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FAC, UT ARDEAT COR MEUM:

an Experiment in Listening to Visual Theatres

Submission for the award of MPhil

University of Glasgow

Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies

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ABSTRACT

Moving within and across the fields of performance studies, aesthetics, and sound theory, this thesis is an attempt to complicate the diffused definition of 'visual theatre' by interrogating the image on stage through the medium and the metaphor of sound. Drawing on theories of the virtual, of the phonographic and of the inorganic, and keeping in the background the sound of Artaud's 'bass', this work seeks to address the sensual interstices of spectating and question how, within those interstices, meaning is made. Following a theoretical reflection which has Fred Moten and Mario Perniola as its main interlocutors, and which allows me to ground my discussion in a particular aesthetic-political space, I perform an audio-analysis of a piece of visual theatre, guiding the reader through the 'inner rattle' of Società Raffaello Sanzio's 2006 performance *Hey Girl!* In conclusion I investigate how listening to an image can help open up other conversations regarding spectatorship and the senses and their importance and agitational potential which works and moves beyond the spectated image itself.

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F A C : 2nd person singular imperative from făcîo, 'to do'.

U T : subordinating conjunction, 'so', 'so that'.

A R D E A T : 3rd person singular, present subjunctive of ardêo, 'to burn'.

C O R : noun, singular masculine accusative, 'heart'.

M E U M : possessive adjective, singular masculine accusative, 'my'.

As the title prefigures, this thesis is an experiment in listening to visual theatres. As such, its aim is to enter into a critical dialogue with the act of spectating performance which works mostly on the ground of the visual, a dialogue which makes space to explore some of the untraversed sites of meaning-making which spectating the visual may engender. Over the course of this writing I will work on the construction of a dialectic capable of working within the language of the aesthetic and of the semiotic but also capable of exploding some of the suppositions of those languages. To use Mária Minich Brewer's definition, I will attempt to 'perform theory' as a way of being mindful 'theatricality carries with it lures and seductions that, if unexamined, will continue to be a regressive blind spot of theory, an automatic reflex, and a diffuse and misunderstood figure of modernity. The question to be addressed to theory is not why it privileges the theatrical figure, but rather what unreflected aesthetic presuppositions it ushers in along with that figure.'¹

Here, the questioning of those unreflected aesthetic presuppositions is addressed through the metaphor of sound: this piece of writing is concerned with theorizing a way that we may *listen* to visual theatres, as a strategy for picking out some of the layers of experience we may not think about when traditionally assessing the visual through the visual only. In *The Skin of Culture* Derrick De Kerckhove asserts: 'seeing and hearing are not only different ways of accessing and processing information, they establish totally different relationships between ourselves and the environment.'² I am curious about this

1 Brewer, Maria Minich. 'Performing Theory'. *Theatre Journal* 37 (March 1985) pp 13-30. p. 13

2 De Kerckhove, Derrick. *The Skin of Culture: Investigating the New Electronic Reality*. London: Kogan Page, 1997. p. 115

other kind of attunement as a spectator, about the possibilities opened up by dragging hearing into the seeing.

What I wish to do is reflect upon how we spectate the visual – this vaguely defined yet prevalent 'genre' in the post-dramatic performance landscape – and decline this mode of spectatorship with instruments that are not necessarily linked to the 'visual'. My starting argument is that the visual is not *only* the visual and that the shift into contemporary performance has produced another, more complex, experience of 'going to the the theatre' in the progressive distancing of the stage-world from the world of words. By theorizing a listening to a piece of theatre, a visual experience woven, sieved through the 'grammar' of listening, I hope to shed light on the wider aesthetic experience of spectatorship involving what Fred Moten calls 'the sensual ensemble of what is looked at.'³ So that my intention here is not to swap an eye for an ear, nor to claim that the eye has something to learn from the ear, but to investigate some of the ways in which, through the act of a contemporary watching, we are in fact harnessing an aesthetic and political sensual ensemble in which the eye can act as ear, as the ear can act as eye. This is an answer – one of many possible answers – to Niall Lucy's question: 'What would the visual 'sound' like if we began to think of the specular in terms of the sonic?'⁴

To propose a focus on aurality into the way we deal with image in the theatre is to propose a focus on a number of aspects of the image itself, of which the two most important seem to me to be: (i) a focus on subjectivity and

3 Moten, Fred. *In the Break: the Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. p. 210

4 Lucy, Niall. *Beyond Semiotics: Text, Culture and Technology*. London: Continuum, 2001. p. 75

on the body in perception and (ii) a focus on invisibility, on disappearance, on the intangible in performance. Inserting listenership into spectatorship, and even thinking of watching as listening, brings together discourses which may seem to be in contradiction with each other: the visible and the invisible, external and internal investigations, the real and the unreal, the body and the ghost. The objective of my writing is to demonstrate how these apparently dissonant discourses in fact resonate continuously with each other in the complex, dense realm of perception that we encounter in the theatre. In talking of image here I am also, necessarily, talking of spectatorship as an affective experience, or in any case as an experience of spirit. Part of this process is therefore also the search for a discourse to move within that allows me to justly place spirit into a conversation about image, so that I will be drawing aspects of my methodology from writing which is preoccupied with what binds sound to spirit.

Spirit, sound, affect, all come to this project through the will to 'listen to the invisible'⁵: the will to investigate all those processes of meaning-making which happen inside the space of subjective experience and that for this reason tend to fall off the radar of semiotic investigation (though it is in semiotic investigation, necessarily, that they have their roots). My feeling is that, since I am after all talking about art, perhaps these words – spirit, subjectivity, affect – are legitimate terms in performing an analysis of meaning-making in contemporary theatre.

5 'The repetition of experience is to create a surrogate of experience, so from a certain point of view, it's only representation. Everything that is invisible has to be in the senses that aren't sight. Action isn't image, neither is movement. Where can we listen to the invisible, meet the essential?' Vargas, Enrique, 'Abitare Palermo'. Talk, December 2010. From this moment on, unless stated, all translations are my own.

For a long time (...) 'official' philosophy, dragged into the world of positive sciences, has only admitted two sources of Knowing. There is sensory perception, which supplies the so-called empirical data. And there are the concepts of the intellect, the world of laws which regulate empirical data. Of course, phenomenology has modified and surpassed this simplifying gnoseology. However, the fact remains that the place between sensory perception and intuitions or intellectual categories has stayed empty. What should have been situated in between one and the other, active Imagination, was left to the poets.⁶

In this context, the act of listening allows me a theoretical and methodological freedom which I do not – traditionally – have when I am watching because – again, traditionally – sight is the locus of what is knowable, readable, possessable. Sound, by contrast, at least in the Western philosophical tradition has been treated (sometimes hailed, sometimes shunned) as the place of the unknowable, of the intangible, of the mysterious and the illusory. This kind of division of labour does not, evidently, do justice to the complexity of the spectating experience. This thesis attempts to bring these discourses together to take a closer look.

This project is articulated in two parts: (i) a preparatory theoretical mapping of the means by which we may listen to a piece of visual theatre and (ii) the experiment itself; what I call the writing of the listening. The performance I will listen to is *Hey Girl!* by Italian group Societas Raffaello Sanzio⁷. The work of the Societas is also what opens this piece of work. In other words this project, this

⁶ Corbin, Henri. *Corpo Spirituale e Terra Celeste, Dall'Iran Mazdeo all'Iran Sciita*. Milan: Adelphi, 1986. p. 14. Quoted by Tessari, Roberto, in *Teatro e Avanguardie Storiche*. Rome: Laterza, 2005. p. VIII

⁷ I will be referring to the Societas Raffaello Sanzio as either 'the Societas' or 'Sanzio' from now on.

interest, stems from having thought of Sanzio's work in the past and having explored other means by which to analyse their particular practice.

Sanzio's creative research is one which constantly comes back to the same dialectic, and at the centre of this dialectic are the words 'real' and 'unreal'. The work of the company is hence based on investigating the struggle, the tension between what is real and what is unreal in the theatre. Their pieces always exist in a complicated, deceptive balance between the body and its presence and the making present of that which is absent, or imaginary – somehow not belonging to the 'here'. Sanzio's practice is a non-stop interrogation of the paradox of art in general, but of the theatre in particular, by which the human body interacts with a fictional landscape, a mental space, an 'untrue' narrative. As Nicholas Ridout once put it, 'the theatre is working: it is making us take its make believe for real'⁸. Therefore looking at Sanzio's work has pushed me, over the past few years, to ask questions regarding the experience of contemporary spectatorship, so perhaps the experience of the sensual ensemble of theatre: its cultural resonances, its bodily implications, the way that live image is understood, read and how we spend those two or three hours and *where* we spend them. I am interested in the relationship between the theatre's make-believe and mine – in how, as a spectator, I 'see, feel and understand in as much as I am composing my own poem.'⁹

My first conclusions regarding Sanzio's practice led me to the adjective

8 Ridout, Nicholas. 'Make Believe: Societas Raffaello Sanzio do theatre'. In Kelleher, Joe and Ridout, Nicholas. *Contemporary Theatres in Europe: a Critical Companion*. London: Routledge, 2006. pp. 175-188. p. 177

9 Rancière, Jacques. *The Emancipated Spectator*. Trans. G. Elliott. London: Verso, 2009. p. 13

'carnal': an image which resonates with us on a physical level but without touching us, an image that in its distance and spectacularity is in fact an immersive image, which as spectators we embody as it projects into us and as we live a second life inside the image, a life which 'does not exist'. And my work now is still anchored in the territory of carnality, but to say carnal is not enough. The materiality of this spectatorship hides an immateriality, an invisible sense. Much like sound, then, we are somehow physically implicated by an *event* rather than by an *object*¹⁰: the fact that we can also see *it* does not mean that it is reducible to a mere object in its tangible, knowable, 'real' objectness, nor to merely sign-system in which each fragment is concurrent to a certain linguistic reading.

But let us start from the catalyst, from Sanzio and their work. Though the company's practice has evidently changed dramatically over the past thirty years, there are some constants that have remained over the decades – some intentions have remained unchanged and have a lot to do with Sanzio's origins and with the cultural movement in which they came into being. The Società Raffaello Sanzio commenced in the cultural context of what came to be referred to as the 'Italian Post-avantgarde' – a neglected but pivotal moment in Italian and European contemporary performance practice. Emerging more out of the punk scene than out of the ashes of the theatre of the 1960s and '70s, and informed more by video and television than literature, the post-avantgarde was concerned with, as Ruggero Bianchi concisely puts it, 'intersecting languages'¹¹.

¹⁰ Lucy, Niall. *Beyond Semiotics: Text, Culture and Technology*. London: Continuum, 2001. p. 73

¹¹ Bianchi, Ruggero. 'A Process of Transformation: Falso Movimento (Italy)' *The Drama Review: TDR*, Vol. 27, No. 1, New European and U. S. Theatre (Spring, 1983), pp. 40-53. p. 41

In the post-modern whirlwind of fragmentary existence and multiple aesthetic identities, the theatre became, for certain groups, a place to crash together the particles that made a motherless idea of culture, of art, of technology and of an Italy unable to make sense of those very ideas of culture, art and technology.

The 1960s and 1970s were marked, like elsewhere in the world, by a radicalisation of performance, in socio-political, cultural and aesthetic terms in the form of happenings, fluxes and *material actions*¹², all dependant on the wider context of political change and shifting social structures. Without entering into a more complex historical discussion, it is fair to say that in Italy at least (but in other countries also), the Zeitgeist of 1975 had very little in common with that of 1980. Enrico Deaglio thus describes Italy in his overview of the year 1980: 'some call 1980 "tragic". The Irpinia region is destroyed, Bologna station blown up, the Fiat gets beaten to death. Politics are strange. So strange that Giulio Andreotti gets called to Palermo and vituperated by Cosa Nostra'¹³. Many of the social and political diseases that plague Italy to this day were contracted at the very end of the 1970s. Indeed, the early 1980s were riddled with terrorism, Mafia wars, political corruption, micro and macrocriminality. The dawn of the so-called 'Italian strategy of tension' leaves a country in which social discontent is at its highest and the line between crime and government is dangerously fine. The song of the year is De Gregori's *Viva l'Italia* which sings of a country 'ransacked and hit in the heart/ kidnapped and taken by surprise/ assassinated by the papers and the cement'¹⁴ and the author of the year is Pier

12 See, for example: Pistoletto, Michelangelo. *Azioni Materiali*. Köln: Galerie im Taxipalais, 1999.

13 Deaglio, Enrico. *Patria 1978-2008*. Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2009. p. 79.

14 Francesco De Gregori, *Viva L'Italia*. Rome: RCA Italiana, 1979.

Vittorio Tondelli, whose *Altri Libertini (Other Libertines)* sells just under ten thousand copies in a few days and then gets censored for its blasphemous content which 'violently incites the reader to sexual depravity and scorn for the catholic religion'¹⁵. Meanwhile, the communist party speaks of it as a political book about the absence of politics. The literary case of the year tells stories from a world of relatively carefree, unproblematized prostitution and heroin abuse, which take place on the streets of a violent but indifferent Bologna, with characters often no more than 20 years old.

Though not at all exhaustive, this brief overview serves the purpose of giving the reader an idea of the context, the climate, the 'atmosphere' that spawns a certain generation of Italian theatre makers whose work provides the basis for my research here: a climate of mysterious killings, collapsing governments and mass TV addiction. Most of the music, the literature, the visual arts, the video-work (very prevalent at this time) and the performance of these years seems to suggest that the battle continues, so to speak, but that the tone has changed. An air that is simultaneously marked by extreme rebellion and extreme cynicism: iconoclastic¹⁶. The performance practice that develops in this time is under-researched nowadays and was under-researched at the time, operating in a virtual twilight. It was work that existed in the peripheries as a choice of militance, 'closed in a chosen marginality, identifying with that part of a generational culture that searched for marginality as the only way to behave,

15 Deaglio, Enrico, quoting the order of the Court in L'Aquila, written by Director of Public Prosecutions Donato Massimo Bartolomei in *Patria 1978-2008*. Milan: Il Saggiatore, 2009. p. 102

16 Castellucci, Claudia. *Santa Sofia/Teatro Khmer*. In Castellucci, Claudia and Romeo. *Les Pèlerins de la Matière: théorie et praxis du théâtre*. Besançon: Les Solitaires Intempestifs, 2001. p. 16

confronted with a social make-up that was unacceptable'¹⁷. The 'underground' nature of this movement perhaps explains why we have such a confused nomenclature for it, highlighting various aspects of the companies' work. There are three labels I would like to emphasise here for the purpose of this writing, which are *post-avantgarde* (the most common), *post-* or *new (neo) romantic* and *image-theatre*. These three names for the movement provide particular angles from which to view this work that are worth exploring since they will be useful to keep in mind for the rest of this specific project.

So the first things that we notice looking at these words, in the first two cases, are the prefixes: neo and post. And the words that follow: avantgarde and romantic. Two things, in other words, that have already happened, prefixed by two intimations of modernity. But neo- and post- are not anti. Unlike certain registers of the 1960s, such as Pasolini's¹⁸, that hailed a genre that was anti-what came before – anti-bourgeois, anti-establishment and so on – the prefixes neo- and post- prefigure an idea of newness by still saying: we are not without a past. Neo- and post- resuscitate a conversation, pull the past into the future.

The first of the epithets for analysis here presents us with something even more post-/neo- : *post-avant*. Why not post-modern? Why post + avant + garde? Some thought should initially be spent on this compound which has become a given in our everyday language, avant-garde. It is easy to forget that avant-garde is a military term, meaning vanguard: the foremost part of an army

17 Corsetti, Giorgio Barberio in conversation with Ponte di Pino, Oliviero, in *Il nuovo teatro italiano 1975-1988. La ricerca dei gruppi: materiali e documenti*. Florence: La Casa Usher, 1988. Also accessible at trax.it/olivieropdp/barberio88.htm

18 See, for example: Pasolini, Pier Paolo. 'Manifesto per un nuovo teatro', published in *Nuovi argomenti* of January-March 1968. Also available at campus.cib.unibo.it/24600/1/manifesto_per_un_nuovo_teatro

advancing into battle. *La garde qui est avant*, to open it up, the guards *in front*, who *come first*, before chronologically but also spatially, those who are the face, the surface, the brave few encountered before anybody else. The bellic nature of the term is important, not merely because of its signification but because of the energy it carries, the symbolic implications of the semantic field of 'avant-garde'. The avant-garde *is* bellic. Whether or not it has specific references to martial themes or myths in particular (like Marinetti's futurism and its myths of machines and masculinity, which, in Roberto Tessari's eloquent words 'ended in the fatal embrace with fascism'¹⁹), avant-gardes are bellic in the sense that they *fight*. They have a creative agenda, but they also have an important destructive agenda. Manifestos are like political programmes for extremist parties, they make no concessions, they talk of regimes, of new orders. They have, in their language, an intrinsic bellic force. One of the things bellic force presupposes is militance and militance presupposes belief, even faith. In tracing lines between avant-garde and post-avant-garde, one of the most striking experiences is to look at the manifestos of each together. Here are some examples:

We lacerate like a furious wind/
the laundry of the clouds. And we
prepare for the great show (...) /
the fire.²⁰

(Tristan Tzara)

We search for the zero. The hole
we have put in the centre of the
stage, that absorbs everything.²¹

(Giorgio Barberio Corsetti)

19 Tessari, Roberto. *Teatro e Avanguardie Storiche*. Rome: Laterza, 2005. p. 16

20 Tzara, Tristan. Quoted by Tessari, Roberto. *Teatro e Avanguardie Storiche*. Rome: Laterza, 2005. p. X

21 Corsetti, Giorgio Barberio, quoted by Ponte di Pino, Oliviero in *Il nuovo teatro italiano 1975-1988. La ricerca dei gruppi: materiali e documenti*. Florence: La Casa Usher, 1988. Also accessible at trax.it/olivieropdp/barberio88.htm

We must penetrate the realm of shadows that are lurking everywhere. Only after this victory may liberation become possible²².

(Yvan Goll)

You will not enter the church of Saint Sophia without a revolution. Habitué of the theatre, go away, there are no images for you here²³.

(Claudia Castellucci)

I will uncover
with words as simple as a bellow /
our new buzzing souls /
like the glow from a headlight²⁴.

(Vladimir Mayakovsky)

What counts, before action,
is immersing oneself in the delirium,
in the hallucinated and exalted
night of the Voyage²⁵.

(Franco Lombardi)

What immediately strikes us in these fragments of text is the political and religious language which veins them, whether they belong to the 'historical avantgarde' or to the post-avant. The tone of the political manifesto is furthered by, on the one hand, the spiritualist language: talk of exalted night, glow, church, zero, realm of shadows, the fire; on the other hand by an idea of undoing something in order to do, by a consequentiality, a 'preparation' – so that the reoccurring idea is that there is something to destroy 'before action', 'before the revolution', 'before liberation'. There is always a previous violence, a crusade of sorts, which determines the blossoming that follows.

Tessari, writing about Expressionism, talks of a 'spiritualist mask to

22 Goll, Yvan. Quoted by Tessari, Robertoin *Teatro e Avanguardia Storiche*. Rome: Laterza, 2005. p. IX

23 Castellucci, Claudia. *Santa Sofia/Teatro Khmer*. In Castellucci, Claudia and Romeo. *Les Pèlerins de la Matière: théorie et praxis du théâtre*. Besançon: Les Solitaires Intempestifs, 2001. p. 16

24 Mayakovsky, Vladimir. Quoted by Tessari, Roberto in *Teatro e Avanguardia Storiche*. Rome: Laterza, 2005. p. IX

25 Lombardi, Franco, Marion D'Amburgo and Federico Tiezzi. *Sulla Strada dei Magazzini Criminali*. Milan: Ubulibri, 1983. p. 13

predicate the interior palingenesis of the individual and a militant mask to shout the necessity of social revolution'²⁶; let us think again of the title of Sanzio's first piece and manifesto: *Santa Sofia-Teatro Khmer*. A reference to the religious and in particular to religious iconoclasm and a reference to the Khmer Rouge. A word from Artaud's vocabulary comes to mind, in French: *Terrible*. So post-avant: *après le avant* or *avant*²⁷?

What the label *post-avantgarde* also does is implicitly highlight the distance that exists, chronologically, between the two movements. Defining oneself as somebody's post- (especially two or three generations later) exposes a will to mythicise a chosen past (so it must be a *known* past, but cannot be known in first person) and screams a profound dissatisfaction with the now. The need to dream and also to contrast, challenge, resist. As to say: our fathers (if there are any fathers) are not recent nor traditional. We take from the only ones who have been brave enough to fight at the front. 'Your paradise: nothing. Your idols: nothing. Your politicians: nothing. Your heroes: nothing.'²⁷

This is happening between the late 1970s and the early 1980s, so we must not ignore that calling back these avant-gardes and re-opening these radicalising discussions was not something that was happening solely in the theatre or in this particular kind of theatre: it was happening across subcultures in Europe and, to a certain extent, in 'official' culture as well. Other post-s and neo-s are happening, for example in music: New Wave, Post-Punk, New

26 Tessari, Roberto. *Teatro e Avanguardie Storiche*. Rome: Laterza, 2005. p. XII

27 Picabia. *Manifeste Cannibale Dada*. Quoted from the catalogue of *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed*. Exhibition, Hayward Gallery, London 11th January - 27th March 1978. London: Dawn Ades and the Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978. p. 3

Romantic, Post-Rock, New Pop, Neue Deutsche Welle and their derivatives, Cold Wave, Neo-Punk, Synth-Pop, or extremes like Neo-Apocalyptic Folk or New Folk (in many ways a branch of Industrial music, which is neo- in itself). For the purpose of this dissertation, I also want to mention that there were ideas, even in pop music, of a certain 'neo-neo-primitivism' (ideas of tribal trance, dance, an ideal tribal past, a certain post-exotica viewed from the West) which is often interwoven, almost without distinction with a certain neo-orientalism, commodified now even more than when Edward Saïd was talking about it, to the point of reaching what I call a 'Chinese Restaurant Orientalism'. All methods of rebellion and escapism from the here and the now, into the there and the then, the other and often the archaic. A common denominator of all the 1980s new-s and post-s is curiosity, play, deconstruction, DIY, energy, revolt, technology, iconoclasm, battle. The great majority of these movements, in any discipline, were militant without being political. And the great majority were spiritual without being religious. And almost all of them ended in similar ways to the movements that were part of the 'first' avantgarde. As Schneider points out,

If modernism was, as Adorno has stated, in thrall to “the category of the new”, post-modernism positions itself relative to this thrall. (...) In the post-modern paradigm the old paradoxically erupts on the scene as the true “new” even as it ricochets back into temporal position again as outmoded. Post-modern artworks garner their post-modernity in their ghost dancing, their playful mimicry of precedence, positioning themselves relative to an extant, continually eruptive field of precursory modernist imagery and modernist obsession.²⁸

28 Schneider, Rebecca. *The Explicit Body in Performance*. London: Routledge, 1997. p. 21

But this is not, of course, merely a form of fashion, merely a superficial interface – though the interface serves deeper aesthetic agendas and this is crucial to this thesis. There were very real preoccupations that were bringing this language back. There was a socio-political climate that was obliging artists to be very rigorous in the process of reconsideration they had to undertake. There was a technological revolution that was shifting our ways of being in the world in a similar way to the industrial revolution. It was a time for a strict, organic re-think. If it were purely a question of energy on the surface, if it were in the how and not in the what that these groups were affiliated, the word 'post-avantgarde' would result in a formal exercise, in an empty declination. But it is not, because the objective of the fight is similar, and I would argue it is a fight for spirit, whether we call it the Unreal, the Zero, the Wave, the Fire, the Terrible, the Dyonisian. It is also a fight, in both cases, for the determination of new languages through which to tell but also to *form* the new world, to make sense of it. As the world shifts quickly, representation is sometimes challenged, the power of art itself is sometimes challenged, especially of art *forms*.

Rancière writes that 'some things, it is said, fall out of the competence of art. They cannot adapt to the surplus of presence and subtraction peculiar to it, and which in Platonic terms defines its character as simulacrum.'²⁹ In these times, the 1980s, it is the artist's role to play with the simulacrum itself, to question its nature and its mechanisms. Il Marchingegno's (later Krypton) 1982 performance *Space-Computing* in which the action consists of 'a sequence of laser rays programmed by a computer according to the qualities of the

²⁹ Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, translated by Gregory Elliot. London: Verso, 2007. p. 110

environment'³⁰ leads very naturally to thinking about Kandinsky's *The Yellow Sound* in which the stage directions call for offstage voices 'arranged in such a way that the source . . . cannot be located'³¹ and that the crux of the question was to convey the essence of the yellow sound. Leigh Clemons writes that 'this essence, a product of the inner spirit, was hidden behind matter, or form. It was imperative to Kandinsky that the form not obscure the creative spirit, but provide a pliable, flexible atmosphere for its expression.'³² This thirst for a re-working of creative means and refusal to fall into predetermined modes of creation and expression travels very clearly from avantgarde to post-avantgarde, as does the declared necessity and defense for relying, in the very heart of the matter, on an object commonly deemed *unrepresentable*.

On this note, I would like to talk briefly of the other two labels mentioned at the start, *neo-romantic* and *image-theatre*, which I consider almost as sub-labels inherent in post-avantgarde. Important sub-labels though, since in the sea of contexts connected to the post-avantgarde they can tell us something more about the specific current we are talking about. A discussion of these other two definitions will also allow me to lead the reader into my thinking about sound, and my choice of sound as a paradigm which can help us decline a certain way of making performance and of being 'emancipated' spectators.

30 Ruggero Bianchi, *A Process of Transformation: Falso Movimento (Italy)*, *The Drama Review: TDR*, Vol. 27, No. 1, New European and U. S. Theatre (Spring, 1983), pp. 40-53

31 Wassily Kandinsky, *The Yellow Sound: A Stage Composition* (1912). In Cardullo, Bert & Robert Knoff. *Theatre of the Avant-Garde 1890-1950: a critical anthology*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2001.

32 Clemons, Leigh. 'Staging New Dimensions: Wassily Kandinsky, Der Blaue Reiter Almanac and the Reconfiguration of Artistic Space.' *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, Vol. IX, No. 1: Fall 1994. p. 139.

