victim himself as a method to get "effective" results (129). Though such a torture abuses and destroys the woman, and strikes all the family beliefs for current and even upcoming lives, the oppressors' purpose is apparently to get some evidence from the man victim. This type of torture does not indicate that women are targets of the oppressed authority for just extracting information from male victims as the oppressor's authority torture female victims for their actions when they become dissident. In this way, women are twice oppressed; one for their subversive action just like male victims and the second is unlike man as a method of persecuting the man who is related to (129).

The suggestions that observing can be converted into a type of torment are widespread. Martin's carelessness is the sole behaviour he

can do to get out from the terrible situation he is in. He probably can abandon Emma's appeal by which he would be disengaged in troubles as the latter says in pain : "No matter how much you want to, please don't push me away" (Gambaro, *The Camp*, 72). Also, Martin can deny Emma as a person, deserting her in this camp to her destiny. In general, man is scarcely turns his back on an oppressed person in persecution, however, the common principle that it is a way affects the people's response to torture. Though Martin has no chance or possibility to leave the camp as he is an inmate himself, but, he is engaged with Emma's case. On the other hand, passivity is a human nature, most people in the world think that it is unsafe to express sympathy or line up with the oppressed , unsafe to see what is going on and unsafe of watching . To be on the safe side is not to involve or "turn the one's back" on such matter (Taylor, *Crisis*, 129)

( IV )

Gambaro's *The Camp* searches the larger political consequences of people who have no awareness of acts of torture, recognized as a method of survival instinct in terrified states. In scene 3, Gambaro extends the audience or the characters of the play itself to the display such torture. Those characters or the admirers are the Gestapo officers and fellow prisoners who supposed to be the audience of Emma's concert. Black humour and contrast are employed to produce an impression of uncertainty and terror in which Martin and the audience are constructed to "mistrust, then fear, whatever is seen, heard, and done" (Cypess, *Revolt*, 103).

The scenery of the abuse done by authority is not assigned to the spectators' vision. The concert scene has a strange scenario which is at once a parody of a piano spectacle to the audience of prisoners and Gestapo officers and "an exhibition of physical and emotional punishment." (105) This audience embrace aggressiveness as they act as antagonists or criminals getting their commands automatically from their director or the oppressor; Franco.

There is a play-within-a –play part in this scene in which the audience of the concentration camp is sit down at the last row brought together to attend the concert by the pianist Emma, who is a prisoner herself.. This show arouses the torment of Emma committed by the prisoners themselves under the command and direction of Franco. Before the concert show, Franco bounces Emma an artificial bouquet of flowers; yet, she seems happy to smell them and cries out:" They are so sweet!" (Gambaro, *The Camp*, 76).

In this scene, Martin is forced to be one of the audience who should witness this show while Franco is the director of this concert show. Before Emma starts her playing on the piano. Franco begins to have fun of Emma through his talking with Martin. But Martin begins

to sympathize Emma and accuses Franco of not treating her well or not caring for her. Franco resists Martin and claims that she is in no need for a doctor as she is vaccinated:

Franco: I don't know what she's going to play.(Then jokingly )" The Great

Scratch," in four movements.

Martin: Why don't you have a doctor look at her?

Franco (with a threatening gesture): Ah, no , no !You ...mind your own

business! (Seriously) You think I do not take care of her. That

she has no doctors. Vaccinated! She's vaccinated against all

diseases and all plagues of this world !

Martin : her hand is ... .(Gambaro, *The Camp*, 75).

Franco cuts his speech as he directs the scene in a technique that converts the abuse into an odd distortion of the concert show. He abuses both Emma and Martin causing real pain for both of them. Emma tries to arrange herself to play but she couldn't as she begins to scratch herself instead. Frank rises from his seat and takes a bottle of dark liquid from underneath one of the benches. He has a piece of cotton in his hand. He goes toward Emma to nurse her in front of the audience, and as he passes Martin he growls between his teeth:

Franco : I don't take care of her, huh? You say I don't care of her? You

bastard ! ( He goes to Emma ,wets the cotton with the liquid in

the bottle, and rubs it over her skin, while she ,without rising

from the piano stool, tries to avoid the treatment.)

Emma :thank you very much ,but I'm perfectly all right!

Franco : Sit still ! This will soothe you. I'm always taking care of you,but

this son of a bitch says I don't . What the hell did you tell him?

