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Attention, Agency, Affect
In the Flow of Performing Audiences

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C. Maria Laudando

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> O to write a play without an audience – *the* play. But here she was fronting her audience. Every second they were slipping the noose. Her little game had gone wrong.
>
> ...
>
> Blood seemed to pour from her shoes. This is death, death, death, she noted in the margin of her mind; when illusion fails. Unable to lift her hand, she stood facing the audience.
>
> (Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts*)

> If the audience is not altogether an absence, it is by no means a reliable presence.
>
> (Herbert Blau, *The Audience*)

Whether celebrated as 'travelling concepts' across an impressive array of disciplines or denigrated as inflationary and all-too-fashionable labels, performance and performativity have increasingly, even perhaps equivocally, marked the cultural scenario of the last five decades, contributing to a disruptive investigation of identity and culture no longer in terms of given products and theoretical abstractions but as living, embodied practices and contingent, situated events. Since their very 'beginnings' around the late Fifties and early Sixties, and then through the various controversial stages of their institutional consolidation Performance Studies have indeed emerged "less as stably referential terms than as discursive sites on which a number of agendas, alliances and anxieties collect".[1] The new field has thus triggered a convergence, at one time fruitful and suspicious, of different disciplinary fields – speech, drama and theatre studies, sociology, anthropology, linguistics and the philosophy of language, to name just a few – and of different artistic practices – from the experiments of John Cage and the militant happenings and 'call to action' of the Living Theatre and the Open Theatre to the ultra sophisticated and multi-media environment of contemporary performance art and digital literature.

One of the distinctive characteristics of this field has always been the 'liminal', Jon McKenzie has even suggested two modelling phases of liminality for this restless conglomeration: the first phase revolved around "the theatricalization of ritual and the ritualization of theatre" (one may think of the seminal collaboration between Richard Schechner and Victor Turner),[2] whereas the most recent phase has shifted to the critical interplay of "the theory of practice and the practice of theory" (the impact of deconstruction and its radical critique of text, sign and subjectivity).[3] In particular, the disruptive reworking of John Austin's seminal categorisation of speech 'acts' by Jacques Derrida (1988) and Judith Butler (1993 and 1997) among others, together with the development of a number of new branches of cultural studies (from media and visual to gender and postcolonial studies) has set in

[1] Shannon Jackson, "Professing performances: Disciplinary Genealogies" (2001), reprinted in Henry Bial, ed., *The Performance Studies Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 40.

[2] See, above all, Richard Schechner, *Between Theatre and Anthropology*, with a Preface by Victor Turner (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania U. P. 1985) and Victor Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance*, with a Preface by Richard Schechner (New York: PAJ Publications, 1986).

[3] Jon MacKenzie, "The Liminal Norm", in *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (London: Routledge, 2001), 49.

motion an extraordinary proliferation of the 'performative' paradigm across any interdisciplinary engagement with the processual, hybrid and translational aspects of culture – a truly 'performative turn' which was also key to the unfolding of the postmodern.[4]

If its "most compelling" potential nowadays is to provide a critical tool to imagine what Peggy Phelan has termed "a post-theatrical, post-anthropological age",[5] no less influential has proved the challenge of adopting a performance trope in the field of literary studies. As one of the undisputed pioneers of Performance Studies makes clear, "to treat any object, work or product 'as' performance – a painting, a novel, a shoe, or anything at all – means to investigate what the object *does*, how it *interacts* with other objects or beings, and how it *relates* to other objects and beings".[6]

As is well known, the turn to performance within the domain of drama and theatre studies has contributed to enliven an old debate over the contentious relationship between texts and their stage productions, sharpening the focus on the limits of their mutual 'representation-ability', while promoting the emergence of the groundbreaking conceptualisation of 'post-dramatic' theatre.[7] Actually, given the increasing porosity among visual, performing and literary arts, the question is no longer to oppose a performativity paradigm vs. a textuality paradigm, rather to exploit the former to decenter the hegemony of the latter, by conceiving the very "disciplines of the text" as "sites of performance".[8] In other words, a performative investigation of texts goes hand in hand with a number of critical readerly procedures which concentrate on the endless process of actualisation of writing-and-reading, from Barthes' notion of text as an inter-textual field of "play, activity, production, practice" and reader-response theory (Stanley Fish) to Jerome J. McGann's emphasis on texts' 'material' and 'processual' condition or John Gavin's explicit reference to Schechner's theory for the activity of reading as belated, "restored behavior",[9] not to mention the forceful conjugation of a performative and affective ethos in the recent work by Derek Attridge.[10]

Analogously, projects based on the challenging adoption of a 'performative writing' keenly responsive to the very interstices of theory and practice continue to proliferate, from the radical production by performance theorists like Peggy Phelan and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick – who strive to "make writing/textuality *speak to*, *of*, and *through* pleasure, possibility, disappearance, and even pain. In other words, to make writing *perform*"[11] – to the provocative playful textual performances by a media artist and theorist like Mark Amerika. As the latter case amply demonstrates, it is the vertiginous diffusion of digital technologies in the culture of the new millennium which has largely contributed to a renewed interdisciplinary focus on the interactive, performative and affective aspects of all kinds of artwork including the literary. Social media, hypertexts, e-books and other on-the-fly postproduction processes necessitate new browsing and reading habits, what's more in such "a network-distributed environment" the very concept of writing and reading has been crucially extended to require "a more proactive resourceful approach to 'making' things, often collaboratively,

[4] See, among others, Philip Auslander, "Postmodernism and Performance", in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism*, ed. by Steven Connor (Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 2004), 97-115.

[5] Peggy Phelan, "Introduction: The Ends of Performance", in Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane, eds., *The Ends of Performance* (New York and London: New York U. P., 1998), 5. The scholar has stressed the palimpsestic and revisionary complexity of the claim as follows: "Such a post-age, like all postage, is reinscribed, written over".

[6] Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction,* Third Edition (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 30. Italics added.

[7] Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. by Karen Jürs-Munby (London and New York: Routledge, 2006 [1999]).

[8] I refer to W. B. Worthen's article, "Disciplines of the Text/Sites of Performance", *TDR*, 39.1 (1995), 13-28.

[9] Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text", in *Image/Music/Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 162. John Glavin, *After Dickens: Reading, Adaptation and Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 1999). See also Jerome J. McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton: Princeton U. P., 1991).

[10] Derek Attridge, "Once More with Feeling: Art, Affect and Performance", *Textual Practice*, 25.2 (2011), 329-343.

[11] Della Pollock, "Performing Writing", in Phelan and Lane, eds., *The Ends of Performance*, 79. Italics added.

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[12] Mark Amerika, "Expanding the Concept of Writing: Notes on Net Art, Digital Narrative and Viral Ethics", *Leonardo*, 37.1 (2004), 9. See also his *Remixthebook* (Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota P., 2011).

[13] See, among others, Stuart Moulthorp, "Travelling in the Breakdown Lane: A Principle of Resistance for Hypertext", *Mosaic*, 28.4 (1995), 55-77. See also Lucia Esposito, "The Body and the Text: Performance in Cultural and Literary Studies", *Alicante Journal of English Studies*, 26 (2013), 27-43.

[14] Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004 [1996]), ix.

[15] Gareth White, *Audience Participation in Theatre: Aesthetics of the Invitation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 1.

with computers", thus "becoming more performative".[12] In the age of cultural remix, readers of a book (as well as spectators of any play or artwork) are called increasingly to act, behave, or perform as 'inter-actors' making their own choices and finding their own way through the dynamic and open arrangement of the texts as 'performance spaces'.[13]

Ubiquitously invoked in the fluid 'post-age' scenario of global and digital interactions, the conceptual network of performance entails, in Marvin Carlson's words, "not just doing or even re-doing, but a self-consciousness about doing and re-doing on the part of both performers and spectators",[14] thus calling attention to a heightened or even exasperated awareness of both readers and spectators. If the two exergues from Woolf's last novel, published posthumously in 1941, seem already to strike a cautionary note against any facile claim to audience's participation, it is only in the wake of the performance turn briefly outlined so far that a rising number of studies have turned to 'the spectatorial' question, a question as slippery as it is essential. As Gareth White has recently summarised with reference to the theatre, but also pointing to a larger cultural scene, audience participation may prove a mixed blessing:

> There are few things in the theatre that are more despised than audience participation. The prospect of audience participation makes people fearful; the use of audience participation makes people embarrassed, not only for themselves but for the theatre makers who choose to inflict it on their audiences.
> This is true not only among theatre's traditionalists, but also among those with broad horizons, aficionados of theatre informed by a century of experiments with theatre form, by the influence of 'performance' practices originating in fine art, and by an understanding of non-western theatre traditions. Audience participation is still often seen as one of the most misconceived, unproductive and excruciating of the avant-garde's blind alleys, or otherwise as evidence of the childish crassness of popular performance.
> Meanwhile techniques, practices and innovations that ask for the activity of audience members and that alter the conventions of performance and audience relationships proliferate and garner critical and popular support.[15]

In light of the theoretical framework sketched above, the present issue of *Anglistica AION* attempts at offering insights into the fractious, contested concept of 'participation' as it has emerged from the recent cross-fertilisation of literary and cultural studies with an array of performance theories and practices. In particular, it aims to investigate how a critical focus on the 'travelling' and interstitial concepts of performance and performativity can help to reframe, revise and challenge existing notions of publics and audiences (both as spectators and as readers). The very title chosen for this collection suggests a trio of keywords – attention, agency, affect – which represent the privileged, albeit problematic indicators of audience participation on one hand, and on the other highlight the character – both elusive and situated – of any spectatorial act as a flowing process whose limits are hard to pin down. Obviously, each of such terms also evokes a constellation of related ideas, agendas and anxieties due to the overlapping of all the different cultural theories and practices mentioned so far. For instance, the call to 'attention' has

long been a priority of any avant-garde project vs. the homogenising effects of a consumer-oriented culture through the various stages of modernity and its fraught legacy; whereas 'agency' immediately triggers a more nuanced scenario informed by postcolonial and minorities discourse in which any cultural act is no longer analysed through clear-cut dichotomies but is deeply enmeshed in the hybrid space and translational potential of the contingent. Similarly, the requisite of bodily attention vs. the canon of normative logo-centrism has been deconstructed and reconfigured in more holistic terms in favour of the emotional and affective capabilities at stake in any cultural reception. The contributions published here reflect, each with their distinctive concerns and specific case studies, a limited but significant sample of the richness and variety of the inter- or trans-disciplinary dialogue tensely taking place among different artistic and critical perspectives on the issue of performing audiences. Ultimately, they all contribute to the further unfolding of lines of entanglement amid attention, agency and affect from their own specific research perspective. Ranging from installation artworks and reality shows to photography and antithetical forms of theatre, including Deaf performances and embodied narrative, all the contributions engage – to a lesser or greater degree – with the hybrid and vulnerable space of performances' fruition as a potential translational catalyst between 're-creative' intention and political and social action at large.

While the title of the present issue alludes to the privileged keywords for this investigation of audience participation, the sections discriminate among the conceptual dilemmas discussed in the essays. The first section revolves around the 'interstices' between art and matter, body and technology, memory and erasure as they are brought to the fore in two forceful cases of site-specific installation: *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk*, presented by Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller at dOCUMENTA 13 (2012) in Kassel, and Rory Macbeth's spray paint installation, *Utopia* (2006). The former is discussed by Andreas Hudelist and Elena Pilipets in the wake of the recent debate on 'relational' art and accordingly situated as an 'in-between' frame of media and space which blends the affective with the performative and the visual with the material. This is followed by Marco Pustianaz's essay which, drawing on affect theory and Rancière's radical notion of "aesthetic regime",[16] interprets Macbeth's act of copying the text of Thomas More's *Utopia* on the walls of a derelict building destined to demolition as a 'dissensual site', powerfully engaging the contingent and performative nature of the literary and its suppressed ties with event, affect, and *aesthesis*.

The central section has a distinctive focus on all kinds of real and figurative 'transactions' between the stage and the audience, theatricality and performativity, illusion and reality, role-playing and social roles – especially in the case of works which stage the very process of reception and participation. Thus, the essay by Lucia Esposito highlights the interplay of traditional pre-scripted roles and the parodic outbreak of a chaotic anti-conventionality as it unfolds in Tom Stoppard's one-act comedy, *The Real Inspector Hound* – written in 1968 in reaction to the first experimental wave of happenings. A reflective 'inspecting' approach to the role and

[16] Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. by Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004).

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agency of the audience is also at work in the contribution by Amaya Fernández-Menicucci on the growing popularity of TLC reality show, *19 Kids and Counting*, based on a Christian fundamentalist family, the Duggars. The unexpected success of the series offers an intriguing case study to investigate the delicate negotiation at stake among producers, performers and spectators while assessing to what extent the Duggars' identity is constructed on and off stage in a succession of performative acts against and for the expectations of both mainstream and alternative viewers.

Orality, physicality and affect dominate the section on the risky 'exposures' of body and writing. Starting from the intrinsically performative and theatrical character of Deaf culture, Elena Intorcia underlines the powerful corporeal expressivity of sign language literature (through the poets-performers' fluid movements of face, hands, head and chest) and the contrasting effects of digital technologies on the composition, transmission and reception of a type of literature which was remarkably tied to a 'live' audience. If in Deaf performances it is the body itself which becomes writing, Giuseppe De Riso's discussion of the recent novel by Geetanjali Shree's, *The Empty Space* (2011), shows how a 'haptic' writing is 'made flesh' by virtue of its extraordinary demands on the reader's bodily perceptions. Drawing on affect theory and the deconstruction of performative acts, the narration of a terroristic attack is explored as a sort of relocation of that traumatic event from its unidentified geographical place to the very body of the reading public.

The journal's traditional section devoted to 'discussion, debate, dissent' here hosts the essay by Sue Lovell and Teone Reinthal on the nexus of performativity, agency and affect as they are 'embodied' and interrelated in experimental forms of improvised performance, and Annalisa Oboe's intriguing conversation with South-African photographer Pieter Hugo. The latter focuses on the performative potentialities of photography and on his viewers' vexed response to his bold combination of activism and provocation.

The two reviews which close the present issue further dwell on interstices, transactions and exposures. Natale's review shows how the joint publication by Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (2013), engages with the performative arena of identity formation and resistance in social conflict, while dismantling the neo-liberal brutal logic of property and ownership as the constitutive features of subjectivity. With Amideo's review the focus shifts to a sort of 'performative' experiment of conference proceedings arranged by Marco Pustianaz, Giulia Palladini, and Annalisa Sacchi as editors of *Archivi affettivi. Un catalogo/Affective Archives. A Catalogue*. Their collection deliberately alludes – in its hybrid and dynamic layout and structure – to a radical shift from the common notion of archive with its centralised acquisitive underpinnings in the past to the risky openness and contamination of a pluralistic and relational modality virtually committed to the future.