In *La Morasse* Zola writes: make it important, make it simple, make it real³³, as a manifesto for Naturalism, for post-romanticism, what comes after the *Sturm* and the *Drang*. In this sense it is important to differentiate post-romantic from neo-romantic. Neo- resurrects the romantic ideal – from a bourgeois perspective: make it unimportant, complicated, unreal. Claudia Castellucci's words ring in our ears again, 'we already know the real and it has disappointed us since we were four years old'³⁴. Romantic is a fierce word now that it is separated from its cultural movement and has its own popular (and pop) semantic field, the field of the amorous and of the adolescent (which is adolescent, for a revolution). From both points of view resurrecting the romantic indicates an abandonment and a disregard for rationality which seems, at least superficially, thoroughly out of place from an 'adult', or 'sensible' point of view. Holding on to the word Romantic is a way of holding on to sentiment, without having to offer any kind of justification. Just as an aside, another word which was being used at this time was *neo-sensibile*, which translates roughly as neo-sensitive. Another urban subculture, *neo-sensitives* considered themselves 'lost in the city', 'lost in a supermarket', 'lost in the night', 'lost in style exercises'³⁵, congregated in *neo-sensitive* collectives and had *neo-sensitive* manifestos. Neo- as a way to detach oneself from 'the inconsiderate and irresponsible use of vocabulary'³⁶: a sentimental education. *Les soupirs de la sainte et les cris de*

33 Preface of *La Morasse*. Quoted by Becker, Colette, Gina Gourdin-Serveni re and V ronique Lavielle in the *Dictionnaire d' mile Zola*. Paris: Robert Laffont Bouquins, 1993.

34 Castellucci, Claudia. *Santa Sofia/Teatro Khmer*. In Castellucci, Claudia and Romeo. *Les P lerins de la Mati re: th orie et praxis du th  tre*. Besan on: Les Solitaires Intempestifs, 2001. p. 16

35 Headings of chapters from Marcuccio, Marco Andrea. *Guida al Neo-Sensibilismo Ragionato* (Listbot) accessible online to members of the group.

36 Offlaga Disco Pax. *Sensibile*, on *Bachelite*. Florence: Santeria/Audioglobe, 2008.

*la fée*³⁷. A thirst similar to Artaud's:

(...) but the spiritual infirmity of the Occident, which is the place *par excellence* where men have confused art with aestheticism, is to think that its painting would function only as painting, dance which would be merely plastic, as if in an attempt to castrate the forms of art, to sever their ties with all the mystic attitudes they might acquire in confrontation with the absolute³⁸.

More words: mysticism, absolute. A lyric from 1983 comes to mind: 'I've got a spiritual cramp/ going for my ribs'³⁹. And another: 'Artaud lived with his neck placed firmly in the noose/ Eyes black with pain, limbs in cramps contorted/ The theatre and its double/ The void and the aborted'⁴⁰. The 'Dyonisian cramp', let's call it, inherited from the first avantgarde, crept frequently into rock music – which is unsurprising. In many ways, after all, it is the Dyonisian cramp which takes my thinking from image into sound.

The last label I would like to think about is *teatro-immagine*, image-theatre, theatre of image, or visual theatre. This definition of theatre is wide and vague. The only common denominator we can deduce between the many 'image-theatres' we know (without imposing any other attributes) is a will to use images as a means of communication over words. 'Visual theatre' is a term still in use today to designate anything from mime and Nouveau Cirque to Tanz-Theater, from digital theatre to Boal-inspired pedagogical endeavours. For the purpose of

37 Translation: 'the sighs of the saint and the cries of the fairy.' From de Nerval, Gerard. *El Desdichado*. From *Les Chimères* in Landi, M. and Campagnoli, R. *Antologia della Poesia Francese*. Florence: L'Espresso/La Repubblica, 2004. p. 436

38 Artaud, Antonin. *The Theatre and its Double*. Trans. Mary Caroline Richards. New York: Grove Press, 1958. p. 69

39 Christian Death. *Spiritual Cramp on Only Theatre of Pain*. London: Future Records, 1983.

40 Bauhaus. *Antonin Artaud on Burning From the Inside*. London: Beggars' Banquet (4AD), 1983.

this text, I need to cut out the image-theatres of Beck and Malina, of Boal and of Barba; this is not to say that the image-theatres which I am describing here are devoid of political content or of a political agenda. On the contrary, I would argue that the use of image over words is almost always the result of a political meditation on inclusiveness and democratic values, as well as on the search for a language somehow 'open to interpretation', able to promote both a certain fluidity in terms of meaning-making and subjectivity as the place where meaning-making happens. In this discussion on image-theatre this left-wing undertone should be kept in mind, a low hum which always veins the conversation. The reason I say this is that in the Occident of the early 1980s image has acquired (re-acquired?) a much more *fetishistic* dimension compared to the epochs that were informing the work of the practitioners mentioned above. This is already a time of computer games, commercial television, glossy magazines and music video, in which the image is fetishized and the screen is fetishized just as much. In the technological revolution many aspects of daily life shifted prepotently from the aural to the visual and from the read to the watched. As the systems of art, of music, of fashion, of journalism super-aestheticised themselves, image became more and more the place of the fetish. In this sense, talking of image in the 1980s has a lot more in common with talking about image in the context of Catholicism⁴¹: a lot more in common with talking of venerable icons. The screen is just as convincing and as adored as the image (what is more real?⁴²), just like the marble is as convincing and as

41 De Kerckhove, Derrick. *La Civilizzazione Video-Cristiana*. Milan: Feltrinelli, 1991.

42 Bianchi, Ruggero. 'A Process of Transformation: Falso Movimento (Italy)' *The Drama Review: TDR*, Vol. 27, No. 1, New European and U. S. Theatre (Spring, 1983), pp. 40-53. p. 41

adored as the image of Saint Teresa in Bernini's *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*. The route to rupture (and rapture, also), though still political, still utopian, still spellbound, seems to pass in this time more through the lens of aesthetics (even in the Greek sense of 'that which is perceivable') than directly through that of the revolt of ideas expressed in words. Forms which share a great deal with the tendencies of the first avantgardes but are somehow different in as much as they are also, implicitly, silently perhaps, fighting against 1968. Or, rather: against its shadow. Silvana Sinisi notes:

The glorification of the power of the imagination as freedom, having lost its political battle, takes its revenge in the aesthetic, as a experience of the different, as a new revolutionary instrument for the strategy of dissensus. (...) Words are reduced to sonic fragments, elements of sensual provocation; the literary text becomes a quote, an evocative memory, an excuse to put in motion a re-appropriation of a scenic space to be redefined in the sphere of the visual⁴³.

The object in itself is worthy of as much importance as whatever it may be the 'sign' or 'symbol' for. Form contains function. The medium is the message (even when it did not make it to the masses) and defended the right to express itself in minimal brushstrokes of a theatrical language, a language referred to as a 'new spectacularity'⁴⁴, concerned not with the giving but with what the audience member may take, revolving around the spectator's visual perception. In putting fetishism into understanding this image, iconoclasm acquires a

43 Sinisi, Silvana. 'Neoavanguardia e postavanguardia in Italia' in *Avanguardie ed Utopie del Teatro, Storia del teatro moderno e contemporaneo Vol. 20*. Turin: Einaudi, 2001. p. 717

44 Infante, Carlo, about the performance *Cuori Strappati* (1983) by La Gaia Scienza. Taken from Infante, Carlo. 'La Memoria dell'Avanguardia', accessed at idra.it/cyberia/MemoAvan.htm on 8th January 2010

clearer contour: the iconoclast always knows iconophilia, perhaps only too well⁴⁵. The spectator is not subjugated by image but a very part of the world of image; not a slave to vision, but a visionary him/herself. Studio Azzurro wrote in 1985:

The videoenvironment, more than the video program, represents the changing relationship between reality and imagination (...) it is time to breach the barrier, enter into the scene, move all one's equipment onto the set; without getting mixed up with that metalinguistic attitude of cinema within cinema. (...) There is a need to turn toward an 'ambient' cinema where the screens float in a space, that is partially a reconstructed set and partially an actual building. Here it is no longer the spectator who watches but the visionary; where the narration is not placed on stage, but place and space and the mode of deciphering is analogical; where abstraction hides the concrete essence of its indications.⁴⁶

Though taken from the world of video (which, however, is not that distant from theatre anymore), this quote supplies us with a certain illumination on the role of the spectator in relation to this new nature of the world of image. It seems that the preoccupation of most of the practice of the time lived not only in the refusal of the representation of the real, but in creating new worlds which are distant from the real: presentation, yes, but of an experience detached from, if not impossible in, everyday life. The definition of spectator as 'visionary' detaches the experience of the image seen from an idea of 'the real' and implies the production, and not merely the reception, in the body of the spectator of

45 I mean that if Leo III the Isaurian had not known the religious and agitational value of the image he would not, of course, have forbidden it or ordained its destruction.

46 Rosa, Paolo. Notes on *Vedute: Quel Tale non sta mai Fermo*. In *Studio Azzurro: Videoambienti, Ambienti Sensibili e altre esperienze tra Arte, Cinema, Teatro e Musica*. Milan: Feltrinelli, 2007. p. 132-133

worlds that are other to those known and shared. In the *nuova spettacolarità*, then, the stress of the word 'spectacularity' falls not so much on the idea of 'the spectacular' as it does on the idea of spectating, but on a spectating which is not the alienating spectatorship prefigured by Debord: it is much more self-conscious, much more 'emancipated'. As the materials of theatre-making (its characters, its stories) detached themselves from the sphere of literature to move into concept, theatre audiences – and their bodies – became more and more 'present' in the making of theatrical space, thought and experience. The new spectator walks a line between an exasperated individualism of experience (his/her own visions) and the stunning corporeality of the experience of the basement, the videoenvironment, the soundscape, all 'immersive' and against the idea of the distant, private act of 'spectating'. We find ourselves at a crossroads which finds body and spirit insolubly linked in the notion of spectatorship: the oniric vision and the sensual experience which happen – have to happen – hand in hand, like Saint Teresa's ecstasy.

As a document of this shift, I propose the piece *Last Concert Polaroid* (1979), a concert/performance (much like Sanzio's recent *Ingiuria*) which ended the era of the Il Carrozzone company being called Il Carrozzone ('The Caravan') and inaugurated the company name Magazzini Criminali ('Criminal Warehouses'). The entire aesthetic apparatus of the company was hence renewed, out of the theatre and into the club, out of the caravan and into the warehouse. New spectacularity appears to dust away any remains of what was once hailed as theatricality. In the words of Giorgio Barberio Corsetti, 'even

theatre is a genre in itself, and genre is a dirty word'⁴⁷.

When I think about that period, I think of those extreme gestures in which you cut off a part of your body and throw it away. At a certain point, this extremism of emptying the stage brought us to the absolute void. (...) It was an extremism that always took us to the limits. Or even outside.⁴⁸

So what is *wanted* from this image? What is this image there to do? To begin this conversation, since the function that this image does *not* serve is its classic, representational function, I would like to synthesise this image and what it *does* or aims to do under three headings: (i) this image aims to create worlds which are to be seen but as visions – they are there but *they do not exist*; (ii) image is pervasive and immersive (and thus can be physically implicating); (iii) image is elusive, in the sense that it has the possibility to flee the realm of sign systems (and as such is also classless), but can be allusive because it has the flexibility to adopt objects from a determined sign system to use in an undetermined, 'new' one. This image hence seems to me to be suspended in between its possibilities of embodiment and its possibilities of 'unreality', as if the assumed postulate were that the body allows us to travel into the Unreal and vice versa, the unreal can make us travel into the body: the mechanism endlessly works both ways. How can we find a vocabulary suitable for talking about the contour and importance given to this particular image in this particular theatre?

47 Corsetti, Giorgio Barberio, quoted by Ponte di Pino, Oliviero in *Il nuovo teatro italiano 1975-1988. La ricerca dei gruppi: materiali e documenti*. Florence: La Casa Usher, 1988. Also accessible at trax.it/olivieropdp/barberio88.htm

48 Ibid.

The investigative reflex pushes toward semiotics and quickly becomes inadequate. Pierce's visual categories initially interested me – specifically, the category of thirdness⁴⁹. According to Pierce, thirdness is the relation-state of looking, the final stage in the process during which what is seen collides with consciousness and culture, thus supplying the overriding identity of the seen object by the seeing subject. In Pierce, the quantitative category corresponding to thirdness is 'all', as opposed to 'some' and to 'this'. But is 'all' really the location of this image? All is still a quantitative category: it is still a quantity. If 'all' is intended as the 'sum' of fragments of experience, then this definition does not suit an idea of *sensual ensemble*; it still refers strongly to an idea of seeing and hence knowing, an idea which this image wants to escape. So although it leaves open an entrance, is this entrance wide enough to fall out of linguistic categories? In other words, can it travel 'beyond semiotics'⁵⁰?

Deleuze devoted a great part of *Cinéma 2* to critiquing the idea of thirdness and *beyonding it*, we could say, with the definition of the opsign or – better for our argument here – sonsign (*son* + *signe*: *its* sign or *sound* sign) which in Deleuze's later words 'started everything off again, from the inside'⁵¹. The sonsign is an active definition coined in order to surpass thirdness, to acknowledge the duration, the scope and the density of thirdness: what

49 Peirce, Charles S. *Peirce on Signs: Writings on Semiotics*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991.

50 'Jagger's singing on *Exile on Main St.* is pure glossolalia, a reminder that language is irreducible to words. (...) When we're in the space of cultural criticism we're never in the space only of writing in the narrow sense; indeed it's that precisely that sense of writing which we need to open up and move beyond.' Lucy, Niall. *Beyond Semiotics: Text, Culture and Technology*. London: Continuum, 2001. p. 12

51 Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinéma 2 : the Time Image*. translation by Tomlinson et al. London: Continuum, 2005. pp. 32-33

distinguishes thirdness from the sonsign is the *beyondness* contained in the sonsign, the core of infinity not displayed in the number three (though of course three and infinity have a lot in common in Western thought and ideology).

Rancière, thinking about the dimensional shift that occurs in Deleuze's critique of Peirce's fundamental intuition, writes that what Deleuze is doing is 'shifting the argument of the image from images as part of a philosophy of nature to images as part of a philosophy of spirit'⁵². Into the 'regime of aesthetics', in Rancière's own words, which is 'opposed to representation'⁵³.

This statement of Rancière's really shifts something, because what it seems to me to most importantly do is drag semiotic discourse, phenomenological discourse and perceptual discourse into a metaphysical discourse. So that by doing this, it also re-grounds the 'importance', I want to say, of aesthetics and of the image: its possibility to 'set off from the inside' which cannot exist if we consider image as merely a question of the Real⁵⁴. In order to soundly conceive that image can go beyond the seen (and hence create *that which is not seen or seeable*) we need to ground aesthetics in spirit and, in the case of this theatre, in a physical metaphysics: a place where body is aesthetics is spirit. In this sense, I want to think about the following passage by Jean-Luc Nancy to stress a certain kind of metaphysicality offered by the image (and more specifically, by the work of art):

52 Rancière, Jacques. *Film Fables*. Trans. E. Batista. London: Berg, 2006. p.113

53 Rancière, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics*, translation by G. Rockhill. London: Continuum, 2004. p. 22.

54 'Art matters because it provides heightened, intensified and highly integrated experiences of meaning, using all of our ordinary resources of meaning-making' Johnson, Mark, paraphrasing John Dewey's *Art as Experience* (1937) in *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007. p. 208

It [image] is not the translation of a state of the soul: it is the soul itself that presses and pushes onto the image; or rather the image is this pressure, this animation and emotion. It does not give the signification of this pressure (...). It is therefore not representation: it is an imprint of the intimacy of its passion (of its motion, its agitation, its tension, its passivity). It is not an imprint in the sense of a type of or a schema that would be set down and fixed. It is rather the movement of the imprint. (...) The image touches me, and, thus touched and drawn by it I get involved (...). There is no image without my too being in its image, but also without passing into it (...) as long as I maintain my regard for it⁵⁵.

So this can re-illuminate us on two fundamental aspects of this image – on the pervasive, conducive, immersive qualities of it, but also, and especially, on the motion of the image, on the making of itself through its own movement and through the movement of the seer's *regard*. The 'movement of the imprint of the intimacy of its passion' makes us understand image as charged air, electrified, in constant motion, tension, distension, as a weave of *renvois*⁵⁶, as Nancy himself defines aural experience in *Listening*, of resonances. The word resonance, or *renvoi*, implies a temporality and an inter-subjectivity. What resonates has to happen over time and has to happen between active subjects. So that in effect, we are getting closer to image as event rather than image as object. At the same time, in this becoming event, what is also happening is that we are acknowledging the invisibility of the image: movement is not object; action is not object. This eventness of the image and its inter-subjectivity as condition gets us closer to this place where we can be 'visionaries'.

55 Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Ground of the Image*. Trans. J. Fort. New York: Fordham University Press, 2005. p. 7

56 Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Listening*. Trans. C. Mandel. New York: Fordham, 2007.

'Resonance' was also a term chosen by sensualist anthropologists of the 1950s to define what one could 'catch' by living within a system of images of another culture. Resonances necessary to annihilate the distance in the study of a culture, to understand not merely the isolated wave but the space, the time, the substance it travels through in order to be heard: again not the sum, but the whole which is not necessarily sum of the parts. Rhoda Métraux's study *Resonance in Imagery*⁵⁷ is concerned with maintaining an intersensory and subjective rapport with the cultures studied, challenging the anthropologist's fourth wall between the observer and the observed⁵⁸. The reason I borrow this moment from anthropology is to highlight a movement that has been in the process of occurring across disciplines from the observational to the sensual. This shift has produced what we now term 'sensory studies' and in many ways it is in this interdisciplinary field that this project moves. Métraux is interested not in the analysis of the system as a static whole, but in the system in motion, in the way that, dynamically, images resonate with or against each other. In other words, not the images but the fluid spaces between the images, the movement that dresses the system of its implications. Métraux's 'imagery' is more than a synonym for thirdness: it is an inter-image relation-image, open to *becoming* sonsign, open to becoming spirit (though of course bound to anthropological discourse, not to aesthetic experience – but maybe spiritual experience?). Métraux's and Mead's work on imagery reminds us that, although it may pose problems, we cannot decide that chains of images are only chains of images

57 Mead, Margaret and Métraux, Rhoda. *The Study of Culture at a Distance*. Oxford: Berghahn, 1953.

58 Ibid. p. 343

and we cannot adopt for image the language of language: each image exists with its pulviscular cloud of cultural, symbolic, sensual and necessarily affective implications. It reminds us, like Nancy, that there is something in the way we perceive things that makes it impossible to reduce these 'things' to objects and that hence necessitates another type of investigative means to be noticed. The perceptual domain falls out of certain rules – hearing, however, falls out of these rules more easily than sight. Niall Lucy notes:

Sounds are never something we simply just hear; we never just listen to sounds. We don't just listen, because there are no sonic objects for listening to. There are only sonic events. That sounds can be transmitted across space and recorded over time is no proof at all for an object-value for sound. Like the objectifiable written word, the sound-object is a theoretical convenience: the one is always subject to event-ualities of being read, the other to being heard [and there are, I would add, for a 'visual object' at the theatre, event-ualities of being seen]. In this way it may be possible to hear the sound of one hand clapping, on the model of narrating the event of a dream. Dreams aren't nothing, on say the model of a square triangle, but what they are has no materiality beyond so many electrical impulses in the brain. Yet dreams are not reducible to these impulses, any more than sounds can be reduced to precise configurations of sound, pitch, tone, frequency and other variables.⁵⁹

In the way that 'dreams aren't nothing', the 'cloud' of the vision is not nothing. A cloud is air and water, but air and water are not nothing. They simply live in between visibility and invisibility, as object and as event. If we see a cloud and it subsequently disappears, it is not because it is *not there anymore* – it is there, but it has become invisible. We can still feel its dampness or that it has blocked out some light. There are physical effects of metaphysical entities:

⁵⁹ Lucy, Niall. *Beyond Semiotics: Text, Culture and Technology*. London: Continuum, 2001. p. 72

We used to assist to the obviousness with which they consented to that world. In Amleto I didn't consent. I was obliged to, because I was sitting in a corner opposite the exit. Three hours of emptiness and eternal madness to kill me repeatedly with gunshots until my entire body was reduced to a sieve.⁶⁰

My feeling is that something very real can be taken from the aesthetics of sound to project into our talking of image, that image can (and in the manifestos of the theatre discussed here must) have ambitions of existing and being perceived in a similar fashion to sound. This beyondness, this zero, this Unreal, this wave, are often discussed when talking about sound. Sound is event, as Lucy states, and we do not find it difficult, in our philosophy, in our categories, to accept it as such and at the same time, to use it as the invisible thread that brings together body and spirit.

In song and in dance man presents himself as a member of a superior community: he has unlearned to walk and talk, and as he dances he is close to flying away into the air. In his attitudes magic speaks. And as meanwhile animals now speak and the earth gives milk and honey, from man himself something supernatural also resounds: he feels like a god and his movement is now captivated and sublime, as he saw the gods move in his dreams.⁶¹

Sound and spirit have things in common, as so much literature, so much art, so many religions remind us. Nietzsche's concept of the Dionysian, though it is only one of many declinations of this correspondence, offers some of its most visionary definitions: 'the character of music in general (...) the overwhelming power of sound, the compact torrent of melody and the world not at all

60 Ventrucci, Cristina. 'Cicatrici di un'abitudine del teatro', in Castellucci, Romeo/Societas Raffaello Sanzio. *Epitaph*. Milan: Ubulibri and Besançon: Les Solitaires Intempestifs, 2003. p. 32

61 Nietzsche, Friedrich. *La Nascita Della Tragedia*. Rome: Laterza, 1992. p. 26

incomparable of harmony. In the Dionysian dithyramb man is excited to the highest exaltation of all his symbolic talents: something never felt finds force to be expressed; it is the destruction of Maya's veil, the being one with the genius of the species, or rather of nature.'⁶² It is not only that for centuries sound has been considered as a means to 'leap into' spirit, so to speak – it is also that sound and spirit share some ties, some essences. As R. Murray Schafer notes, 'it was not until the Renaissance that God became portraiture. Previously he had been conceived as sound and vibration. In the Zoroastrian religion, the priest Srosh (representing the genius of hearing), stands in between man and the pantheon of the gods, listening for divine messages'⁶³. Being 'in sound' shares something of being everywhere and nowhere at the same time, in the presence of ghosts, or of course, gods. 'Something supernatural also resounds'⁶⁴. Linda Phyllis Austern states in her introduction to *Music, Sensation and Sensuality* that 'convention demands silence on the 'musical examples' at the core of a learned journal article and discreet fragmentation of the orgiastic experience of a rock concert in a review.'⁶⁵ As if writing about sound, especially from a non-scientific point of view, is traditionally writing without the body about something which is in the body, and at the same time writing with materiality about something which seems to have the nature of spirit. The limits that manifest themselves seem to rise from two sources apparently in contradiction: writing with the ear is writing with too much body but with too little reality. Too

62 Nietzsche, Friedrich. *La Nascita Della Tragedia*. Rome: Laterza, 1992. p. 31

63 Schafer, R. Murray. *The Soundscape: our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Rochester, Vermont: Destiny Books, 1994. p. 10

64 Nietzsche, Friedrich. *La Nascita Della Tragedia*. Rome: Laterza, 1992. p. 31

65 Austern, Linda Phyllis et al, *Music, Sensation and Sensuality*. London: Routledge, 2002. p. 1.

much corporeality yet too little materiality. It is suspended not in the centre of two ways of thinking but in the space between the two: a peripheral centre, embodied yet abstract.

Let the senses vibrate and your brain will vibrate! Let the senses vibrate through the unexpected, the mysterious, the unknown and you will have the real, intense, deep commotion of the soul!⁶⁶

This trouble that exists in ear-writing is trouble because it sits uneasily with some of the pillars of Western philosophy: it sits uneasily with ocularcentricity, with Cartesian dualism, with a traditional place of aesthetics. All of the above limit sound but also limit the conversations that can be had pertaining to image. The intent of this thesis, then, is to make sense of some of the ideas that exist around sound with the instruments of performance and vice versa; to challenge some of the underlying preconceptions that come from the centre and do not sit well in the peripheral space generated between body on stage and body as spectator; to make some suggestions as to what that space is and how we may build thought around it without having to constantly hesitate on an unsuitable tightrope. To confront the nature and the ambitions of a certain kind of theatre – the post-avangarde – with an alternative set of instruments. To speak of this work *as if* we were speaking of sound, allowing the image itself to resonate within us, to see if it does indeed have a core that can be understood across perceptual frameworks. To listen: to re-speak of sensation through the body and re-write it through the ear, to be sensualist audience members of a sensualist theatre. I will attempt to write some of the 'slippery' mechanisms that happen

66 Luigi Russolo, *L'Arte dei Rumori*. Venice: Edizioni Futuriste di 'Poesia', 1916. pp. 90-91

between our senses and the world, some of the in-betweeness that determines how we spectate. The paradigm of sound will serve me as a way out of purely objective points of view which could be 'both naïve and at the same time dishonest, because they take for granted, without explicitly mentioning, it, the other point of view, namely that of consciousness, through which from the outset a world forms itself for me and begins to exist for me.'⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. Smith, Colin. Routledge: London, 2003. p. IX

Interlude #1.

Music sets out to turn soft into hard, to harden Eurydice's name, to remove her from the realm of epitaphs and marble etchings, it seeks to deliver her from the minimal prison of the written, spoken, sung name, from the congealing gaol of two-dimensional images. Eurydice, Eurydice, Eurydice, come down from the painting where you lie trapped, step out of the immobilizing icon. She leaves the word. Arises from her name. Frees herself from the cartouche. Removes herself from representation. Rediscovered movement, solidity, her dissolved flesh and vanished radiance, the material volume of her body, the delicate, satiny texture of her skin, the variable, clear, coloured light of her gaze, the horizontal agility of her gait as it adapts to the ground, the weight of her chest, hips, shoulders and neck, her hard skeleton. She steps softly out of shadow, image and word. The word is made flesh. Evocation: something, flesh, emerges from voice. (...) Voice makes the name flesh, delivers words from death, light dispels the darkness, music adds flesh, hardens what is soft: how far does incarnation go?⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Serres, Michel. *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies*. Trans. M. Sankey and P. Cowley. London: Continuum, 2008. p. 132.

C R I, or: how far *does* incarnation go?

He [James Abbott] has managed to imagine a world that doesn't exist but through the form of art, the form of poetry, I can now say that this world *is*, that it *does* exist.⁶⁹

Chiara Guidi

In this chapter I shall move into the idea of using sound as a metaphor to understand the theatre of the Società Raffaello Sanzio. I shall address some of the discourses which permeate the work of the company and the work that visual theatre allows us to do more generally. In order to talk of sound as a metaphor for this theatre we will also need to look into some of the ideas surrounding the image, visual theatres, aesthetics and sound in itself.