Emma (frightened): Nothing! What did he say? He's a liar!( 79)

This play is also exciting in that it stages sexual role as a socially over fixed paradigm. Despite her weakness and miserable appearance as a prisoner, Emma is required to act as if she is" an elegant woman" and "a star" (Taylor, *Violent Displays* ,164). She has to make great changes in her appearance to get the audience's attraction and to convince herself first and then Martin that she is so, not a prisoner.

Under Franco's direction, she is forced to put on a strange wig to hide her shaved head and she dresses a satin train that has been sewn on clumsily to her gray prison frock (164).

Despite the fact that the piano doesn't work, Emma was forced to perform something for the audience by the order of the director, Franco. She acts as if she is the piano itself by creating weak sound of music with her thin voice despite the loud noise of the audience that cruelly and offensively mock her that leads to Emma's suffering of her failure. Even though and in return for the abuse, she denies any harm of the audience by her false impression of praising the inmates as "charming people," a "select group of friends," and an adoring public (Garfield 58).

Being passive in action and reaction, Emma depicts Gambaro's archetypal character in El campo. She outweighs passivity despite the severe pain and suffering with infrequent blazes of anger and no active rebellion or revenge (Garfield 58).

Emma is ripped by the torture in the concentration camp. Her sexual characteristics is rupturing between the ideal and the real. The ideal picture of the lady is to be kind, sociable, clever, merry and attractive.

The concert scene, as in other incidents take place in other scenes, reveals a gap between prospect and outcome: the piano tuner repairs the piano but it has no sound; Franco's treatment has brought grief instead of help; the audience's reaction becomes a source of torture towards Martin that opposes caring and loving of the ordinary audience. The result of each event is unbalanced and it causes great harm to the victim. Such harmed activities are among the ways of the oppressors "to break down the individual's confidence in his own judgment and destroy his sense of independence" (Cypess, *Revolt*, 105).

Franco's aim of the concert is a tactic to keep Martin's attention away of what is going on in the camp by the obvious annoyance on stage. To be compared with reality, Gambaro wants the audience to connect the show with the oppressive regimes strategies who preserve the people's awareness off the terrible reality in their society by brutality and execution.

( V )

The characteristics of the play arouse the insincerity of a brutality received submissively first by Emma and then by Martin, her would be rescuer. (Garfield 57).

In both scenes of act II, the strategy of unpredicted contradictions go on. In Act II, scene i, Martin and Emma sit together, superficially without constraints of Franco in spite of the abuse they endured at the show (Cypess, *Revolt*, 105). They are left in

a room with only "a large embroidery frame and its high stool" performing duties; Emma says that "they left you here to work" as Martin is writing on a tablet while she is sewing on a large frame (Gambaro, *The Camp*, 85-87). Martin tries to know the reason behind Emma's existing in this camp and the person who was behind her suffering. Emma is terrified to answer and she demands Martin keeps working. On Martin's insist Emma tells him of the "wound" and "showers" ,but with no completion: "I was working in the garden cutting roses and I cut myself with the pruning shears. The cut became infected. (87).

Meanwhile, the two hear howling of dogs and shooting of rifles. When Martin wants to know what is going outside, Emma tells him that "They're fox hunting" and that she used to go there with them, but now she cannot " with this itching, and this useless hand of mine" (87). In fact, Emma knows of torturing a killing people outside the room but she claims to be fox hunting as she is unable to face reality due to her personality as coward and passive. To verify her speech, Frank arrives putting on "a hunting jacket" and carrying a ' rifle under his arm" and even forces her to go outside to have a look at the dead foxes saying:" there is a mountain of animals in front of the door. If you want one, you can take it ( 89-90). Franco's entrance is to command the sudden decision that Martin has the permission to depart the camp. Franco decides to" break the contract" with Martin as the latter is not committed to "orders" besides the "administrators can't endure the disorder" of Martin's (93). He accuses Martin of love affair with Emma" You behaved very well. Most efficiently, .It's not your fault you failed. We let ourselves go and before we knew it we were in a tangle worse than a whore's bed (93).

