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LIVEGRAPHY

Performance Art, Language, and the Multiplicity of Sense

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Abstract

This thesis is constructed in three parts. Each one of them offers a reflection on the common ideas disseminated about Live Art, conceptual dance and postdramatic theatre, i.e. that these practices reject the notion of mimesis as it is supposed to represent reality, they reject text in favour of a phenomenological language and they produce a form of non-sense[1] which should be translated into meaning. Each of these statements will be problematized. I will argue that Live Art is producing mimesis even if it works against representation and although its actions are performed for real. It does not represent reality, but neither does it present the Real. It is producing a version of the "Real", which is the definition of mimesis. I will then argue that if these practices create a phenomenological language, it relies on a form of writing that is being produced live by the work. Finally, I will propose that the non-sense constructed by this writing process should not be forced into a meaning, but should be read as a fluid linguistics, which in some instances will be concretely a linguistics of fluids. By this I intend to point out that the meaning of the constructed non-sense will never be fixed nor unique. The work only becomes meaningful because it remains permeable to meanings. These three steps all participate in the "undoing of meaning"; relying on a process involving destruction within construction to then allow reconstruction. Mimesis, logos and sense need to be taken apart before these concepts can be thought anew. It is the rigidity of the conventional systems of apprehension which has to become permeable to allow a fluid multiplicity of meanings. In conclusion I will draw some parallels between performance art and feminism in their appropriation of the concept of mimesis and their approach to language outside the structure of logos and I will suggest that the performances which explore and expose these concepts adopt a feminist philosophical strategy.

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[1] I chose to use this spelling closer to the French spelling of "non-sens", which does not have in French the colloquial use it has in English and is more directly related to the philosophical concept. The hyphenated word better translates the idea of a reverse image of the word "sense".

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DVD Three performances – practice as research

Introduction

Since the 1990s a range of contemporary performance practices has emerged that is distinguished by a shared interest in the relationship between the body and language. These practices, and here I include my own, are distinct from earlier practices which they sometimes resemble, like, for example, body art of the 1970s. They cross over various existing categorisations, such as Live Art, not-dance or postdramatic theatre. This thesis seeks to identify these practices and to show how they collectively suggest an approach to language and the body that is different from (even if sometimes similar to) more familiar approaches, which have a tendency to represent such work as non-mimetic, non-textual.

One pervasive characteristic often attributed to or claimed by performance art, and what is referred to as Live Art, is to be against any kind of representation, against mimesis, thus placing it in opposition to theatre. The theoretical discourses of RoseLee Goldberg,[2] Lois Keidan[3] and Adrian Heathfield,[4] among others, highlight this particular feature of performance art and Live Art as an element which defines them. Similarly regarding the discussion on not-dance where, for example, André Lepecki[5] and Johannes Birringer[6] both define it as non-representational. Chapter

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[2] "[Practitioners attracted to performance art] all believed in an art of action – in creating work in which the audience was confronted by the physical presence of the artist in real time – and in an art form which ceased to exist the moment the performance was over." RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art since the 60s*, (London: Thames and Hundson, 1998), p.15.
Referring to the influence performance art had on theatre she writes: "The avant-garde art world of the 1960s was a strong magnet for those in theatre seeking a break from the psychological approach both to the audience and to acting that had been prevalent in the '50s. […] It was clear that this new performance-art theater had nothing whatsoever to do with even the most basic theatrical concerns: no script, no text, no narrative, no director, and especially no actors." Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art since the 60s*, p.64..
[3] "Influenced at one extreme by late 20th century Performance Art methodologies where fine artists, in a rejection of objects and markets, turned to their body as the site and material of their practice, and at the other by enquiries where artists broke the traditions of the circumstance and expectations of theatre […] Live Art is a generative force: to destroy pretence, to create sensory immersion, to shock, to break apart traditions of representation, to open different kinds of engagement with meaning. […] Live Art is about immediacy and reality […]." Lois Keidan, www.thisisliveart.co.uk/about_us/what_is_live_art.html [accessed 2009]
[4] "The drive to the live has long been the critical concern of performance and Live Art where the embodied event has been employed as a generative force: to shock, to destroy pretence, to break apart traditions of representation, to foreground the experiential, to open different kinds of engagement with meaning, to activate audiences." Adrian Heathfield, "Alive", in *LIVE: Art and Performance*, ed. by A. Heathfield, (London: Tate Publishing, 2004), p.7.
[5] "One prevalent concern – particularly significant to the question I would like to tackle in this chapter, that is, the question of a dance that initiates a critique of representation by insisting on the still, on the slow […] – is the interrogation of choreography's political ontology. […] The critique of representation is one of the main characteristics of early twentieth-century experimental performance, theatre and

One expands on this, giving more details on how not-dance carries forward some features developed by the Judson Church post-modern dance movement, which also claimed to be against any form of representation, as explained by Sally Banes. This characteristic of being against representation generates a tendency to reject text, since text is considered as dictating representation. In this sense, theatrical interpretation is made to look secondary and the rejection of text is seen as a way to give prevalence to the actual performance. Chapter Four raises the issues surrounding the paradigm of text versus performance as identified by W.B. Worthen and attempts to resolve them, such as Hans-Thies Lehmann's by broadening of the notion of text to encompass the whole theatre experience. For Lehmann, postdramatic theatre is no longer at the service of the written text, but text may still be embedded in the whole as part of its multiple layers of textualities. The paradigm in which text and performance are opposed to one another derives partly from Artaud, whose claim in his manifesto "The Theatre of Cruelty" that theatre should distance itself from the predominance of text has mainly been read as establishing an opposition between body and language.[7] In Chapter Four I reaffirm that Artaud's relation to text within the theatre is more paradoxical and problematic than a simple dichotomy opposing body to language. Even if Artaud's manifesto goes beyond this dichotomy, it has been taken for granted and recuperated as a model for practices, like performance art, which define themselves in reaction to a traditional theatre of representation. In discourses about performance art and body art it is frequently the

dance […]." André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the politics of movement*, (New York & London: Routledge, 2006), p.45.

[6] "[…] the politically progressive *Konzepttanz* experimentalists know how to examine the medium of dance, to lay bare the mechanics of the production process and negate its aesthetic modes of representation." Johannes Birringer, "Dance and Not Dance" in *Performing Arts Journal*, 80, (2005), 10-27 (p.21).

[7] For example, Edward Scheer writes that "Artaud sees actors as brutalised by representation and advises them to hang on to the moment through an 'inner force' which 'sustains' them and by which they rejoin 'that which survives forms and produces their continuation'. Similarly, language for Artaud has a secondary function in theatre. Instead of realizing a text on stage, Artaud would drive language itself to its limit and stage its dismantling, its disintegration." in *Antonin Artaud: A critical reader*, ed. by Edward Scheer, (London & NY: Routledge, 2004), p.4.
In his chapter on Artaud in *Deleuze and Performance* he affirms that "[t]he acceptance of the body such as it is, of life and the world such as they are, constitutes for Artaud a betrayal of the creative impulse, a betrayal of the active consciousness which would renew and sustain a vital idea of the world, and a betrayal of the infinite potentials of the body. […] Language is also an index of this abjection. To rely on an relentlessly second-hand language and to enunciate words which have already been chewed over by millions of other mouths is an abjection which is countered […] by Artaud's *glossolalia* or invented language." Edward Scheer, "I Artaud BwO: The Uses of Artaud's *To have done with the judgement of god*" in *Deleuze and Performance*, ed. by Laura Cull, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p.41.

case that prevalence has been given to the body over language. As shown further on in this introduction, it is the body which becomes the language in opposition to using a textual or verbal language. For Lea Vergine and RoseLee Goldberg, for example, the body is seen *as* language rather than being considered as *in relation to* language. This is not the case for Rebecca Schneider, however, in *The Explicit Body in Performance* where she considers the use of the body in feminist performance work in relation to mimesis and to meaning. She emphasizes the process and the strategy developed by such work rather than imposing a reading on it, which corresponds to the approach I adopt in this thesis.

My methodology is to interrelate with philosophical debates through an engagement in performance art rather than the other way around. The performance work which I consider to be related to some aspects of my thesis prompts me to read pertinent philosophical texts which treat various issues connected to language and the body. I comprehend these texts from a different viewpoint, which tentatively leads me to affirm that it is not the philosophical approach that helps me understand the performances which I have chosen to work with, but rather the opposite. The performances and how they deal with the concepts, or notions, of language, meaning and their relation to physicality, offer a new perspective from which to read such texts. Moreover, this allows me to make new links between performance art and some philosophical texts which, until now, have not necessarily been part of the overall theoretical discourse relating to this artistic field.

The performances which I have chosen to work with are often assigned to categories which classify and give labels to different types of contemporary performances, such as Live Art, not-dance or postdramatic theatre. Sometimes these categories feel arbitrary and the work which they mean to qualify could easily belong to one or another denomination, since their definitions overlap. As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter One, it is precisely the fact that this type of work seems to elude categorisation which engenders its specificity. Although I have to consider here the issue of denomination and categorisation of the work in which I am interested, it is not the principal concern of my thesis. My interest in these different performances lies in the way in which they envisage and deal with language, meaning, and their relation to the live body. It is the main criterion which links these works together in this thesis, and it is this that enables me to use them as a way of thinking

conceptually about language. Before discussing my views on the use of language in these different contemporary performances, I will survey the key critical writings about performance and body art focusing on how the issues of body and language have been addressed in this field up to the present.

If we consider critical writing about performance and body art, we can note that most of the key texts have been published between the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century and that the majority of the authors are women.[8] It is a fact that many of the critical writings in the field focused on the use of the body in performance art and body art. This is apparent in many of the books' titles: *Body Art and Performance: The Body as Language*,[9] *The Explicit Body in Performance*,[10] *The Artist's Body*,[11] *Extreme Bodies*,[12] etc. Most of the critical writing that I am dealing with here is addressing a large spectrum of work from the 1960s and 1970s onwards, so the critical approaches reflect still mainly the concerns of this work. The appearance of the artist's body in and as the work of art and its use as an artistic tool are among the most distinctive characteristics of performance art and body art. This explains both the necessity of developing a theoretical and critical discourse around this particular aspect of this type of work and a certain infatuation with the thematic and philosophical exploration which surrounds the use of the body in some extreme and visceral work of performance art. My aim here is to give a brief survey of the common theoretical discourse around performance art and body art, focusing especially on the relation they both have with the notion of language. I will then be able to affirm my position regarding this discourse and develop a new perspective on the use of the body relative to an apprehension of meaning and language by drawing on a selection of more recent works in performance, dance and theatre.

Lea Vergine's *Body Art and Performance: The Body as Language* is an anthology of the work done in this field through the 1970s in Europe. It starts with an essay which Lea Vergine wrote in 1974 and in which she adopts a phenomenological

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[8] It is interesting to note that many authors of theoretical writings about performance art are women since, as it will be developed further on, performance art in the 1960s and after has been a privileged mode of artistic expression for women and feminist artists. This is probably why women academics have been writing about the field and its artistic characteristics since it allows them to credit and value the work of other women in a time when the art world is still mainly considered as patriarchal.

[9] Lea Vergine, *Body Art and Performance: The Body as Language*, (Milan: Skira Editore, 2000)

[10] Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1997)

[11] Tracey Warr, *The Artist's Body*, (London & New York: Phaidon, 2000)

[12] Francesca Alfano Miglietti, *Extreme Bodies: The Use and Abuse of the Body in Art*, trans. by Anthony Shugaar, (Milan: Skira Editore, 2003)

and psychoanalytic perspective on the practice of body art. According to Vergine, body art is the vehicle for emotions and it is for this reason that it may be considered as a language. The body becomes a language in the sense that it expresses emotions or constitutes the site in which they are inscribed. She begins her essay by saying that

> [t]he body is being used as an art language by an ever greater number of contemporary painters and sculptors, and even though the phenomenon touches upon artists who represent different currents and tendencies, who use widely different art techniques, and who come from a variety of cultural and intellectual backgrounds, certain characteristics of this way of making art are nonetheless to be found in all of its manifestations.[13]

She interprets and "reads" this use of the body as a language which is supposed to express a profound lack and need for love. She affirms that

> [a]t the basis of Body Art and of all of the other operations presented in this book, one can discover the unsatisfied need for a love that extends itself without limit in time – the need to be loved for what one is and for what one wants to be – the need for a kind of love that confers unlimited rights – the need for what is called *primary love.* [14]

The use of the body as a means of language in body art reflects the need "to communicate something that has been previously felt but that is lived in the very moment of the communication".[15] Thus the artist becomes the object because "he is conscious of the process in which he is involved"[16] which is that

> the significant terms of this art are the things that are outside of us, our bodies, what happens *inside* of us and what happens *to* us. Objects have the task of being the proof that others are either *together* with us or not, and this is communicated to us by the physiognomy of objects. The relationship between the artist and the other is a question of being close or distant from the objects.[17]

For Vergine, many of the artists discussed in her book "treat their own body as a love object"[18] and thus they are able "to disclaim [their] aggressivity and to reprove not [themselves], but rather something else, the object of [their] aggressivity and the

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[13] L. Vergine, *Body Art and Performance: The Body as Language*, p.7.
[14] Ibid., p.7.
[15] Ibid., p.8.
[16] Ibid., p.15.
[17] Ibid., p.15.
[18] Ibid., p.19.

object of [their] affection, i.e. [their] body."[19] She considers that this allows some artists, like Gina Pane for example, the expression of a powerful "emotional discharge"[20] or the expulsion of "an internal menace that has been created by the pressure of an intolerable impulse; it is thus transformed into an external menace that can be more easily handled."[21] This means that "[t]he artists shift their problem from the subject to the object, or from the inside to the outside; qualities or feelings that they do not want to recognize as their own are projected away from the ego and situated elsewhere in other things or other people."[22] Vergine explains the notion of "body as a language" where the body is the site for the expression of emotions or actions that she interprets mainly through a psychoanalytic grid or relates to a psychopathology. The concept of language as such remains vague and mostly linked to the idea of communication through the live performance: if there is communication it is through the medium of a "language" of some sort.

RoseLee Goldberg's *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present*, published first in 1979 and then reprinted and expanded in 1988 and 2001, traces, as the title indicates, the history and influences of performance art from the beginning of the 20th century to the late 1990s, in the latest edition. The first half of the book is dedicated to avant-garde artistic movements which took place in Europe before the Second World War like Dada, Futurism, Bauhaus and Surrealism. In the second half she explores the impact these artistic currents have had on the evolution of contemporary dance and performance art in the US and Europe. It is constructed like an anthology with many examples of specific performances from different artists throughout the decades. In the chapter entitled "The Art of Ideas and the Media Generation 1968 to 2000", Goldberg mentions briefly the move towards using the body as an artistic tool. She says that

> [p]erformance in the last two years of the sixties and of the early seventies reflected conceptual art's rejection of traditional materials of canvas, brush or chisel, with performers turning to their own bodies as art material, just as Klein and Manzoni had done some years previously. For conceptual art implied the *experience* of time, space and material rather than their representation in the form of objects, and the body became the most direct medium of expression. Performance was therefore an ideal means to materialize art

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[19] Ibid., p.19.
[20] Ibid., p.21.
[21] Ibid., p.25.
[22] Ibid., p.25.

concepts and as such was the practice corresponding to many of those theories.[23]

In her later book, *Performance: Live Art since the 60s*, first published in 1998, she develops throughout, using different themes relative to performance art, this use of the body as a mode of artistic expression, mainly by presenting examples and anecdotes. She writes that for some artists "it was important to relinquish the heavy mantle of high art, to declare that everyday life was not only material for art, but was itself art"[24] and that "[t]here was an increasing desire to question and challenge the commodity value of art objects in the hands of art patrons, collectors and museum."[25] She refers to Pollock's Action Painting as an influence on the emergence of body art in the sixties. She says that "[t]he sheer physicality of painting, and the connection of the artist's body to canvas, led to numerous performances in which the body was viewed as an integral material of painting and vice-versa."[26] Goldberg argues that body art became a fertile soil to explore concepts from psychoanalysis to phenomenology:

> Body Art was a laboratory for studies of all sorts, from the psychoanalytical, to the behavioural to the spatial and perceptual. While the term "body language" was widely used by the media to refer to the signals that people unconsciously made to one another with their bodies, the academic community referred to "powerfields" – social pyschologist Kurt Lewin, described the waves of psychological tension rippling through any inhabited space. Of more unnerving concern, was the material which French philosophers of the late '60s, led by Gilles Deleuze, revealed in rigorous studies of psychoanalysis and literature about the metaphorical nature of masochism.[27]

Neither the popular term "body language" nor the psychoanalytical and philosophical one - "masochism" - are explained and developed any further in relation to performance art. Although she declares that "the notion of the body as a powerful weapon for redirecting our thoughts towards a preponderance of social ills – domestic violence, abuse, deathly plagues - has re-surfaced in the '90s,"[28] and that it has "the same immediate shock of the real as Burden or Pane's early work, with the

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[23] RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2006), p.153.
[24] RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art since the 60s*, p.16.
[25] Ibid., p.16.
[26] Ibid., p.17.
[27] Ibid., p.97.
[28] Ibid., p.99.

added jolt of blame for the inept political machines that turn too slowly to contain the tragedies of modern diseases",[29] her statements are brief and she never expands with further explanations on the terminology that she uses or the socio-political context that she refers to. Whereas, on the contrary, Kathy O'Dell adopts a political and psychoanalytical perspective on the practice of performance art in the 70s and Peggy Phelan, Rebecca Schneider and Amelia Jones look at the practices of performance art and body art from a feminist perspective.

In *Contract with the Skin: Masochism, Performance Art and the 1970s* Kathy O'Dell clearly defines her methodological approach to writing about performance art. She discusses the work of five performance artists, Chris Burden, Gina Pane, Vito Acconci, Marina Abramovic and Ulay, in a political and psychoanalytical frame of interpretation. She writes:

> Why, I asked myself, would artists push their body to such extreme physical and psychological limits? Intuitively, I knew that women's rights, gay rights, civil rights and the Vietnam War were all part of the reasons. But I also sensed that the masochistic bond between performers and audience was a key to the situation.[30]

She refers to Vergine's text, saying that

> Vergine ranges across a wide variety of discourses that she claims influenced artists' extreme manipulation of their bodies. She quotes psychoanalysts, philosophers, and phenomenologists but resists embracing any single theory or methodology to explain the work. For example, she makes passing reference to the dynamics of masochism but quickly elides further discussion [...]. Vergine gives a nod in the direction of a discourse on subject-object relations and leaves open the possibility of making necessary connections between these general relations and the more specific subject (and object) of masochism.[31]

O'Dell analyses the work of the five artists mentioned above, explaining how and why it might be regarded as masochistic. She sustains the claims that

> [b]y the early 1970s, numerous performances artists, in various countries, had begun using their bodies in highly unconventional ways in performance artworks. Though from very different backgrounds, all these artists seemed to share a common set of

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[29] Ibid., p.99.
[30] Kathy O'Dell, *Contract with the Skin: Masochism, Performance Art and the 1970s*, (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p.xii.
[31] Ibid., p.8-9.

concerns that can now be regarded as typical masochist performance.[32]

According to O'Dell, "in the work of masochist performance artists of the 1970s, the body and its actions served metaphoric roles."[33] She discusses the metaphorical and communicative functions of the body mainly in relation to the political contexts of the Vietnam War and post-May 1968 and within both Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytical frameworks of analysis, as well as a philosophical one. Regarding each of the artists' work on whom she focuses her analysis there is a relation to language. In *Talking about Similarities*, Ulay, she writes, "reduces language in his manner, he forces viewers to limit their perceptions of the body to the skin and its communicative function"[34] and "that [Ulay's and Abramovic's] collusion also demonstrates that this understanding of the body is inextricably linked to an awareness that only language can deliver a practical and potentially beneficial assumption of sameness between individuals."[35] She affirms that in Gina Pane's *Autoportrait(s)*

> her body functioned like a linguistic entity- that is her hand-writing was a kind of sign language that the audience 'understood.' Like any understanding, this interpretation stemmed from prior participation in the systems of representation that make up culture.[36]

The pain inflicted upon her body "must be understood as a metaphor of the oppressive level of institutional and political domination in the early 1970s."[37] Existing verbal language participates in this domination so it becomes necessary to find an alternative mode of expression to communicate a critical position towards a form of social oppression. O'Dell writes that

> [a]rtists of this area saw problems in the oppressive frameworks that shaped their lives as artists and citizens […]. In response, masochism provided an appropriate methodology, because as Deleuze rightly argues, masochism always embodies a critique. […] Burden and others acted out of a desperate lack of viable means to critique these institutionalized facts.[38]

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[32] Ibid., p.2.
[33] Ibid., p.9.
[34] Ibid., p.34.
[35] Ibid., p.34.
[36] Ibid., p.47.
[37] Ibid., p.50.
[38] Ibid., p.55.

In *Reception Room*, Vito Acconci, rolling on a bed with his naked body wrapped in a white sheet, uses verbal language recorded on a soundtrack. According to O'Dell, he does this "both to criticize himself masochistically […] and to demonstrate how language is the only source of full communication."[39] She explains that

> Acconci wrapped language around his body just as he did his white sheet, generally hiding meaning, sometimes (almost) exposing it. In doing so, he showed that what is really at stake, what constitutes the greatest consideration – in masochism as in the proceedings of contract – is, in fact, the human body.[40]

Although the focus is put on the body, it seems almost impossible to dissociate or separate it from a notion of language. O'Dell adds that "Acconci's bed piece, like Pane's or Burden's, declared the necessity to recognizing the primacy of the body, whether it is visible or invisible, in systems of representation – especially language."[41] Even if it is the primacy of the body which is claimed, the overall difficulty resides in extracting it from the systems of representation and thus language. Since at the very core of any action of or on the body – be it masochism or something else – seems to be an act of communication, it becomes thus inevitably related to a form of language, even if it is a marginalised one. O'Dell comes to the conclusion that these masochist performances were linked to the political context of the Vietnam War and she explains "how masochistic performance artists, in particular, were affected, how they moved to create metaphors for a type of negotiation […] that might bring balance to the war-induced instability they were experiencing."[42] The end of the 1970s does not mark the end of masochistic performances though: "[i]t did diminish in the United States for a time in the late 1970s, only to reescalate in the 1980s and explode in the early 1990s."[43] One of the reasons she invokes for this recrudescence of masochistic performances is the start of the AIDS epidemic. According to her, "[m]asochistic performance models resurfaced in the late 1980s, […], because of the need for negotiation become as strong during the war on culture and the war on AIDS as it had been during the Vietnam War."[44] Her conclusion corroborates Goldberg's statement about the recrudescence of this type of body art performance in the 1990s,

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[39] Ibid., p.56-57.
[40] Ibid., p.57.
[41] Ibid., p.57.
[42] Ibid., p.75.
[43] Ibid., p.76.
[44] Ibid., p.78.

but O'Dell's development and explanation of the concept of masochism in relation to this kind of work defines more clearly the ways in which they constitute a historical response to socio-political circumstances.

In relation to the notion of the wounded body Francesca Alfano Miglietti, in *Extreme Bodies: The Use and Abuse of the Body in Art*, adopts a mainly Foucauldian perspective to analyse the diverse handling and manipulations of the body in visual and performance art practice. In her introduction, she writes that

> [t]he book analyses the body, which has always been manipulated, by its relationship with cultural, religious and political institutions, right up to the threshold of a self-mutation. A special body. Exploration of a body as the construction of forms of discourse, obligations and the instruments of control.[45]

From the wounded body to the cyberbody she explains how the body has been the site for inscriptions of socio-political power and how the use and abuse of the body in contemporary visual and performance art exposes the struggle of the body, and thus of the self, to extract themselves from this yoke and to enter a process of reconstruction. She explains that

> art chose the body, a body that had been used, usurped, abused, displayed, a body that had been cut, wounded, dramatised, the body as loss of self, the body of Antonin Artaud and the acts of cruelty, the body without organs of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, bio-power as the cultural disciplining of the bodies of Foucault, the body that struggles, rebels, that indicates the escape from the coercions of power, indicating the relations that are exercised by powers and knowledges over bodies.[46]

She refers to the actions and performances of Vito Acconci, Gina Pane, Chris Burden, Arnulf Rainer, among others, and how their works "demolish the conventions that regulate social relations, thus beginning to shatter the taboos that insist that public and private should be different and separate."[47] The body becomes not only the artistic material, but a manifesto. She identifies a decision to make "flesh, skin, one's own senses the tools of communication, the substitution of the body itself for the written pages and lectures."[48] This is more precisely what she says about Gina Pane's work and its relation to language:

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[45] Francesca Alfano Miglietti, *Extreme Bodies: The Use and Abuse of the Body in Art*, p.10.
[46] Ibid., p.15.
[47] Ibid., p.19.
[48] Ibid., p.20.

> With Gina Pane, the private became public in a dimension that was poetic even more than political, she established a personal autonomy in which the wound allowed a language, a communication, a dialogue, that would break into the absent relations amongst beings whose existences were separated by conventions, choices and references. All of Gina Pane's work seems directed toward the creation of a suspension of time, a crystallisation of language: all of her energy was concentrated into a redefinition of the world beginning from the communication amongst living beings.[49]

Gina Pane's bloodshed takes part in the "redefinition of the world" through communication, whilst Franko B's bloodshed, which Miglietti understands as renewing and developing the trajectory established by Pane's, involves "an act of inverting the internal/external relationship of the body, the expulsion of one's own liquids onto the 'external façade', the external aspect of things",[50] and thus takes part in the performance of "an act of reappropriation and reconstruction of self."[51] Although the "redefinition of the world" and the "reconstruction of self" are inevitably linked with one another, Miglietti notes that

> the body returns to being a protagonist of the contemporary artistic scene, in a geography of mutations that repropose it as a possibility of self-production: the truth of a body that emerges more and more in its acceptation as a cultural construct subject to a perennial and rapid transformation; if for the Body Art of the 1970s the body constituted a place to be explored in its most recondite recesses, it now becomes a decision to be faced. […] A body that takes into account the changes that emerge from the social and cultural fabric and which becomes a social body that enters and mutates the individual body.[52]

So, the central idea in both remains one of transformation: "[a] modifying intervention and an intervention on the body constitute the principal poles of the semantic structures of the word culture."[53] This means that any modifying intervention implies an intervention on the structure of language. Miglietti's final chapter, "Extraneous Bodies", deals with biotechnologies and cyborgs as means of translating the body into a computerized language or abstracting it again into a different sort of code. She writes that "[b]iotechnologies become a process of textualisation of the body as a problem of code, a form of 'sequential ordering' of human codes, inasmuch as a

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[49] Ibid., p.28.
[50] Ibid., p.30.
[51] Ibid., p.32.
[52] Ibid., p.29.
[53] Ibid., p.88.

transcription (of the human) by purely technological means."[54] A result of this is the cyborg which is "the ideas of bodies that are being produced in this period: the technologies of communication and biotechnologies constitute the principal means of their reconstruction."[55] There is a shift from a visceral form of communication to a cybernetic one, but the issues of redefinition and reconstruction remain.

Peggy Phelan, in her well-known essay "The ontology of performance: representation without reproduction", uses psychoanalytic and feminist theories of representation to support an argument that performance "is the art form which most fully understands the generative possibilities of disappearance."[56] She argues that performance art cannot be adequately represented even through writing. She explains that

> [w]riting, an activity which relies on the reproduction of the Same […] for the production of meaning, can broach the frame of performance, but cannot mimic an art which is nonreproductive. The mimicry of speech and writing, the strange process by which we put words in each other's mouths and other's words in our own, relies on a substitutional economy in which equivalencies are assumed and re-established. Performance refuses this system of exchange and resists the circulatory economy fundamental to it.[57]

She adds that "[p]erformance's challenge to writing is to discover a way for repeated words to become performative utterances rather than […] constative utterances."[58] Since the main characteristic of performance art is the presence of living bodies, one moves "from the grammar of the words to the grammar of the body"[59] and thus "from the realm of metaphor to the realm of metonymy."[60] Peggy Phelan notes that

> [m]etaphor works to secure a vertical hierarchy of value and is reproductive; it works by erasing dissimilarity and negating difference; it turns two into one. Metonymy is additive and associative; it works to secure a horizontal axis of contiguity and displacement. […] In performance, the body is metonymic of self, of character, of voice, of "presence".[61]

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[54] Ibid., p.163.
[55] Ibid., p.163.
[56] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked :The Politics of Performance*, (London & NY: Routledge, 2001), p.27.
[57] Ibid., p.149.
[58] Ibid., p.149.
[59] Ibid., p.150.
[60] Ibid., p.150.
[61] Ibid., p.150.

The above statement differs diametrically from O'Dell's assertion that the actions perpetrated on the body should be understood as metaphors, which would thus secure their reading. By moving from the notion of metaphor to metonymy Phelan opens up a dimension of multiplicity and instability. According to Phelan, "[p]erformance uses the performer's body to pose a question about the inability to secure the relation between subjectivity and the body *per se*; […]."[62] Her interest in the metonymic use of the body in performance is primarily that it resists the reproduction of metaphor and especially the metaphor of gender. Regarding the aspect of gender, she asks a series of questions about women in relation to the representative systems, such as: "What aspects of the bodies and languages of women remain outside of metaphor and inside the historical real? […] Are they perhaps surviving in another (auto)reproductive system?"[63] In this feminist perspective she asserts that "[p]erformance is an attempt to value that which is nonreproductive, nonmetaphorical."[64]

In *The Explicit Body in Performance* Rebecca Schneider pursues a feminist analysis of the "literal" use of the body by postmodernist feminist performers. Towards the end of her introduction she specifies that she "do[es] not intend to suggest that [her] interpretations here are the artists' own, nor even that [her] interpretation might fit these artists' intentions"[65] and she adds that "[m]eaning is a social affair, a matter of exchange, and – in the line of the political purpose of feminist criticism – 'meaning' can be a matter of change."[66] Her choice of the term "explicit body" is "a means of addressing the ways [feminist performance art] aims to explicate bodies in social relations."[67] Since the Latin origin from the word "explicit", *explicare*, means "to unfold", she explains that

> [u]nfolding the body, as if pulling back velvet curtains to expose a stage, the performance artists in this book peel back layers of signification that surround their bodies like ghosts at a grave. Peeling at signification, bringing ghosts to visibility, they are interested to expose not an originary, true, or redemptive body, but the sedimented layers of signification themselves.[68]

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[62] Ibid., p.151.
[63] Ibid., p.151.
[64] Ibid., p.152.
[65] R. Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance*, p.9.
[66] Ibid., p.9.
[67] Ibid., p.2.
[68] Ibid., p.2.

The issue with feminist performance art is not to show the body as such, but to deconstruct the meanings that have been imposed on the female body. According to Schneider, the "explicit body has become the *mise en scene* for a variety of feminist artists."[69] She writes that

> [m]aking any body explicit *as socially marked*, and foregrounding the historical, political, cultural, and economic issues involved in its marking, is a strategy at the base of many contemporary feminist explicit body works. Manipulating the body itself as *mise en scene*, such artists make *their own bodies* explicit as the stage, canvas or screen across which social agendas of privilege and disprivilege have been manipulated.[70]

And she also says that

> [c]hallenging habitual modalities of vision which buttress socio-cultural assumption about relations between subject and object, explicit body performance artists have deployed the material body to collide literal renderings against the Symbolical Order of meaning.[71]

The notion of meaning is at the core of the use of the body in feminist performance, not only to challenge "who has the right to author the explicit body in representation", but mainly "who determines the *explication* of that body, what and how it *means* […]."[72] The body performances that Schneider discusses aim to make explicit or render the body literal and in doing so they "disrupt and make apparent the fetishistic prerogatives of the symbol by which a thing, such as a body or a word, stands by convention for something else"[73] and "interrogate the notion that relations between sign and signified are fundamentally arbitrary."[74] This is a strategy for disrupting representation and exposing the *mise en scene.* The explicit body performers "call attention to [the] illusion by collapsing the distance between sign and signified […]."[75] In her conclusion Schneider comes back to the tension inscribed in the female / feminist use of the body in re-presentation and to the tension between the literal and the symbolic. She writes:

> When we burst out of the given habits of vision, given modes of apprehension, we collapse a terror-marked host of symbolic

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[69] Ibid., p.2.
[70] Ibid., p.20.
[71] Ibid., p.3.
[72] Ibid., p.3.
[73] Ibid., p.6.
[74] Ibid., p.6.
[75] Ibid., p.23.

signposts. We find ourselves straddling the divide between the
symbolic order and the literal renderings that it disavows, disallows,
blinds and secret(e)s. Thus, we invoke a certain psychosis, a
hysteria certainly – an encounter with the "unnatural" as we press
ourselves into an inspection of the cracks […]. For women, figured
historically as always already different, aberrant, cracked, this project
is deeply unsettling in its classic double bind. Figured as already
aberrant, different, we potentially illustrate and prop that inscription
by courting aberrance, difference – by promoting cracks. Explicating
while illustrating this double bind is the project of feminist
performance artists of the explicit body who present their bodies as
stretched across this paradox like canvases across the framework of
the Symbolic Order.[76]

Amelia Jones in *Body Art / Performing the Subject* exposes how body art and
its exploration of the notion of subjectivity can be viewed as part of postmodernism,
thus distancing herself from conventional art history and criticism. According to Jones
the artist's body embodies first of all the subject, and therefore using it as artistic
material corresponds not only to an exploration of physicality, but also of subjectivity.
She writes that

Body art is viewed here as a set of performative practices that,
through such intersubjective engagements, instantiate the dislocation
or discentering of the Cartesian subject of modernism. This
dislocation is […] the most profound transformation constitutive of
what we have come to call postmodernism.[77]

Jones, adopting a poststructuralist and feminist point of view, argues that "[b]y
surfacing the effects of the body as an integral component (a material enactment) of
the self, the body artist strategically unveils the dynamic through which the artistic
body is occulted (to ensure its phallic privilege) in conventional art history and
criticism."[78] She focuses on the body as being the "locus of a 'disintegrated' or
dispersed 'self'".[79] This conceptual and physical embodiment turns out to be not only
a philosophical gesture but also a political one. According to Jones, body art

places the body/self within the realm of an aesthetic *as a political
domain* (articulated through the aetheticization of the particularized
body/self, itself embedded in the social) and so unveils the hidden
body that secured the authority of modernism. Again, in this regard
body art is *not* "inherently" critical […] nor […] inherently reactionary,

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[76] Ibid., p.184.
[77] Amelia Jones, *Body Art / Performing the Subject*, (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota
Press, 1998), p.1.
[78] Ibid., p.5.
[79] Ibid., p.13.

> but rather – in its opening up of the interpretative relation and its active solicitation of spectatorial desire – provides the possibility for radical engagements that can transform the way we think about meaning and subjectivity (both the artist's and our own).[80]

It is not a question of determining whether body art generates a language or a kind of "body language", but rather of envisaging how it might change the perceptions and preconceived ideas we have about "meaning", which becomes in a way as "disintegrated" and "dispersed", as the notion of "self", and thus, susceptible of being redefined or defined anew. Jones offers

> a new understanding of the ways in which body art, in particular, can radicalize our understanding of postmodernism as not only a new mode of visual production, but also a dramatically revised paradigm of the subject and of how meaning and value are determined in relation of the work of art.[81]

In developing this notion that in body art neither subject nor meaning are fixed, she explains how "[b]ody art and performance art have been defined as constitutive of postmodernism because of their fundamental subversion of modernism's assumption that fixed meanings are determinable through the formal structure of the work alone."[82] The meaning is not predefined by the work itself, nor by the body:

> The "unique" body of the artist in the body art work only has meaning by the virtue of its contextualisation within the codes of identity that accrue to the artist's name/body. Thus, this body is not self-contained in its meaningfulness; it is a body/self, relying not only on an authorial context of "signature" but also on a receptive context in which the interpreter or viewer may interact with it. This context is precisely the point (always already in place) at which the body becomes a "subject".[83]

Subject and meaning become unfixed and changeable because they do not only depend on the formal structure, or the body structure, of the work any longer, but rather on the receptive context. It means that there is an external input to the definition of the embodied subject and thus, to the possible meaning of the work. Part of the risk and the innovation of such work resides in the fact that it defies the common stability attached to the notion of subject and allows subjectivity to be

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[80] Ibid., p.13-14.
[81] Ibid., p.15.
[82] Ibid., p.21.
[83] Ibid., p.34.

considered as a concept that can suffer multiple (re)-definitions. Jones mentions the tension involved in a practice that, though being narcissistic in its exploration of subjectivity, remains entirely dependent on and bonded to the external other in order to defy the notion of a fixed and stable subject. She writes that "[s]ubjectivity – as we understand it in the postmodern condition – is performed in relation to an other yet is paradoxically entirely narcissistic. In its 'other-directness,' it opens itself dangerously to the other, but always in an attempt to rethink itself."[84] No longer is the body exposed as an impermeable envelope whose limits are supposed to prevent the subject from dispersing itself. The skin is revealed not as a barrier concealing the inside from the outside, but rather as a permeable and porous material which allows leakage. The very notion of fixed meaning is defied by the presentation of a body/self whose limits are blurred and revealed as ones which can be trespassed.

Amelia Jones and Tracey Warr collaborated in 2000 on an anthology on body art entitled *The Artist's Body*, which contains a series of significant pictures and texts. This book is divided into different thematic sections, each of whom gathers a series of photographs of the use of the body by several international artists. It is introduced by a survey written by Amelia Jones, in which she talks about the evolution of body art illustrated by the thematic division chosen. The preface is written by Tracey Warr; in her text she comes back to the notion of language and "body as a language" in relation to body art. She writes:

> Artists making performance work have thought to demonstrate that the represented body has a language and that this language of the body, like other semantic systems, is unstable. Compared to verbal language or visual symbolism, the 'parts of speech' of corporeal language are relatively imprecise. The body as language is at once inflexible and too flexible. Much can be expressed, whether deliberately or not, through the body's behaviour. […] Widely contradictory reactions to the work of Chris Burden, Orlan, Gina Pane or Hannah Wilke are evidence of the difficulty of controlling and using the body as a language. […] No amount of critical contextualizing or artists' insistence on intention can stabilize the language of the body.[85]

In this statement, Warr reaffirms the unstable quality of "the language of the body" and underlines that any attempt to stabilize it into a fixed and determined meaning is in vain. She addresses a form of criticism of the attempt made to impose an

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[84] Ibid., p.46.
[85] T. Warr, *The Artist's Body*, p.13.

interpretation and thus a fixed meaning on this type of work. The "language of the body" remains a notion which seems to be impermeable to meaning, or maybe permeable to many different and unstable meanings, and whose problematic use is evoked, but not thoroughly developed.

In his introductory article "Alive" in *LIVE: Art and Performance*, a publication generated by the Live Culture Event at Tate Modern in 2003, Adrian Heathfield draws a perspective on the practice of Live Art focusing on the notions of time, space and body which characterise it. Heathfield's use of the term 'live art' rather than 'body art', used by most writers addressed here, may reflect both his historical and institutional situation: he is addressing work in a context which may be seeking to dissociate its practices from the tradition of 1970s body art. The issue of definitional categories will be addressed more fully in Chapter One. Heathfield explains that "the charging of attention used by many contemporary Live artists brings the spectator into the present moment of the making and unmaking of meaning"[86] and that "we are more like witnesses than spectators, engaged in a vibrant relay between experience and thought, struggling in a charged present to accommodate and resolve the imperative to make meanings from what we see."[87] Heathfield focuses on the notion of process on both sides: the performer doing something while undoing its plausible meaning and the "witnesses" trying to make or reconstruct a possible meaning. It is not a question of language nor of "language of the body", but rather of the potential construction anew of meanings. Heathfield reaffirms that "twentieth-century artists increasingly stepped *inside* the frame, using their own bodies as sites of experimentation and expression."[88] He adds that "[p]erformance explores the paradoxical status of the body as art: treating it as an object within a field of material relations with other objects, and simultaneously questioning its objectification by deploying it as a disruption of and resistance to stasis and fixity."[89] It is this refusal of allowing the body to be seen and perceived as a fixed entity that allows the "making and unmaking of meaning". So, the

> performing body is often presented as a site of contestation between
> two opposing dynamics: as a passive recipient of inscription by social
> institutions, cultural discourses, ideologies and orders of power, and

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[86] Adrian Heathfield, "Alive", in *LIVE: Art and Performance*, p.9.
[87] Ibid., p.9.
[88] Ibid., p.11.
[89] Ibid., p.11.

as an active agent through which identity and social relation may be tested, re-articulated and re-made.[90]

Thus, Heathfield touches on the notion of reconstruction of an identity or a relation which would allow a new or different meaning.

Lois Keidan, from The Live Art Development Agency which promotes and supports Live Art throughout the UK and abroad and which co-organised the Live Culture Event at Tate Modern, defines Live Art in the following terms:

Live Art is now recognised as one of the most vital and influential of creative spaces in the UK. Live Art is a research engine, driven by artists who are working across forms, contexts and spaces to open up new artistic models, new languages for the representation of ideas and new strategies for intervening in the public sphere.[91]

She insists on the fact that Live Art "is not a description of an artform or a discipline, but a cultural strategy to include experimental processes and experiential practices that might otherwise be excluded from established curatorial, cultural and critical frameworks."[92] According to her, "Live Art is about immediacy and reality: creating spaces to explore the experience of things, the ambiguities of meaning and the responsibilities of our individual agency."[93] In her extended article "From Performance to Live Art: New Approaches and Contexts in the UK", published in *ArtPress2*, she comments on the use of the body in some Live Art performances. Like Heathfield, she is addressing work of the 1990s and beyond, as distinct from those earlier practices usually discussed under the heading of 'body art'. Keidan writes:

In their employment of the body as an active, and often transgressive, site Live Art practices are central to contemporary debates around the politics of the body. In visceral, bleeding-based work such as Franko B's *I Miss You!* and Kira O'Reilly's *Wet Cup*, Live Art can be seen as a force to destroy pretence, to create sensory immersion, to shock, to break apart traditions of representation, to open different kinds of engagement with meaning.[94]

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[90] Ibid., p.12.
[91] Lois Keidan, *What is Live Art ?*, http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/about_us/what_is_live_art.html [accessed April 2008].
[92] Ibid., http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/about_us/what_is_live_art.html
[93] Ibid., http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/about_us/what_is_live_art.html
[94] Lois Keidan, "From Performance to Live Art : New Approaches and Contexts in the UK", *ArtPress 2*, n° 7, (2008), 98-106 (p.103).

It seems that in the past few years the critical discourse around performance art and Live Art has moved from the notion of "language of the body" to focus on the question of "meaning": making or unmaking meaning and different ways to apprehend meaning. Lois Keidan and Daniel Brine wrote in their article "Fluid Landscape" that "Live Art is an expansive body of approaches offering audiences immersive experiences, engaging them as complicit partners in the making and reading of meaning."[95] The construction, or the reconstruction, of meaning becomes then part of the Live Art process and a collective experience.

In all these different theories and critical writings about performance art, body art and Live Art, we seem to move from the notions of language and "language of the body" to the concepts of "meaning" and the construction, or reconstruction of "meaning". The construction of meaning refers to the idea of the construction or the creation of a language, but perhaps even more to the notion of text and writing: Lois Keidan talks about the "*reading* of meaning". Most performance art and body art work does not rely on any text, although I will argue in Chapters Four and Six that they perform a type of writing. The question of the use of text has been a critical one for the theatre of the mid- and late 20th century, often now called postdramatic theatre. I will draw some parallels between performance art and Live Art practices and some characteristics of postdramatic theatre, especially in relation to the use of the body and the concept of writing. One of the burning questions in terms of theatrical creation and the fact that it continues to be mainly based on texts is whether theatre existed before the invention of writing. The idea that it did is sometimes taken as a way of asserting a kind of primacy for a non-textual theatre, and casting the text and writing (and language in general) as a later and possibly extraneous addition to the form. This idea appears in those arguments about theatre that specifically wish to return the theatre to some kind of expressive authenticity, usually located in the 'body'.

In his book *Postdramatic Theatre* Hans-Thies Lehmann asserts without taking any critical distance that "theatre existed first: arising from ritual, taking up the form of mimesis through dance, and developing into a full-fledged behaviour and practice

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[95] Lois Keidan & Daniel Brine, "Fluid Landscapes", in *Live Culture*, ed. by Adrian Heathfield, (London: Tate Publishing, 2003), p.4.

before the advent of writing."[96] Such an assertion has to be challenged especially given the context of Lehmann's argument, which makes a clear distinction between theatre and drama and their potential uses and purposes. Eli Rozik, for example, in *The Roots of Theatre*, offers a counter-argument to what is, in effect, the School of Cambridge theory on the origins of theatre,[97] challenging the commonplace idea that theatre originated from the practice of ritual by first clearly defining the way in which they differ. He writes that

> [w]hereas ritual is a mode of action in the real world, theatre is a kind of medium (i.e., a particular system of signification and communication). […] Ritual and theatre are mutually independent: ritual can use different media, including theatre; and theatre may or may not describe rituals. Theatre may even create fictional rituals.[98]

Since theatre is defined as a medium it is considered as "an instrument of thinking, articulating, and communicating thoughts to others, similar to and no less efficient than natural language."[99] Rozik then explains the respective purposes and specificity of ritual and theatre in their social environment. So, "whereas ritual basically aims at affecting states of affairs in the divine or another sphere, theatre art only aims at affecting the perception of states of affairs or, rather, thoughts about them."[100] If theatre is defined as a medium of reflection and communication, a vehicle for ideas, then it can be associated with the practice of writing. Theatre is thus producing a text, whether it includes actual words and speech or not. Rozik comes to the conclusion that "[e]ven if ritual employs a theatrical text as part of its practice, and subordinates it to its particular aim, the medium itself cannot originate from such a particular use of

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[96] Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. by Karen Jürs-Munby, (London & NY: Routledge, 2006), p. 46.

[97] The key figure of this group, also called the "Cambridge Ritualists", was Jane Harrison. Julie Stone Peters writes in her article "Jane Harrison and the Savage Dionysus: Archeological Voyages, Ritual Origins, Anthropology, and the Modern Theatre": "As a crucial contributor to the intellectual foundations of theatrical modernism in England, Harrision was pivotal in the transformation of theatre from the narrative and socially mimetic institution that it had been from the Renaissance into the anti-mimetic organ it became for the twentieth-century avant-garde. As important, her work offered a model for modern theatre historiography: challenging the written text as privileged vehicle for performance knowledge and documentation positioning the artefact as the central actor in the symbolic drama of theatre history, and showing theatre history to be intimately linked to the broader history of human performance. She was thus instrumental in formulating the twentieth-century conception of theatre as part of a broader continuum of performance practices, to be studied in relation to one another." in *Modern Drama* , 51: 1 (Spring 2008)

[98] Eli Rozik, *The Roots of Theatre: Rethinking Ritual and Other Theories of Origin*, (Iowa City: Iowa University Press, 2002), p.4.

[99] Ibid., p.22.

[100] Ibid., p.23.

it. The use of the medium of theatre logically presupposes its existence."[101] The suggestion that ritual and theatre are two entities which are independent of each other does not rule out the idea that theatre pre-existed the advent of linguistic writing. Defining theatre as a medium of communication does not necessarily mean that it uses written texts. Rozik qualifies it as "similar to and no less efficient than natural language" meaning that theatre should be envisaged as a system of its own, elaborating its own form of writing, its own form of "rhapsodising": bringing together different semiotic elements into its own particular song. This idea of theatre as a medium which can be associated with a form of writing would have served Lehmann's argument. For not only does he acknowledge that the elements which define the specificity of ritualistic theatre, even if the latter were more linked to gestures and dance, formed a sort of "text" which remained distinct from the composition of dramatic texts, but also he redefines theatre as an entity independent from drama and thus capable of creating its own "text". Using the theatrical medium as such is one of the characteristics of postdramatic theatre.

Rozik's idea of theatre as "an instrument of thinking, articulating, and communicating thoughts to others, similar and no less efficient than natural language" can also very well apply to performance art. Although dramatic "text" is strongly rejected in postdramatic theatre and "text" as such in some of the performance and live art practices, including of course, body art, there are several issues concerning language and meaning addressed in the critical theories about these practices. In my survey of critical writing about performance art and body art, it appears that the body very often becomes the "text" to be read and on which to impose a meaning. The body is "an act of language", a metaphor, a metonymy, the canvas on which social agendas are inscribed, a language impossible to stabilise, etc. Such statements secure the idea that this type of work creates a language to be understood, a text to be deciphered and a meaning to be found. Allucquére Rosanne Stone refers to this issue when she writes that:

> we make meaning by acts of reading. We read the body as a text; we attempt to render it legible, we develop elaborate location technologies to fix the body's meaning within a precise system of cultural beliefs and expectations; but the most interesting bodies

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[101] Ibid., p.27

escape this attempt to locate them within a predefined meaning structure.[102]

It is the second part of this statement which interests me here. My project is not to try to read or impose a meaning on these bodies which escape predefined meaning, but rather to explore and emphasise the process engaged in this type of work and the philosophical concepts and thinking to which they relate. My research also focuses on the notions of "language" and "meaning", aiming to see how these notions can be attached to these practices in a conceptual way rather than in an analytical one. By this I mean that rather than using the notions of "language" and "meaning" to analyse the work and to give it a sense, or even force a sense onto it, I want to see how the work envisages these notions of "language" and "meaning". My interest resides in understanding not only what some of these works do to these notions, but also how they consider "language" and "meaning" as philosophical concepts which are not fixed entities and becoming thus concepts which can be thought anew or thought differently as any philosophical concept. The conceptual proposal remains malleable; subject to multiple deconstructions and reconstructions. My reflection is triggered by statements such as Heathfield's when he says that Live Art is the moment when the spectators witness "the making and unmaking of meaning"[103] or Keidan's saying that Live Art can be seen "to open different kinds of engagement with meaning."[104] What is the process that results in undoing meaning?

This thesis is constructed in three parts. Each part offers a reflection on the common ideas disseminated about Live Art and postdramatic theatre, i.e. that these practices reject the notion of mimesis as it is supposed to represent reality, that they reject text in favour of a phenomenological language and that they produce a form of non-sense which should be translated into meaning. Each of these statements will be problematized. I will argue that Live Art is producing mimesis even if it works against representation and although its actions are performed for real. It does not represent reality, but neither does it present the Real. It is producing a version of the "Real" which is the definition of mimesis. I will then argue that if these practices create a phenomenological language, then it relies on a form of writing that is being produced

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[102] Allucquére Rosanne Stone, "Speaking of the Medium: Marshall McLuhan Interviews Allucquére Rosanne Stone", in *Orlan: This is my body… This is my software…* (London: Black Dog, 1996), p.46.
[103] A. Heathfield, "Alive", in *LIVE: Art and Performance*, p.9.
[104] L. Keidan, "From Performance to Live Art : New Approaches and Contexts in the UK", p.103.

live by the work. Finally, I will propose that the non-sense constructed by this writing process should not be forced into a meaning, but should be read as a fluid linguistics, which in some instances will be concretely a linguistics of fluids. By this I intend to point out that the meaning of the constructed non-sense will never be fixed nor unique. The work only becomes meaningful because it remains permeable to meanings. These three steps all participate in the "undoing of meaning"; relying on a process involving destruction within construction to then allow reconstruction. Mimesis, logos and sense need to be taken apart before these concepts can be thought anew. It is the rigidity of the conventional systems of apprehension which has to become permeable to allow a fluid multiplicity of meanings.