As I have previously stated, this piece of work is dedicated to understanding some of the mechanisms, in art, which move *beyond* an image. The visual theatre of the Società Raffaello Sanzio, its roots (conscious or unconscious), its motives and its 'movements towards' are the object of my enquiry. Sound, and the blossoming space of an interdisciplinary sound theory, is the place towards which my analysis moves, considering it a suitable pool from which to borrow viewpoints, insights and terminology. But the reason sound is even present in my analysis is due to some particular aspects of

⁶⁹ Guidi, Chiara interviewed for Santarcangelo39 on the topic of *Flatlandia*. Video accessed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9dT3YmNkRyY&feature=related> on 20/05/2010

Sanzio's work which have pushed me to think of their theatre *as if it were* sound, and sometimes music. I have experienced a lack of terminology, in the visual, to write about certain companies who work in the sphere of the visual (Sanzio amongst others). In other words, in the theatre and the theorising of that theatre there is a black hole, a place where description stops, where we are somehow 'not doing justice' to the experience of spectatorship, where we block the mechanism of incarnation⁷⁰. It is not the formal attachment to music present in Sanzio's work (though it is not only formal) which motivates my necessity to bring sound into a discussion about visual theatres. Rather, the heart of my investigation is a restlessness within the work, the search for the previously mentioned zeros, beyonds, unrels, spirits: the bodily and spiritual, carnal and transcendent core that seems to rattle within the work, that seems to constitute its pulse. Having recognised this force, my feeling is that the dialectic of sound and of music could accommodate the questions of the work better than a purely visual analysis of the work. This writing is not so much concerned with 'what happens on stage' but with what happens beyond the stage, in the body and thoughts of the spectator and in the space between spectating and action, movement, where meaning is generated. This writing is a way, in the words of Elinor Fuchs, to watch the planet and 'listen to its "music"'⁷¹. In *Noise*, Jacques Attali offers this definition of music:

70 Serres, Michel. *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies*. Trans. M. Sankey and P. Cowley. London: Continuum, 2008. p. 132

71 Fuchs, Elinor. 'EF's Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play'. Duke University Press: *Theater*, Volume 34, Number 2, Summer 2004, pp. 4-9

(...) music is a credible metaphor of the real. It is neither an autonomous activity nor an automatic indicator of the economic infrastructure, It is a herald, for change is inscribed in noise faster than it transforms society. Undoubtedly, music is a play of mirrors in which every activity is reflected, defined, recorded, and distorted. If we look at one mirror, we see only an image of another. But at times a complex mirror game yields a vision that is rich, because unexpected and prophetic. At times it yields nothing but the swirl of the void.⁷²

Attali is putting *prophecy* into noise – thus, he is giving it the power to foresee, control, but also and perhaps more importantly, to *make* the world. In his use of the play of mirrors metaphor, Attali highlights the aspect of music that differentiates it, we can assume, from the visual. Nietzsche called music 'the Dionisian mirror of the world'⁷³. Attali variates on this theme: 'it is thus an immaterial recording surface for human works, the mark of something missing, a shared utopia to decipher, information in negative, a collective *memory* allowing those who hear it to record their own personalized, specified, modeled meanings, affirmed in time with the beat – a collective memory of order and genealogies, the repository of the word and the social score.'⁷⁴

So Attali is implying that music is at work as mirror, as negative, as prophecy and as memory, as utopia, as imagined space, as unimagined space, all at the same time. Part of this implication is that what is happening within music is not necessarily *known* or *understood* by music. Music is not mere reflection, but reflection 'at its extreme'. Reflection with relation, with the existent

72 Attali, Jacques. *Noise: the Political Economy of Music*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985. p.5

73 Friedrich Nietzsche. 'Twilight of the Idols' in *A Nietzsche Reader*. New York: Penguin Books, 1977. p. 70.

74 Attali, Jacques. *Noise: the Political Economy of Music*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985. p.5

and the non-existent, reflection revelatory of the 'hypertext'⁷⁵ of the relations, of what is happening behind syntax, beyond syntax (in its largest sense). And Dyonisian: 'from man in himself something supernatural also resounds.'⁷⁶ Attali is arguing that that 'something supernatural' contains prophecy, makes things happen, tells that which has the conditions or the possibilities to happen, although unimaginable outside of the music. And the music somehow tells that thing that is not happening but *is*, but *can* – it tells it, but in the space of music, in the space 'between noise and silence, in the space of the social codifications it reveals.'⁷⁷ The prophecy and its resonance are offered and received in that space, in that interstice of meaning, in that interstice of life. It *means* but it means beyond. It is perceived, but does not translate. It lingers in that space until it happens. Utopias which happen stop being utopias. A place is either place or non-place, matter or anti-matter. 'Meaning at its extreme' happens underneath, or above, these dichotomies. In sound, at its extreme, these dichotomies are resolved. As Steven Connor suggests,

A world of sound is a world grasped as irreducibly and undecomposably compound. The difficulty of conceiving this state becomes apparent as soon as one inspects the metaphors we habitually use to think of that which is conjoined. 'Complexity' has at its root the idea of one surface folded over upon another. Collage and juxtaposition similarly focusses attention on the edges or outward surfaces of things brought up against each other. (...) Our language tends to separate the compound into the merely com-posite, into the setting together, surface against surface, or edge against edge, of

⁷⁵ Carlo Infante talks of theatre as 'hypertext' in his *Imparare Giocando: Interattività tra Teatro e Ipermedia*. Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2000.

⁷⁶ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy*. quoted by Attali, Jacques in *Noise: the Political Economy of Music*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985. p.5

⁷⁷ Attali, Jacques. *Noise: the Political Economy of Music*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985.

entities which remain entire. The vernacular language is a little wiser. Where we have traditionally spoken of the making of music as a composition, this act is more likely to be named in contemporary sound practice as a process of 'mixing' (...), a process more akin to cooking and chemistry than to calculation. Sound belongs to what the philosopher Michel Serres has called a 'philosophy of mixed bodies', bodies which are compound all the way through.⁷⁸

Jean-Luc Nancy talks of 'meaning at the extreme' in his *Listening* and calls it *sens sensé* ('sensed sense' but also 'sensed meaning' or 'sensical meaning', 'meaning that makes sense'). He writes that 'listening is listening to something other than sense in its signifying sense'⁷⁹, so that 'beyond A minor there is A minor, in its *sens sensé*'⁸⁰. Therefore A minor, the words, the writing of them but even the sound, are but an icon of A minor. A minor is beyond the senses. A minor, behind the words and the sounds and any linguistic categories, exists as A minor at its extreme. And Nancy argues that when we listen to A minor, it is the extreme of A minor that we are listening to: something other than sense in its signifying sense. And Nancy's thesis is that this happens in listening, but not in viewing. Though Nancy's work concentrates greatly on the transcendent possibilities of image, his writing about image always keeps in mind that the image starts as a linguistic sign, as a signifier – and from this signifier we can travel, but we are bound to the image. In effect, the image has boundaries, especially the pictorial or photographic image which lies at the core of Nancy's analysis. Listening, on the other hand, has within itself not the faculty or the

78 Connor, Steven. *Ears have Walls: on Hearing Art*. A talk given in the series 'Bodily Knowledges: Challenging Ocularcentricity' at Tate Modern, 21st February 2003. Published in FO A RM, 4 (2005), 48-57.

79 Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Listening*. Trans. C. Mandell. New York: Fordham, 2006. pp. 11-12

80 Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Listening*. Trans. C. Mandell. New York: Fordham, 2006. pp. 11-12

interpretational option, but the condition, the automatism of listening to the sens
sensé, to meaning at its extreme:

Sound has no hidden face; it is all in front, in back, and outside inside, inside-out in relation to the most general logic of presence as appearing, as phenomenality or as manifestation, and thus as the visible presence of subsisting in self. (...) To listen is to enter that spatiality by which, at the same time, I am penetrated, for it opens up in me as well as around me, as from me as well as toward me: it opens inside as well as outside, and it is through such a double, quadruple, or even sextuple opening that a 'self' can take place.⁸¹

If this is indeed the case, then we do, as Fuchs suggests, need to start thinking about how we can *listen* to performance. If our theatre-makers embark on the work with what we have called an intention of beyondness, if they wish to refuse the real to make the Unreal, we need to investigate the audible space of performance, the space I have described through the words of Serres, Nancy, Nietzsche and Attali. The space which contains clarity but which is Dionysian at the same time, where the body meets meaning, where meaning is meaning in itself. The space which in sonic terms is meaning at its extreme but which in visual (visual-linguistic) terms can fall dangerously towards absence of meaning. How can this space be mapped in performance? How can we find that intersensory but extrasensory space when we are talking image, when we are talking bodies and 'the instruments of here'⁸²?

81 Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Listening*. Trans. C. Mandell. New York: Fordham, 2006. p. 15-16. When Nancy uses the word 'self', however, he is not only referring to our 'soi' but to the 'en soi' of listening it-self.

82 Castellucci, Claudia and Romeo. *Les Pèlerins de la Matière: théorie et praxis du théâtre*. Besançon: Les Solitaires Intempestifs, 2001. p. 16

In my argument at the beginning of this thesis I briefly outlined the basic terms of Peirce's notion of 'thirdness' and went on to talk of Deleuze and Rancière's critiques of 'thirdness' and its confrontation with the opsign or sonsign which 'set everything off again, from the inside'⁸³. It is precisely in the space of the opsign or sonsign that my spectating of Sanzio seemed to take place: my analysis is concerned with the image that sets everything off from the inside, in the 'movement of the imprint of the intimacy of its passion [of the image]'⁸⁴. However, I wonder if this semiotic and cinematic term, this linguistic term in brief, opsign or sonsign, is entirely capable of the 'movement towards' existent in the theatre. I question, in other words, whether even the term coined by Deleuze is mobile or liquid enough to exist in the movement of the imprint without imposing its own semiotic logic, without becoming the imprint that Nancy clearly states is not the imprint he is interested in when writing about image⁸⁵. I question whether this term can define the space in which we fall into meaning at its extreme – if this term has any of the force of the *soi-ness* which Nancy describes. In other words, I question if we are still miles away, in this coining of terms, from the space between noise and silence that Attali discusses – whether Deleuze's thinking obliges us to remain in the imagined, hard, possessable Real and to grant ourselves no opening into the spatiality of sound.

In refining my language for the space within which this specific intervention can take place I would like to take a term from James Abbott's 1884 novella *Flatland: a Romance of Many Dimensions*, adapted for the stage by

83 Rancière, Jacques. *Film Fables*. trans. by Emiliano Batista. London: Berg, 2006. p.113

84 Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Ground of the Image*. Trans. J. Fort. New York: Fordham, 2005. p. 7

85 Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Ground of the Image*. Trans. J. Fort. New York: Fordham, 2005. pp. 8-9

Sanzio: I would like to start talking about *fourthness*.

In Abbott's novel a square, who is an inhabitant of Flatland, tells the story of his life and of his land, a world in two dimensions, in which everything moves on a surface, as if trapped on a sheet of paper. Abbott's narrative includes descriptions of worlds with one and worlds with no dimensions, but the crux of the story involves the square meeting a sphere, a creature from Spaceland. The discovery of Spaceland leads to the massacre or imprisonment of many inhabitants of Flatland, for having dared to venture into the unimaginable. During the square's encounter with the sphere, the square asks if the sphere can also lead him into the fourth dimension, to which the sphere replies no, because it is not possible. There is a great deal of political critique and satire in Abbott's text, but Sanzio's interpretation of it (obliquely political, but firmly political also) focuses chiefly on the possibilities of imagination and the idea that art is the place where what is deemed unreal can come into existence:

What is fascinating about this writer is that through writing, through description, he has managed to imagine a world that doesn't exist but through the form of art, the form of poetry, I can now say that this world is, that it does exist. It's the magic of poetry, of the gap between reality and poetry. He has created a world which is now defined and geometricizable, describable – visible, almost – so clearly that I can now enter that world and discover it. (...) The strength of this book is the possibility of pushing into a world, through art, which is apparently empty, apparently inexistent, but which becomes explorable through the visual capacities of the artist.⁸⁶

The real force of Flatland, then, in engaging with Sanzio's practice, is the

⁸⁶ Guidi, Chiara interviewed for Santarcangelo39 on the topic of Flatlandia. Video accessed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9dT3YmNkRxY&feature=related> on 20/05/2010

prefiguration within it of the fourth dimension. The text does something very simple but very powerful by asking the question of what exists and what can be imagined. The old question: if flowers didn't exist, for example, would we be able to imagine them? The main trait that connotes the fourth dimension for the reader who finds him/herself at the end of Abbott's text is that though it is thinkable, it does not exist. Another way of saying that something does not exist is to say that it is 'virtual', from the Latin *virtus* "virtue, faculty, power". Therefore the non-existence implicit in the word 'virtual' is a non-existence *in potentia*: non-existence with the potential to exist. Alessandro Martin writes that for this reason 'virtual reality should be considered as a project, as an imagined, desired, wanted and constructed reality, produced by individuals and inhabited by those very individuals.'⁸⁷

The theatre has always come into these conversations about the virtual, as the physical simulation of a mental space⁸⁸; theatre, representational or opposed to representation, can be fitted into this definition: making theatre as the process of making present that which is imaginary, that which is potentially existent in its being thinkable; moreover, the materialization of this process involves movement, liveness and three-dimensionality. The possibilities opened up by the use of virtual technologies in the theatre from the 1970s onwards re-fuelled this conversation about the virtual and the nature of the theatre: in a way, the insertion of the virtual into the theatre is the assemblage of two types

87 Martin, Alessandro. *Reale, Materiale e Virtuale*. Published on noemalab.org. Accessed at http://www.noemalab.org/sections/ideas/ideas_articles/pdf/martin_reale_materiale.pdf on 16/04/2010

88 'The ancient theatre invented with the alphabet in Greece was the physical simulation of a mental space, virtual reality is the psychological simulation of a physical space.' De Kerckhove, Derrick. 'Il Senso Comune del Virtuale' in *VIRTUAL* 4 (April 1993).

of virtual, of two types of potentially real, highlighting two versions of what Chiara Guidi refers to as the gap between reality and poetry.

Poetry is not to be a part, nor yet a copy of the real world (as we commonly understand that phrase), but a world by itself, independent, complete, autonomous.⁸⁹

It is in the space of this virtuality (and of this lust for virtuality) that the theatre of the Societas Raffaello Sanzio moves. This virtuality, however, is not to be intended merely in the sense of 'video' or 'multimedia' performance, but in the sense of a research of spaces in which to experiment existence. From this point of view, thinking in terms of sound can serve as a good device to think of the visual, because sight gives us, traditionally, the impression of being already, or being external, being materialised, provable, possessed. Sound, which in its not-existing *in potentia* flees symbolical interpretation and obliges us to think a discourse in motion and the A minor of A minor, in which the co-ordinates get mapped as we go on listening, is a more fluid and truly experimental way of confronting fourthness, or the virtual, or what is thinkable but has yet to be discovered. After all, until we hear something, that something does not exist: it hasn't happened. Then it happens, and it exists. But then it passes. Was it real? Where is it now?

It is in this necessity of beyondness, then, in this evasion from Flatland *and* from Sphereland, that sound comes naturally into our discussion. For this intervention, let's consider this metaphorical listening as the fourthness of

⁸⁹ Bradley, Andrew Cecil. *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, 1909. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961. p 5 quoted in Harris, Max. *Theater and Incarnation*. London: Macmillan, 1990. p. 38

spectating. Listening as spectating posits an engaging attitude interested chiefly in what happens beyond the visual as an inhabitation of the aural (which 'appeals to the inner man'⁹⁰). Music, perhaps, and not sound, since like theatre, music is composed (or of course mixed). Music is written and performed, ordering the aural world into work, into pieces, whether we are thinking of Western or non-Western music traditions. This 'something supernatural' is a bending of codes by human beings for other human beings – it is divine, but made by people. It is inner, but a shared experience. It is in an interstice that it produces sense, in the interstice between body and thought (though is there really such an interstice?). It is the place in which art really *moves*.

God is sound. It manifests itself in the silence of non existence with a voice, a noise, be it brush or beat, sneeze or blow, it exhales, it breathes, speaks, sings, shouts, cries out, coughs, weeps, vomits, thunders – or plays an instrument. (...) And so man is born from sound, he enters into possession of a song which is 'already his own', lives to know its notes and desires the reconnection with a primitive universal melody.⁹¹

This Marius Schneider quote is intended to make us think for a minute that one of the places where this movement has been discussed is ethnomusicology, which has had to look for ways to write about this aforementioned 'too much corporeality, too little materiality'. Ethnomusicology is concerned with the coincidence between sound, rhythm, the body, the divine, and the theatre; like Métraux and the sensualist anthropologists, it is confronted

90 'Man's nature is twofold, an outer and an inner. The senses to which he offers himself as a subject for art are those of Vision and Hearing: to the eye appeals the outer man, the inner to the ear.'

Wagner, Richard. 'Artistic Man and Art Derived Directly from Him'. In *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*. London: Wagner Society London Branch, 1893. p. 91

91 Schneider, Marius. *La Musica Primitiva*. Milan: Adelphi, 1992. p. 96

constantly with the impossibilities brought about by the traditional philosophical contrapositions of the subjective and the objective, of the sciences and the arts, of the body and the soul. In writing about Sanzio in this thesis I am also dealing with these connections, re-injecting a ritual focus into the experience of going to a theatre, to see visual work, in the 21st century. Not as a form of spectatorship, but as an essence of what it is to spectate – a verb which has in itself a distance – of what it is to perform the act of audience, or even cliraudience⁹². My feeling is that some assumptions that we make in discussing experiences of ritual and folk theatres (notions of participation, sensuality and communal affect and spiritual change and exchange – which were also prevalent in the historical avantgardes) need to be re-instated to talk of some of the theatres that Hans-Thies Lehmann has described as post-dramatic⁹³, in which it is the relationship between audience and spectacle that meaning is generated, that sense is made. In bringing listening into a discussion on spectating I am making an Artaudian call to rethink the *importance* of the experience of the theatre, of art and of aesthetics:

If we have come to attribute to art nothing more than the values of pleasure and relaxation and constrain it to a purely formal use of forms within the harmony of certain external relations, that in no way spoils its profound expressive value; but the spiritual infirmity of the Occident, which is the place par excellence where men have confused art with aestheticism, is to think that its painting would function only as painting, dance which would be merely plastic, as if in an attempt to castrate the forms of art, to sever their ties with all the mystic attitudes they might acquire in confrontation with the absolute.⁹⁴

92 Schafer, R. Murray. *The Soundscape: our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Rochester: Destiny Books, 1977. p. 10.

93 Lehmann, Hans-Thies. *Postdramatic Theatre*. Trans. Karen Jürs-Munby. London: Routledge, 2006.

94 Artaud, Antonin. *The Theatre and its Double*. Trans. Mary Caroline Richards. New York: Grove Press, 1958. p. 69

Here Artaud is polemicising with three main, intertwined, factors that have led us to the 'spiritual infirmity of the Occident'⁹⁵: the correspondence of art and pleasure, the adherence to 'external' harmonic relations and the lack of confrontation with the absolute. Artaud is saying that the absolute needs to exist in the internal, and that the expression of this internal is not linked to pleasure, or as he disapprovingly states, 'relaxation'. Artaud's battle cry, his *cri* in fact, is an aesthetic cry, a philosophical cry, a cry for meaning – the cry of a trapped animal, trapped in manner and mannerisms, form and formalism, calling for 'expression' in 1938. Artaud's frustration concerns a number of aspects of theatre and its role, or rather the artist and his/her role. On the one side there is his anger at the exclusion of the body, the lack of anarchy, blood and sperm (to take some terms from *Heliogabalus*); on the other the exasperation of the artist obliged to inhabit a secondary category, art as a second class citizen⁹⁶.

I interpret Artaud's thirst as a thirst for a re-coincidence of body and meaning, body and politics, body and change. A need to place art in a place of *importance*, in a place of *mattering*, *matter* which needed to *matter* again. Artaud's theatre of cruelty was based on a language between gesture and thought: looking closely, we notice we are there again, in that space again. The

95 In my introduction I spoke about some of the threads of new- and post- that follow into the post-avantgarde from the historical avantgarde; amongst these, I briefly mentioned an early 1980s resurgence of primitivist and orientalist tendencies. When Artaud talks about the Orient or about the Occident, when he talks about rite and cry, it cannot be forgotten that Artaud is, in many ways, what we call an 'Orientalist': his image of the Orient is the projection of an ideal, received from other orientalists, such as Gauguin and Rousseau. An ideal which is partly innocent but also partly malicious. In his writing he is unaware of the 'marketing' of the Balinese dance he had seen at the International Exhibition – he exists in another *Zeitgeist*. I would like the reader to keep this in mind, as a backdrop to my writing about Artaud and to this piece in general; at the same time, I believe this does not invalidate Artaud's *ars poetica*, which is dense, complex, and filled with intuitions nonetheless.

96 Johnson, Mark. *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. p. 236

interstice of existence, the place where the body meets the soul, where A minor is A minor, where meaning is at its extreme. The place, also, as I have previously mentioned, which rejects, has to reject, traditional philosophical dualism. Which not only separates gesture and thought, but as a consequence also separates art and *matter*, art and meaning, confusing art with pleasure. Artaud is calling, cruelty is calling, sensualist theatre, visual theatre (in this incarnation) is calling for meaning embodied, for a world which does not exist and ends up existing in the body, being finally thinkable in the body. Calling for a form of communication which wants to make present a corporeal virtuality, in effect, shared, real and Unreal at the same time, infinite, absolute and zero. Susan Sontag thus discusses this tension in her essay *Approaching Artaud*:

The difficulties that Artaud laments persist because he is thinking about the unthinkable – about how body is mind and how mind is also a body. This inexhaustible paradox is mirrored in Artaud's wish to produce art that is at the same time anti-art. (...) Artaud's work denies that there is any difference between art and thought, between poetry and truth.⁹⁷

The place for these incarnations to take place is the theatre because art is *action*, not object. Artaud's vision of art and expression put the theatre in the position of paramount responsibility to *move*, I would say, for it contains *movement*, drama, δράω. In being movement, in being human, it almost *has no excuse* to be a practice of relaxation and referentiality – the fact that every body in the system of the theatre was indeed a body gave theatre, as an art form, both an escape route from practices of commodification and commercialization

⁹⁷ Sontag, Susan. *Under the Sign of Saturn*. London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative Society, 1972. pp. 23-24

of art and the possibility to in-corporate the necessities of other art forms, which had been mutated into objects and muted, deprived of movement and voice, indeed of the conditions for the *cri*. Again Sontag writes on the Artaudian imperative, necessity, of the theatre as an expressive medium – I quote at length:

Unlike poetry, an art made out of one material (words), theater uses a plurality of materials: words, light, music, bodies, furniture, clothes. Unlike cinema, an art using only a plurality of languages (images, words, music), theater is carnal, corporeal. Theater brings together the most diverse means – gesture and verbal language, static objects and movement in three-dimensional space. But theater does not become a master art merely by the abundance of its means, however. The prevailing tyranny of some means over others has to be creatively subverted. (...) Assailing as false the priorities of dialogue theater which have subordinated theater to 'literature', Artaud implicitly upgrades the means that characterize such other forms of dramatic performance as dance, oratorio, circus, cabaret, church, gymnasium, hospital operating room, courtroom. (...) A master art cannot be constructed by a series of additions; Artaud is not urging mainly that the theater adds to its means. Instead, he seeks to purge the theater of what is extraneous or easy. In calling for a theater in which the verbally oriented actor of Europe would be retrained as an 'athlete' of the heart, Artaud shows his inveterate taste for spiritual and physical effort – for art as an ordeal. Artaud's theater is a strenuous machine for transforming the mind's conceptions into entirely 'material' events, among which are the passions themselves.⁹⁸

I want to stop for a moment on Sontag's last sentence. She pauses on two aspects of Artaud's theatre which, I would argue, are inherited in full in Sanzio's practice: one is De Kerckhove's previously mentioned notion of the physical simulation of a mental space, central to much writing in and around ideas of

98 Ibid. pp. 32-33

virtuality and virtual theatres⁹⁹. Sontag ties into this idea of physicalization of the mental the idea of 'the passions themselves' as 'material events'. The passions themselves: is she not writing precisely about *sens sensé*? But she is doing something else, taking the same force that exists in Nancy's reflection but *pushing* it– she is making explicit the body that is implicit in Nancy's idea of (embodied?) listening. *Sens sensé*, in Sontag's writing on Artaud, passes through the body of the actor: some of the passion – internal and external in its nature – existent in our idea of sound is being channelled in the body, by the body. This is one of the driving ambitions of Artaud's theatre and this, I believe, is the continuing tension still present in Sanzio: that the sound of things, things 'of the inner man', things in their *sens sensé*, things in their virtual not-being may be made visible, made *felt*, made *sensé* in its plurality of meanings, in the body, through the body, in between 'mingled'¹⁰⁰ bodies. This tension is filtered through the decades in Sanzio's theatre, decades that have mutated (but not muted) Artaud's intentions in transporting them into the now. Decades that have put us in contact with different versions of the word 'machine', of the word 'athlete', which is in many ways a version of the word 'techne'; different versions of the word 'simulation', 'mutation', perhaps also of the word 'cruelty'.

Carlo Infante writes on Artaud's *presages* – he introduces Artaud's work as a 'meme' of experimental performance practice, drawing on Richard Dawkins' notion of units of cultural transmission that abandon its makers to exist

99 Which Carlo Infante offers some reflections on in *Imparare Giocando: Interattività tra Teatro e Ipermedia*. Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2000 and on <http://www.idra.it/cyberia/ScenaImm.htm>
Accessed on 09/08/2010

100 I borrow Serres' terminology from Serres, Michel. *The Five Senses: a Philosophy of Mingled Bodies*. Trans. P. Cowley and M. Sankey. London: Continuum, 2008.

pulviscularly in cultural production:

Artaud's presages, even more than in the 'cruelty' of Hermann Nitsch's body art, have traversed a type of theatrical experimentation as 'memes' – an experimentation that from Living Theatres and Grotowski travelled into the cyber-performance practised by Antunez, Fura Dels Baus and Stelarc, as well as into the Italian Post-avantgarde and groups such as Magazzini Criminali, La Gaia Scienza, Krypton, etc. (...) [these groups] initially staged the pathological-existential dimension of those collective forms of behaviour typical of the late 1970's 'proletarian youth', in a manner which was schizoid more than antagonistic; then, in a second phase, the phase of Valdoca and Societas Raffaello Sanzio, they formalized new types of physical and symbolical auto-exhibition, somewhere between metropolitan hedonism and the search for a strongly 'perceptual' archaism. In these attitudes we can see the precedents of contemporary cyberperformance. We have groups in the wave of cyberpunk that have been working for years on an idea of a 'panic theatre', a quintessentially Artaudian idea.¹⁰¹

Carlo Infante's reflections bring together the spheres we have talked of so far: virtuality, the body, perceptual theatres, 'panic' ideals. In his view it is Artaud's theatre that constitutes the embryonic space for these ideas to form, Artaud's theatre is responsible for engendering these memes. Artaud is unanimously considered father of this battle against the differentiation of the senses and of art and spirit and body and politics, fighter *par excellence* of the canonical cages of art in its various forms, impassive animal, militating for the correspondence of all the parts that form the *cri*, in its whole, the cry complete, which contemporarily body and soul, form and spirit *have to coincide*.