A firm commitment to the transformational power of theatre has always marked Tim Crouch's work as one of the most interesting cases of British playwriting of the new millennium.[17] In conclusion, I would like to recall a piece this forceful

[17] See, among others, the section on Tim Crouch in Dan Rebellato, ed., *Modern British Playwriting 2000-2009: Voices, Documents, New Interpretations* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 125-144.

theatre-maker has recently co-authored and performed with his long-life friend and collaborator Andy Smith. The play, *What happens to the hope at the end of the evening* – premiered at the Almeida Festival in July 2013 – stages the meeting of two old friends after a long while in a manner which continuously implicates the spectators in a tangle of embarrassment, hostility, familiarity and solidarity. Eventually, the hope reclaimed in the title is not only about 'these two friends' but about the revolutionary project of another 'living theatre' also off stage. As Andy reads to the audience:[18]

> I want to start a revolution here.
>
> I met this woman in a bookshop once. I was reading a book about The Living Theatre. She told me she had been at one of their performances in the sixties. She told me how, at the end of the performance, the audience were led out onto the street and encouraged to shout 'Paradise Now! Paradise Now!
> Paradise Now! Paradise Now! Paradise Now!'[19]

Fig. 1: Tim Crouch and Andy Smith, What Happens to the Hope at the End of the Evening, 2013. Photo credit Katherine Leedale. Courtesy of Tim Crouch.

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On a closing note I would like to thank Anna Notaro for her invaluable assistance and support while editing this issue.

[18] Andy 'sits' on the left and 'reads' from a script, often addressing the spectators like a 'performer' or a lecturer avoiding his friend's gaze. Tim 'speaks' only to him and nervously 'wanders' the stage on the right. Their 'contrapuntal' attitudes thus trigger a trenchant sense of proximity and distance with the audience.

[19] Tim Crouch and Andy Smith, *What Happens to the Hope at the End of the Evening*, in Tim Crouch, *Adler & Gibb* (London: Oberon Books, 2014), 46.

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[1] Scott Lash and John Urry, *Economies of Signs & Space* (London: Sage, 1994).

[2] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2002), *Postproduction. Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World* (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2005), and *Radicant* (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2009).

[3] Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, 43.

[4] Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, trans. by Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

[5] Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 31.

[6] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London: Verso Books, 2010); Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso Books, 2012); Grant H. Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

[7] Boris Groys, "Art in the Age of Biopolitics: From Artwork to Art Documentation", trans. by Steven Lindberg, in *Documenta11_ Platform: Exhibition. Catalogue* (Ostfildern-Ruit: HatjeCantz, 2002).

[8] Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics", *October*, 110 (Fall 2004).

[9] Claire Bishop, "Participation and Spectacle. Where Are We Now?", in Nato Thompson, ed., *Living as Form* (New York: Creative Time, and Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 2012), 39.

Andreas Hudelist and Elena Pilipets

Walking Art: The Movement In-Between

How does contemporary art happen outside the walls of the museum? The sets of actors, practices and relations supporting art with a capital A appear no longer as taken for granted as perhaps once they were. Within global economies of signs and space[1] many of the old certainties – aesthetic, institutional and practical – concerning what makes art come into being seem less clear-cut and our experience of them less secure. Due to an increased degree of entanglement between creative cultural activities and everyday practices, both the meaning and the experience of art once tied within the constraints of one particular space at one particular time begin to dissolve as they merge in other, more heterogeneous ways. Art 'happens' and, in doing so, opens, extends and moves its aesthetics to the outside, into the social realm of lived experiences like the art projects by Richard Long, Bruce Nauman, Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton and William Pope L. show us. It is precisely this 'liveness' of art and its openness to the dimensions of the unpredictable that have led to the establishment of Nicolas Bourriaud's 'relational aesthetics' project during the 1990s. Drawing on the philosophical work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari,[2] Bourriaud, former co-director of the Palais de Tokyo Contemporary Art Center in Paris and current director of the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts also in Paris, outlines a paradigm shift in which artistic practice is focused upon the social sphere of inter-human relations where "encounters are more important than the individuals who compose them".[3] According to Bourriaud, in his interpretation of Guattari's concept of subjectivity as a network of relations (1995),[4] relational art becomes productive of "everyday micro-utopias"[5] wherein it can serve as a trigger for new democratic modes of collectivity including knowledge exchange outside mass media standardization of spectacle society and free interaction between the artist, the artwork and the viewer or participant.

Bourriaud's rather unilateral notion of relational aesthetics will appear on several occasions throughout our contribution. Though currently being critically reassessed by different scholars like Jacques Rancière, John Roberts, Claire Bishop and Grant Kester,[6] it works from within of the fundamental problematic of the 21st century art and thus remains crucial for understanding the dynamics emerging at the interface between art and everyday practice, dynamics of the relational process in which "art becomes a life form, whereas the artwork becomes non-art, a mere documentation of this life-form".[7] If art produces human relations outside the museum, then, as Claire Bishop puts it in *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics*, "the next logical question to ask is what types of relations are being produced, for whom, and why".[8] Furthermore Bishop objects to the fact that many contemporary art projects find themselves in the logic of neoliberal structures, although some of them argue to expound the problems of it.[9]

Another important shift that needs to be addressed very carefully happens at both institutional level and at the level of practice or, better, use: in fact contemporary exhibitions are designed to break down the borders between art, technology, science and economy. In this regard jan jagodzinski offers a very valuable insight into the experience of visual art within what he calls "designer capitalism".[10] In the designer capitalism of digital information art meets the demands of the new media society where the visual, the material, and the textual have come together under the strategic imperative to put its aesthetic relationality to use. It seems that within the designed spaces of contemporary capitalist logic of productivity art becomes useful and practiced in a set of relations, wherein processes of aestheticization and commodification form and reinforce one another. Against this background, Bourriaud in his critique of capitalism does not go far enough, factually just substituting social relations for objects. As jagodzinski points out by drawing on Stewart Martin,[11] this "does not escape the criticism that it is not *just* objects, but *also* social relations where capitalist exchange value occurs".[12] Today's art practices become paradoxically productive in a circulation process where life becomes art and "art becomes design, which is then integrated into everyday life".[13]

Probably the most prominent example of how these fields become "symbiotically engaged with each other"[14] is the influential dOCUMENTA exhibition which takes place in Kassel, Germany, every five years since 1972 (the first exhibition was in 1955). A brief insight into the art world of dOCUMENTA published on the official website at the end of its 13th edition (2012-2013) will suffice to demonstrate the complex relationality of contemporary artistic encounters in their involvement with the global mediated order of production. Echoing the relational turn in art theory, a variety of aspects characteristic of both "artistic research and forms of imagination" is being addressed in terms of "commitment, matter, things, embodiment, and active living".[15] The vision of an art exhibition "that is skeptical of the persisting belief in economic growth" is being encouraged, driven by a "holistic and non-logocentric vision" that recognizes "the shapes and practices of knowing of all animate and inanimate makers of the world, including people". All in all, art as "ceaselessly posed in life" is being thought through the production of multifaceted experiences which "carried by the events, and by the singularities" are able to go beyond "the aporias of the subject and the object" towards more complex terrains where politics and art are inseparable within a "sensual, energetic, and worldly alliance".

The conditions of this complex heterogeneity associated with art as lived experience are both unstable and open to change. Today, when art has become all too subsumed into everyday life – as leisure, entertainment and consumption – the critical task is not that of reasserting the autonomy of artistic activity in opposition to the capitalistic machinery of spectacle, rather that of art to become "furtively disruptive"[16] within the designed spaces of its global mediated order. An integral part of this tension is that relational art is being confronted with the challenge of "breaking free of what appears, to be free already".[17] Influential exhibitions like dOCUMENTA

[10] jan jagodzinski, *Visual Art and Education in an Era of Designer Capitalism* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

[11] Stewart Martin, "Critique of Relational Aesthetics", *Third Text,* 21.4 (2007), 369-386.

[12] jan jagodzinski and Jason J. Wallin, *Arts-based Research: A Critique and a Proposal* (Rotterdam and Boston: Sense Publishers, 2013), 128.

[13] Ibid., 49.

[14] Ibid., 20.

[15] dOCUMENTA (13), <http://d13.documenta.de/>, 31 December 2013.

[16] Ibid., 133.

[17] Ibid., 204.

[18] Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics", 70.

[19] Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999).

[20] Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics", 52.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. by John Howe (London and New York: Verso, 1995).

[23] Elizabeth Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 3.

[24] Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible,* trans. by Gabriel Rockhill (London and New York: Continuum, 2004).

need to reflect on the conditions of their own possibility, which in turn might serve as a challenge of "contemporary art's self-perception as a domain that embraces other social and political structures".[18] It is important to emphasize that the artists do not contribute to the political dimension of art just because they open up spaces for social encounter. What is really at stake is how those spaces activated through the participation of the viewers might be set into motion and become something else in their potential to create a previously unknowable and unthought-of world. In this context it is the capacity of the relational art to transform its own relations which might provide critical potential, and thus has to be taken into account with a view to the contingencies and uncertainties of its dynamic environment.

One of the spaces associated with dOCUMENTA (13) that has always been particularly interesting in terms of relationality is the old railway station in Kassel transformed in 1995 into *Kulturbahnhof* – a center for art, culture and entertainment. By accommodating a cinema, a gallery, a restaurant, event rooms and an open TV channel, *Kulturbahnhof* stands exactly for the kind of artistic and cultural production that in its involvement in contemporary "experience economy"[19] is characterized through potentials of extreme ambiguity. If a work of art can find spaces that overcome the institutional constraints of the 'museum art' it becomes something else – a work of experimentation akin to a laboratory experience. Bishop addresses such cultural *modus operandi* as a direct reaction to the type of relational art produced in 1990s, "work that is open-ended, interactive, and resistant to closure, often appearing to be 'work in progress' rather than a completed object".[20] This "perpetual flux"[21] contemporary artistic spaces find themselves located in becomes especially expressive in the hall of the train station, in its transformation into an artistic "non-place" in Marc Augé's sense (1995).[22] Both connected to and interrupting currently effective power structures, *Kulturbahnhof* exists in a constant movement, a state of dynamic encounters between human bodies, consumer objects, media screens, works of art and other semiotic and material events, entities and practices. In this context, what we think is worth taking a closer look at is the capacity of an artwork to reassess its own aesthetic relationality – a frame of "dynamized and impacting forces" that are "by no means exclusively human",[23] – as situationally contingent and thereby to raise the political question for art within the realm of what Jacques Rancière calls the "distribution of the sensible".[24]

Among a variety of works designed for *Kulturbahnhof* one particular art installation stands out, as it not only permits participation but operates with(in) the ambiguity of the train station's dynamic framework itself. Performed for the first time in 2012 at dOCUMENTA (13)*,* the experimental new media art work *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* by Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller is still one of the most popular artistic attractions of the train station. Participants, equipped with an iPod and headphones, are asked to follow the pre-recorded video and audio instructions, and then directed through the station by a set of happenings enfolding on the iPod screen. A variety of heterogeneous actors come to act during the walk, both on and off the screen, creating a series of performative and affective encounters. The

dynamic installation designed literally not so much as a 'work' but as a "*walk* of art" becomes expressive only through and within movement. Aligning the dynamic space of the train station with the bodies of those participating in the walk through a small frame-screen of the iPod, Cardiff and Miller's installation questions the reductive idea of the frame reducible to the actual spatial parameters where "anything that appears within that frame has no relation to anything outside".[25]

Through *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* where virtual and actual space, reality and fiction, bodies and things are opened up to dynamic and interrelated forces, the goal of our contribution will be to develop new ways of addressing relational art practices in which "the interhuman sphere"[26] can and must be linked to non-human agency without emphasizing the human vision as the only measure of the significance of the world. Following the instructions of the video walk we concentrate on three happenings, situations or frames that together create a "plain of composition",[27] an assemblage of moving and relationally transforming elements. Throughout our argumentation placed in the context of a range of non-representational theories that conceive art, space and movement in terms of relationality[28] we attempt to explore the manifold intensities of the art walk emerging from the in-between of its affective and performative dimensions. In so doing, we intend to follow Deleuze and Guattari's lead in identifying art as "a self-movement of the expressive qualities".[29]

Between Media Frame – Space Frame

> Okay … turn the camera on, press the video button.
> I am sitting here right now with you
> in the train station in Kassel watching people pass by …
> (Janet Cardiff, *Video Walk*)

Taking its departure from the constituting power of the movement, the media installation by Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller invites us to 'walk' art by pushing the play button of an iPod. The small mobile screen-frame with headphones opens an audiovisual file that shows exactly the same place we are located in with a series of disturbing variations commented on in a thoughtful narrative manner. A woman's voice (the voice of artist Janet Cardiff) gives us instructions. We watch things happen on the 'virtual' screen but feel the presence of the world being 'actually' unfolded because it is situated in the exact location the footage was shot. In following the moving images by simultaneously framing them as if we were behind the camera, a strange confusion of realities occurs. What is being represented within the frame becomes a characteristic of our movement. The video walk becomes expressive not only by giving us directions and, in so doing, aligning our movements with those performed on the screen, it also actively participates in the transitive dynamics of the semiotic-material space, *Kulturbahnhof*, to which it refers and also intensifies. The alternate reality of the train station unfolding within the iPod frame resonates with movements and dynamics of the train station performing itself in the 'here and now'. The dynamic intertwining of relations causes a fleeting and

[25] Brian Massumi, "The Thinking-Feeling of What Happens: A Semblance of a Conversation", *Inflexions*, 1.1 (May 2008), 33.

[26] Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 25.

[27] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (London: Continuum, 2007), 266.

[28] See for example Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Music, Painting and Arts* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art*; Massumi, "The Thinking-Feeling".

[29] Deleuze and Guattari, 149.

paradoxical experience of being caught in-between two potentially overlapping environments – one performative and one affective.

The performative situation of the video walk refers to the kind of relationality staged, in its specific orientation between the actual and the virtual movement. Bodies, actions, objects and events are not only shown on the iPod screen, they begin to function. The act of staging is neither meant to produce, nor to represent. It does not speak in the name of ultimate creation. What it does for sure is a continuous performance of connection and transformation coming to act again and again as a relational assemblage of unique articulation. Its performative orientation, though being partly staged and directed, still unfolds within various relations of becoming: the image becomes frame, the frame becomes movement, the movement becomes space.

Within this dynamic constellation a lot happens. Possibilities and potentialities of *Kulturbahnhof* are transformed in various ways as they get re-arranged within and through the movements of the video walk. First, the binary division of time and space becomes obsolete. The past and the future, the virtual and the actual, the material and the visual interrupt each other and merge in a set of differentiated actions. Secondly, the museal conceptualization of frame as fixed, immobile and awaiting the enlivening effects of human interpretation stops working properly as it just does not meet the demands of the art walk's situation. The iPod video acting as a frame in motion becomes a transitional passage between images and bodies moving on both sides of the screen and creates the very condition for the plane of the video walk's composition. The complex relationality emerging in-between the frame and its space might be described as the affective one where "art takes a bit of chaos in a frame in order to form a composed chaos that becomes sensory, or from which it extracts a chaoid sensation as variety".[30] In its technical and material connectivity it simultaneously extends and ruptures the visual experience by exposing the social construction of the frame as well as the spatial construction of the social. To echo Brian Massumi, the experience of this occasion is about "a strong sense of thinking-feeling qualities of movement".[31] Through movements of bodies and things affecting each other the relation between actual space and its artistic vision is being recomposed, thus engaging a variety of actors in a set of differentiated and yet closely connected experiences.