Throughout this thesis, I use a series of key terms which recur in the chapters. In Chapter Two, I define at length the concept of mimesis, explaining how this word contains at the same time the notions of imitation and of imagination, thus always involving a part of creativity. In Part II, it is necessary to distinguish clearly between the concept of language, which is the faculty to communicate which can happen at a physical, psychological and psychic level, and the linguistic notion of *la langue. La langue* is the system of signs, the principle of classification, which allows spoken and written language. In contrast to language, *la langue* is an linguistically organized structure which is usually meant to produce sense, although it does not have to be necessarily the case. However, the philosophical concept of logos, from the Greek meaning "speech, word" as well as "reason", implies a notion of sense and rationality. It carries the idea that reason and reasoning are held within a linguistic structure. In Chapter Four, I make a distinction between the notion of text as a written document, which can be either interpreted or reproduced within a performance, and Barthes' concept of "Text" which he defines as "a process of demonstration".[105] This concept implies that the "Text" can emerge during the performance and can be composed of any of its components: words, sounds, gestures, images, etc. and depends more on the audience's reading than on an existing pre-written text. Using the same approach, writing is considered as not being confined to the necessity of producing a written text. It is rather envisaged outside logos as being able to compose a "Text" independently of words reproducing speech. Speech, which is the linguistic equivalent of "*parole*", is defined as the articulate utterances of words or sentences. It

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[105] Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text", in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. by R.Howard, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p.157.

is embedded in *la langue*, reproducing existing words under the dictation of logos. In Chapter Five, I develop the notion of non-sense,[106] focusing especially on the Deleuze's philosophical concept of "deep non-sense". Deep non-sense refers to a state of mixture in which body and *la langue* merge and the subject is engulfed by the body again. Another phenomenon related to non-sense is glossolalia, which is better known as speaking in tongues. Linguistically, glossolalia is a series of utterances deprived of any sense, but which are structured phonologically, so that the speaker thinks that it is a real verbal language. In fact, it shares no systematic resemblance with any natural *langue*. However, glossopoeia, "the making of tongues", is neither an imitative language nor a creation of names, according to Derrida, but "the moment when the word has not yet been born, when articulation is no longer a shout but not yet discourse".[107] In Part III, I use the concept of abject which Kristeva explains as being both the rejection and the integration of all the undefined, mixable fluid and unorganized matter which is oozing out of the body. The abject consists in a permanent threat to the equilibrium of the symbolic order, i.e. to the structure of logos, and thus shares similarities with the notion of non-sense.

Most of the claims about language and representation regarding performance art seem mainly to be made on behalf of the work and not by the work itself. My methodology will try to reverse the process which requires that a theory explains and gives the reading keys to a performance. Rather that giving a reading of some performances through the grid of diverse chosen critical theories and philosophical concepts, I propose to use some chosen performances as tools to read and experience some philosophical and psychoanalytical concepts about language, non-sense and subjectivity in three dimension. Performance art becomes the live unfolding of a philosophical way of thinking. Neither embedded in a single sense nor meaning, it becomes the embodiment of a process of thinking philosophically.

Among the different philosophers and critical thinkers to whom I will refer throughout this project, there are: Elaine Scarry for her theory on representation and the language used to express pain, Antonin Artaud for his reflection on a possible

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[106] I chose to use this spelling which is closer to the French spelling of "non-sens", since it does not have in French the colloquial use it has in English and is more directly related to the philosophical concept. The hyphenated word better translates the idea of a reverse image of the word "sense".

[107] Jacques Derrida, "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation" in *Mimesis, Masochism and Mime: The Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought*, ed. by Timothy Murray, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), p.48.

theatre without the supremacy of text, Jacques Derrida mainly for his essays on and readings of Artaud's texts, Roland Barthes for his philosophical thoughts on the notions of Author and Text and on voice, Gilles Deleuze for his elaborate definition of non-sense and of language being an event, Jean-Jacques Lecercle for his reading of the Deleuzian concept of "non-sense" and his theory of "délire", Julia Kristeva for her linguistic, psychoanalytic and philosophical analysis of the concept of language, for her reflection on Artaud's use of language and for her theory on the abject, Luce Irigaray for her feminist theory about a potential linguistics of the body fluids and Judith Butler for a feminist critical reading of the Kristeva and Irigaray. As can be seen from this non-exhaustive list, many of the philosophers I will refer to are postmodern and feminist French philosophers. These French philosophers have all had a major influence regarding the thinking both on language and representation. The fact that these postmodernist and feminist philosophers have already been often used as references in the critical writing about performance art is also an interesting aspect for my research. I will not use these philosophical concepts about language to find a meaning to the different performance works which interest me here, or a code in order to decipher them, but I will rather consider them as parallel mode of thinking about the concept of language and try to understand how performance art might present an on-going reflection about language. My aim is to look at performance art as a performative philosophy which envisages the concept of language in a much larger and complex way than only the notion of sense. As I have said, I will consider performance art as a process which might reflect on similar ideas to those offered by some of the French postmodern and feminist philosophies, but which chooses another medium to develop and hypothesise on the subject. I will try to demonstrate that the performance art works in this project do not work as illustrations of some philosophical concepts, but are rather engaged in a process of thinking these concepts through in a performative mode.

Concerning the French philosophy to which I am referring, I am reading it in French and quoting it in English translation. Being bilingual French-English, it is natural and more coherent for me to read these texts in the language they were originally written in. This will allow me from time to time to choose a different terminology than the one adopted in published translation. In the event of my

choosing to keep a French term, which I judge more appropriate or precise for my project, or by modifying a translation in any way, it will be explained and justified.

This constant moving between the French and English language has an effect on my way of writing. We can consider that there are two types of writing taking place throughout the process of composing this thesis. There is the form of writing which equals the process of thinking, the understanding and the construction of concepts. This first type of mental and abstract writing takes place for me in French. French is my mother tongue, and thus can be considered as my first language, so it is the language in which my pattern of thoughts is constructed. It is as if the foundations and the structure of my reflection rely on and evolve following the construction and structure of the French language. French becomes thus the language linked to thoughts, ideas, reflection and elaboration of concepts; a form of abstract mental writing. English is my second language (my "father tongue"). As the language in which the actual writing concretely takes place, English becomes the language of transmission. It is the language used to transfer the abstraction of thoughts into a more pragmatic realm. The concepts are expressed, explained and exemplified once put down onto paper. The abstract philosophical concepts developed first mentally acquire a relation with the concrete materiality of the outside world when they start to be verbalised or applied. The writing of thoughts is transferred into writing with words which makes it possible to be verbalised and thus have a direct impact, because it is through verbalisation, speech acts, that the abstraction of the writing system becomes more concrete since enunciation has a social characteristic. It is the actual verbalisation which anchors concepts into the outside reality.

Here, a short parallel can be drawn to the dichotomy often referred to between French and English philosophical thought of the 20th century. French philosophers are known to have a tendency to deal with abstract concepts, which do not need to be scientifically proven to be accepted, whereas English philosophers, stemming from an empiricist philosophical tradition, strive to quantify the ideas they assert to create a more direct link with the existing world and to deal more concretely with everyday life problems encountered by society. Directly linked to this dichotomy between an abstract conceptual philosophy and a empiricist pragmatic one, French philosophy of the mid-20th century was arbitrarily labelled "French theory" by the Americans, when they came across the ideas developed by the main French

philosophers of this period. According to Sylvère Lotringer and Sande Cohen in their introduction to *French Theory in America*, the Americans turned what the French call "thought" into "theory".[108] "Theory" is a term whose definition encompasses both notions of "abstract thought" and "scientifically acceptable general principle" which gives a sort of ambiguity to this chosen appellation. As Lotringer and Cohen explain "requesting from French theory a unified, all-embracing model for criticism, especially one that would lead into a goal for discourse, is a mistake. French theorists made language and representation a problem in specifying any sort of goal."[109] In her article in the same volume, Elie During explains that Deleuze "was cautious not to present himself as a provider of "theory" – he was too much of an empiricist (or a philosopher). In his view, tailoring concepts, not theories, is the specific job of a philosopher."[110]

To come back to the idea of different types of writing done in different languages, I'd like to refer to Deleuze, who says in *A Thousand Plateaus*' fourth chapter "November 20, 1923: Postulates of Linguistics"[111] that one should be bilingual in one's own language and operate variations. For this thesis I am bilingual in my different processes of writing: the conceptual thinking and the concrete writing. I am operating variations between the language in which I think and the one in which I write. There is a third type of writing to add which is the writing done through the act of performing. This is probably the most pragmatic writing process out of the three, although its pragmatism engenders anew conceptual thinking. The practice of performance as part of research can be envisaged in two ways: it can either be used as the exploration of an idea or concept in a concrete manner through practice, i.e. a kind of demonstration, or it is the actual practice which makes the concept unfold and writes it as the process of performance parallels the thinking process. In my practice I use both French and English either in writing or speaking. I tend to play with their differences and similarities especially in relation to sound. For example, I made English words merge into French ones and vice-versa until the mix of the two made audible a third unknown language. I also used them indifferently as the languages for

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[108] *French Theory in America*, ed. by S. Lotringer and S. Cohen, (NY & London: Routledge, 2001), p.1.
[109] Ibid., p.3.
[110] Elie During, "Blackboxing in Theory : Deleuze versus Deleuze" in *French Theory in America*, p.165.
[111] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi, (London: The Athlone Press, 1987)

philosophical thought ("theory") and the languages for playing with words and variations, becoming multilingual within my own bilingualism. I also use fluids in my performances. Fluids have a material physical quality and are conceptually charged as well. They take part in the process of writing within the performance both on an abstract and concrete level. Fluids can be thought of as the moment of transition between the conceptual writing done through thinking and the pragmatic writing with letters.

As outlined above, my research draws some of its material from my own practical work. Throughout the duration of this project I have created three performances related to my research and I use this practical aspect as part of my methodology. The performances I created are embedded in my thinking process and being nourished by my philosophical readings and reflections about some of the concepts which interest me, but here again they should not be considered as an illustration of these concepts. When I assert that these performances work as a methodological tool, I mean that they should be envisaged as part of the research process. Practical research allows me to adopt a different perspective towards the thinking process related to this project. The embodiment by performance offers an alternative and complementary approach to the use of the philosophical concepts with which I am dealing. It is through this actual embodiment, which becomes a different kind of thinking process, that the philosophical ideas and theories unfold in a kind of self-evidence. This is the reason why my methodological approach is somehow to reverse the logic which demands that philosophy and theory should give sense to the performance work by suggesting on the contrary that performance art could be a way of doing philosophy.

So, for me, performance work becomes the embodiment of a mimesis

a livegraphy
a glossopoeia
a linguistics of the fluid
a thinking process
a thinking in process.

This project is a reflection on writing the fluidity of meaning, which implies the perpetual re-construction of meanings.

1. Against Logos: Similarities between Live Art, Not-Dance and Postdramatic Theatre.

In the introduction I focused on the fact that one of the aims attributed to a wide range of contemporary performance is that of generating a form of communication, or language, by means of the body. At the same time I highlighted how what we have come to know as postdramatic theatre (one of these performance practices) has rejected dramatic text in order to produce a theatrical expression that would be independent of any narrative or meaningful pre-written text. The rejection of both verbal language and written dramatic text in such work is an attempt to move away from the tradition of representation. Performances of this type put an emphasis on the body as a means of expressing the immediacy of the "real" or "real presence", thus enlarging communication and the perception of meaning to a wider spectrum than the one enclosed in verbal language and its organisation within logos.

I have chosen to look at a range of contemporary performance practices, and I have chosen the practices in question because of the distinctive ways in which they address questions of body and language, and, as a result, their relation to the concept of mimesis. These practices are dispersed across various fields: some are identified as dance, others as theatre. Still others are presented, at least in the UK and, increasingly, elsewhere, as Live Art. They do not share the kind of formal characteristics that would enable them to inhabit a single critical category.

Although the categorisation of these practices is not at the core of my research, it is worth noticing that there are at least three reasonably well defined fields of contemporary performance into which these works could be placed.

In this chapter I make a brief survey of the emergence and evolution of the practices that tend to fall into these three fields - Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre - in order to clarify some key common concerns which the work I am dealing with addresses. In turn, this will explain some of the similarities behind their artistic process and thinking. In the process I will be introducing in general terms the field from which I am drawing the specific examples of performance practice through which the thinking of this thesis is conducted. These examples include Franko B, Boris Charmatz, Socìetas Raffaello Sanzio, Yann Marussich and Kira O'Reilly.

- **Live Art**

The term Live Art is a British terminology which appeared in the 1980s and derives from the term performance art. I will use it here partly retrospectively, as a designation for both work that appears today under the institutional or conceptual umbrella that it provides, and for work from the tradition which Live Art claims as its antecedent. Live Art stems primarily from the practice of fine arts, although it has now come to enclose a wider range of artistic influences. Keidan writes that

> Live Art has grown out of the Performance Art practices that radicalised the gallery space in the late 20th century, when in a challenge to cultural and social politics and a rejection of objects and markets, visual artists turned to the body as their material and site and to ideas of presence, process and place.[112]

In the 1960s, some artists claimed that painting and sculpture originated from the action of the body and wanted to put their body at the centre of their creative production, using it as a tool and a canvas. Goldberg explains that "[t]he sheer physicality of painting, and the connection of the artist's body to canvas, led to numerous performances in which the body was viewed as an integral material of painting and vice versa."[113] Live Art has its roots in the performance art of the 1960s when performers were emerging from fine arts and used performance as a way to inscribe their body in their work and in this way expose the process that leads to the realisation of a work of art. In this type of performance there is no text, no pretence, just presence and sometimes an interaction with the audience. The artist's body and the artist herself make the work; it is immediate and ephemeral. It is task-based performance avoiding any form of representation, in favour of presentation, exploring the preponderance of the body over verbal language or text.

It resulted in performances like *The Anthropometries of the Bleu Period* (1960) by Yves Klein, in which he used his models as live paint bushes, or Carolee Schneeman's *Eye Body* (1963), which consisted of placing her naked body at the centre of one of her three-dimensional paintings for it to become "an integral material… a further dimension of the construction."[114] This reflection that formed around the artistic practice at the time was also a reaction against the market

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[112] Live Art Development Agency, http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/about_us/whatisliveart.html [accessed March 2006]

[113] R. Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art since the 60s*, p.17.

[114] Ibid., p.17-18.

economy in which painting and sculpture were embedded. Live artists did not believe any longer in the idea of art producing a marketable object and avoided doing so by integrating their live performing body within their work. It made them time-related. The audience had to witness these actions at the moment they happened; these artists were operating in a "now or never" dynamic. Live performances started to invade the gallery spaces, but also the artists' lofts or other alternative spaces, since they had no real need to be affiliated to institutions which could sell. In this way they reiterated the "unmarketable" quality of this type of artwork.

Artists needed to show that simple everyday actions could not only be integrated into art pieces, but also be considered as art. Live artists both wanted to demystify art and remove from it any notion of hierarchy, thus involving their audience more directly in response to their performance, like Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* (1964), "in which the audience was invited to cut off her clothes as she sat unmoving before them […] drawing the audience directly into contact with her, essentially defacing the artist in process."[115] There was always an element of provocation in these performances, either via simple actions or more violent and dangerous acts which put the performer at risk, like Chris Burden's *Shoot* (1971), in which he got himself shot in the arm, or Gina Pane's "actions", in which she recurrently cut herself and bled, as in *Escalade non anesthésiée* (1971), in which she climbed a metallic structure with sharp points, or *Psyché (Essai)* (1974), in which she cut her eyelids with a razor blade and wept tears of blood. Marina Abramovic also pushed her body to dangerous limits; in her interview with Nick Kaye, for his book *Art into Theatre*, she says that "[i]n sculpting […] the stone or clay or whatever [is the material], and here it is the body – make a drawing with the body, open it, see what pain is, what the body is. Just exploring all the possibilities – the mental, physical limits, everything together."[116] She adds: "I just treated my body as if it was without limits."[117] In her performance called *Rhythm 0* (1974), she stayed for six hours in a gallery surrounded by a set of objects that the audience could use on her as they wanted, to abuse or please her. The performance was stopped when someone chose to point the displayed loaded gun at her. In *Lips of Thomas* (1975) she carved a star on her

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[115] Ibid., p.95.
[116] Nick Kaye, *Art into Theatre: Performance Interviews and Documents*, (The Netherlands: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998), p.182.
[117] Ibid., p.184.

naked belly with a razor blade and in *Freeing the Voice* (1975) she screamed until her voice broke. In *Relation in Space* (1976), she and Ulay ran towards each other, slamming their naked bodies against each other, increasing the impact as they increased their speed. In another gallery performance, *Imponderabilia* (1977), they stood naked facing each other on each side of a door, leaving only a small space through which the audience had to pass to enter the exhibition room, brushing against their bodies. These types of performances involving the body in a very raw and physical manner oblige the audience to acknowledge its own integral participation in artistic production. The audience witnesses the physical actions of the body within the process of creating the performance, i.e. the live work of art. It is not just looking at the product, which is often more easily related to an abstract concept of creation rather than to the physical involvement which is part of the creation itself. The fact that the artist's body is seen in the process of creating, making a series of actions, enduring, or even sometimes suffering or at risk makes the audience fully aware of its implication in the realisation of the work. Live performances changed not only the status of the body in regard to the work of art, but also the relation of the artists to the gallery space, ephemerally invading it with their presence, confronting their audience. The work of art had become (a)live.

Live performance started as a reaction to the principles of fine art, but as it involved live performers it also had to position itself with regard to theatrical representation. Marina Abramovic underlines how theatre was considered:

> [...] theatre was the enemy. It was something bad, it was something we should not deal with. It was artificial. All the qualities that performance had were unrehearsable. There was no repetition. It was new for me and the sense of reality was very strong. We refused theatrical structure.[118]

So, live performances distinguished themselves from theatre, rejecting any form of pretence, facticity, or theatrical props, even rejecting its space and technical structure. Nevertheless the 1980s saw a reversal of the situation and performance art was re-inscribed into theatrical structure. Goldberg writes that

> [b]y the mid-eighties, the overwhelming acceptance of performance as fashionable and fun "avant-garde entertainment" [...] was largely due to the turn of performance towards the media and towards spectacle from about 1979 onwards. More accessible, the new work showed attention to décor – costumes, sets and lighting – and to more traditional and familiar vehicles such as cabaret, vaudeville,

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[118] Ibid., p.181.

theatre and opera.[…] Indeed, the return to traditional fine arts on the one hand, and the exploitation of traditional theatre craft on the other allowed performance artists to borrow from both to create a new hybrid.[119]

However in Britain "performance defiantly retained its manifesto of being live art by fine artists"[120] and thus the British have kept "a preference for the term "live art" because it is more directly descriptive."[121]

In the 1990s, not only British, but other European and American live art performers strongly reaffirmed their rejection of theatrical representation or any form of pretence by often engaging in visceral performances in which the body was again used as the main artistic material, recalling body art performances of the 1970s.

Performers like Franko B and Ron Athey appeared in the 1990s. Franko B, after doing a fine arts degree at Chelsea Art School, dropped painting and used his body as a performance tool and canvas.

> What we are presented with is a heavily tattooed and pierced naked body, sometimes painted in white and bleeding, sometimes in a wheelchair, restricted by leg callipers or attached to a catheter. The performance can take place in a gallery space or in marginalized urban public places.[122]

He used to bleed in most of his performances; not only was he painting with his blood, but he was confronting the audience with both the viscerality and vulnerability of the body, linking the strength of an action of the body bleeding to its helplessness. He describes his performance work as follows:

> My work presents the body in its most carnal, existential and essential state, confronting the essence of the human condition in an objectified, vulnerable and seductively powerful form.[123]

Ron Athey is an American body art performer whose performances are usually provocative actions related to sexuality, homosexuality, sadomasochism and religious iconography and which defy received ideas, mentalities and political positions surrounding these issues. He specifically created an uproar in 1994 with his

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[119] R. Goldberg, *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present*, p.196.
[120] Ibid., p.207.
[121] R. Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art since the 60s*, p. 12.
[122] Colleen Walker, *Liminal Spaces Within The Transgressive Body*, U.C.C 2004, www.franko-b.com/text/cw_the_artists_body.htm [accessed July 2006].
[123] Franko B in *Live Culture* programme, ed. by Adrian Heathfield, (London: Tate Publishing 2003), p.38.

performance *Four Scenes In A Harsh Life* at the Walker Centre in Minneapolis in which he "carved letters into the back of a fellow performer who was HIV positive, rubbed paper towels over the wound and hung the bloodied towels on clotheslines above the audience, exploiting the public's terror of AIDS."[124]

In Britain a group like Forced Entertainment remained closer to the theatre structure and used it to show its constant failure to achieve representation. Keidan and Brine write that Forced Entertainment "have destroyed the pretence of theatre, smashed the language and codes of its performance and reimagined the stories it can tell."[125] They work outside narration or forbid it to take place, destructuring the action, using repetitions and duration. In their piece *12am Awake and Looking Down*, the performers spend six hours dressing-up as different characters of non-existent stories and identifying themselves to the audience by a piece of cardboard on which is written who they are supposed to be. The audience is left with the possibility of imagining the story in which these eclectic characters could take part or not, to witness their inability to incarnate adequate characters and the exhaustion creeping in. All this renders the reality of the performers ever more visible and striking since it allows the unexpected to happen: a mistake, a giggle, a failure – or so, at least, it seems. Although Forced Entertainment aims at revealing the different failures of the theatre, their work is often understood within the framework offered by live art: it does not provide a representation, but is engaged in a process of production or re-production of tasks and actions. Of course, Forced Entertainment also appear as an exemplary instance of Lehmann's postdramatic theatre, especially within an English-language context, as is evident from Karen Jürs-Munby's introduction to her English translation of Lehmann's work. Like the work that I consider in this thesis, much contemporary performance tends to defy or at least traverse the critical and institutional categories created to present and discuss it. The very term 'live art' is itself an attempt to create a category that is barely a category.

Live Art might therefore be considered as a "strategy" which can include different, often interdisciplinary, artistic practices working mainly with space, time and the body, exploring these to their limits by defying them. Keidan and Brine explain that

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[124] R. Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art since the 60s*, p.99.
[125] *Live Culture* programme, p.6.

> Live Art is a fluid landscape. Spanning the extremities of performance cultures, Live Art is not a singular form of art but an umbrella term for intrinsically *live* practices that are rooted in a diversity of disciplines and discourses involving the body, space and time.
> […]
> Whether challenging the orthodoxies of fine art practice, exploring the limits of theatricality, appropriating the idioms of mass culture, pushing at the boundaries of choreographic conventions or exploring the performativity of cyberspaces, Live Art practices occupy all kinds of mediums in a volatile state.[126]

Live Art, with its large scope, can enclose diverse artistic disciplines depending on how the artists use or question the medium rather than on which medium they use. Keidan and Brine add that "[t]o employ the term Live Art is not to attempt to define or contain what it might be, but to contribute to the construction of a cultural map that includes artists who choose to operate within, across, between and beyond received conventions."[127] This is why performances like those of Forced Entertainment or La Ribot can be considered just as much Live Art as Franko B's, for example.

La Ribot comes from a dance background; she started classical ballet in Madrid and then continued her dance training in Cannes and Cologne[128]. Gradually she began choreographing her own work. Her solo work tends to be associated with the European choreographic trend of the 1990s that re-explores the notion of movement and dance. Lois Keidan writes about La Ribot that "[p]lacing herself at the centre of a "slippery surface" of disciplines, images and meanings, her practice occupies a space somewhere between dance, performance art, visual art and feminist discourse, employing the artist's body as "a woman", "a canvas"; "an object" and "a concept"."[129] Her durational performance *Panoramix* is a panoramic overview of ten years of work consisting of thirty-four *Distinguished Pieces* she made between 1993-2003. Each action or still lasts between 30 seconds and 7 minutes and involves her naked body and an object or a series of objects or a costume or a wig. In one of them she drinks an entire bottle of water without interruption while lying down; in another she puts on cardboard wings taped on the wall of the gallery and flaps her arms until the wings come loose; in another she is *The Dying Mermaid*:

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[126] L. Keidan and D. Brine, "Fluid Landscapes" in *Live Culture* programme, p.4.
[127] Ibid., p.4.
[128] http://www.laribot.com/laribot [accessed October 2008].
[129] "Fluid Landscapes" in *Live Culture* programme, p.6.

> *The Dying Mermaid* is my first distinguished piece. Every day for almost a month, on my way to the studio, I have come across a dried sardine lying on the pavement. One day I decided to take a photo of it and when I arrive at the studio, I lie on my back and cover half of my body with a white towel and my head with a blond wig. I stay in this position for hours. The next day the sardine has disappeared. I add to my pose the sound of the rubbish lorry recorded from the window, the white sheet of the hotel and the last death throes.[130]

Work which can be categorised under the label of Live Art tends to deal with "questions of immediacy and reality." Jennie Klein refers to Live Art as "gender-bending performance" in her article which has the same title. She quotes Keidan's and Brine's Focus Live Art report in which they write: "Live art's obvious ability to move fluidly and eloquently across genres, spaces and places singles it out as an area of practice uniquely equipped to negotiate the complex tapestry of our lives and times."[131] As the example of La Ribot shows, categories are constantly overlapping and never mutually exclusive.

- **Not-dance**

Performances gathered under the title not-dance[132] emerge out of a choreographic tradition. Since they also deal with the questioning and reconsideration of "pretence", "representation" and "meaning", they do not engage with the refusal to act, but rather with the refusal to dance. Not-dance consists in a range of works that embody what André Lepecki calls "the betrayal of the bind between dance and movement".[133] He explains that

> [i]n the case of contemporary dance's putative betrayal, the accusation describes, reifies, and reproduces a whole ontology of dance that can be summarized as follows: dance ontologically imbricates itself with, is isomorphic to, movement. Only after accepting such grounding of dance on movement can one accuse certain contemporary choreographic practices of betraying dance.[134]

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[130] La Ribot in *Live Culture* programme, p.28.
[131] Quoted in Jennie Klein, "Genre-Bending Performance", in *PAJ* 82 (2006), 58-66 (p. 60).
  Focus Live Art report can be read entirely here:
  http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/pdf_docs/focus_live_art.pdf [accessed May 2009].
[132] I use the term "not-dance" here as a literal translation of one of the French terms used to refer to this practice: "non-dance".
[133] André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the politics of movement*, p.1.
[134] Ibid., p.2.

Dance has been understood and defined as an uninterrupted flow of movement, a "flow and continuum of movement",[135] which is why the introduction of an element of stillness, of everyday actions, casual movements, or even maybe text, has disturbed the definition of dance and excluded from it a series of choreographers who envisage movements in a larger spectrum than the one considered to fit that range of movements classified and listed as dance. Bringing together choreographers using different processes, such as Jérôme Bel, La Ribot, Xavier Le Roy or Boris Charmatz, who seem to share the concern for "a dance that initiates a critique of representation",[136] this type of choreographic work does not have an agreed denomination:

> In 2001, a group composed of many of the choreographers and critics (including La Ribot, Xavier Le Roy and Christophe Wavelet) aligned with this experimental scene met in Vienna to draft a document to be submitted to the European Union as suggestions for guidelines for a European dance and performance policy. In this document there was a purposeful resistance to naming the current choreographic practices under a single word:
>
> > Our practices can be called: "performance art", "live art", "happenings", "events", "body art", "contemporary dance/theatre", "experimental dance", "new dance", "multimedia performance", "site specific", "body installation", "physical theatre", "laboratory", "conceptual dance", "independence", "postcolonial dance/ performance", "street dance", "urban dance", "dance theatre", "dance performance"- to name but a few… (Manifesto for a European Performance Policy)[137]

Lepecki chooses to bring together these artists under the name of "conceptual dance", but I have opted for "not-dance".[138] This coined term expresses the idea of the refusal to dance, a refusal to represent dance through a set of constant constructed movements, which does not mean that these artists refuse choreography. Not-dance is a choreography of stillness, of steps, of slight casual or shifting moves; not the

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[135] Ibid., p.2.

[136] Ibid., p.45.

[137] Ibid., note 2, p.135.

[138] I want to draw attention to the fact that this term may sound familiar because of the NOTT Dance Festival which happens each year in Nottingham and whose name implies a definition of the work presented: "The international NOTT Dance festival aims to spark people's imagination by serving up a potent mix of work which inhabited the boundaries between dance, performance, the live and visual arts" and which asks questions such as "can dance be found in voice […]? Can you dance while sitting down and can you have dance without a live performer? Can you call it dance if it exists in your imagination or does it have to be real? […]"
www.dance4.co.uk/artisic/archives/nottdance03/introduction.html [accessed May 2006].

writing of dance, but the writing of movements: a kinegraphy. According to Frédérique Pouillaude in her article "*Scène* and Contemporaneity",[139] five features characterise the mutation which generated not-dance: the dissolution of fixed companies, the integration of work into the economic context of production and of presenting/touring, the mutation of the concept of writing ("as such it indicates the ensemble of procedures enabling the identification and fixing of the choreographic object as a stable and reiterable entity"[140]), the loss of an obvious notion of the medium "dance", and the reflexive opacification of the medium "show". She writes that these five features "can be subsumed in the single syntagma: 'the *reflective* work of performance'" and she adds that this mutation

> is neither modern, nor postmodern. It does not consist of, as per modernism's claims, a moving forward of art toward what is appropriate: it is not "dance" as such that is the object of refection, but rather the performance event, which is accidentally and not essentially relate to dance […].[141]

For her, "this mutation only repeats and adjusts a mutation that has already happened (that of American postmodern dance), so that the repetition come to break the figure of progress and of successive breaks with conventions of the modernist logic."[142]

   Not-dance shares many characteristics with the work of the post-modern dancers that formed the Judson Dance Theatre group in the 1960s-70s. According to Sally Banes,

> Rainer, Simone Forti, Steve Paxton, and other post modern choreographers of the sixties were not united in terms of their aesthetic. Rather they were united by their radical approach to choreography, their urge to reconceive the medium of dance.[143]

These choreographers felt the need to distance themselves from modern dance which did not suit their expectations in terms of what they looked for in dance or even what dance meant and was for them. Their work and methods came closer to

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[139] Frédérique Pouillaude, "*Scène* and Contemporaneity" in *TDR: The Drama Review*, 51:2, (2007), 124-135.
[140] Ibid., p.132.
[141] Ibid., p.133.
[142] Ibid., p.133-134.
[143] Sally Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers: Post-Modern Dance*, (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), p.xiii-xiv.

the performance art that was happening at the time. In 1965 Yvonne Rainer expressed in her "NO Manifesto" her strategy for demystifying dance:

> NO to spectacle no to virtuosity no to transformations and magic and make believe no to glamour and transcendency of the star image no to the heroic no to the anti-heroic no to trash imagery no to involvement of performer or spectator no to style no to camp no to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer no to eccentricity no to moving or being moved.[144]

Defining dance through their performances became one of their preoccupations; their work still maintains references to Graham or Cunningham, who had been teaching most of them, but they distanced themselves from them and questioned their conception of dance by developing new uses of time, space and the body. Sally Banes explains that "[t]he body itself became the subject of the dance, rather than serving as an instrument for expressive metaphors."[145] They wanted to find the "natural" body; the movements had to be objective, "distanced from personal expression through the use of scores, bodily attitudes that suggested work or other ordinary movements, verbal commentaries, and tasks."[146] The quest was for "real movements" and the work was not ashamed to present the actual process of creating movement: "watching mistakes occur in improvisation, witnessing fatigue, danger, awkwardness, difficulty; watching movement being marked and learned."[147] This was all part of a process of demystification of the traditional modern dance movements by showing that placing an ordinary movement in a dance context was enough for it to become dance.

Post-modern dance evolved alongside the development of performance art in the 1960s and 1970s with, for example, Happenings or a group like Fluxus, which gathered artists and non-artists from different fields and where "the borders between art forms blurred and new formal strategies for artmaking abounded."[148] These are part of the outside influences that post-modern choreographers used to develop their own structure. The pattern is similar in the 1990s in Europe where not-dance developed in reaction to narrative Dance-Theatre and is influenced by some of the characteristics of Live Art work done during the same period. Again, there is a move

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[144] Ibid., p.43.
[145] Ibid., p.xviii.
[146] Ibid., p.xxi.
[147] Ibid., p.16.
[148] Ibid., p.9.

towards interdisciplinary work and a blurring of the borders between art forms, tending to bring closer together work issuing from the dance and performance art fields, whereas the 1980s had witnessed a drastic switch away from the conceptual minimalist body-orientated choreographic work of the 1960s and 1970s.

This noticeable shift in post-modern dance in the 1980s took place when the new generation of choreographers started to look for ways to reinstall meaning into dance. Whereas choreographers of the Judson Dance Theatre in 1960s and 1970s had been asking questions such as "What is dance?", the choreographers of the 1980s were asking "What does it mean?"[149] Content regained precedence over questions of form and context. There was a resumption of interest in narrative structures and "other features that the analytic dancers tried to purge from their work, such as character, mood, emotion, situation."[150] In Europe, the 1980s saw the emergence of dance-theatre which was more directly influenced by avant-garde theatre. Pina Bausch is the main reference point for this style and remains a major influence for the subsequent generation. As Heathfield writes,

> Pina Bausch's response to the empty formalism of the dance against which she turned was to assert through dance the drive to move. The inaugural question of this work was not, How does the body move, but Why? In the wake of this question, dance-theatre went in search of the psychological and emotional drives of physical expression, […].[151]

Although it resisted narrative structures, her work put the accent on emotional content and was composed of "character, mood, and situation" and often words, thus marking the interdisciplinary move between dance and theatre.

The trend which emerged in Europe in the 1990s and which can be understood under the label of not-dance derives from a lineage of dance-theatre works prevailing in the dance scene at the time. Again these emerging dancers felt the need to react against a mode of theatrical representation that typified dance-theatre work. Their choreographic techniques seem to bear many similarities to the post-modern choreographers of the Judson Dance Theatre: a return to objective and ordinary movement, a prevalence of form and context over content, and an urge to

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[149] Ibid., p.xxv.
[150] Ibid., p.xxx.
[151] Adrian Heathfield, "After the fall: Dance-theatre and dance performance", in *Contemporary Theatres in Europe*, ed. by J. Kelleher and N. Ridout, (London & NY: Routledge, 2006), p.188.

ask again the question "What is dance?" and to redefine the parameters of dance, in terms of time, space and the body. Christophe Wavelet reflects on the phenomenon saying that

> It is striking to notice the long historical curve required so that the motivations which were at the origins of such projects could return as singular preoccupations on the European "choreographic" scene that has recently emerged. In order to be convinced that the past is not always as past as some wish to think, you just need to consider the projects of dancers such as Jérôme Bel, La Ribot, Xavier Le Roy, Claudia Triozzi, Boris Charmatz, Myriam Gourfink, Alain Buffart, Meg Stuart, Raimund Hoghe or Vera Montero. Although different, common threads and shared priorities are noticeable in each of their production. For example, they avoid like the plague anything that would connote the "profession" (e.g. the use of clever technical skills to fulfil an aesthetic objective). They reject the non-historical conception of the body, by giving precedence to aesthetic practices which put the accent less on the product (becoming goods of the body) than on process (body movements can produce thoughts). They rescrutinise the postulate of equality, questioning what we call "democracy" and what it really consists of.[152]

Their influence not only comes from a continuum of the history of post-modern dance in Europe and the US. It also comes from the different art fields that resulted from a rejection of the concept of representation and which distanced themselves from fine arts or theatre, such as Live Art or body art. Heathfield notes that "[i]n the hyper-connective context of contemporary culture, cross-art-form practice, including the work of movement artists, is now much more promiscuous, ambitious, intensive and eclectic in its affiliations and borrowings."[153]

In his article "After the fall: Dance-theatre and dance performance", Heathfield affirms that La Ribot's work retains a link to Bausch's dance-theatre in the

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[152] « Or il est saisissant de constater qu'il aura fallu un long détour historique pour que les motivations où ces projets puisaient leurs sources viennent à nouveau inquiéter, en mode propre il est vrai, les scènes 'chorégraphiques' européennes récemment émergées. Il n'est que de considérer, pour se convaincre que le passé m'est pas toujours aussi passé que certains semblent le penser, les projets respectifs de danseurs tels que Jérôme Bel, La Ribot, Xavier Le Roy, Claudia Triozzi, Boris Charmatz, Myriam Gourfink, Alain Buffard, Meg Stuart, Raimund Hogueou Vera Mantero. Chez chacun d'eux différemment, des lignes de force communes se repèrent, des priorités partagées, se laissent déceler. Elle consistent par exemple à fuir comme la peste tout ce qui viendrait connoter le 'métier' (l'usage virtuose des savoir-faire techniques comme fin en soi du projet esthétique), à réfuter les conceptions an-historiques du corps, à privilégier des pratiques esthétiques qui mettent l'accent moins sur le produit (devenir-marchandise des corps) que sur la processivité (les corps en tant que leur mouvement est susceptible de produire de la pensée), et à remettre en chantier le postulat d'égalité en quoi consiste proprement ce que l'on nomme 'démocratie'. » Christophe Wavelet, "Seule la violence aide où la violence règne", *de L'Arsenic 2*, (Lausanne: Arsenic, 2000), p.19-20. Translation by L. Easton.

[153] A. Heathfield, "After the fall: Dance-theatre and dance performance", p.194.

sense that her "persona and her drive to move are also highly present in relation to both the work's content and its form",[154] but that at the same time it strongly positions itself in its specificity in eschewing "physical theatre's high impact viscerality and the forceful assertion of the self in favour of a quieter, bare – though nonetheless edgy – being. Its terrain is the place where dance dissolves into action, the movement of stillness and the exposed materiality of the flesh."[155] For La Ribot stillness is a choreographic strategy that emphasises a different temporality. She writes about the importance of "the sense of being, or of feeling a corporeal presence and of contemplating inside a non-theatrical time, understanding 'theatrical' as something that starts and finishes."[156] Her work expresses a strong desire to move away from the structures of theatre. Explaining why she moved from performing in theatre spaces into galleries, she says: "I would like to speak of presentation rather than representation."[157] She performs her *Piezas Distinguidas*, all presented under the title *Panoramix* for Live Culture at Tate Modern in 2003, naked and, as André Lepecki writes,

> if her naked body operates sometimes as an image, this image is always subtly trembling, always revealing its physiological nature, through its small tensions, its pulsations, hesitations, imbalances, shivers, contractions, expansions – the inexhaustible kinetic elements of La Ribot's small dances and still-acts.[158]

The notion of "still" is also a particularity of Jérôme Bel's choreographic work in which there is hardly any dance. According to Lepecki, "[Bel] deploys stillness and slowness to propose how movement is not only a question of kinetics, but also one of intensities, of generating an intensive field of microperceptions."[159] Bel needs to slow dance down "as a way of decelerating the blind and totalitarian impetus of the kinetic-representational machine"[160] and through repetition to reveal "that dance is something independent of the dancers."[161] Jérôme Bel's work questions and criticises representation "in uncovering how choreography specifically participates in, and is accomplice of, representation's 'submission of subjectivity' under modern

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[154] Ibid., p.195.
[155] Ibid., p.195.
[156] La Ribot in *LIVE: Art and Performance*, p.30.
[157] Ibid., p.30.
[158] A. Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, p.82.
[159] Ibid, p.57.
[160] Ibid., p.58.
[161] Ibid., p.63.

structures of power."[162] He refuses to consider the subject as a closed entity limited by corporeal boundaries. Lepecki explains that "[t]he subjectivity and the body Bel proposes are clearly not monads or self-mirroring singularities, but packs, open collectivities, continuous processes of unfolding multiplicities."[163] In *Jérôme Bel* (1995) four naked dancers write with chalk who they are and details about themselves and stand in front of this information while two others write names that are not theirs, "names they represent, names that will be represented by what the dancers do."[164] In *The Last Performance* (1998), four dancers who keep changing their identity, come on stage and announce to the audience who they are: "a body that is not Jérôme Bel opens the piece by announcing to the audience, deadpan, alone center stage, by the standing microphone, "'*Je suis Jérôme Bel*' […]."[165] Bel plays with the fact that identity and representation are linked to the name given to people and objects which creates a form of authority for their (self-)representation. Lepecki notes that "Bel's pieces constantly indicate that both performers and audiences are coextensively trapped in those particularly charged representational machines: language and theatre."[166] In *Nom Donné par l'Auteur* (1994) Bel questions the mechanisms of the author by having two male performers explore the relationship between an object and its name, thus silently creating a "semic and syntagmatic visual game"[167] via a series of arrangements and rearrangements. He explains that he was trying to "create meanings on stage, even if it was very difficult and boring for the audience – there was no dance, there was no music, there was no costume and no dancers."[168] In his article "Dance and Not Dance" Johannes Birringer quotes Krassimira Kruschkova who asked in an introduction to a series of lectures which took place at Tanzquartier in Vienna: "Is dance still possible nowadays – even, or just, when it continually subverts what actually enables it, when it constantly displays and omits its own prerequisites? Is dance still possible when it stand still, when it remains absent – outside the scene?"[169] Birringer continues that:

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[162] Ibid., p.46.
[163] Ibid., p.50.
[164] Ibid., p.49.
[165] Ibid., p.47.
[166] Ibid., p.49.
[167] Ibid., p.52.
[168] Jérôme Bel in Helmut Ploebst, *No Wind No Word: New Choreography in the Society of Spectacle*, (Munich: K. Kaiser, 2001), p.200.
[169] in Johannes Birringer, "Dance and Not Dance", *PAJ*, 80, (2005),10-27 (p.15).

> [t]he theoretical defense of conceptual dance undoubtedly suggests that Bel's *The Show Must Go On* brilliantly reveals how the audience itself performs the work or how spectatorship makes the choreographic score happen. By shifting the emphasis on process, and not result, the processual operations point towards dance as an event that is constituted within a matrix of possibilities.[170]

Xavier Le Roy in his piece *Unfinished Self* "proposes an entirely different understanding of what the body is: not a stable, fleshly host for a subject, but a dynamic power, an ongoing experiment ready to achieve unforeseeable planes of immanence and consistency."[171] André Lepecki explains how Xavier Le Roy frees himself from the notion of subject and the dichotomous categories it generally creates, such as femininity-masculinity, human-animal, object-subject, and so on. As an alternative he chooses to experiment with Deleuze's and Guattari's notion of becoming, so "Le Roy's solo never falls into those oppositions, thus restitutes to the body its power to constantly reinvent itself."[172] The question becomes "What can the body do?"

> X6: […] As you say, body images are capable of accommodating and incorporating an extremely wide range of objects and discourses. Anything that comes into contact with surfaces of the body and remains there long enough will be incorporated into the body image. […]
>
> Y6: So in other words what you say is that the body image is as much a function of the subject's psychology and socio-historical context as of anatomy. And that there are all kinds of non-human influences woven into us.[173]

The focus has switched from dance onto the body. The issue does not revolve solely around dance any longer. Any type of movement placed in a dance context can now be considered as dance. Emphasis is now placed on the body and its potential to create otherness or be the Other. The key issue is the link between the subject and the body. Is it possible to suppress the notion of subject for the body to become the object of study or the object of the experiment? While body art uses the body as a subject-object, refusing the dichotomy between the mind and the body and replacing the subject within the flesh, not-dance also seems to refuse this dichotomy. At the same time there is a need for not-dance to keep a distance from the subject in order

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[170] J. Birringer, "Dance and Not Dance", p.15-16.
[171] A. Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, p.43.
[172] Ibid., p.40-41.
[173] Xavier Le Roy, "Self-Interview" (2001), http://www.insituproductions.net/_eng/frameset.html [accessed 2009].

to present the body as an object that can be manipulated (by that very subject). Keeping the subject at a distance allows the flexible variability of the body to remain in the state of becoming.

Some of the not-dance dancer-choreographers have not followed the regular dance training mold, whereas La Ribot, Jérôme Bel, or Yann Marussich have had a dance training, Xavier Le Roy started as a biologist, for instance, and Maria Donata d'Urso as an architect. Dance training is no longer a requisite, and the input of other disciplines expands the avenues of exploration concerning dance and choreography. By turning to not-dance these dancer-choreographers emerging from other disciplines change their relation to the object of creation. Rather than creating objects or artefacts which stand independently outside of themselves, they become the objects. Their bodies become both the subject and object of their creative drive. Their bodies become the site of their interrogation and the material at their disposal to elaborate and propose possible ephemeral answers. Their work shares with many live art practices, and much post-dramatic theatre, a negative or troubled relation to conventional representation.

● **Postdramatic theatre**

Postdramatic theatre, although influenced by the exploration and practice of performance art and postmodern dance, comes mainly out of a theatre tradition. One frequently cited influence, considered to have exercised an influence over a large part of this newly-constituted field, is Antonin Artaud. His repudiation of psychological drama, his bid to evade the conventional structure of representation and found his art upon the signifying power of the immediate corporal presence makes Artaud a key reference point, not simply for postdramatic theatre, but for live art and not-dance practices as well. Artaud's theoretical moves towards the creation of a language of the body for theatre and performance are of direct relevance to the work of this thesis, and constitute a vital legacy, in terms of a critical framework for thinking about the work I am addressing. In 1946 Artaud wrote "I am the enemy of theatre."[174] This affirmation follows from the reflection on theatre which Artaud developed in the series of essays, written between 1932 and 1935, which were then gathered into one volume: *The Theatre and its Double*. In these essays he proposes

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[174] Antonin Artaud, *Oeuvres Complètes*, XXVI, (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), p.53.

a "theatre of cruelty" that must free itself from the notion of representation such as it has been defined by the supremacy of text and Logos. To achieve this, God must be expelled from the stage because, as Derrida explains in his celebrated essay on Artaud, "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation", "the stage is theological for as long as it is dominated by speech".[175] The text is the medium that drives representation for Artaud since it is always the vehicle of the thoughts and intentions of an "author-creator" that are interpreted and represented by the director and the actors. So, from the text to the stage it is only a series of representations and representations of representations; the text being "necessarily representative"[176] and its staging being a further representation. "Released from the text and the author-god, mise-en-scène would be returned to its creative and founding freedom. The director and its participants […] would cease to be the instruments and organs of representation."[177] According to Derrida the theatre of cruelty would not be devoid of representation, but it would come closer to "original representation", which means it would be freed of the need to offer the representation of a text:

> The stage, certainly, *will no longer represent*, since it will not operate as an addition, as the sensory illustration of a text already written, thought, or lived outside the stage, which the stage would then only repeat but whose fabric it would not constitute. The stage will no longer operate as the repetition of *present*, will no longer *re*-present a present that would exist elsewhere prior to it, a present that would exist elsewhere and prior to it, […].[178]

There will be no repetition and no re-presentation, only present. Artaud is trying to find a way to use language that differs radically from the way it is used to produce texts and sense. For Artaud, theatre should be a language of gesture, a language of images. He writes:

> I am adding another language to the spoken one, and I am trying to restore to the language of speech its old magic, its essential spellbinding power, for its mysterious possibilities have been forgotten.[179]

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[175] Jacques Derrida, "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation" in *Mimesis, Masochism and Mime: The Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought*, ed. by Timothy Murray, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), p.43.
[176] Ibid., p.43.
[177] Ibid., p.45.
[178] Ibid., p.45.
[179] Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*, trans. by Mary C. Richards, (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1958), p.106.

Artaud wants to develop a theatrical language that is beyond repetition, "a language of sounds, cries, lights, onomatopoeia",[180] a language which situates itself at "the moment when the word has not yet been born",[181] and as it becomes the language of the instant, this theatrical language becomes the theatre of the instant, of presence and thus, of the present.

This immediacy advocated by Artaud seems to have been more directly explored through performance art whereas a type of post-war theatre avoided a representative use of text by interrogating its own theatrical mechanism through self-reflection and meta-theatre. Beckett, for instance, explores the limits of meta-theatre with plays like *Act Without Words I* and *II*, *Quad I* and *II*, or *Breath*. There is no question of representation in these pieces, but rather of disembodiment, leaving the mechanism of theatre and mise-en-scène "[r]eleased from the text and the author-god",[182] bare for the audience to witness. Beckett even touched upon the notion of the "theological stage" in *What Where*, using the disembodied voice of the "master" (author-creator) and the "slaves" repeating the same actions and the same words as actors in a game over which they have no power. He used bodies devoid of voice, silent, just present, but also disembodied voices or voices that remain only "Mouth" like in *Not I*. *Not I*, although it is a written monologue, thus almost entirely relying on text, is at the same time a logorrhoea and an attempt to push language close to non-sense, close to madness or otherness.

Peter Handke developed another theatrical strategy to avoid representation. *Offending the Audience* is addressed directly at the audience. The text is just a series of remarks to the audience, remarks about their presence, about their function, about the fact that they would like to forget their presence and the presence of others, about their corporeal reactions and reality and so on. It is a meta-theatre which uses the audience's expectation of what theatre is and what it means to them traditionally to reveal its intrinsic mechanism. This play, although it relies on text, authorship and direction, nevertheless questions the notion of representation, of pretence, of what makes theatre and what it is supposed to be.

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[180] Ibid., p.90.
[181] J. Derrida, "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation", p.48.
[182] J. Derrida, "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation", p.45.

The theatre which Hans-Thies Lehmann calls "postdramatic theatre"[183] is not only tributary to the experiments with ways of escaping representation, or how to reveal presence beyond pretence and beyond text in the theatrical field, but also to the explorations led in performance art and postmodern dance. Postdramatic theatre has emerged from the questioning of these different disciplines by integrating several of their aspects and developing its own specificities. It seems to share many characteristics with Live Art and not-dance performances (be it even only "the *reflective* work of performance"[184] Frédérique Pouillaude is referring to), and although the borders between these practices might be blurred, postdramatic theatre still remains inscribed in a theatrical framework. It brings together names such as Robert Wilson, Jan Fabre, Pina Bausch, Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, The Wooster Group, Goat Island, Forced Entertainment and Socìetas Raffaello Sanzio, among others. Postdramatic theatre is no longer based on drama: no plot, no narration, no dialogues or characters. If Lepecki wrote that not-dance is "the betrayal of the bind between dance and movement",[185] then postdramatic theatre could be referred to as "the betrayal of the bind between drama and theatre".

For Lehmann,

> [t]his explains why many spectators among the traditional theatre audience experience difficulties with postdramatic theatre, which presents itself as a meeting point of the arts and thus develops- and demands- an ability to perceive which breaks away from the dramatic paradigm.[186]

Lehmann adds that an audience accustomed to other arts, such as visual arts, dance or music, responds more easily to this type of theatre than an audience used to a narrative plot. In postdramatic theatre "[i]t is no longer the stage but the theatre as a whole which functions as the 'speaking space'".[187] It might therefore be thought of in terms of Kristeva's notion of the "polylogue", because it breaks away from "an order centred on *one* logos."[188] Language becomes multiple and the semiotics of the different disciplines that are pulled together in the same entity results in a proliferation of visual, vocal, musical, linguistic and body signs and sign-systems.

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[183] H.-T. Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. Karen Jürs-Munby, (London & NY: Routledge, 2006).
[184] Frédérique Pouillaude, *"Scène* and Contemporaneity", p.133.
[185] A. Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, p.1.
[186] H.-T. Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p.31.
[187] Ibid., p.31.
[188] Ibid., p.32.