This coincidence, this obligation to considering a unity of intentions, is where music really resonates with our discussion. Music as the sphere where

¹⁰¹ Infante, Carlo. *I Presagi di Artaud*. Published on idra.it, accessed on 09/08/2010 at <http://www.idra.it/cyberia/lpreArta.htm>

body and spirit do not fear coincidence. Theatre as the place in which this force, this coincidence, can be incarnated. I want bring this meditation on Artaud and his influence to a conclusion by citing Gautam Dasgupta's article on the memory of Artaud:

It is this nexus of thinking and its physicalized attributes that distinguishes Artaud from other theorist-practitioners in the theatre, for even though he was emphatic in valuing the physical over the literary on stage, he was far from denying to spectacle the attributes of serious mystical, mythical, and philosophical import. Resolution of Cartesian dualism was integral to his thinking, unlike that of other theorists, such as Vsevolod Meyerhold, whose biomechanics was inspired by Cubo-Futurist aesthetics and Soviet work ethics, and the radical Polish thinker Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz, whose ideas on theatre, art, South Sea island mythologies, even drugs, not unlike that of Artaud's, was linked to his concept of "pure form." Artaud was, finally, a metaphysical thinker, his spirituality formed by a native Catholicism even as he flirted with spiritual notions from other lands and cultures, including Balinese, Indian, Tibetan, Persian, Mayan, and Aztec.¹⁰²

Now, Artaud wrote in *Theatre and The Plague* that 'a real piece of theatre shakes the calm of the senses, frees the oppressed unconscious, pushes toward a sort of virtual revolt (which keeps all of its value by remaining virtual), imposes an attitude which is both difficult and heroic on the assembled congregation'¹⁰³. So theatre should provoke movement, and because of movement, traverse a space: provoke change. I borrow from Mark Johnson's writing about music: 'it captures us, carries us along a sensuous, rhythmic tonal adventure, and then deposits us, changed, in a different place from when we

102 Dasgupta, Gautam. 'Remembering Artaud'. PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art - PAJ 56 (Volume 19, Number 2), May 1997, pp. 1-5

103 Artaud, Antonin. *The Theatre and its Double*. Trans. Mary Caroline Richards. New York: Grove Press, 1958.

started.'¹⁰⁴ There is a travelling involved in art, a motion of some kind. Where does this motion come from?

As Dasgupta points out, at the philosophical core of Artaud's writing, of his theatre and of his life was the resolution of Cartesian dualism (and this is perhaps part of what really builds his ongoing meme), necessary to his understanding, or I would even go as far as saying his *faith* in art and expression. Artaud's *cri* and all the mechanisms it ignited simply could not function in a philosophical system in which the body did not shape thought, in which the body was not the place of meaning-making. But where was the cry if not in the body? What was being felt, and how, if the body was absent? If words were able to happen without thinking the body, then where did they come from? What was their source?

Artaud was human so he cried – he *knew* that meaning was in the body, he knew that his body was shaping his mind; he also knew that art makes body makes thought makes meaning. Dualism breaks all of these links in the chain of meaning – not only body/soul, but also thought/matter, art/meaning, aesthetics/understanding, emotion/understanding – and hence dualism was impossible in Artaud's work, it almost negates it. His meme perhaps survives in great part because in Artaud's language the question of dualism is resolved. But apart from his own (illuminated but also primitivist) language, there was no other Western philosophical language to accommodate his tension, both as a thinker and as a theatre-maker. Artaud faces a search for a language which can evade

104 Johnson, Mark. *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. p. 237

language, a talking cry. 'Cruelty', a word which in Artaud's use has generated so much theorising, has its centre in a body-mind unity: in cruelty the poet is the animal, the thought radiates from the body. The image that responds to the word 'cruelty' has the texture of sound, escapes language like sound, escapes language like much experience of art through the body. Why? Is there a will to put a stop to incarnation?

Susan Sontag, whose writing about Cesare Pavese carries the same clarity as her writing about Artaud (though the two talk in different, almost opposed tones), quotes from Pavese's diary: 'life begins in the body.'¹⁰⁵ She goes on to note: 'he continually gives voice to the reproach that the body makes to the mind. If civilization may be defined as that stage in human life at which, objectively, the body becomes a problem, then our moment of civilization may be described as that stage at which we are subjectively aware of, and trapped by, this problem.'¹⁰⁶

To bind together all the strings so far: meaning at its extreme, the virtual, Abbott, Artaud, Sanzio, the avantgarde, the post-avantgarde. To bring these things together, to identify the music underneath all of these variations, to hear the problem, to hear the pain that permeates the writing, the making, the doing I can say we are in the presence of the feeling described by Sontag: trapped by the problem of the body as a condition of modernity (and of post-modernity).

¹⁰⁵ Sontag, Susan. 'The Artist as Exemplary Sufferer'. In *Against Interpretation and other Essays*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967. p. 44

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. p. 45

Art, in this picture, has a scar to heal: the scar of having lost the body, or rather the importance of the significance of *feeling*. So if we want to do this listening, we need to somehow heal this scar, the scar that Jean-Luc Nancy calls the 'scar of modernity'¹⁰⁷. We need to go back to Constantinian Rome, to Rome before its conversion.

The body becomes a burden not when something is asked of it that it cannot fulfil but when there is an *a priori* deafness in regard to what the body may or may not be able to do. I mean: it is not the alleged secondness of feeling that gives feeling its bad reputation but the disregard for feeling as a 'proper' place for meaning-making, for discussion, for philosophy. If Artaud, in his work and tragically in his life, had to be confronted with (and his ghost is still confronted with) the fact that his *cri* apparently failed to make sense, it was that the *cri* was failing to be heard. 'Death is not in not being able to communicate but in not being understood / only loving, only knowing counts / not having loved, not having known. / Living an exhausted love is anguishing / The soul no longer grows'¹⁰⁸. The cry in its moment of crying counts – the theorization that stands in the place of the cry, that substitutes the cry, does not. We need a theorization that can speak the cry without merely putting words in its place. Mark Johnson says: 'meaning is more than words and deeper than concepts'¹⁰⁹. Louder than bombs.

107 Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Ground of the Image*. Translated by Jeff Fort. New York: Fordham, 2005. p. 128-133

108 Pasolini, Pier Paolo. *Le Ceneri di Gramsci*. Milan: Garzanti, 1970.

109 Johnson, Mark. *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. p.1

I will devote what remains of this chapter to understanding of the importance of anti-dualist thinking as the basis of a listening to visual theatres, looking into the ways in which anti-dualism will open aspects of the avantgarde and post-avantgarde described thus far. Finally, in sound, we come to a resolution – or a temporary suspension, at least – of the exclusion of soul from body and body from soul. The 'com-pound' becomes its own, mixed, thing, as Steven Connor has pointed out. For the delineation of anti-dualism as a *conditio sine qua non* of our listening, Mark Johnson will be my main interlocutor – not because he is the only scholar who has dealt with anti-dualism or the importance of the body, of course – but because his stress on art as the place of meaning-making, inherited from John Dewey's writings, will prove particularly suited to the project of listening to the stage world.

Many have written, as we have seen – for example Sontag and Dasgupta – about a resolution of Cartesian dualism as a condition for Artaud's theatre and our understanding of it. What I am arguing is that in order to 'hear its music', contemporary theatre from the avant-garde onwards requires the spectator to shift to this anti-dualist mode of watching. Or, more precisely, I am arguing that we *do*, as spectators, shift to anti-dualist watching (and perhaps, as Johnson argues, our behaviour with art is exemplary of our anti-dualism when making meaning, any kind of meaning in everyday life) – what we do not necessarily have are the means to talk about it, to theorize outside of dualism. So the question for now is: what do we mean by anti-dualism and why is it so important to the understanding of a (post)modernist piece of theatre?

Johnson starts his book like this:

The central thesis of this book is that what we call 'mind' and what we call 'body' are not two things, but rather aspects of one organic process, so that what we call meaning, thought and language emerge from the aesthetic dimensions of this embodied activity. Chief among these aesthetic dimensions are qualities, images, patterns of sensorimotor processes, and emotions. (...) Acknowledging that every aspect of human being is grounded in specific forms of bodily engagement with an environment requires a far-reaching rethinking of who and what we are, in a way which is largely at odds with many of our inherited Western philosophical and religious traditions¹¹⁰.

What I want to do here is not retrace Johnson's theory of embodied meaning, nor begin the process of shedding light on all the views and concepts held by the West that shift fundamentally by adopting Johnson's point of view. Instead, I wish to 'use' Johnson's wider theory to understand, later, how we will listen to an art work, listen to a piece of theatre, concentrate on the noise that a piece of work makes. However, this initial paragraph introduces a few things that are at the base of this embodied meaning and also at the base of our listening, of Sanzio's work and Artaud's. First of all, we have a focus on process – on the eventness of meaning-making, and not on its objectness – this lack of objectness immediately shifts us into a lack of hierarchy, into an organicity of parts. This is a thought – cognitive, aesthetic and political – that I would like to keep in mind for the rest of my writing. We decide that our ear is doing work and our listening is also doing work but neither is coming 'before' the other and this is radical in rethinking the importance of our bodies as makers of meaning.

Johnson later points out that this is something which becomes very

¹¹⁰ Johnson, Mark. *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. p. 3

apparent when we think of the way we listen to music (and, I add, to the way we listen in general) and this, again, is a political thought: thinking of ourselves as process, or as a series of processes, means taking away the substrata of possession, of 'thing'. And perhaps paradoxically, the material thinking of Johnson's theory – the embodied importance of it – takes away the materiality of meaning itself. We are thinking through and with and inside our bodies, but we are not producing 'objects' in our thought. We are producing thought in motion by moving, something which changes, grows, and is not a 'kind of having'¹¹¹.

Like this, Johnson's thought declines itself as a battle against dualism, a *j'accuse* of dualism. His *cri* is fuelled by a conviction that philosophical categories are essentially flawed in having constructed a world of feeling and a world of knowing, side by side, running parallel to each other, without letting them touch each other. Not only is there not a division between body and mind, there is also not a division – or a consequentiality – between processes of meaning-making in the mind or in the body and there is also not a division – or a hierarchy – in categories of philosophy. He proposes a sensing-feeling-thinking 'all at once' in which it is vital for categories to know each other and bleed into each other. A philosophical system capable of sustaining an idea of a Gesamtkunstwerk, an idea of immersion and of Real/Unreal; capable of sustaining performances like *The Yellow Sound*, like *Last Concert Polaroid*, like the *Tragedia Endogonidia*. The kind of philosophical system Artaud would have

¹¹¹ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. As quoted in Connor, Steven. *Ears have Walls: on Hearing Art*. A talk given in the series 'Bodily Knowledges: Challenging Ocularcentricity' at Tate Modern, 21st February 2003. Published in FO A RM, 4 (2005), 48-57.

liked: so interdisciplinary that it looks like indiscipline.

When Johnson, after Dewey, states that 'art is exemplary of meaning-making' and proposes a kind of meaning-making which evades the contours and the logic of the Western tradition, he is in effect saying that the philosophical system of categories, temporal/spatial dimensions, and cognitive limits constitutes a castration of the art-world. It is as if he were saying: artists have always known this; *spectators* have always known this. Art and the desire for art and the reception of art have always counted on a kind of knowing made in the interstices of categories, in the open space where meaning moves and has no care for the fences and obstacles that bind it to a field, to a region, to a classification. A kind of knowing which, like listening, 'listens out' for the next thing, respects the impossibility of delineation, respects the fourthness that is the opening to what may or may not happen next. There is no 'saving for later' in it, there is no making immobile and putting aside – or at least, that is the kind of spectatorship that at least this kind of art, I believe and hope, wants to prepare. So there are some acceptances, some affordances, in the understanding of art that shed light on our processes of meaning-making and asking: why are these paradigms unreflected in our philosophical systems? Aesthetics can teach a lesson beyond aesthetics, opening a form of listening to the world which is at work beyond the work of art.

Back to etymology: aesthetics from αἰσθάνομαι, to perceive – so that in a sense, aesthetics is the study or the category of that which is felt, so in a sense it is, at the root, what we call sensory studies today: the study of perception and

its difficulties. If we are talking embodiment and sensoriality we are *necessarily* talking aesthetics and this is important in as much as it heals the scar between art and the body – if we have come to think of aesthetics as philosophy of art, then in terms of origin it is helpful and enlightening to regard it as a philosophy of feeling. Aesthetics is central to our understanding not only of art, but of life in general: 'one cannot do epistemology, logic, metaphysics, or any other philosophical undertaking adequately without first exploring aesthetics – the aesthetics of human experience and meaning'¹¹². The 'throwing out' of aesthetics – of the body *and* of art – from the Western philosophical tradition has heavily impeded our reading, in other 'branches' of philosophy, in our idea of *language*. Language has shifted toward the textual and has forgotten about the textural (though this movement is being reversed) and hence, more often than not, the *cris* have gone go unheard.

Most of the responsibility for the devaluation of aesthetics (and the development of an idea of aesthetics as a 'branch' and not part of the core of thought in the Occident) can be attributed, according to Johnson, to Kant. The critique he offers of Kant's idea of 'aesthetic thoughts' makes the same sound as those manifestos I cited in the introduction to this piece of work – and the same sound as the passages from *The Theatre and Its Double* we have been looking at here and could thus be summarized: (i) a subjectivization of aesthetic experience (ii) the putting in place of a link between art and pleasure or displeasure (and it is in this whirlwind that the words 'taste' and 'beauty' also

¹¹² Johnson, Mark. *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. p. 213

appear and disappear) and (iii) a fundamental dualist *scar* animating and agitating the work, a structural impossibility or unwillingness to relate body and mind. The separation of *feelings* and *concepts* in Kant's philosophy troubles me, mostly because these categories are perhaps not useful, I would argue, after the avant-garde. The words 'beauty', 'pleasure' and 'taste' also trouble me, because I live and write in an art-world where these ideas have been surpassed: where, as far as I understand, we want art in order to feel in order to think, and where the word 'taste' rings alarmingly bourgeois in my ears.

But I am also interested in something else: following his critique of Kant, Johnson spends a few lines on the late 19th century, saying that romanticism brought art back into the limelight for a brief moment, 'but more as a bearer of strong feelings than of rational thought'¹¹³. This is an interesting moment to me, because here the avant-garde starts to rattle: here a lot threads I have discussed in this piece start to (re)appear. I am intrigued by the refusal, or challenge, or resistance on the part of the artists of the avant-gardes and post-avantgardes of the dualist philosophical tradition, and by the hunger for embodiment, and for the arts as the place to experiment this embodiment, this kind of existence *at one with the image*. As Fuchs argues,

Compacted in Artaud's unforgettable image [the idea of the artists being "like victims burnt at the stake, signalling through the flames"] is the entire aspiration of presence in the theater, and by extension proposed in it also, under cover of an end to dualism, yet another "solution" to the long struggle in Western metaphysics, between body and mind, action and reflection. (...) the image was fire: the theater

113 Johnson, Mark. *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. p. 211

event should seek to “burn into time as a movement cuts into space”¹¹⁴.

It is sad that Johnson does not go further into thinking about this brief flash of 'limelight', as he calls it, of the late 19th century. It is also unfortunate that I cannot make this dissertation the space for working through the intricacies of the 'coincidences' (but I take a distance from this word) of the avant-garde and of the postavantgarde with the romantic, or symbolist, or in Italy, *scapigliato*. In my introduction I briefly pointed out some of these questions, especially in my talk of names, such as neo-romantic, post-romantic, and as I was discussing the prefixes neo- and post-. Also in my introduction, I briefly mentioned Rhoda Métraux and Sensualist Anthropology of the 1950s, and how sensory studies was stopped in its tracks in the early 20th Century due to its association with Orientalist trends, in fear of racial essentialism in the academy¹¹⁵. Johnson, in his anti-dualist project, says: 'we need a Dewey for the 21st century'¹¹⁶, highlighting in this way that the last of the anti-dualists, so to speak, was American philosopher John Dewey with his *Art as Experience*¹¹⁷. The threads are getting tangled, and this is an aside, but we have to at least have in mind this question: how come the avant-gardes and then the post-avantgardes allow themselves to enter these 'dangerous' territories while these are not, it seems, being discussed in philosophy? And also: this happens, or seems to happen,

114 Fuchs, Elinor. *The Death of Character: Perspectives on Theater after Modernism*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996. p. 69-70

115 Howes, David. *Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003. pp 4-7

116 Johnson, Mark. *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. p. 212

117 Dewey, John. *Art as Experience*. New York: Perigee, 1980.

when art as representation, to simplify, shifts to art as concept – why? Does this mean that perhaps we are in a space and time now in which we can work through art in order to work through philosophy and life and not vice-versa? Does the fact that arts are 'exemplary', as Johnson says, of other processes, mean that we are at a point in which art – no longer being imitation of life – is the space for the questions surpassed by an over-categorization of our philosophical systems? Is this why performance theory exists and is this the reason I am writing in it now? Are we going, finally but maybe liberatingly, *backwards from or against nature*¹¹⁸?

Let us say that maybe we are and that maybe here we reveal the postulate for this project. Let us say that Artaud's project has its centre in a sort of radical aesthetics, as does Sanzio's work, which inherits a great deal of its preoccupations, implicitly or explicitly, from Artaud. Let us say that it is this putting in the centre of what is a 'branch' (aesthetics) and what is liminal (aesthetics: since it relies on a relationality). I quote Silvana Sinisi again, who writes that the post-avantgarde 'takes its revenge in the aesthetic as a revolutionary instrument for a strategy of dissensus'¹¹⁹. I want to think that my writing and this project are taking place within that revenge: the philosophical revenge inside art of the aesthetic as political. The *cri* is indeed part of the same operation – you can hear the cry, feel the cry, but a cry takes place outside of

118 I refer to Huysmans, Joris Karl. *A Rebours*. Paris: Gallimard Folio, 1977.

119 Sinisi, Silvana. 'Neoavanguardia e postavanguardia in Italia' in *Avanguardie ed Utopie del Teatro, Storia del teatro moderno e contemporaneo Vol. 20*. Turin: Einaudi, 2001. p. 717

language and *before language*¹²⁰. What a militant anti-dualism does is vital to keep my project of listening to an art work going; it is vital to keep alive the project of sound as metaphor and of a will to *listen*. The verb αἰσθάνομαι takes us back to the place where feeling and art are, in their roots, intertwined. It thus supplies an archaic fault-line (a scar?) that I can walk, in my project of writing my listening to visual theatres, *remixing* bodies.

In the next chapter I shall perform the 'experiment' that my title prefigures, dealing with this 'all at once' synaesthesia of feeling-thinking and moving; I will write my listening to Sanzio's *Hey Girl!*. The work that follows is consequently concerned with looking into the following questions: what does it mean to attune oneself to the sensual ensemble of the image? How can the live body at work on 'making images' make a sound – a metaphorical sound – which explodes and pushes beyond its own signification? Is there a way in which the work of art listens to itself, reproduces and reflects the resonant field of the context in which it is produced? How can our watching be attentive to listening, and in doing so produce a wider aesthetic-political reflection? Fred Moten's idea of the 'phonograph' of an image will constitute the catalyst for my reflection, as I thread my listening to the performance through its philosophical and political repercussions, touching on questions regarding the 'beyondness' of the Catholic image, the fetish image, the inorganic image, the image of young white woman and the image of grown black woman; in this hall of acoustic mirrors I hope to

¹²⁰ I borrow Fred Moten's use of the word 'before', which stresses at once its temporal and its spatial significance. Moten, Fred. *In the Break: the Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

really hear *les cris* – I need to hear them in their *sens sensé* – outside, before,
and beyond language.

Interlude #2.

If we associate the concept of truth, not only with 'reality' or, to be more precise, with 'realization', then we might develop a different view of pink. The beauty of pink can be acceptable if we understand that truth also incorporates the unreal and the ideal. Here, a perceptive shift takes place.

Aesthetics relate to the senses. If we consider the sheer abundance of possibilities for experiencing pink (...), it is reasonable to conclude that pink is an especially aesthetic colour: 'Pink is Beauty'. The longing for *la vie en rose* is a yearning for life in perfect beauty. That is an ideal. And it can also be the reason why so many people reject pink. After all, who wants to be perceived as a naïve dreamer? Pink is simply too beautiful to be true¹²¹.

121 Nemitz, Barbara. 'Pink: the Exposed Color' in *Pink: the Exposed Color in Contemporary Art and Culture*. Ostfildern: Hatje Kantz, 2006. pp. 40-41

For Saint Rosalia.¹²²

'But, what ends when the symbols shatter?'
Death In June¹²³

C R I was devoted to creating a theoretical space in which my analysis of Sanzio's work could move. I hope to have constructed, over the course of my writing, a backdrop which can make present, make space for, make possible an audio-reading, or in Fred Moten's words a *phonograph* of the visual matter before us on stage. The phonographic event is *Hey Girl!*, a performance premiered by the Societas Raffaello Sanzio in 2006 and which has toured extensively ever since, effectively presenting Sanzio's work to a truly international – extra-European – audience.

Its popularity is not the reason that brings me to use it as the matter of my analysis. *Hey Girl!* has many peculiarities which make it, in many ways, a culmination of Sanzio's research, writing and art; these peculiarities work chronologically and on both a formal and a conceptual level. It is also a piece in which there is an insistence on the same language, on the same objects, on the

122 Santa Rosalia is the patron saint of Palermo, who lived between 1130 and 1166. The daughter of an aristocratic Norman family, she renounced earthly pleasures by hiding alone in a cave in Monte Pellegrino, the mountain above Palermo. When the city was hit by the plague in 1624, legend has it she appeared to a hunter, ordering him to find her bones in the cave and take them in procession across the city. The hunter followed her instructions and the plague immediately ceased. In iconology, she is portrayed in a black robe, wearing a crown of pink roses and carrying a skull in her hand. Santa Rosalia effectively turned herself from pink to black, and then the city black to pink.

123 Death in June. 'But, what ends when the symbols shatter?' on *But, what ends when the symbols shatter?* London: New European Recordings, 1992.

same movement – it is relatively 'unspectacular', devoid of scene changes, accelerations, or coups de théâtre, as will become evident as this chapter progresses. In many ways, exiting the classic – or the classic form – and concentrating on how the contemporary exists within the classic, or uses the classic without making it the object of inquiry, opened up much of the investigation that followed in Sanzio's work: pieces such as *Storia dell'Africa Contemporanea*, *Homo Turbae* and the recent *Sul Concetto di Volto nel Figlio di Dio*, as well as the sound projects ('concerts') *The Cryonic Chants* and *Ingiuria*. All pieces with one contemporary conceptual idea and one formal idea behind them: portraits¹²⁴.

To start, I want to place this performance in its own space and I want to make evident how it is placed in the discourse I am interested in, in thinking of image as sound. I have used the term 'creative research' talking about Sanzio's practice and inside this term is the first location of *Hey Girl!*. In my introduction I spoke of the Italian post-avantgarde and its intentions, the cultural climate which the Società emerged from, and of its affiliations with the avant-gardes of the early 20th century. I'd like to reiterate some of the conversations about the tangled ties that bind modernism and postmodernism and talk again – briefly – of the way we have come to sound.

When I started writing, I started from having written in the past of the *carnality* of the Società's theatre. I was referring, by using the term 'carnality' (which quickly became insufficient) to the bodily implication of the spectator in

124 Romeo Castellucci interviewed by Radio Città del Capo, Bologna, May 2008. Accessed on 25th July 2010 at kpteatro.it

the experience of Sanzio's theatre. I was attempting to describe the direct relation between meaning-making and pure perception. This 'immediacy' of feeling/meaning/knowing is resolved, and becomes writable, only if these experiences of spectatorship are viewed from an anti-dualist point of view, that is: if we accept that feeling and thinking are not only simultaneous but part of the same action, if we treat feeling-thinking as one verb. The experience of sound, and hence also music, is the closest we have to an accepting of this resolved duality – the practice we perform in which this verb as one is evident: listening.

A particularity of the theatres of both the avant-garde and the post-avantgarde is a fierce search – intellectual, conceptual, formal – for the expression of what was/is to be expressed and in many cases, as I wrote earlier, for an expression of the inexpressible. In any event, there is always a tension towards something and this something is not the 'new' (especially not in the Italian tradition, which is somehow obliged to face the archaic) but something which can be exoteric and esoteric at the same time, testing the boundaries of art and of life. The word that has come up from Sanzio is Unreal¹²⁵; the word that has come up from my work is 'beyond'. We have seen other words in the introduction. The place of this search is the theatre and hence: the live body (which, distanced from the text, suddenly appears closer, much closer to the dance and hence: the music). The ghost of this search is Artaud, his cruelty plays the bass, the meme-bass, still into the sound of the 21st century. It is his *spirit* and his work's. I have insisted in the previous chapter but I

125 I hesitate on this word, which others translate as 'Irreal'. We will stick to my translation here, motivated by the fact that 'irreale' is the word for 'unreal' in Italian, nothing more.

insist again: we haven't seen Artaud's theatre, but we have read his texts. This, even formally, carries on in the companies I am interested in from the early 1980s to the now in terms of creative research, which is: looking for something, writing about it, talking about it, attempting to make thinkable, reaching out. Carrying on, striving for something, building a philosophical system perhaps capable of supplying entrances, openings, incursions. So here is one of the locations of *Hey Girl!*: inside the philosophical 'reaching out' typical of the attitudes of the avant and post-avant-gardes. In particular, in a need to make present in the theatre that which is absent, or unreal, or unthinkable or rather, returning to Flatland – not yet thought, virtual – in the 'real' world.

In this project, its location is inside what I have described as theatre as sound, or audio-spectatorship; ear-watching and in this phase of the work, ear-writing. Because I am not only interested in the intersensory weave that makes up the experience of watching 'visual' theatres; I am also, and especially, interested in determining how it is possible to extract the sonic quality of an image as we spectate. I am interested in listening to the visual because I have a sense that sense is made more in the spaces that the image leaves unwritten than in the score of the image itself. Those spaces are immaterial, formless: non-possessable events. Listening to an image can make possible another, differently efficacious (in the sense: differently open to engendering something else) knowledge, feeling, life of an image. My sense is that sound fills in some of our epistemological spaces regarding representation. My listening is not a way out of looking, but another dimension of looking, feeling, thinking and

looking-feeling-thinking.

The (living) ghost in my side of the work, Artaud's partner, playing bass on my side of Sanzio's research for this analysis, delineator of spectres and spectrum, will be Fred Moten (sounding like Mingus' *Wild Bass*¹²⁶ – but Mingus will use a word from Artaud's vocabulary, 'terrible', later in this chapter) and his idea of the phonograph and to what it is to listen to an image; I will modulate on some of his writings in his book *In the Break* – his contribution will become evident over the course of this chapter. Also present in this chapter will be some of the ideas already discussed from the works of Attali, Nancy and Serres and a contribution from Mario Perniola. I am bringing Moten's theoretical input into contact with these European philosophies of aesthetics and of the senses in an attempt to write about the journey of the vision of a performance through sound and through the body, keeping in mind the notion brought up by Studio Azzurro's writings on the spectator as a 'visionary' who 'moves into the stage with all of his/her luggage'¹²⁷, 'where the narration is not placed on stage, but place and space and the mode of deciphering is analogical; where abstraction hides the concrete essence of its indications'¹²⁸. What these philosophies have in common is a strict sense of how art and the senses are absolutely part of a political discourse – I am moving in this theoretical sphere, with these ghosts, these historical indicators and these differing but close traditions. I am doing so holding *Hey Girl!* as the image-score over which, within which and with which

126 Mingus, Charles. *The Wild Bass*. Unauthorized Recording: Jazz Legacy (Vogue P.I.P)VG 405 JL 81

127 Cirifino, Fabio et al. *Studio Azzurro. Videoambienti, ambienti sensibili e altre esperienze tra arte, cinema, teatro e musica*. Milan: Feltrinelli, 2007. p. 9

128 Ibid., p. 9

these thoughts on spectatorship can be modulated, experimented, accessed, developed.