Between Affective Happening – Performative Happening

> This video will be an experiment.
> We are like those prisoners stuck in Plato's Cave.
> We watch the flickering shadows on the screen.
>
> Try to align your movements with mine.
> (Janet Cardiff, *Video Walk*)

With these words Cardiff guides the visitor through the walk. She emphasizes the intimacy and the experimental character of this setting that she compares with the

[30]Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 26.

[31] Massumi, "The Thinking-Feeling", 33.

prisoners in Plato's Cave. A place – from a pedagogical or philosophical point of view – we all should escape individually and at the same time collectively. Following our senses we think we perceive 'one truth' or 'one reality', because our knowledge and understanding of the world are structured by them. *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* tries to challenge these, maybe to the same extent that the pictures on the wall in Plato's Cave broaden our understanding of reality, as Susan Sontag claims.[32] No matter if those shadows are flickering and give us the feeling to be unreal or unsure, the more we are perceiving, the more we can imagine. Sontag writes in "Plato's Cave" that pictures (photographs) show us what is worth looking at.[33] By looking at photographs we are following an ethic and grammar of seeing. The video walk provides us with a very special kind of grammar we want to follow in its relational movement. Walking through the main station and listening to the guiding voice we get confronted with a special kind of seeing. To take part in the walk means to relate ourselves to the art environment. An environment that our selves have to experience. In this way, each experience becomes both individual and collective. The artwork is not seeable until the visitor brings it to life. As a consequence of the participatory turn Suzana Milevska describes the fact that objects are becoming less and less important within social bonds. More and more important are the relations between subjects, although artists have to foster the audience to create the relations in an active manner. Milevska argues for participatory art and militates against interaction, "wherein the relations established between the members of the audience or between them and the art objects are much more passive and formal (usually directed by certain formal instructions, given by the artists, that are to be followed during the exhibitions)".[34] In *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* it seems that visitors are left to their own, however realising the collective power of the walkers and their relations is part of the artwork. Artist Teddy Cruz claims, that "[w]e lack the kind of collective sense of urgency that would prompt us to fundamentally question our own ways of thinking and acting, and form new spaces of operation".[35] While looking at the flickering shadows like in Plato's Cave, we feel separated from the others, because we think we perceive alone. But it is not only the talking about what we have seen to others, it is also the act of seeing and performing that binds us collectively. Already the fact of watching and walking with the video is experienced within a certain collective situation connecting visitors in unpredictable ways. Art is always open to different interpretations, especially when it comes to "the poetics of the 'work in movement'".[36] What we are interested in with regard to *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* is the active movement that creates a cycle of relations. Our interest echoes Bourriaud's concept of relational art that focuses participation and not interaction: "If a work of art is successful, it will invariably set its sights beyond its mere presence in space: it will be open to dialogue, discussion, and that form of inter-human negotiation that Marcel Duchamp called 'coefficient of art', which is a temporal process, being played out here and now".[37] We are challenged by this new communicative situation, in which we feel at the same time alone and a part of a collective, what seems to be also symptomatic of contemporary

[32] Susan Sontag, "In Plato's Cave", *On Photography* (New York: Picador, 2001 [1977]), 3.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Suzana Milevska, "Participatory Art. A Paradigm Shift from Objects to Subjects", *eurozine* (2006), http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2006-06-02-milevska-en.html, 30 December 2013.

[35] Teddy Cruz, "Democratizing Urbanization and the Search for a New Civic Imagination", in Thompson, ed., *Living as Form*, 57.

[36] Umberto Eco, *The Open Work* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 22f.

[37] Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 41.

38 Kester, *The One and The Many*, 21.

socially engaged art.[38] We might perform the walk as individuals but at the same time, following the suggested steps through the halls of the station, we are moving along the movement itself, creating associations and aligning our movements with those of other participants affectively. The politics of this affective encounter is always a relational one. During the walk we begin to question the station with its structures. The past of the train station is being revealed in the 'here and now'. The group of 'walkers' finds itself in constant movement. It is a collective experience of an ongoing transformation, becoming performative and affective, collective and intimate. The people disrupt the ordinary business of *Kulturbahnhof* and broaden its time and space to a new political level. The walk as a happening intervenes in everyday life in order to expose the particular. Consequently, the relational dimension of the video walk increases its political potential. In this regard, as artist Teddy Cruz claims,"[t]o be political in our field requires that we commit to revealing conditions of conflict and the institutional mechanisms that perpetuate them".[39] Political art projects have to be strongly geared to everyday practices, therefore their creative work is focused on socio-political and economic approaches.

39 Cruz, "Democratizing Urbanization", 61.

Between Visual Environment – Material Environment

Try to follow the image.

Now stop and watch ... Cut! Cut!

Let's continue.
(Janet Cardiff, *Video Walk*)

During the walk, the visitor is always confronted with virtual images on the screen as well as the movements of the people in the train station, hence the walk disrupts the 'usual behaviour' and challenges visitors to act throughout their walk according to directions given by the artist Janet Cardiff. All the time during the walk the visitors are thrown back into the past at the time of the Second World War and have to decide whether to follow orders and be obedient walkers or if they want to be 'disobedient' and concentrate their attention on something else. Each time the visitors have to interact with the iPod and they must negotiate their behaviour with 'non walkers' and the ongoing ordinary business at the station. These intensive moment(s) or sensation(s) of negotiating the 'here and now' are being activated affectively and lead us to a collective experience we did not recognize before. The dynamic relationality of the walk lets us walk with art in a movement where "the molecular is opened up, the aesthetic is activated, and art does what is its chief *modus operandi*: it transforms, if only for a moment, our sense of our 'selves' and our notion of our world".[40] The transformation of ourselves is provoked by the walk where we are always between the beginning and the end, always in transit between the virtual reality of the video screen and the material actuality of the station. Deleuze describes the power of the virtual through actualization as follows:

40 Simon O'Sullivan, "The Aesthetics of Affect: Thinking Art beyond Representation", *Angelaki*, 6.3 (December 2001), 128.

"By contrast, the virtual is not opposed to the real; it possesses a full reality by itself. The process it undergoes is actualisation. It would be wrong to see only a verbal dispute here: it is a question of existence itself".[41] It is about changing and reflecting ordinary living. The actualisation of the virtual creates a liminal experience of the audience, which could act for a certain period of time. The big strength of the walk is thus not to show the audience what is possible in the material reality by achieving something, but to provoke the spectator to create. In this regard, as Bourriaud points out, "art, likewise, is no longer seeking to represent utopias; rather, it is attempting to construct concrete spaces".[42] Art, and we want to take this video walk as an example, can be seen as the space between the actual and the virtual. It provides us with a frame we, as spectators, are able to use and transform. The artists invite us to learn how to use a frame in order to "make them one's own, to inhabit them".[43] The walk does not guarantee a liminal experience, but there is the potential of a certain actualization during the walk, provided by the visual and the material environment, that has been self reflected in the video.

The visual or virtual reality unveils itself as a constructed reality by showing the spectator quick changes between day and night or sunny and snowy weather. Also at one point the female narrator reveals to the listener that the woman with the red coat down at the railroad tracks is herself. We move between different weather conditions, times and environments on the screen. So, for example, within the first minute of the video the short cross reference to the installation work "for a thousand years" (2012) performed in the Karlsaue in Kassel during dOCUMENTA (13). At the same moment the visitors are confronted with the history of the train station in Kassel from the 1850s when it was built till today, passing through the aftermaths of the Second World War. Since 1991 the train station Kassel-Wilhelmshöhe has been used for long distance train journeys and Kassel's Hauptbahnhof is only a local commuter station. Many rooms in the building are now empty. During the war it was Germany's most important station because of its location and also because of the closeness to the arms factory. Guided by the video the visitors have to engage artefacts relating to victims of the Second World War. Observing other participants of the walk and observed by 'non-walkers' the material world of the station comes to its fore. So the environment of the station seems to be perfectly fitting for giving the 'walkers' space for engagement. Following Bourriaud these social interstices provided by the open space are the key points for the spectators to act. "The interstice is a space in human relations which fits more or less harmoniously and openly into the overall system, but suggests other trading possibilities than those in effect within this system".[44] The created space fosters communication and brings topics to life that were buried in the halls of the station and in people's minds. Also Nato Thompson, Chief Curator at the New York based public arts institution Creative Time, claims in his concept of "living as form" that art has to be anti-representational, participatory and situated in the 'real' world.[45] Only then can art operate politically. The confrontation between the material and the visual environment is essential in *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* because the walk pushes us

[41] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. by Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 211.

[42] Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 46.

[43] Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, 12.

[44] Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 16.

[45] Nato Thompson, "Living as Form", in Thompson, ed., *Living as Form*, 12.

[46] Bogue, *Deleuze on Music, Painting and Arts*, 20.

[47] Jacques Rancière, "Contemporary Art and the Politics of Aesthetics", in Beth Hinderliter et al., eds., *Communities of Sense: Rethinking Aesthetics and Politics* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2009), 31.

[48] W. J. Thomas Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[49] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005), 107.

[50] Philip Goodchild, *Deleuze and Guattari: An Introduction to the Politics of Desire* (London: Sage, 1996), 184.

[51] See also: Kester, *The One and The Many*, 31.

[52] jan jagodzinski, "The 'Relations' of Relational Aesthetics within Altermodernity: Revisiting the Case of Nicholas Bourriaud", *etum - ejournal for theatre and media,* 1.1 (2014), <http://ejournal.theaterforschung.de/index.php?journal=ausgabe1&page=article&op=view&path[]=23 >, 31 December 2013.

forward to struggle with the environment we perceive through our senses. As Ronald Bogue suggests, "art, as the disposition of expressive qualities, is the active agent in the formation of territory".[46] We experience a transformation of perception in an ongoing recasting of our spatial and temporal senses. That is why discussions about art is not about its value, but about "the sense of presence conveyed by the screen that takes its place".[47] Discussions about art have always to deal with their spatial setting and what qualities they produce. So the question remains, how does this kind of walking art relate us to the non-human territory we are part of? Visual art is not just about human vision. The pictures on the screen are less important than the experiences they produce. Since modernity pictures have not been seen as identical representations of reality or truth. Pictures became increasingly a reference to objects. As W. J. Thomas Mitchell has pointed out, in contemporary visual studies it is not about what a picture means but what it wants.[48] We can use this thoughtful objection for our matter and ask what art wants. It is not about the representation of the train station in the video, it is about the relations between the material and visual environment of the walk and the spectators that what the walk is about is revealed. An experience of situations, made possible by relations to the uncanny historical heritage of the immediate environment.

The Practice in between

In conclusion, echoing Bourriaud's claim of relational aesthetics, we have argued that contemporary art spaces are constituted through social relations. Outside of these relations the work of art has no existence. Every artwork is thus relational, enfolding within 'the here and now' of what Doreen Massey describes as a situation of "dynamic simultaneity, constantly disconnected by new arrivals, constantly waiting to be determined (and therefore always undetermined) by the construction of new relations".[49] Relational art installations are therefore always unfinished. Their dynamic and situational unfolding, as well as the uncertainty about their political dimension, refer to manifold potentials of the contemporary post-modern world that, both in its affective and performative forms, becomes more and more "artificially fabricated".[50] Also, Bourriaud's description of relational aesthetics fails to engage the complexity and diversity of contemporary art works.[51] It is not about what art is, rather how art as a practice comes to its fore. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari jagodzinski claims that "art creates by 'breaking down'".[52] Consequently *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* should not only be seen as an art project that creates space for spectators to use, but also as a project that interferes with the ordinary structures of the train station. A walk that breaks down the station as a non-place, where people just pass by to go somewhere else, but a walk that transforms both the space of the station and the visitors walking art. Art as a walking practice at the Hauptbahnhof in Kassel reveals the unspeakable history of the Second World War. Within an undeniable spectacle of the art world, that maybe reproduces more neoliberal structures rather than putting them in question, Cardiff and Bures Miller

detach themselves as artists and set a walk in motion that emancipates itself from their creators. Although *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* was originally designed as part of dOCUMENTA (13), it is now still available and can be walked at the old train station in Kassel. The global event of the art exhibition helped to "established the political, ethical and collective possibilities that have led to the conjoining of politics and aesthetics in a political aesthetics".[53] Against this background our second argument is that of relational aesthetics being not exclusively inter-human. The dynamics of Cardiff and Bures Miller's video walk have shown a much more complex way of unfolding, a multiplicity of various actors moving and changing together, gathering moments and spaces of interconnection, opening up the expression of the artwork in complex and unpredictable ways. During the video walk the space itself becomes expressive as a condition for the unexpected. It performs affects and affects performance, directs the dynamics of the movement and transforms by rearranging its own frame, setting its own conditions into motion.

[53] Barbara Bolt, *Heidegger Reframed: A Guide for the Arts Student* (London: Tauris, 2010), 126.

Finally, the video walk by Cardiff and Bures Miller exemplifies the relation between visual and material frame as increasingly blurred. With the establishment of new media art the frame does not disappear, the image itself becomes the frame, which evokes a reorientation of the actual-virtual relations between the art performance and its corporeal experience. Participants of all kinds – both human and in-human transform the space of the artwork and thus contribute to its being made. Yet, as the artwork is being negotiated by the participants' ongoing movements, its space is itself constantly changing as it exists within a variety of dynamics and processes that exceed the limits of every single variation.

The experiences made by the walk were possible through human and non-human relations. This also means that the walk itself and its outcome is uncertain and precarious. The result cannot be foreseen, nor regulated. Maybe the walk is somewhat uncanny and more depressing than liberating. We are not able to certify explicit characteristics, but it expands our awareness of the world we are living in. We leave the last word to Claire Bishop, when she compares participatory art with democracy and emphasizes the similarities: "Participatory art is not a privileged political medium, nor a ready-made solution to a society of the spectacle, but is as uncertain and precarious as democracy itself; neither are legitimated in advance but need continually to be performed and tested in every specific context".[54]

[54] Bishop, "Participation and Spectacle", 45.

Marco Pustianaz

Now You See It, Now You Don't: Performing Literature in Transition*

A Resting Ground

Fig. 1: Rory Macbeth, *No Place (Spiral)*, 2006. Matt white emulsion on walls. Eastern Electricity, Norwich, courtesy of the author.

* The *Ur-text* of this essay dates back to a 2010 poster session I presented at the ESSE (European Society for the Study of English) convention held in Turin (August 24th-28th). I would like to thank all those who left comments on my guest-book, among them Serena Guarracino, Giovanna Covi, Cristina Iuli, Marina Vitale. No thanks can equal Rory Macbeth's generosity and warmth. Thank you.