These, layered among others act as so many devices capable of creating a theatrical "speaking space", other than text, closer to "speech" as Artaud would have conceived it, not to make sense, but to touch a human sense of presence and chaos. Lehmann explains it as follows:

> A *disposition of spaces of meaning and sound-spaces* develops which is open to multiple uses and which can no longer simply be ascribed to a single organizer or organon – be it individual or collective. Rather, it is often a matter of the authentic presence of individual performers, who appear not as mere carriers of an intention external to them – whether this derives from the text or the director. They act out their own corporeal logic within a given framework: hidden impulses, energy dynamics, and mechanics of the body and motorics.[189]

Being at the crossroads between different disciplines and gathering different techniques developed by each of them to deal with the same main objective, i.e. a refusal of representation understood as a representation of reality, postdramatic theatre shares many characteristics with and can be difficult to distinguish from performance art. According to Lehmann, postdramatic theatre "can be seen as an attempt to conceptualise art in the sense that it offers not a representation but an intentionally unmediated experience of the real (time, space, body)."[190] As for performance art there is a craving for producing presence, "'liveness' comes to the fore, highlighting the provocative presence of the human being rather than the embodiment of a figure."[191] To achieve this production of presence the focus is often put on the body and its potential to be in the present. Lehmann explains that "[i]n postdramatic theatre, breath, rhythm and the present actuality of the body's visceral presence take precedence over the logos",[192] and "as the body no longer demonstrates anything but itself, the turn away from a body of signification and toward a body of unmeaning gesture (dance, rhythm, grace, strength, kinetic wealth) turns out as the most extreme charging of the body with significance concerning the social reality."[193] To some extent, then, Lehmann's concept of postdramatic theatre seeks to provide a catch-all term that might bring all the work I am considering under a single heading.

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[189] Ibid., p.32.
[190] Ibid., p.134.
[191] Ibid., p.135.
[192] Ibid., p.145.
[193] Ibid., p.96.

The body might gain precedence over logos, but not over language. One specificity of postdramatic theatre is that it tries to revoke the separation between body and language. It tries to restore a "*chora*", which Lehmann defines as "a space and speech / discourse without telos, hierarchy and causality, without fixable meaning and unity."[194] The *chora* is like an "antechamber" of logos, it is the space in which language is still outside of the system that is imposed by logos. The language Artaud was looking for situates itself in the *chora*. Within the framework of my research it is this aspect of postdramatic theatre that interests me: the refusal of text and of the organisation of logos which does not lead to the abolition of language, but rather to the emergence of a different language which not only emerges sometimes raw from the body, but also is being expressed or even written by the practice itself. Lehmann explains that

> [i]nstead of a linguistic *re*-presentation of facts, there is a "position" of tones, words, sentences, sounds that are hardly controlled by a "meaning" but instead by the scenic composition, by a visual, not text oriented dramaturgy. The rupture between the being and meaning had a shock-like effect: something is exposed with the urgency of suggested meaning – but then fails to make the expected meaning recognizable.[195]

Such a definition of postdramatic theatre brings this practice close to some of the exhortations Artaud made in his "Theatre of Cruelty". Not only does postdramatic theatre work with the notion of immediacy and an exploration of the rawness of language, but it also emphasises physical presence through the use of "hidden impulses, energy dynamics, and mechanics of the body and motorics."[196] This last definition could, of course, also apply to Live Art and not-dance practice. In the end, if it seems sometimes difficult to place some work in one or the other category, it is because, even if each practice comes respectively out of fine arts, dance or theatre, they all seem to have developed around the same questions about the artistic process of creation. Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre focus principally on the exploration of the notions of time, space, body and the methods through which they can generate immediate presence, inevitably linked to the concept of "real", avoiding representation. Rejecting the traditional modes of representation, these practices also engage in a different relation to meaning, privileging its

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[194] Ibid., p.145-146.
[195] Ibid., p.146.
[196] Ibid., p.32.

multiplicity and instability. The critical framework provided by these modes of categorising and conceptualising contemporary work has developed a broad consensus[197] around this work, in which its relations to language and representation, and, above all, mimesis, are assumed to be predominantly antagonistic. As suggested in my consideration of approaches to language in critical writing on body art, however, it is a major part of this thesis to complicate this assumption.

● **My practical research**

Throughout this work I am also going to refer to and write about my own artistic practice which I have developed to explore certain aspects of my research. The performances to which I am going to refer mark different stages and the progress of my reflection and show the evolution of my findings. Developing my own practice around questions that arise during my research allows me to confront the subject of my reflection concretely and puts me into a research mode that produces live material and sometimes results that happen to be different to the idea they originated from. Christophe Wavelet said in his reflection about the appearance of not-dance that "body movements can produce thought";[198] practical research can be considered as a concrete manifestation of the philosophical process of thinking.

I came to solo performance after spending several years doing experimental minimalist theatre which explored the limits of text, of repetition and bare mise-en-scène, revealing the potential of strangeness located in human qualities. These were the elements that attracted me, but at the same time I was tired of acting, tired of pretending, tired of the artifice. This is why task-based performance seemed a more fruitful soil in which to develop my interests. My solo work is nourished, consciously and unconsciously, by the influences of Live Art, not-dance, postdramatic performances and by the visual arts that interest me and that have constituted my

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[197] The main point of this consensus relies on the fact that each discipline stems from one of the fine arts, dance or theatre categories and has its own basic specificities. Live Art distinguishes itself from theatre, rejecting any form of pretence, facticity, or theatrical props, even rejecting its space and technical structure, it is supposed to be exploring the preponderance of the body over verbal language or text and it tends to deal with immediacy and reality. Not-dance remains linked to a choreographic tradition in the sense that it explores movements, envisaging them in a larger spectrum than the one considered as dance and thus, introducing an element of stillness, of everyday actions, casual movements, or even maybe text in its performance. Postdramatic theatre still remains inscribed in a theatrical framework, but it avoids a representative use of text by interrogating its own theatrical mechanism through self-reflection and meta-theatre and explores the potential of language within visual, vocal, musical, linguistic and body signs and sign-systems.

[198] Christophe Wavelet, "Seule la violence aide où la violence règne", p.20.

reference field these past five years. My work inscribes itself in the trend that puts the emphasis on the creative process as an identifiable element rather than on a precise categorisation between the artistic disciplines.

In my work I explore the relation that language has with body fluids, how the emergence of fluids out of the body parallels the effusion of a logorrhoea out of the body and how both of these effusions can be associated with the production of glossolalia. Just as some body art performers want to bypass the dichotomy between body and self and thus affirm the "I" as part of the physical body, I want to re-inscribe verbal language as part of the physical body and to concretely link the linguistic potential of fluids to the nonsensical potential of verbal language. It is the moment language merges into non-sense that, like the exposure of the explicit body in performance, it breaks out of the arbitrary frame which constructs both its sense and the parameters of identity. Either known words, often in more than one language, are chosen and associated for their similar sound qualities, played with, made difficult to recognise and made to appear other to the audience, or letters are randomly associated, read and displayed to create a nonsensical *soundscape*. It comes close to what Lehmann calls a "*soundscape*":

> The boundaries between language as an expression of live presence and language as a prefabricated material are blurred. The reality of the voice itself is thematized. It is arranged and made rhythmic according to formal musical or architectonic patterns; through repetition, electronic distortion, superimposition to the point of incomprehensibility; the voice exposed as noise, scream and so on; exhausted through mixing, separated from the figures as disembodied and *misplaced voices*.[199]

The physicality and sensuality of the fluids should find a parallel in the verbal sounds and become more like a physical sensation rather than producing any decipherable sense. Most of the time I aim to be at the very interface where recognizable words start to dissolve into sounds and vice-versa. The audience finds themselves in this in-between where they are wrapped in an audible wave of sounds whose words remain barely graspable or understandable.

My performances are structured around simple systems that I rely on as a basis to create non-sense and chaos. In the same way that language is a system of sense and the body is a physical system both of which can be interrupted, rendered deficient

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[199] H-T. Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p.149.

or generate a form of incoherence, my performances are, and appear as, structured patterns that generate non-sense, mess and chaos. A system needs a reference to gauge its arbitrariness and to expose how the parameters that are organised inside the system are working or behaving outside of it. This work is not only a reflection upon the relation between the inside and the outside of the body, but also on the relation between the inside and the outside of any system.

I.

2. Mimesis

The commonly held idea about mimesis is that it is a faithful representation of nature and the world surrounding us. The term "representation" tends to prevail over mimesis as if the two terms were synonyms. Mimesis is defined primarily as the imitation of nature, i.e. of reality, which means that, through imitation, mimesis provides a representation of reality. Each attempt to represent reality involves mimesis. Although it is this simplified definition of the concept of mimesis, and thus of representation, that dominates in common thought, mimesis reveals itself to be a much more complex and intricate concept, involving both imagination and the production of artefacts. Even if it has been evolving historically, its definition seems to remain torn between the notion of "imitation" and of "imagination", an act of production involving creativity. This perspective broadens the concept of mimesis and renders it almost inherent to all actions resulting in a product.

In this chapter, I chose to focus mainly on Stephen Halliwell's *The Aesthetics of Mimesis* and Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf's *Mimesis: Culture-Art-Society* because they are two recent studies on the concept of mimesis and they are complementary in their different methodological approaches. Halliwell offers a close reading and a detailed analysis of the subtleties found in Plato's and Aristotle's texts on mimesis. His aim is "to correct and replace numerous misconceptions about not only the materials of those foundations but also the later edifices that have been erected (or superimposed) on them."[200] He nuances statements which have been commonly disseminated about Antiquity's conception of mimesis, such as the idea that Plato is said to condemn intransigently mimesis or that Aristotle affirms that art imitates nature. Halliwell explains the complexity of the philosophical thought that lies behind these simplified reductions which undermined reflection on the problematic surrounding the concept of mimesis and its reception. Gebauer and Wulf's book, on the other hand, consists of "a historical reconstruction of important phases in the development of mimesis, which has allowed [them] to identify continuities and breaks in the usage of the term."[201] Gebauer and Wulf outline the evolution of the concept of mimesis during the period from Antiquity to the present by referring to a selection of

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[200] Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems*, (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), p.vii.
[201] Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf, *Mimesis: Culture-Art-Society*, trans. by Don Reneau, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1995), p.1.

philosophers in different cultural fields and explaining the impact their reflection on mimesis had on their contemporary society. Although they are using a different perspective and methodology to those used by Halliwell, Gerbauer and Wulf have the same intention, which is "to expose the buried dimensions of the term and to correct and move beyond reductions, beyond the kind of unwarranted precision that results in an impoverishment of the concept."[202]

Both these studies refer to Eric Auerbach's *Mimesis* and explain (briefly for Halliwell and in detail for Gebauer and Wulf) in which way they are complementary to Auerbach's work on mimesis. Their main criticism of Auerbach is his lack of definition and theorisation of the concept of mimesis as such. They draw on the weaknesses of his work to elaborate a theoretical and historical context in order to make the definition of and reflection on the concept of mimesis more accurate and at the same time to expand its repercussions on a larger cultural and societal scale. Halliwell mentions in his preface that Auerbach "had almost nothing to say about the role of mimesis in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle",[203] and this is why he is not using it as direct source in his study, although he acknowledges that Auerbach's work on mimesis remains a major reference. Gebauer and Wulf devote an introductory chapter to their criticism of Auerbach which "serve[s] as a point of departure for a new methodological orientation."[204] They reiterate that their approach differs from Auerbach's in the sense that their aim is to anchor the evolution of artistic mimesis in relation to historical changes; they "assume that style, making up a worldview, and the various media, each with its respective technical history, are all interdependent, so that *each* of these areas is involved in historical change."[205] In adopting this perspective they want to not only exemplify the evolution of the concept, but also to expose the complexity inherent in producing a theory of mimesis. They underline that "mimesis cannot be represented without the use of mimetic processes [which] poses the fundamental problem of theory formation in reference to [the] object."[206] Thus, mimesis becomes not only the "product of a practice", but the actual subject of this practice. Mimesis becomes an ungraspable and paradoxical concept that "does not

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[202] Ibid., p.7.
[203] S. Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, p.vii.
[204] G. Gebauer and Ch. Wulf, *Mimesis*, p.9.
[205] Ibid., p.15.
[206] Ibid., p.21.

let itself be enclosed in the status of object or of theme"[207] and "challenges the production and the position of the discourse that formulates it."[208] In this sense, as expressed in the introduction of *Mimésis des articulations*, mimesis "escapes any attempt of being pinned down. It retracts itself at the contact of discourse."[209] Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe develops this notion of paradox inherent in mimesis, explaining it in regard to Diderot's *Actor's Paradox*. I will turn to his account of mimesis later, in order to explore further the paradoxical and problematic relation the artistic work which I am focusing on entertains with the concept of mimesis.

Halliwell, in his introduction to *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, distinguishes between two fundamental conceptions of mimesis: firstly, there is "the idea of mimesis as committed to depicting and illuminating a world that is (partly) accessible and knowable outside art, and by whose norms art can therefore, within limits, be tested and judged;"[210] and secondly, "the idea of mimesis as the creator of an independent artistic heterocosm, a world of its own, though one that, […], may still purport to contain some kind of "truth" about, or grasp of, reality as a whole."[211] The concept of mimesis seems to hold within it a constant tension between "imitation", implying a "representation" of the world, and "imagination", which allows more creativity. In this chapter, it is the second conception of mimesis which is going to be of particular relevance, but the inherent tension which dwells within the term, constantly in balance between notions of "truth" and "falsehood", might reveal itself asvery close to a tension inherent in Live Art practice, between presence and representation, or between different orders of the "real". Imagination seems to be the key word in the evolution of the concept of mimesis. The accent has commonly been put on the notions of "imitation" or "representation", but throughout Halliwell's breaking down of the term, the concept of "imagination" appears to hold an important place in the function of mimesis. The importance of the notion of imagination in the definition of mimesis evolves with the historical currents, but the subtleties with which

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[207] « ['mimesis'] ne se laisse pas enfermer dans le statut d'objet, ou de theme. », S. Agacinski, J. Derrida, S. Kofman, Ph. Lacoue-Labarthe, J-L. Nancy, B. Pautrat, *Mimésis des articulations*, (Paris: Flammarion, 1975), p. 5. Translation by L. Easton.
[208] « [cette question la reproduction] met au défi la production et la position du discours qui la formule. », Ibid., p.5.
[209] « [Mimesis] se dérobe à toute prise. Elle se rétracte au toucher du discours. », Ibid., p.13.
[210] S. Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, p.5.
[211] Ibid., p.5.

the definition of mimesis develops are already occupying a significant place in the key texts of Plato and Aristotle.

• Plato

In Plato's works the concept of mimesis already takes a broader sense than that of a simple imitation of nature as it is understood as "the capacity of producing a world of appearance."[212] According to Plato, the artist does not produce an object but a mere phenomenon. It is not a concrete thing, but only an appearance in which one might be tempted to believe. The common idea according to which Plato "uses the concept more in the general sense of imitation"[213] and decries artistic mimesis as the copy of a copy is problematized by Halliwell, who shows that Plato's position on mimesis is more complex. This complexity arises from the fact that Plato knows "just how seductive the transformative experience of art can be."[214] Plato writes in *The Republic*:

> When we hear Homer or one of the tragic poets representing the sufferings of a hero and making him bewail them at length, perhaps with all the sounds and signs of tragic grief, you know how even the best of us enjoy it and let ourselves be carried away by our feelings; and we are full of praises for the merits of the poet who can most powerfully affect us in this way.[215]

Plato's fear about artistic representations is grounded in an ethical concern. The influential potential of artistic creation should be used for educational purposes in his city. Mimesis is defined as "a sort of productive activity [poēsis], but the production of simulacra [eidola] not of things themselves"[216] Thus, "simulacra" or "apparitions" belong to the realm of the sensory. For Plato "truth" and reality are beyond the realm of the sensory. The essence of the real will never be reached or experienced through the experience of the produced simulacra, as explained in the following dialogue:

> "You may perhaps object that the things [the painter] creates are not real; and yet there *is* a sense in which the painter creates a bed, isn't there?"
> […] "he produces an appearance of one."

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[212] G. Gebauer and Ch. Wulf, *Mimesis*, p.25.
[213] Ibid. p.31
[214] S. Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, p.74.
[215] Plato, *The Republic*, X, 605c, (London: Penguin, 2003), p.349
[216] S. Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, p.64.

> […] "his produce is not "what is", but something which *resembles* "what is" without *being* it.[…]"[217]

The essence of the Idea will never be attained by the attempt to represent or reproduce it in the sensory world through mimesis. Plato reaffirms the inequality between "essence" and "likeness" saying that "[t]he art of representation is therefore a long way removed from truth, and it is able to reproduce everything because it has little grasp of anything and that little is of a mere phenomena."[218] It is the fact that the product of mimesis belongs to the sensory realm that is threatening in terms of educational purposes. Plato distrusts the power of emotions, and rather than eradicating arts from his city he seems, in *Republic:* Book III, to operate a sort of censorship regarding which emotions are portrayed in poetry or artistic representations and to put a veto on the ones than would not enhance and strengthen citizens subjected to feel them. He writes that

> […] we must issue similar orders to all artists and craftsmen, and prevent them portraying bad character, ill-discipline, meanness, or ugliness in pictures of living things, in sculpture, architecture, or any work of art, and if they are unable to comply they must be forbidden to practice their art among us. We shall thus prevent our guardians being brought up among representations of what is evil, and so day by day and little by little, by grazing widely as it were in an unhealthy pasture, insensibly doing themselves a cumulative psychological damage that is very serious.[219]

He adds:

> […]
> you may agree with them that Homer is the best of poets and first of tragedians. But you will know that the only poetry that should be allowed in a state is hymns to the gods and paeans in praise of good men; once you go beyond that and admit the sweet lyric or epic muse, pleasure and pain become your rulers instead of law and the rational principles commonly accepted as best.[220]

Plato is suspicious of the potential identification with the simulacrum and a possible appropriation of it as the real because of the power and immediacy of that which is felt, which, he fears, corrupts the mind. It is as if tasting the realm of the sensory would lead people astray from the transcendent world of Ideas, the realm of the "truth". The paradox remains however, in the sense that mimesis is "doomed to

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[217] Plato, *The Republic*, X, 597a, p.337-378.
[218] Ibid., 598b, p.339-340.
[219] Plato, *The Republic*, III, 401c, p.97-98.
[220] Ibid., 606b-607a, p.350-351.

failure", but at the same time mimesis is "all we have"; "the world itself is a mimetic creation".[221] The world we encounter and which surrounds us is a copy of the realm of Ideas. This world belongs to the category of imperfect mimetic copy engaged with the chaotic realm of the sensory, which seems to be exacerbated by the artistic mimetic representation, the second rate copy, allowing identification. According to Plato,

> […] very few people are capable of realizing that what we feel for other people must infect what we feel for ourselves, and that if we let our pity for the misfortune of others grow too strong it will be difficult to restrain our feelings in our own.[222]

This process of identification, offering the possibility to experience a range of diverse emotions which might not be encountered by everyone in everyday life, is what Plato distrusts and rejects as corruptive, because, as Halliwell explains, "[i]t is in the nature of the variety on which the imagination thrives that it can take us 'outside ourselves'."[223] Plato writes that

> [p]oetry has the same effect on us when it represents sex and anger, and the other desires and feelings of pleasure and pain which accompany all our actions. It waters them when they ought to be left to wither, and makes them control us when we ought, in the interests of our own greater welfare and happiness, to control them.[224]

Variety allows the mimetic representation to be more than one, to be always slightly different, blurring the reference to an ideal model as its representation becomes more and more caught up in imagination. Not only is mimetic representation subject to variability, but the reactions it provokes in terms of emotions and the intensity with which they might be felt is unpredictable and might very well vary from one occasion to another. These variations tend to deviate from the focus on a model of "truth" and scatter the possible experience of the sensory world across several and multiple levels. Plato fears that this perspective might drive people away from the notion of an unique transcendental truth and have them scatter and lose themselves among the diverse emotional and sensory experiences of the world which artistic mimetic representations provide and encourage. There is

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[221] S. Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, p.71.
[222] Plato, *The Republic*, X, 606b, p.350.
[223] S. Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, p.94.
[224] Plato, *The Republic*, X, 606d, p.350.

a fear that the ethical and studious self-focus would be lost in this self-dispersion into the many variable selves encountered within fiction. Plato states that

> [the poet] resembles [the painter] both because his works have a low degree of truth and also because he deals with a low element in the mind. We are therefore quite right to refuse to admit him to a properly run state, because he wakens and encourages and strengthens the lower elements in the mind to the detriment of reason, which is like giving power and political control to the worst elements in a state and ruining the better elements. The dramatic poet produces a similarly bad state of affairs in the mind of the individual, by encouraging the unreasoning part of it, which cannot distinguish greater and less but thinks the same things are now large and now small, and by creating images far removed from the truth.[225]

Finally Plato seems to recognise the potential of variability within mimetic representation and that "the kinds of relationship to the world that qualify images as types of "likeness" (*homoiotēs*) are not unitary, but artistically and culturally variable."[226] So, it is not the failure of mimesis that Plato condemns as such. He seems to accept the fact that any representation will remain imperfect in terms of its reference to the transcendental model. The fear is related to the power of the imagination that the artistic mimetic creation develops within the artist and in the public. The variability and the ungraspable quality of the sensory realm makes it dangerous as it is impossible to frame and control. Artistic creation, or just any creation, seems to be a means to try to do so, and to transmit this urge to communicate or test what is felt.

Aristotle does not share Plato's reluctance as regards the potential that mimesis has to vehicle emotions. On the contrary, he underlines it as a key function of the whole mimetic process.

● **Aristotle**

Aristotle identifies mimesis as an act of production. The purpose of mimesis is no longer seen as only trying to reproduce a copy of nature, but rather as the reproduction of the process of nature in the act of creation. Gebauer and Wulf explain that "[l]ike nature, [artists] are capable of creating matter and form."[227] The

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[225] Plato, *The Republic*, X, 605b, p.348-349.
[226] S. Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, p.128.
[227] G. Gebauer and Ch. Wulf, *Mimesis*, p.55.

term moves from being associated only with an image (*eidos*) to being the product of an action. Fiction is the new element which is forcefully put in the foreground, thus valorising the function of imagination in relation to mimesis, allowing "the poet [to create] something that previously did not exist and for which there are no available models."[228] There is a clear distancing from the notion of the representation of a model to engage with the notion of production. In *Poetics* Aristotle writes that "[…] the function of the poet is not to say what *has* happened, but to say the kind of thing that *would* happen, i.e. what is possible in accordance with probability or necessity."[229]

Aristotle is conscious of the variability of mimetic representation since it is dependent on the cultural and artistic context of its creation. He does not fear and prevent the imaginative faculty of the artist. It is the imaginative potential embedded in the notion of mimetic creation which interests Aristotle by virtue of what it can reveal of a possible depiction of the world. There is no need for an endless repetition of the same in mimetic representation, but rather a creative and innovative potential in the exploration of fictional representation. Aristotle acknowledges that the creative process needs to have access to the possibility of imagining the world from its reality rather than having to represent it. According to him,

> [t]he poet is engaged in imitation, just like a painter or anyone else who produces visual images, and the object of his imitation must in every case be one of three things: either the kind of thing that was or is the case; or the kind of thing that is said or thought to be the case; or the kind of thing that ought to be the case.[230]

The tension inherent in mimesis remains, since even though imagination can expand, the tie to reality is still present. The diverse products of artistic creation are imprinted by the imaginative conception of how things "*ought to* be", but the starting point to creation remains grounded in the real world. The notion of depiction of the world keeps its validity though it can be deployed with different perspectives resulting from the works of imagination. Aristotle writes that

> [t]he reason for this is what is possible is plausible; we are disinclined to believe what has not happened is plausible; we are disinclined to believe that what has not happened is possible, but it is obvious that what has happened is possible – because it would not have

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[228] Ibid.,p.55.
[229] Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. by Malcom Heath, (London : Penguin, 1996), p.16.
[230] Ibid., p.42.

happened if it were not. To be sure, even in tragedy in cases only one or two names are familiar, while the rest are invented, and in some none at all, e.g. in Agathon's *Antheus*; in this play both the events and the names are invented, but it gives no less pleasure. So no need to try at all costs to keep to the traditional stories which are the subject of tragedy; in fact it would be absurd to do so, since even what is familiar is familiar only to a few, and yet gives pleasure to everyone.[231]

Aristotle's notion of fictional imagination functions on "a shared agreement between the maker and recipients of the mimetic work to suspend the norms of literal truth"[232] as a condition for the purpose of communication to be fulfilled. For Aristotle "[p]oetry tends to express universals, and history particulars. The *universal* is the kind of speech or action which is consonant with a person of a given kind in accordance with probability or necessity",[233] which means that, as Halliwell explains, "[t]he mimetic status of certain objects is a matter of their having a significant content that can and, if their mimetic status is to be effectively realized, must be recognized and understood by their audience."[234] In this sense, the imagination has a part to play in mimetic creation, but only to the extent to which the product remains associated with the audience's reality, so that they can relate to it and be able to understand it. For Aristotle, one of the main functions of mimesis is that it operates as a vehicle for emotions, including both pleasure and pain. The emotions are embedded in the work, but should also be transmitted to the audience. Mimesis becomes a creative product which in its turn is supposed to produce emotions which may be shared with an audience; it becomes a means of communication since "Aristotle supposes that mimesis provides a formal equivalent of an imaginable reality, but also that it opens up the possibility of equivalence of *experience*, on the part of the audience in relation to such reality".[235]

Contrarily to Plato, the fact that the audience is subjected to experiencing a range of emotions triggered by the mimetic artistic creation is not perceived as a threat by Aristotle. Engaging with these different feelings, levels of pleasure and pains is part of the experience that the artwork should offer its audience. Aristotle remarks that

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[231] Ibid., p.16.
[232] S. Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, p.166.
[233] Aristotle, *Poetics*, p.16.
[234] S. Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, p.153.
[235] Ibid, p.163.

> [i]t is possible for the evocation of fear and pity to result from the spectacle, and also from the structure of the events itself. The latter is preferable and is the mark of a better poet. The plot should be constructed in such a way that, even without seeing it, anyone who hears the events which occur shudders and feels pity at what happens; […]. Producing this effect through spectacle is less artistic, and is dependent on the production. […]; one should not seek every pleasure from tragedy, but one that is characteristic of it. And since the poet should produce the pleasure which comes from pity and fear, and should do so by means of imitation, clearly this must be brought about in the events.[236]

It is the inscription of the artist's world conception within her/his production as work of art which needs to be communicated to an audience on the basis of a shared ground of experience commonly understood as the real. In this case, the possible emotions provoked by mimetic artwork would not be, as Plato feared they would, the experience of feelings that would not have been encountered otherwise than through mimetic identification, but it would be instead a series of emotions already known to the audience. The main reference remains the common real, though it is acknowledged that its representations can vary and produce fictions that "parallel" the real. It is the recognition of this parallel, the possible link with the real, that provokes pleasure within the audience. According to Aristotle,

> [i]mitation comes naturally to human beings from childhood (and in this they differ from other animals, i.e. in having a strong propensity to imitation and in learning their earliest lessons through imitation); so does the universal pleasure in imitations. What happens in practice is evidence of this: we take delight in viewing the most accurate possible images of objects which in themselves cause distress when we see them (e.g. the shape of the lowest species of animal, and corpses). The reason for this is that understanding is extremely pleasant, not just for philosophers but for others too in the same way […]. This is the reason why people take delight in seeing images; what happens is that as they view them they come to understand and work out what each thing is […]. If one happens not to have seen the thing before, it will not give pleasure as an imitation, but because of its execution or colour, or for some other reason.[237]

Pleasure, understanding and emotion are the three elements which are working in relation to one another in the process for the reception of mimesis. It is understanding that provokes pleasure, although Aristotle makes a distinction between the emotion raised by or transmitted through the mimetic work and the pleasure felt from

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[236] Aristotle, *Poetics*, p.22.
[237] Ibid., p.6-7.

understanding it. The mimetic object can trigger a sensation of pain or disgust, which could not be associated with pleasure. Although, even a painful emotion can be integrated into aesthetic pleasure; it is the recognition of that emotion which procures the pleasure linked to the understanding of the mimetic object, as "Aristotle clearly supposed that the pleasure in question depends on the perception of something *known* to be artistically mimetic: no one confuses a painting of a corpse with a real corpse."[238]

The tension between the representation of the real and imagination is inherent in the concept of mimesis and is at the core of the philosophical reflection that surrounds it. Halliwell cites Plutarch by way of summary: "[m]imesis, […], is *both* the invention of worlds that differ from the reality we inhabit, *and* fundamentally dependent on resemblance to that reality."[239] There remains a tension in this doubleness, which may be viewed as a kind of paradox.

● **Paradox**

The near impossibility of writing about, theorizing or criticising mimesis without using a mimetic mode, as mentioned by Gebauer and Wulf and underlined by authors of *Mimésis des articulations* in their introduction, has already been noticed as a paradoxical feature of Plato's *Republic*. Jonas Barish remarks in *The Anti-Theatrical Prejudice* that Plato's "attack on mimesis […] is after all itself conducted in the mimetic mode"[240] and that it betrays his own addiction to poetry. Plato would then become ensnared by the mode that he condemns. Or is he consciously exploiting it, using the mimetic mode both to convince and thus to denounce its potentially corruptive power? According to Barish,

> […] a careful reading of the dialogue as a whole tends to confirm the hard interpretation, and to make the frequent local concessions, the dramatic touches, the quasi-comic by play, largely a matter of leavening, to win a favourable hearing for unpalatable doctrine.[241]

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[238] S. Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, p.180.
[239] Ibid., p.301.
[240] Jonas Barish, *The Anti-theatrical Prejudice*, (Berkley, LA, London: University of California Press, 1981) p.11.
[241] Ibid., p.11.

Plato's *Republic* cannot elude the inherent paradox of mimesis which means that the "Platonic dialogues […] would have trouble with the proposed Platonic censor."[242]

In his essay "Diderot: Paradox and Mimesis",[243] Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe attempts to explain the paradox of mimesis starting from Diderot's *Paradox of Acting*. Diderot's theory about acting is that to be good and credible, the actor should not be feeling any of the emotions that he portrays, but he should be able to reconstruct them and "thus perform […] *mechanically* in one of the basic meanings of that word – capable of exact duplication, replicable by rule and measure."[244] Lacoue-Labarthe notices that Diderot's claim in *The Paradox of Acting* that "great poets, great actors and I may add all great imitators of nature, […], are the least sensitive of all creatures"[245] contradicts one of his own well-known theses about the enthusiasm of the artist who "feels vividly and does little reflecting."[246] Lacoue-Labarthe uses Diderot as a springboard to develop further the paradox of mimesis. He refers back to the dual conception of imitation and imagination, already at stake in Aristotle's notion of poesis:

> There are thus two forms of mimesis. First, a restricted form which is the reproduction, the copy, the reduplication of what is given (already worked, effected, presented by nature).
> […]
> Then there is a general mimesis, which reproduces nothing given (which re-produces nothing at all), but which *supplements* a certain deficiency in nature, its incapacity to do everything, organise everything, make everything work – *produce* everything.[247]

This general mimesis which is a reproduction of the drive of nature to create allows the artist to produce "*another presentation* – or the presentation of *something other*, which was not yet there, given, or present."[248] The paradox then is that "in order to do everything, to imitate everything – in order to (re)present or (re)produce

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[242] Ibid., p.11.

[243] Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "Diderot: Paradox and Mimesis" in *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics*, trans. by Christophe Fynsk, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

[244] Joseph R. Roach, *The Player's Passion: Studies on the Science of Acting*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002), p.133-134.

[245] « Les grands poètes, les grands acteurs, et peut-être en général tous les grands imitateurs de la nature, […]sont les êtres les moins sensibles. » Diderot, *Paradoxe sur le comédien,* in *Œuvres Esthétiques*, (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1968), p.310. Translation "Diderot: Paradox and Mimesis", p.253.

[246] « Les poètes, les acteurs, les musiciens, les peintres, les chanteurs de premier ordre, les grands danseurs, les amants tendres, les vrais dévots, toute cette troupe enthousiaste et passionnée sent vivement, et réfléchit peu. » Diderot, *Entretien sur le fils naturel*, in *Œuvres Esthétiques*, p.104. Translation in "Diderot: Paradox and Mimesis", p.253.

[247] Ph. Lacoue-Labarthe, "Diderot: Paradox and Mimesis", p.255.

[248] Ibid., p.257.

everything in the strongest sense of these terms – one must oneself be nothing, have nothing *proper* to oneself".[249] Lacoue-Labarthe associates this "law of impropriety" to the "poietic gift", which is nothing given. The characteristic of nature to be in "perpetual movement of presentation" is equivalent to the "gift of mimesis": "in effect, a gift of nothing (in any case of nothing that is already present or already *given*). A gift of nothing or of nothing other than the 'aptitude' for presenting".[250] Mimesis becomes more the synonym of an action (an energy, the *poesis*) rather than a product. It is the "law of impropriety" or the "gift of nothing" which allows the constant mutation that it implicates. This instability results in variability not only in the (re)production of the non-given, but also in the subject who produces it. Lacoue-Labarthe notes that

> […] the artist, the subject of the gift, is not truly a subject: he is a subject that is a nonsubject or subjectless, and also an infinitely multiplied plural subject, since the gift of nothing is equally the gift of everything – the gift of impropriety is the gift for a general appropriation and presentation.[251]

The core of the paradox lies in this required absence and nothingness which provides the space in which to generate a productive, various and variable creativity: "that hyperbolical exchange between nothing and everything."[252]

Lacoue-Labarthe draws the comparison between paradox and mimesis based on Diderot's *Paradox of Acting*, in which Diderot claims that the actor should be able to abandon his emotional subject to reproduce mechanically the emotions he needs to portray, so from nothing, a nonsubject void, he has the potential to present every emotional construction. This gift of nothing, or "aptitude" for presenting everything, defining the paradox of mimesis, is in fact a suitable definition or description for the type of artistic work that rejects mimesis as representation and the principle of pretence which has been associated with it, to privilege presentation or production in its creative process. In putting the accent more on the process than on the product, it uses the poietic drive of general mimesis to create a supplement to the real. Artists working in this way, such as those I have mentioned in the preceding chapter, entertain a paradoxical relation to the notion of subject dealing with the tension of the

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[249] Ibid., p.259.
[250] Ibid., p.259.
[251] Ibid., p.260.
[252] Ibid., p.260.

subjectless subject. Performers retain their subjectivity in the refusal to incarnate, but at the same time this refusal and the fact that they put their person at the service of the production of a series of actions obliterates the notion of subject. For example, not-dance performers, through their refusal of representation and their presentation of the body as a malleable object, might come closest to the paradox of mimesis: the gift of nothing which acquires the capacity for appropriating everything. They become subjectless subjects who now possess the capacity of becoming "subject-full", meaning that they make themselves available to a multiple of variable subjects / forms. This paradoxical dynamic has repercussions for the state of the tension between the real and the created. The basic principle of the work rejecting mimesis is the refusal of representation and fictionalisation in favour of the production of actions that inscribe themselves in the immediacy of the real. Nevertheless, the presentation of this creative process is itself inevitably inscribed within a construction of something other, i.e. something which is not *given*, which is the principle of artistic creation, especially when it refuses to represent the real to better create the real. The paradox of mimesis allows a reinscription of the series of artistic creations which works against mimesis in a mimetic problematic. As was already the case with Plato, the detractors of mimesis do not seem to be able to avoid using features of mimesis in their creative work.

● **Feminism**

Feminism also entertains a paradoxical relationship with the concept of mimesis. Feminists found themselves struggling with notions of "imitation" of models, representation of the "truth" that commonly define mimesis. Which models? And whose "truth"? All of these parameters have largely been associated with the phallic power of patriarchy that set up the models and the way that these should be represented as images of an agreed "truth". Feminists have rejected the concept of mimesis since they could not recognize themselves as women in the representations and images supposed to be picturing women that were offered to them. The construction of the female "I" in relation to the Other is problematic since women have been portrayed as the Other and the reflection that has been offered to them is not matching. Julia Kristeva, for instance, takes a radical position on the impossibility of representing "women". Although she acknowledges the necessity of defining,

stating and claiming womanhood in order to achieve the political agendas of feminism, according to her defining a woman as "a woman" is already affirming her difference and placing her "I" the realm of the "Other". She claimed in an interview she gave for the group "Psychanalyse et Politique du MLF" in 1974:

> On a deeper level, however, a woman cannot "be"; it is something which does not even belong in the order of *being*. It follows that a feminist practice can only be negative, at odds with what already exists so that we may say "that's not it" and "that's still not it." In "woman" I see something that cannot be represented, something that is not said, something above and beyond nomenclatures and ideologies.[253]

Elin Diamond asks "why would a self-consciously evolving feminism concern itself with mimesis?",[254] since "[m]imesis for its earliest and varied enunciations, posits a *truthful* relation between world and word, model and copy, nature and image, or in semiotic terms, referent and sign, in which potential difference is subsumed by sameness."[255] Luce Irigaray refers to the phallic power of mimesis in *Speculum of the Other Women*, explaining how women have been subjected to what she calls "mimesis imposed", which means that they have had to "reflect that which society tells [them] to mirror – male virility".[256] In the case of women, mimesis does not seem to represent the real, the truth, but rather to define and impose the real. Images and representations of women do not seem to offer a copy, faithful or not, but rather to provide what is expected by patriarchal society to be taken as the model that women should mimetically reproduce: "the impact of those social fantasies is, nevertheless, inexorably real."[257] Rather than having imagination anchored in reality, the reverse seems to be happening in the sense that the imaginative part of the created image imposes authority in the definition of an non-existing "real". Rebecca Schneider explains that

> the paradox, explicated by feminist theory, [is] that the female body in representation has emblematised *both* the obsessive terrain of

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[253] Julia Kristeva in *Tel Quel*, automne 1974, trans. by M.A. August, in *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), p.137.
[254] Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on feminism and theatre*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1997), p. iii.
[255] Elin Diamond, "Mimesis, Mimicry, and the 'True-Real'", *Modern Drama*, 32, n° 1, (1989), 58-72 (p.58).
[256] R. Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance*, note 25 ,p.202.
[257] Ibid., p.104.

> representational fantasy *and*, as empress / impress of the vanishing point, that which escapes and is beyond the representational field.[258]

The represented woman is inaccessible to both men and women since she does not exist as such. She is the constructed representational image created by men, a fantasized social construction that does not refer to any real. This is why the concept of mimesis, as defined as a representation of the real, is inadequate in terms of feminist theory.

Some feminists therefore react strongly against mimetic representation; they react against the damage caused by a concept that is understood as representing reality when it is in fact a constant product of the imagination. They must try to make the term mimesis their own and redefine it anew with the parameters associated with a possible (re)-presentation of women and of the female body. Hélène Cixous, for example, in her article "Aller à la Mer", which she wrote in 1977, said that she stopped going to the theatre because it gave her the impression of going "to [her] own funeral" because it did not "produce a living woman or (and this is no accident) her body or even her unconscious"[259] She urges women to reinvest their bodies and to take possession of the stage as a "body-presence" or a "body in labour":

> This will be a stage/scene without event. No need for plot or action; a single gesture is enough, but one that can transform the world. […] It will be a text, a body decoding and naming itself, […].[260]

This exhortation almost corresponds to the use of what Schneider has called the explicit body in performance, although the relation to the pre-existing representations of women and their female body makes the presentation and the claim of the female body as it is when defined and used by women problematic. Irigaray suggested the notion of hysterical mimicry, in which women do not reflect the patriarchal constructed image, but "mirror [their] own patriarchal oppression".[261] For Diamond, "[a] feminist mimesis, if there is such a thing, would take the relation to the real as productive, not referential, geared to change, not to reproducing the same."[262] This definition comes close to the way Aristotle considered mimesis to function in terms of

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[258] Ibid., p.6.
[259] Hélène Cixous, « Aller à la Mer », *Le Monde*, avril 1977, trans. by Barbara Kerslake, *Modern Drama* 27, 4, (1984), 546-548 (p.546).
[260] Ibid., p.547.
[261] R. Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance,* note 25, p.202.
[262] E. Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis*, p.xvi.

the expansion of the imagination in fiction. However, Diamond does not choose fiction to explore a new conception of mimesis, but refers instead to the Brechtian alienation effect in order to come closer to what is suggested by Irigaray with her notion of hysterical mimicry. Using the concept of alienation, she is "framing the way systems of meaning are marked upon literal bodies and exposing the reality effects of those engenderments upon those who live in and wield patriarchally marked, engendered bodies."[263] Feminist artists, suggests Schneider, need to be "side-stepping", to look at their bodies and present them as "dialectic image[s]". Schneider borrows the term "dialectic image" from Walter Benjamin, who use it to refer to "objects which show the show, which make it apparent that they are not entirely that which they have been given to represent".[264] Feminist artists play with the fact that there is a gap between the image and the real, reproducing the mimetic representations that have been imposed on women, but disrupting them just enough for the audience to look at them twice. They expose the paradox surrounding the representation of their female body, showing it as a fantasy that will never be fulfilled or concretised in the real, rather than it being a mirror image of the real female body/being: "what we want to call "real" woman falls apart as her body (that which marks her "woman") is read as always already relative to the phallic signifier which marks her as his insatiable desire, the terrain of his obsessions."[265] By showing what has been done to their mimetic representation, they use mimesis, or rather counter-mimesis, to criticize what the concept has done to them.

Female performance artists often work with their body, inevitably inscribed in a patriarchal fantasy, disrupting the expected representation by using their raw and explicit body, re-inscribing it if possible in the real, but definitively in the reality of the flesh. Schneider says that the aim of the explicit body in performance art "is not necessarily to erect a "True Woman", a "Real Woman", as much as to explicate the historical service of bodies to commodity dreamscapes and to wrestle with the effect of that service."[266] Female performance artists by making the "sensuous contact between viewer and viewed […] literal and explicit"[267] expose the gap between the fantasy and the real. Using the dreamscape that already exists in the mimetic

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[263] R. Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance*, p.116-117.
[264] Ibid., p.52.
[265] Ibid., p.99.
[266] R. Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance*, p.6.
[267] Ibid., p.90.

tradition they emphasise how the fantasy impacts the real by disrupting it with the intrusion of the explicit sensuous contact imposed by the presence of their female body as such and which thus acknowledges its misrecognition. Rather than destroying the image made of them, they re-interpret it, re-produce it, suggesting "a collapse of the space between the phantomic appearance and literal reality, interrogating the habitual ease of our cultural distinctions."[268] It is the use of the paradox of their *invisibility* as women, since their female body will remain mainly read through a patriarchal fantasy grid, and the use of their female body that will allow them to disembody the mimetic representations society has imposed on them. By embodying these representations with their raw explicit female body, which is unknown, and which has been rendered invisible because of its misrecognition and its mismatch with the offered image, they perform a disembodiment of the actual fantasy image. The discrepancy is exposed and the actual place of the mimetic fantasy in society interrogated. These images cannot be destroyed or eradicated, but they can be questioned and exposed. According to Schneider,

> [c]ontemporary performers of the explicit body bank on the possibility that though, as Marx reminds us, the mode in which identity determining takes place may not change, and though secret-making and the mechanisms perpetuating the social underpinnings of the construct "nature" are not altered by exposure, nevertheless, that which is secret-ed by such mechanisms may be malleable, playable, *performative*.[269]

Amelia Jones in her book *Body Art / Performing the Subject* broadly shares the same discourse about feminist body artists showing that the female body is inscribed in patriarchal codes of representation from which it cannot free itself. For her,

> […] Hannah Wilke explores her body / self as always already not her own and enacts femininity as, by its very definition in patriarchy, inexorably performed […] doubly alienated, removed from the lure of potential transcendence.[270]

Here it is not only a question of finding a suitable way of representing women, but of finding the female self. Female artists have to fight with the fact that women have been subjected to a double alienation through their image. Jones notes that

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[268] Ibid., p.99.

[269] Ibid., p.97.

[270] Amelia Jones, *Body Art / Performing the Subject*, p.152.

> Simone de Beauvoir suggests in *The Second Sex* that patriarchy works to separate women's immanence from any possibility of cognition, selfhood, or transcendence; the woman's body is folded in the patriarchal regime as fundamentally objectified and alienated from the woman's "self".[271]

Jones' argument about body art is that it has allowed the artist, male and female, to re-inscribe the notion of self within their body, overcoming the dichotomy imposed by Cartesian thought between body and self. By acknowledging that the body is part of the self, body artists not only expose their body and explore its limits, but they are also exposing and exploring the limits of their self. Jones argues that "[…] feminist body art works produce the female artist as both body and mind, subverting the Cartesian separation of cogito and corpus that sustains the masculinist myth of male transcendence."[272] Feminist body artists are still questioning the representation of the female body, but at the same time they are problematizing it by exposing their self through the exposure of their body. Again, they have to use mimesis to better counter it; they are not constructing representations of themselves, they are presenting themselves. They are set between the realm of representation and the real. They disrupt the representation with the apparition of the real, exposing the discrepancy between the pretending mimetic image and the reality of their female body which embodies their self. Their body becomes their artistic tool, and in order to break the boundaries in which it has been held and modelled by patriarchal systems of representation, their only option is to use the same female body, and to explore it, push it and present it beyond these imposed boundaries. Only by learning how to use the weapons that have been used against them/their image can they disrupt and counter-attack the concept of mimesis.[273] The feminist use of mimesis is not to represent women / the female body, but to expose what mimesis has done to the representation of women / the female body. It is within this exposure and this questioning of the mimetic concept that female artists can re-appropriate their own body and with it explore their self. Feminist body artists move from this notion of "the female body" to "my female body", as Eleanor Antin suggested:

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[271] Ibid., p.152.

[272] Ibid., p.157.

[273] If I take the liberty here to switch to a lexicon of violence it is with in my head (and on the page next to me) the picture of Hannah Wilke's work entitled *What does this represent / What do you represent*, (Amelia Jones, *Body Art / Performing the Subject*, p.158), in which she is sitting naked in the corner of a room with spread in front of her Mickey Mouse toys and a series of guns. This to me hints to the tension between the potential of harm and self-defence that can be drawn from representation.

> "the notion of the body is itself an alienation of the physical aspect of the self… But what if the artist makes the leap from "the body" to "my body"? "My body" is, after all, an aspect of "my self" and one of the means by which my self projects itself into the physical world."[274]

This idea of projecting oneself into the world through the use of the body may be developed in relation to the concept developed in more detail by Elaine Scarry in her book *The Body in Pain*. Following her argument, any creative and productive action results in the projection of oneself, or oneself's sentience, into the physical world. And as much as the mimetic concept is problematic and paradoxical in its very use and definition, it seems impossible to escape it. Any creative and productive act seems to contain its share of mimesis.

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[274] Eleanor Antin, "An Autobiography of the Artist as Autobiographer" in *LAICA Journal*, 2, (1974), p.18.

3. Sensuous Apprehension

This third chapter focuses on the relationship mimesis has with the expression of perceptions and sentiences and thus with the concept of language. It considers Walter Benjamin's account of the human mimetic faculty at the origin of translating perception and sensuous apprehension of the surrounding world. Benjamin deplores the loss of a language based on mimetic similarities between the sign and its referent, when our common verbal language is now constructed on an arbitrary mimetic relation between the referent and the signifier. It also engages with the work of Elaine Scarry, through the development of the idea that every human creation is the mimetic artefact of a sentience for which language does not necessarily have a pre-existing referent, and which therefore reveals the frailty of verbal language as an arbitrary construction. It is the creation of an artefact in the outside world which allows human beings to verbalise their emotions, pain or pleasure and then elaborate a mimetic relation with this outside referent. This process allows them to communicate and share the sentience and reciprocate it in the Other. Scarry emphasises the process of "making-up" the artefact and then "making [it] real", exposing verbal language as an arbitrary mimetic construction easily destabilised.

Working with Benjamin's philosophical notion of sensuous apprehension and Scarry 's concepts of "making-up" and "making-real" as a mimetic creative process, I will explain how the performances I consider in this thesis, by focusing on the creative process rather that the artistic product, might in fact be coming close to elaborating a form of language based on sensuous perception. These performances show the process of creating their artefact live. They create thus a tension between performing the "real" and exposing the "real" as "made-up", destabilising the mimetic relation between the two. They present the performance as an artefact which develops a mimetic relation between the signifier and referent, rather than between the signified and the referent, and thus comes close to a form of sensuous apprehension.

● Walter Benjamin

Walter Benjamin theorised the implication of mimesis for language. According to him, "[w]riting and language have become 'an archive of nonsensuous similarities,

nonsensuous correspondences.'"[275] The shift from a ternary to a binary structure of the sign transformed the relation knowledge had with the recognition of similarities between nature and human beings into considering knowledge outside the mimetic faculty. Language and the world are separated and knowledge is no longer based on a sensuous apprehension of the world. According to Benjamin, this resulted in "[a] reduced conception of language [which] sacrifies its expressive aspect to semantic content and instrumental function, which accompany the disappearance of the mimetic relation."[276] The mimetic relation between language and its referent is not a given, it is arbitrary and has to be decoded. Gebauer and Wulf explain that "[l]anguage is a mimetic transformation of perceptions and sensations, the mimetic aspect of which requires something on which to anchor itself."[277] It needs a referent in the outside world. Language becomes a medium that needs the outside world as a reference to express the sensuous inside of human beings, creating thus a relation between the two. This relation is no longer one of similarity, but one of reference. Gebauer and Wulf write that

> [t]he experience of nonsensuous similarities becomes tied to the reciprocal permeation of human needs and objects in the world. If mimetic abilities disappeared altogether, there would no longer be any way of interacting with the environment and experiencing it; for it is by means of the mimetic faculty that the objective world metamorphoses into the Other for human beings.[278]

Human beings have a strongly developed capacity for generating mimesis. This mimetic faculty becomes obvious when observing children playing. Benjamin notes that

> [c]hildren's play is everywhere permeated by mimetic modes of behaviour, and its realm is by no means limited to what one person can imitate in another. The child plays at being not only a shopkeeper or teacher but also a windmill and a train. [279]

Children not only reproduce the attitudes or behaviours of other beings, their language, but they also enter into a mimetic interaction with the objects that surround them in the outside world. They create a relation and enter into relation

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[275] G. Gebauer and Ch. Wulf, *Mimesis*, p.271.
[276] Ibid., p.271.
[277] Ibid., p.272.
[278] Ibid., p.273.
[279] Walter Benjamin, "Doctrine of the Similar" in *Selected Writings*, vol.2, 1927-1934, ed. by M.W.Jennings, H. Eliand and G. Smith, (Cambridge & London: The Belknap Press of Havard University Press, 1999), p.694.

with the outside world through the mimetic process of producing similarities. This process is linked to perceptions. It is through the perception of similarities in the outside world that the child/person establishes its own "I" in relation to the Other (people and objects) with which s/he interacts. The child still possesses the capacity of a sensuous understanding of the world that will tend to be lost with adulthood and replaced by a nonsensuous medium, which is language. For Benjamin,

> language is the highest application of the mimetic faculty – a medium into which the earlier perceptual capacity for recognising the similar had, without residue, entered to such an extent that language now represents the medium in which objects encounter and come into relation with one another.[280]

Even if language is an "archive of nonsensuous similarities", there is still a part of sensuous apprehension in language since it is the verbalisation of the sensuous apprehension people have of their inner and outer world. Language is a mode of translation of these sentiences through a set of words rather than through the acts of playing at being a windmill or a train. Gebauer and Wulf note that "language, for Benjamin, is in every instance the expression of the deepest, most intimate self."[281]

For Benjamin, it is indeed the perception of similarities and the process of their reproduction which is inherent to the concept of mimesis. Bettine Menke explains that

> an essential constructivity [is] at work in Benjamin's concept of "mimetic", which is not stabilized by (pre)given "similarities", but rather defined as a "faculty" of the perception of these similarities through the "processes" of their production.[282]

There is a notion of creativity here as well in the concept of mimesis and not only of representation. According to Beatrice Hanssen, it is the "interplay between mimetic *perception* and *(re)production* that Benjamin felt to constitute poetic experience."[283] So, the apprehension of the outside world and of the self, the "I", is done through the perception of similarities and their creation, or re-creation, in order to express oneself. Artistic creation, not only the "poetic experience", relies on this interplay

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[280] W. Benjamin, "Doctrine of the Similar", p.697.
[281] G. Gebauer and Ch. Wulf, *Mimesis*, p.275.
[282] Bettine Menke, "Ornament, Constellation, Flurries", in *Benjamin's Ghosts: Interventions in Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory*, ed. by G. Richter, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 261-262.
[283] Beatrice Hanssen, "Language and mimesis in Walter Benjamin's work", in *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, ed. by David Ferris, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.68.

between perception and (re)production. Although Benjamin's concern is mainly related to the relation between mimesis and language, he mentions a physical relation to the mimetic concept in the notion of gesture. Mimetic activity is linked to gesture. Benjamin refers to dance, using an expression of Mallarmé who defined it as "gestural writing".[284] This implies that gesture is already a form of writing, i.e. a form of language. Dance is then the mimetic production of a range of perceptions inscribed in a language of gestures. Menke notes that "[f]ollowing Benjamin, perception is defined as *reproduction* or presentation, and presentation is defined in its turn as a gestural inscription, […], which reproduces nothing, re-presents nothing but itself. "[285]

According to Benjamin a mimetic process is involved in the reproduction of a perception, or perception of similarities, which does not necessarily concern the actual product as in re-presenting the similarity perceived, but rather the actual recognition and the process of the re-production. Like Aristotle, mimesis is associated with the action of re-producing the object, sensations or other, not with the final product. Mimesis becomes then an active concept inherent in the process of creation. Menke writes that

> [a]ccordingly, the "mimesis of objects" which is traditionally conceptualized in terms of a binary logic of representation, *is* a "mimesis of activities", the latter being a (remembering) relation of relations, of gestures, and not a re-presentation of something pregiven in these activities. [286]

In her book *The Body in Pain*, Scarry develops the idea that any act of human production involves mimesis since any human creation is an artefact which is supposed to reproduce a human sentience in the outer world. This means that any form of product is a way to express and diffuse sensuous apprehension into the world through an act of production and reciprocation.