This paper has more than one departure point – I would say it has three, which I am conjugating for my discussion. The first of these positions is that of engaging with the virtual itself, the position of the line who has met the sphere in Flatland and wants to posit that fourthness is possible. This position is a dissident position in Abbott's novella, because it is interested in the not-yet-thinkable. I want to keep on the light that maybe the opening to the virtual is also the political dimension of my work and where Sanzio's work becomes intrinsically political: I am suggesting that an engagement with fourthness is a political act in itself, and a virtual opening to the image is a work of imagination and constitutes a political line of flight. Though this may not be explicit in the work on *Hey Girl!* that will follow, I want to leave this consideration here as a presence – that the stretch towards making and thinking and writing the unreal is in many ways what Silvana Sinisi calls the 'aesthetic revenge for a strategy of dissensus'¹²⁹. In other words, as I have 'cried' with Artaud in my last chapter, I do not want to forget that the aesthetic and sensorial talk that I am constructing here carries the political force of that anti-representative push which moves the unimaginable or the should-not-be-imagined into a realm of possibility. Art as a place which can make another world exist.

The second position, derived from the above, is borrowed from Elisabeth Le Guin's term 'voluntary synesthesia'¹³⁰. It is a term taken from musicology but

129 Sinisi, Silvana. 'Neoavanguardia e postavanguardia in Italia' in *Avanguardie ed Utopie del Teatro, Storia del teatro moderno e contemporaneo Vol. 20*. Turin: Einaudi, 2001. p. 717

130 Le Guin, Elisabeth. *Boccherini's Body: an Essay in Carnal Musicology*. Berkeley: University of

also from the experience of playing, feeling music, an oblique term, used by Le Guin precisely because her study is an experimental study in musicology and the body. She uses the term to describe the moment in which a musician picks up his/her instrument, in this case a cello, and attempts to 'channel' the intentions of a composer, in this case Boccherini. She calls the process 'cello and bow-thinking', talks of the intellectual process of *sentir* and *sentire* ('to feel' and 'to hear' are the same verb in Italian: to sense – I add that to smell is also *sentire*) as well as of the difficulties in placing in a sense the things that happen between the performer and the piece. She writes:

the act of describing and interpreting this aggregate of fleshy phenomena called a sonata is a complex one, perceptually, epistemologically, linguistically. The shading over of *sentir* into *sentire* implied by Rousseau, its continuations into interactions with auditional expectation and visual spectacle, mean that I can never be sure whether the experience I am describing is primarily heard, or primarily felt, or primarily seen.¹³¹

As a spectator and a writer, I am paying attention to what happens in my senses and in between my senses to start my own process of 'voluntary synesthesia' with Sanzio's *Hey Girl!*, writing my sensual ensemble as it is when it is in *Hey Girl!*, caught up in that particular event: I am *sentendo*, in all the complexity of *sentire* in the gerund.

This part of the departure is muddled by and agitated by another complexity: a number of performances are at work here, the performance of *Hey Girl!* by Sanzio and of Silvia Costa and Sonia Beltràn Napoles; the

California Press, 2006. p. 17

131 Ibid., p. 29

performance of the work itself (the one that is not necessarily known by the music, by the performance itself); the performance of spectatorship and of my writing about it here. This position may seem to jumble the cards somewhat, but it is necessary, again, for an opening towards the task at hand, this synaesthesia, this sensual translation of spectatorship; I have to keep these barriers open to make space for listening to the image, per il mio sentire.

My third position, which starts the journey, is about a metaphorical listening. However, what I'm interested in here is detecting a sonic quality which allows us to hear beyond the image and hence to make sense of it that way, beyond itself, in its epistemological gaps or empty spaces. I am, therefore, working inside but beyond a notion of post-dramatic, trying to open some of its fissures. Hans-Thies Lehmann offers the idea of contemporary theatres working outside of logos into landscape¹³²: he talks of scenic poems, constructed more following a musical score than the logic of language¹³³; in *Postdramatic Theatre* he talks about a *musicalization* of theatre and does hint to an idea of 'not musical theatre but theatre as music'¹³⁴. But I am unsure that Lehmann and I are talking about the same thing. Because I am not so much writing about formal attributes or narrative debates of the work, but am more interested in perception and hence, in spectatorship. I am not attempting to map the escape from logos into landscape but as I start I am in that landscape and I want to experiment with how that landscape is perceived and what it does that is

132 Lehmann, Hans-Thies. 'From Logos to Landscape: text in contemporary dramaturgy'. *Letters from Europe* Vol 2. No.1 Spring 1997. London: Routledge, 1997. pp. 63-67

133 Lehmann, Hans-Thies. *Postdramatic Theatre*. London: Routledge, 2006.

134 Ibid.

different from logos, certainly, but that is also different from the sphere of the purely visual (and by using the word landscape, Lehmann is certainly accepting 'immersion' and opening the discussion to immersion, which is one of the most discussed characteristics of sound). What I talk of in performance, the sound of it, extends beyond the photograph into other areas of the visual, but we could even simply say, of existence, since it also extends to the linguistic, which is not a category I am uninterested in (for me logos does not disappear from this conversation, nor does it for Sanzio and nor – albeit everything – does it for Artaud). The taking of a 'phonograph' is the extraction of a sonic 'core' of an image, within which its meaning can start to be grasped. I quote from Fred Moten's *In the Break*:

Perhaps whatever speech and writing that comes on or over a photograph should deal with this epistemological and methodological problem: how to listen to (and touch, taste, smell) a photograph, or a performance – how to attune oneself to a moan or shout that animates the photograph with an intentionality of the outside.¹³⁵

In order to achieve this attuning, he proposes an 'attentive looking', a way to 'discern and project', as Métraux described it, threading our way through the resonances, the echoes of the noises that an image makes:

Such an opening is only held in looking that is attentive to the sound – and movement, feel, taste, smell (as well as sight) – the sensual ensemble – of what is looked at. (...) What is held in a photograph is not exclusive to the photograph, but this photograph moves and works, is shown, was seen, shone, says, is animated,

135 Moten, Fred. *In the Break: the Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. p. 208

resounds, broken, breaking song of, song for, something before like
The Music that is, as Mingus says, not just beautiful but terribly
beautiful.¹³⁶

In this chapter, then, I am attempting to *attune myself* to Sanzio's work, which is not only the work *per se*, but everything that happens within and beyond the work. And which is not the sound *per se*, but the sound of the image. And which is not only the sound but the *sensual ensemble* made possible by listening to that sound. Finding the sound gives us an access to what is, as Moten says, held in a photograph. Moten talks of the photograph of Emmett Till that mobilised the civil rights movement after his mother chose for it to be published and circulated – inside this photograph, he identifies a moan and this moan echoes through life and disciplines and culture. Moten's intervention regards a particular political moment – one whose scale and importance is evidently superior and dramatically other to the work that I am doing on *Hey Girl!*. A comparison is not thinkable and is in no way, of course, what I am doing here. However, this very 'real' metaphor, of hearing a moan when he listens to the photograph, opens up the somatic core of the photograph, its 'carnality' and hence its carnal ability to move; but it also opens up, from the somatic and with the somatic, the cultural movement this photograph belongs to and which belongs to this photograph. I am hence using Moten's contribution and applying it to something else, because it is what Moten does with the photograph that interests me: if we find the sound, if we listen enough to hear, feeling and thinking do indeed become one verb, and

¹³⁶ Ibid. p. 210

understanding, living this compound can shed light on all the animations that are present in an image, resounding in it and beyond it. So that all the parts which make Nancy's *A minor* in its *sens sensé* can be listened to in the work of art. Moten asserts that 'an extended, lingering, look at – aesthetic response to – the photograph manifests itself as political action.'¹³⁷ I am interested in spectating like this.

I have two sounds present in my title: 'pink noise' and 'rattle'. They could be side A and side B of the same record, the rattle coming narratively after the pink noise. And it is true that the pink noise turns to rattle, louder and louder as the piece goes on. But pink noise is also the container of a rattle, even if it is not a rattle itself – though we can say that it is the rattle of electricity, an electrical / electronic storm – it hides a rattle, or rather, a rattle can hide well inside of it. Pink Noise seems to stand *before* (both temporally and spatially) the rattle, predicting it and staring at it simultaneously.

In technical terms, a noise is pink if every octave of it carries the same amount of noise power in bands that are proportionally wide: 'White noise contains all frequencies but emphasizes shorter timescales. Brown noise [also known as red noise] conversely emphasizes longer timescales. Pink noise is special in that it contains disturbances equally on all timescales.'¹³⁸ Pink noise exists in nature, but we know it mostly as a test-tone, so like white noise it is

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Halley, John M. 'Ecology, evolution and 1/f-noise'. In *Tree* Vol. 11, Issue 1. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1996. pp. 33-37

found at the end of VHS tapes, or in television snow or when plugging and unplugging devices such as synthesizers – in its electronic form it is also referred to as 'flicker noise'. In effect, it does flicker, but the flickering stays the same. Pink noise is a muffled, hushed, softer version of white noise, a dampened version of television snow, is often compared to the sound of the sea: 'ssssshhhhhh'. I have understood that the nomenclature of these noises happens by electricity, and hence light, and hence colours. So if white noise is white light, we can imagine pink noise as white light with a very light pink ('lavender' as it usually called) gel – the gel does not tint the white, but deafens it, deadens it slightly.

It seems to me that the equal bands of energy in pink noise do, somehow, make it rattle: the unmoving, ungrowing quality of the sound means that it could (i) happen forever: the fact that the energy fails to increase or decrease means that it is technically impossible to produce true pink noise, since the signal would have infinite energy and (ii) happen without it being noticed: pink noise, the low hiss of white, is apparently present in our heartbeat, 'in almost all electronic components, in all semi-conducting devices; in all time standards from the most accurate atomic clock to quartz oscillators to the sand flow of ancient hourglasses; in the flow of traffic in Japanese expressways; in the small voltages measurable across nerve membranes due to sodium and potassium flow; in the speed of ocean currents and in the yearly flood levels of the Nile (...) and in music.'¹³⁹ Pink noise, it is said, is ubiquitous. And unlike white noise, it

139 Kuittinen, Petri. "Noise in Man-generated Images and Sound". Helsinki: Helsinki Medialab, 1999. Accessed at on 8th June 2010 at 21.15: <http://mlab.taik.fi/~eye/mediaculture/noise.html>

exists in nature¹⁴⁰. We do not tend to hear it, either because we are so used to it being there or because we confuse it for its purely electronic, bigger – but not older – brother. Lastly, pink noise can result as annoying, or as frustrating as white noise, but it *is* less abrasive since, though it contains equal power in all bands, the power is proportional to the bands, which isn't the case in white noise (which has no proportionality).

The idea of colour/sound, the seed of my own personal voluntary synaesthesia, comes from a time when I was getting to know the work of American artist Steven Parrino, which was around the same I watched *Hey Girl!* for the first time. In Summer 2007 the Palais de Tokyo in Paris dedicated a retrospective, a tribute, performances and a number of publications to the life and work of the no-wave artist, offering an unprecedented possibility to engage with his work.

Though there is a lot of Parrino photography and collage (he was fascinated by bikers, tattoos, pirates, comic books¹⁴¹), mostly Parrino's work consists of blocks of monochrome black pictorial and sculptorial surfaces¹⁴².

140 Levine, W. S. *The control handbook*. Boca Raton: CRC Press, 1996. p. 590

141 Out of the purpose of my writing here but nonetheless meaningful in Parrino and in Sanzio and the post-avantgarde in general (after all, the no-wave and the post-avantgarde are contemporary): Parrino's *Dark Matters* (1999, from the Pangea collection in Geneva), in which on a faded photograph of a group of bikers is superposed a black circle with rays, reminiscent of Albrecht Durer's *Melancholia I* (1514), the “black sun”, also the black hole, Nerval's *soleil noir de la mélancholie*. This is a motif which appears in almost all of Sanzio's pieces; following this motif could bring us into interesting territories in visual (and audio) cultures which relate Durer, Parrino, Baudelaire, Nerval, indeed Sanzio, indeed Gibbons, industrial music, neo- gothic architecture and 'coldwave' as a subculture (and its manifestations in that area of Italy in the early 1980s).

142 Some good examples of Parrino black are: *13 Shattered Panels for Joey Ramone* (2001), *Dancing on Graves* (1999), *Stockade: Existential Trap for Speed Freaks* (1988-1991) and *Lee Marvin / Marlon Brando* (1990). These pieces are displayed at the Gagosian Gallery, New York, apart from *Lee Marvin / Marlon Brando* which is from the Le Consortium collection in Dijon.

Colour being so absent – or so present – means that being in a room with Parrino's work obliges you to start thinking about other places in which to make meaning. One starts to interrogate surface, placement, texture, even temperature, one starts lingering on every shadow and every bright spot the work presents.

Later in my research on Parrino I had the opportunity to hear some of his sound works, notably the *Black Noise Practitioner* project (1997-2007), billed under the band name Electrophilia¹⁴³ – 'extreme psychedelic noise; brutal electric bass manipulations interwoven with freezing synth textures'¹⁴⁴. Now, I had heard the freezing synth in his artworks: I had seen a rigour, a fascistic fascination with lines, with clean, decided, black and white. Though I had seen destruction, I had seen it inside order – I hadn't seen the chaos. This was disorderly, dissonant, distorted – all words that start with dis, that seem to 'undo', against linguistics, against a formal logic. As I was listening I realized that this noise was the noise that the work was really making, that all of my uneasiness and hunting for rough edges was that I had an inkling of this sound but I was failing to really listen to the work. So it was failing to reach my body, and was sliding on the surface of things. It was occupying time but failing to occupy space. Once I learned to listen to the work, I started seeing not only the place that it occupied in Parrino's life and universe, but also the place that it occupied in the world, that is: the noise that it made, the space it occupied, the way it kept resonating and hence, its truly aesthetic (:political) dimension and

¹⁴³ Electrophilia. *Black Noise Practitioner*. New York: Skul Records, 2004.

¹⁴⁴ Lamm, Olivier. Review of *Black Noise Practitioner* in 'As Loud As Possible'. *Palais/*, Magazine 03, Summer 2007. pp. 50-59. p.51

action. In the dis- prefix that undid there was a *doing*, the *work the work was doing*, its reason to exist.

So that maybe undoing can be not a destructive act, but a creative or a reflective act instead. So that maybe this is how *Hey Girl!* undoes and somewhere starts doing again. Because the 'black hole' and the 'absolute void' that Giorgio Barberio Corsetti talked of when I quoted him in my introduction¹⁴⁵ did *do* something – because we have to believe that iconoclasm has a cause, as noise has a cause, as anarchy has a cause: although the project of the unreal rests on a refusal it *is* a project of construction.

Hey Girl! does not undo on the surface, nor does it do. This 'portrait', unlike other Sanzio pieces and notably the previous project, *Tragedia Endogonidia*, holds the tragic in mind but cannot justly sit in the tradition of the tragic, nor in the tradition of the classic, nor in the world of logos. It persists, however, in the 'archaicist' tradition of Sanzio's theatre making. The girl and then the woman here are like details of another epic which is happening somewhere outside the auditorium. If it ever touches the tragic, it does so in negative, on the other side, in the empty room, like secondary characters in an epic poem. Its grand narrative comes by way of rattling, by way of electricity, by way of building up static. Our girl has no rebellion and no cause. The gravitas and the lightness of Homer's Nausicaa, whose tenderness cannot find its 'real' dimension, whose

¹⁴⁵ I quoted Barberio Corsetti's following two passages: 'We search for the zero. The hole we have put in the centre of the stage, that absorbs everything' and 'When I think about that period, I think of those extreme gestures in which you cut off a part of your body and throw it away. At a certain point, this extremism of emptying the stage brought us to the absolute void. (...) It was an extremism that always took us to the limits. Or even outside.' Corsetti, Giorgio Barberio, quoted by Ponte di Pino, Oliviero in *Il nuovo teatro italiano 1975-1988. La ricerca dei gruppi: materiali e documenti*. Florence: La Casa Usher, 1988. Also accessible at trax.it/olivieropdp/barberio88.htm

gravity goes unseen, cannot find ears. She has Nausicaa's desire and loneliness, her urge to be loved and taken seriously. Nausicaa who waits for a bus, waits for a stranger, waits for love, waits to be married, waits for the night, waits for the sun. Nausicaa sweet and frustrated, quiet and violent, pink and black. Nausicaa who sits on a beach and 'burns ships'¹⁴⁶.

Hey Girl! is a simple performance¹⁴⁷, its genesis apparently in a bus-stop scene that Romeo Castellucci once observed at a traffic light in Cesena. Its dailiness is its very stuff. Its pace is quotidian and domestic, but somehow infinite at the same time. I quote from an interview at Radio Città del Capo, Bologna:

It's a project that is born small, a small point of concentration, as punctual and concentrated as possible. (...) It's a portrait, to use a pictorial metaphor. (...) It was born from its title, *Hey Girl!*, that came to me, and I followed the title into the structure [unlike the 'epic' process of the company's previous work, *Tragedia Endogonidia*]. The structure which is simple, it's the structure of a day, of a girl's day. Full stop. (...) I saw these girls waiting at a bus stop, with their rucksacks full of books and their faces painted. All of that silence around them, they didn't talk to each other, they didn't look at each other. So I thought: Hey Girl! which is a greeting, a way of greeting a girl whose name you don't know, as banal as it is promising. English accentuates the popular character of adolescent culture: song lyrics, MTV, etc. But Hey Girl! is also an annunciation. It could be something that a contemporary angel says to an adolescent Mary. The greeting is vulgar and sacred, and the structure of the work follows that binary.¹⁴⁸

146 One of the etymologies proposed for the word Nausicaa is 'burner of ships', from ναῦς ('ship') and καίω ('to burn').

147 I have enclosed an appendix with a scene by scene description of the scenic action of *Hey Girl!*, which I suggest the reader reads now, since I will be jumping back and forth in my discussions on the piece. Please see Appendix.

148 Romeo Castellucci interviewed by Radio Città del Capo, Bologna, May 2008. Accessed on 25th July 2010 at www.klpteatro.it

Sacred and vulgar at the same time is something that pink does, the way that it makes noise and silence together. Like a rattle, pink (and pink noise also) carries both the hesitation and the fury of adolescence; as the English language, as Castellucci points out, which for a native Italian speaker provokes some admiration (of 'modernity') and some scorn (of 'modernity') at the same time. Like strange experiences of songs in bad taste in which we sometimes hear a darkness, an importance, *Hey Girl!* listens to itself, and the girl listens to herself on the line between banality and the spiritual. *Hey Girl!* is, I would argue, first and foremost a portrait of adolescence, of a being *in potentia*. Almost red and also almost white, in a state in which what is red is frightening and what is white is also frightening. The adult and the child, the domestic and the public terrify in the same way, so that pink becomes an interstice of existence and meaning, a pocket of life, a scar along which to rattle as long as you can, in the meantime, while we wait.

So let us go from here, from the wait. Castellucci mentions the wait, the silence, the make-up. All things that belong to the *in potentia*. Waiting is the rhythm of *Hey Girl!*. Waiting and rattling. Waiting and moving only if something attracts our attention. Waiting in stillness, waiting for something to happen. Waiting can also be turned into – and almost always is – a state of observation and a state of meditation. Waiting is also the mode par excellence of the boredom-soaked half-dream state of adolescence. It is heavy but somehow on

the surface and curious without boundaries. Maybe because it is also the state of real nihilism, of the brave kind, in which seeing no future, no projection, is actually possible, since all the daydream is so faraway. Adolescential waiting is also the waiting without power – or rather, with all the power inside and no power outside. Power without the higher frequencies of action. Infinite thought and finite body, the human paradox which keeps us in our place and not in the place of God, is even more apparent in adolescence. The Artaudian *élan* dictates that we talk about the presence of this paradox, both on stage and here – it dictates that we listen to it. And perhaps this waiting is also similar to Faith Filding's 1972 performance *Waiting*¹⁴⁹, which modulates an entire life in a series of waits, arguing that a woman's life is a life of waiting, from waiting to be looked after as a child, to waiting to wear make-up and look pretty, waiting to marry, waiting for the decay of the body, waiting to be looked after again, waiting to die.

Silvia: I am placed inside your pink noise, inside your fragile waiting, inside your low unfaithful hum. De Kerchove's definition of theatre rings again, a physical simulation of a mental space¹⁵⁰.

Silvia Costa is born from a slimy wet pink substance on a metal table. Under what looks like a strobe light, the replica of her naked body she is concealed within starts to rip and drip. She has a knife to help her out of the gluey chrysalis. She falls off the table, feet first, by letting the weight of her upper body slide her down. It's a leap into the day. A heavy leap, a difficult awakening. The day continues, and she watches herself in a mirror, an old

149 Wilding, Faith. *Waiting*. First performed at the Womanhouse in Los Angeles, 1972.

150 De Kerckhove, Derrick. 'Il Senso Comune del Virtuale' in *VIRTUAL 4* (April 1993).

fashioned hand-held mirror which she holds onto the pink backdrop. This mirror is also an annunciation, is also an eclipse.

There are many circles on the pink surfaces, circles which have light going into them or light going out of them. The performance all in all is a conglomeration of circles and lines, all of which somehow sparkle, or reflect, or burn; all suns, or rays, beams of light. I want to talk about this light because I believe it is significant in the economy of the performance and in its sound. I want to talk about how light functions in making the sound of certain paintings and how it happens in *Hey Girl!*.

So Castellucci talks of *annunciation* and of an adolescent Mary. In the Italian pictorial tradition, the angel is always a beam, a ray of light on Mary. Sometimes she is waiting for it, sometimes she is not, but Mary is almost always placed in a netting of light, somehow, in lines of light that come and break her silence. Mary is passive, *has to be* passive to the annunciation, for this is the gift, the surprise, which will make the young girl holy. Mary, like Nausicaa, waits for *something*. The nature of that something is unknown, but they wait, however, to burn or be burnt. The light does not touch them until it touches them. In the two stories (Nausicaa's and Silvia Costa's, the girl's) this is, effectively the light of masculinity, the gift of holding onto or keeping safe some sort of 'sacred' or rather, heroic, masculinity. Sanzio's annunciation in the performance, which happens later, in the form of a laser beam into Silvia Costa's ear, seems to me to serve the purpose of a cold discovery of the world to come. But to proceed with order: the first beam we encounter is the beam

produced by the mirror the girl holds to look at herself in. The girl peers into the mirror (which is also Alice's looking glass, as we shall later see) but she does so on a horizontal line with it: she is not looking in – rather, she is performing the pictorial gesture of looking in (without perspective, as in Egyptian painting: with flatness) and observing the ray that beams out of the mirror. Like this, the girl is somehow placed outside of her own glow: she produces a glow but does not get to bask in it. The line of her reflection avoids her, stretching from the 'eclipsed' circle in the pink panel behind her towards the audience, towards the sky, up and across. So that for a long time, in fact until that final moment of annunciation, Costa's movements are never inside the light, but always outside, always moving in the shadows that the spotlights leave behind. The only lights that touch her are 'industrial' lights, by which I mean: industrial in *feel*, such as strobes, neons, cold washes, big red and big grey backlighting. Only once does she produce a shadow, but when she does, it is shadow only, without the frequencies of her real body. The girl rattles by herself, goes unnoticed, is placed outside the light until the light places her in its scope. She is, like Nausicaa, unnoticed, un-there. Her noises are muffled, even when they are loud, nobody knocks on her bedroom door to see if she's alright.

After this ceremony we have our first big noise, as Costa literally slips down so as to never meet the beam, snakes across the stage and almost falls, like she fell off the table, shoulders tight and closed, onto a big steel drum, enveloping it as she picks up the drumsticks. One: bam. Two: bam. Three: bam. And louder, and faster, muffled loud drum without echoes, a dry sound that

stops and starts again, hesitates and the accelerates, hiccups and the bangs. This, in pink and grey, this sound, constantly finds its visual translation in the bones on Costa's back. The cold backlighting (of the kind often used in dance) means that every muscle and bone is picked out, so that what we have of Costa is the map of her spine, a trrrrr trrrrr, a jagged surface with silk-skin stretched across it. Bam, trrrr, bam, trrrrr, bam, trrrr, bam.

Bam bam bam bam bam bam bam.

To rattle you need a rattling space; rattling is always in an interstice, and always synonymous with frustration, expectation, boredom, obstruction, with being in between. Even as she dresses, the bam trrrr symphony keeps on, the eternal slowness of movement never achieving a peace, a serenity, nor a reflection on slowness. The slowness never engendering a thought about weight, about the earth, about a connection with the floor, like the slowness sometimes found in butoh walks, in the idea of slipping into the density of the soil. This slowness is always weightless, by which I intend not 'light', but unable to find a way to settle. In its suspensions, *Hey Girl!* scuttles along the surface, its stopping always a pause and never a desired halt. It is stopping to wait, to wonder, to ponder, to look. If there was a reason to stop it would stop, if there was a reason to go it would go, but there is neither one nor the other to break this sort of wistful waiting. Where is she going? She leaves the drum, starts dressing, and starts a suffocated, shy, sobbing. She breaks our heart, in a

fragmentary repetition, glossy yet sharp, like Gino Favotti's electroacoustic composition *Lady Gosse*¹⁵¹ (1994).

There is a review for *Hey Girl!* in the *Seattle Times*¹⁵², in which the critic thus describes the intro of the piece: 'to a clanking, pounding, buzzing music track (composed by Scott Gibbons), a slender young woman (Silvia Costa) rises from a primeval bed of gelatinous ooze that keeps dripping in huge waxy ribbons through the piece.'¹⁵³ This is significant, because Gibbons' music for that particular scene is everything but 'clanking, pounding, buzzing'. The reviewer is hearing the sound of the image, not the sound of the sound, which is a slow, classically epic, almost sci-fi composition, made of long extended notes, a sort of slowed down fanfare devoid of a real 'beat'. Berson is hearing Costa, not Gibbons. It is *she* who clanks, pounds and buzzes. The memory of the spectator plays these fortunate tricks. We are sensualist spectators of a sensualist theatre, in the sound we remember are the bodies, the bones, the lighting, the space, the feeling of the surfaces, the quality of the movement, the grain of the voice.