1 The manually painted building was unveiled at the East International Art Exhibition. Another version, called *No Place (Kingly Digs)*, was commissioned by Alasdair Robinson for the Manor Hotel in Sunderland, formerly a forty-room hostel for the homeless. I am going to engage only with the Norwich work, *No Place (Spiral)*.

In 2006 the English artist Rory Macbeth painted the Eastern Electricity building in Norwich by transcribing the whole 42,000 words of Thomas More's *Utopia* (in its 1965 Penguin Classics translation) over its uneven outer surfaces. The building was doomed, due for demolition by the end of the year.[1] This uncanny object, an ambiguous monumentalization of a literary text, will serve as a provisional resting ground for a meditation on the lines of flight unsettling the 'literary' no less than the 'textual'. On the one hand, we are facing a 'literal' transcription of the order of the text, on the other, an arresting materialization that is a stumbling block to the ordinary set of practices which enable the 'literary' performance of that same text.

It seems that Macbeth's labour of love has in fact created a literary *monstrum*, a book in bricks and mortar, indeed a Sphinx: even though the text of *Utopia* is ostensibly unfolded before our very eyes, it becomes enigmatic in light of its amplified openness. Between the writing of the text and the reading of it a certain encoding/decoding has been, if not entirely interrupted – we are still able to read small portions of text closer to us, and even more with the aid of the photographic prosthesis – at least made awkward, defamiliarized. The question that this Sphinx,

mute in its monstrous speech, suggests is, "Under what conditions does literature cease to be (visible)?" It is a question of thresholds and passings, as though literature had little to do with intrinsic properties, nor were just a social and institutional convention but, above all, a contingent aesthetic (i.e. sensible) event.

In the Norwich *Utopia* linearity is preserved, yet by spiralling all along the four sides of the building from top to bottom it exceeds the length manageable by the human eye: the display of an excessive amount of text and its nearly unbroken uniformity not only strains reading but disperses our attention. Therefore, regardless of Macbeth's literal transcription, More's text can no longer sustain its literary textuality inasmuch as certain grounds of legibility have been shaken by, among others, a re-modulation of scale that is enough to turn this otherwise literary text into another 'thing', indeed another performance. Although as a copy it may still be considered one of *Utopia*'s possible text-tokens, it also uncannily defaces the original.

What Macbeth's materializing performance makes visible is that another materialization, all but invisible, is involved in the habitual embodiment of *Utopia*'s readable text as a printed book. The material dissociation that has produced the 'un-bound' text of *No Place (Spiral)* signals a temporary removal from what Rancière has called "the historical mode of visibility of the works of the art of writing" called literature.[2] In other words, it signals a breach of the enabling and constitutive conditions for literature to appear. Macbeth's deceptively simple chirographical performance makes the literary disappear by means of a certain distortion, as if by spilling the text out of the folds of the book and by making it obscene through an unashamedly public display of its interiors, Macbeth had also suspended *Utopia*'s literary performance. Its suspension shows that the performance of repetition has gone awry, that literary properties emerge or 'demerge' by flickering in a spectrum of becomings ⇔ unbecomings visible.[3]

The Norwich site raises a knot of issues around the contingent production of literary effects, literature's selective investment in textual materiality or immateriality, and the technological site-specificity of literary texts. The fact that these issues loom on the horizon at all, in a doomed site of urban erasure and promised regeneration, makes this doubtful textual embodiment even more precious. This may well be the reason why I cannot stop staring at it. If it had stayed within a book, its material textuality would have passed me by; as it is, I am held in thrall by it, repeatedly. What is it in the architecture of the book that is capable of housing the literary, whereas, exiled from its reproducible domesticity, it suddenly becomes orphaned, doubtful, inhospitable? A question of politics – what is the home of literature? Where will it be archived? – turns quickly into one of affect: how is a reader domesticized within a textual environment?

In his essay "The Book As Machine" (1972) the Canadian poet and scholar Steve McCaffery describes the functioning of the book's capacity to store information and arrest the flow of speech in terms of "design": "The book's mechanism is activated when the reader picks it up, opens the covers and starts reading it … the book organizes content along three modules: the lateral flow of the line, the vertical

[2] Jacques Rancière, *Mute Speech: Literature, Critical Theory and Politics* (New York-Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1998), 32.

[3] Emergent properties "do not inhere in the individual components of a system; rather these properties come about from interactions between components". Catherine Hayles, *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 25.

[4] Steve McCaffery and bpNichol, "The Book as Machine", in Jerome Rothenberg and Steven Clay, eds., *A Book of the Book: Some Works and Projections about the Book & Writing* (New York: Granary Books, 2000), 18.

[5] Bonnie Mak, *How the Page Matters* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2012).

or columnar build-up of the lines on the page, and thirdly a linear movement organized through depth (the sequential arrangement of pages upon pages)".[4] The threefold modularity is segmented also by word breaks, by spacings between lines and paragraphs, and further framed by the blank borders of the page margins. As Bonnie Mak has shown in *How the Page Matters* [5] the technology of the book page is no less layered, involving among other things the relationship between the *recto* and *verso* of the same page, as well as the relationship between two adjacent pages, both open at the same time. Our tactile familiarity with the book as well as the intimacy between secret and disclosure suggest that the machinic functioning of the book is not just a matter of spatial arrangements or given protocols. The notion of reading as a set of interpretive strategies should be expanded to include any kind of relationship taking place within the book environment, a material hybrid between human and machine.

Thus, the opening of the book may well invite comparison to a digital switch (on/off, reading/non-reading) causing the 'activation' of the book; yet, each opening is also a threshold leading to multiple openings and closings (the turnings of pages), which pace the reading as though simulating a progression into the depth of the book. Pace changes according to the interactions with page design and stylistic affordances (syntax slowing down or speeding up reading), according to the reader's linguistic competence, as well as her interest, time-constraints and interruptions, attention. There is an onward flow accompanied by rhythmical counterpoint; yet recursivity and reversibility are always possible too. Reading's durational performance may freely stop, pause, resume, go back, thus disordering time and performing its own asynchronous temporality. Book reading is a multi-dimensional experience, despite the seeming flatness of the page surface.

More than just an object or a machine, then, the book is a technological environment for a nexus of events that are molecular and non-specific, that is, neither reducible to a single plane (spatial, temporal, haptic, visual), nor to a rational schema of deliberation (the reader's intentional acts or the text's intended meanings). Reading events are, in this sense, post-human(ist): the reader's subjectivity is not the only agent. Reading is also infra- and supra-subjective. This complex environment is what the Norwich *Utopia* does not reproduce despite its ostensible textual fidelity.

On the other hand, by betraying the text's habitual materialization, it paradoxically returns it to us as a questionable property. Some might say that Macbeth's *No Place* does not add anything to our reading of the original text, because it refuses to engage with it other than superficially, in other words, materially. On the contrary, I believe that this silent and practical refusal, embodied by a performative writing act instead of a reading, turns out to be a radical engagement, whose addendum – a differential performativity of the copy – is in the nature of the supplement. It subtracts literariness whilst performing, by way of negation, a contemporary spectre of *Utopia*. By refusing to read and let others read the textual and literary 'wholeness' of the original the brute force and weight of the inscribed building projects a contingent materiality back onto its acknowledged original: the printed book whose translated title and running text it shares.

The alternating appearance and disappearance of the literary qualifies it as an emergent property, that is, an event. Such property can be perceived here as an attenuation (what I have called a demergence) of the conditions under which we would be prepared to accept *No Place* as a genuine work of literature, if its recognition depended only on the survival of this singular text-token. The Eastern Electricity resting ground engages literature at its roots: a trembling ground letting us experience literature as vibrational matter in a state of becoming that has become all but invisible in its prevalent regime of materialization.

Digital Trembling

Choosing the Norwich site in order to stage a crisis between literature and the book, between text and matter, may seem a perverse move. After all, there are already established fields of research and critical interrogation where literature's materiality has been foregrounded: historical book studies and 'new philology' (or 'material philology'), for instance. Their cultural material turn has already questioned the myth of the text's transparent reproducibility, explored textual difference, and undermined the original vs. copy binary.

These challenges, however, are being overshadowed by the 'digital turn' which has arguably established the terrain where the future destiny of literature – especially its archival transmission – is being decided. The newly transitional state of literature appears to coincide with its mutation and passage through digital conversion and into digital storage. The instability of the book form today compels us to look again at the naturalized bind between a historically contingent medium and its textuality, especially in the case of literature, even more fetishistically bound to the book. In fact, their intercourse has been instrumental in the invention of the literary text as the peculiar object of literary studies. Even though book technology is by no means dead, it has been vampirized by digitization to such an extent that it is unclear what is analogue or digital in a book today: what we call book is only one of its possible stages in the transitions and conversions between analogue and digital. Seeing the literary as the result of a contingent materialization will also help us resurrect suppressed relationships with performance, emergence, temporality, event site.

Digital technology reframes the meaning of textual and literary materiality in its generalized transition to digitality. It also revolutionizes the availability of literary texts: literature becomes another database. The potential for quantitative analysis of huge numbers of textual data is already leading away from the text as the paramount discrete unit amenable to interpretation towards corpora and metalibraries. One effect is a marked change in how literature is envisaged and, consequently, processed. Digital computation tends to put a premium on aggregate data, available through methods of "distant reading": a kind of reading which is "almost not reading at all, but rather engages the abilities of natural language processing … to detect large-scale trends, patterns, and relationships that are not discernible from a single text or detailed analysis".[6] Whereas a literature made of books encourages modes of

[6] Ibid., 39. For an example cf. Katherine Bode, *Reading by Numbers: Recalibrating the Literary Field* (London-New York-Delhi: Anthem Press, 2012).

close reading that seem to respond to their folded, intimate proximity, connected libraries of digital-born or digital-converted texts, ceaselessly migrating on and off-line, lend themselves to somewhat different practices: rhizomatic readings, metatextual interrogations, recombinant remixes.

In "Translating Media. Why We Should Rethink Textuality" Catherine Hayles has focused on the textual crisis determined by the passage from print to digital and argued for a careful discussion of their respective features.[7] Interested in what happens to print text when its medial environment changes, she argues that something 'does' happen: the translation from one medium to another never leaves the text unchanged. By speaking in terms of gains and losses she thus foregrounds the performing of difference, in marked contrast with those who prefer to naturalize the transition to digital as 'business as usual'. Crucially for Hayles, digitality, involving conversion, can be brought under the rubric of translation, that is, of interpretive acts – an agency which she radically reformulates as a post-human hybrid between human and machine.

As Hayles points out in discussing projects such as the digitization of the William Blake Archive, transitioning analogue texts towards their digital counterparts represents a significant challenge to concepts of literary text that eschew the materiality of medium: digitization ultimately undermines the illusion that a digital translation will save the text as 'a whole'. The premise of the "imbrication of physical form with meaning" (266), in fact, leads to the opposite conclusion. Preservation is out of the question: if the text cannot be abstracted from its contingent materiality, digitizing the Blake Archive will certainly 'not' preserve it. No matter what choices we make, digitizing a text will only simulate it, that is, perform it differently. The paradigm of simulation effectively unbundles 'literature' as a package that cannot claim any privilege to pass unscathed through its digital transitioning. In unpacking and converting textuality the digital is no less material than it is performative: in the very process of its non-transparent translation it once again performs the textual as materially bound. We can see now why and to what extent the literary trembles in the process of its digital transition: it does so because every time it is reconstituted it will fail to stay the same. Just like any singularity or any event it is non-reproducible.

A crucial layer of digital performativity concerns the technical operations of the code. No matter how effective the on-screen simulation of analogue texts – so that we might think that whatever conversion has taken place it is over once we start reading – the performativity of the digital has by no means ceased to work. It has merely shifted to the processes underwriting our interactions with the screen, even if interaction means 'just' reading. This is why a merely visual phenomenology is insufficient to uncover the performativity of digital texts. For as long as we abstract the visual as being the only sensory plane that grounds our reading, any interface – of the monitor screen no less than of the book page – will be taken to work in a visual mode.

Abstracted and disconnected from its whole media environment, the 'visual' field of textuality becomes ready to be naturalized so as to appear performatively inert: a transparent medium – in other words, no medium at all. It merely becomes the ground – unread by definition – for the figure of the text, thereby produced

[7] Catherine Hayles, "Translating Media: Why We Should Rethink Textuality", *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 16.2 (2003), 263-290. Cf. also Catherine Hayles, *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2008), arguing for the distinct performativity of digital-born literary texts.

as 'the readable'. Thus, the digital interface can continue to work as homologue to the printed page thanks to the misrecognition of the simulation performed through the interface effect.[8] In constantly refreshing itself the monitor reiterates its performance of visualization so that we can turn our undivided attention to the text. In its digital mode, text is stabilized through repetition, i.e. through controlled instability. The machine loops as our desiring machine: our desire to see a text sustains, and is sustained by, the machine's performance as text 'delivery'. In fact, as Hayles points out, a digital text 'as such' never exists as a completed artifact (267). When we are online, it is processed from distant servers, through data files, software programs, hardware, optical fibers and switching routers. When we are offline, digital text, resident as a file and saved in our computers or plugged into external memories, is becoming ⇔ unbecoming text at all time.

Each apparition of the selfsame text, reconstituted from data packets or bundles of digital bytes, is made possible by the software code, with its own syntax of command lines, its textuality. Machinic language functions as a performative, not so much preceding, rather as subsisting in phenomenic text. Alexander Galloway has defined code as "the only language that is executable", a language more strongly performative than natural language.[9] Whether stronger or not, digital performativity implies analogue performativity, or at least performability: the capacity to be converted or translated, with attendant loss.[10] The strength of digital performativity is reinforced by the architecture that conceals it, the fact that it is programmed to hide its executable codes, disciplinary protocols and running programs behind thinner and thinner screens – thus mimicking immateriality –, if not behind the proprietary walls of copyrighted patents.

Such performativity tends to strengthen the dubious effects of the material vs. immaterial binary in all the spheres of production and reproduction that are processed through its agency. Here, even the mystified relationship between literature, book and materiality stages a paradoxical reversal. Literary scholars who bemoan the end of literacy as they know it have a vested interest in validating the immateriality of the digital, so they can ascribe to it the evacuation of the material solidity of the printed book, even though it has been precisely the supposed transparency of its materiality that has undergirded the superior 'immateriality' of the text in its capacity to transcend physical barriers. Strategically foreclosed, materiality resurfaces now as what is being mourned, an abjected and reconstructed materiality that only serves to lend objectivity to the effect of literariness.

Of no less weight are the critical stakes lying in the legibility of depth and surface. To the extent that they persist as tropes even in digital mode, depth and surface are imbricated in discourses of visibility and invisibility that act in a predictably regulatory logic. Depth will 'read' surface as the medium covering the making-visible of itself. In turn, surface will be endowed with the special opacity that is the correlate of the luminousness of what is hidden by it. In other words, this medium never permits real loss, and the concept of mediation is rendered totally unproductive. Mediation has any sense only if it is allowed to be 'poietic', to institute a change, a being-in-relation.