In the last scene of the play, Martin leaves the camp with Emma and goes to his deserted family home. He realizes that something has changed and his family members are out, even his younger brothers, that makes the entire place looks unfamiliar to him. "Noise of children "is heard , "but without commands and groans" (95).When Martin uses the window to have a look he sees no one. Then, barking of dogs is heard in a distance ,but Martin tells Emma that these are "street dogs" which "don't bite" and "they don't know how to take orders" (96-97). Meanwhile, the children noise is faded away, but a scream of pain is heard, but Emma chooses to ignore it. Martin tries to give excuses about the disappearing of the whole family: "They must have stepped for a moment...But sometimes the kids run away...to the street, to the park, chasing a ball". He also adds" I've gone after them many times. I'd bring 'em home, dragging 'em by the ears" (97).

Regarding to his unreasonably persecution and attack, Martin responds with confusion to his freedom; however, he departs the camp

with Emma through the volunteered gate to liberty. There is a great change in him as he comes back home. On the surface, he loses his possessions; "overcoat, gloves, and scarf ", which are symbolic of the levels of "dignity and integrity" that were taken from him in his way in the camp.(105) As a human being, he is full with fear and he has no confidence that he is free any more. His discomfort is confirmed when a man enters his house without a prior notice. Martin asks him to leave but the official demands that Martin be immunized. Then, three other men followed him "look like burly male nurses" dragging "a metal table on wheels on which rest several instruments ...and a lit burner ...and a branding iron" ( 102).

This scene dismisses the impression that Martin and Emma had run away from their oppressors. The second contract on liberty is a delusion. In a surrounding of intensifying fear, Martin is attentively terrorized with enquiries about his personality and his physical condition, which are met by unrelated and helpless replies as a complaint and challenge helpless to avoid penalties (Cypess, *Revolt*, 106). Martin looks "like an animal about to be caught " ( Gambaro, *The Camp*. 103). He is so passive that makes the intruders apply a vaccination to him that abolishes his desire to complain. At the end of the play, the curtain falls as the official comes towards Martin with a hot branding iron and before being it applied directly to him while Emma's groan is heard (Cypess, *Revolt*, 106).

In the last scene of *The Camp*, Gambaro makes setting arises in a "concentration camp" and the "released" inmates have a delusion that they will have a home to come back to (Taylor, *Crisis*, 120). Actually, the house Martin and Emma goes to at the end of the play is as unacquainted , and as deadly, as the concentration camp they believed they had departed. The delusion of Emma and Martin's freedom seems despairingly " nostalgic "as the home is conventionally the place which is set aside for man as "a shelter and reproduction", but in the play it becomes unclear to be distinguished from torture halls and demise camps in Argentina (120).

Gambaro's *The Camp* defies the concept that individuals and communities defend themselves by simulating that they are unable to see or comprehend what is happening in their society. Martin might possibly rescue himself from the condition would be by ignoring the whole issue. He might pay no attention to Emma's request "Please don't push me away. No matter how much you want to, please don't push me away" and leave her to her destiny (Gambaro, *The Camp*, 72). He might explain that ignoring by giving the impression to rely on "the pathetic drama" being performed in front of him in the camp when Emma says:" my hair is short. It's because of my wigs"( 66). To let down a victim is barely a practicable explanation to persecution

besides the play proposes no option for Martin to leave the camp. In fact, he likes the false impression that he is released. Martin's case is like many others conditions in which citizens believe that it is unsafe to support or back the oppressed or risky to know and understand what is going on, it is behind schedule and things cannot be changed. Citizens are involved and they sometimes contribute in the atrocities take place in their society they simulate that they do not see. Gambaro presents such a case in her previous plays with assertion that "going along with the fiction is actually more dangerous than saying 'no' enough" (Taylor and Townsend 223).

It is obvious to the audience that Franco is an oppressive authority character. However, Gambaro makes this character as hard to be completely identified in place and period. She may want to represent many dictators in one to make the subject of the play a universal matter, to promote this character to a model symbol of "evil" that at occasions it "descends into parody", or it could be a matter of personal censorship to make her play far from the oppressed regime's censorship (Puga 151).

Gambaro's major theme of the *Camp* is the individual's passivity that strengthen the oppressors. On the other hand, she tries to depict this picture to make people believe in the power of truth to be on the surface of reality despite all the repression by authority. Whenever authority allocates roles and creates visible reality it wants and its opposition is been punished, it means a matter of accepting oppression and renunciation to the other reality or the hidden one.