Costa sobs for a little facing the audience. She walks slowly towards us for the first time and her walk, her expression, are both fearful and aggressive. Perhaps not really waiting now, perhaps she has a disregard. Costa's jagged anger in this piece follows the non-flow of rattling. The impulse to slam the door

151 Favotti, Gino. *Lady Gosse*. Paris: GRM, 1994. Contained in *50 ans de musique électroacoustique au GRM, Paris*. Palermo: Avidi Lumi (Teatro Massimo), 2002.

152 Berson, Misha. "With 'Hey Girl!' theater company evokes confusion of girlhood". *Seattle Times*, 02/02/2008, accessed on 18/05/2010 at seattletimes.nwsources.com/thearts/2004159233_girl.02.html.

153 Ibid.

and then apologise. The shout, the *cri* displayed and then swallowed again, the crisis and then the biting of the tongue. So that the car keeps stalling, stops at every gear change, has to start again. It is as if every fragment of the road took too long, every tiny distance covered is covered slowly, both out of hesitation and out of lack of means. By this I do not intend that there are not moments of great momentum in Costa's performance of the girl: however, they are always at some point halted, covered, the bravado always seems to have to break¹⁵⁴. Costa needs to *crier* for the duration of the performance, but what comes out is always tiny, only once does she manage to cry out. And when she does cry, after emerging with her double-sized head from the encounter with the men, she cries:

Turn the lights off please.

Turn the lights off please.

Turn the lights off please!

Turn the lights off please!

Turn the lights off please!

Turn the fucking lights off please!

I need to say this: every infinitesimal gesture has infinity within it in this piece. What is extremely interesting about this performance of a girl is that it exists in the tiny interstice. Without venturing necessarily into the unreal, the scale of the tragic, the scale of the universal¹⁵⁵, *Hey Girl!* displays and puts into

¹⁵⁴ There is a band that's recently quite popular amongst Italian adolescents called Baustelle. One of their hits talks about a 16 year old girl leaving a suicide note in a perfumed biro. One of the lyrics goes something like this: 'a Carabiniere caught her trying to shoplift at Esselunga [a discount supermarket], she cried and hated that she cried'. I am talking about this kind of halted bravado. Baustelle, *La Guerra è Finita*. On *La Malavita*. Milan: Atlantic, 2005.

¹⁵⁵ 'Universal' is an adjective often used by the Castelluccis to describe their cycles, such as the Divine

question the very attitude, the quotidian truth of the Artaudian paradoxes of existence. The pain of *Hey Girl!* is the awareness of being trapped by the problem of the body, to refer back to what Sontag was writing about Artaud and Pavese. Again: 'death is not in not being able to communicate, but in not being able to be understood'¹⁵⁶. So that the lacerations of *Hey Girl!* all happen in the displays of the awareness of being trapped *in the context of the domestic, in the context of the quotidian*. Because from this point of view, this is a performance much more about the instruments of here¹⁵⁷ than about tending to the instruments of there – this performance, to reiterate Claudia Castellucci's *Santa Sofia* manifesto, talks about the frustration of peering into the unreal and being disappointed with the 'here'¹⁵⁸. The abundance of looking glasses that Costa peers through, like Alice, constitute the real pain of *Hey Girl!*. When she cries, when she flies, when she hears is when she explodes. The rest is suffocated, motionless, blocked. The girl wants us to turn off the lights: the problem – as ever – is rising from the real; the scandal is the difficulty which persists in avoiding the luminous.

When we see Costa's face for the first time, we have this tableau: Costa, kneeling, peering, breathing heavily or sobbing over a heated sword laid in front of her. In front of the sword, a red lipstick and a bottle of Chanel N°5. She lifts her hand, as if to understand the dimension of her audience, as if she was

Comedy or the *Tragedia Endogonidia*, since 'universal', in their language and writing is the place of tragedy. See Castellucci, Romeo, Bonnie Marranca and Valentina Valentini. 'The Universal: the Simplest Place Possible.' Trans. J. House. PAJ 77(2004) pp. 16-25

156 Pasolini, Pier Paolo. *Le Ceneri di Gramsci*. Milan: Garzanti, 1970.

157 Castellucci, Claudia and Romeo. *Les Pèlerins de la Matière: théorie et praxis du théâtre*. Besançon: Les Solitaires Intempestifs, 2001. p. 16

158 Castellucci, Claudia and Romeo. *Les Pèlerins de la Matière: théorie et praxis du théâtre*. Besançon: Les Solitaires Intempestifs, 2001. p. 16

'blocking' us, scrutinising us. Her glance turns from inquisitional, to defensive, to nonchalant. To what are you looking at, what is there to look at. Her arm slides across the surface of the floor, against the surface of an imaginary air-surface. The set is minimal, but the objects that are on stage are quite large and this really counteracts the fact that Silvia Costa's figure is slight, small. There is real calculatedness in each gesture – so much that as I watch I can almost feel the grain of the movement. She moves her arm in such a way that the curvature that she draws isn't a smooth, slippery one like the curves in Merce Cunningham, for example, the way of drawing the contour of the air, like enveloping the spaces: this envelops the line. The movement is more like clockwork, like every point of the curve is marked by an effort, like each dot is visible and if we join them we get the curve, but it is fragmented. It really is as if the surface hid a rattle, like Parrino's anti-silence, anti-matter. This is almost too much matter. Too much silence. Also: always despite the surface-ness of the piece, there's dust, there's a haze in the cold light. So although we're presented with gloss and glass the lighting design moves toward spaces like the warehouse, or more accurately the attic, or the garage, even the catacomb. It's dusty, powdery, dusky. So every surface has an added grain: though depth isn't where the piece happens, the surface always carries a powdery graininess. Every concavity drawn in the air remains hanging in the air, like the trace of a black aeroplane. She puts the lipstick on. Burns it. Puts on some Chanel N°5, but does so dragging the dauber across her neck, as if slitting her own throat. And the movement stops. Tac.

Costa proceeds to fold a piece of pink cotton into four. She burns the sword into the cotton, pouring Chanel N°5 onto it so it sizzles as it draws a black cross onto the material. She whispers the names of queens, such as Alexandra Federovna, Marie Antoinette, Anne Boleyn.

*Queste sono le regine che hanno dato la loro testa per il popolo*¹⁵⁹.

So she dresses in the cotton, the black cross becoming a cape. She draws a circle on the floor. Lifts the sword. Lets it fall. Lifts the sword. Lets it fall. Because this is a ceremony to pass the time, though believed in its moment: this is a passing fury, it ends, like the others. Because this is playing, and it does not work either.

*Odio i simboli e tutta questa merda medievale*¹⁶⁰.

She puts her foot on the cape. he pushes everything aside. I have included the end of a piece of music called *Lycee*¹⁶¹ to make clear the way this sword is dropped down, to talk about its phonic quality. To talk about what this giving up and letting go means, solemn but hopeless, with a majestic, heroic cultural background. Dum. Dum. Dum. Dumdumdumdumdumdumdumdum. Like shaking a heavy marble in a jar. *Nevermind*. Or even: *Oh well, whatever*,

159 Translation: 'These are the queen who have given their head for the people'.

160 Translation: 'I hate symbols and all this medieval shit.'

161 Chrisma. *Lycee on Chinese Restaurant*. Milan: Polydor Italia, 1977.

*nevermind*¹⁶².

And the sound of this delusion and of this disappointment continues. Interestingly, for about 20 seconds, we have what sounds like a banal, 'hellish' club piece of music, something tiny but that immediately places us into another kind of adolescence, just for a moment. Something to remind us of the black in the pink; to remind us of the roughness which here we are not seeing but that we are hearing in the movement, in the colours, in the light. A moment of explicitation, a moment of trashy electronic club music. Something is happening in between the noise, the whisper, the perfume, the queens, the word 'shit', uttered whispering.

I find myself thinking of an advert for Chanel N°5 from a few years ago, in which Estella Warren, in the guise of a couture little red riding hood, finds some perfume in what I believe is the Orsay museum, and then sets out to go off into a champagne-lit Paris (as usual). A pack of wolves follows her, howling, and she silences them with a tiny “ssshhhh”. How is this ssshhh close to Costa's pink rattle? There is something in both of these scenes which domesticates and harnesses an aggression. A pink nonchalance, or maybe a pink dis-missal which somehow, gives pink – is it its 'white noise' frequencies, its scream? Is it 'balls'? I'm not sure what this (feeling) is. *Hey Girl!* rattles in the Chanel curve, it wears the symbols like they don't fit, it displays their painful trace. It burns the well-known scent of the first synthetic flowers. It attempts to do, but undoes. Nothing seems to work. There's too much unrest. Each attempt of adherence generates a scar in the girl. Each contact with a symbol, with an expectation

162 Nirvana. *Smells like Teen Spirit*. On *Nevermind*. Seattle: Subpop, 1991.

and with the outside world disturbs her impatient waiting, wounds it somehow. Disillusions it. Another undoing word. Ssshhhhhhit. Impossible not to think of Judith and Holofernes now, her beheading him, in Caravaggio's rendition, or even more, in Artemisia Gentileschi's. The sword is weighty yet the gesture precise. Judith in shock due to her own actions, terrified by her own hands, the crime an obligation as well as a revenge, her age unfit for both the crime inflicted upon her and the crime she is inflicting. She is sullen, offended, scandalised. Young mythical girls whose youth is violent. Caravaggio's light also echoes in *Hey Girl!*, the scene always lit sideways, light falling betraying faces, on feet, from windows, from angels, from outside.

Jean-Luc Nancy writes about Artemisia Gentileschi's Cleopatra in his essay *The Sovereign Woman in Painting*. In his text Nancy points out how the portrait of Cleopatra – together with those of Dido and Helen – are in themselves the very movement which takes antiquity into Rome, and hence into Europe, into the North, into the cold light and into modernity, and how moving into modernity shows in itself the scar of having lost something that isn't there anymore. The scar of antiquity.

I feel this scar, I think, as the incandescent metal of the sword burns into the pink cotton. I am taken aback as the smoke rises into the haze. In the big slow beat, something is breaking inside of me as a spectator, as a woman, my now self, my 16 year old self, as Costa's slow movements push the sword into place. I am breaking but somehow healing at the same time. I am becoming powerful of a certain understanding, I am figuring something out, I'm witnessing

some kind of painful truth, I'm vibrating, rattling with a painful truth. This initial wound that Hey Girl inflicts serves as a passage into modernity, into the cold blue light, out of the warm gluey chrysalis and into a pair of skinny bluejeans. Clothing becomes bodies. And the scar seals on the giant upside-down self-portrait of Jan van Eyck. A fragile but knowing, paternal? glance. Cleopatra, Sonia, Silvia, all of the them putting the grain into their empty spaces, lifting the suffering image out of the sleek surrounding, from the haze to the gloss, this unrest, this entrapment. Living in high frequencies but veiling them with their skin, highlighting the lower frequencies of existence. This rattle which produces a scar – not a Cunningham scar, but a scar made with an electric saw. Where the glass breaks, where the choice is always a resigned choice of difficulty, of the hardest route. A closing that hides an opening. As if the rattling knew no end. It makes me think of how Susan McClary¹⁶³ analyses the chorus of Madonna's *Live to Tell*¹⁶⁴: feminine endings are always, or always hide, feminine beginnings.

And then: a hyperbole of undoing and loneliness, a hyperbole of rattling: the scene that follows sees Costa run intermittently between two light boxes that light up red. One: "L", the other: "R". When they stop lighting up, with their harsh airport noise, she walks right and says:

*What man art thou that, thus bescreen'd in night,
So stumblest on my counsel?*

163 McClary, Susan. *Feminine Endings: music, gender and sexuality*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991. pp. 148 - 151

164 Madonna. *Live to Tell*. On *True Blue*. New York: Sire Records, 1986.

She moves left and answers:

By a name

I know not how to tell thee who I am.

My name is hateful to myself,

*Because it is an enemy to thee.*¹⁶⁵

This does not simply serve as a reflection on loneliness or on adolescence and romantic love. Nor does it serve simply as a reflection on waiting, though it does all of these things by merely being itself, being, in other words, the cultural icon of Romeo and Juliet, which is imbued with the same cultural cloud that makes the English language the place of pop lyrics, MTV, etc. The scene chosen, and its Italian translation (which is in modern Italian, and eliminates the word 'man' by simply asking *Chi sei tu?* , 'Who are you?' and does away, as I have done in my quoting of Shakespeare above, with the 'dear saint' between 'My name' and 'is hateful to myself' in Romeo's answer) highlights two aspects that are important in Romeo and Juliet that are important in *Hey Girl!*. That is: *her* counsel matters, her thought. Who is interfering with my thoughts. Who is piercing through my silence. This question has a tender curiosity, but it also, in Juliet and in Silvia I would argue, carries that same sense of being aggressed, that same defensiveness, that same sense of being dis-turbed. And the answer highlights words, highlights the undoing of language, or the mockery of language, which is: the mockery of the outside world, of the adult world, of its codes and canons, its concealed violence, its desired but scorned impurity, and

¹⁶⁵ Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet*. Act II, scene II. Lines 55 – 60.

also: mediocrity in the face of the dream. Back to the looking glass, then. Language is always an outside force in *Hey Girl!*, a something which somehow pierces through her sobbing silence. Language and men play this sickening role of undoing the pink, of accelerating processes with violence, processes that should, must take longer. I am unsure as to whether we are talking about men or if we are talking about the outside world more generally, but what is certain is that the violence exists outside and always at a slightly different rhythm to the girl's inside. At the same time I do not want to give the impression that this girl is some kind of delicate being inside a cocoon. It is not that she is soft against the hard of the world. It is more that her hardness is at a different pace and preoccupied about different things. It is more that we are constantly in the presence of a working through in the girl's head, of a running through, of a going back and forth, of a trying to understand, trying to make sense of her desires and those of others, her violence and that of others, her age and that of others, her silence and other's words, her body and that of others (and it is in this pool of meaning, which encompasses all the others, that the role played by Sonia Beltran Napoles plays an important part).

If we can hear, what can we look at? Moten, still in his discussion of Emmett Till's photograph compared to Roland Barthes's discussion of the photograph of his mother¹⁶⁶, asks some questions about what we can hear when what we hear in an image has something to do with death. I think it fair to ask some of these questions, now, that this performance becomes a place of

166 Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida*. Quoted by Moten, Fred. Moten, Fred. *In the Break: the Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. p. 210

violence, where we confront a brutality. Moten asks questions about Black mo'nin. He talks of how this mo'nin modulates itself through mourning and melancholia. I want to ask these questions: what do we do with this violence the girl finds herself in, offers herself to, is a victim of, and later ignores, abandons, disappears? How is she working through that violence? What is this violence, the outside world? A note of fear: during the 'pillowfight' she is not even there. And a greater fear: in between the cold beams from the back of the stage that light the scene, in absolute scenic silence, twice the stage is covered, for a second each time, with full red lighting. These men stand in the shocking red with their pillows in their hands, immobile. Where can I improvise with this, if I want to follow Moten and look, and listen? One scar produces itself in me: the scar of 1970s Italian terrorism, of Italian violence and its representation. And this has something to do with photography, and stands as testimony to how the image rattles beyond itself into our lives. These shadows of a mob of people in red light survive in my memory, and I would argue in many Italians' memory, as the photographs that remain from 1970s journalism, documenting the terrorism of the so-called 'years of lead': assassinations, bombings, kidnappings, protests. Over-contrasted and over-exposed photographs from the press of those years, red headlines, red logos, the overbearing red of the red brigades' signatures, flags. The red comes on with the sound of a power-cut, with the buzzing out of electricity. The rest of the scene happens in silence, all we can hear are the pillows slamming on the ground. What echoes in this scene is the sobbing we have been hearing throughout the piece so far – it improvises in the

image with the industrial electric buzz, with the deafening silence of thinking of the years of lead, the strange silence that follows an explosion. Another scar/question produces itself in me, which will produce itself again later: are the girls alright?

We have talked about materiality, about carnality and then about sound. Why sound, again? Because, again: sound can do abstraction without forgetting about the body. So my question is now: in this scene, what happens to Costa's body? Now that the image talks about death, what happens to her live and living body? This moment in the piece is *Hey Girl!* turning dark. I want to know where Costa goes. After this scene, we see Costa's shadow for the first time: she lays in the backlighting, moving her arms as if she was flapping her wings, her torso immobile. The shadow of her arms is enormous on the stage. They shot the albatross.

So Costa girl becomes albatross becomes Mary becomes Judith becomes Juliet. Is Costa progressively becoming less girl and more symbol? My feeling is that perhaps, in her journey towards the annunciation, Costa's role slips in and out of being human and into the interstices of tragedy, where she becomes mythical, and into the interstices of the real where she becomes unreal. Her body, so materially 'there' comes out deformed from this confrontation. Her head swells to double its size. This 'growth' distances her from the girl we have known – Costa becomes excessively material but immaterial at the same time. Is she becoming sound?

Mario Perniola has a theory about the 'sex appeal of the inorganic', which I

feel has something to do with this moment. The centre of his argument is that in contemporary mechanisms of desire (and: of art), sexuality has been removed from the body and placed in contact with philosophy, 'freed by thought from nature'¹⁶⁷. He talks of a neutral 'mode' of sexuality whereby rather than feeling beings, we become or become placed in the presence of things that feel – that is, this mode of feeling is closer to the inorganic world than to the world of humans. He speaks thus about sound in the framework of the inorganic and its appeal:

The essence of music is neither sentiment nor life, but more essentially, *sound*, understood precisely in the neutral and inorganic indifference evoked by this word. Schelling is the philosopher who has underlined this character of music, defining it as the inorganic form of art par excellence. One could say that music is thing, both when it appears as discontinuous sonority, and when it is an uninterrupted stretch of sonority. Music is connected with the most elementary level of physicality with a corporeity which is not animal, but rather that of heavenly bodies. Referring back to the well-known Pythagorean theory, Schelling claims that the movements of the stars do not cause music but are themselves music. (...) For Schelling, all music has cosmic meaning. Music forms are the forms of being of heavenly bodies as such. But the mineral and inorganic character of music does not exclude the existence of an opaque and impersonal feeling that belongs to it essentially. In fact, music is a type of spoken but not living word, something similar to a petrified god transformed into thing¹⁶⁸.

So is this the way that Costa is becoming sound? Does the Artaudian *cri* thus reify itself in a contemporary 'sex appeal'? Are we in the presence of a thing that feels, now, rather than a living body? Has the girl lost her counsel and

¹⁶⁷ Perniola, Mario. *The Sex Appeal of the Inorganic*. Trans. M. Verdicchio. London: Continuum, 2004. p. 15

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. pp. 65-66.

body by becoming somehow 'heavenly'? Because Perniola is proposing a 'cosmic' view of sound, yes, but rather than placing the body where I have placed it so far (that is: in a place of foremost importance which is, in itself, cosmic because of its *crit*), he is placing the body not only beyond, but outside of itself. Where I have been saying 'too much body' in Artaud's meme, Perniola is saying: inorganic. Where I am making coincide heavenly bodies and animals, he is distancing them. Is this what is happening to Costa in the performance? Is she, through the force of violence, turning into a star¹⁶⁹? Because after all, if we want to talk annunciation, this is what happens to Mary: through a violence – the violence of the divine but a violence nonetheless – she is unwillingly and unknowingly made holy from human. Mary's body loses its organic core so that she may become a star-maker, a vessel of the holy, her light always reflected from the holy (masculine) and Mary never shining of her own (feminine) light, interrupted in her counsel and somehow implicitly vowed to an acceptance of her status as star-machine. But this 'elevation' does not happen, in Mary or in *Hey Girl!* by ecstasy, ascent or communion, but always by way of an outside, mysterious, electrical force. The laser ray in Costa's ear in the last scene of *Hey Girl!*, the holy ray towards Mary in pictorial representations of the annunciation, turn them into stars but the intentionality comes from outside, like a shiny gunshot from a hidden place. Somebody is shooting albatrosses.

This design is about to be complicated by something else. Enter Charlie Mingus: *Moanin'*. *Moanin'* which unlike Silvia Costa's stillness and silence,

169 This makes me think of how in the *Divine Comedy* 'star' is the word used for those inhabiting Hell and Purgatory: 'star', then, also as a synonym for 'dead'.

seems to *go somewhere*. Perhaps it travels towards the grave, but it travels. In this white still industrial space something else comes into clang. A 'real' clang though, not noise music from speakers, nothing to do with speakers. We need to understand how the clang breaks the rattle, and what events happen in between Costa and her annunciation. Before we talk about beautiful, we need to keep talking about *terrible*. We need to look for a cave to heal in if we are to understand a certain type of scar (Jean-Luc Nancy: the scar of modernity or the scar of Catholicism?).

Another rattle is audible on stage now, a very real rattle, of chains around a human body. Sonia Beltràn Napoles is a black woman in her 30s. She is chained up by a man in Victorian dress and placed on a pile of hay. Sonia and Silvia look at each other through looking glasses. Then Silvia pays some money to the Victorian-looking man and unchains Sonia. The man exits. Silvia undresses. Silvia hits the glass with a clenched fist. They embrace. The glass panels all shatter at once. Fred Moten talks about the photograph of Emmett Till: 'you have to keep looking at this so that you can listen to it. Can you be black and look at this? Can you be black and not look at this? Can you be black and look at this again? Can you look at this again and be black? There is a responsibility to look every time, again, but sometimes it looks like that looking comes before, holds, replicates, reproduces what is looked at'.¹⁷⁰ Moten is talking about repetition, and a certain kind of repetition (in the forms of lingering, waiting, waking, wondering) has been an integral part of this project so far. But

¹⁷⁰ Moten, Fred. *In the Break: the Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. p. 210

this repetition is different: it is re-perpetuation and it reiterates something already known. I want to consider this idea of repetition in talking about Sonia Beltràn Napoles, because I am interested in how she breaks the glass of the performance of girlhood we have been watching thus far.

If we have talked of dis- with Silvia, we find ourselves now talking about re-. Silvia's luck is that she is, after all, violence, boredom, dis-existence, dis-body considered, *new*. And this *new* carries not only connotations of hope or future (in fact it doesn't carry those associations at all) but it is, at least, without the graininess of depth, it is, at least, *shiny and new*. Like a Virgin, touched for the very first time. Which is to say shiny and new like a new object, like something that hasn't been used, something that ends up showing a lack of history, of knowledge, of knowing what to expect. But what about this re-? Moten is talking about Emmett Till and he is talking about the aesthetics of a painful repetition. You have to keep looking, but what you look at is already looked at and the next looking is being engendered in the one before. Maybe in re- and in dis- we have the sides A and B of the *Hey Girl!* record. Side A is scratched, side B is on a loop. Side A as a choppy synth, maybe, side B as a deep moan. Both pink noises, however: infinite, deep, repetitive, frazzled. Let us try like this, in the meantime, to open another kind of conversation about these two women.

Both Moten and Perniola have come into my discussion so far, both have animated my writing, which constantly goes back to their writing, be it explicitly or implicitly. Why Moten and Perniola? Because both seem to me hyper aware

of how what is aesthetic is phonographic is political¹⁷¹. I am using these two thinkers together because I want to think of how we can get access to something else: to the interstice between the material and the immaterial, maybe by banging the word *mater* against the word *αίσθάνομαι*. So that two pieces of writing come to mind when I think about this scene, two pieces of writing about voice, so about sound coming from bodies, there where voice is completely absent on stage, but somehow present, *resonant*, *heard*:

Side A:

The *hardcore* of progressive rock does not consist in the delirious performance of shouts, sexual breathing and moans (...) but in the fact that both the human voice and the sound of the instruments are accessible only through a distortion, a filter, a montage that renders them artificial, but not mechanical. Somehow these sounds are harmonized on a neutral sensibility which, evading both pleasure and pain, knows no rest and no catharsis. This electronic manipulation of the human voice evokes infinite penetrations that go beyond the mouth and the throat into depths that are no longer flesh. It is as if the very chanting of things were coming from these invasions into things that resemble more organ pipes than biological ducts. (...) Every type of music and song can become *hardcore* sonority as long as it is perceived in conjunction with the movement that leads the human outside itself. Music, after all, is the sound generated from the movement of attraction of bodies becoming things.¹⁷²

171 And the first, Moten, is insistently material; the second, Perniola, insists on the immaterial. Perniola, however, also insists that what he calls immaterial, inorganic, neutral is not reducible to spirit. The magnetic force between things who feel, he argues, is not spirit, since it does not lead beyond its own electricity. I question – or rather I wonder – if the neutral mode is indeed a spiritual mode, but a redesigning of it for the 21st century. Johnson's 'meaning' and Perniola's 'neutral' strike me as resonant, in terms of A minor. But this is for further research, perhaps asking the following question: can the neutral be a form of spirit for the now?

172 Perniola, Mario. *The Sex Appeal of the Inorganic*. Trans. M. Verdicchio. London: Continuum, 2004. p. 70

Side B:

What does it mean to surrender to the lyric? It's not only an abstract reaching, this going for, this willingness to fail. Something is reached for, an unprecedented communication (cuts literature, literature is cut and cuts) possible only when language is not reducible to a means of communication, when the sounded word is not reducible to linguistic meaning. (...) Billie Holiday sings at the locus of a massive transference; the (literary) interpretation of Billie Holiday's operates as a massive acting out. She resists such interpretation, is constantly reversing and interrupting such analytic situations, offering and taking back that mastery, finally reaching radically around it. Therefore, motherfuckers are scared. Got to domesticate or explain the grained voice. Got to keep that strange-keeping shit under wraps even though it always echoes. But why is her lipstick ingrained on your temple? She wrote on it: "know your self!". (...) She's on another thing, another register of desire. And that grained voice elsewhere resists the interpretation of the audience when the analytic positions are exchanged. This imaginary kiss marks a voice that resists reading and writing when the audible is forgotten in the interest of a repetition of suffocated desire and lost object (...) that would tell the audience what they want to hear and what they already know.¹⁷³

I ask: what is the ... of these two paragraphs? What is the 'that ...' which Johnson talks of¹⁷⁴? Where is A minor A minor? Here, certainly. Whatever the ... of this moment is, this is the locus of *Hey Girl!* It's in that expectation, that dead moment that happens when we turn the record from side A to side B.

The portraits that emerge from listening to this record seem to be marked by these feelings: (i) Sonia is the B-Side of Silvia. She is 'secondary' in the economy of the piece, occupying a ten minute segment, but she is also somehow representation behind representation: if Silvia is 'young girl', Sonia is

¹⁷³ Moten, Fred. *In the Break: the Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. p. 104

¹⁷⁴ Gendlin, Eugene. 'Crossing and Dipping: Some Terms for Approaching the Interface between Natural Understanding and Logical Formulation.' Quoted by Johnson, Mark in *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. p. 219

even more 'black woman'; (ii) Silvia disappears by way of becoming neutral – her body, shaped on the quasi-neutrality of adolescence, becomes mythical by disappearing; Sonia, on the other hand, is somehow the body that we haven't seen over the duration of the performance – she is the body 'in the way', and becomes mythical by *appearing*; (iii) both sides of the record are marked by an unsubjective passivity, they are done to, do to each other, but do not do to themselves. Silvia moving away from the grain into a reflection of spirituality and power, into a cathode mirror of rhythm and time. Sonia moving inside an echo, inside the grain and the graininess, modulating on reiteration by 'offering and taking back that mastery'¹⁷⁵, in a space in which power depends on a knowledge beyond and outside of interpretation. This hits an open nerve of spectating, an exposed wire. Ten minutes before the end of the performance we are pre-ushered into the world.