[8] Alexander R. Galloway, *The Interface Effect* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), especially 69ff. The performative element of digital textualization only becomes apparent when there is some fault or glitch.

[9] Galloway, *Interface Effect*, 70. On the performativity of code cf. Hayles, *My Mother Was a Computer*, 49-50; on software code's legislative and executive powers cf. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011).

[10] On the loss of acts and representations brought about by the book see Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Reader, Authors, and Libraries in Europe Between the 14th and 18th Centuries* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 89-91.

One further step, however, needs to be made. If the literary effect has played an important role in regulating the visual mode of textuality, its regulation has not been done 'for the sake of the text'. What makes it political is the fact that it is entangled in a textualization of reading, itself part – as Michel de Certeau has argued – of a historical disciplining of readership.[11] In this sense, while the specific object of literary studies has been what is literary in a text – and what is textual in the literary – the unspoken aim of its practice has been to establish what turns reading into a proper reading. The literal side of reading, its entanglement with the surface matter of the text, is what reading has commonly defined itself against.

[11] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 131-176.

Furthermore, as literary studies have tended to shape protocols of 'writing' about what a reading of a (specific set of) writing is, their literary effect has reined in both reading and writing: on the one hand, it has contributed to the idea of a complementarity between reading and writing, whereby a reading will have to be a reading 'of' a specific writing; on the other, it has promoted legitimate kinds of metascripture shadowing the text's writing, thus pushing into the background the mediation of their concurrent reading performances. The redoubled prioritization of writing in this heavily biased hermeneutical circle makes the reader's subordinate performance opaque, enwrapped as it were by the presence to itself of a text that has already banished what does not belong to it.

It is to the performance of a reading ignorant of writing, then, that a materializing 'occasion' will be offered in the next section.

Composing the Reader

Fig. 2: Rory Macbeth, *No Place (Spiral)*, 2006, matt white emulsion on walls, Eastern Electricity, Norwich, © courtesy of the author.

Does the fact that a reading cannot be completed successfully mean that there is no space for a performance of reading, that there is no reading that is being done? Meanwhile a reading space is being made out even before we know that it will be impossible to read. And a time for a reading is also being made free to allow for its possibility. Even a forestalled reading, a wrong reading, a reading emerging from and demerging into non-reading, is still a reading. It takes reading time to fail reading, if failure is measured by how much of the text is 'lost'. In all these cases reading would not be an embrace between text and reader, but a struggle to read; there is reading insofar as the trembling distance of a medium is held.

An effect of the foregrounding of reading as event is that the text will appear as a trace that has truly forgotten its own writing performance, as though the two events – writing and reading – were doubly distant, not only temporally, but ontologically as well. As Pierre Macherey put it, "nothing precedes it [literature] on its own ground, not even the promise of a future site".[12] If reading is not the future of writing, the text to which the reader responds to does not hail from its past, from whose performance it has been severed: it must hail from the present itself, as emergent practice.[13] The historicity of the text is held in abeyance in the present singular of the time of reading; in order to take place at all, reading must not be subsumed into the past history of the text's writing, but produced as the ground for a new contingency that may once again be called historical.

Let us call this historicization a creation of new time – a rupture – within the temporal unfolding of (literary, textual …) history. According to Blanchot, reading is the space that lets the work 'be', without any further qualification. Reading becomes a creation of anonymity: the name of the author is erased, yet the reader, if he is truly reading, only forgets himself: "What most threatens reading is this: the reader's reality, his personality, his immodesty, his stubborn insistence upon remaining himself in the face of what he reads".[14] To us this violent effacement of the reader's biography may seem too demanding a sacrifice. For Blanchot it is a sacrifice to the necessary space of reading's interval: "It seems to be very difficult to preserve such an interval" (201). Indeed, it is as difficult to think of it as to preserve it. Preserving it implies giving it over every time, to another reading for instance. It is the multiplication of these reading performances, of these singularities, that, Blanchot acutely observes, gives us the illusion that works of art are ageless (202).

If, *pace* Blanchot, the performance of reading is taken to be subordinate and posterior to its originating writing performance, reading will tend to be cast in the passive or receptive mode, and the readers, flickering silently in the background, as subjects waiting to be empowered by a new politics of reading.[15] Such progressive rhetoric, of course, assumes that there is a reader to be activated, even though in reading "there *already* exists, though it is surreptitious or even repressed, an experience other than that of passivity".[16] Such is reading in its quotidian plane of praxis, distinct from the disciplinary (writing) practices of literary criticism, a reading whose politicization brings to light the irrepressible outlaw practices, or tactics, that punctuate the 'everyday' and represent the connective tissue – the affective fabric, so to speak – of social life.

In the context of de Certeau's interest in amateur practices, especially those defined in terms of consumption, reading acquires pride of place for at least two reasons. Firstly, it reconfigures space as a social practice intersected by divergent performances spectralizing the power relations imbricated in it. Secondly, as a 'secondarized' performance, reading can exert a powerful leverage in the battle to subvert the unequal distribution of economic and cultural value leading to certain practices being held productive whereas others are not. Unproductivity is in itself a product of a social debasement. Its negativity has to be upheld if we want to

[12] Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production* (London: Routledge, 1978), 72.

[13] Cf. Jeremy Fernando, *Reading Blindly: Literature, Otherness and the Possibility of an Ethical Reading* (Amherst NY: Cambria Press, 2009).

[14] Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature* (Lincoln-London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 198.

[15] A summary history of this process would include such diverse works as Umberto Eco's *The Open Work* (orig. 1962), Roland Barthes' *The Pleasure of the Text* (orig. 1973), Judith Fetterley's *The Resisting Reader* (1977), Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (orig. 1980), Jacques Rancière's *The Emancipated Spectator* (orig. 2008).

[16] De Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, 173.

acknowledge the relative autonomy of a social plane of creativity for which that unproductive 'nothing' is after all the ordinary currency sustaining its survival as heterotopia.

Enter the reader as a poacher. As a poacher, the reader steals from the text, or rather from the 'order' of the text, intended as a progressive accumulation of signs to be treasured up into a final hoard of meaning. Her textual performance of "advances and retreats, tactics and games" (175) carves out a heterotopic nomadism in relation to the text, whose linear purpose is double-crossed by the poacher's lines of flight. Her peculiar strategy of following, yet deviating from, the text produces a pleasure in what is called "escapism". Yet, what exactly is she running away from? Isn't there a pleasurable escapism in running away from the text? Reading has no place, we are told surprisingly. The text appears not to be the place where the reader can be found, or find herself. Stealing from it, she is also a bit of a burglar in a palace of words that are, yet are not, her own.

The unproductive character of non-linear mobility is related to the temporality of reading vis-à-vis the processes of work and work subjectivation. In contrast with writing, whose performance stocks up a treasure of time and invests in representation, reading is an activity that "takes no measures against the erosion of time (one forgets oneself *and* also forgets), it does not keep what it acquires, or does it so poorly …" (174). Its scandal is manifold: it neither saves time against its ruinous advance nor saves the text; it is not acquisitive; it is uneconomical in terms of work economy, which banks on a surplus and would value reading only as additive knowledge. From this surplus will also depend one's own sense of activity, measured in terms of output.

How can we value the reader in ways that do not already make her dependent on a text, as a reader of whatever?[17] De Certeau starts from a strikingly affected body: "We should try to rediscover the movements of this reading within the body itself, which seems to stay docile and silent but mines the reading in its own way: from the nooks of all sorts of 'reading rooms' (including lavatories) emerge subconscious gestures, grumblings, tics, stretchings, rustlings, unexpected noises, in short a wild orchestration of the body" (175).

His description expands the reading space to include an embodied site where an event produces an unexpected surplus. These discharges are a symptom that the performance of reading is releasing a bodily remainder rendered obscure to signification. In the reader's grotesque body reading appears to re-enact the underlying cut or rupture between writing and speech that de Certeau sees at the root of modern scriptural economy. In *The Practice of Everyday Life* the French theorist recapitulates the disciplinary installation of the scriptural apparatus, which, "inseparable from the 'reproduction' made possible by the development of printing", excised the authority of the "Voice of the people".[18] Reading has become the subjected Other of writing, a kind of ordered orality brought into line with the text; a genealogy of modern 'literacy' will reveal the traces of the fissure between reading and writing inscribed on the reader's body. Every singular reading,

[17] Borrowing the term from Agamben, I mean a reading that is neither particular nor universal. The whateverness of reading leaves its singularity to be, a space of difference where the reader may preserve its unthought-of.

[18] Cf. de Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, 131-132 and the whole chapter 10 on "The Scriptural Economy".

according to de Certeau, performs the history of the power relationships invested in the separation between body and matter, orality and scripture; it is in this sense a new event of that history. No reciprocity is possible between writing and reading, no comparable equivalence or homology. No wonder that the reader's body is shattered, by pleasure as well as guilt. Else, why would this noisy body perform in secret nooks and 'lavatories'?

This is not the whole story, though. De Certeau traces out another body, the less obscene and more contemporary figure of the silent reader. She has learnt to withdraw her body from the intense possession by the text – evident in voiced reading or reading aloud – by creating a distance from which the text is objectified as a visual terrain that can be scanned, skipped and roamed. Are we sure, though, that a visual distancing of the text allows for "the condition of its [the body's] autonomy"? Can the silent reader's bodily engagement be limited to "the mobility of the eye" (176)? In other words, can reading be purified from its affective waste product, from shame?

It seems it cannot, though in a quite different sense, at least if we read Eve K. Sedgwick reading Silvan Tomkins on affect. Towards the end of "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold" the posture associated by Tomkins with the primary affect of shame – lowering of eyelids and eyes, hanging of head – is compared to that of reading.[19] However, the association is no longer with repression and guilt-complexes – shame as reaction and escape into a closeted world – but with a force field that exerts enough attention to create a world. Indeed, this affect, freed from the double bind of pleasure and repression, is turned unashamedly into one of the primary forces of world-making: "The additional skin shimmering as if shrink-wrapped around a body-and-book, or body-and-playing/working environment, sharply and sheerly delineates the conjunction and composition, making figural not escape or detachment, but attention, interest" (21). Immersion in reading hardens a second skin, the signal of an affirming creation of, rather than a seclusion from, a world. Its materialization no longer has at its core an interiorized subjectivity whose psychoanalytic drama invests even those who would subvert it. A new relationality links the social and the material, the cognitive and the affective in a common ontology that escapes the closed circuit of human-centred worlding. Sedgwick argues for an engagement with the material and biological constitution of our life-world by taking her lead from Tomkins' psychobiology.

Trusting shame as an affect rather than hiding it as a symptom certainly reconfigures the reader into a different body. Except it is no longer just his or her body, it is a composition moved by affect. Both Blanchot and de Certeau have noted the reader's forgetful body. How can forgetting be reconciled with affective embodiment in reading? Sedgwick's suggestion is: by embodying differently, by locating the sources of affect not in some hidden fold of the subject, but in emergent compositional forces enmeshed in heterogeneity, needing only a skin to provide a temporary interface. These multiple skins materialize relations no less forceful for being contingent. Thus, relation gives rise to the composition Sedgwick calls

[19] Eve K. Sedgwick and Adam Frank, "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins", in Sedgwick and Frank, eds., *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 20-21.

book-and-reader. Yet this boundary remains an open-ended interaction between inside and outside. The affect that sustains the ostensible 'introversion' of the reader neither means that she is knowing herself in her own foldedness, nor that this folding space is of the kind private vs. public.

There is no reader who needs to bear the brunt of the inscription of the law, since reading, as an interface event and a temporary in-between, is above all the affirmation of a compossibility, what Deleuze would call the assemblage (*agencement*) of book-and-reader. This reading site fits neither the disciplinary regime of scriptural economy, nor the object-centred disciplinarity of literary studies. By a scalar shift in attention Sedgwick's affective stance cathects an interest in heterogeneous conjunction rather than in the dual drama of object and subject. In this sense, it leads us into the performance of the non-specific, the formless that is taking form, the emergent.

A Dissensual Site

Fig. 3: Rory Macbeth, *No Place (Spiral),* 2006, matt white emulsion on walls, Eastern Electricity, Norwich, © courtesy of the author.

An interest in assemblages is not only significant because of its chance to materialize relations, but also because it focuses on the conditions that sustain them and on the properties they assume or are seen to assume by being performed over time. In the beginning I have referred to the "historical mode of visibility" of literature as a sensible condition that sustains the persistence of a literary object, even in the face of the contingent materiality of its visible textuality, the reliance on the simulated transparency of its technological interface, and the non-identity of the two (writing and reading) performances that realize it. This mode of visibility is, in other words, performative. Since the persistence of any visibility has an obvious relation to *aisthesis*, while the occlusion of its compossibilities always effects the preservation of social and disciplinary partitions, it is crucial to theorize – even just to see – the foreclosed indeterminacy of those partitions, their contingency. This is where Jacques Rancière's proposal of 'radical equality' can be useful. I am interested in how Rancière brings together aesthetics, a "partition of the sensible, of the visible and sayable, which allows (or does not allow) some specific data to appear",[20] and politics, which imparts a specific distribution of the sensible to the effect of confirming or disrupting the established partitions or domains of the social world.

[20] Jacques Rancière, "The Politics of Literature", *SubStance*, 33.1 (2004), 10. On the aesthetic regime and the distribution of the sensible (*partage du sensible*) see Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. by Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004).

Keystone to his politics of the sensible is Rancière's concept of "aesthetic regime", which establishes a paradoxical yet fruitful relationship between art and life. Breaking away from the rules and codes that determine the hierarchical adequation of form to subject matter (e.g. through genres), the aesthetic regime vindicates the autonomy of art as heterogeneous and separate from life. However, by claiming a capacity to recreate life on account of its own separation art discovers at the same time its own heteronomy as an 'art of life'. Its capacity to imbue life with new perceptions installs art in the gap between sense and meaning, thus realizing the capacity of *dissensus*, a synthetic term that joins the political with the aesthetic. While the technologies of 'arts' do differ, the point lies not in their difference, but in art's promise of overcoming the differences already distributed. Although this does not justify our indifference to formal means, neither does it tolerate an *apriori* distribution of the sensible that would autonomize each field of artistic creation over and against its heteronomous relation with life. By affirming the creation of a differently sensible world this promise is necessarily non-specific, its political premise lies in equality.