● *The Body in Pain*

The concept of mimesis does not restrict itself to the definition of a representation of reality, but it can be defined as a product or even the act of

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[284] B. Menke, "Ornament, Constellation, Flurries", p.263.
[285] Ibid., p.263.
[286] Ibid., p.263.

production involving both a reference to a pre-existing object and the imagination. I will now consider this notion of mimesis as a product in the light of Scarry's work.[287] Scarry develops her argument around the notion of pain. Pain, according to Scarry, cannot be expressed through language. She writes that "[p]hysical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned."[288] Pain has no referent and this is why it resists its objectification in language. Thus when people try to find ways to put their pain into words it reveals the capacity humans have for word-making. It is through speaking that "the self extends out beyond the boundaries of the body, occupies a space much larger than the body."[289] It shows a need or will to diffuse oneself into the outside world through language and the use of the voice. Scarry notes that "[t]he "self" […] is "embodied" in the voice, in language."[290] This implies that the destruction of language would be equal to the destruction of the self.[291] Pain does not possess an object of reference in the external world and thus cannot be rendered in language, but it is "its objectlessness that may give rise to imagining by first occasioning the process that eventually brings forth the dense sea of artefacts and symbols that we make and move about in."[292] This means that when the imagination has created an artefact for pain, or any other sentience, it becomes possible to objectify it and verbalise it.

Through this process of creating artefacts, sentiences are objectified and made sharable. The body is turned inside out. The body is projected into the outside world through the creation of artefacts to express its various sensations and these created artefacts operate a reciprocation in which the sentiences can be internalised again by others. In this sense they become sharable. Scarry notes that "[t]he presence of the body in the realm of the artifice has as its counterpart the presence of the artifice in the body, the recognition that in making the world, man remakes himself."[293] She divides the process of "making" into three statements: first, "the

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[287] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: the making and unmaking of the world*, (NY & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985)
[288] Ibid., p.4
[289] Ibid., p.33.
[290] Ibid., p.49.
[291] Scarry develops this argument more in depth in relation to the subject of torture.
[292] Ibid., p.162.
[293] Ibid., p.251.

phenomenon of creating resides in and arises out of the framing intentional relation between physical pain on the one hand and imagined objects on the other"; second, "the now freestanding made object is a projection of the live body that itself reciprocates the live body"; third, "'making' entails the two conceptually distinct stages of 'making-up' and 'making-real'."[294] Creation consists then in reversing the inside and the outside. Scarry writes that

> [t]he interchange of inside and outside surfaces requires *not* the literal reversal of bodily linings but the making of what is originally interior and private into something exterior and sharable, and conversely, the reabsorption of what is now exterior and sharable into the intimate recesses of individual consciousness.[295]

It is the objectification of the sentience through creation that allows human beings to share and express sentiences that at first remained completely abstract. In this sense "the act of human creating includes both the creating of the object and the object's recreating of the human being".[296] Human beings thus need this process of exteriorisation which leads to re-interioristation or reciprocation to expand the range of definitions that they can use to explain themselves.

This can be apparent with language as language is created, and is thus an artefact:

> We ordinarily use language without contemplating its "madeness" […], but when one has an infant in whom the labor of "making" language is beginning, or a friend who has lost language facility because of a stroke and who must relearn, reform, this capacity, its "madeness" will be strikingly apparent.[297]

Language is clearly an artefact created to exteriorise our inner body, our inner self, in order to make it "real", share it and reciprocate it with others and ourselves. It is through its possible failure that we become aware that it has been "made", created. The only objects that announce themselves as "made-up" and unreal are the objects found in the art category. Scarry notes that "their made-upness surrounds them and remains available to us on an ongoing basis."[298] All the objects that surround us are made, they are "projected fictions of responsibilities, responsiveness, and reciprocating powers of sentience, they characteristically perform this mimesis more

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[294] Ibid., p.280.
[295] Ibid., p.284.
[296] Ibid., p.310.
[297] Ibid., p.313.
[298] Ibid., p.314.

successfully if not framed by their fictionality or surrounded by self-conscious issues of reality and unreality."[299]

Mimesis can be considered as a product resulting from a pre-existing object and the workings of imagination, a process which involves a part of imitation. An artefact, according to Scarry, is created from a non-existing object and from the work of imagination resulting in a product. However, if we take into account the fact that "in making the world, man remakes himself", there is then a pre-existing object: man. Every artefact created by human beings becomes then the result of a pre-existing object and imagination, which would mean that imitation is involved at one level of creation. Artefacts would be mimetic in this respect. Mimesis is considered as a product and all objects in our world are products that have first been imagined before having been created, "made-up" before "made-real", so they all are artefacts. Once "made real" they perform mimesis of a sentience projecting and reflecting the human body, or the inner human body, in the outside world. For Scarry, when the fictionality of the object (by fictionality she means its "made-upness") is pointed out, it reveals the object as an artefact and thus its arbitrariness as a referent. It disturbs the performance of mimesis; it disturbs the "made real"; it disturbs the value of the "real". Mimesis then performs the "real".

● **The production of the artefact**

I want to think about the performances discussed in this thesis with regard to different aspects of Scarry's argument. According to Scarry, pain and imagination are the key elements of creation, as they allow the elaboration of an artefact necessary to expose and diffuse a sentience in the external world. It is a process involving the exposure of the inside to the outside. I refer to the passage already cited above:

> The interchange of inside and outside surfaces requires *not* the literal reversal of bodily linings but the making of what is originally interior and private into something exterior and sharable, and conversely, the reabsorption of what is now exterior and sharable into the intimate recesses of individual consciousness.[300]

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[299] Ibid., p.325.
[300] Ibid., p.284.

This could also be adapted to define a parameter of certain kind of performance, involving only a slight change: in performance the interchange of inside and outside surfaces "requires *not* [*necessarily*] the reversal of bodily linings". Artists often play literally with the exposure of the inside of the body, with what should not be seen. Herein resides the actual tension in much performance: it is both creating an artefact and showing the fact that the artefact is a creation or even is being created in the now of the performance. Such a performance is made-up in the sense that it is a creation, it has been imagined and developed by the artist, but when it is performed the actions that take place are usually not made-up / unreal; on the contrary they are performed for real. When Chris Burden got himself shot the bullet entered his flesh for real and when Franko B. bled, it was real blood that was dripping from his veins onto the outside world. Such performers are still creating artefacts by setting a context in which they can in one way or another make "what is originally interior and private into something exterior and sharable"[301] and which will be reciprocated by an audience. Their work remains in constant tension between showing the unreal, the fact that art is a creation, that it is made-up and that, using Scarry's sense, it is a fiction, and the real, since at the same time it defictionalises the actions performed, making them happen for real. It uses mimesis in producing a artefact constructed on the pre-existing "real" and imagination, but at the same time it does not let the mimetic process take place fully. The intrusion of the reality of the action interrupts the possibility of a mimetic fiction. Just as feminist performers proceed with the disruption of reproducing their image, it is the exposure of the explicit body, the raw body made of flesh that prevents mimesis from operating without its process being exposed as well.

Postdramatic theatre is defined by Lehmann as "theatre of the real". He writes that "[i]t is concerned with developing a perception that undergoes – at its own risk- the 'come and go' between the perception of structure and of the sensorial real."[302] In this sense it plays with the same tension between the made-up and the made-real as I have discussed in relation to performance practices which exploit the 'realness' of the artists' bodies, but by using a different technique. It is not the appearance of the raw real that disrupts the fictionality of postdramatic theatre, but rather "its *self-*

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[301] Ibid., p.284.
[302] H.-T. Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p.103.

reflexive use".[303] Postdramatic theatre is using a tension which already resides in the medium of theatre since "[t]heatre takes place as practice that is at once signifying and entirely real."[304] The real serves a new meaning in the created artefact, an artefact which is always composed of elements of the real. This means that postdramatic theatre creates an "*aesthetics of undecidability*"[305] which is the impossibility to decide "whether one is dealing with reality or fiction."[306] It thus shares the tension inherent in mimesis that is visible in Live Art practices.

One characteristic of Live Art, which it shares with not-dance and possibly postdramatic theatre, is to perform one or a series of everyday actions or everyday movements, accomplished as tasks, but always distorted in some way: repeated endlessly, executed in a strange context, disrupted from the expected fulfilment and so on, resulting in "the production of *events*, *exceptions* and moments of *deviation*."[307] Not-dance can involve the breaking down of gestures through their repetition, slowness of execution and meticulous, almost imperceptible, movements out of stillness. Through the decomposition and repetition of simple gestures it exposes their "realness" as constructed. In what Lehmann calls "postdramatic theatre of events", he writes that "it is a matter of the execution of acts that are real in the here and now and find their fulfilment in the very moment they happen, without necessarily leaving any traces of meaning or a cultural monument."[308] Here again, with such performances, the context is understood as unreal, but the fact of inserting everyday actions uncovers their "madeness" and reveal them as artefacts. The actual process of the sentience passing through to the exterior and being reciprocated is made more concrete through the exposure of the artefact(s). This could be a reason why Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre performances can be controversial and disturb or unsettle some people: they do not simply reveal themselves as "made-up", but they show the fiction surrounding simple everyday objects and simple everyday actions or movements, thus destabilising their usual function outside of an art context by highlighting their arbitrariness as created referent. Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre disrupt mimesis because they

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[303] Ibid., p.103.
[304] Ibid., p.102.
[305] Ibid., p.100.
[306] Ibid., p.101.
[307] Ibid., p.105.
[308] Ibid., p.104.

constantly find themselves on the border of the "self-conscious issue of reality and unreality."[309]

Franko B in his piece *Oh Lover Boy!* is lying naked, his whole body painted in white, on a slightly bent square panel covered in a white material. The performance consists in him bleeding from both his arms for approximately ten minutes, the only movement being his hands clenching into fists and releasing in a slow rhythm to make the blood flow. The action is real, the blood is real, it is dark red, dripping and shining on the white canvas underneath him. The process of production of the artefact is the performance. At the end, when Franko B has left, only the white canvas smeared with shining blood remains to be watched. It is what has been produced live, it has been made-up, but everyone knows that the blood is real and that the bleeding took place. It is the performance as such that forces the audience to acknowledge the realness of the act of production; preventing them from seeing the result as a representation, stating its "unrealness", and thus, creating a tension between the live "made-up" artefact and the supposedly "made-unreal" (art) smeared and impregnated by the real (blood).

In *Nom donné par l'auteur*, Jérôme Bel and Frédéric Seguette use ten everyday objects (a carpet, a hairdryer, a vacuum-cleaner, a stool, salt, a ball, a bank note, a torch, ice-skates and a dictionary), chosen especially for their quality of ready-made and the fact that they are real objects, to create what Bel calls a "dance project", but which contains absolutely no dancing. Bel's performance of associating and confronting these ten mundane objects de-contextualised within the space of the black box ends up presenting a reification of the choreographic codes, as he explains in his interview with Christophe Wavelet in *Catalogue raisonné*. For Jérôme Bel, this piece is "pure choreography" since, as he says, it consists of "objects placed in space with set times."[310] The succession of the different actions realised with these ten objects, which are real, shows the creation of a made-up artefact which becomes the actual performance. Bel and his partner are in the process of creating this "pure choreography" which does not consist of dance, but of a writing process. Jérôme Bel says that with this piece he realised that he "had invented a language";[311] he had

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[309] E. Scarry, *The Body in Pain: the making and unmaking of the world*, p.325.

[310] *Nom donné par l'auteur*, Jérôme Bel interviewed by Christophe Wavelet in *Catalogue raisonné, 1994-2005*, www.catalogueraisonne-jeromebel.com [accessed June 2009].

[311] Ibid., www.catalogueraisonne-jeromebel.com [accessed June 2009].

made up a language out of real objects. Here again, this performance confronts the audience with the realness of the act of production of a made-up language within an artistic context which states its "un-realness".

Mimesis, as an act of production, as the creation of an artefact that requires the workings of the imagination and pre-existing elements to take shape, is happening in Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre performances, but it is straightaway disrupted. Because the emphasis of the performance is generally put on the process rather than the outcome, the audience is made to face the process of production. They are not subjected to mimesis, but they are facing mimesis as an act of production. Such performances use mimesis in the sense that they show it as being a construct rather than an imitation. There is no imitation of reality, but a creation resulting in the use of elements belonging to the audience's reality being decontextualised and / or re-contextualised in a different space, a different time and usage, in order for the non-referenced, the unexpected to appear. Although these performances advertise the process of the artefact being "made-up" before being "made-real", which could be considered as the moment when the sentience is shared or diffused, they disrupt mimesis by letting elements of the real take part in the process of production. They show the production of the artefact as being man-made / hand-made / blood-made. The object does not exist, but it is created. Through the intrusion of real actions, the "madeness" of the work and of existing objects is exposed. Mimesis is an act of production of fiction, fiction being the result of any creation (poiesis), and when this production of fiction is disrupted it ceases to appear as real. When the process of "making real" is interrupted by the intervention of "realness", or actions performed for real, it reveals the process of the "making real" of fiction. So, Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic performances use mimesis to expose it as a process of creation and refuting it as something that operates as an auxiliary, an intermediate, that allows by a sort of induction the transmission of an inside into the inside of the Other. Such performances put the focus directly on the inside and the idea that the production of any intermediate is the result of the body as a producer. The performer, rather than the fiction of the piece / the object, becomes the emerging source. The reciprocation is then achieved in a more direct body to body relation, the only intermediate or auxiliary being the process of production taking place in front of the audience's eyes, in front of the audience beings.

***The Spell of the Chestnut Tree Blossom Smell**[312] is a piece in which I performed a series of actions involving milk, cherry juice, white dresses, and a list of the words beginning with "sp-" in both the English and French dictionaries. This performance plays with the notions of inside and outside and how the inside always appears on the outside. I emptied, spat, poured, drank, broke, showered myself with the contents of several glasses of milk, which led to the revealing of dark glasses full of cherry juice hidden from view beforehand. The cherry juice would colour the production of the inside imprinting the outside: cherry juice tears thickly rolling from the corner of my eyes on my cheeks, lips and tongue tinted dark purple before the recitation of the list of words, fingertips dipped into it to write the list of words on the wall and finally my entire body submerged in a cherry juice bath dyeing my white dress dark red. The inside tinted the immaculate white of the outside. After milk, words poured out of my mouth as I recited the list of the "sp-" words of the English dictionary. I had memorized this list of words, as you would normally memorize a text, learning by heart a random series of words which are recognisable as words as such, but do not make any sense when given to you in alphabetical order. By reproducing this list of words, the actual fact is exposed that language and any text learnt by heart involves a reproduction of the arbitrariness of our language. My body became the means of production. My hesitations, mistakes, stumbling, repetitions of words acted as a trigger to find the next one to come; all these failures, these interruptions to the flow, revealed the "made-up" and interrupted an impossible "made-real", impossible since the "madeness" of this series of words is already inscribed and inherent in the alphabetical list. The list is not language, it is a series of possible components of language, so it becomes like an object, an artefact. The audience is witnessing the process of reproduction of this artefact through my struggle to reproduce the list of something approaching seven to eight hundred words. The words become other in this process; it is the action which is the focus, the action of the body producing this artefact. The process of mimesis is exposed since the impossible "made-real", or "made-unreal" in terms of artistic creation, is constantly pushed back to the stage of "made-up" through the performer/her body struggling to re-produce the words. The same happened with the French series of "sp-" words written on the white wall. The act of re-production becomes even more*

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[312] Leonore Easton, ***The Spell of the Chestnut Tree Blossom Smell***, performed at Espace Basta, Lausanne, 2004. **See DVD**.

tangible, since it leaves a trace on the wall. The writing carries the mark of the fingers' effort to write the letters one after the other, making them readable, dipping in the juice as often as necessary, changing from one to the other as the blisters formed start hurting and bursting leaving unexpected traces of blood. The wall is gradually covered by a series of awkwardly traced letters that are forming words that little by little are recognisable or on the contrary are no longer recognisable. Here again the audience is witnessing the production of the artefact, subjected to the effort of the performer and the time it takes to fulfil the task. In this performance the whole space is transformed through the series of actions executed, each one participating in the creation of the final artefact which only consists of the traces of the actions that took place and these will only remain overnight. It is the live and immediate process of its creation which makes up the performance, not the outcome, not the final object whose status is ephemeral as well.
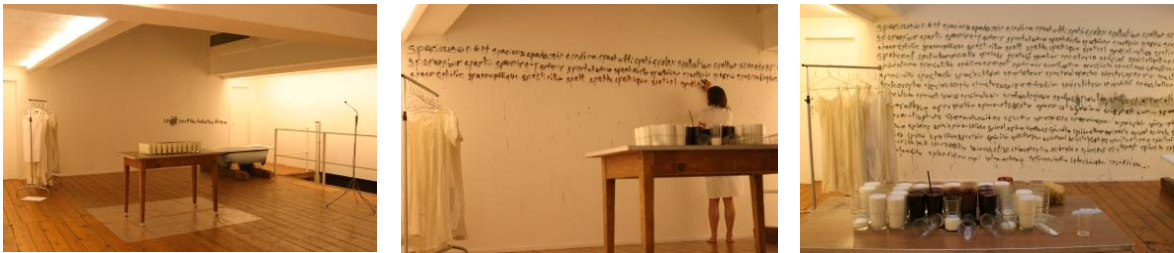
The Spell of the Chestnut Tree Blossom Smell, 2004.   © F.E.

These acts of production / re-production in Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre performances can be directly associated with the notions of perception and reciprocation, since according to Scarry every act of production is an attempt to express and transcribe a sensation or perception. This notion may be brought into conjunction with Benjamin's conception that "perception is defined as *reproduction* or presentation",[313] which when applied to these performances would mean that the latter is working with perception as core material, or could even be associated with perception if the term is substituted in the above definition: "Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre performances are defined as *reproduction* or presentation". These performances could be considered as recreating the sensuous aspect which has been lost with language; a moment when there was a mimetic relation between the referent and the signifier and not only between the referent and

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[313] B. Menke, "Ornament, Constellation, Flurries", p.263.

the signified as is the case with everyday language. The "made-up" world created at the time of a performance by the series of real actions is using at the same time a range of references that the audience recognises, but putting them at the service of a disrupted real, a dream-like real, a fiction being produced in front of our very eyes and whose language is other. The creation of these artistic artefacts have as a purpose the diffusion of a sentience or of a perception through a language of production.

● **Sensuous apprehension**

The purpose of the performances considered here is for their actions and gestures to be perceived for what they are: "presentation is defined in its turn as a gestural inscription, […], which reproduces nothing, re-presents nothing but itself."[314] It is these actions and gestures that should be recognised. The "gestural inscription" has to be read, but although there can be a recognition through perception, the language is not necessarily recognised. One reason for this might well be the possible association of these performances with the sensuous similarities that used to be at the origin of the relation between the outside world and language and, thus, be more directly based on perceptions. Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre performances create a vocabulary composed of signs in which the signifier and the referent are linked mimetically and can even be the same. So, the "archive of nonsensuous similarities" that is our everyday language according to Benjamin, becomes again a selection of sensuous similarities with the artistic language of these performances based on the diffusion of sentiences.

The sensuous belongs to the direct apprehension of the outside world, the world of objects. It belongs to the tactile, it is linked to the physical relation we can have with the material world surrounding us. Sensuous perception is linked with what Benjamin referred to as the "auratic language", by which he meant that objects in the external world have an aura that is perceived, before, or independently of, the naming of these objects. It is through the naming of the objects of the external world that the relationship with the auratic language has been lost. As soon as the object is considered through its linguistic name, it is no longer perceived, but simply named and it then enters the binary arbitrariness of the sign rather than staying in the ternary

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[314] Ibid., p.263.

system of the auratic language, in which referent and sign entertain a mimetic relation. Gebauer and Wulf explain that

> [a]uratic experience leads to unmediated communication, made possible by the similarity between human being and the world constituted in language, between phenomena and individuals who open themselves to them. Communication here takes place via physical-sensuous, prelinguistic, and preconscious approximation of the individual to the world, which seems, at least in the moment of experience, to overcome the separation between subject and object.[315]

According to Jones body art has also allowed artists to overcome a form of separation between subject and object, i.e. the induced separation between their self and body. Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre performances can be seen as not only using the body as a producer but also as a means to explore and express the self. These artists are working against the separation between the physical and the self and therefore against the separation between the sensuous and the verbal. As said before, feminist performance artists have claimed the re-appropriation of their selves through the exposure of their body to disrupt the misleading representations made of women. To re-appropriate their selves, they had first to re-appropriate their body, to re-inscribe themselves in it. As Eleanor Antin said: "My body" is, after all, an aspect of "my self" and one of the means by which my self projects itself into the physical world."[316] These artists expose and explore the "sensuous contact between viewer and viewed".[317] Through the use of the body there is a projection of the self into the outer world and this is not a representation, but a presentation of the self mediated by the actions produced by a body: a "gestural inscription". The reading of these gestural inscriptions depends more on a sensuous apprehension than anything else. This series of actions, network of gestures, sometimes a word pronounced or a sound uttered, are deciphered through association. The sign might still be composed of the familiar signifier and signified, but it is the relation to the referent that changes. The signifier and the referent can become one, thus changing the mimetic relation between the components of the sign. There is an attempt at bringing the signifier and the signified closer to each other in a possible mimetic relation. The signifier / referent is perceived and it is the very recognition of this perception which is the actual signified,

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[315] G. Gebauer and Ch. Wulf, *Mimesis*, p.279.
[316] Eleanor Antin in *LAICA Journal*, 2, (1974), p.18.
[317] R. Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance*, p.90.

associating it thus to sensuous apprehension of similarities, which consists of the recognition and acknowledgement of perceptions.

End of Part I

Performances are acts of production. The performances discussed in this thesis do not re-present, but produce or re-produce a set of actions. To go even further, they could be regarded as an exposure of the artefact's production; as a breaking down of the production process. As the body in pain destroys language to then recreate one, the body in these performances could be considered as destroying language to then construct a new one with or without words. There is a rejection of the conventional way of exteriorising and sharing the interior and private and an attempt is made to find another way of creating a projection and reciprocation of it. Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre performances are the act of production of a different language. Destroying language means that it destroys the common mimetic relation between signified and referent and makes the audience face the construction of a new artefact, the making of language as other. So, these performances are in tension between the destruction of mimesis and its reconstruction if mimesis is understood as an act of production. They are revealing the process of the exposure, the process of exteriorisation and sharability. They show the body in the act of production. It is the body that creates the artefact. The body that is performing the series of tasks or actions that participates in the production of the artefact / language. The audience sees the performer / the body working, producing the object or the action. This body can be producing language as we most commonly understand it as words, then creating sense or a stream of non-sense, or a language constructed of actions or objects. As with non-sense (as we shall see in later chapters), the relation between signifier, signified and referent becomes other: in creating a new language, the performer creates for the audience a signifier and a referent and sometimes these two can be the same, like, for example, Franko B's blood. The signifier can be estranged and not obvious to decipher; for example a signifier that is the process of production and is not necessarily reproducible or capable of establishing a relation with the signified outside its context. By revealing the construction of the artefact, Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre performances show the "madeness" of any language and thus destabilise mimesis in decontextualising actions and objects, letting them produce a new perspective in their clash. Giorgio Agamben writes that "[e]very time that something is pro-duced, that is brought from concealment and nonbeing into the light

of presence, there is ποιησις, pro-duction, poetry. In this broad original sense of the word, every art – not only the verbal kind – is poetry, pro-duction into presence, and the activity of the craftsman who makes an object is ποιησις as well."[318] These performances produce presence. They try to produce a language that is more of a presence, and through presence I mean a language that is more palpable, more directly physical. A language which relies on sensuous perception, on the recognition of sensuous similarities; a language in which signifier and signified are closer; a language in which the mimetic relation has switched from being between signified and referent to being between signifier and signified, and the referent might be the object that possesses no mimetic relation to the other two. In a Live Art, not-dance or postdramatic theatre performance, it is the set of actions that is creating the referent, the new / other artefact, in order to express the concept and exteriorise the sentience. It is the moment of the actions that involves the movement of the inside out: "the now freestanding made object is a projection of the live body that itself reciprocates the live body."[319] The performance in this sense becomes the freestanding object which is a mimetic projection of the live body. It is reciprocated sensuously by the audience's body.

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[318] Giorgio Agamben, *The Man Without Content*, trans. by Georgia Albert, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), p.59-60.

[319] E. Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, p.280.

II.

4. Writing and Performance

In this chapter I will seek to show how text imposed its supremacy in the field of theatre and how this led to the emergence of performances rejecting text altogether. To understand this rejection of written text, it is essential to distinguish clearly between the notions of text, writing and speech and the relation of authority which exists between them and concomitantly with theatre and performance art. At the beginning of the 20th century, modern theatre made various attempts to overthrow the supremacy of text. For example, both Gertrude Stein and Antonin Artaud, whilst experimenting with different ways of producing a theatre no longer subjected to the reproduction of an existing text, came to the conclusion that the problem was not text but speech. The issue then was not only to replace speech by writing, which is what Gertrude Stein tried to do, but to find a way of removing writing's dependency on speech, which was Artaud's theatrical quest. They both realized that there is a real difference between speech and writing. For Lehmann, towards the end of the century, postdramatic theatre is an example of a theatre which becomes itself a form of writing. Writing can be envisaged outside logos, producing a "text", independent of words as the reproduction of speech, with which dramatic theatre had primarily concerned itself.

Mainly I use references to Barthes and Derrida to explain the notions of writing and text as entities that should be considered beyond the concept of author and the supremacy of logos. Barthes in "The Death of the Author" and "From Work to Text" demystifies the importance given to the author of a text to put the focus back on the text itself and its readers. The author disappears while writing; it is not the author that dominates, but the writing. It is left for the readers to make meaning. Barthes develops the notion of "Text" as "a process of demonstration",[320] to which Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre performances can be associated, following my argument that they are composed of different layers of writing which are being written as the performance progresses. Derrida, in "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation" and "The Scene of Writing", discusses Artaud's paradoxical tension between his rejection of text and his urge to create a new form of writing. Writing does not necessarily involve an arrangement of words in linear sequence, but

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[320] Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text", in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. by R.Howard, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p.157.

can also be an arrangement of physical gestures, visual objects, lights and sounds, like in a dream where the writing is "other" and the meaning left to be interpreted. The Author is banished from the stage, and only performers and the theatrical apparatus are left to write.

● **Theatre and text**

Much performance art is characterised by its strong suspicion of text and especially written text.[321] This rejection of verbal language, both written and spoken, offers a way to distinguish and distance itself from a theatrical tradition. W.B. Worthen, in his book *Print and the Poetics of Modern Drama*, explains how theatre has developed a sort of submission to the preponderance of the dramatic text and how "dramatic performance has increasingly come to be understood on the model of print transmission, as a reproduction and reiteration of *writing*, as though performance were merely a new edition of the substantial identity of the script."[322] Theatrical performance tends to be seen as a possible *reading* of a text, an interpretation, rather than as a creation developed through the theatrical medium. Accordingly, theatre performance should be seen less as an interpretation of a text and more as a "rewrit[ing] [of] it in the incommensurable idiom of the stage."[323] Theatrical production is considered as a version of a text, of a play, written previously and thus it is

> understood as a kind of simplification as well: since the director has made a choice, a stage production realizes only one interpretation of a text, while the process of reading generates at every moment a multitude of alternatives which can be held simultaneously in the profounds of the mind. Yet if we were to regard the performance as the *work itself*, we might well understand each moment of a stage production to be replete with alternative meanings, […].[324]

In a way, theatre has been badly served by the leading role and dominance that written text has taken in cultural society since the advent of printing. The oral tradition

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[321] Like, for example, Carolee Schneemann *Eye Body: 36 Transformative Actions* (1963), Chris Burden *Shoot* (1971), Marina Abramovic and Ulay *Relation in Space* (1976), Gina Pane *Psyché (Essai)* (1974), Kira O'Reilly *Wet Cup* (2000), Franko B *Oh Lover Boy* (2001).
[322] W.B. Worthen, *Print and the Poetics of Modern Drama*, (Cambridge & NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.8.
[323] Ibid., p.4.
[324] Ibid., p.8.

using different types of performances as a mode of diffusion has been overtaken and supplanted by the printing mode of diffusion.

In *Orality and Literacy* Walter Ong explains how writing gradually took a predominant place in Western societies and the influence it had on modes of thinking, and the acquisition and diffusion of knowledge compared with oral cultures. He argues that "[o]ral expression can exist and mostly has existed without any writing at all, writing never without orality"[325] and that "[w]ithout writing, words as such have no visual presence, even when the objects they represent are visual."[326] Although words as such do not have a visual presence in their oral utterance, they have a vocal and physical presence given by the body which utters them. Ong explains that "[s]poken words are always modifications of a total, existential situation, which always engages the body. Bodily activity beyond mere vocalization is not adventitious or contrived in oral communication, but is natural and even inevitable."[327] Oral cultures use different mnemonic techniques so that cultural knowledge and heritage can survive and be transmitted; "knowledge, once acquired, had to be constantly repeated or it be lost: fixed formulated thought patterns were essential for wisdom and effective administration."[328] This means that the information had to be encoded in a pattern so that it could be remembered. In a sense, this form of oral encoding is already a form of writing; a writing which is alive and enters the process of being written again and anew each time it is needed to be performed. Although Ong admits that it is possible "to count as 'writing' any semiotic mark, that is, any visible or sensible mark which an individual makes and assigns meaning to",[329] he wants to differentiate it from the linguistic notion of writing, claiming that "[u]sing the term 'writing' in this extended sense to include any semiotic marking trivializes its meaning."[330] However, when these semiotic marks are organised into a system or form a code which can be reproduced, it is a form of writing. Even if it does not make the words visible as such it still gives them a kind of objectivity. Wallace L. Chafe explains that ritual language, which he compares to colloquial language, is like written language in the sense that

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[325] Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, (London & NY: Routledge, 2005), p.8.
[326] Ibid., p.31.
[327] Ibid., p.67.
[328] Ibid., p.23.
[329] Ibid., p.82.
[330] Ibid., p.82.

> [it] has a permanence which colloquial language does not. The same oral ritual is presented again and again: not verbatim, to be sure, but with a content, style and formulaic structure which remain constant from performance to performance. A piece of ritual language is something which is valued, and which is repeated because of its value.[331]

Interestingly it is not the accurate reproduction of the words which is preponderant here, but the structure in which it is delivered. If text has gained such an authority, it is also because the author, as producer of a text, holds a powerful status of authority in our society.

Barthes, in his essay "The Death of the Author", not only suggests that there should be a shift from the dominant position of the Author in our society, he also defends the position that the author loses his/her identity as soon as writing begins: "Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing."[332] The author is a medium; "it is language which speaks, not the author".[333] According to linguistics "the whole of enunciation is an empty process […] language knows a 'subject', not a 'person'".[334] When the author becomes the point of focus rather than the text, the text is limited to meanings that might be ascribed to the author's intention. The author is supposed to be the one who has the key to the meaning of the text since s/he produced it. It supposed that the text has a fixed and closed meaning when it is not the case. The author produced the gesture of writing, losing her/his identity in this very action. The text remains open, multiple: "We know that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash."[335] The text must free itself from the limitation imposed on it by the dominant concept of "Author" and be allowed its multiplicity:

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[331] Wallace L. Chafe, "Integration and Involvement in Speaking, Writing, and Oral Literature" in *Spoken and Written Language: Exploring Orality and Literacy*, ed. by Deborah Tannen, (Norwood N.J.: Ablex, 1982), p.49.
[332] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. by R. Howard, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p.142.
[333] Ibid., p.143.
[334] Ibid., p.145.
[335] Ibid., p.146.

"there is only one place where the multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not as was hitherto said, the author."[336]

Worthen remarks in *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance* that the author has had a role of authority in the performance field: "The relationship between texts, textuality, and performance is deeply inflected by notions of authority – not so much professional authority, but the stabilising, hegemonic functioning of the Author in modern cultural production."[337] He uses the word "stabilising" as a qualification for the status of the author, which relates to Barthes notion of the attribution of an author to a text as a closure. The text becomes then stable with a fixed meaning which is the one the author meant to give it. If Barthes in "From Work to Text" considers the text as an "irreducible plural" and the work as "caught up in a process of filiation", reversing a common thought in performance studies that opposes "'performance' (transgressive, multiform, revisionary) to the (dominant, repressive, conventional and canonical) domain of the 'text'",[338] it is because the notion of text has been freed of the notion of author and the notion of work has not. The work is still affiliated to the text in the sense that it is an interpretation of it, so it becomes bonded to an authority again. Worthen re-establishes a form of authority to performance in saying that

> […] the authority of performance is lodged in the work as manifest in the text. Performance in this view is an authoritative *version* to the extent that it appears to echo a particular reading or interpretation of the work, a reading which makes a claim to authenticity.[339]

Although according to him the "version" proposed by the performance can be considered as "authoritative" and claim "authenticity", it remains an echo of a "particular reading or interpretation", which means that it is still "caught in a process of filiation" as Barthes suggests. Worthen elaborates then on this idea that performance

> signifies an absence, the precise fashioning of the material text's absence, at the same time that it appears to summon the work into being, to produce it as performance (remembering that reading is as much a performance, a production of the work, as a stage

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[336] Ibid., p.148.
[337] W.B. Worthen, *Shakespeare and the Authority of Performance*, (Cambridge, NY & Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.2.
[338] Ibid., p.5.
[339] Ibid., p.16.

> performance is), a performance that summons one state of the work while it obviates others.[340]

This would mean that although performance emerges from the text, it obliterates it as a concrete text on the page and thus gains authority by providing a version, a reading, of this same text. As much as there is an attempt to give a kind of authority to performance it seems to be doomed to produce a lack, an absence, as long as it is dependent on a text. Worthen notes that

> performance has no intrinsic relation to texts. The fact that in the 20th century performance has been seen to succeed when it recaptures or restates the authority of the text is a distinctive, modern way of situating text and performance, literature and theatre, one that represents a characteristically modern anxiety about the cultural status of drama – and the dramatic "author" – in the theatre.[341]

However, at the beginning of the same 20th century, an attempt was made to separate drama and theatre, first with the rejection of drama, which then led to an in-depth questioning of and experimentation with the theatrical form.

Lehmann offers a clear distinction between the notions of theatre and drama, as a way of tracing the legacy of these experiments. By being associated with each other, drama and theatre have developed a relationship with the written text. Although according to its etymological origin drama should be linked to *action* or the *language of actions*, it has become a synonym of plot, characters and narration and has been embedded in the written script of the play. Theatre semiotics has mainly been used to serve and illustrate the dramatic text rather than exploited as a medium capable of "writing" its own text. The usual association of theatre and drama does not imply that they cannot be considered and approached separately. Lehmann considers the current theatre, which is pertinently called postdramatic theatre since it emerges from a long tradition of dramatic theatre and frees itself from the preponderance of text. He writes that "[t]heatre is recognized […] as something that has its own different roots, preconditions and premises, which are even hostile to dramatic literature."[342] Postdramatic theatre would tend to privilege Barthes's notion of Text rather than basing itself on a "dramatic" text. As Barthes explains, the Text is

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[340] Ibid., p.16-17.
[341] Ibid., p.27.
[342] H.-T. Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p.49.

"a methodological field […] a process of demonstration"[343] which means that the performance can be a Text rather than be a representation, a version or an interpretation of a text. It opens a space in which the "distance separating reading from writing"[344] can be reduced. The audience can read this Text as a sign and write the possible text as a reading of the proposed Text. It is the work which produces the Text, which in itself is a form of writing, and only this way does it gain an autonomy. For Barthes, "the Text is that space where no language has hold over any other, where languages circulate (keeping the circular sense of the term)."[345] And for Lehmann, "in postdramatic forms of *theatre*, staged text (if text is staged) is merely a component with equal rights in a gestic, musical, visual, etc., total composition."[346] Theatre should not be dependent on text for its existence; it should not only be the embodiment of the words on the page; not only be the verbalisation of the poetic lines. Authors like Gertrude Stein or Artaud proposed different ways of both deconstructing and approaching the concept of theatrical texts.

- **Gertrude Stein and theatre as "lang-scape"**

Gertrude Stein wrote plays to be performed, not to be read. She insisted that she did "*not* want the plays published. They are to be kept to be *played*."[347] However, Stein's preoccupation is the page and how the play takes to the page. She explored how the "dramatic accessories" (stage directions, tones, exits and entrances, etc.) could be part of the core of the play: "on Stein's page it's all play."[348] As in *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights*:

> […]
>> Once again the dog says
> Thank you
>> A duet between doctor Faustus and the dog about the electric
>> light about the electric lights.
> Bathe me
>> says Doctor Faustus
> Bathe me
> In the electric lights
>> During the time the electric lights come and go

[343] R. Barthes, "From Work to Text", in *The Rustle of Language*, p.157.
[344] Ibid., p.162.
[345] Ibid., p.164.
[346] H.-T. Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p.46.
[347] Letter to Mabel Dodger in *Print and the Poetics of Modern Drama*, p.63.
[348] W. B. Worthen, *Print and the Poetics of Modern Drama*, p.63.

> What is it
> > says Doctor Faustus
> Thank you
> > says the dog.[349]

All the elements characteristic of dramatic writing are embedded directly in the poetry of the text. The page is the stage and everything is happening on its surface as if the whole theatre semiotics were already consciously used by the playwright as theatrical elements of the text. Stein does not give stage *directions*, she writes theatre; or maybe rather a poetry of theatre. She writes images and she writes simultaneity of appearances which could lead to a performance without words, without speech.

She writes her plays as if painting a landscape and in doing so she resolves one of the problems she had with theatre which she calls the notion of "acquaintance":

> I felt that if a play was exactly like a landscape then there would be no difficulty about the emotion of the person looking on at the play being behind or ahead of the play because the landscape does not have to make acquaintance. You may have to make acquaintance with it, it does not with you, it is there and so the play being written the relation between you at any time so exactly that that it is of no importance unless you look at it.[350]

The nervousness that she experienced at the theatre was related to the fact that the emotion felt was not synchronized with the action taking place. She writes that "the emotion of the person at the theatre is always behind or ahead of the scene at the theatre but not with it."[351] This de-synchronization is linked to the linear narrative construction of writing which does not allow the mind to wander on it like the eyes would on a landscape painting, getting acquainted with it gradually, as a whole or in details or coming back more than once to the same patch. Referring to the theatre which Gertrude Stein experienced, the eye might be allowed to work this way, but not the ear. The spectator's attention needs to be focused on the text so as not to lose the sense. A time when she did not experience this nervous feeling at the theatre was when she saw Sarah Bernhardt play in French in San Francisco:

> I knew a little french of course but really it did not matter, it was all so foreign and her voice being so varied and it all being so french I could rest in it untroubled. And I did.

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[349] Gertrude Stein, *Last Operas and Plays*, (New York & Toronto: Rinehart & Co., 1949), p.92.
[350] Gertrude Stein, *Look at Me Now and Here I Am: Writings and Lectures 1909-45*, (London & NY: Penguin Books, 1971), p.77.
[351] Ibid., p.65.

> It was better than the opera because it went on. It was better than the theatre because you did not have to get acquainted.[352]

Experiencing the theatrical text not for its narrative meaning, but for its sound, its melody and the tone of the voices saying it allowed Stein to encompass the words in the same way as the other elements of the play; it allowed her ears to wander just as her eyes would have done: "It was for me a very simple direct and moving pleasure."[353] Jane P. Bowers underlines that "if one needs to eliminate from the play all narrative and discursive elements and to conceive the play not as telling a story but as forming a landscape, one could create a theater experience that did not require its audience to 'make acquaintance'."[354] This is what Stein does when writing her plays. She uses words on the pages as so many brushstrokes not to tell a story, but to create her theatrical landscape. Jane Bowers calls them "lang-scapes" as it then "suggest[s] the centrality of language in the theatre landscapes Stein creates […]."[355] The words are no longer used for their meaning though, but for their potential to create a possible meaning. It is the process of composition which is important here, and as Bowers explains "if made of words, as Stein's lang-scapes are, they need not be 'about' landscape; they need only be compositions according to the principles of relationality articulated by the landscape or discovered by the artist in the process of composition."[356] Stein's "lang-scapes" are composed as a poetry of theatre; a poetry of theatre which unfolds as it is being written in front of the audience's eyes. It is striking in *Four Saints in Three Acts*:

> Act One.
> Saint Therese. Preparing in as you might say.
> Saint Therese was pleasing. In as you might say.
> Saint Therese Act One
> Saint Therese has begun to be in act one.
> Saint Therese and begun.
> Saint Therese as sung.
> Saint Therese act one.
> Saint Therese and begun.
> Saint Therese and sing and sung.

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[352] Ibid., p.73.
[353] Ibid., p.73.
[354] Jane Palatini Bowers, "The Composition That All The World Can See: Gertrude Stein's Theater Landscapes", in *Land / Scape / Theater*, ed. by E. Fuchs and U. Chaudhuri, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), p.124-125.
[355] Ibid., p.130.
[356] Ibid., p.131.

> Saint Therese in an act one. Saint Therese questions.
> How many have been told twenty have been here as well.
> Saint Therese and with if it is as in a rest and well.[357]

The poetry of theatre which is words on the page become a poetry of process and images on the stage: "performance necessarily transforms 'language', which Bowers understands as the written word, into something else, into speech, behaviour, action, *performance* […]."[358] The simultaneity of all these different aspects, which is practically impossible to translate into written words, is possible on stage. Bowers says that a play like Stein's *Four Saints in Three Acts* "is not experienced as a unit but as an accumulation of multiple engagements of the listening self with the spoken and sung words."[359] At the beginning of her essay *Plays*, Stein writes: "Plays are either read or heard or seen./ And there then comes the question of which comes first and which is first, reading or hearing or seeing a play. / I ask you."[360] Theatre does not need you to decide. The audience reads signs, hears the sounds and sees the images simultaneously. Theatre has the potential to allow this synchronicity and to free itself from the linearity of the text. In this sense theatre reflects better the way the mind works, since the belief that thoughts are linear is totally induced by the fact that the writing and verbalisation of thoughts happens in a linear sequence. In reality the mind operates by using layers of information not readily organised into a linear structure. Ong explains that "[s]parsely linear or analytic thought and speech is an artificial creation, structured by the technology of writing. […] writing […] imposes some kind of strain on the psyche in preventing expression from falling into its more natural patterns."[361] Through her poetry of theatre, it seems that Stein attempts to find a way to express this synchronicity on the page and although the play is written and pre-planned, "we are made to feel that the plan is being created in our presence, as the performance proceeds."[362] The process of composition is made part of the performance to allow a synchronicity between the unfolding of the play and its reception by the audience. If

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[357] G. Stein, *Last Operas and Plays*, p.453.
[358] W. B. Worthen, *Print and the Poetics of Modern Drama*, p.71.
[359] J.P. Bowers, "The Composition That All The World Can See: Gertrude Stein's Theater Landscapes", p.132.
[360] G. Stein, *Look at Me Now and Here I Am: Writings and Lectures 1909-45*, p.60.
[361] W.J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p.40.
[362] J.P. Bowers, "The Composition That All The World Can See: Gertrude Stein's Theater Landscapes", p.135.

Stein has been considered "to be 'unplayable' – which is true if her texts are measured by the expectation of dramatic theatre",[363] she is definitively not "unstageable" as Robert Wilson, among others, has proved.[364] Elinor Fuchs notes that Wilson's theatre shares a landscape quality with Stein's play in the sense that "whether set in nature or not, [it] requires from the audience the 'landscape-response' appropriate to a dispersed perceptual field, a response enforced by the repetitions and slow-moving transformations of his stagings."[365] Maybe "on Stein's page it's [*not*] all play", but it is *all stage*. "Stein tries to make the written text an element of performance"[366] just as Artaud tries to make the performance write itself.

● Artaud and the "death of the author"

Artaud is the fervent advocate of the stage and of the theatre as entities that should be independent from any textual authority. In "The Theatre of Cruelty" he explains how the stage should not be the site for representation or for the transcription of an already existing text. The theatre stage has to free itself from the tyranny of speech, the dominance of logos, and move towards "pure mise-en-scène."[367] Artaud wants a theatre that stands on its own, "an independent and autonomous art, [that] must, in order to revive or simply to live, realize what differentiates it from text, pure speech, literature and all other fixed and written means."[368] Artaud does not ban speech from his conception of theatre, but he does not want theatre to work as an illustration of a pre-written speech/ text which depends on the authority of the author. He professes a theatre where speech becomes gestures and sounds again. He wants the stage to be filled with a language that is alive again.

> When I say I will perform no written play, I mean that I will perform no play based on writing and speech, that in the spectacle I produce there will be a preponderant physical share which could not be captured and written down in the customary language of words, and

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[363] H.-T. Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p.49.

[364] Robert Wilson, *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* (1992) and *Saints and Singing* (1997), The Wooster Group *House / Lights* (1998), or Heiner Goebbels *Hashirigaki* (2000).

[365] Elinor Fuchs, *The Death of Character: Perspectives on Theater after Modernism*, (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), p.99.

[366] J.P. Bowers, "The Composition That All The World Can See: Gertrude Stein's Theater Landscapes", p.135.

[367] Antonin Artaud, *Oeuvres Complètes*, IV, (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p.305.

[368] Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, trans. by Mary C. Richards, (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1958), p.106.

that even the spoken and written portions will be spoken and written in a new sense.[369]

There is a sort of contradiction in the core of this quotation in the sense that Artaud refuses "play based on writing and speech" but then acknowledges that "spoken and written portions will be spoken and written in a new sense". What Artaud is really after is to find a way to liberate language from the ascendancy of logos. He is looking for the expression of a language beyond words, closer to sounds and sensuous perceptions. This is the language which Benjamin said has been lost with the binary linguistic system.[370] The theatrical language Artaud is looking for is a language that seems dependent on the tri-dimensional physical fleshiness of the performer's body, still embedded in movements, a language that is visual. The theatrical apparatus redefined within the precepts of "the theatre of cruelty" allows the performance of this language and thus, its potential existence outside any written form. He wants a language which refuses to be inscribed in an imposed system.

In his essay "The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation", Derrida presents "the theatre of cruelty" as "*produc*[*ing*] a nontheological space" for "[t]he stage is theological for as long it is dominated by speech."[371] Artaud, by refusing to consider theatre as being the representation of a text previously written and then dispensing a language of words depending on an authorial authority, expels not only the notion of author from the stage, but also the notion of the domination of logos. Not only is there no longer one abstract "master" being the author of the text which has to be represented on stage, but there is also no longer the mastery of logos imposed on speech. Derrida states that "[r]eleased from the text and the author-god, mise-en-scène would be returned to its creative and founding freedom."[372] The performer is left as the only creator within the theatrical apparatus, since according to Artaud "no one had the right to call himself author, that is to say creator, except the person who controls the direct handling of the stage."[373] There is still a notion of control that remains. If theatre would stop "'representing' an other language,"[374] speech would still have its place within a system, as Derrida writes:

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[369] Ibid., p.111.
[370] According to Benjamin, language and writing have become an "archive of nonsensuous similarities, nonsensuous correspondences." See Chapter Three, p.81-82.
[371] J. Derrida, "The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation", p.43.
[372] Ibid., p.45.
[373] A. Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, p.117.
[374] J. Derrida, "The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation", p.46.