And this moment in *Hey Girl!* awakens this question in the audience: where did it come from? What is this doing here? Maybe it's time to go back to the bus stop. The radical passivity and waiting of Sonia is, after all, the epitome of waiting. If we are talking about being stuck in an interstice where we become things that feel and no longer thinking bodies – if we are talking of the state of rattling while 'having things done to us', Sonia is exemplary of how an extreme being done to takes place.

Why back to the bus stop then? Because we must go back to 'real place' and to 'real time', outside the auditorium. If we might utter 'Hey Girl!' to Silvia at

¹⁷⁵ Moten, Fred. *In the Break: the Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. p. 104

the bus stop, when we utter 'Hey Girl!' to Sonia, who are we uttering to? This is the feeling I have always had from watching *Hey Girl!*: a young white teenage girl, as I was, lives her life without much to do, a lot of boredom, a lot of undirected expectations and a 'figuring things out' made of a knowing silence. At times, trying to decide how to be girl or indeed how to be woman, she is shot into a world that reveals that the road is long, the work is hard and that she may be disappointed. The music of the adolescent girl is sometimes pierced by a loud clang of violence, which stumbles on her counsel. The men are men are history are Italy are the streets and are some of those clangs. Then comes the final clang of Sonia.

Following a conversation about Sonia and about Rome, my interlocutor recounted how horrified and also genuinely surprised she was by the ubiquitous presence of black prostitutes on suburban and country roads. Women alone, that seem to come from nowhere, standing in pink miniskirts in January, waiting to be picked up. That same interlocutor writes thus about the reproduction of images of Aunt Jemima and Cathleen Ní Houlian: 'I suggest that both Aunt Jemima and Cathleen Ní Houlian are those dialectical visual and material images whose 'abstracting energies' gesture to the past – be it to American slavery or to the Great Famine (1845-51) – that is figured as (gendered) 'ruin': that which is 'unspeakable' or 'unrecoverable' but nevertheless reproducible in reified form. The very ubiquity of Aunt Jemima's reproduction (...) means that black female subjectivity is disappeared under the weight of the spectre's prolific reproductions'¹⁷⁶. What I am proposing is that in the context of *Hey Girl!* (the

¹⁷⁶ Gough, Kathleen M. 'Girls Interrupted: Gendered Spectres, Atlantic Drag.' *Performance Research*

namelessness of the greeting already doing away with subjectivity as such) maybe what can apply to the reproductions of Aunt Jemima on a pancake flour bag can apply also to this 'representation' of this black female body on stage.

Sonia is as reified as an image – her purpose lies in what spectres she may bring about, for the audience and for the girl. She brings about the spectre of slavery, but she also brings about the spectre of this 'unspeakable' and 'unrecoverable' but this time contemporary spectre. A prostitute is a commodity and an object – one does the work of whichever, the category is nameless, devoid of subjectivity and very much a means to an end: she does what she says on the tin (or on a pancake flour bag). The prostitute is a ubiquitous figure in contemporary Italy – they are talked about a lot, in the news a lot, in politics a lot, on television a lot. In contemporary Italian it is quite normal that a 'nigeriana' ('Nigerian woman') automatically means prostitute, as 'rumena' ('Romanian woman') means carer, as 'filippino/a' means cleaner, as 'marocchino' ('Moroccan man') means street vendor. This picture is complicated further if we think about Italy as the place that in as late as 1996 'overall occupied a distinctly retrograde place in the diverse world of European patriarchy¹⁷⁷' and in which, as Lorella Zanardo has pointed out, 'the representations that women offer of themselves are designed to suit the male gaze... I am constantly surprised by adverts that, though directed towards women [Zanardo is referring to foodstuffs, household products etc.] sell their product according to the logic of male

13 (4), 2008. pp. 115-126

177 Ginsborg, Paul quoting S. Duncan, 'The Diverse World of European Patriarchy' (1996) in *Italy and its Discontents 1980-2001*. London: Penguin, 2001. p. 104

desire¹⁷⁸.

By reminding myself and the reader of these 'situations' that Italy finds itself in, what I want to do is understand how a brazen and violent image works in the context of contemporary Italy. Sonia works also in this logic, in the logic of the society she belongs to (as does Silvia). Silvia's rattling task is hence agitated by Sonia, as it is by the men, as it is by the mere fact, after all, that we are all looking at her – the waiting that manifests itself as the leading thread of *Hey Girl!* is something which is inextricably bound to being an adolescent, yes, but also to being an adolescent in Italy. And ultimately, the undertone coming from religious iconography which permeates this work also holds in mind these differences of experience, or these particularities of experience that agitate the Italy of our times.

Silvia and Sonia do what Italian society wants them, or rather, expects them to do, respectively in their roles of white adolescent girl and of grown black woman. As it draws the portrait of these two women, through its bending, its rattling, its metallic noises and metallic lights, *Hey Girl!* is also drawing a world from the point of view of the portraits, a world which, as we have said before 'scuttles along the surface' and sometimes falls in a scar. A world which is, after all, empty. What Sonia B does to Silvia is pluck her violently out of the Chanel world, of the Joan of Arc world, allegedly out of the Virgin Mary world and drags her onto the streets to remind her that no, that all of these worlds are underwritten, somewhere, by a violence. Sonia also makes us doubt, the

178 Zanardi, Lorella. *Il Corpo Delle Donne*. Documentary, 2009. Available at ilcorpodelledonne.net
Accessed on 13th March 2010.

spectators, the way we have been viewing Silvia. In the light of Sonia, Silvia becomes smaller, becomes someone that does what she says on the tin, too. Sonia's violent absence of subjectivity alarmingly points out a spectacle of object that we have observed so far. By this I do not mean that what we have felt for Silvia is nothing – but that maybe we have been feeling with an object, as Perniola proposes, with a thing that feels: that our relationship with Silvia is a relationship, but of a special kind of unreal, in as much as it is not *really* a relationship with another human being.

And perhaps that repetition, or observation of repetition – that Sonia obliges Silvia to – is the annunciation in itself, or rather, the annunciation of the annunciation that follows in the form of a laser ray. Sonia is that entrance of language into the girl's life, Billie Holiday's 'Know your self!', Sonia's lipstick ingrained on Silvia's temple.

'Offering and taking back that mastery': Sonia and Silvia paint themselves silver, Sonia flies the sword the way that Silvia had flown the flag. Offering and taking back that mastery – a last lesson in resistance, I suppose, the entrance of another music, a passivity that knows, a commodity that knows, a female body that knows all that which Silvia's female body is yet to know. The music is not just beautiful, but *terribly* beautiful.

This night-birth, if we consider *Hey Girl!*, as Castellucci urges us to, as having the structure of a day, is more birth than that morning birth we saw, at the start, from the gluey chrysalis. Night time, with its dis- and re- prefixes, opens the world more than the bedroom ever does. At night, now (*'Spegnete*

queste cazzo di luci per favore!) perhaps some kind of birth with purpose can finally take place. The silver paint, the boxing glove, the noise of the sword lashing through the air and the piercing buzz of the annunciatory laser ray in Silvia's ear, this birth finally breaks that rhythm, that trrr bam trrr bam, to give way to a high pitched bweeee and the swoosh of the sword. And for the first time, in the blackness, all we have is words:

CAKE NEWSPAPER SATELLITE GIRAFFE OIL NEON TIP-
EX LUXURY HIT-PARADE GLUE VOLCANO RACE RECEIPT
PARKING LOT FORK ELECTRICITY FOAM DRUGS RUBBISH
UNIVERSITY SATELLITE ASH TAPE FOOT KNIFE FOOD
UMBRELLA CORAL HAY SMOKE SCISSORS HAIR COFFEE
SANDALS BOAT MASK BARRACK GHOST SUNDAY
SUPERMARKET EARDRUM MADONNA SUGARED ALMOND
PUTREFACTION PRISON GRASS MEAT PAIN CHILD DESIRE
HAMMER STAMP TOY SERVANT ARCHITECTURE FREEDOM
ROTOR ARM BROTHER GASOLINE CIAO HUNTING NUCLEUS
SUN ALPHABET HOME CAR TRACTOR BANK
PARADISE BLOOD TELEVISION TRAIN THREAD FACE
TOOTH KISS TOY TRAGEDY FOAM ASH AFRICA FIST
CLORINE YEAR CLOD BEARD CHRISTENING
CASSEROLE FUR MARKET MOTORWAY CONDEMANCTION
PROFESSOR CEMENT ABYSS DOLPHIN MONITOR WINE
BRAIN WEIGHT REVENGE CITY PHILOSOPHY
SKELETON IMAGE SPIDER PROBLEM SWING GRAVE SOAP¹⁷⁹

Silvia thus comes into contact with language. Sonia falls away into the dark

179 This is a random selection of hundreds of words that appear on the screen.

leaving only the sonic trace of her sword, swoosh. Baptism of fire? The laser burns and Silvia listens, her expression ranging from attentive, to annoyed, to serious, to confused, to serene, to attentive again. So this is not quite how we have come to see the annunciation, and maybe it is closer to the story of Mary, to a problematic aggression to somehow harness and contain. A decision regarding how to be in the world and make sense of violence, a deep need to do some 'figuring things out'.

Something within and beyond the image is heard inside the image, most obviously now, relying on listening now. We hear the pulviscule of the image, the rhythmic remainder, the sonic shadow of what is seen. The end of *Hey Girl!* does something which is in the discourse of that 'all at once' sensing-thinking-feeling which we have discussed so many times over the course of this project. It makes something apparent in that feeling-moving – it sheds light on its 'all at oneness', on its complexity. It points out how the threads of the body, of culture, of watching and listening, of feeling, of knowing aesthetically and/or politically, are braided, or knotted, or tied.

The laser ray in Silvia's ear is accompanied by an on-stage noise – a piercing blue sound, similar to the high pitched sound of a wine glass, that breaks the wine glass itself. In some productions of *Hey Girl!*, notably in the Avignon 2007 production taking place in the medieval Église des Célestins, this sound was unbearably loud and the audience was given earplugs to protect themselves. I wonder whether this sound, contemporary to the entrance of words, is in effect the ultimate violence, the ultimate good-bye to that teenage

rattling we have known so far. Noise is, after all, violence: extreme noise deadens perception and removes thought or the possibility of thought. I think about 'white noise' torture, for example, used in a number of countries as a tool for sensory deprivation and to isolate prisoners – these 7 minutes or so of noise are already extreme – I think about the fact that language and anti-language come into Silvia's life together, words on the one hand, and loud, loud, piercing noise on the other.

Salomé Voegelin talks of noise having the effect of making her 'speechless but ecstatically me [her]¹⁸⁰, Steven Parrino, as we have seen, thought it was a just rendition of 'chaos'¹⁸¹. I recently went to hear Lou Reed's *Metal Machine Music* live¹⁸²; at the end I was speechless and perhaps I was also ecstatically me, but solely by way of a violence: I could not hear myself think. Again De Kerckhove dedicates a chapter of *The Skin of Culture* to media and gender, in which he states that 'in order to accept some of the hard psychological conditions of living in the "real world", it is imperative that women succeed in silencing their bodies.'¹⁸³ This is questionable, but my point is this: the end of *Hey Girl!*, in more than one way, has to do with the 'hardcore' of the contemporary world. Silvia's rite of passage into the 'real world', or the 'adult world' and our rite of passage back into the outside world is marked by that word that Perniola uses so often: hardcore. I borrow a phrase from Moten: 'new

180 Voegelin, Salomé. *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art*. London: Continuum, 2010. p. 48

181 Electrophilia. *Black Noise Practitioner*. New York: Skul Records, 2004.

182 Reed, Lou. *Metal Machine Music*. New York: RCA, 1975.

183 De Kerckhove, Derrick. *The Skin of Culture: Investigating the New Electronic Reality*. London: Kogan Page, 1997. p. 115

word, new world'¹⁸⁴. Hardcore to be 'ecstatically' yourself.

At the start of this piece of work, I quoted briefly from Michel Serres' writing on ears, *boîtes*, boxes and from his writing I borrowed the question 'How far does incarnation go?'¹⁸⁵. Steven Connor argues that 'hearing is understood in this chapter, in which the duality promised in the French word *entendre* is powerfully at work, in terms of a work of transformation. Hearing takes what Serres calls the hard, *le dur*, and converts it into information, *le doux*, or the soft. This exchange is effected by the senses, or by the work of sensation, which, in turning raw stimulus into sensory information, also make sense of the senses, effecting a slight declination, or deflection within the word *sens* itself: sense becomes sense. These transformations are effected in every organism by a series of processes of transformation which Serres is wont to call "black boxes". He means by this processes whose initial conditions are known and whose outcomes are known, but whose actual processes of transformation remain inaccessible to view or understanding'¹⁸⁶. Like music, then, as we saw in Nancy, Silvia is doing something unknown to Silvia herself – her self is touching her self, sense is listening to itself, Silvia is performing a process of figuring something out beyond language as she meets language. 'She's on something else'. She stands still, finally, she stops rattling, linguistically defined, be it for the better or for the worse. The next time we see her she's disappeared and

184 Moten, Fred. *In the Break: the Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. p. 104

185 Serres, Michel. *The Five Senses: a Philosophy of Mingled Bodies*. Trans. By M. Sankey and P. Cowley. London: Continuum, 2008. p. 132

186 Connor, Steven. 'Michel Serres's Five Senses'. Extended version of a paper given at the Michel Serres conference at Birckbeck College, May 1999. Accessed at stevenconnor.com on 05/03/2010

there's another girl, or maybe the same girl, taking a bow in front of a giant upside down Jan Van Eyck self portrait.

Le doux of a performance, it seems to me, singles out and makes possible a process which is hidden, or disguised, in *le dur*. This process has something to do with the wish for an affective encounter with the image which engenders, perhaps, something closer to the 'deeper and keener perception' that Artaud wanted from the body of the spectator. As the *dur* playworld disappears, *le doux* begins to find its own proportions; and since the *doux* is exactly that, *doux*, the proportions it invents for itself are those of memory, of affect, of the imagination, and rely little on what Claudia Castellucci calls 'the instruments of here'¹⁸⁷. Distanced from the work itself, then, the sound of the work goes on thinking and making, we forget about the *stadium* and start to work out the *punctum*, in Barthes' definition, of an image¹⁸⁸, which is not only *punctum* in the sense of the 'detail', but it also somehow the 'point'. Which is, though soft, somehow also the 'matter'. Like the Seattle Times reviewer remembered the buzzing and clanking when there was no buzzing and clanking: not the whole, but the details – in this case the implicit phonographic details – of what places an image in the realm of life. And whether life is 'here' or 'there' is debatable, but the coming into contact with art and the interiorization of its sound has produced, perhaps, that very debate, or that very question – the awful question of what is 'here' and what is 'there' in the economy, the terrible economy of the the hard and the soft. The

187 Castellucci, Claudia. *Santa Sofia / Teatro Khmer: Manifesto*. Taken from Claudia and Romeo Castellucci's *Les Pèlerins de la Matière, théorie et praxis du théâtre*. Besançon: Les Solitaires Intempestifs, 2001. p. 15

188 Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida*. Trans. R. Howard. London: Jonathan Cape, 1982. p. 96

awful question of what ends when the symbols shatter. Carmelo Bene wrote: 'You cannot make a masterpiece out of art – *outside* of the opus, you *are* masterpiece.¹⁸⁹ After the work has disappeared, something must appear in its place, its music, its trace, its invisibility. These 'remains', this phonic sediment, will be the object of the conclusion of this thesis.

189 Bene, Carmelo. *Opere con l'Autografia di un Ritratto*. Milan: Classici Bompiani, 1995. p. XXXVII

Interlude #3.

ahhh let us go our separate ways together... let us gather on the summit of a cool volcano... plunge into the infinite pit in a jet spitting an ec-static dialogue of sound until the attar of our being permeates the red field... blood, tongue and new noise – a sonic dart – from deep in the heart of... ¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ Smith, Patti. Sleeve notes to *Radio Ethiopia*. New York: Arista, 1976.

Rabih Mroué's piece *Make Me Stop Smoking* is a 60-minute video-performance-lecture about contemporary Lebanon. Mroué's work generally relies on a relationship with the image made out of 'errors' occurring between representation and reality: two of his most recent pieces, *Photo Romance* and *The Inhabitants of Images*, are modulated respectively around a documentary of a protest (that never happened) that gets subjected to an absurd censorship, and imagining photomontage as 'real' in Lebanese political posters and propaganda (two politicians who lived in different times meet after their deaths, for example).

Make Me Stop Smoking in particular hits on an interesting open nerve of the contemporary: Mroué guides his audience through a series of titles of pieces that for one reason or another did not happen, titles which are so good that he cannot let them go to waste. So, he makes a whole performance out of titles for performances that never were. Through these titles, symbols of 'disappeared' or 'never-appeared' projects, what *does* begin to appear is Mroué's own personal history and critique of Lebanon and its discontents. The mechanism at work in Mroué's piece, then, relies on what a title prefigures as a place of meaning, independently of whether or not the piece that the title refers to reaches its accomplishment. The open nerve is, in effect, the reliance on the image generated by words: a deep sense of how a semantic field generates a

certain kind of expectation, often separated, in logical terms, by the piece itself. The name of a piece of theatre, of writing, of art pre-furnishes the suppositions we make regarding the piece itself. This 'game' is constantly played in the contemporary arena, making jokes, shifting registers, mixing ideas, adding layers.

Make Me Stop Smoking is, for example, deeply pre-furnished by the title 'Make Me Stop Smoking' and that is the case, perhaps even more so, with *Hey Girl!*: a 'pop' title, which maximises the aprosdoketon effect once the audience is inside the auditorium. So, although we are used to it, it is strange to think how once upon a time a play about two people called Romeo and Juliet was called *Romeo and Juliet* and that now, to pick an example, Rodrigo García makes a show about his childhood and calls it *Cruda. Vuelta y vuelta. Al punto. Chamuscada*¹⁹¹. 'Hey Girl!', the two words and the punctuation, take us to pop and to commercial hip-hop, the exclamation mark gives it a spring, the Hey gives it informality, the English language gives it that strange 'modernity' we have talked of before; 'Cruda. Vuelta y vuelta...', as a phrase, takes us to meat, to Argentina, to fire, to a certain anger, to a certain ruthlessness etc. The title of this thesis moves in this logic also, so I want to spend a few moments explaining my choice to pre-furnish this project with the words 'Fac ut Ardeat Cor Meum.'

These words are a line from Jacopone da Todi's thirteenth century poem *Stabat Mater*, later put to music and rendered popular by composers such as

¹⁹¹ Translation: 'Rare. Medium. Well-done. Carbonized.'

Pergolesi, Rossini and Dvořák¹⁹². The poem, a narration of the Madonna watching her son being crucified, finally leading to a reflection on the transitory nature of the body, has a particular way of shifting tone, register and address. A narration in the third person imperfect ('Stabat Mater dolorosa...') is interjected with moments of Jacopone addressing himself, or his auditors, or God, or the Madonna. Much of the poem is built around open-ended questions, open-ended implorations, in a tone of quasi hallucinated frenzy and devotion. Questions such as 'who could ever not cry [watching the Mater]?' are followed by exclamations like 'reproduce each one of his wounds in me!' and by narrations such as 'for the sins of his people she saw Jesus in torment.' Jacopone's tone reads like one of delirious ecstasy – he seems to want to suffer, whoever's suffering it may be. The mother's, the son's, humanity's. A tone similar to Saint Theresa's poetry, punctuated by raptures in their orderly discipline. By the time he joins Christ, he must have suffered as much as him and as everybody who has suffered from his death (which in the religious logic means: everybody).

'Fac, ut ardeat cor meum' translates roughly as 'make my heart melt', or rather: 'do so that my heart may burn', 'act in such a way so that I may also burn (like you have burned)'. He wants to share, even take, the suffering of the Madonna. He wants to see what she saw how she saw it.

So that in effect he asks of the image, of the representation of the Madonna – a narrative/pictorial representation – to make a pain come back to life. He asks the image to make him re-live its passions. He asks the story to

¹⁹² Da Todi, Jacopone. *Stabat Mater*. In De Sanctis, Francesco. *Storia Della Letteratura Italiana*, Tomo I. Turin: Einaudi, 1958.

make him re-suffer. There is a pact of sympathy inherent in belief, and in Catholicism it passes through the icon. In Catholicism, the icon is the way to elevation, to sympathy, to ecstasy. Without its symbols, the Catholic church cannot make its metaphysical leap. Inside the icon is where the sound begins – without the icon there is no sublime (so that, as I have said before, it takes an iconophile to make an iconoclast). Similar to the pact of belief is the pact between spectator and performer; to paraphrase Casagrande: 'if you give me here, I can come with you into the beyond – how beautiful.'¹⁹³

'Fac, ut Ardeat Cor Meum' are words which, in the semantic (and magnetic¹⁹⁴) fields that they create carry a weight: a thick symbolic music. Their placement alters their music, their music is bent for certain reasons. For example: here they are in Latin and not translated into English. This is so that in the distance we can hear the sound of a martial drum, the linguistic world the words come from. It seems to me that the sentence 'Fac, ut ardeat cor meum' lives in the location of the crux of everything I have been discussing so far. It is the plea to a representation to re-become (or simply become) real. It is begging an icon, in two dimensions, to take us to our fourth, but always passing imperatively through our bodies. A real-unreal wish to burn. A layering of fictions and bodies. A deaf answer to the impossible question: how far does incarnation go¹⁹⁵?

193 Bottirolì, Silvia. 'Promises', talk with G. Palladini and J. Kelleher. Performance Matters, London, 9th October 2010.

194 I refer to Perniola's idea that emaning is made between the 'magnetic' field that originate between the things that feel, be it ourselves or objects. Perniola, Mario. *The Sex Appeal of the Inorganic*. Trans. M. Verdicchio. London: Continuum, 2004.

195 Serres, Michel. *The Five Senses: a Philosophy of Mingled Bodies*. Trans. By M. Sankey and P. Cowley. London: Continuum, 2008. p. 132

This thesis has its origin in a frustration: the frustration of being without a language that spoke accurately of my experience of spectatorship. The talk of 'theatre of image', a definition which was meant to liberate us from a strict idea of 'form', or 'genre', or 'style' began to sound like an outmoded and empty container, a way to avoid talking about the deep aesthetic experience of going to the theatre. Worse still, in these days of 'challenging ocularcentricity'¹⁹⁶, a worry emerges, that we may have somehow lost interest in the image, that 'kind of having'¹⁹⁷, that thing of the 'outer man'¹⁹⁸. While we challenge ocularcentricity, the *oculum* is indeed challenging itself, and I, in turn, challenge the idea that spectatorship may be a kind of having, or a thing of the outer man.

'We are so subjugated by image that nobody knows how to listen': this is the kind of nostalgic conversation that animates and veins a lot of the work that has been done on sound over the past two decades. A focus on sound and on sound perception – in our 'fast, image-driven technological' society – is believed to sharpen us and awaken us, and I believe this is also true. This project, however, has worked from or has intended to work from the opposite statement: 'We have so much experience with image that we can even listen to it.'

196 I am referring to the series 'Bodily Knowledges: Challenging Ocularcentricity' at Tate Modern, 21st February 2003. Published in *FO A RM*, 4 (2005), 48-57.

197 Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. As quoted in Connor, Steven. 'Ears have Walls: on Hearing Art.' A talk given in the series 'Bodily Knowledges: Challenging Ocularcentricity' at Tate Modern, 21st February 2003. Published in *FO A RM*, 4 (2005), 48-57.

198 Richard Wagner's *Prose Works*. London: Wagner Society London Branch, 1893. p. 91

Listening came here, into this project, as a way of adding a layer of sense onto our seeing: as a seeing beyond and not as a substitute of seeing, not as a faculty which is completely higher or other to what we may do with our eyes. The listening metaphor came into this project, and is still in this project, as a type of deep watching, as an experiment in intersensoriality.

The attitudes of the avantgardes and post-avantgardes described in the first part of this dissertation, the thirst for a way into and beyond the image, are in many ways the first kicks – generational, cultural, artistic – toward a deeper, more realist comprehension of the image. A type of understanding which could make us aware of image the way we had become aware of language, an aesthetic mastery and not an aesthetic subjugation.

As we tune into the hypertext of the world, the image has become a more and more complex locus for meaning and its making. Looking, consequently, is more and more an intersensory sense, a multi-somatic activity, in which it is not only our eyes that are harnessed, but our every opening and possibility. Just as we have learned to perceive text, to life the life of a text in between body and alphabet, we are in the process of understanding how an image has the exact same number of openings. Here I have looked into one of the aspects – but one of many – of how we may navigate our world of image without this alleged 'subjugation' to the image. I have attempted to listen to it.

A number of commentators have wished to see in the new electronic and computer media the end of the otherness of images, if not the end of the inventions of art. But the computer, the synthesizer and new technology as a whole have no more betokened the end of

the image and art as did photography and cinema in their day. The art of the aesthetic age has never stopped playing on the possibilities that each medium could offer *to blend its effects to those of others*, to assume their role and thereby create new figures, *reawakening sensible possibilities* which they had exhausted. The new technologies and aids supply these metamorphoses with unprecedented possibilities. The image is not about to stop being pensive¹⁹⁹.

I realise that if we are becoming inorganic – things that feel – as Perniola states, then we are doing so by ways of re-organizing our organicity. I do not feel that we are losing any of our somatic presence or thereness by moving into these territories opened up by image, such as the virtual, the digital, the post- and in-organic, because the body and the senses are continuously redefined as the ghosts and our bodies learn about each other, as spectators become hyper-conscious of the spectres. So perhaps nostalgia is not strictly necessary. The experiments in performance and, speaking more specifically to this piece of work, in Italian performance over the past 30 years push us more towards a movement with the image than against it. The image became, in European and American theatres of the 20th century, the locus of experimentation, ferment, rebellion – and to a large extent it still is. This is not surprising since – it seems – we are somehow still 'afraid' of the image, and the further it moves from representation (inextricably bound to our textual history) the more afraid we are.

As we gain a deeper 'feeling' of the image, we learn how to read it, to experience it, to talk through it, to traverse untraversed spaces and imagine unimagined landscapes. And this is perhaps the beauty of what we have come to call 'theatre of image'. The fundamental intuition, prefigured within it, that

199 Rancière, Jacques. *The Emancipated Spectator*. Trans. G. Elliott. London: Verso, 2009. pp. 131-132

image is democratic, infinite and strong – if we learn how to listen to it we can understand how our sense inter-senses can shape another version of performance and of spectatorship, unafraid of the mediatic synaesthesia we are plunged into by the modern world, but in fact: critical of it, attuned to it, capable of suffering from it. 'Taking revenge in the aesthetic'²⁰⁰ means to make profoundly political something which is inherently anchored in subjectivity.