The contrast of this campo is displayed instantly by the sounds Martin listen to: the screams of carefree children are set against the sounds of harsh commands and with groans coming from the distance (Cypess, *Revolt*, 104). The frequent sounds is a strategy being used to dislocate the misleading "tranquility" of the surroundings. Despite the fact that Martin has not seen the playing children, nor the chanting countrymen, nor even the cheerful foxhunters, he sniffs the burning flesh, and he even turns into a witness to and a victim of the extraordinary torments and humiliations imposed upon the prisoners of the concentration camp (104). Martin is a central character who finds himself both factually and symbolically alongside the wall, trapped into a place from which there is no way out. He has been demolished of his capacity to act freely and represented helpless to confront impressive powers (106).

In 1967, Gambaro's *The Camp* with its background on the concentration camp was a caution of terrible issues to happen for the Argentine people. The retell of the play suggests, as the saying goes that those who do not learn from history are condemned to re-experience it. Unluckily, in that period of staging the play, the

Argentine people was still to undergo terrible events of violence all over the country which is considered a unique period of its history. As a result of the oppressive regime, the violence is getting greater rather than becoming lesser. Many horrific events take place including the Dirty War that would tear the country into pieces and lead the Argentine army to be the enemy of its people, the Mothers of May Square would take to the Plaza de Mayo to demonstrate against the missing of their family members, and information would come facts of many underground cites in which the military junta abducted, abused and murdered thousands of citizens. Even the prominent dramatist Griselda Gambaro herself would be obliged to leave Argentina and look for a refuge in Europe. At last ,but not least, Gambaro's drama of 1960s and 1970s reflects her people's misery in an era with the game is how to survive.

### Conclusion

Counted as the most major woman playwright not only in her home country, Argentine but also in Latin America, Gambaro's play is a powerful investigation of the human's violence that have factually portrayed Argentinian suffering due to the abuse of authority that ruled the country of an era giving its priority to their interest with no consideration to the people's needs . Due to the fact as a realistic dramatist, Gambaro depicts theatre as a replication of the people's demands and struggles that makes her work emphases on the main issues affecting the human state embodied by the abuse of authority, the people's blind obedience to power, and alienation of the man in an oppressive society with lack of communication .

Gambaro's drama is varied to the variations of events in Argentine recent history. She depicts the oppressed and oppressor relationships in *The Camp* as a reflection of the invisible ugly reality of the 1960s. Despite the misapprehension of depicting man in a grim and meaningless life , Gambaro insists that she demonstrates violence and passivity in her drama to aware her people of the visible reality unseen by them.

*The Camp* of 1960s has revealed how weak is the Argentine citizen to face his or her reality due to the passivity and blind obedience to authority.

Griselda Gambaro carries on writing and getting great success in spite of the apparent censorship of the oppressive consecutive regimes in words and actions before and during the Dirty War of 1976 to 1983.

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## المخيم : اعادة الجسد والروح

بحث لطالب الماجستير : حسين عبد الكاظم خليفة

باشرف ا.م.د. مي محمد باقر تويج

قسم اللغة الانكليزية / كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية – ابن رشد ( ٢٠١٨ )

## الخلاصة

تعد كريسيلا كامبارو واحدة من اشهر المؤلفين المسرحيين ليس في الارجنتين فحسب ولكن في قارة أمريكا اللاتينية ككل.

اكتسبت المؤلفة شهرتها بكتابتها الناقدة للواقع الارجنطيني حيث الطغيان والاضطهاد من قبل السلطة وتأثيراته السلبية على المجتمع الناجم من الخضوع والاستسلام على الظلم وبالتالي نشوء عصابات وميليشيات أدت الى حرب أهلية وفقدان الاف الشباب الذين اختطفوا وعذبوا ومن ثم قتلوا واخفاء جثثهم او رميها في البحر. نشطت الكاتبة في نقل الصورة للواقع باستخدام الأسلوب الارجنطيني الساخر الذي يدمج بين الفكاهة والمأساة.

تعد مسرحية المخيم من اشهر مسرحيات المؤلفة في فترة الستينات والتي تصور فيها الارجنطين كسجن كبير وجميع الناس البسطاء سجناء فيه ويتلقون شتى أنواع العذاب والاضطهاد بأسلوب ساخر مع نقل الاحداث الى التاريخ من اجل التأثير غير المباشر ومقارنة المسرحية بالواقع وكذلك الابتعاد عن مقصلة الرقابة التابعة للدولة البوليسية.