"speech and *its* writing will be erased on the stage of cruelty only in the extent to which they were allegedly *dictation*".[375] As the body will be freed to expand into gestures no longer under the dictation of speech, speech will be freed in its turn from the dictation of the words. It will turn into

> [g]lossopoeia, which is neither an imitative language nor a creation of names, [but] takes us back to the borderline of the moment when the word has not yet been born, when articulation is no longer a shout but not yet discourse, when repetition is *almost* impossible, and along with it, language in general.[376]

This form of speech, although outside the system of logos, remains in a system of writing. "[W]hat of this new theatrical writing?"[377] Derrida asks to then explain: "This latter will no longer occupy the limited position of simply being the notation of words, but will cover the entire range of this new language: not only phonetic writing and the transcription of speech, but also hieroglyphic writing, the writing in which phonetic elements are coordinated to visual, pictorial, and plastic elements."[378] It is no longer writing as it is generally conceived as a series of words assembled in linear sentences, but a writing which envisages visual and plastic elements as part of its components. This language shares similarities with the language of dreams. Freud remarks "that the means of representation in dreams are principally visual images and not words, we shall see that it is even more appropriate to compare dreams with a system of writing than with a language."[379] It creates a new code. Artaud says in the *First Manifesto*: "It is not a question of suppressing the spoken language, but of giving the words approximately the importance they have in dreams."[380] Sounds, gestures and visual stimuli merging into an indecipherable code is what the theatrical language of cruelty offers: "It seems indeed that where simplicity and order reign, there can be no theatre nor drama, and the true theatre, like poetry, though by other means, is born out of a kind of organized anarchy"[381] which can be associated with a form of writing. Barthes's concept of "Text", which defies the domination of logos, seems to come close to the mode of expression Artaud talks about in both of his

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[375] Ibid., p.48.
[376] Ibid., p.48.
[377] Ibid., p.49.
[378] Ibid., p.49.
[379] *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Work of Sigmund Freud*, trans. by James Strachey, vol. 13, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955), p.177.
[380] A. Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, p.94.
[381] Ibid., p.51.

manifestos on "The Theatre of Cruelty". For Barthes, "[t]he theory of the Text can coincide only with a practice of writing"[382] because just as the author loses his/her identity when s/he is writing, the Text does not require any figure of authority "as judge, master, analyst, confessor, decoder."[383]

● Performance and text

Lehmann states that "[o]ut of the rejection of traditional forms of theatre develops a new autonomy of theatre as an independent artistic practice."[384] This autonomy is gained by means of writing. Unravelling the intertwining of author and writing, text and meaning, body and voice, the concept of writing broadens beyond the boundaries of linguistic text which has to be reproduced on stage. The writing happens on stage to produce a Text. The question of the artistic value and autonomy of theatre had already been raised by Artaud in *The Theatre and its Double*: "Presented with this subordination of theater to speech, one might indeed wonder whether the theater by any chance possesses its own language, whether it is entirely fanciful to consider it as an independent and autonomous art, of the same rank as music, painting, dance, etc."[385] This quest for a theatrical specificity and a theatrical language led to diverse experiments with texts and mise-en-scène. For example, the idea of symmetry of page and stage generated texts whose principal exploration was meta-theatrical. Stein wrote plays which incorporated the "dramatic accessories" in the core of her poetic texts not differentiating between the actual textuality and stage directions and later Beckett managed to write plays composed only of stage directions or with a minimum of lines, like *Act Without Words I*, *Act Without Words II* or *What Where*, which exposed the potential of the theatrical apparatus, but at the same time problematised the question of the director's authority (even if he is the playwright himself) or perhaps even the authority of the theatrical apparatus itself over the performers. This "'theatralization' of theatre leads to liberation from its subjection to drama"[386] and all the different layers involved in the theatrical realisation are considered as "autonomous realities."[387] Lehmann explains that "[f]rom the

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[382] R. Barthes, "From Work to Text", in *The Rustle of Language*, p.164.
[383] Ibid., p.164.
[384] H.-T. Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p.50.
[385] A. Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, p.68-69.
[386] H.-T. Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p.50.
[387] Ibid., p.51.

decomposition of the whole of a genre into its individual elements develop new languages of form."[388] The meta-theatrical text becomes then closer to Barthes's notion of Text as a "methodological demonstration", which needs to be applied within the theatrical apparatus to reveal its specificity. Lehmann says that "[t]he focus is no longer on the questions whether and how the theatre 'corresponds to' the text that eclipses everything else, rather the questions are whether and how the texts are suitable material for the realization of a theatrical project."[389]

Again these questions go back to questions Artaud formulated:

How does it happen that in the theater, at least in the theater as we know it in Europe, or better in the Occident, everything specifically theatrical, i.e., everything that cannot be expressed in speech, in words, or if you prefer, everything that is not contained in the dialogue (and the dialogue itself considered as a function of its possibilities for "sound" on the stage, as a function of the *exigencies* of this sonorisation) is left in the background?
[…] how does it happen that the Occidental theater does not see theater under any other aspect than as a theater of dialogue?
Dialogue –a thing written and spoken – does not belong specifically to the stage, it belongs to books. […]
I say that the stage is a concrete physical place which asks to be filled, and to be given its own concrete language to speak.[390]

By dissolving the unity of text and stage and exploiting all the specific elements of the theatrical apparatus as a series of signs in order to constitute what could be this "concrete language" of the stage, it allowed a "poetry" of the stage to appear. The stage then becomes a text of its own. Lehmann distinguishes between the "linguistic text", the "text of the staging and mise-en-scène" and the "performance text".[391] The performance text designates the "whole situation of the performance"[392] which embraces all the parameters that constitute the theatre experience. The "performance text", although composed of the layers of signification which can be read within the different signs of the theatrical apparatus, should be perceived more as homogenous texture. The signification of the "performance text" is not enclosed or fixed, but depends on the perception of the audience. It is no longer under the domination of an author or a director, but rather, as Barthes wished it, it is a "text" for

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[388] Ibid., p.51.
[389] Ibid., p.56.
[390] A. Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, p.37.
[391] H.-T. Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p.85.
[392] Ibid., p.85.

the readers, the audience in this case. Postdramatic theatre offers "a *changed conception of the performance text*"[393] in that it is

> not simply a new kind of text staging – and even less a new type of theatre text, but rather a type of sign usage in the theatre that turns both these levels of theatre upside down through the structurally changed quality of the performance text: it becomes more presence than representation, more shared than communicated experience, more process than product, more manifestation then signification, more energetic impulse than information.[394]

Given that postdramatic theatre shares qualities such as "the deconstruction of any coherence", "the privileging of nonsense and action in the here and now," "aggressive impulse" and "dream logic"[395] with some of the avant-garde theatre movements which preceded it, the previous definition could correspond to the avant-garde performance art work born out of the 60s. Performance art re-inscribed the live body, and thus the artist, as the main creative tool and the central part of the work. Although performance art developed in a process which involves live performers as the theatre does, it made a point to distance itself from the theatrical practice and any association with this art form.[396] As previously mentioned, a clear and total separation through the evolution of both performance art and a form of theatre, like postdramatic theatre, is not so easy to sustain. Performance art using the artist's body both as a tool and a canvas is rejecting the notion of text and privileging the presence of the performer as a vehicle for signs. In postdramatic theatre, similarly:

> the body becomes the centre of attention, not as a carrier of meaning but in its physicality and gesticulation. The central theatrical sign, the actor's body, refuses to serve signification. Postdramatic theatre often presents itself as an *auto-sufficient physicality*, which is exhibited in its intensity, gestic potential, auratic presence and internally, as well as externally, transmitted tensions.[397]

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[393] Ibid., p.85.

[394] Ibid., p.85.

[395] Ibid., p.61.

[396] Marina Abramovic, for example, said about the practice of performance:" […] theatre was the enemy. It was something bad, it was something we should not deal with. It was artificial. All the qualities that performance had were unrehearsable. There was no repetition. It was new for me and the sense of reality was very strong. We refused theatrical structure." in Nick Kaye, *Art into Theatre: Performances, interviews and documents*, p.181. However, in the 1990s, a group like Forced Entertainment would use the mechanism and structure of theatre to denounce the inevitable failure of representation. See section on Live Art in Chapter One.

[397] H.-T. Lehamann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p.95.

The focus is on the production of presence. Contrary to performance art, which tends to eradicate texts, postdramatic theatre does not necessarily do so, but "[…] breath, rhythm and the present actuality of the body's visceral presence take precedence over the logos."[398] It strips the text, the words, of their meaning; language is treated like an object that can be manipulated and incorporated into the scenic and visual composition, not in relation to its potential sense-making, but for its phonic, tonal and rhythmical qualities. It becomes closer to the use of sounds or noise. As in performance art there is a move from preponderance of sense to sensuality.

> This follows one of the precepts already given by Artaud:
>
>> I say that this concrete language, intended for the senses and independent of speech, has first to satisfy the senses, that there is a poetry of the senses as there is a poetry of language, and that this concrete physical language to which I refer is truly theatrical only to the degree that the thoughts it expresses are beyond the reach of the spoken language.
>> […]
>> It consists of everything that occupies the stage, everything that can be manifested and expressed materially on a stage and that is addressed first of all to the senses instead of being addressed primarily to the mind as is the language of words. […]
>> This language created for the senses must from the outset be concerned with satisfying them. […] it permits the substitution, for the poetry of language, of a poetry in space which will be resolved in precisely the domain which does not belong strictly to words.[399]

The satisfaction of the senses happens beyond signification, this being with or without the use of speech. At first Artaud advocates a theatre deprived of text and words in order to find again a language specific to the theatrical space; a language which is composed of the presence and the gestures of the performer's body as well as the elements of mise-en-scène. He sees the stage filled with moving forms which he calls hieroglyphs. These hieroglyphs are signs of another form of language, an indecipherable language as such, or rather indecipherable signs at first. They are part of the visual language that Artaud describes which does not speak to the mind, at least at first, but speaks to the senses. This composition of moving hieroglyphs appears as a form of nonsensical language. When Artaud introduces the notion of speech back into his concept of "theatre of cruelty", it will have to be a language of sounds, cries, noises, closer to the non-sense of the body rather that the common

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[398] Ibid., p.145.
[399] A. Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, p.37-38.

sense produced by the system of logos. It is the nonsensical language of the sounds coming raw out the body that can participate in the spatial poetry which Artaud promulgates for his "theatre of cruelty". As a result, parts of his theatrical speech are forms of glossolalic poetry, an idea to which I shall return in Chapter Five.

Artaud is looking for a language that should fill the theatrical space with its physicality and its materiality. This explains why his notion of theatrical speech is based on sounds and intonations rather than words: "And what the theater can still take over from speech are its possibilities for extension beyond the words, for development in space for dissociative and vibratory action upon sensibility. This is the hour of intonations, of a word's particular pronunciation".[400] For Artaud, this language "flows into the sensibility. […] it turns words into incantations. It extends the voice. It utilizes the vibrations and qualities of the voice. It wildly tramples rhythms underfoot. It pile-drives sounds. It seeks to exalt, to benumb, to charm, to arrest the sensibility."[401] He is inspired by the Oriental theatre tradition which he considers has kept closer ties to ritual and the notion of magic spells and which finds "its expression and its origins alike in a secret psychic impulse which is Speech before words."[402] This refers to Benjamin's conception of an auratic language based on sensuous similarity.[403] It is a form of pre-language, or rather a form of language pre-logos. The theatrical space becomes the equivalent of the "chora", which according to Kristeva is the space where language has not yet become logos, the space of the pre-symbolic. Kristeva explains in a section of the *Polylogue* that

> Artaud's glossolalia and 'eructations' reject the symbolic function and mobilise the drives which the function represses in order to constitute itself. […] This pulsional network, which is readable, for example, in the pulsional roots of the non-semanticised phonemes of Artaud's texts, represents (for theory) the *mobile-receptacle site of the process*, which takes the place of the unitary subject. Such a site, which we will call *chora*, can suffice as a representation of the subject in process […].[404]

These pre-logos sounds participate in the movement and the creation-in-process of the "theatre of cruelty"; they appear as the extension of the gestures which compose

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[400] Ibid., p.89-90.
[401] Ibid., p.91.
[402] Ibid., p.60.
[403] Language lost its sensuous relation to the world with the binary linguistic system. See Chapter Three, p.94-95.
[404] Julia Kristeva "The subject in process", in *Antonin Artaud: A critical reader*, ed. by Edward Scheer, (London & NY: Routledge, 2004), p.118.

the physical language of the theatre: "The overlapping of imagery and moves must culminate in a genuine physical language, no longer based on words but on signs formed through the combination of objects, silence, shouts and rhythms."[405] Artaud is not interested in the words as such and their meaning, but in their enunciation and the sound they make coming out of the body. He says that "words will be construed in an incantational, truly magical sense – for their shape and their sensuous emanations, not only for their meaning."[406] The words and the utterances become extensions of the body filling the space with a noise imprinted with its physicality. Kristeva makes the remark about Artaud's use of verbal language that "[t]he word is subordinated to a function: to translate the drives of the body, and in this sense it ceases to be a word and is paragrammatised, even to the extent of becoming simply noise […]."[407] The mise-en-scène of the "theatre of cruelty" deploys as a series of signs, moving hieroglyphs composed of images, gestures and words closer to sounds exteriorising the drives of the body. This seems to create an atmosphere similar to that encountered in dreams. Artaud says himself that "the audience will believe in the illusion of theatre on condition they really take it for a dream, not for a servile imitation of reality."[408]

● **Dream**

The nonsensical language of dreams is also supposed to be a transcription of human drives via sequences of visual moving images. Derrida, in his essay called "The scene of writing" on Freud and his interpretation of dreams, questions the importance of words in dreams and says that

> [a] certain polycentrism of dream representation is irreconcilable with the apparent linear unfolding of pure verbal representations. […] Far from disappearing, speech then changes purpose and status. It is situated, surrounded, invested (in all the senses of the word), constituted. It figures in dreams much as captions do in comic strips, those picto-hieroglyphic combinations in which the phonetic text is secondary and not central in the telling of the tale […].[409]

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[405] Antonin Artaud, *Collected Works*, vol. 4, trans. by V. Corti, (London: Calder & Boyars, 1974), p.96. I will use Corti's translation when I find that his translation is closer to my understanding of the French text.
[406] A. Artaud, *The Theater and its Double*, p.125.
[407] J. Kristeva in *Antonin Artaud: A critical reader*, p.118.
[408] A. Artaud, *Collected Works*, vol. 4, trans. V.Corti,, p. 65.
[409] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass, (London & New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 273-274.

Rather than a language, dreams are seen as a form of writing. Dreams tend to take a visual rather than an oral form. Freud specifies that it seems "more appropriate to compare dream with a system of writing than with language. In fact the interpretation of a dream is completely analogous to the decipherment of an ancient pictographic script such as Egyptian hieroglyphics";[410] a transcription through visual signs which needs to be decoded, but which is difficult to translate into the linear and static system of writing that transcribes the linearity of logos. Derrida, still referring to Freud, adds that "psychic writing does not lend itself to translation because it is a single energetic system (however differentiated it may be), and because it covers the entirety of the psychical apparatus."[411] According to Freud

> [t]he language of dreams may be looked upon as the method by which unconscious mental activity expresses itself. But the unconscious speaks more than one dialect. According to the differing psychological conditions governing and distinguishing the various forms of neurosis, we find regular modifications in the way in which unconscious mental impulses are expressed.[412]

Freud explains that if a dream is almost impossible to translate into a linear linguistic form of language it is because

> it has nothing to communicate to anyone else; it arises within the subject as a compromise between the mental forces struggling in him, it remains unintelligible to the subject himself and is for that reason totally uninteresting to other people. Not only does it actually not need to set any store by intelligibility, it must actually avoid being understood, for otherwise, it would be destroyed.[413]

As much as Artaud was urging that spoken language should have the same importance in his "theatre of cruelty" as it has in dreams, a language of sounds, cries, groans and "eructations", he still wanted to find a way to write it down so that it could be reproduced and communicated. The theatrical language must be created on stage, freed from the domination of the pre-existing text, but all its signs should be able to be transcribed constituting its own alphabet:

> […] we must find new ways of recording this language, whether these ways are similar to musical notation or to some kind of code.

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[410] *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Work of Sigmund Freud*, trans. by James Strachey, vol. 13, p.177.

[411] J. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p.268.

[412] *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Work of Sigmund Freud*, trans. by James Strachey, vol. 13, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955), p.177.

[413] *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Work of Sigmund Freud*, vol.8, p.179.

As to ordinary objects, or even the human body, raised to the dignity of signs, we can obviously take our inspiration from hieroglyphic characters not only to transcribe these signs legibly so they can be reproduced at will, but to compose exact symbols on stage that are immediately legible.[414]

Throughout *The Theatre and its Double* there is a tension in Artaud's precepts regarding his relation to systems and writing. In his essay "The theatre and culture" he questions the utility of systems: "*Either these systems are in us and we are impregnated by them to the point that we live from them, and if so what is the use of books? Or we are not impregnated by them and they did not merit us basing our lives on them and anyway who cares about their disappearance?*"[415] Being needed or not, systems are rejected either way, be it for the uselessness of their being written down or their uselessness as such. Artaud seems to refuse to fix theatre in one language. He speaks of a theatre

> which is in nothing, but uses all languages: gestures, sounds, speech, fire, cries, [and] situates itself exactly where the mind needs a language to produce its manifestations.
> And fixing theatre in one language: written speech, music, lights, noises, indicates its rapid loss, since the choice of one language proves the taste we have for the facilities it offers; and the emaciation of language goes with its limitation.[416]

Artaud wants a mobile language composed of heterogeneous elements, but at the same time he wants it to be considered as a specific theatrical language which can be transcribed in order for it then to be reproducible. As Derrida says that "a pure idiom is not language; it becomes so only through repetition".[417] This means that Artaud cannot escape inscribing his glossolalic poetry, "anarchic […] to the degree its occurrence is the consequence of a disorder that draws us closer to chaos",[418] in a writing system. The question is what becomes of these glossolalic instances once

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[414] A. Artaud, *Collected Works*, vol. 4, trans. V. Corti, p.72.
[415] « Ou ces systèmes sont en nous et nous en sommes imprégnés au point d'en vivre, et alors qu'importe les livres? ou nous n'en sommes pas imprégnés et alors ils ne méritaient pas de nous faire vivre; et de toute façon qu'importe leur disparition? » Antonin Artaud, « Le théâtre et la culture », in *Le théâtre et son double*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p.12. I provide my own translation for both this quote and the following one because my understanding of the French text is different than both Corti's and Richards's translations.
[416] « [Le théâtre] qui n'est dans rien mais se sert de tout les langages : gestes, sons, paroles, feu, cris, se retrouve exactement au point où l'esprit a besoin d'un langage pour produire ses manifestations. Et la fixation du théâtre dans un langage: paroles écrites, musique, lumières, bruits, indique à bref délai sa perte, le choix d'un langage prouvant la goût que l'on a pour les facilités de ce langage; et le desséchement du langage accompagne sa limitation. », Ibid., p.18-19. Translation L.Easton.
[417] J. Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p.268.
[418] A. Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, p.43.

they are written down and frozen in a linguistic structure? Do they remain glossolalia or do they become a coded language? A characteristic of glossolalia or non-sense, as in the Deleuzian concept of "deep non-sense",[419] is that they are a production and are usually not reproduced because they do not inscribe themselves in the linearity of the recognisable system of logos. Glossolalia can only be reproduced once transcribed in a written system, which would deprive it of its inherent quality of non-sense. This issue will be addressed further in Chapter Five.

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[419] Gilles Deleuze *The Logic of Sense*, trans. by Mark Lester, (London & NY: Continuum, 2004), p.103.

5. Non-sense and Performance

This chapter explores the concept of non-sense and glossolalia and their relation to language and writing, and thus to Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre performances. Artaud experienced the tension between his production of a vocal glossolalic poetry and his desire to include it as part of the new language of his "theatre of cruelty", his theatrical glossopoeia. The only way for this form of language to become a code, a *langue*, and to be reproducible, is to put it into writing, which according to Michel de Certeau and Jean-Jacques Courtine is the antithesis of glossolalia and kills it, or at least transforms it (translates it) into something other. Glossolalia and the Deleuzian deep non-sense are oral productions which defy mimetic conventions, allowing everyday language to be considered as a *langue* and thus be reproducible. The performances which interest me often resort to the use of non-sense in order to escape from the burden of the text and the tyranny of the narrative or non-narrative meaning, and I shall offer some examples as part of the argument that follows. The logorrhoea of sounds or "eructations" becomes an emanation of the body; it shows the physicality of language, re-inscribing it into flesh, rather than considering it as an abstract intellectual concept. Although the performers I discuss here are not glossolalists and therefore they are not producing a nonsensical glossolalia, nevertheless they are reproducing a constructed glossolalia for the performance. They are creating a non-sense which they will be able to reproduce just as Artaud envisaged. Some of the performances that I will analyse later on, including my own practice, embed the construction of this glossolalia as the work unfolds. The process of writing this nonsensical language is revealed or done live, a practice that I will call, in the next chapter, "livegraphy". It participates in the different writing processes happening throughout the performances. Each of them is constructed as a glossopoeia.

In this chapter I chose to use for different reasons the term "non-sense", written as a hyphenated word rather than the common spelling of "nonsense". Firstly, this spelling is closer to the French spelling of "non-sens" which, although derived from the English word nonsense, does not have in French the colloquial use it has in English. In French the term "non-sens" is more directly related to the philosophical concept, and the hyphenated word better translates the idea of a reverse image of the word "sense", or what sense is not, but, at the same time, what it remains

attached to. The English word "nonsense" refers more commonly to gibberish, stupidity or a concept or an idea that one does not understand. This is why I chose to fuse the two words and decided to use the word "non-sense" in the body of my text. I will keep the word "nonsense" when quoting theoretical texts in English with an exception for Deleuze. In *The Logic of Sense* Deleuze uses in French the word "non-sens" which has been translated into English by "nonsense". For my purpose here I will replace it by the term "non-sense" which I consider marks a relevant differentiation between the nuances and uses of the term in the two different languages and thus grounds my argument in a philosophical context. On the other hand, I keep the French word *délire*, a term used by Jean-Jacques Lecercle[420] in *Philosophy through the Looking Glass,* which allows me to read it as "*dé-lire*" either "un-read" or "dys-read". The idea of "un-read" non-sense is linked to the fact that glossolalic production is concretely unreadable and is not meant to be translated into writing because it ceases then to be glossolalia. The Deleuzian concept of "deep non-sense" as the production of a language and sounds that are inseparable from the body and glossolalia as a linguistic concept are closely related by the fact that they are not transferable into a linear writing system. The relation Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre performances have with non-sense does not only involve the construction of a form of glossolalia, which is reproduced during the performance, but it involves the elaboration of a more extended form of glossopoeia.

● **Non-sense**

In *The Logic of Sense* Deleuze distinguishes between two types of non-sense, surface non-sense and deep non-sense:

> In the surface organisation […], physical bodies and sonorous words are separated and articulated at once by an incorporeal frontier. This frontier is sense, representing, on one side, the pure "expressed" of words, and on the other, the logical attribute of bodies. Although sense results from the actions and passion of the body, it is a result that differs in nature, since it is neither action nor passion. It is a result which shelters sonorous language from any confusion with the physical body.[421]

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[420] Jean-Jacques Lecercle teaches linguistics and English literature in University of Paris X-Nanterre. His work in the fields of the philosophy of language and of literature tends to criticise the dominant conceptions of language regarding linguistics and philosophy. He writes and publishes both in English and French. www.puf.com [accessed July 2009]

[421] Gilles Deleuze *The Logic of Sense*, trans. by Mark Lester, (London & NY: Continuum, 2004), p.103.

On the contrary, deep non-sense is directly linked to the body which produces it:

> There is no longer anything to prevent propositions from falling back onto bodies and from mingling their sonorous elements with the body olfactory, gustatory, or digestive affects. Not only is there no longer any sense, but there is no longer any grammar or syntax either – nor, at the limit, are there any articulated syllabic, literal, or phonetic elements.[422]

In the chapter "Thirteenth series of the schizophrenic and the little girl", Deleuze compares Lewis Carroll's use of language and non-sense in his poetry to Artaud's based on the translations Artaud made of Lewis Carroll into French. Artaud despised Carroll's conception of non-sense and said about "Jabberwocky": "I never liked this poem, which always struck me as an affected infantilism."[423] And then added:

> *I do not like poems or languages of the surface* which smell of happy leisures and of intellectual success - as if the intellect relied on the anus, but without any heart or soul in it. […] One may invents one's language, and make pure language speak with an extra-grammatical or a-grammatical meaning, but this meaning must have value in itself, that is, it must issue from torment.[424]

Carroll's non-sense is surface non-sense. It is a constructed non-sense, based on play words and play on sounds; it is a nonsensical language that is elaborated through writing and is thought about. It is not a language that is felt, a language that has to extract itself out of the body as a necessity. The nonsensical poetic language of Artaud is not a language which he constructed and elaborated through its writing, but it is sounds, cries and "eructations" which come raw out of the body. Artaud is trying to transcribe this physical language through his writing. His writing breaks the surface of playfulness with a language which comes from the depths of his tormented body. His texts express the struggle to write the body, its drives and its suffering. Maybe it is no longer him writing, but the body writing itself; Artaud might have come close to losing his identity to the writing body. Deleuze says that "Artaud is alone in having been an absolute depth in literature, and in having discovered a vital body and the prodigious language of this body. As he says, he discovered them through suffering. He explored the infra-sense which is still unknown today."[425] Artaud loses his subject in the writing of deep non-sense. Deep non-sense is the state of mixture;

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[422] Ibid., p.103.
[423] Antonin Artaud, "Lettres de Rodez" in *Oeuvres Complètes*, IX, (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), p.184.
[424] Ibid., p.184-185.
[425] G. Deleuze *The Logic of Sense*, p.105.

the state in which body and *la langue*[426] mix with one another and the subject is engulfed by the body again. This corresponds to the pre-symbolic stage of the *chora* as described by Kristeva.

Kristeva associates the semiotic to the unconscious impulses. She explains that "the drives, which are 'energy' charges as well as 'psychical' marks, articulate what we call a *chora*: a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated."[427] Just like the world of dreams, the *chora* develops its own language, which is not linguistic since it "is a modality of significance in which the linguistic sign is not yet articulated as the absence of an object and the distinction between the real and the symbolic."[428] Kristeva explains that

> [c]hecked by the constraints of biological and social structures, the drive charge thus undergoes stases. Drive facilitation, temporarily arrested, marks *discontinuities* in what may be called the various material supports [*matériaux*] susceptible to semiotization: voice, gesture, colors. [...] Connections or *functions* are established between these discrete marks which are based on drives and articulated according to their resemblance or opposition, either by slippage or by condensation.[429]

This is the way that the semiotic introduces itself into the symbolic and appears underlying *la langue*. The mobile pre-logos language of the *chora* refuses to be immobilised and translated into a linguistic form. Kristeva says that "[l]inguistic structures are the blockages of the process. They intercept and immobilise it, subordinating it to semantic and institutional unities which are in deep solidarity with each other."[430] The mobility at work in the *chora* allows a form of chaos produced by instances in a constant mutation of process, instances in a constant state of "becoming". Kristeva notes that

> [t]hough deprived of unity, identity, or deity, the *chora* is nevertheless subject to a regulating process [*réglementation*], which is different from that of the symbolic law but nevertheless effectuates

[426] I use the French term "*langue*" to make a clear distinction between the concept of *langue* and language. "*Langue*" as a system of signs, a principle of classification and "language" as the faculty to communicate which can happen at a physical, physiological and psychic level.
[427] Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p.25.
[428] Ibid., p.26.
[429] J. Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, p.28.
[430] J. Kristeva in *Antonin Artaud: A critical reader*, p.124.

discontinuities by temporarily articulating them and then starting over, again and again.[431]

It refuses the pattern of fixed definitions and roles assigned by any linguistic structure. The *chora*'s chaotic and mobile but regulated non-sense is the language of the senses, the language of the drives, which is usually repressed by logos enclosing it into a linear and linguistically structured system, even if this semiotic non-sense always remains logo's underlying shadow.

It is with the inscription of language in the system of logos that the subject defines itself, "establishes itself above the semiotic chora and starts repressing its physical origins."[432] Releasing language from the structure of logos dissolves the subject in the chaotic and mobile state of the *chora* from which it emerged. This is when language becomes what Jean-Jacques Lecercle calls "*délire*":

> *Délire* […] is the experience of the body within language, of the destruction and painful reconstruction of the speaking subject, not through the illusory mastery of language and consciousness, but through possession by language. The subject understand that he does not speak language, but he is spoken by it.[433]

Lecercle is interested here in "the kind of reflexive 'delirium' in which the patient expounds his system, attempts to go beyond the limits of his madness, to introduce method into it",[434] which is why he chose to use the term "*délire*" to differentiate "unreflexive delirium, the repetitive and unimaginative discourse of the paranoiacs" from "a reflexive delirium […] created by talented patients who write down their experience and devote their time to argument and what they take to be science."[435] Lecercle also distinguishes between two kinds of *délire*, one which only disrupts the rules and conventions, but which is still structured and constructed, and another one, "that of depth, the depths of the body, where another language emerges, raucous, violent, full of consonants and unpronounceable sounds, of screams and hoarse whispers."[436] The latter is the language of the affect, no longer articulated, equivalent to the Deleuzian notion of deep non-sense. I want to keep the term *délire* as an

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[431] J. Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, p.26.
[432] J.-J. Lecercle, *Philosophy through the Looking-Glass: Language, Nonsense, Desire*, (London & Melbourne: Hutchinson, 1985), p.42.
[433] Ibid., p.40.
[434] Ibid., p.1.
[435] Ibid., p.3.
[436] Ibid., p.41.

equivalent of deep non-sense, but without involving the word "non-sense", which remains intricately linked to "sense". Non-sense seems to be the reverse side of sense and still attached to a linguistic notion. Non-sense needs sense to be defined as non-sense and vice-versa. Susan Stewart remarks that "on basis of etymology nonsense depends upon sense. On basis of function sense depends upon nonsense."[437] *Délire* might be more closely related to madness, but in *délire* there is "dé-lire", i.e. "to un-read" or "to dys-read". The texts which are attempting to transcribe the deep non-sense which emerges out of the body as a glossolalic logorrhoea and diverse raw sounds are unreadable. They are unreadable because this language does not correspond to the linearity imposed by the structure of logos, which means that forcing it into this linguistic pattern freezes the very essence of its mobility, rhythm and density. So, not only should they be "un-read", but they should also be "un-written". This was one of Artaud's preoccupations and maybe constituted a part of his struggle to find a suitable way to communicate this language beyond the linguistics of logos. It was part of the theatrical language of the "theatre of cruelty" and inherent to his poetry, but there once again it fell into the trap of writing and had to be immobilised on the page. Suddenly this language, that trespasses the borders of the body and its constructed subject to let them merge again into one another in a nonsensical original chaos, seems to be banging against new boundaries when it is enclosed in the system of writing. In *Deleuze and Language*, Lecercle explains how the artificial and arbitrary construction of *la langue* can never completely tame the language emanating form the body:

> Because language is not homogenous, because *langue* is an abstraction forced upon it, the stability of which is reached at the cost of artificiality, it is always moving beyond grammar that seeks to freeze it into a system. This is what Deleuze and Guattari mean when they claim that "languages leak".[438]

As much as logos represses the language of the body, the mobility of the semiotic *chora*, it is all the same imprinted with it. "Languages leak" because they can at any time yield to the constant pulsing of the body against its linguistic borders and *la langue* can stumble back into its semiotic origin. The result produces glossolalia.

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[437] Susan Stewart, *Nonsense : Aspects of Intertextuality in Folklore and Literature*, (Baltimore & London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1979), p.5.
[438] J.-J. Lecercle, *Deleuze and Language*, (Hampshire & NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p.67.

● **Steve McQueen:** *Once Upon a Time.*

Steve McQueen for his installation *Once Upon a Time*, which took place at the South London Gallery in 2004, used an actual recording of voices speaking in tongues. This installation consisted of a 70 minute loop with pictures and images similar to the ones sent into space by NASA to show to possible extra-terrestrial beings how life is on Earth. The sound track which was running at the same time consisted of different extracts of glossolalia. At first, all these sounds made me think of different languages like Italian, Spanish, Swiss German or some Slavic languages. It seems that I wanted to identify these sounds as being a *langue*, unknown and unrecognisable, but which could sound like a *langue* that might have made sense to someone. It was very pleasurable to listen to; it had a catching rhythm, some of the "sentences" seemed to be coming back as if the sound or text was circular or like anaphors in poetry. The intonations, the rhythm and the pattern made it sound like someone was telling a story or reciting poetry. There was something familiar, something soothing that put a sort of spell on me. Although again, I might have been forcing a familiar linguistic pattern on this series of sounds that was entering my body and caressing my senses. The title of the installation, *Once Upon a Time*, induces a storytelling element which could predispose the listeners to recognise this kind of pattern in the voices they will be listening to. On the other hand, the notion of an ancestral collective past embedded in the tradition of storytelling and the idea of futuristic progress which one day would possibly allow communication with an extra-terrestrial life recreates the tension Michel de Certeau ascribes to glossolalia of being both related to a "pre-language" and a "post-language".[439] Although Steve McQueen might impose through his title a linguistic pattern upon the glossolalic soundtrack, his mode of reproduction does not incarcerate it into a linguistic system which would then enable it to be reproduced. On the contrary, he leaves it as sounds. The recorder operates in an echolalic way and retransmits the exact sounds produced by people speaking in tongues. The glossolalia is seized, but it is enclosed first into a linguistic pattern. The live performer would have to apply a linguistic pattern to it and break it down into different entities in order to learn it and reproduce it, even if the source was only an audio soundtrack.

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[439] Michel de Certeau, "Vocal Utopias: Glossolalias", trans. by Daniel Rosenberg, *Representations*, 56, (1996), 29-47 (p.33)

● **Glossolalia**

Glossolalia, perhaps better known as "speaking in tongues", is the phenomenon that occurs when someone starts fluently speaking in an unknown language, "a spontaneous utterance of uncomprehended and seemingly random speech sounds."[440] Glossolalia comes from the Greek words "*glossa*" which means "tongue" (the organ) and "language" or "dialect" and "*lalia*" meaning "to speak". Glossolalia implies speaking a dialect, a different language, but it might also have the implication of "the tongue", as in the organ, speaking rather than "speaking in tongues." Historically, the Pithy is said to have delivered her omens in a form of glossolalia, and in the cult of Dionysus "the god-possessed devotee spoke *glottys Baccheia* with the tongue of Bacchus."[441] It appears in the Christian Scriptures as "'tongues of men and angels' of which Saint Paul talks about with the Corinthians"[442] and "this miraculous gift of speaking foreign languages which, according to Saint Luc, goes with the Spirit's effusion on the day of Pentecost."[443] The tradition of breaking into tongues to deliver the word of the Spirit remains nowadays a strong feature of some derived Christian communities, like the Quakers, the Shakers and Pentecostalism in the US. In the 19th century, glossolalia became associated with mediums and spiritualism, especially with the famous case of Hélène Smith, who was supposed to speak "Martian". It was subsequently revealed that she was in fact speaking French but having removed specific letters from it; the word order and construction remained the same. At the turn of the 20th century, glossolalia was recognised in the language uttered by some people suffering from mental illnesses. At that point "'speaking in tongues' ceases to be a divine gift to become a symptom in psychiatric clinics […] and is thus characterised linguistically and pathologically for the first time."[444] It is this linguistic aspect of glossolalia which interests me here and

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[440] Morton Kelsey, *Tongue Speaking : The History and Meaning of Charismatic Experience*, (New York: Crossraod, 1981), p.1.

[441] David Christie-Murray, *Voices from the God : Speaking with Tongues*, (London & Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978),p.3.

[442] « 'langues des hommes et des anges' dont Saint Paul s'entretient avec les Corinthiens » Jean-Jacques Courtine, « Les Silences de la voix : Histoire et structure des glossolalies », *Langages*, 91, (1988), 7-25 (p.7). Translation by L. Easton.

[443] « Ce don miraculeux de parler des langues étrangères qui accompagna selon Saint Luc l'effusion du Saint-Esprit le jour de la Pentecôte. » Ibid., p.7.

[444] « le 'parler en langues' cesse d'être un don divin pour devenir un symptôme dans la clinique psychiatrique[…] et reçoit ainsi ses premières caractérisations linguistiques et pathologiques. » Ibid., p.8.

on which I am going to focus in relation to the idea that the language structured within logos is always at risk of falling back into its semiotic origin.

Jean-Jacques Courtine refers to it as "dreamt history" in which glossolalia is "a simulation of the first moments of language, a representation of its origin; but also a myth of its genesis, one of the imaginary forms which, in the history of language, takes the eternal return to the moment when man spoke for the first time."[445] Michel de Certeau in his article "Utopies vocales : glossolalies" says that glossolalia "resembles a language[446] but is not one."[447] Courtine talks about a "semblance" or an "appearance of language" which consists of "utterances deprived of any sense, but structured phonologically, that the speaker thinks to be a real *langue* and which in fact shares no systematic resemblance with a natural *langue* alive or dead."[448] De Certeau underlines the fact that glossolalia is already present and underlying in every conversation: "bodily noise, quotations of delinquent sounds, and fragments of other's voices punctuate the order of sentences with breaks and surprises."[449] He refers to the discourse as porous, soaked with these noises that are other. This is why language is susceptible to "leak" as Deleuze and Guattari expressed it. According to de Certeau, glossolalia is "the phenomenon that *isolates* […] and *authorizes*"[450] these sounds and noises; "it organizes a space where the possibility of speaking is deployed for itself."[451] In this sense glossolalia does not refer to the "dreamt history" of the origin of language that Courtine is talking about, but rather to the mere fiction of *la langue* itself and to the possibility for it to be spoken. It is referred to as a kind of origin because it sounds like the vocalic trials of young children. There is a notion of play and of experimentation with the sounds at the disposal of humans. The etymological definition that de Certeau provides expresses this idea. For him glossolalia signifies "to babble, to jibber-jabber, or to stutter (Greek:

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[445] « une simulation des premiers moments du langage, une représentation de son origine; mais aussi un mythe de sa genèse, une des formes imaginaires que prend, dans l'histoire du langage, l'éternel retour du moment où, pour la première fois, l'homme se mit à parler. » Ibid., p.8.

[446] In French, it is the term "langue" which is used here and which I personally think is clearer.

[447] M. de Certeau, "Vocal Utopias: Glossolalias", p.29.

[448] « énoncés dépourvus de sens mais structurés phonologiquement, que le locuteur croit être une langue réelle, mais qui ne possèdent aucune ressemblance systématique avec une langue naturelle vivante ou morte. » J.-J. Courtine, « Les Silences de la voix : Histoire et structure des glossolalies », p.8.

[449] M. de Certeau, "Vocal Utopias: Glossolalias", p.29.

[450] Ibid., p.30.

[451] Ibid., p.30.

lalein) in the tongue (Greek: *glossè*)".[452] This happens within the concept of language since the conception of sense, which is organised within the structure of *la langue*, needs its reverse, non-sense, which is a form of language, to exist. It is the notion of a possible non-sense which allows the elaboration of a system which is considered as making sense. Once language is frozen into the system of logos it automatically implies that this system can be disturbed and disrupted by the emergence of a form of non-sense, of glossolalic *délire*, which is spoken language playing with its own vocalic components. De Certeau makes the idea that glossolalia would be a return to a form of pre-language more complex by adding the notion that it is also something relating to "post-language": "[e]very glossolalia combines something pre-linguistic, related to a silent origin or to the 'attack' of the spoken word, and something postlingustic, made from the excesses, the overflows and the wastes of language."[453] Language of sense, *la langue*, happens in between the two and is inevitably impregnated and surrounded by its origin and its remains. The error is to try to impose sense on this series of sounds. De Certeau remarks that "[t]he history of glossolalia is made up almost entirely of interpretations that aim to make it speak in sentences and that claim to restore this vocal delinquency to an order of signifieds."[454] And Courtine adds in his article that "[t]o write about glossolalia is in fact to suppress it: to substitute writing to oral practice, to convert emotion into reason, to translate non-sense into signifying representation, to submit the impulse of the voice to the order of the sign."[455] There is an incessant urge to try to regulate a form of chaotic language and to impose the organisation and principle of classification of *la langue* on any form of language. If the nonsensical part of language, which is inherent to its concept, is decoded or decrypted and made into sense, it would mean that another form of non-sense would arise to encircle this new sense to allow it to be. The task becomes then infinite. Courtine says that

> glossolalia is necessary to the rationality of our representations of language; this is why there are 'speaking in tongues' and glossolalia and that there will still continue to be. The sudden appearance of the glossolalist's insane vocalisations is in its way a reminder that to

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[452] Ibid., p.33.
[453] Ibid., p.33.
[454] Ibid., p.33.
[455] « Ecrire sur la glossolalie, c'est en effet *la faire taire*: substituer l'écrit à l'oral, convertir l'émotion en raison, traduire l'insensé en représentations signifiantes, soumettre la pulsion de la voix à l'ordre du signe. » J.-J. Courtine, « Les Silences de la voix : Histoire et structure des glossolalies », p.18. Translation by L. Easton.

speak has a sense and that *la langue* needs to be used to communicate.[456]

The idea that glossolalia refers to the origin of language is considered by Courtine and de Certeau as fictional history because it cannot be considered as a *langue.* Sound has no linguistic existence and glossolalia "will make sure that sounds only exist *for themselves* to de-semiotise *la langue.*"[457] Glossolalia implies a rupture between sound and sense and thus, between signifier and signified. Sense is lost to the benefit of the voice. Glossolalic utterances give back to language its vocal materiality. Courtine writes that "[e]vading from sense they find back again this essential dimension of *la langue* for a subject: the inner sensation, irremediably singular, that a *langue* is spoken and that the body is reasoning with the rustles of the voice."[458] It is the voice that is speaking and uttering sounds, speaking a "tongue of the mouth", (*gib-* probably related to the Irish word *gob*: the mouth, *to gabble, to gibber*).[459] "'Speaking in tongues' is a speech of organs (*tongues*)";[460] people experiencing glossolalia speak about the impression of being spoken. The subject disappears; it is no longer the subject who speaks, but "it" speaks, just as Barthes argues that the author loses her/his identity while writing and that it is "language which speaks"; the voice speaks and utters sounds emerging from the body. It is no longer sense that matters, but the only fact that the body is a speaking entity capable of producing a voice. They mention the impression that the glossolalic utterances are pouring out of their mouth like a liquid; it is like producing a substance. *La langue* is absorbed again by the physical entity of the body and so is the notion of subject with it. Language not only "leaks", but it seems to overflow its structure and in doing so it stops being a *langue* to become again, or anew, a corporeal utterance of the voice. The dissolution of the concept of subject within the fleshiness of the body corresponds to the dissolution of the concept of sign within glossolalia. "Glossolalia is not a *langue*: […] a *langue* is based on a system of signs and there are no signs in

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[456] « la glossolalie est nécessaire à la rationalité de nos représentations du langage; c'est pour cela qu'il y a des 'parlers en langues' et des glossolales, et qu'il y en aura encore. Le surgissement des vocalisations insensées du glossolale est, à sa manière, le rappel que parler a un sens et que la langue doit servir à communiquer.» Ibid., p.17.

[457] « faire en sorte que les sons n'existent plus que pour *'eux-mêmes'* de désémiotiser la langue.» Ibid., p.13.

[458] « En s'évadant du sens, elles retrouvent cette dimension essentielle de la langue pour un sujet: la sensation intérieurs, irrémédiablement singulière, qu'une langue est parlée, et que le corps résonne des bruissements de la voix. » Ibid., p.9.

[459] See J.-J. Courtine, « Les Silences de la voix : Histoire et structure des glossolalies », p.10.

[460] « Le 'parler en langues' est un parler d'organes (*tongues*) » Ibid., p.19.

glossolalia"[461] because the correspondence between signifier and signified is broken and then sense cannot be made. Glossolalia is the raw utterance of the inner. It has no referent. It is composed of a signified which would be the "inexpressible" and a signifier which is the nonsensical word itself. The sound uttered becomes the referent itself. Signifier and referent are the same. Glossolalic utterances are then linguistically composed of a rather abstract signified and of a signifier which is its referent at the same time. In *la langue*, the mimetic relation does not occur between the signifier and the referent, but between the signified and the referent. So, with glossolalia the expected mimetic relation does not take place, producing thus an undecipherable language as such.

● William Pope L.'s version of "Klingon"

William Pope L. gave a very peculiar talk during the Symposium of *Live Culture* at Tate Modern in 2003. His talk-performance was delivered in a bastardised form of "Klingon", a language originally created for the TV series Star Trek. "Klingon" in itself is devised as a *langue*, a constructed form of glossolalia. William Pope L.'s succession of phonemes and syllables, sounding like aborted words out of different languages or dialects, was constructed, written down and learned. This sequence of sounds formed a fragmented language on the verge of being composed of words. Some of the syllables sounded familiar or belonging to a known language whereas others sounded totally new and foreign. It was delivered as a talk with an argument in a foreign language; although it was incomprehensible, the structure was sensed. This new form of communication was mastered, though it resembled a kind of struggle to produce words. Some sounds seemed to be extracting themselves from the body, trying to come loose from the flesh. It gave these sounds a sort of physical quality. It felt as if each try was broken by the next one and sometimes as if the sounds were pushing one another eager to appear, as if the sounds were taking over. The product was more than sounds, but less than words. It seems to produce a state in-between the two, the moment when sounds start becoming words, but are not there yet. There is a recognition in the formation of phonemes, the associations of sounds into syllables that from time to time emerge as familiar, when you recall the sound of a

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[461] « *La glossolalie n'est pas une* langue: […] La langue est un système de signes et il n'y a pas de signes dans la glossolalie » J.-J. Courtine, « Des faux en langue? », *Le discours psychanalytique*, 6, (1983), 35-47 (p.41). Translation L.Easton.

language that you might know. This stream is more than sounds because it gives the impression of following an argument and thus convinces the audience that it could have a sense, a sense that it can just not understand. This series of atrophied syllables appears as signifier without referent, which tends to lead to one merging into the other. It develops a mimetic relation to the signified, which is the unprocessed nonsensical language produced by the body. William Pope L.'s talk-performance put the focus on the body as a producing instrument. He uses the whole capacity of his vocal apparatus to produce the series of interrupted phonemes and syllables that result in what is received or sensed as a sort of organised non-sense or paradoxically a glossopoeia. It makes the audience aware of two things: firstly that our common language is a conventional non-sense, a construction that everyone has adopted, and secondly that what is commonly considered as non-sense can as well be a type of language. Pope L.'s glossopoeia is a learned non-sense which is not produced during the performance, but re-produced, although still engaging with the live production of sounds at the actual moment of the performance.

• Non-sense and mimesis

Referring back to Scarry's *Body in Pain*, glossolalic utterances take part in revealing *la langue* as an artefact of something that is impossible to share and express. The expression of human sentiences through *la langue* is just an agreement that it is what we feel and what we share, but nothing can prove the exact sameness of the felt. Sentiences are in fact unsharable and verbal language is there to make exist in the outside world something that does not exist outside, but only inside, circulating in each of our bodies. Glossolalia is then always a production and not a product that tends to crystallise a signifier-signified-referent relation which is reproduced in known language. It cannot then be translated or repeated. Glossolalia reveals the body as a speaking entity which can become a language producer.

Glossolalia can be considered as a sort of vocalisation of an auratic language since it is expressing or trying to find a vocable or a series of sounds to share either a perception or a sensation. It is a form of expression that is closer to the physical and the tactile than common everyday language. What makes it more physical is the fact that it is dependent on sensuous similarities. By producing a signifier that is at the same time the referent the verbalised nonsensical word refers to itself as being non-

sense and it is the process of its perception as non-sense, or as *délire*, that can actually bring the listener somehow closer to the potential signified.

When I was reading <u>The Body in Pain</u> *I made a reading mistake: I read "madness" instead of "madeness". I kept on reading and identifying "madeness" as "madness" each time it appeared in the text. I reported it as such in my notes and was not at all aware of my mistake. My reflection on Scarry's argument went on with the concept of the "madness" of language and the "madness" of the outside world, until someone made me aware of my misreading or of my "dys-reading", of my own "dé-lire". It hardly surprised me since such misreadings happen regularly to me. Although "madeness" made more sense in the context of Scarry's argument, "madness" was not totally absurd since it did not strike me when I read it and I managed to reflect on the unfolding of the argumentation with this concept in mind. When you consider it, it is when language becomes "mad" that its "madeness" is revealed. When language fails, it falls into non-sense, it becomes senseless, it becomes mad. Suddenly, there is an awareness that language is something that needs to be constructed and controlled to create an artefact, to make sense and become sharable. The same happens with objects in the outside world. Scarry says that it is when something needs to be repaired that its "madeness" becomes apparent. When an object is broken or a machine does not function properly any longer, it loses its sense, it becomes mad, it "dé-lire". The most convincing example is probably with computers which are not only objects, but use a specific language; when they break down they can concretely fall into "madness". A friend of mine said after seeing my performance* **The Spell of the Chestnut Tree Blossom Smell** *that as I was reciting the "sp-" words, it felt as if I was delivering them like a machine. Interestingly it is the failure to reproduce it like a machine, without a pause, that gave the impression that I had a mechanical quality: my body as a faulty machine producer of non-sense.*

The body in pain destroys *la langue*, reducing it often to sounds, screams or groans, but also makes language as it needs to create an artefact in order to express and verbalise the pain. The language created can be *la langue* we know, recognise and understand, but it can also be an unknown language, a language made of unknown "words" which, though being incomprehensible, wants to be identified as words rather than simple sounds produced by the speaking body. It being a form of

pre-language, language constructing itself, or language let loose, language left at the mercy of imagination which plays with it without a model, it might just be the expression of the sentience as it is. Glossolalic production reveals the "madeness" of *la langue* by exposing the potential "madness" of language, its *délire*, exposing that language can be other. Giorgio Agamben in *Remnants of Auschwitz* cites Primo Levi. In Auschwitz Levi saw a little boy who never spoke, but whose "need of speech charged his stare with explosive urgency",[462] a child from the camps, a child of death, as he calls him. One day he started repeating a word constantly, which Levi transcribes as "mass-klo or matisklo." Nobody understood what he was saying. Agamben refers to it, to this "secret word", as "the sound that arises from the lacuna, the non-language to which language answers, in which language is born."[463] This sound, this deep non-sense, Levi finds again in Celan's poems and says that "[i]t is not communication; it is not a language, or at the most it is a dark and maimed language, precisely of someone who is about to die and is alone, as we will all be at the moment of death."[464] It is the language that is left to try to express the inexpressible, the non-referential, when sentiences have destroyed all the known words. The production of a nonsensical language is the exposure of the vulnerability of *la langue*. An exposure of the "lacuna"; an exposure of the fact that the language we know comes out of a "non-*langue*". Language is not born from nothing, it is the need to express, share something, but it can be a production, rather than the reproduction of an existing product, that is a known language.

Language, whether it is a known or a nonsensical language, always involves mimesis in the sense that it is the verbalisation or vocalisation of something happening in the human being. The body needs to exteriorise its inner turmoil. Sensations are at one point or the other pushed out of the body through the process of producing language. It has to go through the process of what Scarry calls the "made-up" and the "made-real". Any means to create the artefact in order to share the sentience is a way to make it exist in the outside world, to make it exist for others and then, to make it "real". Language, organised within logos, participates in this creation of the "real". The notion of "real" becomes associated with the notion of sense and what makes sense. Susan Stewart explains that

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[462] Primo Levi, *The Truce* in *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen, (New York: Zone Books, 1999), p.37
[463] Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz* , p.38.
[464] Primo Levi, *Other People's Trades* in *Remnants of Auschwitz.*, p.37.

we might see the domain of common sense as being "the real": a domain experienced through the senses, through the "actually happened". Conversely, we can see nonsense as a "not real" domain, a domain of the "never happened", even more a domain of the "could not happen".[465]

Sense is a form of organisation and "organisation is always a reorganisation brought about by disorganisation."[466] Non-sense, in this case, is disorganisation, a form of ever present chaotic past and future, with which sense is in constant process of reorganisation. "Nonsense depends on an assumption of sense" and at the same time, "without nonsense, sense would not be "measured", sense would itself threaten infinity and regression."[467] Non-sense is language referring to itself, since the mimetic relation is no longer between the signified and the referent, but constructs itself between the signified and the signifier, the signifier and the referent being the same: the nonsensical utterance. The possible representation induced by the utterance of non-sense is that of an abstract and indecipherable signified. Although it relates potentially to the vocalisation of an inner sentience and is thus an attempt toward "making it up" and eventually "making it real" in the common outside world, it remains without referent and alien to the system of logos which is making sense and allows the notion of reality to make sense - to be recognised as the "real". Nonsensical utterances are discarded as threatening the equilibrium of the representation of the "real", acknowledging its close relationship to chaos and disorder. According to Stewart

> [i]t becomes apparent that nonsense must of necessity be a kind of taboo behaviour. First of all, it involves the constant rearticulation of an anomalous aspect of social life […]. Secondly, as the most radical form of metafiction, it threatens the disintegration of social interaction that would occur if the unconscious was made conscious. It is the realisation of the possibility that the discourse of everyday life could become totally conscious of its own procedures […] Thus it is concerned with states of transition, with the operations taking place between categories more than with the content of the categories themselves, nonsense may be seen as a further anomaly, a marginal or liminal activity.[468]

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[465] Susan Stewart, *Nonsense: Aspects of Intertextuality in Folklore and Literature*, p.13.
[466] Ibid., p.vii.
[467] Ibid., p.4-5.
[468] Ibid., p.88.