Taking revenge in the aesthetic incorporates, as a phrase, those attitudes that as Sinisi notes are the stuff of 1977, not of 1968²⁰¹. To take revenge in the aesthetic is to have profoundly interiorized, without having 'learned' it, that the medium is the message; that the fetishization of the work of art can in itself, whether we agree or not, constitute its deep commitment²⁰² – and that the commitment of the work can become fetish without relying on the work itself²⁰³, that the visual has depths which extend beyond symbolism and representation. So that it seems the question is still and always, like a broken record: how far does incarnation go?

200 Sinisi, Silvana. 'Neoavanguardia e postavanguardia in Italia' in *Avanguardie ed Utopie del Teatro, Storia del teatro moderno e contemporaneo Vol. 20*. Turin: Einaudi, 2001. p. 717

201 Ibid.

202 'A work of art that is committed strips the magic from a work of art that is content to be a fetish, an idle pastime for those who would like to sleep through the deluge that threatens them, in an apoliticism that is in fact deeply political.' Adorno, Theodor. 'Commitment' in Adorno et al. *Aesthetics and Politics*. I think about this statement in relation to the remark made in the introduction about Tondelli's *Other Libertines* being a political novel about the absence of politics, and in relation to Sinisi's 'taking revenge' and I question whether Adorno's statement can be true and Sinisi's be true at the same time. How to distinguish the committed from the uncommitted in the contemporary art world? Is it still true that there is clear a difference between 'fetish' and 'committed'? And what about a knowingly political apoliticism?

203 I refer here to something brought up by Gianni Canova in a recent editorial regarding the 2010 Venice Festival, in which he laments that many films, by audiences and by critics are 'reduced to the chit-chat surrounding the film itself'. In other words, he has noticed how it is enough to make a 'film about Communism' to awaken a polemic about the film and about Communism, whereas the aesthetic dimension of the film in itself – and hence also its political content – falls into the background. Canova, Gianni. 'Il Cinema Italiano nell'Era del Cavaliere'. In *'Micromega'* Vol.6/2010, pp. 3-8

(III) AN EYE FOR AN EYE

Max Harris writes concisely about 'the problem of the body', as we saw Sontag refer to it earlier²⁰⁴: 'there is in the theatre one virtually insurmountable barrier to complete abstraction, one incorrigible link with the world of flesh and blood: the presence of the body of the actor.'²⁰⁵ He goes on to list the short-lived experiments of doing away with the body in the theatre, such as those of Gordon Craig or of the Futurists: 'the human body, it seems, may be banished from the canvas but not from the stage.'²⁰⁶ This is where those 'black boxes' that Serres imagines as ears come back into our conversation. How far does incarnation go? Very far, it seems. In saying 'Fac ut Ardeat Cor Meum', Jacopone is not at all wishing for abstraction, but on the contrary, for a somatization of the abstract. And this, in many ways, is what the theatre is capable of doing. Those black boxes have been, for me, a way to prove this somatization, to prove that our body is not absent in the mechanisms at work in the image, in the 'regime of aesthetics'²⁰⁷. So that it appears that the problem of the body may be a problem, but that it is also the quintessential condition for the *making of theatre*. A *cri* is a cry, not a noise from nowhere; Silvia Costa's body is Silvia Costa's body, we count our fears on her stretched spine.

204 Sontag, Susan. 'The Artist as Exemplary Sufferer'. In *Against Interpretation and other Essays*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1967. p. 44

205 Harris, Max. *Theater and Incarnation*. London: Macmillan, 1990. p. 38

206 Ibid. p. 39

207 Rancière, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics*, translation by Gabriel Rockhill. London: Continuum, 2004. p. 22.

Has the desire for abstraction pushed us into a space where the body of the actor and the body of the spectator are almost done away with? Is that why, now, in order to place image into a conversation about spirit and body, I need to create a link made of sound to justify a connection between the visible and the invisible?

After all, image *does* abundantly. Commencing the endeavour of writing about perception, I was faced with Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible*²⁰⁸. Having this text at the start of one's reading list means being on the one hand immediately confronted with the impossibility of the task; at the same time, somehow, it carries a strange sense of 'being let off the hook'. Merleau-Ponty's initial reflections talk of a perceptual 'faith': he quotes Saint Augustin – another saint and so, by definition engaged in the problems of unreality – and says: 'what Saint Augustin said about time: that it is familiar to each one of us but each one of us is incapable to explain it to others, must be said about the world'²⁰⁹. Philosophy, in this state of affairs, obliges humanity to think of itself as an enigma, he states. '*C'est ainsi, et personne n'y peut rien*'²¹⁰.

The movement which is revolutionary in that first chapter, however, is stating that there is no difference between the true and the false, supplying an entry beyond all early 20th century 'reasonable' inquiry. In the peripheral opening and centrifugal whirlwind opened up by modernism, in effect Merleau-Ponty takes the courage to state that not only 'thoughts' are real – but also that subjectivity is real and that thus, the place where meaning is made is an inter-

208 Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Le Visible et l'Invisible*. Paris: Gallimard, 1964.

209 Ibid. p.18

210 Translation: 'It's like this and nobody can do anything about it.' Ibid. p.19

subjectivity, not an objectivity. He liberates image from being tied to the 'tyranny of the visual', that is, frees it from the encasing of *mimesis and truth* that traditionally dominate it. I quote:

As it is true that I see my table, that my vision ends in the table, that the table fixes and arrests my sight in its insurmountable density, it is also true that if I, still sitting at my table, think about the Pont de la Concorde, then I'm not in my thoughts, I'm at the Pont de la Concorde, so that at the horizon of all these visions or quasi-visions there is the world that I live in, the natural and historical world, with all the human traces it is made of; and this conviction is also complicated, as I think about it, by the fact that it is my own vision²¹¹.

But he concludes that this fear of what is mine, this argument against subjectivity, has made us throw out our perception (concrete) the way that we have thrown out our dreams (abstract), in a desperate but irresolvable need to distinguish the true from the false. The postulate that I have responded to from Merleau-Ponty into this thesis has something to do with this first conversation on the *clair* and the *obscur* and it goes something like this: not only my perception is real, but since I am writing inside art and more specifically, inside performance, perhaps we can say my dream is real also – as is the dream I am yet to dream (or the sound of one hand clapping²¹²).

But onto sound again, and sound in the light (*dans le clair*) of Merleau-Ponty. I came from an idea that if everything is real, even the Unreal, then since the theatre is a place which relies on what we see as real (a table) as much as it relies on what we think as real (the Pont de la Concorde), then let us use an

211 Ibid. p. 19-20

212 Lucy, Niall. *Beyond Semiotics: Text, Culture and Technology*. London: Continuum, 2001. p. 74

invisible sense to think about what is invisible in the visible. Enter, then, Moten's idea of the phonograph. Salomé Voegelin imagines that when Merleau-Ponty talks of perception, he is not really talking about the visual, but he is talking about the sonic. She even hypothesizes that Merleau-Ponty would have arrived to realise this if he had lived, and hence written, longer²¹³. But is this true? Voegelin states: 'Merleau-Ponty talks about perception in visual terms. The sensibility of perception however is not that of vision, it is not vision that painting and philosophy has liberated from representation. It is sonic perception. (...) It shares nothing of the totalizing ability of the visual'. And this is the kind of nostalgia that in my writing I attempt to push against: why talk of vision simply in terms of a 'stranglehold on knowledge and experience'²¹⁴? When Merleau-Ponty talks of being inside Cezanne's *Pommes et Oranges*, is he really committing an error in thinking that he is inside by way of the visual? Does he really want to substitute his visual perception for the sonic? Or, as I believe, is he simply in the 'keener and deeper perception' proposed by Artaud²¹⁵, using his sensual ensemble to listen to the phonograph of *Pommes et Oranges*?

Perhaps because I am writing in performance, I refuse that notions of sharing and being inside are supplied solely by an idea of the sonic. The visual is capable of the 'sensibility of perception' of the sonic. The sonic, here, is a metaphor and a way in to visual sensibility, but it is uninteresting to me to

213 Voegelin, Salomé. Book presentation for *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art*. London: Continuum, 2010. London, LCC, June 2010.

214 Voegelin, Salomé. *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art*. London: Continuum, 2010. p. 48

215 Artaud, Antonin. *The Theatre and its Double*. Trans. M. C. Richards. New York: Grove Press, 1985. p. 91

exchange an ear for an eye or an eye for an ear. I am interested instead in the complexity of watching as a corporeal and intersensory activity, moving with a force which relies on the being completely in the world. A question of sensual ensemble. A question of being – entirely – attuned. I have used the sonic as a metaphor of what a glimpse of the whole of experience may look like.

My reasons for writing have their birth somewhere else, that supplies the 'other' entrance to my argument and makes it differ from the fields of both Merleau-Ponty and Voegelin – it also supplies the mode of engagement, the kind of importance it rests upon. A place, maybe not the furthest, but one of the places where incarnation *does* go. In conclusion, this somewhere else is discussed in part (IV).

(IV) SON DOUBLE

There is the theatre, and then, there is its double. 'the Double, not of this direct, everyday reality of which it is gradually being reduced to a mere inert replica – as empty as it is sugarcoated – but of another archetypal and dangerous reality, a reality of which the Principles, like dolphins, once they have shown their heads, hurry to dive back into the obscurity of the deep.'²¹⁶

The double which is, perhaps, the wall and also the hole, the zero, the

²¹⁶ Artaud, Antonin. *The Theatre and its Double*. Trans. M. C. Richards. New York: Grove Press, 1958. p. 48

absolute, yet material. I want to talk for a moment about theatrical gesture, because I believe this is the place where my discussion ends. Theatrical gesture is something which comes from the pre-conceptual, pre-image, pre-technological theatre, and the thing that still animates all of those places with old-fashioned names: laboratories, workshops, academies, drama schools. The thing, also, that still animates a great portion of our interest in Grotowski, in Barba, in Brecht, in people such as Carmelo Bene and Antonio Neiwiller, who have influenced a vast landscape of Italian theatre of the late 20th century, and of course, in Artaud. This idea of gesture is older still, very old or rather: very ancient, archaic even, quite unfashionable, quite proverbial, almost common place, linked to an idea of 'the theatre' which seems almost surpassed in the differently rhythmic world of performance we live in now, hanging on a line between a televisual spectacularity on one side and an anti-formal alterformality on the other. To remind ourselves of certain attitudes towards gesture, I want to quote two passages from *Towards a Poor Theatre*:

The education of an actor in our theatre is not a matter of teaching him something; we accept to eliminate his organism's resistance to this psychic process. The result is freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already an outer reaction. Impulse and action are concurrent: the body vanishes, burns, and the spectator sees only a series of visible impulses. (...) There is no difference between inner technique and artifice.²¹⁷

217 Grotowski, Jerzy. *Towards a Poor Theatre*. Translators not credited. London: Methuen, 1975. pp. 16-17

And:

[the 'holy' actor] is a metaphor defining a person who, through his art, climbs upon the stake and performs an act of self-sacrifice. (...) Is holiness therefore an unreal postulate? I think it is just as well founded as that of movement at the speed of light. By this I mean that without ever attaining it, we can nevertheless move consciously and systematically in that direction, thus achieving practical results²¹⁸.

Albeit the efforts made to decline gesture into an explicit grammar, often with difficulties, by thinkers such as Pavis, Eco or Barthes, what we learn from the makers of the theatre and their conversation and work is that the theatrical gesture knows things that anybody who has not experienced the theatrical gesture in its intimate, silent form, cannot know. The theatrical gesture, the beast that animates the machine, so problematic and slippery to write about, is known and 'deeply understood only by whoever has been visited, God knows where, by this elsewhere of not-having-to-be-aesthetic that incapsulates the (no longer his) flow of the production-articulation of an opus.'²¹⁹

To allow that 'slippery thing' into one's analysis, even only as a problem, is to allow that here, on the near side of a perhaps not very imminent epistemological break, the pursuit of a theoretical account of live performance remains an unsettled project, tragic even, and doomed to fail. However, this theoretical failure sparks fascination and desire alongside acute anxieties. Through an unwillingness – or a failure, to accommodate performance into a theoretical discourse, Barthes offers the compelling suggestion that it is in blind fields and unanswered questions, more than in any ideal, safe, or tidily elegant account, that we might find the most vivid reflections on the intricate powers, dangers, discomfort, worries and pleasures of the live

218 Ibid. p. 43

219 Bene, Carmelo. *Opere con l'Autografia di un Ritratto*. Milan: Classici Bompiani, 1995. p. XXXVII

performing body.²²⁰

As I said earlier about sound, then (the hypothesis offered by Attali that sound allows us to know something not even known, or not necessarily known, by sound itself²²¹) theatrical gesture also exists in an intentionality of which it is not wholly conscious, while being conscious that it is the gesture itself which gives the gift of that intentionality. Bene uses a word, 'visitation', which comes – once again – from a religious vocabulary. Gesture, this hyper-corporeal thing that actors learn and to which they become addicted, holds in its centre a 'holy' quality, as Grotowski stated, which means that *cor meum* and *cor teum* communicate with a troubling ease, touch each other, go together somewhere, 'a total acceptance of one human being by another'²²². Gesture makes it possible for people to sometimes fail to remember what they have seen, what they have said or done, what happened in the stage world, making visible and invisible collide, turning everybody into visionaries. It makes it possible for legs to shake, for hands to go limp, for somebody to cry, to shout, to laugh and all of this without it being known by the gesture itself.

The opus is hence made, it seems, by this exteriorized force of the gesture which, once liberated, seems to have no master and no god. Gesture is wise and childish, it plays in a hyper-consciousness which makes it both innocent and cruel. It is capable of declining an aesthetic, a political world with a flick of the wrist, with an un-uttered syllable, with a glance. And these things are true –

220 Scheie, Timothy. *Performance Degree Zero: Roland Barthes and Theatre*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006. p. 15

221 Attali, Jacques. *Noise: the Political Economy of Music*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985. p.5

222 Grotowski, Jerzy. *Towards a Poor Theatre*. Translators not credited. London: Methuen, 1975. p. 17

they appear spoken with a sideways untrue lexicon which seems to 'not fit', slippery, generating anxiety and desire together²²³, but they are true: they make our theatrical tradition, they are milestones of what it means to 'make theatre'.

Mingled bodies live, at the theatre, in a world that looks like that wall, that wall between the visible and the invisible; gesture knows, by way of soulfulness and by way of discipline in equal measures how to calibrate that dance then, how to make meaning with one's entire (anti-dualist) being. The theatre is a craft, before anything else. Stages do not fill, nor do audiences, thanks to the gods, but thanks to mingled bodies and their work, which is conceptually and corporeally 'hard work'. The body is pushed toward the other, though, and the lines between things are blurred. Lost days come to life. And, like dolphins, hurry back down into the obscurity of the deep²²⁴.

As Nancy talks of sound, when he says: it is all behind, all in front, all sides – so is gesture and, though seeable, cannot be confined to the space of the visual, or rather: not to the space of the visual as a synonym for 'knowable'. And the fact that gesture is capable of virtuality – to go back to Chiara Guidi's comment on Abbott – is perhaps the most important aspect of this conversation, and its crucial core: that which does not exist, passes, at the theatre, through the living, breathing body which *does* exist. In the theatre, it is the body and its movement which lives within but also creates that world which, until a second ago, simply did not exist. Theatre does with bodies what music does with

223 Scheie, Timothy. *Performance Degree Zero: Roland Barthes and Theatre*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006. p. 15

224 Artaud, Antonin. *The Theatre and its Double*. Trans. M. C. Richards. New York: Grove Press, 1958. p. 48

instruments – a voluntary synaesthesia. But it is theatre, which makes music, not the body itself – so perhaps this is gesture: making music in the most absolute silence. 'Music made visible'²²⁵.

Pasolini wrote a Manifesto for the New Theatre in 1968, in which he proposes a distinction between theatre of words and what at that time in Italy was known as 'theatre of the scream or of the gesture' (such as Carmelo Bene's). While he states that the new theatre can adopt either of these methods for the reiteration of anti-bourgeois ideals and the subsequent generation of a useful, concrete political discourse, he underlines that the genesis of these debates in the latter kind of theatre has a ritual matrix²²⁶.

So that it seem that theatrical gesture is *cor meum* and *cor teum*: it extends to spectators, but also to space, to buildings, to those who are not watching. By doing so it is capable of generating, through the aesthetic, the political phonograph we attune to. By doing so it travels, as we think and talk. By doing so it simulates mental spaces and engenders more mental spaces yet to be simulated, it transforms the outer into inner, the hard into soft, and back again.

Rarely, as spectators, we too are 'visited' and we become holy. In recently watching a performance, I felt my heart fill with pain and thoughts and strange excitement. I drowned for an hour, in the black hole of theatre where the gesture is the message, feeling the emotional, physical and intellectual risk of being a spectator, of being present, of being there, one of the bodies, mingled. A sense of frenzied collectivity, mingled with my mental space furnished, then

²²⁵ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Trans. F. Golffing. New York: Doubleday, 1956. p.89

²²⁶ Pasolini, Pier Paolo. 'Manifesto per un nuovo teatro', published in 'Nuovi argomenti', January-March 1968. campus.cib.unibo.it/24600/1/manifesto_per_un_nuovo_teatro_.pdf

unfurnished, at play with itself and at war with itself, my individuality exasperating itself, in its 'beyond', as I felt the heat of the bodies around me. As I left my seat, I realised I was walking differently, I was using my body differently, talking, thinking with a different shadow – as if the electricity of *their* gesture has rubbed off onto *me*. I could have run the 100 kilometres back to the apartment where I was staying. Visitation. Visions. Visionaries. 'Moving on to the stage with our luggage'²²⁷. Or the stage moving into me?

Every moment of the image on stage *does something* to the life of a spectator: my writing here has been an attempt to critically discuss some of that *something*. The reason I bring these reflections in as I reach the end of this thesis is the desire to address anew those which are, in effect, the reasons of the genesis of this piece of work. And these have to do not with the transformative *power*, but with the transformative *potentialities* of spectatorship as a paradigm for a wider idea of what it is to *relate to images*. Neiwiller's manifesto recites: 'it is time to listen, it is time to make some silence within ourselves'²²⁸. What I propose with this piece of work, in conclusion, is that the act of paying attention to deep listening, the act of taking make-believe seriously, the act of concentrating on the sensual engagement urged for by the image may shed light on some of the darker corners of what we have come to consider as our society of spectacle. That this kind of questioning of the image may help illuminate the way we think of ourselves as spectators at large: the

227 Cirifino, Fabio et al. *Studio Azzurro. Videoambienti, ambienti sensibili e altre esperienze tra arte, cinema, teatro e musica*. Milan: Feltrinelli, 2007. p. 9

228 Neiwiller, Antonio. 'Per un teatro clandestino'. in Grieco, Antonio. *L'altro Sguardo di Neiwiller. Il teatro di frontiera di un protagonista dell'avanguardia italiana*. Naples: L'Ancora del Mediterraneo, 2002. p. 89

way we assess our 'emancipation', our attunement, our victimisation as spectators, inside but also outside the (relatively reassuring) limits of the auditorium. My intervention is intended as an opening up of one of the routes we may follow in order to add some *depth* to the notion of image and to the notion of visual theatres – it is intended as a *deep interrogation of the surface*. By listening to the theatre we can perhaps start hearing beyond the theatre, as an attempt to bring the double closer and perhaps develop a language to talk of Artaud's dolphins and of that particular motion of 'hurrying back' into the obscurity of the deep.

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Madrid, October 2009. Courtesy of Societas Raffaello Sanzio.

APPENDIX I

A SCENE-BY-SCENE DESCRIPTION OF HEY GIRL!
TRANSCRIBED FROM A VIDEO FILMED IN MADRID, NOVEMBER 2008
COURTESY OF SOCIETAS RAFFAELLO SANZIO.

00.00– 07.42 – Silvia Costa peels through her melting mould. Once she has come out of it, helping herself with a knife, she falls off the table and slowly stands up, upstage right.

07.24- 09.32 – After having picked up a mirror, Costa walks towards the back of the stage onto a pile of neatly folded towels. She holds the mirror up to the wall, making the light shine out of it. After this gesture, she turns her back to the audience and slowly lifts her left hand. After this gesture, Costa progressively slides onto the wall, down towards the floor, in a fade-out, upstage centre.

09.32- 14.28 – Costa reappears lit next to a drum, upstage left, and proceeds to slide onto the drum and arrhythmically pounding it with two drumsticks. All we see is Costa's back stretched onto the side of the drum. She then sits down and turns round the drum, beating it more regularly this time, slowly getting faster and faster. At the apex of the rhythm, she puts down the sticks, discards the drum and gets dressed, just behind it. She slowly puts on a pair of underpants, a pair of jeans and a white t-shirt. Costa starts sobbing, almost inaudibly, still with her back to us. Her action is interrupted by the light picking out a silver sword, which is placed on the floor, downstage centre.

14.29- 22.30 – Costa walks back to where she held the mirror, picks up one of the pieces of pink folded material she had stood on; then, she makes her way to the sword. She positions the material in front of the sword and uses it to kneel on. She brings her hands to her hips and gazes out to the audience. Having held this look for a minute or so, she looks back down at the sword and lowers her upper body towards it, as if falling, her hands still on her hips, and sobs a little. This action is repeated three times. The third time, she takes one of her hands to the floor, draws an imaginary semicircle. This movement follows into her body and she lays down next to the sword. She crosses her feet, as if she was on a beach, and then starts gently moving them, as if tapping to a rhythm. After a couple of minutes, she gets back on her knees and looks again at the sword.

22.31 – 30.50 – In front of the sword are a red lipstick and a bottle of Chanel N°5. Costa picks up the lipstick and puts it on facing the audience. As if to see herself in a mirror, she then looks into the sword. She takes the lipstick and touches the sword with it. The sword is heated, so the lipstick creates a long crackle and a puff of smoke. Costa picks up the perfume and drags the dauber along her neck, as if slitting her own throat. She pours the rest onto the

sword, back and forth, twice. This, again, produces a puff of smoke and a strong smell of burnt Chanel N°5. Costa lifts the pink material from under her knees and presses it onto the burning sword, when she lifts it again and unfolds the four folds, she is left with a small sheet with a black cross burnt into it. Costa wears it as a cape and slowly picks up the handle of the sword, drawing a semicircle on the floor. She whispers a list of queens (Anne Boleyn, Marie Antoinette, etc.) and then whispers: 'These are the queens who have given their head for the people'. When she has finished she puts her foot on the bottle, her back to us, and attempts to lift the sword. The first time she doesn't succeed. The second time she lifts it into the air, and then drops it to the floor again. She discards the sword and walks along to stage left.

30.51 – 35.00 – One of the glass discs is hanging stage left. She looks through it and then walks in front of it. She raises her hand and says 'Who art thou, that, thus bescreen'd in night, so stumblest on my counsel?'. She marches stage right, looks both ways behind her, as if to check that nobody is looking, and answers: 'My name is hateful to myself, because it is an enemy to thee.' As she says these words, she brings her hand to her heart. Soon afterwards, the R sign lights up and clangs. She looks up at it and runs left where the L sign lights up and clangs. This, like the drum, gets faster and faster. Blackout and then one more noise again in which we see Costa's outline in a cold green light. Blackout again.

35.00 - 39.00 – Costa is next seen upstage centre in front of what looks like a light box, lying down and flapping her arms like wings. She turns onto her side and keeps repeating the same gesture. Frequent blackouts and then a group of men (50 or so – 50 being the desired number in the e-mails that the company sent out to recruit extras in each city; usually there are just over 30 men) slowly make their way onto the stage and look at her. They are holding pillows. One of the men comes close to her and beats her with the pillow. Other men follow. Finally, in between blackouts, all we have is the image of the shadows of the men beating these pillows to the ground; Costa disappears inside this scene. The only light is the light from the light box projecting the shadows. Twice the stage goes to full red, for about a second each time.

39.00 - 45.15 – When a cold wash comes back on, the extras are standing in three rows upstage left. From in between them emerges Costa, wearing a realistic mask of her head, but double the size. She stands between the men and the audience and picks up a black flag. As she waves it, she demands of the lights to be turned off. Every time the lights come back on, she puts the flag down and shouts louder for the lights to be turned off. For about a minute of this scene, some of the words which appear at the end are slowly projected on a screen stage left, going a little faster as she waves the flag in the dark. Hospital, shame, rainbow, disco. The extras stand behind her throughout. The words stop and the girl stays in blackout. Costa puts down the flag, takes off her mask and leaves it centre stage next to the sword. She proceeds to, again, disappear

amongst the extras.

45.15 - 51.20 - When Costa comes back, again through the wall of extras, she brings Sonia Beltràn Napoles with her. Napoles is wearing Costa's mask, this time it is inflated three times. They stand together facing the audience, the men exit and a man in Victorian costume enters and stands upstage. Costa strokes Napoles' hair, whispers to her, seems to comfort her. They lift their arms together and draw a line in the air. Then she takes off her clothes and piles them together. Then she takes off her mask-head and positions it next to hers, near the sword. Napoles is now naked and turns to face the man. Costa walks to the looking glass and observes the scene.

51.20 -59.26 – The man walks left to get some chains and some hay, then proceeds to take Napoles by the hand and invite her to stand on the stack of hay. He chains her up, her hands and feet, and extends his arm, offering his hat. Costa walks towards the man, takes a coin out of her pocket and deposits it in the hat. He gives her a key and exits. Costa unties Napoles and they each hold one end of the chain. They lift it and perform the same gesture they have performed before, this time with the chain. Costa walks back to her looking glass and meanwhile another 3 glass circles have been lowered. Napoles looks through one in front of her. They look at each other through four looking glasses on a diagonal. Costa runs to Napoles, punches a glass circle and embraces her. As they embrace, the four glass circles shatter. The light go out.

59.26 – 01.03.17 – Napoles is peering into the mirror circle Costa peered into at the start. Costa walks into the beam that it produces and is immersed, from the back and the top, in a very bright saint-like light. Costa opens her arms. As the light fades, she paints Napoles in silver paint. Napoles picks up a sword and starts waving it. Costa walks slowly down stage, where a blue laser ray points directly into her ear.

01.03.18 – 01.09.23 – The words are projected behind the two performers, Napoles keeps flying the sword and Costa keeps listening to the laser beam (for a selection of these words see p.119). 6 minutes in, Costa abandons the beam (which continues, shining into the floor) and walks backstage. Napoles also stops and walks backstage. Blackout.

01.09.23 – 01.10.20 – A giant upside-down version of Jan van Eyck's self portrait appears at centre of the stage. Napoles and Costa come back on stage for a curtain call.

APPENDIX II

CD TRACKLIST.

- #1. Favotti, Gino. Extract from *Lady Gosse*, 1994. (p. 95)
- #2. Extract from the sound of the first scene of *Hey Girl!* (p. 95)
- #3. Chrisma. Extract from *Lycee*, 1977. (p. 99)
- #4. Extract from the sound of final scene of *Hey Girl!* (p. 120)