This is where radical equality can be seen to affect both the makers of art and the ordinary lives of those who are affected by it and come to have a share in its dissensual effects. Radical equality posits an equal capacity – common to the point of being anonymous, ordinary, everyday – to forge associations and dissociations, that is, a translative capacity in terms of a dissensual creation of meaning. Such a commonplace multiplication of lines of flight opposes not just any notion of specification that would predetermine art's ways of redistributing the sensible, but also any notion of specialization intended as a set of tools that have already performed their 'specific' inspection of an art object in order to pre-empt its newness. Therefore I see Rancière's approach as helpful in sustaining our attention to sites, events and encounters that dissociate the already constituted (i.e. distributed and partitioned) elements of any artistic object and the capacities it engages.[21]

My interest in Rory Macbeth's *No Place* lies precisely in his dissensual deployment of literature.[22] No longer in the book, the Norwich *Utopia* redistributes the sensible by a transcription that is more than just visual. Recalling the use of protest graffiti on walls, public buildings, bridges and motorway gantries, his writing does not rely on a blank page but on architectural surfaces that are pre-existing and as such already inscribe urban space.[23] Citing this practice but also overturning it and overdoing it, this *Utopia* seems to play a stranger game: instead of using anonymity to express oneself, Macbeth authors a bluntly inexpressive performance of copying.[24] Furthermore, by installing More's text on a derelict building awaiting demolition Macbeth marks a temporal deadline for its performative effect. He writes in the gap, in the temporal lag between an already pronounced death sentence and the promise of a (speculative) revolution lying more prosaically in urban regeneration. He writes *Utopia* in the seemingly most inert temporality of all: that of the ruinous present, a duration coming into its own as a conflation between a past that is condemned and a future that has already marked its occupation.

[21] Cf. Jacques Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics* (London: Verso, 2007), 32: "The essence of equality is not so much to unify as to declassify, to undo the supposed naturalness of orders and replace it with controversial figures of division".

[22] Christopher Warley, *Reading Class Through Shakespeare, Donne and Milton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) discusses both versions of Macbeth's *No Place* as displacements of the ghost of communist utopianism in the post-industrial era.

[23] A 1970's instance of protest graffiti in East London was the writing "G. Davis is innocent" springing up everywhere as a campaign against his robbery conviction. Rory Macbeth, email message, 2 January 2014.

[24] On uncreative and conceptual writing see Craig Dworkin and Kenneth Goldsmith, eds., *Against Expression. An Anthology of Conceptual Writing* (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 2011). Another work by Macbeth is excerpted there: *The Bible (alphabetized).*

By grafting a literary text that has survived the centuries onto a late 19ᵗʰC power plant, originally associated with electrical modernity yet now redundant and doomed, Macbeth has folded temporal and spatial politics into one. We have the privilege to see a ruin before the end has actually come. *Utopia*'s new homeless location stares at us from a site that is literally our *unheimlich* (post)-modernity; the utmost banality of post-industrial sites has become so *heimlich* that we need its literal monumentalization in order to see it anew, albeit as unreadable artwork. Wrenched out of its architectural book form, literature, too, is tacked onto the more modest architecture of a former power plant, deployed not so much to point towards transcendence but to the materiality of brick-and-mortar history. Both architectures have their own pretensions, their own utopian ambitions. It is apt, in a way, that they should share the same resting ground.

Nevertheless, the literal collapse of two utopias – industrial modernity and book literature – into a single *No Place* is far from nihilistic, or resolved. The way out of its terminal implosion lies less in the perfect moment when the building will be actually torn down – thus 'realizing' the work's meaning according to its author – than in the repetitive drudgery that we have not seen: the painstaking labour of its writing. As I am led to respond to it with a reading that remains unachieved, Macbeth's uneconomical labour of copying *Utopia* strikes me as the most political form of its publication here and now. Through the glaring mismatching of classical text, volatile surface and would-be reader so as to create a new dissensual composition, *No Place* folds them all into the prophetic fold of a commonly shared interval. As this folding is perceived the site becomes suddenly alive, contrary to the planned obsolescence of market speculation. The 'permanent' paint Macbeth has used on the site ironically marks his 'precarious' occupation of its deadline.

A recent collection of essays suggests an oxymoron for a site like this: future ruin.[25] Here the future is visible as a ruin 'in' and 'of' the present, as if to fulfil Agamben's notion of con-temporaneity: "a singular relationship with time that adheres to it through a disjunction and an anachronism".[26] Yet what seems crucial is that a certain time has been newly occupied. It is true that Macbeth's layering of intrusive temporalities – including our own failed readings – is neither able to cancel nor to shift the deadline. Actually, it seems to reinforce its power by folding the destiny of its writing into the destiny of the otherwise anonymous building. In so doing, though, the artist repoliticizes what would otherwise have lain inert through the unproductive labour of art and the equally unproductive motility of our looking, until the site trembles under our very eyes.

Future ruins become actable. The prophecy of this ruin is spelled out by a writing on the wall that is legible, yet unreadable. It turns out that the lag between the two is the time and space that we have, once again.

*

No Place (Spiral) is still standing in Norwich.
No Place (Kingly Digs) has gone.[28]

25 Davide Borrelli and Paola Di Cori, eds., *Rovine future. Contributi per ripensare il presente* (Milano: Lampi di stampa, 2010).

26 Giorgio Agamben, "What Is the Contemporary?", in *Nudities*, trans. by David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 11.

Lucia Esposito

Playing with the Audience:
Performative Interactions in Tom Stoppard's *The Real Inspector Hound*

Introduction: Performance Studies and Theatre as Event

The Real Inspector Hound is a one-act comedy Tom Stoppard wrote in 1968, immediately after the stunning success of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. The play substantially 'inspects' the role and agency of the audience, the performative nature of role-playing and the complex relationships between illusion and reality. As the focus of this essay is to explain how Stoppard's orchestration of theatrical tools succeeds in illustrating the 'performative' power of theatre as a means for such an 'inspection', some introductory remarks will outline the place, validity and nature of theatre and the role of the audience in the wider framework of Performance Studies, as it is in these terms that the efficacy of Stoppard's comedy will be tested.

In the years in which the playwright was taking his first steps on the British scene a greater focalization on theatrical practice and process, or better, on theatre **'as'** practice and process, made for a broadening of theatre studies' former areas of inquiry and a re-theorizing of 'performance' as a concept that has given rise, thanks to the American scholar and theatre director Richard Schechner, to Performance Studies as a distinct discipline. Then, due to a felicitous convergence of linguistic, sociological, anthropological and philosophical investments in the discourses of performance and performativity, "performance has floated free of theatre precincts – as Elin Diamond puts it – to describe an enormous range of cultural activity", from "popular entertainments" to "speech acts, folklore, political demonstrations, conference behavior, rituals, medical and religious healing, and aspects of everyday life".[1]

In his critical introduction to performance theory, Marvin Carlson remarks that, given the contemporary world's high degree of self-consciousness, reflexiveness, obsession with simulation and theatricalization in every aspect of social life, it is no surprise if performance has become a dominant interdisciplinary trope: "With performance as a kind of critical wedge, the metaphor of theatricality has moved out of the arts into almost every aspect of modern attempts to understand our condition and activities, into almost every branch of the human sciences".[2] Paradoxically, however, theatre studies have come to be more and more overlooked. Especially since the revolutionary and irreverent Sixties, theatre has become the favourite target of a number of theorists and practitioners persuaded that it is indissolubly linked with the static idea of drama as a mimetic artefact, with the authority of the dramatic Text and of the Author, and with a concept of the audience as a passive and disciplined observer confined to the 'black box' of the proscenium

[1] Elin Diamond, "Introduction", in Elin Diamond, ed., *Performance and Cultural Politics* (London-New York: Routledge, 1996), 2.

[2] Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (London-New York: Routledge, 1996), 6-7.

performance, with its darkened auditorium and its fourth wall separating the set onstage. In performance, on the contrary, as Diamond stresses, "in opposition to theatre structures and conventions" and "in line with poststructuralist claims of the death of the author", the focus has shifted "from authority to effect, from text to body, to the spectator's freedom to make and transform meanings".[3]

In response to such claims, especially to the one that takes dramatic performance "merely as a reiteration of texts, a citation that imports literary or textual authority into performance",[4] W. B. Worthen laments that, notwithstanding the poststructuralist and postmodern subversion of the idea of Text as an authoritative and enclosed work or object subjected to interpretation into an intertextual (and palimpsestic) field of "play, activity, production, practice",[5] the two different conceptions of the text continue to be "blurred" and "compacted in one another".[6] So that drama continues to be identified with the 'work', and not to be considered itself as a 'performance', whose meanings are continually and differently produced and reproduced by the performers (both actors and spectators in the case of theatre) each time the text is 'enacted'. The stage – Worthen maintains – is not a place where the 'original' meanings of the written text are finally disclosed to the public, but a space where a fundamental negotiation takes place and a new text, or any number of new texts are produced ('textualization'). In the performative environment of theatre the "text is absorbed into the multifarious verbal and non verbal discourses of theatrical production, transformed into an entirely incommensurable thing, an event", that is to say "a performance".[7] Also, according to the semiotician Marco De Marinis, "every theatrical performance (every single theatrical occurrence) constitutes an *unrepeatable, unique event*, an ephemeral production that is different each time in spite of all attempts at standardization … and recordings".[8] But of even greater importance, De Marinis adds, is that since theatrical events, like all events, are governed by a condition of simultaneity between production and reception, it is the reception that "qualifies or disqualifies it as a performance text".[9]

So, if theatre is, just like any other performance, a "showing doing",[10] and if beyond sharing "an emphasis on the body and on the verbal, visual, auditive, and gestural signs", it obviously shares with it the absolute necessity "to be performed in front of an audience, which is a co-creator of meaning",[11] there is no reason why a text-based prejudicial opposition between 'performance' and theatre should be retained. On the contrary, in restating the specificity of the latter as a 'performative' site, Jill Dolan underlines its 'uniqueness'[12] among the other performative "geographies of learning", since theatre "offers, literally, a place to investigate some of the questions posed *only* metaphorically elsewhere".So, instead of "leaving theatre architecture to study the world as a stage"[13], it would be profitable, as Janette Reinelt also advocates, to see the "performance as a model for the emergence of novelty and the theatrical as the space of its emergence".[14]

It is in this light that the dynamics of Stoppard's traditional but markedly performative theatrical piece will be explored. Seeing it as a site of investigation, not least taking the cue from the presence of a 'real inspector' in it, clues for the

[3] Diamond, *Performance and Cultural Politics*, 3.

[4] W. B. Worthen, "Drama, Performativity and Performance", *PMLA*, 113.5 (October 1998), 1098.

[5] Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text", in *Image/Music/Text* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 162.

[6] W. B. Worthen, "Disciplines of the Text / Sites of Performance", *TDR*, 39.1 (1995), 15.

[7] Worthen, "Drama, Performativity and Performance", 1100.

[8] Marco De Marinis, *The Semiotics of Performance*, trans. by Aine O'Healy (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 51.

[9] Ibid., 48. The same goes for the individuals' social performances. As Carlson affirms in *Performance. A Critical Introduction*: "Performance is always performance *for* someone, some audience that recognizes and validates it as performance even when, as is occasionally the case, that audience is the self" (6).

[10] Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (London-New York: Routledge, 2013), 22.

[11] Janelle Reinelt, "The Politics of Discourse: Performativity Meets Theatricality", *SubStance*, 31.2/3, Issue 98/99 (2002), 211.

[12] Jill Dolan, "Geographies of Learning: Theatre Studies, Performance and the Performatives", *Theatre Journal*, 45.4 (December 1993), 418.

[13] Ibid., 431e 429.

[14] Reinelt, "The Politics of Discourse", 213.

[15] This is, for Victor Turner, the purpose of theatre: "To look at itself a society must cut out a piece of itself for inspection", in order to scrutinize it and, possibly, "rearrange it". Cit. in Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception* (London-New York: Routledge, 1997), 105.

[16] Erika Fischer-Liche, "From Theater to Theatricality. How to Construct Reality", *Theater Research International*, 20.2 (Summer 1995), 104.

multiple ways in which we (both performers and audience in our life) can act upon reality and can be acted upon can be detected,[15] together with the awareness that theatre, as Erika Fischer-Lichte argues, unlike everyday life, deliberately provides an experience of the "very process of construction [of reality] and the conditions underlying it. …. Thus, theater turns out to be a field of experimentation where we can test our capacity for and the possibilities of constructing reality".[16]

'Investigations' into Audience Response

The Real Inspector Hound was put on the stage in 1968, a crucial year for the anti-authoritarian mood and actions that were informing the search for more open, democratic and creative alternatives to any kind of institutionalized regime of power and knowledge. An iconoclastic experimentation was taking place in theatre as well in the form of anti-conventional and anti-representational performances, such as Happenings and Performance Art, aimed at demolishing the barrier between illusion and reality, and between the stage and the audience. Yet Stoppard does not seem to have ever shared the restless anxiety for modernity and revolution of these movements. On the contrary, the playwright has often been accused of a slight conservatism, not least concerning the structurally refined edifice of his comedies, if compared with the transgressive (in)formal solutions of the Avant-garde. Nevertheless, his idea of theatre and of text is perfectly in line with the one that has been explored in the introductory section. In conferences, speeches and interviews Stoppard has often stressed that he can only conceive of his theatre as an 'event', that is, both something singular and unique – that truly comes into existence, again and again, and always differently, only when it is experienced by the audience in a particular context – and something organic and changeable like fruit, vulnerable to the response of directors and actors in rehearsal. In fact the playwright has often changed his 'texts' as if they were always in progress, not only before and during, but even 'after' the first production, in part as a result of the audience's response in performance.[17] This "interactive nature of theatre", as Susan Bennett explains in her seminal volume on *Theatre Audiences*, is due to the fact that the "playwright invariably shapes a text and the director invariably shapes a production to provoke particular expectations and responses within an audience. … Clearly then, the audience affects not only the performance but the dramatic text too".[18] But of course a transformative or 'liminoid' process which, according to the anthropologist Victor Turner, is crucial to a performance, also works the other way round. And Stoppard seems to want to explore precisely the way in which both dimensions, that of the performance/text and that of the audience, seem to interact and to be 'reciprocally' affected.

Aimed at this exploration, the play is built upon Stoppard's beloved device of the play within the play, through which it becomes a sort of open machine with its nuts and bolts in full view. In fact the author has frequently asserted that he considers this work as a "mechanical toy" where all must fit together with a

[17] See the lecture he gave at McMaster University in 1988, "The Event and the Text", in Paul Delaney, ed., *Tom Stoppard in Conversation* (Ann Arbour: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 199-211.

[18] Bennett, *Theatre Audiences*, 18-19.

clockwork precision,[19] or as an entertaining game whose strict rules – paradoxically contemplating the eruption of chaos[20] – have to be respected if one wants it to work correctly and affect the audience. Pattern is really important here, and particularly apparent in the interlacing between the performers who act on the stage, inside the play-within-the-play, and the ones who are outside it and meant to act first as audience and then as co-performers. The play shows indeed such a complex and multilayered configuration that it is worth briefly introducing it, especially if we consider that this is not one of Stoppard's best known works.