If "the discourse of everyday life" became conscious of its own procedures, it would involve facing the fact that there is no mimetic relation between the signified and the signifier and thus consequently that the system acknowledged as making sense is arbitrary. If the system of logos, which constitutes the basis for the construction of the speaking subject and the reality which surrounds it, is forced into admitting its arbitrariness, it would mean that the whole conception of the subject and of the "real" are endangered. Stewart states that "[a]lthough we may believe language to be "arbitrary" in that there is no natural relation between the sign and what it signifies, social life endows language with a nonarbitrariness."[469] The emergence of non-sense, which takes control of its own procedures, reveals this aspect of language. Although non-sense threatens the equilibrium instigated by the system of logos and even the system itself, the latter protects its order by recognising the existence of non-sense, labelling it as such and trying to make it part of its own system by defining its reality as other. She writes that

> [i]t is the language of everyday life that is transferred intact, transgressed, manipulated, traversed, and transformed to other domains of reality. Talking in one's sleep or gibberish or glossolalia are all recognised as kinds of talk used in everyday life. Realism calls upon the organisation of language in everyday discourse. But the recontexting of language, the reframing of language, demands different patterns of expectation, different rules of interaction on the part of members.[470]

The system of logos, of discourse, organises itself around the reality of the disorder of non-sense, but it cannot totally integrate it to its system since non-sense eludes sense. As de Certeau and Courtine said, there has been a history of wanting to impose sense and interpretation on the glossolalic utterances and it is not only an error to apprehend its reality through this system, but it annihilates it. It might be the inherent destructive and impossible drive of the system of logos: to annihilate its nonsensical component. The task is impossible since "[w]hile the work of the discourse of everyday life is a set of purposes at hand, the work of nonsense is reflection and self-perpetuation."[471] This means that contrarily to common language, non-sense is in a mode of production and not of reproduction. *La langue* is based on the fact that it is reproducible, learnt and transmitted. Non-sense, glossolalia or *délire*

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[469] Ibid., p.96.
[470] Ibid., p.27-28.
[471] Ibid., p.119.

do not inscribe themselves in this reproducible scheme. They are a spontaneous production of a form of language that trespasses the boundaries of *la langue*. Nonsensical productions might be built on similarities of sonorities, but are never twice the same and since they do not function within the familiar linguistic system, they become almost impossible to remember and thus to reproduce. The only exception might be by the persons capable of echolalia.

● **Echolalia**

Echolalia is a feature of speech, which can be considered as a language deficit, characteristic of autism. Fay and Schuler explain that echolalia "is generally defined as the meaningless repetition of a word or a word group just spoken by another person."[472] There are different theories about echolalia: on the one hand it is regarded as a normal feature in the process of learning how to speak and on the other hand it is considered as pathological. According to Piaget, it can be regarded as a game; the children are simply enjoying repeating words for their own sake. Any child can use echolalia and it has been noticed that "young children are more likely to repeat a command that includes a nonsense word."[473] It seems that children "repeat what is just a little beyond them, what is just a little bit odd."[474] The debate linked to echolalia is also concerned with whether it is a stage in the speech learning process or rather "more a product of learning";[475] whether imitation is a way to learn words yet unknown and get familiar with pitch and intonation or whether it is rather a way to rehearse what is already acquired. Fay and Schuler write that

> this learning is the gradual building of the motor connections from the child hearing his own vocalisations, at first in random babbling and then later in more organized combinations of phonemes. That this process leads to imitation is demonstrated by the fact that the child ends up with the vocabulary, accent, and other speech mannerisms of his social group.[476]

In the end any kind of language learning process is based on the imitation of a pre-existing pattern. This feature of speech becomes intriguing in the case of autistic

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[472] W.H. Fay and L.A. Schuler, *Emerging Language in Autistic Children*, (Baltimore & London: University Park Press, 1980), p.25.
[473] Ibid., p.29.
[474] Ibid., p.29.
[475] Ibid., p.31.
[476] Ibid., p.31.

children and adults because there is clear clinical evidence that it reveals a failure to appreciate syllable boundaries.

> The echoed sound package is typically better described as a single chunk of speech sound. […] Even when the echoer shows fidelity in mimicking pauses, accents, and other non-segmental features, one cannot assume that he appreciates the implications of these for the decoding operation.[477]

This means that some autistic children are repeating sentences that for them are probably only a series of sounds and have no particular sense. They have the ability to reproduce the exact words and intonations of what they echo directly or later on in a totally different context. In the case of delayed echolalia, the striking feature is "the sustaining quality in the absence of the model."[478] Their ability to reproduce the exact sound pattern of a sentence or an expression would be only phonological and not semantic or syntaxic. This phonological aptitude is coupled with an excellent memory. These sentences of delayed echolalia can appear suddenly in the middle of a prattling monologue produced by autistic children. Amongst a series of modulated sounds and vocalisations a perfectly clear and understandable sentence emerges.

This feature of autistic speech, which is considered as an impairment since the child does not abandon it to progress into a different phase of language learning, could be seen at the same time as a mimetic skill. The precision with which these children can reproduce any sound patterns emitted in their surrounding implies that they apprehend *la langue* in an different perspective than other people do, or maybe they keep apprehending it as all children do in a pre-linguistic stage. Language is not sense, but it is just sounds. Autistic persons capable of echolalia might only hear the sounds of language. They are able to reproduce not only the series of sounds, but the exact intonation, the accent and the rhythm it was produced in; they do not reproduce logos, they reproduce voice. They produce their own set of sounds as a kind of glossolalic babbling, and amongst this sonic logorrhoea they suddenly reproduce the voices of others. This faculty gives them the quality of a recorder being able to reproduce an exact soundtrack as if it had been pre-recorded. Not only are they able to produce glossolalia, but they are able to reproduce common language, discarding the fact that it is embedded in a system which makes sense, thus

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[477] Ibid., p.47.
[478] Ibid., p.48.

discarding logos. They are probably able to assimilate common language as glossolalic utterance as well, since it is the sound sequence which is important in this case and not at all the sense. This is why it seems that the features of the voice are more important to reproduce rather than any aiming sense. In this sense, it would seem that echolalia could be a way to reproduce glossolalic utterance, giving the speaker a machine-like quality.

When performers intend to produce a form of glossolalia they adopt the machine–like quality characteristic of echolalia. Most of the time, performers using a nonsensical form of utterances in their work are neither glossolalists, nor autistic. This means that their glossolalic utterances do not belong to *délire* or Deleuze's concept of deep non-sense in the sense that it is not a spontaneous production of a flow of sounds pouring out of the body; it is not language becoming the master and in order to do so engulfing the subject back into the physicality of the body. In general, performers do not produce glossolalic logorrhoea, they reproduce it. They operate a sort of reversed echolalia in the same way that autistic children would generally use echolalia to reproduce sentences that make sense in common language, but which might very well sound nonsensical to their ears; in the same way the performers will have to learn by heart nonsensical sequences of sounds in order to reproduce them throughout the performance in a flow that could be similar to speech. The performer becomes a sort of human recorder who pre-records a soundtrack which s/he is able to then reproduce, to play back, for the performance.

6. Livegraphy

In the previous chapters I suggested that Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre performances rely on a form of writing even if most of the time they distrust and reject pre-written texts as a basis for the work. Through the process of creation, of presenting a different or new apprehension of "the real", these practices are producing a form of mimesis, not as the representation of reality but as the presentation of "a real" or its perception. The same tension appears with the notion of text and writing. Along with the rejection of representation comes a distrust and refusal of narrative texts, and often even of any text at all, as the origin of a work that should illustrate it. This method is adopted to create a distance and a relevant difference to theatre practice. Postdramatic theatre does not eradicate the theatrical text, but it eradicates the dramatic text in favour of meta-theatrical texts. Such meta-theatrical texts reveal by their content and form a notion of process that becomes embedded within the live theatrical process. Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre performances focus on the notion of process; they use the process of production of a creative artefact, not its reproduction, as a core element. They reject written texts for the performance itself to become a form of writing: a livegraphy.

This chapter develops the concept of "livegraphy". I have coined the term "livegraphy" to describe the process of the performance writing itself live, producing its own text, which is not necessarily composed of words or not only composed of words, or not even composed of existing understandable words. Livegraphy can be the result of different livegraphies taking place at the same time during a performance, using the potential of the theatrical apparatus beyond text, just as Artaud expected. Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre performances which explore the concept of non-sense and therefore develop a glossopoeia in order to reproduce non-sense as sort of glossolalia effect are sometimes inserting the creation and elaboration of the new language into the process of the performance. Although the glossopoeia is conceived prior to the performance in most cases, the idea is to include the compositional process as an element of the performance which allows a form of writing to take place within it, similar to Gertrude Stein's attempt to make the writing process a constructive element of her plays. This is what I call "livegraphy", when the writing process is exposed on the stage. This applies not only to a form of verbal language, but also to the different languages used within the

creation. Through music, gestures, visual images and words or sounds these performances develop a glossopoeia which is the result of many different "livegraphies" taking place simultaneously. They produce a Text, in Barthes's sense of the term, by writing it live. It is through the simultaneity of these different livegraphies that they produce a nonsensical language which can be considered as a genuine glossopoeia.

With references to William Pope L.'s performance, already discussed in Chapter Five above, Societas Raffaello Sanzio's *Cryonic Chants*, work by Jérome Bel and Maria Donata d'Urso, as well as my own practice, I explain the use made of various forms of glossopoeia and how it is not only through the construction of a nonsensical verbal *délire*, but through the different livegraphies that they create their own glossopoeia. These performances develop various layers of livegraphies, as in a dream, which are writing a Text left only to be then "dys-read" again.

● **Gesture**

Performers do not necessarily reproduce existing glossolalic utterances, but they can be constructing their own. They are then producing what Deleuze would call a non-sense of surface, which might sound like a glossolalic deep non-sense as a result, and then they re-produce it for the time of the performance. The "made-up" non-sense reveals the "madeness" of *la langue* as well as the fact that language is a physical construction: a glossopoeia.

This is the technique which William Pope L. adopts for his "Klingon" talk.[479] This talk was translated into sign language by the two women in charge of translating the whole Symposium. Through them the language took place in gestures. It was interesting to notice the calm of one of them just doing her best to transmit the series of sounds, whereas the other one was puzzled and got annoyed and frustrated trying to translate sounds deprived of straightforward meaning. The movement of their hands scanned the broken rhythm of the talk. In fact what they should have been translating was the appearance of the body speaking rather than anything like a meaningful language. Chiara Gaudi in a interview with Joe Kelleher about the ethics of voice talks about the "possibility of enabling the entire body to emerge from the

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[479] *Live Culture*, Tate Modern, March 2003. See Chapter Five, p.129.

gesture. Or of making the entire body emerge from the mouth. As the mouth becomes a body, so the gesture too becomes a body."[480] Translating sounds and rhythms rather than sense seems paradoxical in this case. It is paradoxical that on one hand these women were confronted with the fact that they had to translate into sign language sounds rather than words. On the other hand, they should have been able to translate this talk into "sense", since "Klingon" is supposedly constructed as a *langue*, contrarily to glossolalia. Having this text make sense for the audience was not the purpose of this performance. "Klingon" is the support for constructing a glossopoeia, but the audience has to be confronted with the nonsensical flow of sounds emanating from the speaker. The strange thing is that although this glossopoeia belongs to a system and is elaborated as a *langue*, it acquired the quality of glossolalia through the impossibility of it being translatable into sign language. It seems almost impossible to transfer it into another system of signs, another constructed language, reverting back to the fact that glossolalia cannot be translated into a linguistic form since it is not constructed as a *langue*. At the same time, it seems almost impossible to escape trapping it into a system. The transfer takes place in two steps: from the writing to the oral utterance and from the oral utterance to the gesture. Sign language is "un-writing" the constructed glossolalic *délire* in a sense, extracting it from the linear system of letters and reproducing it into gestures emerging directly from the body, gestures as a body construction, but at the same time this transfer into gestures is a re-writing of the utterances. Through sign language the glossolalic logorrhoea is forced back into another system of writing. It becomes a form of "livegraphy" since all these writing gestures are produced live just slightly off-beat from the actual utterances of the speaker. "Livegraphy" would thus come close to what Artaud was advocating for his "theatre of cruelty", in which the text should not generate the performance, but rather the performance should be generating the possible text. "Livegraphy" is the process that seems to be at work in some Live Art, not-dance or postdramatic theatre performances using constructed forms of *délire*. The process of composition and transcription is exposed as well as its live performance. Although there is still a pre-written text, the nonsensical component seems to be written live as well. Societas Raffaello Sanzio's *Cryonic Chants* could also be seen as a form of "livegraphy".

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[480] Claudia Castellucci and Chiara Guidi in conversation with Joe Kelleher, "Ethics of the Voice", *Performance Research*, vol.9, 4, (2004), 111-115 (p.111).

● *The Cryonic Chants*

The Cryonic Chants, a concert composed by Societas Raffaello Sanzio and Scott Gibbons, is a subtle interweaving of electronic music, nonsensical sequences sung by four women in black dresses and saccades of video images in negative. The concept is to sing a poem written by a goat. The poem has been composed using a constructed system consisting of grids of letters on which the goat would walk and in this way choose the phonemes that would establish the verses to be sung. So that
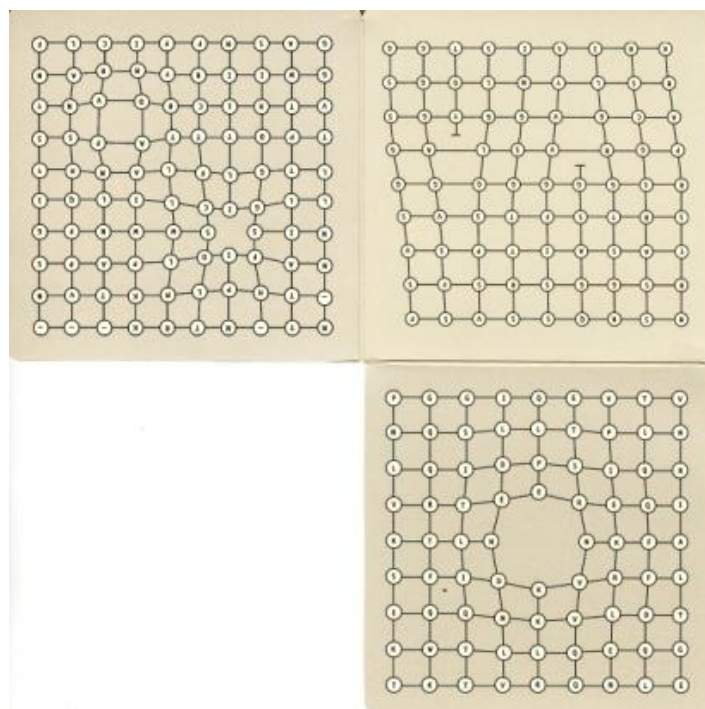
The Cryonic Chants: *objective songs and poems, taken from an impassive animal*,
Societas Raffaello Sanzio / Scott Gibbons, 2005.

these combinations are not entirely arbitrary and remain directly related to the goat as a being, the lettered patterns were composed using "the sequence of the amino acids of a protein, of a substance that characterises some organic process"[481] inherent to the goat:

> An analogical system of recombination of phonemes has been adopted in order to obtain the language-text of the goat, with phonemes taken from the protein sequences precisely contained

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[481] Quoted from the leaflet given out at the entrance of the concert *The Cryonic Chants*: *objective songs and poems, taken from an impassive animal*, Societas Raffaello Sanzio / Scott Gibbons, 2005.

within the body of "that" goat, a four year old male individual. All sequences of the chosen aminos are those respectively responsible for cellular respiration, reproduction, horn's growth and putrefaction.[482]

Chiara Gaudi, a member of Societas Raffaello Sanzio, writes that "[t]he amino acid writing system […] is a biological code, conventionally written but unpronounceable. […] There are about the same number of symbolic letters for the amino acids as there are letters in the alphabet."[483] By walking freely on these grids and choosing the letters by each step of its hooves, the goat becomes the writer, the demiurge Poet.

At the start we are immediately plunged into electronic music which puts us into the atmosphere of a live concert. The music gradually enters our bodies, makes them want to move, makes them want to dance. We are led into this state where there is nothing to follow, nothing to think about, nothing to understand. We just have to hear and let the sounds take possession of us. The images on the screen are abstract formations of vertical and horizontal gleaming black and white lines rapidly flashing in front of our eyes. They tend to provide an hypnotic effect, catching our attention, sort of numbing our brains by their aggressive and persistent recurrence, while the music is keeping our bodies alert, entering them and spreading electrically through their members, almost aggressively sometimes as well. When the four women in black dresses walk on stage we think for a minute or two that we will be able to focus on them ready to hear their singing the nonsensical language of the goat. *-The goat crossing the grid of letters-* They start singing individually from the little book in their hand, but the sound of their voices *-the eye of the goat-* totally merges into the electro music. *-The goat crossing the grid of letters in the other direction-* As soon as they start singing the images on the screen change and *-The goat hesitating-* become a series all in negative showing the goat, parts of the goat, *-WWN-* the grid of letters, the goat *-TTT-* walking on it, *-YNF-* its hooves scraping the floor, its horns, its eye, letters flashing, *-Black horns-* a series of nonsensical fragments appearing in white, all of these following the sustained *–LVK-* rhythm of the electro music. The singing of the women happens *–The goat crossing the grid of letters-* at another pace and clashes with the sounds and images which are

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[482] Ibid.

[483] C. Castellucci, R. Castellucci, C. Gaudi, J. Kelleher and N. Ridout, *The Theatre of Societas Raffaello Sanzio*, (London & NY: Routledge, 2007), p.77-78.

bombarding our ears and retinas, bombarding our bodies. Suddenly, there is too much –*The goat's gleaming eye*- to see, too much to pay attention to, it seems like –*an empty room*- every little gesture, every –*VGG*- step, shuffling of –*a draughtboard floor*- dress has its significance, its importance. Our eyes –*a black hoof scraping*- are racing at the pace of the music and of the –*QGAS*- flashes of images to try and catch –*the goat crossing the grid*- every detail, our hearing – *a black hoof scraping*- struggling to detach –*the goat's gleaming eye*- the voices from the –*NNLL*- music, our senses in –*the goat cornered in an empty room*- tension and scattered at –*the grid of letters*- the same time. We –*black horns*- are put – *NPI*- in the middle of a –*the goat crossing the grid*- whirlpool in –*PGG*- which we know –*a black hoof scraping*- that the only way –*the goat crossing the grid*- out is to let ourselves – *the goat's gleaming eye*- go and be –*KRI*- swallowed by –*the goat crossing the grid*- the stream. We –*a draughtboard floor*- get swallowed –*YGT*- by non-sense, the whirlpool –*the grid of letters*- of non-sense is working –*the goat hesitating*- on us, entering –*black horns*- us. The voice of the four –*a hoof scraping the floor*- women being electronically sampled –*QLPE*- live are –*NKFA*- re-transmitted to us through –*the goat cornered*- the music. We are made –*YNL*- dizzy with the overdose –*the goat's gleaming eye*- of sensuous –*VVQ*- information which enters our –*the goat crossing the grid*- bodies and against which – *FGR*- we cannot –*the goat crossing the grid*- fight. We are being –*a black hoof scraping the floor*- invaded by –*black horns*- a sort of otherness –*DHI*-. This incessant –*the goat crossing the grid*- bouncing of -*ARK*- images, sounds – *the goat's gleaming eye*- and gestures –*the grid of letters*- forces us to –*KKP*- apprehend the poem –*the goat crossing the grid*- of the goat physically and –*EER*- sensuously –*a black hoof scraping*- at least at first –*FQW*-.

● **Overloaded simultaneity**

The experience of *The Cryonic Chants* seems similar to what Artaud was professing when saying that the language of the "theatre of cruelty" should be a "language created for the senses [which] must from the outset be concerned with satisfying them."[484] He adds that this language "permits the substitution, for the poetry of language, of a poetry in space which will be resolved in precisely the domain which

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[484]A. Artaud, *The Theater and its Double*, p.38.

does not belong strictly to words."[485] *The Cryonic Chants* is composed like a visual poem. Although the elaboration of the goat's glossopoeia has been conceived and realised beforehand through the grids and the actual walking of the goat on them, it unfolds on stage as a live re-writing of it. The livegraphy takes place through different forms. There is the screen diffusing the edited images of the goat walking on the grid and drawing an arbitrary trace composed of the series of letters it touches with its hooves. Gradually several series of letters, forming this language, appear intermittently and are then organised into fragments to be sung by the four women on stage. The process of writing is exposed through these images and reiterated as being written through the little black books the three women hold in their hands and from which they read the verses they are singing. This language seems frozen into the linguistic system of letters and writing, but at the same time it is submitted to another form of livegraphy through music sampling. Through his sampling of the electronic sounds and of the women's singing voices, Scott Gibbons is creating a soundscape which seems to participate to the voicing of this nonsensical and animal language writing. It is as if in order to be vocalised it needed to be embedded in a different form of writing process which gives birth to sounds that the voicing of the letters alone cannot produce. The effect is produced by the combination of several series of elements which together participate in the livegraphy. They are all based on mastering the different rhythms occurring simultaneously. The audience is subjected to the rhythm of the edited images flashing in a constant evolving loop on the screen, the changing rhythm of the electronic music sampling, the rhythm and tones of the singing voices and of the obscure choreographed movements that the women suddenly break into. The steps performed by the feet enclosed in the little black pointed boots mirror in a way the steps of the goat's hooves which composed the language now being sung. The little black pointed boots do not indicate letters though. This choreography becomes like an indecipherable spell suddenly allowing an ancient reference to magic or witchcraft in which nonsensical logorrhoea, signs and symbols are used to cast spells. The spell is most commonly accompanied by a series of movements. *The Cryonic Chants* seems to offer layers of writing: the pre-written conceptual language of the goat and different livegraphies which are performed on stage. These livegraphies allow the goat's glossopoeia to trespass the boundaries imposed by its enclosure into

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[485] Ibid., p.38.

the alphabetical system, thus letting the performers reproduce it as a nonsensical utterance. Reproducing this language with the help of the written form needs to take place within a performance which un-writes it by merging it within layers of different modes of livegraphy. There is an operation of overloading this language both with the visual of its composition, the bombarding with letters, and the overloading of live and electronic sounds, as well as the choreographic elements. The constructed non-sense loses itself in the unfolding and simultaneous livegraphies happening throughout the performance. Stewart explains that "[s]imultaneity works as other nonsense operations do, bringing attention to form, to method, to the ways in which experience is organised rather than to the "content" of the organisation in any particular time and space."[486] The consequence is that "[w]hen attention is split there is a movement toward nonsense."[487] In *The Cryonic Chants* there is a crescendo in the way the audience's attention is constantly split and needs to switch between the different focus provided simultaneously by the performance. The audience is subject to too many stimuli to process them instantaneously. Joe Kelleher writing about *Tragedia Endogonidia A.#2*, part of Societas Raffaello Sanzio's three year long project out of which elements of *The Cryonic Chants* were developed, says that

> between us and the space of the performance there is the alphabet screen and its accompanying cacophony, where writing and speaking are configured as the self-production of their base elements, already alien to us, even as these insinuate their way back into the grain of our feeling and our thoughts.[488]

The letters become an insufficient, or inadequate, element to transcribe and transmit a text which needs to be read by the senses, although their support seems to be indispensable for the process of un-writing it in a new livegraphy. The process is reversed: it is no longer the symbol, the sign or the gesture that needs to be transcribed within the alphabetical letters, but rather these letters supposedly composing sensible texts which need to be reabsorbed by codes that are other, or systems elaborated on different components. In *Tragedia Endogonidia C.#1*, the letters projected on the screen end up dissolving into blotted patches as if they were reabsorbed by the paper, by the surface they had been written on. Claudia Castellucci

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[486] S. Stewart, *Nonsense: Aspects of Intertextuality in Folklore and Literature*, p.147.
[487] Ibid., p.148.
[488] C. Castellucci, R. Castellucci, C. Gaudi, J. Kelleher, N. Ridout, *The Theatre of Societas Raffaello Sanzio*, p.57.

notes that "[t]he speed of this alternation of signs upon an empty surface overwhelms our 'capability', because everything becomes sign, even the white around the black letters, even the black Rorschach blots, which in the end, alternate with the letters."[489] They become stains, symbols or drawings as traces left behind that have to be read and interpreted in other ways. And Kelleher concludes:

> The theatre prepares a welcome for what may be born from that speechlessness, even if – for the moment – what emerges is a harsh birth, as announced in the automatic poetry of the alphabet machine: with writing looming as the first and last gesture on the nocturnal horizon.[490]

• *The Spell of the Chestnut Blossom Smell* and *SOB*[491]

*Two of my performances, **The Spell of the Chestnut Blossom Smell** and **SOB**, are constructed around the possible production of non-sense in relation to the use of the alphabet letters. **The Spell of the Chestnut Blossom Smell** started with me emptying, bubbling out, drinking, spitting, smashing, splashing, sponging the content of a series of glasses filled with milk which little by little as they were emptied revealed in the middle some glasses filled with a dark and thick liquid (cherry juice). I then moved towards a microphone and recited the list of the words starting with "sp-" from the English dictionary. This represents a list of about eight hundred words which are not meant to be read one after the other. So, this list recited in an irregular rhythm depending on the pace of my memory made the audience listen to a series of words they knew and recognised for the most part, but which adopted after a while the strange quality of a glossolalic logorrhoea without sense. The sense of each word does not matter any longer since put together, one after the other, these words do not make sense, there is no sensible text created out of this list. The feature which becomes predominant is the constant return of the sounds "sp" at the beginning of each new word. It is this recurrent sound, working like an anaphor, which creates the rhythm close to a litany and which lulls the audience with the nonsensical sounds upon which our common meaningful words are constructed. It operates in the same way as a spell. The anaphor feature became flagrant at the very end of the*

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489 Ibid., p.69-70.
490 Ibid., p.61.
491 Leonore Easton, **SOB**, performed at Galerie Lucy Mackintosh, Lausanne, 2006 and at Fieldgate Gallery, London, 2007, as part of the exhibition "Eau Sauvage". **See DVD**.

performance when a soundtrack reproduced the list of "sp-" words but it was played backwards. Throughout the strangeness of these reversed sounds the repetition of what sounded then like /ŋeps/ became strongly noticeable and even an awaited landmark. Ong notes that

> the alphabet implies that […] a word is a thing, not an event, that it is present all at once, and that it can be cut into little pieces, which can even be written forward and pronounced backwards: 'p-a-r-t' can be pronounced 'trap'. If you put the word 'part' on a sound tape and reverse the tape, you do not get 'trap', but a completely different sound, neither 'part' nor 'trap'.[492]

Through this process the words become un-written again; the sounds free themselves from the linguistic enclosure of the syllables and letters system. They regain a form of sonic autonomy which had started to appear with the recitation. The list of "sp-" words learnt by heart and especially the reversed soundtrack are constructed glossolalia. The list of the dictionary becomes a nonsensical "glossolalia" because all these meaningful words one after the other become senseless by the overloading of sense. The system which organises the words according to a logic and dispenses their sense creates a nonsensical book not meant to be read linearly. This aspect became even more striking when I started writing the "sp-" word of the French dictionary (the list is shorter) on the white wall at the back of the gallery with my finger dipped in cherry juice. This task of livegraphy also took a certain time and the result was uneven and difficult to read since my letters were formed awkwardly. It became a long list of words, a long list of letters, a long list of indecipherable traces, a meaningless text. Stewart remarks that

> [a]lphabetical order is what gives those two great nonsensical enterprises, the dictionary and the encyclopaedia, any pretence to formal integrity.[…] They are attempts to organise the world within the text analogous to the attempt to invent an all-inclusive mnemonic- they reduce the world to discourse.[493]

The system which is meant to provide order and logic is revealed potentially to be able to produce non-sense as well. It is only when the system is exposed as such that its nonsensical quality becomes noticeable; it has to be diverted from its usual use for its arbitrariness to appear. Stewart adds that "there is nothing that is so nonsensical as

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[492] W. J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p.91.

[493] S.Stewart, *Nonsense: Aspects of Intertextuality in Folklore and Literature*, p.190.

the dictionary, the telephone book, or the encyclopaedia – all of them texts that arrange the world within the hermetic surface of an arbitrary convention, a convention without the hierarchy or values of the everyday lifeworld."[494] *The alphabetical system on which the order of the dictionary is elaborated possesses a mnemonic quality and as Stewart notes* "the mnemonic […] bears an intrinsic resemblance to nonsense."[495] *Learning by heart a series of words put one after the other without any form of system and without relying on the sense they could make as a text is an extremely difficult operation in term of memory. A list of words classified according to the alphabetical logic is easier to memorise because it relies on a systematic pattern. In oral culture the diffusion of knowledge was based on fixed ritual formulas which possessed mnemonic qualities in order to be remembered. The production of a constructed non-sense or constructed glossolalia seems to rely on a pre-defined system in order to become reproducible within the performance. It is the knowledge of the system which allows the livegaphy to happen during the performance. In* **The Spell of the Chestnut Blossom Smell**, *even the sequence in which the glasses were emptied corresponded to a pattern of numbers. I was counting in my head so that I knew which glass was to be emptied next and in which way. The livegraphy produced by the pouring of the milk out of its vessel, it being the glasses or my mouth, relied on a personal mnemonic code which established the rhythm and allowed the chaos of the image in process to create itself. The repetition of the milk spilling out of the glass paralleled the repetition of the "sp-" words spat out of my mouth and spreading along the wall: each time a different action with the same outcome: the emptying of the glass; always the same action with a different outcome: never the same "sp-" word. It is these patterns of constructed non-sense reproduced live that produce a nonsensical délire, product of the combination of livegraphies.*

The repetitive pattern is enhanced in the performance **SOB.** *This performance weaves a concrete bond between the effusion of corporal fluids and of sounds or letters which compose our verbal language. Four glasses of water are each in their turn impregnated with a fluid either my saliva, a tear, some blood or my breath. Four opaque glasses hold pasta letters which are found in alphabet soup. Each effusion of a fluid in water corresponds to the ingurgitation of letters which are straightaway spat out onto big black panels laid on the ground. The composition formed is read outloud*

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[494] Ibid., p.191.
[495] Ibid., p.187.

with a microphone. The action is repeated for each of the four glasses. Whilst I am performing these actions a soundtrack is diffusing a logorrhoea of English and French words whose sonorities merge into one another creating an uninterrupted "soundscape" throughout the performance. The nonsensical logorrhoea is created through different layers which are all relying on pre-existing systems: common words and the alphabet letters. The soundtrack is blurring the common sense of the words selected creating both a litany emphasising the sound pattern more than anything else and unexpected words born out of the sound chain resulting from the words merging into one another. The fact that there are no defined gaps or breaks between each word uttered, the unities supposed to make sense are left for the audience to define or not. It is more of the sound of words rather than the sense of words which is imposed on them. This abstract aural logorrhoea is enhanced by my spitting out concrete letters which spread out in a glossolalic text on the black panels. The sounds of the soundtrack which are the sounds of common words are represented by letters in order to be written and read. My mouth should produce these series of sounds organised into words making sense, but it only produces a flow of letters which are expelled in an arbitrary and unorganised order. The fact that my mouth spits out letters allows me to read them and produce a different series of sounds which results in an incomprehensible glossolalic text. It is as if the pre-recorded, or pre-written, series of words merging into the soundtrack, gets un-written live in my mouth in order to be instinctively and impulsively written anew by my body spitting out the letters of the writing system allowing them to break free from their imposed linearity. The mouth rather than only sounding the letters gets to write them out first. The live actions of the body are producing a livegraphy in letting language ooze out of it through the effusion of fluids which triggers its immediate parallel in the effusion of letters. These are writing the nonsensical and sensuous language of the body translating the fluids into a readable, though nonsensical, system. The alphabet letters are used to construct and reproduce the nonsensical délire of the body. This livegraphy produces the leakage of language. As the body leaks fluids, language leaks the glossolalic délire of the body speaking itself which is underlying every meaningful utterance. The abstraction of words belonging to logos are on the verge of falling back into sounds, a further abstraction, whilst body fluids are finding a sonic expression within the sensuous glossolalic effusion which comes out as material letters. Both sounds and letters which are organised within logos usually participate in making sense are now let loose from

the boundaries and scattered, disrupting the system in order to produce a sensuous glossopoeia which reveals how the hegemony of logos can easily be shaken.

● *Jérôme Bel* : **Livegraphy of** *dé-lire*

In Jérôme Bel's performance entitled *Jérôme Bel* part of the livegraphy consists in the performers writing concretely either with a chalk or with red lipstick. To begin with, either they simply present themselves as performers, writing on the black wall their names, heights, weights, ages, the amount of money in their bank accounts and phone numbers, or they write a name which signifies the action which they will perform rather than identifying them as a "character". Thus Gisèle Tremey writes "Thomas Edison" since she illuminates the whole performance with the light of a single bulb and Yseult Roch writes "Stravinsky Igor" because she hums the entire *Sacre du printemps* throughout the piece. These functions participate in the livegraphy since live visible performers embody some elements which can be regarded as essential to a dance piece: light and music. These functions having been assigned, the other two performers go on "writing" the performance. Having initially used the black wall and the chalk to present themselves in a way which corresponds to who they actually are in real life, they turn to their skin as material to write on and mark with various tracings. In this piece, the body is shown as a malleable entity and the skin as a flexible and extensible material with which the performers can play. Also writing is perceived as a changeable and mutable medium. Their bodies are marked by red lipstick with traces and letters which can either be hidden by their positions or movements or which can be self-erased. The body can be made to change shape and the letters can be made to form different words and change meanings: "Christian Dior" becomes "chair" as Claire Haenni rubs off some of the bright red greasy letters on her leg with her palm. If the body is imprinted, marked or defined by writing or even just by the red traces and the red crosses, which according to Lepecki become "points of entrance for interpretation",[496] it is this same body which "un-writes" these imprints. A strong parallel is created between the erasing of some letters and the distortion of the body, both writing and flesh being brought to *délire* which the audience is made to momentarily "*dé-lire*", "dys-read", to then read anew. Lepecki

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[496] André Lepecki, "Skin, Body, and Presence in Contemporary European Choreography", *The Drama Review*, 43.4, (1999), 129-140 (p.131)

remarks that "in this abrupt silencing of language, in a piece that uses language just as vividly as it uses bodies, lies all the performative force of this dance piece."[497] Everything is in constant motion. The bodies, the writing, the humming and the lighting keep moving and changing as the livegraphy is progressing. Towards the end of the performance, and just as the body has erased and changed the writing imposed on its malleable flesh, it is with the help of body fluids that the writing on the stable black wall will be partially erased. Frédérique Seguette and Claire Haenni spit and urinate on the floor. Lepecki explains that "this act not only indexes the inner workings of the visceral body – this act also has a function. It will be used to indicate how the body is the primary agent for the transformation of language."[498] Using their spit, urine and sweat they "un-write" the names written at the beginning until the remaining letters form a new sentence : ERIC CHANTE STING. It triggers a totally new action : Eric appears on stage and starts singing a song by Sting. Lepecki explains that

> [i]f language, name, history, property, titles can be erased, rearranged, played with, and if in this playing rewriting can invoke a new performance, a new body, a performative, a new beginning, a new song, this happens thanks to erasing and a rewriting activated by what the dancers' visceral body produces. Erasing, rewriting, recalling, all operations that happen after the force of names that structured the whole piece is undone by the inassimilable excess the body produces.[499]

The body is triggering a constant "*dé-lire*" by the production of its own *délire* which participates fully in the process of livegraphy.

● **The body that leaks**

The body seems to be the instance capable of disrupting the order imposed by the organisation of language within logos. It is the body which allows language to leak, it is the entity of the body which constantly leaks out of its physical boundaries. It is the physical apparatus of the body which produces glossolalia, the oral phenomenon which cannot be seized within the order established by the writing system, or if it is entrapped in it, ceases to be glossolalia to become something else. The threat to the organisation of logos seems potentially to come from the body. Logos not only refers

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[497] Ibid., p.134.
[498] A. Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance*, p.56.
[499] Ibid., p.56-57.

to the linguistic organisation of language, but this passage from the semiotic to the symbolic is determining for the construction and the definition of the self as well. With the aptitude to name and recognise the outside reality as an organised system regulated and dominated by logos comes the aptitude to define and identify the "I" within this reality. The language defined by logos allows an objictification of reality and it is through the process of naming that outside reality, human self, and sentiences become organised within a recognisable and sharable logic. With the passage from semiotic to symbolic order the body is separated from the self and becomes objictified as well. The body becomes subject to the linguistic organisation and regulation of logos. Michel de Certeau writes that "a body is itself defined, delimited, and articulated by what writes it."[500] Logos writes the body in the sense that it inscribes it in a system organised by a series of laws which derive their authority from the fact that they are written. Laws are part of the elaboration of the systems and organisation that are recognised as defining the outside reality. Written texts, formulas, and inscribed patterns are the references and the instances which define the order. De Certeau explains that

> [t]here is no law that is not inscribed on bodies. Every law has a hold on the body. The very idea of individual that can be isolated from the group was established along with the necessity, in penal justice, of having a body that could be marked by punishment, and in matrimonial law, of having a body that could be marked with a price in transaction among collectivities. From birth to mourning after death, law "takes hold of" bodies in order to make them its text. Through all sorts of initiations (in rituals, at school, etc.), it transforms them into tables of the law, into living tableaux of rules and customs, into actors in the drama organised by a social order.[501]

Laws are produced in writing and

> [t]hese writings carry out two complementary operations: through them, living beings are 'packed into a text' (in the sense that products are canned or packed), transformed into signifiers of rules (a sort of 'intextuation') and, on the other hand, the reason or *Logos* of a society 'becomes flesh' (an incarnation).[502]

The body becomes an instrument of the societal laws since it is used as a surface to be written and carved upon to then serve as its careful shaped embodiment. Thus, as

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[500] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall, (Berkeley, LA & London: Universitiy of California Press, 1988), p.139.
[501] Ibid., p.139.
[502] Ibid., p.140.

much as language seems to be regulated and disciplined by logos, it is said to "leak". It leaks a sonic and glossolalic *délire* which the structure of logos can never totally repress or eradicate. The same happens with the attempt to discipline the body inscribing it in a system of written laws which defines it with regard to the organised structure of the society in which it evolves. The body is made to represent the rules with which it has been disciplined, but it keeps on leaking. As language is susceptible to breaking out of its linguistic boundaries, the body leaks out of its physical boundaries. This is a way for the body to trespass the border imposed by the law; it is the constant underlying non-sense of the body which could pierce through at any given moment, just like non-sense is incessantly underlying sense within language. It is the movement of the senses that produces the leakage that trespasses the written law of logos. De Certeau notes that "the only force opposing this passion to be a sign is the cry, a deviation or an ecstasy, a revolt or flight of that which, within the body, escapes the law of the named."[503] It is the sentiences felt or produced by the body, such as pleasure or pain, that destroy language, as Scarry argued in *The Body in Pain*, making these sensations impossible to translate into words and be communicated. The laws defining order are inevitably producers of chaos, as the linguistic system defining sense is also a potential producer of non-sense. Non-sense circulates within the system of logos and the chaos of the senses circulates within the system of the body. The body is structured as an organism which means it organised and it follows the system defined by the workings of its organs. This is why Artaud talks about "a body without organs", which would be a body not subjected to the systematic organisation of the organs. Artaud's "body without organs" would be "fashioned of bone and blood alone".[504] Deleuze explains that

> [w]e come to the gradual realization that the BwO is not at all the opposite of the organs. The organs are not its enemies. The enemy is the organism. The BwO is opposed not to the organ but to that organization of the organs called the organism. It is true that Artaud wages a struggle against the organs, but at the same time what he is going after, what he has it in for, is the organism: *The body is the body. Alone it stands. And in no need of organs. Organism it never is. Organisms are the enemies of the body.* The BwO is not opposed to the organs: rather, the BwO and its "true organs," which must be

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[503] Ibid., p.149.
[504] G. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, note 8, p.106.

composed and positioned, are opposed to the organism, the organic organization of the organs.[505]

Reactively, the body without organs positions itself relative to its organisation within the law. It refuses to work by serving as representation of order according to the definition of the law. The body without organs un-writes itself from the writings which the law has imposed on it. By refusing the organism, it refuses the order imposed by the written laws. The body without organs is not only un-writing the laws, it is also destroying the organisation of logos. The body without organs can produce the cry that "escapes the law of the named". Deleuze talks about "the creation of breath-words (*mots-souffles*) and howl-words (*mots-cris*), in which all literal, syllabic, and phonetic values have been replaced by *values which are exclusively tonic* and not written."[506] The body without organs should be able to produce a "*language without articulation*"[507] which means that

> [r]ather than separating the consonants and rendering them pronounceable, one could say that the vowel, once reduced to the soft sign, renders the consonants indissociable from one another, by palatalizing them. It leaves them illegible and even unpronounceable, as it transforms them into so many actives howls in one continuous breath. These howls are welded together in breath, like the consonants in the sign which liquifies them, like fish in the ocean-mass, or like the bones in the blood of the body without organs.[508]

Just as language can un-write itself from logos by becoming an uninterrupted breath or an uninterrupted cry, the body can become this uninterrupted motion which transforms it into that malleable shape which incessantly un-writes and re-writes itself in an uninterrupted livegraphy.

● *Pezzo 0 (due)*

Maria Donata d'Urso's piece *Pezzo 0 (due)* exposes the non-sense of the body. I am in front of a body that is fragmented and distorted by the precise and refined work of lighting and shadows which fall on it within the movement of the performer. It is as if this body or parts of it were struggling to extract itself from a tight cocoon. My eyes are tricked, they do not know any longer how to discern the body

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[505] Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi, (London: The Athlone Press, 1987), p.158.
[506] G. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p.101.
[507] Ibid., p.102.
[508] Ibid., p.102.

that is moving in and out of light, in and out of shadow. Where is the head? Is this part an arm or a leg? Suddenly, I have the impression that this body might have some parts missing. My eyes are left uncertain of whether the entity they are looking at is a whole body or a maimed body. This body becomes non-sense. In this light and the space it creates, my eyes find it impossible to conceive or reconstruct it as the body they would like to see. It is a fragmented body softly, but steadily, struggling toward an exit, an escape, a birth. This body distorting itself is gradually surrounded by a sound, an insect sound, a sort of mumbling and grinding sound. This sound seems to be produced by the steadily struggling body; as the body seems to try to extract itself from a non-existent gauze, this sound seems to try to extract itself from the body. This nonsensical body produces this nonsensical sound. They are directly associated with one another through the recognition of sensuous similarities and the body is thus seen or understood as the producer of this strange mumbling whisper. In this situation the relation between signifier, signified and referent is such that they merge into one another. Signifier and referent tend to become the same and the signified remains the abstract "inexpressible" language of the inner body. These sounds are indeed sounds produced by the body during the performance, but they have been recorded, transformed and re-worked by computer to obtain a soundtrack that is "neither realistic or organic, nor completely electronic."[509] The sounds are produced by the body, but then reproduced for the performance as a new product since it has been computer processed. It has been estranged, though it is assimilated to a sound extracting itself from the performing body. The estranged body is producing estranged sounds: a constructed exposure of non-sense.

In this performance, Maria Donata d'Urso develops a livegraphy which allows the body to un-write itself from the written laws of logos which are meant to organise it. The body can then write itself anew in a "language without articulation". The body is not re-defined or re-organised, but on the contrary, it goes through motions of constant disorganisation. The eyes of the audience can never constitute it into one, into the body as it is supposed to be or even into an imagined maimed body. This performing body is defying every rule of its usual construction, structure or organisation. The constant disorganisation and the fight to break free from the invisible cocoon make the body produce a cry. The only text is the text produced by

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[509] www.lelabo.asso.fr/spectacles/pezzo_0_due.html [accessed September 2005], translation by L. Easton.

the body. This livegraphy gives back to the body the authority to write itself rather than to be written. The body writing itself is producing a nonsensical *délire*.

End of Part II

Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre performances tend to refuse the authority of the pre-existing text and un-write the laws of logos, but through this process they do not get rid of the notion of systems. They produce a nonsensical form of *délire* which is constructed by different layers of livegraphy. Even Artaud who tried to work towards the disappearance of systems could not totally eradicate them. In the theatre and performance space all is surface: all is surface to be written on with the voice, sounds, gestures, fluids, etc., which means that the emergence of what Deleuze calls "deep non-sense" is captured in a writing system which kills it. Each time "deep non-sense" surfaces it instantaneously disappears. The performance does not need to be the reproduction of pre-written system, but it writes itself as it is performed. Just as the body without organs "is not opposed to the organs: rather, […] its "true organs," which must be composed and positioned, are opposed to the organism, the organic organization of the organs",[510] Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre performances are not opposed to the notion of writing and text as such, but they are opposed to their function pre-defined within the system of logos. The nonsensical glossolalic body and text have to write themselves live. They have to remain in constant motion, in a constant state of disorganisation. However, it is only through the existence of a system that chaos can exist, just as non-sense will emerge from sense. Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre performances use the organisation of systems against themselves and produce thus a constructed nonsensical *délire*, either by overloading language with sense or by overloading the organisation with too many systems. This way they sometimes manage to make the body cry.

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[510] G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.158.

III.

7. The "Linguistics of Fluids"

In this chapter I consider the close and interdependent relation that language has with the body and how, contrarily to the commonly held opinion, some body art performances which involve the release of body fluids are strongly inscribing their work into a linguistic process. Usually, these practices are said to be focusing on the exposure of the body, rejecting not only mimesis, but also the concept of structured and organised verbal language, i.e. logos. One of the aims of body art is to re-inscribe the self into the flesh of the body and in this way to defy and reject the dichotomy between body and self imposed by the Cartesian mode of thinking. The notion of verbal language has often been associated with a sort of abstract entity which would then be related to the concept of identity, thus close to the notions of soul or self. In dissolving the distinction between body and self, body art artists potentially dissolve the distinction between body and language. I argue that the exposure of the raw and leaking body in their performances contributes to the development of a "linguistics of the fluids".

To begin with I mainly use both the Lacanian concept of the mirror stage and the Kristevan notion of "abjection" to explain the construction of the self both through the residual sensation of void and lack left by the separation from the maternal body and an entrance into the symbolic order, i.e. verbal language. In the Lacanian scheme, entrance into the symbolic order, which is marked by the acquisition of language, affirms a rejection of the state of a possible mixture of the child and maternal bodies and thus the establishment of stable borders which are mainly constituted by the borders of the physical body and the linguistic borders of a structured language. Contrary to their apparent immutability these borders are constantly endangered because they are permeable. Both body and language leak. It is this leakage that Kristeva explains as the abject which consists of both the rejection and then the integration of all the undefined, mixable, fluid and unorganised matter which is oozing out of the body. Although necessary in the process of the definition of the self, the abject constantly threatens to put the border of the symbolic order into a state of disequilibrium. This implies that the semiotic and the symbolic are entrapped in a permanent cycle of construction, destruction and reconstruction.

Rather than expressing the taking over of the semiotic, I argue that the performances considered here enact the potential destruction of language and the

process of its reconstruction into a different language, thus refusing the enclosure within the rigid borders of logos and an imposed unique sense. The concept of "event" developed by Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense* allows me to explain how the releasing of body fluids in a performance can be considered as an event and thus becomes invariably linked to its expression as language. I develop this idea with regard to Irigaray's essay "'The Mechanics' of the Fluids" in which she suggests that a form of language, which she relates to the fluids and to a female way of speaking, has been put aside and eradicated by the domination of a solidified language, i.e. logos. Some Live Art or not-dance performances in producing an event through the release of fluids and by exposing to the audience their visible traces as so many signs to be read, reveal a "linguistics of the fluids" which defies the solidified borders of meaning imposed by logos. Even if these events cannot escape their entering into language, they can defy a notion of "truth" or unique sense imposed by logos.

● *Bleu Provisoire*

In his performance *Bleu Provisoire* Yann Marussich makes the body cry. As the audience enters he is standing still, hands opened and eyes closed, wearing only white underwear. He will remain immobile for forty-five minutes, only his eyes will open. He is surrounded by four metallic bars close to his neck and hands which act as bearings should he drifts forward and lose his balance. On his left stands an articulated arm operating a small camera which will reproduce close-up shots of his body and skin on a vertical screen standing like a mirror to his right. He opens his eyes and there is a lingering calm. The atmosphere slowly fills in with a soundtrack mixing organic and electronic sounds. Suddenly, a *bleu* thick liquid comes out of one of his nostrils. It runs *bleu* along his lips and *bleu* along his chin dripping *bleu* along the rest of his body. It looks as if he had a *bleu* nose bleed. Impossible to know if it is blood or snot, it is just *bleu*. Next, he pisses *bleu*. The liquid runs quickly this time along his legs striping them *bleu*, leaving a *bleu* stain on his white underwear. Then, he dribbles *bleu* and his eyes cry *bleu*. He sweats *bleu*. The camera is moving along his body following the *bleu* liquid smearing Yann Marussich's skin. Its close-up shots reproduce his flesh with all of its pores tinted *bleu* on the screen next to him. Temporarily, the porosity of his flesh and thus of his body is made obvious by the colour *bleu*, this *bleu provisoire*, which is colouring all the fluids pouring out of his

body. The body concretely becomes this entity which leaks. The inside is pouring out *bleu*, increasing the effect of otherness provoked by any fluid effusion. The fact that the body leaks *bleu* has a double effect of making the bodily fluids even more present and abundant to the eye than if they were not coloured. At the same time, the different *bleu* fluids, mucus, urine, saliva or tears, are no longer just fluids oozing out of the boundaries of the body. The *bleu* makes them other, makes them like paint, or even more like ink. The *bleu* fluids are writing on the surface of the body, marking it. The skin becomes an immense blotting paper absorbing as many *bleu* marks as it has pores to sweat from. The main writing movement is happening inside, producing too much ink which is leaking out. The blotting skin of the immobile body is absorbing the traces of the overflowing inside. They are the incomplete traces of the complex writing in the ink of body fluids. The immobility of the body is emphasised by the close-up shots of the skin and the dripping *bleu* which appear on the screen creating a succession of flesh movements. The body is almost relegated to the status of a machine producing the *bleu* fluids which pour out without it even flinching. Only the close-up images of the movements of the thorax breathing and of the bubbling thickness of the *bleu* fluids emanating from this immobile entity operate as a reminder of the viscerality of this human machine composed of inner organs. At the end the projection of the *bleu* beating heart on the screen also appears correctly placed on Yann Marussich's torso. The tension between the inside and the outside is complete: the fluids have poured out of the body, but poured *bleu* and his beating heart has been exposed, but only as a *bleu* projection (*ab-jection)*. Yann Marussich talks about the colour *bleu* being used "to deviate from the idea of the red blood linked to man" and the process as being a "non-bloody skinning of the body."[511] A way to "write" the movements of the inside on the immobile surface of the outside.