First of all, inasmuch as the play-within-the-play contained in the comedy is a really badly performed and managed – and thus hilarious – parody of Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap*, the whole work is mostly defined as a farcical parody of the excessively rational and causal genre of the 'whodunit', whose almost ritualistic development never fails to reassure the audience with its case solution. But the parody is comically and uncannily complicated by the presence among the play's audience of two critics whose task is to inspect and review the performance. They are the popular press first-string critic Birdboot, who has the habit of favourably reviewing female actresses in order to gain sexual favours in return, and the quality papers second-string critic Moon, who dreams of murdering his paper's first-string Higgs, while wondering if his stand-in, the third-string critic Puckeridge, has ever dreamed the same about him. When the performance begins, the two critics are caught expressing their critical opinions but also exchanging pleasantries and following their own personal thoughts, while on stage a situation very similar to that of *The Mousetrap* – which in 1968 was in its sixteenth year – takes place, with its classic drawing room setting in an isolated mansion and its characters involved in a mysterious murderous plot. Surprisingly, the first scene opens with the presence of a corpse on stage which strangely passes unnoticed not only by the critics 'in the audience' but also by the characters, who are seen playing cards and engaged in other trivial matters, until a farcical Inspector Hound reaches the house and discovers it. When the second Act of the mock-*Mousetrap* ends, the telephone on stage rings during the intermission. One of the critics, Moon, cannot prevent himself from answering, only to discover that the call is for Birdboot. Moon regains his seat among the audience, but Birdboot gets entrapped in the performance as the actors re-enter the stage and start to interact with him. Soon afterwards, after discovering that the victim is Moon's superior Higgs, Birdboot is killed, and, when also Moon is drawn into the play, he is killed as well. Astonishingly, the murderer of all victims is discovered to be the third-string critic Puckeridge, who has thus succeeded in eliminating both obstacles to his career: first-string Higgs and second-string Moon.

In this context, as stated by the stage directions, the presence and positioning of the two critics is crucial:

> The first thing is that the audience appear to be confronted by their own reflection in a huge mirror. Impossible. However, back there in the gloom – not at the footlights – is a bank of plush seats, and pale smudges of faces. One of the seats in the front row is occupied by Moon. Between Moon and the auditorium is an acting area which repre-

[21] Tom Stoppard, *The Real Inspector Hound* (London: Samuel French, 1968), 1. Quotations all refer to this edition; references will henceforth be included in the text.

[22] See the 1974 interview with the editors of *Theatre Quarterly*, "Ambushes for the Audience: Toward a High Comedy of Ideas", in Delaney, ed., *Tom Stoppard in Conversation*, 70.

[23] Ibid., 59-60. He also chose to represent critics because he had himself worked as a critic for *Scene* for some time.

[24] According to Schechner a performance is the "whole constellation of events, most of them passing unnoticed, that take place … from the time the first spectator enters the field of the performance … to the time the last spectator leaves". "Drama, Script, Theatre and Performance", *TDR*, 17.3 (1973), 9.

[25] Bennett, *Theatre Audiences*, 34.

[26] A theatre event requires "an audience to realise the multitude of possibilities... As each spectator, according to his part, enters into a dialogue with the work, the act of interpretation becomes a performance, an intervention". David Savran, cit. in Helen Freshwater, *Theatre & Audience* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 17-18.

[27] These terms are mainly drawn from Reader-response theory. See in particular Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory for Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore-London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).

sents, in as realistic an idiom as possible, the drawing room of Muldoon Manor… The body of a man lies sprawled face down on the floor in front of a large chaise-longue.[21]

Even though having the critics seated not at the back of the stage but at the front – with their backs slightly angled towards the real audience instead of facing it – has always worked better,[22] the idea of a mirror positioned in front of the audience, albeit "impossible", is focal because it provides the lens through which we are invited to approach the play's primary concern with audience-response and stage-audience interactivity. Combined or just made to coincide with the presence of two members of the audience who, as Stoppard envisaged, are in the guise of critics only for the purpose of parody,[23] and who are more generally there to represent 'us', the mirror image serves to make the (real) audience extremely aware of its own presence, role and agency before, during and at the end of the performance, but also of the other spectators' presence in the communal situation they find themselves in. The two critics in the fictional frame – which usually, but not here, demarcates the playing space – are seen taking their place, making a noise, browsing their programmes and talking to each other before the play-within-the-play starts, and then, even when the play has started, continuing to make a noise with a box of chocolates or commenting on what they are watching and hearing. Thus the audience in the outer frame – the non fictional one – confronted with this common behaviour, is made to reflect upon it and is also put in the uncanny position of having reasons to critique it. This 'reflection', so soon established in the pre-production phase of the play-within-the-play performance,[24] provides the comedy with its auto-reflexive attack which, by emphasizing its theatricality, has the effect of critically distancing the audience and preventing the establishment of perfect illusion from the start.

This is an effect that Susan Bennett sees reinforced by the presence of the mysterious dead body visible on the scene before the on-stage performance even begins: it "acts as an irresistible lure for the audience" since the latter is "drawn to speculate as to whether the body is real or not (an actor or a dummy) and to construct elements of plot to explain this opening frame".[25] The body acts as a catalyst for the audience, or as a stimulus for decoding, inasmuch as it triggers its interpretative processes around both the nature of the reality – or the realities – it is being confronted with and the kind of story it is called to construct from the clues afforded. Thus, since the very beginning, the audience is itself made to perform the role of 'inspector' dealing with the play's complexities and oddities;[26] a detective role that fits the members of the mirror-audience perfectly well, if not better, given their specificity as critics. Indeed both Moon and Birdboot are led to interpret the play they are watching by filling the 'gaps' and 'negations' it presents,[27] but the down-to-earth Birdboot is the one asking more questions and looking for more solutions according to his horizon of expectations linked to the whodunit genre. Accordingly, he sees the play as one of revenge and jealousy, he is obsessed by his anxiety to discover the murderer and brought to make pragmatic guesses that

will actually prove correct. He must also be used to dealing with more naturalistic plays, in which a classic Aristotelian beginning, climax and dénouement can be easily detected, as he explicitly admits to be in search of such a satisfying structure and is completely at loss in decoding alienating effects, such as the pause with which the play begins: "You can't start with a pause! If you want my opinion, there's a total panic back there (*He laughs and subsides*)" (2). But when he insists that his colleague should "look" at the stage and realize that it's a "sort of thriller", a "who killed thing" (2), he shares with Moon his inability to see the corpse, showing that, as pointed out by Bennett, members of the audience, in their freedom to select their own processes of interpretation, may also choose to ignore or resist focal points: "[i]nstead of accepting the sign-cluster which represents the centre of the action, concentration may be diverted to signs other than those foregrounded by the performance".[28] However, unlike Birdboot, Moon looks for more hidden and profound meanings and for more transcendent resonances. In response to Birdboot's question if he can see that it is just a whodunit, he answers: "I suppose so. *Underneath*" (2, my italics), and continues to comment on the performance by highlighting its dealing with catalyst figures capable of disrupting the ontological securities of comfortable people (9), its alignment "on the side of life" or concernment "with the nature of identity" (16), until he finally wonders if one is not entitled to ask, "Where's God?" (17).

Notwithstanding their different interpretations, both Moon and Birdboot tend to obtusely and deliberately ignore the possibility of a range of potentially complex and diverse audience responses when they both make the mistake that Diamond blames traditional theatre reviewers for making:[29] thinking they are culturally entitled to speak for the mass. When they perform their role as critics, assuming their public masks and voice – usually 'clearing their throat' beforehand – they often use 'we' in asserting their bombastic opinions, and project their own response onto the rest of the audience. But, even though there is and there must be a collective and collaborative response to a performance – which is actually capable of influencing its delivery – subjective responses are to be taken into due account. "[E]ach audience is made up of individuals who bring their own cultural reference points, political beliefs, sexual preferences, personal histories, and immediate preoccupations to their interpretation of a production",[30] observes Freshwater, making a point which is also patently illustrated by Stoppard's play. Especially when Moon's and Birdboot's quite divergent responses are shown to be motivated, through the exposition of their streams of thought and feelings, not so much by the play's inherent meanings but by their strictly personal life facts and frames of reference.[31]

The last two decades have seen the growth of an entire new aesthetic, together with an expanding branch of studies, which supports the view of a new 'affective turn' justified by a willingness to return to questions of readers' affective responses, that is, to questions concerning the embodied effect or influence of works of art on the reader or viewer.[32] In Marguerite La Caze and Henry Martin Lloyd's opinion, affects arise in the midst of 'in-between-ness': "between the thinking mind and the

[28] See Bennett, *Theatre Audiences*, 150. In its evidence, the corpse proves to be indeed the main missing piece of the puzzle, as the final discovery of its identity will be the key to the performance as a whole. Its invisibility or displacement is, however, also the sign of an impossible coherence and causality of meanings.

[29] Elin Diamond, "The Violence of We: Politicizing Identification", in Janelle Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach, eds., *Critical Theory and Performance* (Ann Arbour: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 403-12.

[30] Freshwater, *Theatre & Audience*, 5-6.

[31] Stoppard constructs this difference by skilfully interlacing their inconsequential lines, so as to make evident that their thoughts proceed on completely separate tracks.

[32] For a recent discussion of Affect Theory, see Ruth Leys, "The Turn to Affect: A Critique", *Critical Inquiry*, 37.3 (Spring 2011), 434-472.

33 Marguerite La Caze and Henry Martin Lloyd, eds., "Editor's Introduction: Philosophy and the Affective Turn", *Parrhesia*, 13 (2011), 3.

34 Jacques Rancière, cit. in Freshwater, *Theatre & Audience*, 17.

35 The expression comes from an essay dedicated to an American novel considered to be an exemplary piece of performative writing. Mark B. N. Hansen, "The Digital Topography of Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*", *Contemporary Literature*, 45.4 (Winter 2004), 597-636.

36 Howard D. Pearce, "Stage as Mirror: *Travesties*", in Harold Bloom, ed., *Tom Stoppard* (Broomall, PA: Chelsea House Publishers, 2003), 59.

acting body, between the power to affect and the power to be affected, between two bodies, and between bodies and the world".[33] In *The Real Inspector Hound* Birdboot and Moon affectively respond to what they are watching by semi-consciously linking "what they see with what they have seen and told, done and dreamed".[34] Birdboot is a womanizer, and the deceptive role he sees performed by Simon, a handsome stranger who has apparently succeeded in seducing both the female characters of the play, Felicity and Cynthia, makes him extremely nervous about his own behaviour with actresses and guilty for betraying his wife, without mentioning the fact that he has himself flirted with the actress acting as Felicity and is now becoming infatuated with the one playing the role of Cynthia. Moon, maybe unconsciously affected by the early sight of the corpse on the stage and then more consciously influenced by the murderous plot, cannot avoid daydreaming about killing his superior, the first-string critic Higgs, so as to shine as a 'full moon', without the eclipses provided by the cumbersome presence of Higgs, and to become the protagonist in his own social life. Unlike Birdboot, he is more prone to abstract himself from the realistic plot and the concreteness of the performance and to get lost in his preoccupations. However, both critics find themselves in one way or another narcissistically reflected in what they see as if in a mirror, because they both cannot help but see what they are led to see by their reference frame. In fact here the theatrical situation operates as a kind of machine for producing, through 'fictional effects', what might be called – borrowing an expression by Mark Hansen – "reality *affects*",[35] with an evident shift in emphasis from the 'text' as a referential object to the necessarily real 'impact' that it has on the embodied life of its spectators.

A Mousetrap for the Audience: Uneasy Interactions

Given the guilt-feelings of both critics for what they do and/or dream of doing, one cannot help recalling that Agatha Christie's choice of the title for her *Mousetrap* thriller, which Stoppard is here purposely parodying, derives from the third Act of *Hamlet*, in which the Prince arranges a play to be performed before the eyes of his uncle Claudius; a play that, like a mirror "held up to nature", would "catch the conscience of the king" and allow him to recognize in his affected reactions his guilt. Likewise, Moon and Birdboot seem to be progressively caught up in the mirror they think the play is holding up to their conscience.

Yet, theatre cannot be seen as a perfect mimesis of reality, otherwise "life and dream, stage and world would flow into one another indistinguishably".[36] As Howard D. Pearce points out, the mirror-image, so frequently used as a metaphor for theatre, posits both sameness and difference, that is, identity and otherness, subject and object in a perpetual relation of coexistence. It gives us relations rather than simple reflections, and must serve as a means of gaining perspective on self and/in reality, that is, on the way we construct our identity always in relation to something other or different. As Ragnhild Tronstad reminds us, theatre itself is a metaphor and, to function as such and be effective as a tool of perspective, it needs

the two planes of fiction and reality, which constitute its vehicle and tenor, to be perceived as separate. Tronstad draws on Josette Féral's notion that:

> … theatricality is to be found in the relation between two spaces: the real space and the fictional one. The real space is the actual physical one, while the fictional space is a virtual or imagined space created either by the actor, or by the spectator alone. For theatricality to happen, the spectator must see the 'real' space through a fictional framing, which makes this space occur differently.[37]

If the spectator is unable, or is given the tempting opportunity not to distinguish between the two spaces and between what is real and what is fictional, then the play of reflections is complicated and, to quote a famous line from *Othello*, "Chaos is come again".[38]

And chaos is exactly what occurs when at the end of the second intermission, after answering the phone onstage, Birdboot, who is more a kind of 'immersive' spectator, gets entrapped in the plot as if he were blinded by his own reflection. From this point on the necessary interactions between the performance and the critics/audience stop being abstract – just interpretative and affective – and become 'actual', and – as V. L. Cahn observes – "madness rules".[39] When Birdboot is pressed into playing Simon, "fending off accusations against the character with defences of his offstage actions",[40] he is accused by Moon of making it turn "into a complete farce" (29). When he takes part in a card game which replicates the one played in the first Act, the card players start to use a nonsense language including terms from a range of games such as bridge, chess, roulette and bingo, so that it too becomes a mirror of the chaos enveloping the play. When, during the interval, he shockingly discovers the corpse to be Higgs and warns Moon, he is suddenly shot; and when Moon intervenes and gets entrapped in the role of Inspector Hound, he is shot by Major Magnus, who turns out to be Puckeridge.

However, the levels of reality, piled so insanely on top of one another, are ultimately complicated when the actors who previously impersonated Simon and Hound take the place of Moon and Birdboot among the audience. Assuming the role of the critics, they also reuse some of their hyperbolic or sophisticated terms to evaluate the play, but this time negatively, denigrating rather than praising the performance. They express their contempt for what they see as a hysterical and "complete ragbag" (30) and for the fact that "Some of the cast seem to have given up acting altogether, apparently aghast, with every reason, at finding themselves involved in an evening that would, and indeed will, make the angels weep" (31). Hound also affirms that he can't "see any reason for the shower of filth and sexual allusion foisted onto an unsuspecting public in the guise of modernity at all costs" (31), making us 'suspect', actually, that Stoppard is also alluding to the chaotic Performance Art experiments that were being conducted at the time – to be viewed either as "taboo-smashing liberation" or "anything-goes descent into anarchy".[41] That was a period in which the long-lasting prejudice of audience passivity and an acute desire to provoke, shock and unsettle spectators were triggering, especially

[37] Josette Féral, cit. in Ragnhild Tronstad, "Could the World Become a Stage? Theatricality and Metaphorical Structures", *SubStance*, 31.2/3, Issue 98/99 (2002), 217.