A lot of Live Art performances use the notion of the body running out of itself and deal with the issue of physicality and perspective on the inside of the body: an exposure of the unseen, the private, the secret, the kept hidden or the kept silent. Either the body is shown as a sealed container which encloses an interiority or it is explored as a continuum between the inside and the outside; its orifices and skin not being considered as boundaries, but rather as a transitional space, since they are in constant contact with the inside and the outside. In her article "Working the Flesh: A

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[511]Yann Marussich, http://www.yannmarussich.ch/index.php?m1=2&p=7 [accessed July 2007].

Meditation in Nine Movements",[512] Amelia Jones distinguishes between the techniques used to reveal the inside of the body, depending on whether the body is considered as a sealed container or as a continuum. Part of her argument is constructed on Derrida's notion of "hymen" as being a place of fusion where "the difference between difference and nondifference [is abolished]."[513] Using this Derridean notion she coins the term "hymenal" which she uses to refer to performances that "move inwards but not to rupture the dividing line between inside and out, nor to insist on its differentiating function."[514] Performers working with the releasing of fluids use the body as a continuum, as an entity which is constantly in touch with the exterior and the interior and which can run out of itself. It implies both an awareness and an acknowledgement of its asperities. Fluids come out of the body: mucus, blood, urine, sweat, sperm, tears, saliva. All these fluids have the potential to appear outside the borders of the body without involving a rupture. The spreading of fluids marks the concrete reality of the body as a continuum.

Jones's influential theories and critical writings on body art put the emphasis on the body, its structure and its interior as a means used by artists, such as Vito Acconci, Hannah Wilke, Orlan, Ron Athey, to focus on the visceral and the physical, allowing them thus to move decisively away from the linguistic and representational aspects of performance. She displays how the body has been pushed to its limits, mishandled and distorted by performers whose purpose is to expose a new perspective on the malleability of its skin, its interior, its organs, on the potential of its fluids, on its transformability. The body becomes the artists' principal tool, the principal material out of which they create an ephemeral event that might leave traces or scars. Such work becomes a way for the artist to reaffirm a form of subjectivity and, at the same time, to inscribe it openly and consciously into their work, manipulating and exposing not only the flesh, but their own flesh, not only the inside, but their own inside and simultaneously using it as the main malleable object. The body is the object, but the body remains *theirs*. Body artists are re-questioning the position of the self in performance art and rendering the actual tension triggered by this question concretely within their work. According to Jones, body art "dissolves

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[512] In *LIVE: Art and Performance*, ed. by Adrian Heathfield, (London: Tate Publishing, 2004), p.132-143.

[513] J. Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. by Barbara Johnson, (London: Athlone Press, 1981), p.209.

[514] A. Jones, "Working the Flesh", *LIVE: Art and Performance*, p.140.

the opposition informing the Cartesian conception of the self […]",[515] which Descartes defined in the following words: "Accordingly this 'I', that is to say the Soul by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body and is even easier to know than the body; and would not stop being everything it is, even if the body were not to exist."[516] Body artists refuse the Cartesian abstraction and they re-inscribe the self into the flesh by offering the body as "an integral component (a material enactment) of the self".[517] They explore the notion of self within their concrete experiments with the palpable material offered by the physical body. The self, usually defined and constructed in relation to the boundaries which shape and contain it, these being bodily as well as linguistic structures, is challenged, rather than occulted, as the borders are expanded, distorted or dissolved. In searching for the limits, defying them by showing, using and decontextualizing the usually unseen, they blur the borders. The body's borders are either forced open, trespassed or revealed as being not so rigid or absolute, revealed as porous and subject to possible leakage. Verbal linguistics is replaced by a corporeal linguistics of internal fluids, that pour and run out, giving to the concept of self the possibility of being re-defined in an expanding environment which is constantly in movement, to be re-defined in a language that is not rigidified by the imperative of sense.

This conception that the construction of the self is not only dependent on the structure of language, but also on the body and its drives relies on notions of psychoanalysis developed mainly by Kristeva and based on Lacan's theory of the mirror stage. Although Kristeva considers the acquisition of language, i.e. the entrance into the symbolic order, as a fundamental element in the formation of subjectivity, Megan Becker-Leckrone notes that "[t]he dynamics she identifies in the genesis of subjectivity moves away from the father-centred structures Lacan and Freud rely on: the appropriation of the 'Name of the Father' in the acquisition of language, the Oedipus complex, castration, the phallus."[518] Kristeva allots a more important place to the relation with and the process of separation from the maternal body in the construction of subjectivity. Kristeva also develops the notion of 'semiotic'

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[515] A. Jones, *Body Art / Performing the Subject*, p.38.
[516] René Descartes, *A Discourse on the Method*, trans. by Ian Maclean, (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.29.
[517] A. Jones, *Body Art / Performing the Subject*, p.5.
[518] Megan Becker-Leckrone, *Julia Kristeva and Literary Theory*, (Hampshire & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p.27.

"which precedes and exceeds the workings of the mirror stage"[519] and which is for her "a pre-symbolic dimension to signification that is bodily and drive-motivated and that lacks the defining structure, coherence, and spatial fixity implied by Lacan's formulations."[520] It is an heterogeneous area that still continues to exist once the subject has moved into the symbolic. According to Lacan, the mirror stage is the moment when the child identifies its image in the mirror and is able to conceive its body as a corporeal unity and an organic structure. Lacan writes that

> [t]he fact that the total form of the body by which the subject anticipates in a mirage the maturation of his power is given to him only as *Gestalt*, that is to say, in an exteriority in which his form is certainly more constituent than constituted, but in which it appears to him above all in a contrasting size (*un relief de stature*) that fixes it and in a symmetry that inverts it, in contrast with the turbulent movements that the subject feels are animating him. Thus, this *Gestalt* […] by these two aspects of its appearance, symbolizes the mental permanence of the *I*, at the same time as it prefigures its alienating destination; […].[521]

And he describes the mirror stage as

> a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation – and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body–image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic – and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development.[522]

This stage, that seems to fix subjectivity inside the stable and limited container which is the individuated body, corresponds to the entrance into the symbolic which means the acquisition of language. It marks the acceptance of the inside/outside borders and with it the acceptance of the lack, i.e. the separation from the mother's body. Kristeva says that "[a] representative of the paternal function takes the place of the good maternal object that is wanting. There is language instead of the good breast."[523] The child is then, as Elizabeth Grosz explains,

> positioned as symbolic subject with reference to the (patriarchal) meaning of its anatomy: this is what Freud calls the 'oedipus

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[519] Ibid., p.28.
[520] Ibid., p.28.
[521] Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. by Alan Sheridan, (London: Tavistock, 1977), p.2.
[522] Ibid., p.4.
[523] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: A Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p.45.

complex' and Lacan defines as the 'Law of the Father'. The body's sexual specificity – or rather, the social meaning of its sexual organs – will position the subject either as having (for men) or being (for women) the phallus, and through its relation to the phallic signifier, positions it as a subject or object in the symbolic.[524]

Sara Beardsworth argues in *Julia Kristeva: Psychoanalysis and Modernity* that where Kristeva differs from Lacan is that according to her "long before the imaginary shows up, the primitive ego is in a struggle with the instability of the inside/outside border in relation to the mother's body, where the latter remains a vital necessity and is not parted from."[525] Kristeva's notion of abjection qualifies a "psychic differentiation that is necessary for the child's separation from the mother's body, a highly significant moment in the trail of individuation without which access to the life of signs is impossible."[526] Abjection marks this moment of separation which situates itself in the pre-symbolic and which, as Marie Smith explains, arises as "a reaction when the individual comes up against all the barriers and limits which in society and culture define separation from the archaic mother. The individual reacts with horror at the reminder of the forbidden realm of fusion, the maternal continent."[527] Abjection operates as a reminder that the dispersing impulses of the semiotic drives still have the potential to disturb the order and stability created by the symbolic, thus threatening the limits which allow the subject to define itself in spite of the heterogeneity of the drives. Abjection is neither subject nor object, but the "in-between, the ambiguous, the composite".[528] Becker-Leckrone explains that "'abjection' names not a thing but a potentiality, a gravitational field that summons the subject from its proper place to a no-man's land where the subject is not only 'beside himself' but also almost ceases to be."[529] The abject is necessary for the subject to exist, but it must expel it in order to access the symbolic order and obtain an identity. Kristeva says: "I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish *myself*. [...] During that course in which "I"

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[524] Elizabeth Grosz, "The Body of Signification", in *Abjection, Melancholia and Love: the Work of Julia Kristeva*, ed. by J. Fletcher and A. Benjamin, (London & NY: Routledge, 1991), p.85.

[525] Sara Beardsworth, *Julia Kristeva: Psychoanalysis and Modernity*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), p.82.

[526] Ibid., p.82.

[527] Marie Smith, *Julia Kristeva: Speaking the Unspeakable*, (London & Sterling: Pluto Press, 1998), p.33.

[528] J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: A Essay on Abjection*, p.4.

[529] M. Becker-Leckrone, *Julia Kristeva and Literary Theory*, p.33.

become, I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit."[530] The abject demonstrates "the impossibility of clear-cut borders"[531] and "an assertion that the subject may slide back into the impure chaos out of which it was formed."[532] Kristeva herself explains that "abjection is above all ambiguity. Because, while releasing a hold, it does not radically cut off the subject from what threatens it – on the contrary, abjection acknowledges it to be in perpetual danger."[533] Abjection is the refusal through "re-ject" (*ab-jactare*) to accept that the limits of the body are not impermeable. It is the reminder that the pulsating and chaotic realm of the semiotic *chora* can always surface and it is this drive that needs to be canalised and repressed by the abjection. Grosz explains that

> the objects generating abjection – food, faeces, urine, vomit, tears, spit – inscribe the body in those surfaces, hollows, crevices, orifices, which will later become erotogenic zones – mouth, eyes, anus, ears, genitals. All sexual organs and erotogenic zones, Lacan claims, are structured in the form of the *rim*, which is the space between two corporeal surfaces, an interface between the inside and the outside of the body. These corporeal sites provide a boundary or threshold between what is inside the body, and thus part of the subject, and what is outside the body, and thus an object for the subject.[534]

The body is thus no longer considered as an hermetic container, but rather as a continuum which then becomes permeable. The body constantly leaks and is constantly confronting the subject with the abject, threatening its equilibrium within the symbolic order. These confrontations "that threaten to obliterate meaning or that utterly resist making sense "throw" (*jeter*) one violently to a place of radical ambiguity, where the structural order of subjects and objects does not hold."[535] This place of dissolution of borders, of differences, and of individuation threatens not only the definition of subjectivity, but also the linguistic structure through which it defines itself. Kristeva believes that the power of the drives that generate abjection, "powers of horror", can be transformed into something productive. If the abject threatens to destroy the linguistic structure of language, it needs to find an expression through another form of language, or anyhow a language that can canalise it once it has been expelled. Beardsworth notes that

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[530] J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: A Essay on Abjection*, p.3.
[531] E. Grosz, "The Body of Signification", p.89.
[532] Ibid., p.90.
[533] J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: A Essay on Abjection*, p.9.
[534] E. Grosz, "The Body of Signification", p.88.
[535] M. Becker-Leckrone, *Julia Kristeva and Literary Theory*, p.33.

for Kristeva, the phobic object is a signal of the descent into semiotic processes, and this is the dimension to which art and literature can give symbolic form. This is why Kristeva calls the "subject" of abjection, whose symptom is the rejection and reconstruction of languages, eminently productive of culture.[536]

In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva focuses mainly on how different writers have found a way to express and use the abject in literature. Kristeva might as well also be writing about performance art. The approach consisting in concretely using the abject in the production of languages which would be other becomes more direct with performance art. By considering their body as a continuum and re-inscribing the self within corporeality the live performers discussed here, like Marussich, also confront the abject. They use the abject which is emanating and being expelled out of the body both to reject language and its imposition on the definition of subjectivity and to reconstruct potential "languages". These allow the expression of the semiotic *chora* and the frailty of the stability of the self, through a linguistics of corporeal fluids and flesh.

● The abject as language

> *Franko B told me with his English words spread on the song of his Italian accent: "I don't want to push my body to its limits, I want to push language to its limits."[537]*

In many of his past performances, Franko B bled in silence. In his performance *I Miss You* he walked up and down a white catwalk, his entire naked body painted in white, dark red blood running from both his arms and dripping along the white line. The audience gathered on both sides. As I followed the comings and goings of Franko B my glance could catch people's faces in front of me. I could read the fascination, the fear, the disgust or the disinterest in some facial expressions. When he presented this performance in the Turbine Hall of Tate Modern during Live Culture in March 2003, everyone remained silent. The silence remained in this huge space a few minutes after Franko B left the catwalk and had disappeared. People were just looking at the traces of blood shining on the white material. Franko B literally let part of his body run out of itself. Part of his interiority ran loose. Deep non-

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[536] S. Beardsworth, *Julia Kristeva: Psychoanalysis and Modernity*, p.90.
[537] Phone interview with Franko B. (2004)

sense surfaced. He pushes language over the borders, letting the silent language of fluid flow on his skin and imprint itself on the white canvas.

Franko B who uses his body as his main tool, exposing it and letting it bleed describes his work with the following words:

> My work focuses on the visceral, where the body is a canvas and a mediated site for representation for the sacred, the beautiful, the untouchable, the unspeakable, and for the pain, the love, the hate, the loss, the power and fears of the human condition. My performance practice reduces the body to its most carnal, bloody, raw, exposed, existential and essential state.[538]

The critical focus around his work tends to reflect the artist's own emphasis on the visceral and on the physicality of his practice. According to Lois Keidan:

> Franko B's performance work deals with the vulnerability of the human body and the beauty that is bound up with its inner frailty.[539]

> Franko B's work, drawing on the taboo of his own blood and carnality and investigating the narrow boundary between the "lived" and the "performed" experience is at the centre of the dangerous and high-risk possibilities offered by Live Art practice.[540]

For Francesca Miglietti:

> And blood is the element that Franko B chooses for his performances, his own blood, an act of inverting the internal/external relationship of the body, the expulsion of one's own liquids onto the "external façade", the external aspect of things; he chooses to put the more intimate and personal and hidden dimension of a being on show: one's own interior.[541]

This focus on the taboo of blood and the impact of its letting does not seem to reflect and develop the fact that Franko B is not only playing with the limits of his body. It needs also to be recognised that by doing so he is playing with the limits of language. Corporeal fluids are still widely considered as taboo and should remain hidden, usually provoking a reaction of disgust and rejection when revealed. Kristeva says in *Powers of Horror* that "[i]t is […] not lack of cleanness or health that causes abjection

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[538] Franko B's statement on the flyer for his performance at Colchester Arts Centre, February 2006.
[539] http://www.britishcouncil.org/arts-performance-in-profile-2006-franko-b.htm [accessed March 2006].
[540] Lois Keidan, "Blood on the Tracks. The Performance Work of Franko B", in *Franko B*, (London: Black Dog Publishing, 1998), p.6.
[541] Francesca Alfano Miglietti, *Extreme Bodies: The Use and Abuse of the Body in Art*, (Milan: Skira, 2003), p.30.

but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules."[542] Mary Douglas, whom Kristeva quotes, had herself stated that:

> [m]atter issuing from [the orifices of the body] is marginal stuff from the most obvious kind. Spittle, blood, milk, urine, faeces or tears by simply issuing forth have traversed the boundary of the body. […] The mistake is to treat bodily margins in isolation from all other margins.[543]

Kristeva explains that the dangers of pollution are more likely to appear in a structure whose borders are well defined and that they tend to be proportional to the level of prohibition. Human beings are subjected to these dangers rather than provoking them:

> [T]he danger of filth represents for the subject the risk to which the very symbolic order is permanently exposed, to the extent that it is a device of discriminations, of differences. But from where and from what does threat issue? From nothing else but an equally objective reason […] the frailty of the symbolic order itself. A threat issued from the prohibitions that found the inner and outer borders in which and through which the speaking subject is constituted – borders also determined by the phonological and semiotic differences that articulates the syntax of language.[544]

This implies that by considering the body as a continuum and blurring the margins between the inside and the outside, thus taking them as a transitional space rather than as borders, and by refusing to "insist on [their] differentiating function" it might constitute a threat for the speaking subject since the composition of language relies on differentiation established using borders. The appearance of bodily fluids is then seen as disturbing because, as they trespass the enclosing limits of their corporeal container, the body is suddenly revealed as a permeable entity. The consequence is that it potentially threatens the stability of the symbolic order whose construction relies the clear definition of borders. If the corporeal borders are revealed as unstable and permeable, it implies that the linguistic and syntactic borders which constitute verbal language are also potentially unstable and can be subjected to dissolution. A dissolution of the structure of the symbolic order implies a dissolution of the structure on which the construction of the subject depends. Therein lies the major threat.

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[542] J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: A Essay on Abjection*, p.4.

[543] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An analysis of concept pollution and taboo*, (London & NY: Routledge, 2004), p.150.

[544] J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, p.69.

Letting blood run out of his body Franko B is shaking the established order of the symbolic. He rejects in this way the constraint of verbal language. He uses the power of abjection to dissolve the common border and to allow during the time of the performance the semiotic to create and diffuse its heterogeneous and fluid language. Mary Richards in her article "Specular Suffering (Staging) the Bleeding Body" on the performances of Franko B and Bálint Szombathy explains that

> [b]y deliberately rupturing the body's border, the skin of the self, they compel our attention. In breaking the boundary they shatter their own, as well as our sense of wholeness. For although the skin's ability to contain and alter accordingly to internal and external circumstances makes it a transitory zone that is continually changing and adapting, it becomes a site of ambiguity and potential danger when it is broken. This vunerability and sense of exposure is vital to the communicative function of bleeding bodies on display, both for the individuals wounded and the audience that witness the disruption.[545]

Amelia Jones' use of the Derridean notion of "hymen" to expose the concept of continuum between the inside and outside of the body without necessarily involving any rupture can also be used to explain language as a possible continuum between the inside and the outside of the body. Although language, as logos, establishes the separation between inside / outside, it can also establish the body as a continuum since it moves, in the form of breath, inside out and outside in without rupture and differentiation. It happens sometimes that you cannot exactly recall if you have uttered some words out loud or not, and if you have not, it means that you have only pronounced them inside your head. Somehow the border between the inside and the outside becomes less perceptible. Whilst you speak you hear your words resonate inside your skull as well as coming out of your mouth and whilst listening, the actual passage of the words travelling from the outside to the inside is not so easy to perceive either. Language can be considered as a continuum within itself and not only as a container since, as Deleuze and Guattari remarked, language leaks.[546]

By refusing the dichotomy between the self and the body and by re-inscribing the self within the body, body art is at the same time moving away from the concept

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[545] Mary Richards, "Specular Suffering (Staging) the Bleeding Body", *PAJ*, 88, (2008), 108-119 (p.116).
[546] G.Deleuze and F. Guattari, "November 20, 1923: Postulates of Linguistics" in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi, (London: The Athlone Press, 1987).

of verbal language which is commonly associated with the abstractions of the intellect rather than with the concreteness of physicality. The Cartesian dichotomy between body and soul / body and self reappears frequently as a dichotomy between body and language. This dichotomy can be taken apart and language can be brought into the realm of physicality. In the first place, body art appears to be distancing itself from language as the predominant means to define the self. By focusing on their bodies, artists engage in a concrete exploration of the self within the blurring and the transformation of borders, and in doing so threaten the symbolic order through the release of corporeal fluids. It is my argument, however, that in re-inscribing the self within the body's flesh, they also re-inscribe it into language, because their corporeal fluids function here *as a language*. Through them the linguistic abstraction that language generally constitutes becomes palpable and material. If body art dissolves the Cartesian dichotomy defining the self by disrupting the bodily and linguistic boundaries, the language of words is scattered and dissolved within the oozing of the fluids, trespassing the borders and expanding from the inside to the outside. Language is not negated, but becomes rather another linguistics: a fluidic linguistics. Language becomes embodied. It becomes this nonsensical language of the corporeal emanations which defy the body's borders by surfacing from the inside into the outside, letting the self spread from the body and be re-defined (or remain undefined) by its potential of palpable non-sense.

In *The Logic of Sense*, in which Deleuze defines the notion of "deep non-sense" and "surface non-sense", he also defines two notions of temporality: Chronos and Aion.

> [O]n one hand, the always limited present, which measures the action of bodies as causes and the state of their mixtures in depths (Chronos) ; on the other, the essentially unlimited past and future, which gather incorporeal events, at the surface, as effects (Aion).[547]

Aion is the time of surface whereas Chronos is the time of depths. Deleuze explains that "[o]ne is cyclical, measures the movement of bodies and depends on the matter which limits and fills it out; the other is a pure straight line at the surface, incorporeal, unlimited, an empty form of time, independent of all matter."[548] Chronos is defined by Deleuze as "cyclical" and subject to "a physical eternal return as the return of the

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[547] G. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p.72.
[548] Ibid., p.73.

Same."[549] If Chronos is the time of the body, of mixture and of the semiotic, blood could be considered as Chronos. Blood runs cyclically in our veins. A performance like Franko B's *I Miss You* could be considered as the appearance of Chronos on the axis of Aion. The appearance of blood at the surface of the body is like deep non-sense surfacing, dripping and leaving a punctual mark on the axis of Aion: a bright red event. It is this event that provokes the "reconstruction of languages" which is a way of dealing with the appearance of the abject trespassing the border of the body. Kristeva says in *Power of Horror* that "[t]he sign represses the *chora* and its eternal return."[550] It means that the surfacing of Chronos on the axis of Aion forces it into language. Deleuze explains that

> [i]t is this new world of incorporeal effects or surface which makes language possible. […] It is this world which distinguishes language, prevents it from being confused with the sound-effects of bodies, and abstracts it from their oral-anal determinations. Pure events ground language because they wait for it as much as they wait for us, and have a pure, singular, impersonal, and pre-individual existence only inside the language which express them.[551]

As soon as the abject surfaces from the guts of the body it needs to be objectified through logos in order to be defined and removed from its state of mixture. Blood as an (abject) event becomes then linguistic. Deleuze insists on the fact that

> [e]vents make language possible. But making possible does not mean causing to begin. We always begin in the order of speech, but not in the order of language, in which everything must be given simultaneously and in a single blow. There is always someone who begins to speak. The one who begins to speak is the one who manifests; what one talks about is the detonatum; what one says are the signification. The event is not any of these things: it speaks no more that it is spoken of or said. Nevertheless, the event does belong to language, and haunts it so much that it does not exist outside of the propositions which express it. But the event is not the same as the proposition; what is expressed is not the same as the expression. It does not preexist it, but pre-inheres in it, thus giving it a foundation and a condition.[552]

Franko B produces an event which results from the releasing of blood from his body; this event is thus not only visceral, but also linguistic since "[t]he event results from bodies, their mixtures, their actions, and their passions. But it differs in nature from

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[549] Ibid., p.72.
[550] J. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror : A Essay on Abjection*, p.14.
[551] G. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p.189.
[552] Ibid., p.208.

that of which it is the result."[553] The dripping of the blood, the surfacing of Chronos on the horizontal axis of Aion, is no longer the visceral, but it is the event which is already triggering and haunting the birth of language. In this performance, Franko B is walking as if on a catwalk, moving from one point to the other, in tension between the past and the future. In his process, he leaves marks of the body's present as crystallizing drops of blood. This event, the semiotic non-sense of the present of the body, already moves into something other as soon as it happens since it calls on the "reconstruction of languages".[554]

● *Wet Cup*: **breaking silence through the "mechanics" of fluids**

Kira O'Reilly also bleeds in many of her performances, although she shows the rupture. The blood is released but, contrary to Franko B's performances *I Miss You* or *Oh, Lover Boy*, the intervention is made visible. She either cuts herself or she is cut live like in *Wet Cup*. Throughout this performance she sits immobile and in silence while actions are performed on her. Wet cups are pressed onto her back, torso and arms. Once they are all placed on her body, they are removed and replaced straight after an incision has been made in the middle of the red circle left by the suction of the cup on her flesh. Each cup is now filling with the blood that is dripping from her back, her torso and her arms in slightly different quantities. Then, the wet cups are removed again and put aside on a metallic trolley where all the instruments for the operation are kept. A gauze or some material which looks like blotting paper is applied on each still bleeding cut. It absorbs the blood that marks it in a distinctive stain for each wound. Each sheet is hung on a line one next to the other forming a range of palimpsests. Each stain of blood is left like the mark of an unknown language to be deciphered. O'Reilly uses her body as a tool to produce a form of writing. She is releasing blood to inscribe its flux on a sort of blotting paper; she is using it as ink, red ink which is writing its own fluidic language. In *Wet Cup* her body does not leak in silence, she breaks the silence by incising her body and letting the language of the fluid express itself.

[553] Ibid., p.209.
[554] S. Beardsworth, *Julia Kristeva: Psychoanalysis and Modernity*, p.90.

Luce Irigaray in her essay called "The 'Mechanics' of Fluids" complains about the "*historical lag about elaborating a 'theory' of fluids*".[555] In this essay she asserts the proper value of fluids which language and the perception of the "real" defined in function of the Phallus has ignored. She says that

> if we examine the properties of fluids, we note that this "real" may well include, and in large measure, *a physical reality* that continues to resist adequate symbolisation and/or that signifies the powerlessness of logic to incorporate in its writing all the characteristic features of nature. And it has often been found necessary to minimize certain of these features of nature, to envisage them, and it, only in light of an ideal status, so as to keep it/them from jamming the works of the theoretical machine.[556]

According to Irigaray, women do not recognise themselves in the static and "Ideal" subject elaborated by the dictation of the Phallus and the language which participates in its construction. For her, "[t]he issue is not one of elaboration a new theory of which woman would be the subject or the object, but of jamming the theoretical machinery itself, of suspending its pretension to the production of a truth and of a meaning that are excessively univocal."[557] She asks "what this primacy owes to a teleology of reabsorption of fluid in a solidified form."[558] It is this rigid structure, which defined both the structure of the subject and of logos according to Lacan, that Irigaray finds inadequate for the expression of both female subject and female expression. Elizabeth Grosz notes that for Irigaray

> the solidity sought by masculinity is the result of congealing a feminine fluidity. The fluid has no given form on its own, but it can of course be given a form: when placed within a constricted space, it takes on the shape of that space. Fluids have the capacity to mingle with other fluids without clear-cut boundaries or distinction […].[559]

As Irigaray says "that woman-thing speaks. But not 'like', not 'the *same*', not 'identical with itself' nor to any x, etc. Not a 'subject', unless transformed by phallocratism. It speaks 'fluid', […]."[560] And she adds that

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[555] Luce Irigaray, *This Sex which is not One*, trans. by Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke, (Ithaca & NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), p.106.
[556] Ibid., p.106-107.
[557] Ibid., p.78.
[558] Ibid., p.110.
[559] Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists*, (Sydney, Wellington, London & Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1989), p.118.
[560] L. Irigaray, *This Sex which is not One*, p.111.

> [w]oman never speaks the same way. What she emits is flowing, fluctuating. *Blurring*. And she is not listened to, unless proper meaning (meaning of the proper) is lost. Whence the resistances to that voice that overflows the 'subject'. Which the 'subject' then congeals, freezes, in its categories until it paralyzes the voice in its flow.[561]

The female fluid way of speaking makes the body leak and overflow the rigid notion of subject. This fluidic speech is blurring the boundaries of both the subject and of linguistic construction. The female way of expression has the mobility and physicality of the fluids and allows the dissolution of sense. It is this aspect which threatens the linguistic structures established in the symbolic order. This is why women cannot totally recognise themselves either in the notion of subject or in the concept of logos. They do within phallocracy, within the Law of Father. Irigaray wants to step out from the theory and the "Ideal" to come back to some of the more basic notions of the fluids which she herself associates with a potential object of desire "[s]ince this 'object' refers back most generally to a state that is theirs [...] Milk, luminous flow, acoustic waves, … not to mention the gasses inhaled, emitted, various perfumed, of urine, saliva, blood, even plasma, and so on."[562] In placing these fluids, when most of them belong to the realm of the abject, as objects of desire, Irigaray formulates their value in a potential construction of 'subject' and then recognition of the 'object' of desire. Fluids then become a possible element in the construction of a linguistics, a language which may have to lose "proper meaning" or even the "meaning of the proper", but which should be still regarded as a proper language.

According to Irigaray it is the yoke of sense which prevents women from expressing themselves in a language in which they would recognise themselves. It would be a language which would defy the borders established by sense; a language which express the permanent leakage of the body; a language that would not be afraid of overflowing the subject; a language that would allow the losing of oneself in physicality with no "proper" meaning; a language which would become the fluid "object" of desire. For Grosz it is to "speak with meanings that resonate, that are tactile and corporeal as well as conceptual, that reverberate in their plurality and polyvocity."[563] According to Irigaray women are dumb even if they speak because

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[561] Ibid., p.112.
[562] Ibid., p.113.
[563] E. Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists*, p.132.

they are not speaking a language in which they can define themselves. She harangues men telling them that

> [e]ven if [your daughters] chatter, proliferate pythically in works that only signify their aphasia, or the mimetic underside of your desire. And interpreting them where they exhibit only their muteness means subjecting them to a language that exiles them at an ever increasing distance from what perhaps they would have said to you, were already whispering to you. If only your ears were not so formless, so clogged with meaning(s), that they are closed to what does not in some way echo the already heard.[564]

This is why women are reduced to a form of silence: "Outside of this volume already circumscribed by the signification articulated in (the father's) discourse nothing is: *awoman. Zone of silence.*"[565] However, in this "zone of silence" language is already being composed. With this last sentence, Irigaray is confronted with the fact that verbal language, or at least a form of verbal language, is necessary to express the "mechanics of the fluids". She uses language as it is inscribed in the logos to explain her theory of the fluids and it is not her purpose to discard it. On the contrary, for her the fluid quality of a female way of communicating should be considered as an aspect of language, not as a new language which should overcome the common one. Just as the concrete borders of the physical body, the linguistic construction works as a sealed container which holds subject and object as stable entities, which seems to be the established condition for the human self to develop and evolve normally. She is not refuting the concept and the use of a *langue*, but she contests its unique use as an immutable container of sense and "truth".

Irigaray's ideas have been criticised and judged as essentialist by many feminists.[566] In choosing Irigaray's "'Mechanics' of the Fluids" as one of my

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[564] L. Irigaray, *This Sex which is not One*, p.112-113.

[565] Ibid., p.113.

[566] Negative criticism of Irigaray's work started early on, being initially linked to the fact that in 1979 the MLF split in two groups whose opinions diverged completely. On one side there was "Psych et Po" ("Psychanalyse et Politique"), which included Fouque, Irigaray and Cixous, who upheld the notion of feminine difference, and on the other the materialist feminists, such as Wittig, Delphy and Guillaumain, who defended equality directly in line with the thinking of Simone de Beauvoir. In her article "The Invention of French Feminism: An Essential Move", Christine Delphy writes that

> the most interesting feature of French Feminism is the way it deals with essentialism. Most French Feminists do not hold up essentialism as a 'Good Thing'. But they often promote it by saying it is not essentialism. A good deal of their time is taken up by 'defending' Irigaray against accusations of essentialism […]. Is it because they are convinced that Irigaray is not essentialist? They cannot be, as Irigaray makes no bones about it, and never tried to defend herself against something she does not see as an indictment. (*Yale French Studies*, 87,(1995), 190-221, p.213)

theoretical references, my purpose here is not to re-open the essentialist debate around her essay. Although the feminist issues around language and the construction of the female subject are also relevant to my topic,[567] I intend to focus mainly on the aspect of linguistic construction as a container in Irigaray's discourse, since I consider that her ideas concerning a language of fluids are relevant to some Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre performances.

• Body fluid as a linguistic event

In relation to these notions of physical and linguistic containers and releasing of body fluids as a possible language, we need to come back to Deleuze's definition of the "event" and Kristeva's idea of "reconstruction of languages" triggered through abjection. Deleuze says that

> the event does belong to language, and haunts it so much that it does not exist outside of the propositions which express it. But the event is not the same as the proposition; what is expressed is not the same as the expression. It does not preexist it, but pre-inheres in it, thus giving it a foundation and a condition.[568]

The event is then this moment of "in-between", not yet language but at the same time already language. If the event is considered to be the apparition of fluids on a corporeal surface, it emerges in the very instant when the frontiers constituted by the body are trespassed and the body is revealed as being more of a continuum than a

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In her essay *The Straight Mind*, Monique Wittig clearly denounced the concept of sexual difference as it "constitutes ontologically women as different others." (In *La Pensée straight*, p.72)

Many Anglo-American feminist critics acknowledge the value of the concepts developed both by Irigaray and Cixous but also point out their inherent dangers and paradoxes. In her section devoted to Luce Irigaray in *Sexual /Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*, Toril Moi comes to the conclusion that

> Irigaray's failure to consider the historical and economic specificity of patriarchal power, along with its ideological and material contradictions, forces her into providing exactly the kind of metaphysical definition of woman she declaredly wants to avoid. She thus comes to analyse 'woman' in idealist categories, just like the male philosophers she is denouncing. Her superb critique of patriarchal thought is partly undercut by her attempt to *name* the feminine. If, as I have previously argued, all efforts towards a definitions of 'woman' are destined to be essentialist, it looks like as if feminist theory might thrive better if it abandoned the minefield of femininity and femaleness for a while and approached the questions of oppression and emancipation from a different direction. (*Sexual /Textual Politics*, p.148)

Ann Rosalind Jones writes in "Writing the Body: Toward an Understanding of *l'Ecriture feminine*" that *fémininité* and *écriture féminine* are problematic as well as powerful concepts. They have been criticized as idealist and essentialist, bound up in the very system they claim to undermine; they have been attacked as theoretically fuzzy and as fatal to constructive political action. I think all these objections are worth making. (in *The New Feminist Criticism*, p.367)

[567] In the 70s many women found a mode of artistic expression in body art and performance art.

[568] G. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p.208.

container. The limits between the inside and the outside are blurred, which implies the possibility of their mixture. The releasing of body fluids at the corporeal surface threatens the notion of border which is essential in the acquisition of language within the symbolic order. This is exactly why the status of "event" is so ambiguous and so inextricably related to language itself. In this respect it can be associated with the notion of "abjection", which Julia Kristeva describes as a state of "ambiguity".[569] The body leaks and is constantly confronting the subject with the abject, threatening its equilibrium within the symbolic order. The abject threatens to destroy the linguistic structure of language, but it needs to find an expression through logos that can canalise it once it has been expelled. So, language is needed to express the pre-symbolic, which means that one implies the other. The symbolic is needed to canalise and define the semiotic. Just as the event "does not preexist [the expression], but pre-inheres in it, thus giving it a foundation and a condition", so does the abject. As the fluid pours out of its container, destabilising its limits, it is enclosed again inside the limits of linguistic structure. Deleuze explains that "[p]ure events ground language because they wait for it as much as they wait for us, and have a pure, singular, impersonal, and pre-individual existence only inside the language which express them."[570]

Performances working with the release of fluids on the surface express the moment of the event and its entering into language. They expose the body as being no longer just a container nor just a continuum, but as being both. They express the process in which the body is shown as a container becoming a continuum since it leaks, only to then resume its status as a container when the fluid is spreading on the surface which is already enclosed in another container which is language. The leakage is pushed out of one container into another one in a cyclical pattern. The language which Irigaray talks about in the "'Mechanics' of Fluids" consists of the moment when the fluid is not enclosed in any container; when the body is a continuum. In this sense, the leaking body and the spreading of fluids in some of these performances comes close to a form of language which allows fluidity. The fluids appearing at the surface of the body will eventually be enclosed again in a linguistic and stable container, but it is not imposed by the performer as such. This potential language becomes other and more fluid because it does not impose an

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[569] Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p.9.
[570] G. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, p.189.

immutable sense or an immutable "truth". Although re-inscription into the linguistic system seems almost unavoidable, these performances play with the borders of meaning allowing not only the mixture of fluids, but also the mixture of possible meanings. The fluidity and a sort of instability of sense remains since there is a strong will not to impose meaning. Kira O'Reilly's performance, *Wet Cup*, shows this process very clearly. Her body is presented as a container whose borders need to be cut open in order to release the inner fluid: the blood. Her blood has very little time to run and spread on her skin, it is almost immediately enclosed in a new container, the wet cup, in which it is gathered and sealed by new borders. Then, the blotting paper records its trace as an indecipherable writing, inscribing it directly in a potential linguistic form. Here again the only fluidity left to this other language is that it has lost "proper meaning". Yann Marussich and Franko B leave the fluids spread on their body thus making the enclosure by a new container, a new language, less obvious. The fluids are leaking on the skin, the fluids are writing on the skin just as ink imprints its trace on paper, only with these two performances the link to the linguistic enclosure of the running fluids is not given. In different ways, these three performances allow their audience to read the writing of the body fluids.

*In my performance **SOB** I also work with the idea that the exteriorisation of body fluids is immediately transformed or transcribed into language. The link between the two was exposed in a concrete manner as each fluid which was released into a glass of water was followed by my spitting pasta letters onto big black cardboard sheets. The fluid induced or even produced a written language. Each fluid produced its unique combination of letters. These palimpsests could be read, but had no "proper" linguistic meaning. A nonsensical glossolalic series of sounds mingled into the space as I read the letters from where they had fallen randomly on the black cardboard. The materiality of the fluids suddenly became readable. The action of spitting, of projecting something into the outside, became concretely the action of projecting the fluids into la langue, into the symbolic. Once outside they are immediately enclosed again into any new form of container, a new linguistic of the fluid with its own properties. In this performance my body refused to utter any other words than the chain of sounds, rather than the chain of sense, written within the "linguistics of the fluids".*

- **Vice-versa**

In her article "Bodies That Matter", Judith Butler asks the following question: "Can language simply refer to materiality, or is language also the very condition under which materiality is said to appear?"[571] This question can also be put referring to Deleuze's concept that the event is intricately linked to language and although the expression of the event is not the same as the event itself, it automatically generates language. Butler's question uses the same idea of language and materiality being bound together, but almost reverses the concept. She supposes that it is not the apparition of materiality which "gives a condition and a foundation" to language or the linguistic event, but rather that it is language as such which requires the appearance of materiality. This proposition means that, contrary to what Kristeva suggests, the semiotic would not be the pre-symbolic, but a post-symbolic. Since the manifestations of the semiotic always fall back into the enclosure by *la langue*, it seems that it cannot have a conceptual reality outside the symbolic. It means that it is the structure of language that gives form to materiality. In some aspects this whole concept of boundaries and definitions of the "informed" materiality rejoins both Kristeva's and Irigaray's explanations. For Kristeva, the realm of the semiotic is conceivable only when it is has been rejected or expelled, then named and enclosed into *la langue*. For Butler, the process would be reversed and it is the symbolic which allows the awareness and the conceptualisation of the semiotic. She goes on questioning this notion asking:

> If matter ceases to be matter once it becomes a concept, and if a concept of matter's exteriority to language is always something less than absolute, what is the status of this "outside"? Is it produced by philosophical discourse in order to effect the appearance of its own exhaustive and coherent systematicity?[572]

The semiotic would then entirely participate in the reality of the symbolic. Irigaray recognises this paradox within her writing about the position of women with regard to the use of language. In the "'Mechanics' of the Fluids" she clearly states that "[o]utside of this volume already circumscribed by the signification articulated in (the father's) discourse nothing is: *awoman. Zone of silence.*"[573] This statement implies

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[571] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, (New York & London: Routledge, 1993), p.31.
[572] Ibid., p.31.
[573] L. Irigaray, "'Mechanics' of the Fluids", p.113.

that logos defines everything, including the "outside" or the realm of materiality which is supposed to correspond to the so called "feminine". Butler explains that "[f]or both Derrida and Irigaray, it seems, what is excluded from this binary is also *produced* by it in the mode of exclusion and has no separable or fully independent existence as an absolute outside."[574] She adds that

> [w]hereas Kristeva insists upon this identification of the *chora* with the maternal body, Irigaray asks how the discourse that performs that conflation invariably produces an "outside" where the feminine which is *not* captured by the figure of the *chora* persists. Here we need to ask, how is this assignation of a feminine "outside" possible within language?[575]

If materiality is associated with the "feminine" and at the same time materiality is defined as a concept through the symbolic, the "feminine" becomes this abstract concept created through the symbolic as well. This is why Irigaray suggests that in a "zone of silence" the concept of "woman" and thus of gender does not exists. With her assertions on the fluids and their possible linguistics, she goes further than relegating women to a world of materiality, but rather suggests the possibility of a language refusing the enclosure of immutable sense imposed by the symbolic, i.e. the "Law of the Father". This does not mean that the verbal language is discarded, but it would mean that the language of the fluid refuses the fixity of a single meaning and possible "truth" which a linguistic structure generally implies. Thus the fluid permeates the rigid borders of the container and manages to wander from one to the other without needing to be fixed and stable. This philosophical concept not only allows envisaging and maybe even reconstructing the realm of materiality with a different perspective, but it also means that the verbal and linguistic construction can be reconsidered as a philosophical concept which can be manipulated by integrating fluidity and permeability. It is through this idea of "reconstruction of languages"[576] that Kristeva's notion of the abject and Irigaray's of the linguistics of the fluids rejoin each other. If materiality and the semiotic are conceptualised and created only through language, language needs them to put itself in danger and be forced to reinvent itself. This constant potential of destabilisation inspires the necessary creativity to counter-balance it. In this sense performances which release and expel fluids in silence, or rather non-verbal atmosphere, are neither rejecting language nor pretending to

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[574] J. Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p.39.
[575] Ibid., p.41-42.
[576] S. Beardsworth, *Julia Kristeva: Psychoanalysis and Modernity*, p.90.

access a form of pre-symbolic expression. They are presenting a linguistics of the fluids which refuses any static and fixed enclosure in a unique sense. There is a will to endanger language in order to allow its reinvention and maybe trip it over the border. Deleuze expresses it in the following words: "It is no longer the formal or superficial syntax that governs the equilibriums of language, but a syntax in the process of becoming, a creation of syntax that gives birth to a foreign language within language, a grammar of disequilibrium."[577] Such performances present materiality as a recognisable construction, but let it overrun the container and make it porous to different meanings.

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[577] Gilles Deleuze, "He Stuttered" in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. by D.W. Smith and M.A. Greco, (London & NY: Verso, 1998), p.112.

8. The Materiality of Voice

*My sister said to me one day as we were sitting close together in silence: **"Tu respires FORT!!!"***

Her exclamation can be translated in two ways:
Either "You breathe loudly!" or "You breathe intensely!"
In both cases, the intonation of her voice implied
"TOO loudly" or "TOO intensely".
Whether she meant one or the other there was, there is, something disturbing my sister by the fact that my breathing can be heard when in a silent atmosphere.

Allan S. Weiss states in his essay on Artaud called "K" that "[a]ll expression is informed by language and the body, bound by signs and libido"[578] and that "the pleasures of speech are not merely phatic, communicative, seductive, but also autoerotic".[579] Speech is held by voice which has a dichotomous status oscillating between abstraction and materiality. It is difficult to define whether voice belongs to language or to the body and although it belongs to both, it is more often associated with the immaterial and abstract concept of verbal language. Thus this association tends to occult the erotic and libidinal impulses carried by the voice within expression through speech. It is this quality of the voice which relates it to the body that produces it physically, and to its drives. The production of voice depends mainly on the projection of air out of the mouth; so, as breath is felt as being part of a person's intimacy, voice carries traces of this physical intimacy since it comes out of the body with the release of air. Just like breathing, voice makes the physicality of the body vibrate and acts as a reminder of its erotic quality. The body's drives, even when channeled within the symbolic, have the potential to (re-)surface at any moment. They are what give voice its texture and a kind of materiality which make voice more than just a vehicle for verbal expression. It is what Barthes calls "le grain de la voix",[580] which separates one voice from another and underlines each oral verbalisation with something more ample, physical and sensual than the sounds of words.

In this last chapter, after considering fluids as a form of linguistics, voice is envisaged as a possible extra body fluid which makes the bond between body and

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[578] Allan S. Weiss, "K", in *Antonin Artaud: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Edward Scheer, (London & NY: Routledge, 2003), p.155.
[579] Ibid., p.156.
[580] Roland Barthes, *Le gain de la voix : Entretiens 1962-1980*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1999).

language become even tighter. Although most of the time associated with the abstract notion of verbal language, voice is produced by the body which integrates into it parts of its materiality. Voice can be more easily separated from logos, becoming then only sounds or noises, than from the body which produces it, although it is not commonly associated with a fluid or with a physical production. It not only participates in the construction of logos, but also in its destruction and its reconstruction. In fact voice represents a constant threat to the structure of logos. As much as it is essential to its verbalisation, voice can potentially destroy logos by letting the impulses of the body take over, for example, by swallowing its structure within the power of a scream. This inner tension within voice itself parallels and reflects the constant tension which constitutes the relationship between body and language or between the semiotic and the symbolic. Although they seem to be engaged in an inextricable fight, it is useless trying to define which one has the advantage or to separate them because one cannot function without the other. The cyclical pattern of construction, destruction and reconstruction is part of the game that self plays with its self-imposed boundaries. There does not seem to any escape, only possibilities of "reconstructions".

According to this relationship that voice entertains with both language and body, I want to consider it as a dichotomous element which is involved in the construction and destruction of both language and the self. Voice is in fact closer to the notion of the abject than it might seem to be. It participates in the expulsion and projection of the self outside the body, but most of the time it does so by means of speech. What is expelled out of the body through voice is most of the time already enclosed in the borders of linguistic structure and thus voice is considered as being part of the linguistic construction of speech. Although voice does not consist of words and verbalisation, it is also the sound and the sounding of words. Voice does not belong to the linguistic system; it has an autonomy of its own. It is more related to sounds than to words and verbal meaning as such. Voice is above all sounds and the production of sounds depends on the vibration and the trembling of the body. Sounds are produced by the body entering in a state of trembling. Trembling is a state in which the borders are blurred. Voice, by inducing a state in which the borders are potentially blurred, allows the body to expel it. The drives transmitted by voice are immediately canalised within speech. The trembling and the possible state of mixture

both surface in the grain of the voice, its texture, its rhythm and its intonation. The physical emotions of the body not only appear in voice, but compose an integral part of it. This is how voice is double: it belongs to and is a constitutive part of the symbolic order since it is among the essential elements participating in the construction of verbal language, whilst simultaneously belonging to the semiotic, because it is produced by the body and is part of what the body expels into the outside. It transmits the drives and impulses of the body and does not necessarily express itself in words or speech. Voice can be sounds, noises and screams, and it starts to be expressed as such before the child enters the symbolic order and learns how to speak. Even when enclosed within the structure of logos, voice always threatens to trespass these borders. Voice has the potential to destroy linguistic structure. Voice is not only the vehicle for part of the construction of language, but it is also what is constantly threatening to destroy it. Voice can easily step out of control; voice reveals the body and its passions before the subject can even restrain it. Voice can make language stumble or shake. Voice can disrupt and destroy verbal language turning it into a scream. Voice is probably the element which most clearly lets the constant tension and struggle between the semiotic and the symbolic appear. The idea that the voice is able to destroy language as easily as it constructs it recalls to mind the work of Elaine Scarry, who suggests that pain destroys language. According to Scarry, pain destroys language because there are no words able to describe the exact sensation provoked by pain in the body. So, it is expressed through a cry, a scream or groans therefore requiring the creation of an artefact in order to attempt to verbalise the pain felt. I am not going to refute this theory which works perfectly with my argument about the reconstruction of languages, but I wish to suggest, rather, that it is not only pain that has the potential to destroy language, but that voice as such has this power. The destruction of language is inherent in voice as it incessantly expresses the different levels of the body's passions, from extreme pain to extreme pleasure.

• *A bras le corps*

> ***A bras le corps****: avec les bras et par le milieu du corps ; saisir quelqu'un par le milieu du corps*
>
> ***A bras le corps*** *: with the arms and by the middle of the body ; to grab someone by the middle of the body.*
>
> ***A bras le corps*** *: a dance piece by Dimitri Chamblas and Boris Charmatz.*

A bras le corps is a duet between Chamblas and Charmatz which takes place for the most part without music, and which takes place mainly in silence. *A bras le corps* is a duet between two dancers who grab each other with their arms and by the middle of the body. *A bras le corps* is a duet between two men whose bodies you hear falling. And they breathe. Their breathing becomes more and more audible as their bodies get exhausted in the movement, in the grabs, in the effort. As their sweat becomes visible, drops shining in the light as they are projected away from the skin, wet marks left on the black dance floor when the body that just fell rose up again, as their sweat becomes visible, their breath becomes heavier, it becomes palpable. It brushes against the walls of the nose and resonates in the mouth cavity getting in and coming out, getting louder and louder as the need for air increases, as the speed of its rhythm increases. Breath is this abstract fluid of air that not only gets inside the body but comes out again, invisible but warmer. Breath is this "corps étranger" (foreign body) that gets into the body, gets deep inside and comes out again incessantly. Breath defines the body as a continuum between the inside and the outside. Twice they held their breath standing still or on tiptoes. They gasped for air. They snorted. More and more the air became sound. Charmatz started to produce vocal sounds which resembled an attempt at wording, at speaking. The aborted attempt resumed in an onomatopoeia, the only word pronounced, "et…hop". "Hop" in French is an onomatopoeia used to encourage someone to get going or jump. Contrary to English, it does not have a meaning as such. "Hop" induced the synchronized movement of both their bodies lying on the floor that took an impulse on the "h", arched in the air on "o" and fell back down on "p". As breath is telling us about the body, "hop" is the sound that comes along with the movement that it triggers and describes.

"H-O-P"

They did not dance to music, they danced with breath. Breath kept them dancing, its sound paralleling the body's rhythm, breath becoming the sound of the body's exhaustion. Music was played three times during the piece: the first time in a black-out, the second time while they were both sitting on the side benches in the audience facing each other and the third time, towards the end, in dim light, as their bodies lay on the floor barely moving. Music made their bodies disappear either concretely in the black-out, or in the audience as they stepped out of the movement area, or finally making the audience realise that the body became less human, more distant, more of a "corps étranger" as the breathing sound was covered by the music. During the sections with music the audience was deprived of the link shared with the dancers' bodies which had established itself through the sound of their breathing. We were pulled in and pushed out again. Breath was the palpable but invisible continuum between their bodies and ours. Breath became the onomatopoeia "hop", which consists in a continuum between sound and language, at the very edge when non-sense starts making sense, and which in fact becomes perfect sense in another language: e.g. English.

● **Parole Soufflée**

Breath comes out of the body, comes out and gets in again. Breath is the incessant intake drawn inside and released into the outside from the body, without rupture and even without consciousness, inscribing the body tangibly as a continuum, a permeable entity. It is not considered as abject, although it has "traversed the boundary of the body". Most of the time it is invisible and almost inaudible. Breath comes in and out of the body though, just as fluids come out of it. The fact that it seems immaterial somehow makes its status different to that of body fluids. Although it is in direct contact with the interior of the body and is even transformed as it comes out again, its association to a body fluid and thus with the notion of abject is less obvious. Breathing needs to be heard or felt or even maybe smelt for it to be linked to physicality and to the interior of the body. It is only then that breathing becomes possibly disturbing or disgusting. It seems acceptable to hear breathing when it is intentional, like a sigh, or linked to a form of expression through voice, be it humming or speaking. So, breath should remain invisible and inaudible

unless it is enclosed in the container provided by expression through voice. In this way it prevents revealing the body as a continuum and it keeps the borders of each container sealed. Breath is one of the elements composing voice. It allows sounds to be produced. It makes parts of the body vibrate, creating sounds and eventually voice. It is through the projection of air into the outside that the body is able to produce and project voice into the outside. So, breath is intricately linked to voice, which is also mostly associated with an abstract element rather than a physical one. Breath is thus intricately linked to the verbalisation of language. Although breath as such can still be considered as a body fluid triggering abjection and having a role to play in the projection of the subject outside of the body, it is through voice that it participates in the entrance into the symbolic. Breath, like body fluids, has a relationship to the construction of verbal language. Since it produces voice, it might be more easily associated with logos. By constituting a perpetual movement of coming and going between the body and the outside, the parallel with verbal language seems more obvious as words get in (by this I mean more than just hearing them, but that we retain them, learn them and usually reproduce them) and get out of our body practically unchanged, just as breath does. This is an important difference with the other body fluids which come out of the body, but usually do not go back in again. The liquid and viscous materiality of the other fluids make their disposition to mixture more obvious and the threat to overflow any borders more concrete. This threat to the borders which articulate the structure and syntax of language can be associated with a form of logorrhoea or glossolalia thus freeing these sound types from the enclosure of logos. These variants of language or of expression are not supposed to be learnt or reproduced, so, in this sense, they tend to be expelled from the body as a scream and not to be integrated as a potential producer of a sense that might be reproduced. However logorrhoea or glossolalia do depend on voice and the production of sounds to be expelled from the body. Sound production depends on breath. So, breath participates in the production of this nonsensical aspect of language. Even though it can be associated with logos and with the abstraction of verbalisation, it is a body fluid which plays an integral part in the construction and the potential destruction of language. Just like any emission or effusion from the body it keeps language in constant risk of disequilibrium.

Derrida, in his essay "La parole soufflée",[581] plays with the different meaning of the verb "*souffler*" in French to reflect on how Artaud distrusted and despised speech and logos as expressed in *The Theatre and its Double*. Derrida explains that "Artaud attempted to forbid that his speech be spirited away [*soufflé*] from his body."[582] And by this he means

> Spirited [*soufflé*]: let us understand *stolen* by a possible commentator who would acknowledge speech in order to place it in an order, an order of essential truth or of a real structure, psychological or other. […] Artaud knew that all speech fallen from the body, […], immediately becomes stolen speech. Becomes a signification I do not possess because it is a signification.[583]

Artaud wants to defy the notion of order which is imposed by the structure of logos. When words are expressed they are straightaway recuperated and interpreted, just as words uttered are already a recuperation and a repetition of words heard before. No verbal language is unique: "As soon as I speak, the words I have found (as soon as they are words) no longer belong to me, are *originally* repeated […]."[584] These words are prompted [*soufflés*], inspired (breathed in)[585] by language already heard or read. Words are breathed into oneself and stolen again when breathed out. Speech depends on breath and speech is constantly "*soufflé*". The consequence of this "*parole souffée*" is that

> what is called the speaking subject is no longer the person himself, or the person alone who speaks. The speaking subject discovers his irreducible secondarity, his origin that is always already eluded; for the origin is always already eluded on the basis of an organised field of speech in which the speaking subject vainly seeks a place that is always missing.[586]

Artaud, through his attempts to destroy "the duality of the body and soul which supports, secretly of course, the duality of speech and existence, of text and body, etc.",[587] wants in his "theatre of cruelty" to re-inscribe the subject within the flesh. To achieve this there is only one good inspiration which is "the spirit-breath [*souffle*] of life, which will not take dictation because it does not read and because it precedes all

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[581] Jacques Derrida, "La parole soufflée", in *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass, (London & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).
[582] Ibid., p.175.
[583] Ibid., p.175.
[584] Ibid., p.177.
[585] In French "*inspirer*" means both "to inspire" and "to inhale, to breath in".
[586] J. Derrida, "La parole soufflée", p.178.
[587] Ibid., p.175.

text."[588] Derrida explains that "[i]f my speech is not my breath [*souffle*], if my letter is not my speech, this is so because my spirit was already no longer my body, my body no longer my gestures, my gestures no longer my life."[589] Artaud's first idea was to carve the flesh into a "bloody tattoo", but "the tattoo paralyzes gesture and silences the voice which also belongs to the flesh."[590] Artaud associates the cry with what he names the "Flesh". The cry is the expression of the subject inscribed in the flesh, in the body, through breath without being either stolen or prompted. Therefore Artaud privileges expression through onomatopoeia, sonority and intonation. Breathing, crying and emitting sounds of diverse intensity seem closer to the expression of the flesh because these emissions belong to "a still unorganized voice."[591] This "unorganized voice" which comes out of the "chora" expresses the impulses and drives that populate the semiotic. Such a voice sounds as if it is still impregnated with the internal flesh of the body from which it is expelled. This refusal to use words and speech that can be organised and ordered and thus "*soufflés*" results in the destruction of logos and the reconstruction of an embodied subject within the semiotic voice, within a "*parole soufflée*", i.e. breathed out.

[Soundtrack: My Sister on breathing]

"Mm… there is something very personal about the way someone breathes [she breathes in] *If you sit on the tube and there is someone next to you breathing really loudly* [she breathes in] *it's… I think it's something really intimate… and…* [she breathes in] [pause] *sometimes you just want no intimate things about other people* [she breathes in] *and…* [hesitation] *if you just breathe next to me so loudly* [she breathes in and swallows] *I feel too…* [she breathes in] *I- I know too much about your… your body…or your…*[she breathes in] *your inner… way of- of- of living* [pause] *because breathing is actually the- it's the way you live* [she breathes in] *and- and* [she breathes in] *if you breathe intensely I don't know if it means that you just live more intensely and* [she breathes in] [pause] *that's… that's… too intimate for me."*

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[588] Ibid., p.179.
[589] Ibid., p.179.
[590] Ibid., p.188
[591] Ibid., p.188.

• **Construction**

Voice participates in the construction of the subject, although it is not the subject, because it precedes its construction. In Jean-Luc Nancy's "Vox Clamans in Deserto" one of the "voices" says that "voice frays a path for the subject. But voice is not the subject's voice."[592] The subject's voice is usually recognisable through the use of verbal language. It is when the subject speaks that one can recognise its voice. Voice is autonomous from logos although it is the vehicle verbalising logos which then takes an active part in the subject's entrance into the symbolic order. Voice "belongs to language *in that* it is anterior to it, even exterior to it in a way. Voice is language's intimate precession, even a stranger to language itself."[593] So, voice becomes intricately linked with the subject when it is associated to verbal language. Voice is independent of logos and thus does not define the subject even if it is related to its construction. Before entering the system of logos, voice is just sounds and cries. Voice is responding, psychoanalytic theory suggests, to the emptiness left by weaning. Steven Connor notes that "voice is the auditory apparition of the breast, the sound that swells to fill the void opened by the breast's absence."[594] Kristeva says that "the voice will take over from the void" and adds that "in order to be vocal, the first sonorous emissions not only have their origin in the glottis, but are audible mark of a complex phenomenon of muscular and rhythmic contractions which are a rejection implicating the whole body."[595] Voice is rejected from the body and participates in the process of exultation which is necessary in the construction of the subject. Voice is first of all an expulsion from the body. It relates to the notion of the abject; the necessity that the body has to expel elements of itself into the outside in order to constitute the "I", which, as Kristeva explains, needs to be thrown up by the body. Voice participates in this expulsion. Nancy presents the idea is that the voice "would not be responding to the void, [...], but it would expose the void, would turn it toward the outside."[596] This point helps to dissociate voice from the subject. If the projection of the voice into the outside is an exposure of the void left by the lack of identification with the maternal entity, this suggests that outside the system of logos

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[592] Jean-Luc Nancy, "Vox Clamans in Deserto", in *The Birth to Presence*, trans. by Brian Holmes & others, (Stanford: Standford University Press, 1993), p.240.

[593] Ibid., p.235.

[594] Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*, (Oxford & NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.31.

[595] Julia Kristeva in "Vox Clamans in Deserto", p.238.

[596] J.-L. Nancy, "Vox Clamans in Deserto", p.239.

voice does not constitute the subject. Nancy writes that "being is not a subject, but that it is an open existence spanned by ejection, an existence ejected into the world. My voice is above all what projects me into the world."[597] And thus, since it is being projected outside the boundaries of the body container it needs to be enclosed again into the system of logos. Just like any expulsion of the abject, voice needs to be channeled into a system which defines and leads it. Projection of the voice beyond the body is one of the steps to be undertaken before entering the symbolic order. If firstly "voice frays a path to the subject",[598] it is then recuperated by the subject which uses it to verbalise language and to express the circumstances of its construction. Voice then becomes an event of language. Connor says that "voice is not something that I have, or even something that I, if only in part, am. Rather, it is something that I do. A voice is not a condition, nor yet an attribute, but an event. It is less something that exists than something which occurs."[599] If voice is considered to be an event, just as language is an event and since according to Deleuze the notion of "event" is bound to be expressed by language and thus be totally dependent on it, then perhaps voice and language might come to be regarded as mutually interdependent. Guy Rosolato writes that "if there is such an affinity between voice and speech it is because their development is indissociable."[600] The utterance of voice, its sound, can be related to the appearance of body fluids which also constitutes an event, being let loose from their container to be instantly recuperated by the linguistic container of language which anyway defines the event. In this sense the sounding of voice and its expulsion from the body gives it a status similar to that of the body fluids. The event as such is different to its expression into language, but invariably enters language since it depends upon it. If voice is an event and if the appearance of body fluids at the surface of the body is considered as an event as well, we might insist upon an association between voice and other body fluids. As events, they are both intricately bound to their insertion into the linguistic system, and they thus participate in the construction of language. At the same time, by considering voice as an extra body fluid, rather than as an abstract linguistic entity, our sense of its belonging to the realm of the abject and to the semiotic is strengthened. Voice becomes an element

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[597] Ibid., p.239.
[598] Ibid., p.240.
[599] S. Connor, *Dumbstruck*, p.4.
[600] « [...] si l'affinité entre voix et parole était si grande c'est que leur développement était indissociable. » Guy Rosolato, "La voix: entre corps et langage", *Revue française de psychanalyse*, vol.1, (1974), 74-94 (p.86). Translation by L. Easton.

which can potentially escape the boundaries of logos, just as it escapes the boundaries of the body to threaten the linguistic structure of language and the symbolic order. Voice is not only a production of the body, but also a rejection of the body, something that the body expels. Voice carries within itself the drives of the body which means that it represents a threat of destruction for the organisation of logos. The dichotomous status of voice is revealed in its power to carry the sense of logos or to destroy it.

● **Destruction**

As Rosolato suggests, voice situates itself "between body and language."[601] Voice seems to be the bridge between body and language, neither one nor the other, but inseparable from both. Whether it is directly related to verbal language or not, it is intricately linked to a form of expression. Régis Durand says that "[t]he voice is inextricably bound up with bodies: the body of language and the body of the speaker."[602] It is difficult to separate voice from the notion of language, from speech and words, for the very reason that it would otherwise then appear as a raw production of the body, similar to a fluid. Just like the notion of abject, voice entertains an ambiguous and dichotomous relationship to language in the sense that when it is not enclosed in the linguistic structure of language it becomes dangerous. Mladen Dolar explains that "music, in particular the voice, shouldn't stray from words, which endow it with sense; as soon as it departs from its textual anchorage, the voice becomes senseless and threatening, all the more so because of its seductive and intoxicating powers."[603] According to Dolar, there is a clear dichotomy between voice and logos. Logos forces voice to fit into a system which is not inherent to it. Voice is not words but the sounds of words. Voice as such has no sense, but it makes the sense constructed by the organisation of logos sound. Being produced by the body the voice contains the trace of its physicality, of its materiality, although it is projected outside of the body not as such but most of the time as verbal language. Connor

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[601] « […] la voix : entre corps et langage » G. Rosolato, "La voix: entre corps et langage", p.76. Translation by L. Easton.

[602] Régis Durand, "The Disposition of the Voice", in *Mimesis, Masochism and Mime: The Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought*, ed. by Timothy Murray, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000), p.302.

[603] Mladen Dolar, "The Object Voice", in *Gaze and Voice as Love Objects*, ed. by Renata Salecl and Slavoj Zizek, (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1996), p.17.

explains that the "voice is the agent of the articulated body, for it traverses and connects the different parts of me, lungs, trachea, larynx, palate, tongue, lips"[604] and it does so projecting the part of the inside outside usually directly through the bias of language. The materiality of voice is more difficult to perceive as the one of body fluids, because it relies on air to be vocalised and because it has this almost indissoluble link with verbal language and exists mostly through it. In fact, voice is a substance; voice is a fluid coming out of the body. Dolar says that it "presents carnality at its most insidious since it seems liberated from materiality, it is the subtlest and the most perfidious form of the flesh."[605] Hence voice, set free from the system of logos, is like a fluid and belongs to the realm of the abject. Durand notes that "[t]he voice has to do with flows and desires, not with meaning",[606] so the voice is first of all related to the impulses and drives of the body. Originally, for the child, vocal expression is related to bodily excitement. So, "voice speaks of the body: of its dualities (interior/exterior, front/back, eye/ear, etc.). It speaks of the unconscious drives and fantasies"[607] and this is why voice has a threatening aspect. Since like any effusion or emission from the body voice is considered as "the products of an underground operation, of a metabolism which, once they have fallen out, become objects distinct from the body, without its qualities of sensitivity, reactions and excitability, and which acquire a value which interests the desire of the other."[608] Consequently, voice becomes an object of desire, "object *a*". Rosolato speaks of "coulée sonore" (sound stream) which "*gives itself as object and cause of desire*".[609] It is this voice that the system of logos tries to channel, but cannot ever totally annihilate. The sound of voice is composed of the intonations, the pitch, the flow and rhythm which are most of the time the uncontrollable elements of voice, the elements which express something other than words and their meaning. It forms the musicality of the voice which allows it to be recognised or reproduced without having to understand or reproduce the words uttered. The voice is an entity of its own, other than words. It is this feature of voice which Dolar considers as dangerous and threatening. Since voice is autonomous from the linguistic structure, it can actually break free from it at any point. Simply the trembling and vibration of the voice within

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[604] S. Connor, *Dumbstruck*, p.34.
[605] M. Dolar, "The Object of Voice", p.21.
[606] R. Durand, "The Disposition of the Voice", p.302.
[607] Ibid., p.302.
[608] G. Rosolato, "La voix: entre corps et langage", p.78. Translation by Régis Durand.
[609] « […] *qui se donne comme objet et cause du désir* », ibid., p.93. Transation by L. Easton.

the linguistic expression already represent a threat to the structure; the threat of falling out of it. When voice falls out or frees itself from the linguistic container, through a series of sounds or a scream, it reveals its otherness. Freed from borders the vibrations and the impulses of the sounds allow a state of mixture, like shouting as Connor explains:

> when we shout, we tear. We tear apart distance; we disallow distance to the object of our anger, or of our ecstasy. When I shout, I am all voice, you are all voice, the space between us is nothing but a delirium tremens of voice. […] The cry makes me blind, swallowing up the world of visible distances and distinctions.[610]

Shouting allows the blurring of borders. This is a reason why a scream is perceived as something violent or aggressive because it imposes a mixture by blurring, or even by bursting out of, the border of the symbolic. It allows the subject to project itself outside of the physical borders and to mingle with the other and the outside; to mingle with the object of desire, the object *a*. Through shouting, voice suddenly destroys the linguistic borders of verbal language. Connor adds that "[a] cry is not pure sound, but rather pure utterance, which is to say, the force of speech without, or in excess of, its recognisable and regularising forms."[611] It destroys the borders which impose distance limits and prevent any mixture with or within the Other. Voice enclosed within logos becomes distanced from itself and thus becomes an object of desire, an object *a*. It becomes desire and phantasm because it could potentially fill the void left by the maternal body. Tension arises between desire of a new state of mixture and the refusal to acknowledge this very state of mixture by rejecting it. It is the linguistic structure that restrains voice from remaining at a stage where it is only mixture. Connor explains that "[t]he crying voice tries to get rid of this burden of voice, that, in extending myself into the world, can only ever hold me at distance from myself, hold me apart from the world."[612] By distancing voice from itself language becomes exposed to the danger of being destroyed by the same voice which needs to mix and become as one with the object of its desire. Voice strives to unify with itself which has been forced to become other or the other. Dolar explains this dichotomous status of the voice in Lacanian terms of "*jouissance*" and the "Law of the Father". Not only is it that "[t]o hear oneself speak – or just simply to hear oneself –

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[610] S. Connor, *Dumbstruck*, p.34.
[611] Ibid., p.33.
[612] Ibid., p.34.

can be seen as an elementary formula of narcissism that is needed to produce a minimal form of a self", but "isn't the voice the first manifestation of life and, thus, isn't hearing oneself, and recognizing one's voice, an experience that precedes the recognition in the mirror?"[613] So, the first step towards construction and recognition of the self is through hearing voice sounds. It is the raw sounds of a cry or of babbling, voice in its potential state of mixture, in its potential state of *jouissance* which "frays the path" for the voice of logos carrying the "Law of the Father". Dolar explains that

> the logos – in the largest sense of "what makes sense" – was opposed by the voice as an intrusion of otherness, *jouissance*, and femininity. But there is also another voice: the "voice of the Father," the voice that inherently sticks to logos itself, the voice that commands and binds, the voice of God.[614]

He adds that "the Law is stuck with the letter"[615] but at the same time "there is no Law without the voice. It seems that the voice, as a senseless remainder of the letter, is what endows the letter with authority, making it not just a signifier but an act."[616] Voice turns the verb into an event and becomes thus itself an event of language. Voice as an event of language embodies the link that turns the relationship between the semiotic and the symbolic into a vicious circle. One is always in need of the other and always threatened by the other. They are in a constant process of construction, destruction and reconstruction. Voice is the abstract embodiment of the tension between the feminine *jouissance* and the "voice" of the Father. The "voice" of the Father is invariably submitted to the modulations of the "lawless voice."[617] Traces of voice as a product of the body's drives are constantly present in speech and subtly underlie it, as Barthes describes when talking about the grain of the voice in *The Pleasure of the Text*: "it granulates, it crackles, it caresses, it grates, its cuts, it comes: that is bliss *[ça jouit]*."[618] It is the voice of *jouissance* which will dissolve the Law which will then be reconstructed by the voice of Law expressed through logos. Steven Connor explains the same idea in relation to the scream: "What the scream tears apart, it also holds together. The scream is the guarantee that, after the world

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[613] M. Dolar, "The Object of Voice", p.13.
[614] Ibid., p.25.
[615] Ibid., p.14.
[616] Ibid., p.27.
[617] Ibid., p.18.
[618] Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. by Richard Miller, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), p.67. My italics.

has been atomized, it will reassemble and re-semble itself."[619] Voice enters into a conflict with itself. Dolar notes that "we don't have the battle of 'logos' against voice, but *the voice against the voice*."[620] He suggests with a series of questions that these dichotomous voices are just in fact a tension within the same and only voice:

> Yet, is that inaudible voice pertaining to logos something entirely different from the anathemized voice bringing unbounded *jouissance* and decay? Is the *jouissance* that the Law persecutes as its radical alterity other than the aspect of *jouissance* pertaining to Law itself? Is the voice of the Father an altogether different species from the feminine voice? Does the voice of the persecutor differ from the persecuted voice? The secret is maybe that they are both the same; that they are not two voices, but only one object voice, which cleaves and bars the Other in an ineradicable "extimacy"[...].[621]

An object of desire with which the self can only mix when it is projected into the outside through the same voice.

• *I Want To Suck Your Bones: Rrhea Logo meets Real Corpo*[622]

> "[…] sound is to a significant degree conducted through other substances – notably bone and water."[623]

IWTSYB is a meeting between Rrhea Logo and Real Corpo; a meeting between words and experimental mouth sounds; an artistic collaboration between Leonore Easton and Boris Hoogeveen. IWTSYB explores the physical origin of the voice and how it is this permanent underlying feature which gives it an intimate and erotic quality. IWTSYB uses the potential of voice to produce words and sounds and it brings them to the point where they touch, rejoining each other. The voice of Real Corpo, expressed through experimental mouth sounds and their resonance into a sink, which works as an extension of Boris' body, is composed of raw sounds free from the structure of text and closer to the impulsive drives of the body. The verbal language of Rrhea Logo goes through several phases of deconstruction and reconstruction throughout the performance. There are instances when the voice of

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[619] S. Connor, *Dumbstruck*, p.34.
[620] M. Dolar, "The Object of Voice", p.27.
[621] Ibid., p.27.
[622] Leonore Easton / Boris Hoogeveen, *IWTSYB*, performed at QUORUM, Queen Mary University of London and at L'Oblò, Lausanne, in 2007. **See DVD**.
[623] Steven Connor, "Sound and the Pathos of the Air", April 2007, http://www.bbk.ac.uk/english/skc/pathos/ [accessed December 2007], p.1.

*Rrhea Logo trips and stumbles into the realm of sounds. Real Corpo steals words from Rrhea Logo to distort them and destroy them in what becomes a polyphony of voices and sounds, thus a raw noise which gets amplified until reduced to silence. Talking about polyphony Dolar says that "*when several voices sing at the same time and follow their own melodic lines, the text becomes unintelligible.*"[624] This is mainly how Real Corpo operates, although there are not several voices singing, there are several layers of the same voice producing text and of the same voice producing mouth sounds played on top of each other. Boris' sound system allows the creation of a repertory of layers recorded live which loop with one another. This superposition of the disembodied voices strongly marks a tension between the two and the process of destruction through the engulfment of words by the chaos of sounds which swallows it up. So, verbal language becomes sounds, rhythms, noise again. The process never stops there. Rrhea Logo never collapses with the destruction of her structure. On the contrary, she always comes out of it unhurt; her words intact. And it starts again as a cycle, but each time Rrhea Logo comes closer to accept Real Corpo's presence and influence and Real Corpo's sounds become slightly more articulate. She is trying to structure his tones. In some instances he almost talks with words, but it is to better destroy them again. It is after Real Corpo's scream and Rrhea Logo's autonomous decision at this moment to let herself be submerged by the lawless voice and produce a destructured logorrhea that the potential conflict seems to resolve itself in a meeting of the two voices. When Rrhea Logo re-emerges once again from the destructuration of her text, she goes this time towards Real Corpo and it is at this moment that the two voices can mingle with one another. Real Corpo beat-boxes into Rrhea Logo's mouth while she is saying Deleuze's definition of "*deep non-sense", "*[f]or it is in the mouth that we form our first sounds, and may at first apprehend sound as a sort of plastic tangibility: the burring of the lips, the sibilant puffs of air between teeth and tongue, the uvular gulps and gurgles. Sound and touch meet, mingle and part, in the mouth.*"[625] The proximity of the two mouths allow the microphones to pick up the materiality involved in the production of words and sounds. The abstract philosophical text is given back the physicality of the sounds which it talks about. As Connor says,*

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[624] S. Connor, "Sound and the Pathos of the Air", p.22.
[625] Steven Connor, "Edison's Teeth: Touching Hearing", www.bbk.ac.uk/english/skc/edsteeth/ [accessed February 2004], p.5.

> the microphone makes audible and expressive a whole range of organic vocal sounds which are edited out in ordinary listening; the liquidity of saliva, the hissing and tiny shudders of the breath, the clicking of the tongue and teeth, and the popping of the lips. Such a voice promises the odours, textures and warmth of another body.[626]

After this moment of physical contact and vocal mixture between Rrhea Logo and Real Corpo, the tension and distance is reduced. Rrhea Logo not only speaks into Real Corpo's mouth, but into the sink as well, the space in which words are dissolved back into sounds. The constant mobility of sound is signified by the constant flow of water running from the tap. The water pouring out of the tap parallels the voice pouring out of the body as an invisible fluid, as it is referred to throughout the performance. This concept is also reflected by the video loop projected onto the background showing drops of blood falling and dissolving in a glass of water which links even more strongly the voice to a body fluid. These drops of blood falling as heavy red volutes sometimes encircle Real Corpo and Rrhea Logo who together utter words on the edge of falling back into sounds, sounds on the edge of becoming words whilst on the very edge stands an almost palpable, visceral voice. Once they have met, Rrhea Logo accepts the sensuality of her own voice theorising it verbally and she leaves. Real Corpo is left to express and expel his own raw vocal sounds, but they cannot fill the lack. The resonance of his own voice is not enough to fill it. Rrhea Logo's voice reappears, but as a disembodied voice through the phone. The two voices appear as indissociable from one another and as Dolar concludes earlier "they are both the same". Voice is in constant tension with itself and in process of seducing itself towards its own destruction. Just as the semiotic and the symbolic cannot work without one another. The process of construction, destruction and then reconstruction works as a cycle which involves the incessant passage from one to the other. Voice is the invisible fluid which combines the two into an indissociable entity.

● **Presence(s) of disembodied voices**

Lehmann explains that "[o]wing to an illusion constitutive to European culture, the voice seems to be coming directly from the 'soul'. It is sensed as the quasi-unfiltered mental, psychic and spiritual charisma of the 'person'. The speaking person is the

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[626] S. Connor, *Dumbstruck*, p.38.

present person par excellence"[627] and he adds that traditionally "the vocal sound as an aura around the body, whose truth *is* its word, promised nothing less than the subjectively determined identity of the human being."[628] If body art tries to counter the Cartesian dichotomy between body and self re-inscribing the latter in the flesh, postdramatic theatre tries to re-inscribe voice within its bodily origin. Therefore, voice needs first to free itself from the ascendancy of logos which assimilates it to words and "truth". It needs to relate to its *physis* through the expression of raw physical sounds, like breath or scream. Interestingly, it seems that in order to find its materiality and to be re-inscribed in a physical and sensual rather than in a verbal and spiritual origin voice needs to be disembodied. Lehmann speaks about postdramatic theatre using the "dissemination of voices"[629] and electronic fragmentation. The voices become disembodied, with no soul, and can thus relate to multiple identities. So, if voice, although it participates in the its construction, is capable of destroying logos, it has the ability once disembodied to reconstruct bodies, and thus, presence(s).

When the voice is disembodied, its physical features and its sensuality suddenly become more apparent. It is when the voice is deprived of the actual presence of the speaker's body that it becomes less of an abstract and verbal entity. Disembodied voice reveals more of a sensual materiality bringing it closer to the physical body which produced it. Connor notes that "[t]he seductive capacities of voice have been highlighted by technologies of amplification, from the telephone to the microphone."[630] Not only can such technological devices isolate the voice from the body, but at the same time make audible those sounds which emphasise the sensual features and physical traces composing the erotic materiality of voice. He adds that "[t]hese sounds are not merely the signs or reminders of bodies in close proximity to our own; they appear to enact the voice's power to exude other sensory forms."[631] So, the disembodied voice allows the listener to focus on the fact that this voice has been produced by a body and even more emanates from the inside of this body, i.e. the mouth. The voice as such not only is an object of desire, but once disembodied it also becomes the element representing the desired body of the other starting by the

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[627] H.-T. Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p.148.
[628] Ibid., p.149.
[629] Ibid., p.148.
[630] S. Connor, *Dumbstruck*, p.38.
[631] Ibid., p.38.

mouth which modulates it and which has a strong erotic charge. It means that the disembodied voice is never rid of a body since its listener will instantly re-embody it, be it in the known body to which the voice belongs or in a new and unknown desired body from which this voice could come.

Connor suggests that

> [v]oices are produced by bodies: but can also themselves produce bodies. The vocalic body is the idea […] of a surrogate or secondary body, a projection of a new way of having or being a body, formed and sustained out of the autonomous operation of the voice.[632]

It implies that a disembodied voice can never be totally separated from the notion of a body which produces it, but once heard without the actual presence of the body which produced it in the first place, it allows the body's possible reconstruction or creation anew. Connor adds that "[t]he voice goes out from the body as the body's twin – as a body double"[633] and that according to him "there is no disembodied voice – no voice that does not have somebody, something of someone's body in it."[634] So, voice even when separated from the physical entity, automatically reproduces it. This concept rejoins Butler's suggestion that the semiotic depends on the symbolic to exist rather than the opposite. Thus it would be language that produces materiality, just like voices would produce or reproduce bodies. Here again, the two notions cannot function without each other and are interdependent. Voices are produced by bodies which project them into the outside as separate and immaterial entities. These voices are impregnated with the body's physicality and materiality and they function as a representation of a potential envelope to which they belong in the first place. Therefore voice entertains a dichotomous relationship both with logos and body: it is an essential element in the construction of logos, but, at the same time, it has the potential to destroy it. Voice is produced by the body, but it also has the potential to reproduce or maybe even recreate a body just through the physicality of its sound. In referring to postdramatic theatre, Lehmann suggests that "[t]he electronically purloined voice puts an end to the privilege of identity. If the voice was classically defined as the most important instrument of the player, it is now a matter of the whole

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[632] S. Connor, *Dumbstruck*, p.35.
[633] Steven Connor, "Phonophobia: The Dumb Devil of Stammering",
http://www.bbk.ac.uk/english/skc/phonophobia/ [accessed December 2007], p.1.
[634] Ibid., p.1.

body 'becoming voice'."[635] It seems that it is invariably the case since the voice is projected out of the body "as its twin" and cannot remain disembodied without being at one point re-embodied into the fantasised body, an object of desire, which it necessarily represents and thus reproduces. Although voice seems to have the power to construct and destroy logos, it can only create or reconstruct bodies, but not destroy them, after having been separated from them via an external instance.

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[635] H.-T. Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, p.149.

End of Part III

Dolar says that "[t]he voice is the flesh of the soul, its ineradicable materiality, by which the soul can never be rid of the body."[636] Voice seems to be the medium that dissolves the dichotomy between body and soul, thus body and self. Voice participates in the construction of the self and is at the same time produced by the body, thus impregnated by its physicality. Through voice the self is directly inscribed in the body. Even if voice expels the self outside of the body's physical boundaries so that it can be defined using the borders of logos, voice will always re-insert the self back into the physical enclosure of a body, either into the one from which it has been expelled or into another fantasised one. For if the soul can never be rid of the body, neither can voice. In wanting to produce a "still unorganised voice" Artaud was aiming to create his concept of "body without organs", a body without organ-isation. If voice can reconstruct or reproduce bodies an "unorganised voice" would potentially reproduce an "unorganised body". This is just what some Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre performances are trying to do: produce an "unorganised body".

Such performances are producing an "unorganised body" when they present the body as a porous continuum which leaks, allows mixture and blurs borders. If these artists have re-inscribed the notion of self within their own flesh, it is not only to reaffirm the value of subjectivity in their work and to expose the part the body has to play in the construction of the self, but I would suggest it is also primarily to dissolve it within their disorganisation of the body. I argue that they are attempting to produce a fluid self by making the body leak and creating a "linguistics of the fluids". Coming back to what Derrida explains about the idea of "*parole soufflée*", the self or subject never finds its place in speech, only a place of secondarity, a place that has been "*soufflée*" to it, imposed by an already existing organisation. This is also what Irigaray deplores in "The 'Mechanics' of the Fluids" when she says that women cannot entirely recognise themselves and identify themselves with a language which imposes solidified notions of "truth" and "Ideal". By exposing the body as porous and leaking and as producing a form of language which has fluid borders porous to different meanings, Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre performers are also exposing a raw and porous self which is subjected to possible mixtures, dissolution and thus reconstruction. The "unorganised body" engulfs the self in a process of

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[636] Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More*, (Cambridge, London: MIT Press, 2006), p.71.

dissolution and allows its reconstruction to be mobile and freed from an univocal sense or an univocal self. Its reconstruction within a "linguistics of the fluids" allows the reconstruction of fluid *selves*. The self is no longer defined by rigid and impermeable borders implying that it is no longer one and immutable, but that it can be multiple, mixable and fluid, constantly re-defined and reconstructed anew.

Conclusion

As this thesis comes to an end, I should like to review the main elements developed in the three different parts, before drawing a conclusion from the connections I have traced between the performances considered here. These performances all consist of acts of production. They produce a different type of language. By exposing the process in which a new form of language is created, they reveal the "madeness" of any language. Language is an arbitrary construction, so just as it is constructed, so can it be destroyed and constructed anew. Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre reconstruct a language which does not necessarily depend on words, but which relies more on sensuous perception. This means that the mimetic relation is no longer established between the signified and the referent, but rather between the signified and the signifier and the actual process of the performance creates the referent. I used the neologism "livegraphy" to refer to this process which exposes the (re)construction of another language. Although Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre tend to refuse the authority of pre-existing texts and most of the time un-write the laws of logos, nevertheless they produce a form of writing as their performance unfolds. The performance writes itself as it is performed, here again not necessarily with words or with known, recognisable words. It is rather with a combination of layers (sound, voice, gestures, images, fluids, etc.) that the writing takes place as an operation which is never fixed and constantly progressing, sometimes even without leaving any traces. These different layers in constant motion allow not only a glossolalic text, but also a glossolalic body, to write themselves live. There seems to be a tension between the terms "glossolalia" and "writing" since glossolalia defies the structure of logos; it defies the structure of words and relies directly on the motility of sounds. Glossolalia encloses the notions of motion, mixture and fluidity. This is why it can be associated to the concept of livegraphy as this type of writing is mobile and multiple, and its combination of different layers produces a sensation of overloaded nonsensical chaos. Body fluids and voice both have a glossolalic potential since they can trespass borders and thus threaten the fixed and stable structure of logos and with it the clear definition of the self. When fluids come out of the body, trespassing the border of the flesh or when voice comes out of the body as sound, trespassing the border of logos and revealing its physicality, they both produce an "unorganised body". This "unorganised body", itself being subject to

possible mixtures, produces in its turn a fluid self, a self in permanent reconstruction. By exposing the body as a porous container and constructing a language with fluid borders which becomes porous to multiple meanings, the performances I have considered in this thesis present the self as porous and subject to mixture and reconstruction. The self is thus exposed as potentially being multiple, fluid and mixable *selves.*

I have come to the conclusion that by presenting live the cyclic pattern of construction, destruction and reconstruction in which logos, voice and self are entrapped and by producing a new form of language and writing, which is fluid and permeable to meanings, these performances not only allow the constant reconstruction of multiple *selves*, but also the constant reconstruction of different notions of reality which are perceivable as multiple and other. This production of the unorganised, the fluid, the multiple, the mixable, the state beyond imposed borders seems also to approach through action some of the concepts developed through the discourses of feminism. As I mentioned in different chapters throughout this thesis, feminism, like performance art, has a problematic and paradoxical relationship to mimesis, which induces a problematic and paradoxical relationship to logos. Feminists have struggled with the notion of mimesis, which commonly implies an imitation of the real or a representation of truth. The problem for women is that it has been the image, the representation, which tends to define female identity, a reality to which no woman corresponds. They become themselves a representation, a construction. Feminist performers have deployed mimesis and common female representations in order to deconstruct them, showing the gap that exists between the image, the fantasy and their own reality. Therefore, there can be a process of reconstruction, with mimesis considered as taking "the relation to the real as productive, not referential, geared to change, not to reproducing the same"[637] as Diamond has suggested. Feminists react against the common use of mimesis in the sense that it perpetuates notions of fixed models and immutable representations. There is a strong need to shake and loosen the borders and allow these notions to be subject to change, fluidity and movement. With mimesis, feminists not only attack the fixed borders of visual representations, but also the structure of logos. Not only do feminists claim that women do not recognise themselves in the representation

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[637] E. Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis*, p.xvi.

society has imposed to them, but they also claim that they do not recognise themselves in the patriarchal "I" which is constructed and defined through the acquisition and the structure of verbal language. So, there is also a need to reconsider and appropriate language again, stepping away from the rigid and imposed structure of logos. This is what Irigaray pleads for in *This Sex Which Is Not One*. Her main idea is not to discard the common language of everyday use, but, as Diamond suggested in a way with the possible use of mimesis, she proposes envisaging language as a less static entity, not reproducing constantly the same, but giving space to plurality and multiplicity, letting language overflow the borders of subject and sense. She writes in "When Our Lips Speak Together":

> You are moving. You never stay still. You never stay. You never "are". How can I say "you" when you are always other? How can I speak to you? You remain in flux, never congealing or solidifying. What will make that current flow into words? It is multiple, devoid of causes, meanings, simple qualities. Yet it cannot be decomposed. These movements cannot be described as the passage from a beginning to an end. These rivers flow into no single, definitive sea. These streams are without fixed banks, this body without fixed boundaries. This unceasing mobility. This life – which will perhaps be called our restlessness, whims, pretences, or lies. All this remains very strange to anyone claiming to stand on solid ground.[638]

Advocating this conception of a language with no definite borders and in constant motion, she also rehabilitates the direct implication of the body in the production of verbal language. Additionally she claims the influence of the unceasing flux of body fluids as a pattern for a fluid linguistics. Even though Irigaray's views on language have been considered as controversial and essentialist by some feminists,[639] they remain philosophically pertinent with regard to some of the concepts developed in the performances referenced in this thesis. Since there exist strong similarities between these performances and feminism in their appropriation of the concept of mimesis and their approach to language outside the structure of logos, I suggest that the performances which explore and expose these concepts embody a philosophy that is at the core of feminism. Before coming back to the idea that performance art can be considered as conceptually feminist, I am going to briefly survey the main currents which have marked discussions of feminist artistic practice since the 1960s.

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[638] Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. by Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke, (Ithaca & NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 214-215.
[639] See Chapter Seven, footnote 566, p.180.

Since the 1960s performance art has been a favoured mode of artistic expression for women and feminist artists. According to Josephine Withers, "[p]erformance is a paradigm of feminism itself, which despite the claims of its detractors has never been a monolithic movement nor a single philosophical system."[640] Cheri Gaulke explains that many female artists turned to performance art because "[i]n performance we found an art that was young, without the tradition of painting or sculpture. Without the traditions governed by men."[641] Feminist artists have used performance art, as well as other art forms, as spaces in which they could explore and reflect on themselves both as women and as artists and also on how they could reinvest their image and their bodies. They have used it as a system in which they can operate without the pressure of the artistic canons imposed by generations of male artists. According to Peggy Phelan, in *Art and Feminism*, "[t]he promise of feminist art is the performative creation of new realities".[642] Since feminist artists "were especially inspired by de Beauvoir's analysis of 'made' reality" they realised that their lives "can be remade, revised, altered and improved."[643] In her survey of feminist art practice in *Art and Feminism*, Phelan shows how the different feminist currents came to influence the issues and the forms developed by women artists throughout the last three decades of the 20th century. The first phase in the emergence of feminist art was "activist, passionate and especially concerned with altering art history."[644] The second, toward the beginning of the 1970s, focused on women's appropriation anew of their female body. Carolee Schneemann explains how she tried with her work to find a way out of the traditional patriarchal dynamic which only sees the female body as the desired object:

> Performance works entered into a male contextualisation of space as gender specific to the male imagination. So that women internalise themselves as being a part of something that's dreamed by the men, Trying to tear these veils is central to my work. The classic male nude stands for a mystification, an idealisation; just as female nude traditionally in our painting and sculpture has always been mythicised

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[640] Josephine Withers, "Feminist Performance Art: Performing, Discovering, Transforming Ourselves" in *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact*, ed. by Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 1994), p.158.
[641] Cheri Gaulke quoted in RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance : Live Art since the 60s*, p.129.
[642] Peggy Phelan in *Art and Feminism*, ed. by Helena Reckitt, (London & NY: Phaidon Press, 2006), p.20.
[643] Ibid., p.20.
[644] Ibid., p.21.

as an idealised object of male desire which does not correspond to
what women actually experience or feel about their bodies.[645]

Phelan notes that "[i]n the 1970s, Martha Wilson, Linda Montano, Hannah Wilke, Carolee Schneemann, among many others, began to explore performance as a way to remove the metaphorical structure of art and to make it more direct."[646] There was a need for exposure and visceral expression. The third phase corresponds to the end of the 1970s when feminist artists started to be mainly influenced by post-structuralism, psychoanalysis and French feminism which created an explicit link between theory and practice. This had as a consequence a

> growing discomfort with some of the feminist art made in the 1970s, especially work about women's bodies and experiences of embodiment, whether erotic, abusive or metaphorical. In a nutshell, the claim was that such art was insufficiently savvy about the complex codes of representation that framed the female body; the work was declared "essentialist".[647]

It is only in the early 1990s, in particular with the emergence of queer theory and influential theoretical texts, such as Bulter's *Bodies that Matter*, that there has been a "return to the body" since

> [a] new generation of feminist artists attempted to unite the theoretical sophistication of feminist art of the 1980s with the passionate engagement with the question of embodiment that was the hallmark of feminist art in the 1970s.[648]

It allowed a letting go of the essentialist debate which had come to an impasse. RoseLee Goldberg states that even if it took thirty years to credit "these women artists for their pioneering and highly considered examination of the body as a measure of identity, taboo, and the limits of masculine / feminine emancipation, their belief in the body as prime, raw material, opened numerous territories for artistic investigations."[649]

It is interesting to note that the feminist attempts, either artistically or philosophically, to redefine their female selves through their bodies and to try and

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[645]Carolee Schneeman in Nick Kaye, *Art into Theatre: Performances, interviews and documents*, p.35.
[646] P. Phelan in *Art and Feminism*, p.29.
[647] Ibid., p.23.
[648] Ibid., p.24.
[649] RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art since the 60s*, p.96.

find a language which allowed them to transcribe their connection with physicality have both been qualified as "essentialist". Phelan explains that

> [w]hat has come to be called the essentialism debate might be better understood as a series of investigations into the relationship between female bodies and subjectivity, a relationship that is enframed by language. At the heart of the language of feminism is a complicated attempt to address embodiment, politically, aesthetically, historically, psychoanalytically. Interest in the body of the woman, […], has been central to both feminist art making and to feminist art theory and criticism. Behind this interest there lies an often noted but infrequently examined relationship, the one between language and the body.[650]

And she adds that

> [b]odies and languages constitute each other even as they miss one another. Rushing to make points about the specificity of female embodiment, feminist art theorists have tended to gloss over the deeply paradoxical relationship between language and the body.[651]

According to Phelan, feminist art and feminist theory have failed to investigate seriously enough the complex relation between language and the body which inevitably emerges out of an attempt to (re)define the self and its relation with the body. This relationship between language and the female body was explored by some French feminists like Iriagary and Cixous whose concepts of a possible "feminine" language have also been dismissed as essentialist. One of main criticisms levelled against such concepts is that they appear to envisage a "universal" feminine: "a central system of expression that could be discerned across culture and across media."[652] According to Phelan, "what remains interesting about the questions posed by the "essentialists" [is that they] had the temerity to insist that it was possible to make a connection between visual images and the experience of embodiment"[653] and for her, there is "an intriguing return, an incessant worrying over the difficulty of bringing language and embodiment into alignment."[654] In my view, these questionings are not only related to feminism or feminist art since exploring the connection between language and embodiment has not only been uniquely a preoccupation of feminist performance art, but more generally of performance art as

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[650] P. Phelan in *Art and Feminism*, p.36.
[651] Ibid., p.36.
[652] Ibid., p.37.
[653] Ibid., p.37
[654] Ibid., p.37.

such. If performance art has been seen as redeeming some of the discarded "essentialist " concepts of French feminist philosophy, I move a step further and I suggest that performance art itself develops as a feminist strategy. In performance art feminist artists found a privileged ground on which to explore the notions of mimesis, body, self and language for their own agendas. However it is no longer possible to consider the use of feminist philosophical concepts only as a means to create feminist art whose content might address feminist issues, but also to use it to produce a feminist methodology or creative process. My view is that because of the formal choices adopted, the performances which I have chosen to refer to in this thesis are all feminist performances, totally independent of whether the fact that they are performed by women or men and of the different issues they address. This corresponds to the idea expressed by Lucy R. Lippard according to whom feminist art is "neither a style or a movement", but rather "a value system, a revolutionary strategy, a way of life."[655] In this sense, the performance art creative process adopts a feminist strategy.

I have already made a strong link between the linguistic potential of body fluids and Irigaray's essay "The 'Mechanics' of the Fluids" in Chapter Seven, but to uphold my argument I think there is another link to be made between Cixous' controversial and oft-dismissed essay "The Laugh of the Medusa" and the concept of "livegraphy". In her essay, Cixous develops the idea of an "*écriture féminine*".[656] She exhorts

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[655] Lucy R. Lippard, "Sweeping Exchanges: The Contribution of Feminism to the Art of the 1970s", *Art Jounal*, 40, (1980), 362-365 (p.362)

[656] Cixous, like Irigaray, was part of the faction of the MLF called "Psych et Po" and defended the idea of feminine difference (see footnote 54, Chapter Seven). She developed the concept of *écriture féminine* which has often been associated with Irigaray's *parler-femme*. The criticism against Cixous has mainly been similar to that made against Irigaray. As said before, although many Anglo-American feminist critics recognized the value of the concept of *écriture féminine*, nevertheless Cixous, just like Irigaray, found herself accused of essentialism and elitism.

Domna C. Stanton in "Language and Revolution: The Franco-American Dis-Connection" underlines that she does not suggest

> that the presuppositions and goals of *écriture feminine* should be espoused without serious examination. American and French women should interrogate the premise that the global subversion of the Logos can be achieved through language, and we should question the proposition that there *can* exist a locus outside of the symbolic order from which woman might speak her difference. […] We should also point out that French theorizing on the subversion of Logos has tended to replace, and not merely to supplement, the kind of political activism which Americans consider crucial to their self-definition as feminists. Last, and as some recent French texts seem to confirm, a dis-connection with the *real* can lead to a regressive mystification of the 'feminine' and may yield nothing more than a new 'lingo', a code doomed to repetition and extinction. (in *The Future of Difference*, p.81)

In "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness", Elaine Showalter acknowledges that

> [t]he concept of a woman's text in the wild zone is a playful abstraction: in the reality to which we must address ourselves as critics, women's writing is a 'double-voiced discourse' that

women to find appropriate writing again, just like they need to appropriate their body again. For her the two go together: women have to find a way to write and women have to write their body and with their body. She writes that "by writing herself, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her".[657] She addresses herself directly to the (female) reader, like Irigaray, saying: "Write yourself. Your body must be heard."[658] She sees writing as "*the very possibility of change*, the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structure."[659] She calls on women "to write and thus to forge for [themselves] the antilogos weapon."[660] Like Irigaray, she also wants to free language from the static rigidity of logos and according to her, women could express themselves more faithfully if language could be envisaged more loosely as a fluid entity. According to Cixous, a woman

> doesn't 'speak', she throws her trembling body forward; she lets go of herself, she flies; all of her passes into her voice and it is with her body that she vitally supports the 'logic' of her speech. In fact she physically materializes what she's thinking: she signifies it with her body. In a certain way she *inscribes* what she's saying because she doesn't deny her drives the intractable and impassioned part they have in speaking.[661]

She acknowledges the materiality of the voice and the fact that both writing and enunciation carry the body and hold its mark. Her desire is to let this physicality overflow the structure of logos and find its own logic in a kind of initial disorganisation that would mirror the "unorganised body". According to her,

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always embodies the social, literary, and cultural heritages of both the muted and the dominant. (in *The New Feminist Criticism*, p.263)

In her section about Cixous in *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*, Toril Moi writes that [i]n her eagerness to appropriate imagination and the pleasure principle for women, Cixous seems in danger of playing directly into the hands of the very patriarchal ideology she denounces. It is, after all, patriarchy, not feminism, that insists on labelling women as emotional, intuitive and imaginative, while jealously converting reason and rationality into an exclusive male preserve. It is therefore understandable that, while acknowledging the rhetorical power of Cixous's vision, feminist should nevertheless want to examine its specific political implications in order to discover exactly what it is we are being inspired to do." (*Sexual/Textual Politics*, p.123)

She adds that "Cixous's global appeal to 'woman's powers' glosses over the real differences among women, and thus ironically represses the true heterogeneity of women's power. (*Sexual/Textual Politics*, p.125)

[657] Hélène Cixous,"The Laugh of the Medusa", trans. by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs*, 1, 4 (1976), 875-893 (p.880)

[658] Ibid., p.880.

[659] Ibid., p.879.

[660] Ibid., p.880.

[661] Ibid., p.881.

> [i]f there is a 'propriety of woman', it is paradoxically her capacity to deppropriate unselfishly: body without end, without appendage, without principal 'parts'. If she is a whole, it is a whole composed of parts which are wholes, not simple partial objects, but a moving, limitlessly changing ensemble, […].[662]

This means that "[h]er writing can only keep on going, without ever inscribing or discerning contours", "[s]he lets the other language speak – the language of 1000 tongues which knows neither enclosure nor death" and "[h]er *language* does not contain, it carries; it does not hold back, it makes possible."[663] Although the whole concept of "*écriture féminine*" developed in this essay is dedicated to women as a kind of feminist manifesto, some of the aspects I mentioned seem to match the concepts developed in the performances I am discussing here. It is possible to substitute "performance art" in some of the above quotations, like for example: *performance art* - "can only keep on going, without ever inscribing or discerning contours", - "lets the other language speak – the language of 1000 tongues which knows neither enclosure nor death", or – "does not contain, it carries; it does not hold back, it makes possible." So, I suggest that "l'*écriture féminine*" could be in fact revealed in the "livegraphy" which takes place in performance art. Part of what Cixous describes in her essay is very similar to a writing which would emerge from a linguistics of the fluids, an enunciation which would put forward the materiality of the voice, a construction of glossolalia revealing the potential of the drives, a non-sense opening the possibility of multiple senses and the reconstruction of multiple *selves*. There is also a parallel here with the precepts of Artaud, who advocated a form of enunciation and writing which should not only be close to the body, but directly emanate from it. This is the reason why, in my view, these feminist concepts like Cixous' "*écriture féminine*", and Irigaray's "mechanics of the fluids" or even "*parler-femme*",[664] should also be allowed to be considered beyond the notion of "woman". These concepts, beyond being at first regarded as feminist, belong to a pattern of philosophical thought which uses language as a research ground. I do not want to

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[662] Ibid., p.889.
[663] Ibid., p.889.
[664] According to Margaret Whitford, "*parler-femme* must refer to enunciation. This would also explain why *parler-femme* has no meta-language, since the moment of enunciation the enunciation is directed towards an interlocutor […], and cannot speak about itself.", in *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine*, (London & NY: Routldge, 1991), p.41. This could also correspond to a definition of glossolalia.

discard the term "feminist" though, but I want to reiterate that I consider feminism here as a "strategy" or a "way of life" as Lucy R. Lippard suggested. In this sense I suggest that the strategy adopted by the Live Art, not-dance and postdramatic theatre performances I chose for this thesis is itself a feminist one. These performances are feminist whatever the gender of the artist and the content of the work. It is the strategy in which the work is envisaged and developed which can be regarded as feminist. Philosophically, this aspect of feminism can be considered as a subversive way to conceptualise language and this aspect of performance as a subversive way to embody these philosophical languages.

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