[38] In "The Event and the Text", Stoppard asserts: "This fourth wall, here, which you can't see … is there all the time, and when something just goes like a needle through that wall the event is just destroyed". Delaney, ed., *Tom Stoppard in Conversation*, 210.

[39] V. L. Cahn, *Beyond Absurdity: The Plays of Tom Stoppard* (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1979), 100.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Michael Billington, *Stoppard the Playwright* (London: Methuen, 1987), 68. Stoppard has frequently taken a stand against the extroversion and anarchy of experimental art. See Delaney, ed., *Tom Stoppard in Conversation*, for multiple occurrences.

[42] The term refers to the well known model of audience participation Augusto Boal formulated for his Forum Theatre. See his *Theatre of the Oppressed* (London: Pluto, 1979).

[43] Freshwater, *Theatre & Audience*, 50.

[44] Stoppard himself has said that the name 'Moon' indicates "a person to whom things happen". Cit. in R. A. Andretta, *Tom Stoppard: An Analytical Study of his Plays* (New Delhi: Har-Anand Publication in association with Vikas Publishing House, 1992), 98.

[45] Michael Billington, *Stoppard the Playwright*, 101.

[45] Magnus confesses his plan to lure Moon just before removing his disguise: "we had a shrewd suspicion he would turn up here – and he walked into the trap!" (33).

[47] Weldon B. Durham, "Ritual of Riddance in Tom Stoppard's *The Real Inspector Hound*", in John Harty III, ed., *Tom Stoppard: A Casebook* (New York: Garland, 1988), 91.

in the Avant-garde, the production of 'interactive' performances (no more representations, but 'presentations' of pseudo-real situations) in which spectators were made the primary focus of interest and were directly involved in the action of the play in the guise of "spect-actors".[42] As Helen Freshwater recounts, in the Sixties, and even more in the Seventies, this almost explosive preoccupation with the 'active' audience also took on a notably aggressive, even manically desperate and coercive form, to the point of producing not necessarily empowerment, but disturbing effects.[43]

In the parodic *mise en scène* of *The Real Inspector Hound*, such disturbing effects seem to affect both the fictive-made-active audience – particularly Moon, who doesn't feel at ease with his new role as Inspector Hound since he is coerced against his nature to take action, improvise and interact with the other characters in order to make the play progress[44] – and the 'real' audience. The latter, in particular, is jerked out of its complacency by looking at the way the two critics, who previously thought themselves to be invulnerable – much as members of the audience feel at an ordinary performance – are crudely treated on stage (they are both killed), so that "[t]he final sensation is one of nervous wonder, as those on the outside of the turmoil await the moment when they shall be drawn irrevocably into an action that destroys them".[45] This is essentially due to the fact that, as Weldon B. Durham points out, when the surprising solution arrives with the discovery of the mousetrap organized by Puckeridge[46] – who belongs to the world of the critics (and also ours) and not to the one of the play-within-the-play – the audience comes to realize the part of accomplice it has played in springing the murderous plot: "This scheming killer has written a playlet, rented a theatre, ordered scenery, hired a cast, rehearsed it and, to complete the illusion of a play in progress, he has assembled an audience".[47]

The result is that the real audience, so caught up in the play's trap, is led to question both its own 'role' and its own 'reality'. With respect to the former, for example, if the audience has acted as an accomplice, it might be entitled to wonder if it too must be considered as a 'suspect' liable to be punished for having participated in the construction of the plot, or whether it just wished to fulfil its desires by injecting its own beliefs, dreams and expectations into the play. Just like the poor Moon, who has been willing to see Higgs dead, and who, for this reason, is explicitly, even though wrongly, accused of being his murderer:

> Magnus: 'I put it to you! – are you the real Inspector Hound?!'
> Moon: 'You know damn well I'm not! What's it all about? …. I only dreamed… sometimes I dreamed'.
> Cynthia: 'So, it was you!'
> Mrs Drudge: 'The Madman!'
> Felicity: 'The Killer!'
> ….
> Mrs Drudge: 'The stranger in our midst! (33)

Since Moon is a representative of the audience, and the audience is often charged with nourishing secret desires to change ends or wondering what it would be like

to be drawn into the action on stage,[48] the audience is brought to question its own role in more general terms also.

As for questioning its own 'reality', the matter is even more complicated. With both the fictive and the real audience brought into the frame of the play-within-the-play, *The Real Inspector Hound* becomes a hyper-theatrical chamber of mirrors in which the reflections of alarmingly overlapping and indistinguishable planes of reality and fiction intersect. Tim Brassell's essay particularly highlights the disturbing effect that this knocking down of the theatrical 'fourth wall', with its consequential confusion and collision of two, three or 'n' levels, produces on the (real) audience, which is left "to contemplate which level of statement (if either) can claim to relate to 'truth' or 'reality'".[49] By changing the rules of the game, Stoppard produces in the audience a "deep sense of disorientation … because [he] is not merely juggling with conventions and characters; he is jolting us from one kind of assumed reality into another with quite different terms of reference... [he] demonstrates with frightening ease that planes of reality are neither exclusive nor even consistent" and, displaying "the unreality of *all* acting", he invites the spectators to consider "whether, in terms of another focus beyond their perception, they too are no more than actors in a play" and to beg "the inevitable, logical question: whose illusion is this?".[50]

Actually, according to the much abused metaphor of "all the world is a stage",[51] we all live as if we were actors playing a role. In his well-known text *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Erving Goffman set out in 1959 his sociological theory of the individual more or less consciously offering his performance and putting on his own show for the benefit of other people by wearing a public mask, which Goffman calls 'front'. So, one can speak of performing a self in daily life just as readily as one speaks of performing a role in a theatre. The complication is provided by the questions of how 'free' one is to act his/her own part, how much agency one is provided with, and to what extent one can consider him/herself as an actor rather than as a spectator. In other words, is anybody endowed with the power to act instead of merely being acted upon, thus responding to pre-scripted roles? Such questions have been also discussed by Performance Studies theorists such as Schechner, with his formulation of the "restored behaviour" – meaning that one always performs strips of behaviour already behaved, so that performance in everyday life is actually a reiteration of "twice-behaved behaviours"[52] – and by poststructuralists, who have used the term 'performatives' to indicate the repetition of culturally pre-scripted roles in society. However, just like any script in theatre can never be repeated and received in exactly the same way, so performative behaviours can always contain potentially deviating or disrupting differences when they are constantly re-enacted in different and shifting relational contexts.

In *The Real Inspector Hound*, the problem receives a 'literal' treatment when during the second intermission Birdboot enters the play and there is no evolution towards the third Act but a nearly perfect re-run of the first, with Felicity and Cynthia repeating the same cues and Birdboot interacting with them as if it were 'him' they are interacting with, and not Simon, as they actually call him according to the

[48] Billington also recalls the "impotence complex" from which, according to Jerzi Grotowski, critics often suffer, "as they sit nightly watching other people re-create life". *Stoppard the Playwright*, 68.

[49] Tim Brassell, *Tom Stoppard: An Assessment* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 96.

[50] Ibid., 101.

[51] A quotation from the Third Scene of the Second Act of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.

[52] Schechner has exposed his theory of "restored behaviour" in a number of essays. See for all the recently revised edition of his *Performance Studies: An Introduction*.

[53] Cynthia often exclaims: "We are not free!".

[54] Brassell, *Tom Stoppard: An Assessment*, 98.

[55] Ibid.

[56] I borrow the words used by Matt Adams for his audience participatory project, Blast Theory, <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/>, 10 December 2013.

[57] The very word entertainment embodies the 'liminal', for "it means from the Latin 'to hold between', to be neither this nor that, but the problem in the middle, a problem that staged in liminal surrounds, entertains rather than threatens". Victor Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1986), 41.

[58] Diamond, *Performance and Cultural Politics*, 5.

limiting script.[53] However, the lines now bear new meanings because of the altered circumstances of the performance. Felicity delivers to Birdboot lines identical to those addressed to Simon in the first encounter, but she does it with "a double import",[54] given her flirt with the critic in 'real' life. As Brassell notes, "without departing from the text, she can break out of her role and address him personally".[55] In addition, when things chaotically progress, growing differences emerge – some really disruptive thanks to the uneasy interactions with the new performers – thus departing from the conventional script one would expect. However, this does not prevent Puckeridge's plot reaching its programmed end. Birdboot and Moon die on the stage after having taken the bait with which they had been lured into the idea of passing from a state of passive onlookers to one of active doers. As a result, the problem can be said to receive a contradictory and complex treatment, reflecting the likewise complex and contradictory processes by which, in real life, through repetition (reiteration of inscripted values) and variation (resistance to them), one can be said to be free to construct his/her own relations and his/her own reality.

If seen in this light, an entertainment like this, no matter how merely playful it may seem or, conversely, precisely 'due' to its (chaotic) playfulness, can also be explored in its power to expose, examine and critique more abstract questions such as the overall inscription/resistance mechanisms of participation and agency: "Who is invited to speak, under what conditions and what that is truly meaningful can be said?".[56] An 'entertainment' like this, in its etymologically inscripted liminality,[57] can be examined as a fruitful site of investigation because, as Diamond remarks, it is when "performativity materializes as performance … between a doing (a reiteration of norms) and a thing done (discursive conventions that frame our interpretations), between someone's body and the conventions of embodiment" that we can have "access to cultural meanings and critique".[58]

Amaya Fernández-Menicucci

Performing Duggars: The Interaction between Producers, Performers and Spectators in the Reality Show *19 Kids and Counting*

Children as Media Arrows

[1] Christy Mesaros-Winckle, "TLC and the Fundamentalist Family: A Televised Quiverfull of Babies", *The Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*, 22.3 (Fall 2010), 1.

[2] Amanda Kondolojy, "Tuesday Cable Ratings: 'Sons of Anarchy' Tops Night + 'Pretty Little Liars', 'Snooki & JWOWW', 'Tosh.0', 'Ravenswood' & More", *TV by the Numbers. Zap2it*, <http://tvbythenumbers.zap2it.com>, 13 December 2013.

[3] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990) and *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

[4] Mesaros-Winckle, *TLC*, 8. Adherents to the Quiverfull movement conform to a literal reading of the Bible, especially as far as gender roles are concerned, strictly observing a patriarchal structuring of family and community life. They are, however, better known for their belief that not only should procreation never be prevented by the use of contraceptives, but also that Christian couples should actively seek to have as many children as possible in order to fulfil the biblical commandment to "be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1: 28).

[5] Michelle Duggar and Jim Bob Duggar, *The Duggars: 20 and Counting! Raising One of America's Largest Families – How They Do It* (New York: Howard Books, 2008), 92.

When in 2004 TLC aired a documentary about a frumpy-looking family called *14 Children and Pregnant Again*, nobody expected it to evolve into a successful reality show. Five documentaries and innumerable interviews later, the Duggar empire is at its peak. Jim Bob and Michelle Duggars' family are currently filming the thirteenth season of *19 Kids & Counting*. The show, which had averaged 1.409.000 spectators a week in 2009,[1] was viewed by 1.520.000 people on October the 23rd, 2013, when the grand finale of the twelfth season was aired.[2] The third Duggar book is due on March the 4th, 2014, and their speaking engagements seem to take them across the U.S. all year round. The present paper addresses the way in which the interaction between producers, performers and spectators of the Duggar show contributes to and shapes the Duggars' success, focusing, in particular, on the complex strategies that enable all three categories of participants to engage effectually and effectively in the performative process itself. In a synergetic play of dialoguing consciousnesses and power balances, the performative nature of identity, as theorised by Judith Butler in her seminal works *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter*,[3] is both confirmed and challenged by the double nature of a performance that takes place on stage as well as off stage. The following sections of this paper will, therefore, analyse the way in which the Duggars are represented on screen from the perspective of performance studies. However, it is first necessary to define the Duggars' socio-cultural context, since the latter is crucial to understand what motivates both the producers – Deanie Wilcher, Bill Hayes, Kirk Streb and Sean Overbeeke – and the viewers to join the heated debate of which *19 Kids and Counting* is the result.

Christy Mesaros-Winckle has already convincingly argued that, behind the "serene, pleasant picture of life in a big, Quiverfull family"[4] portrayed by the Duggars in their show*,* there lies the disturbing reality of a Christian fundamentalist family constructed around the hardcore values of biblical patriarchy. TLC has raised the movement supported by the Duggars to a prominent spot in mainstream culture, which it would not have held otherwise. However, the ramifications and rhizoid articulations of their decidedly counter-stream cultural discourse are far from being limited to the network of families who declare themselves to be 'Quiverfull'. Indeed, the Duggars themselves clearly state that they "do not belong to the Quiverfull movement".[5] Yet, they belong to a much more wide-spread movement, of which self-declared Quiverfull families are but a small portion. Indeed, what the Duggars do acknowledge, nay, underscore on their website and the two books they have published so far is their membership to Bill Gothard's Advanced Training Institute

(ATI) and to his overarching Institute for Basic Life Principles (IBLP). The latter constitutes one of the two fundamental sources of ideological indoctrination and networking for Christian fundamentalist families through its vast array of literature, homeschooling curricula, DVDs, seminars, spiritual retreats and conferences.[6] It also functions as a means for outreach by penetrating mainstream America via a series of apparently secular seminars and self-help literature, which Gothard has managed to sell to a number of governmental agencies and political institutes.[7] The other central pillar of Christian patriarchy, Doug Phillip's Vision Forum Ministries, has also benefitted from the Duggars' patronage and has overtly used the Duggars' media success to promote their patriarchal message.[8] Regardless of whether a family declare themselves to belong to the Quiverfull movement or not, as long as they pledge allegiance to any of the aforementioned institutions and political 'think tanks', they will *de facto* admit to having the same beliefs as the Quiverfull movement.

One of such beliefs derives from a literal reading of Psalm 127: 3-5.

> Lo: children are a heritage of the LORD;
> the fruit of the womb is His reward.
> As arrows are in the hand of a mighty warrior,
> so are the children of the youth.
> Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them.[9]

If, on the one hand, the Duggars do share the beliefs of the Quiverfull movement in that they do not use any form of family planning, and, on the contrary, are more than happy to have as many children as possible,[10] it is also true that the list of Duggars' beliefs that derive directly from a literal reading of the Bible is one that far surpasses the statement that "children are a heritage of the Lord". For children are seen as both a reward from God to the faithful believer 'and' as crucial weapons, "arrows" provided by God to Christian "warriors" to defeat His enemies. In this holy war to reclaim the Earth and "subdue it",[11] Christian families should seek to outnumber the children of the heathen and the secular so as to comply with God's command. Quiverfull families are simply those who choose this name to express their obedience to God's will for their families, the peak of the iceberg, as it were. Like the Duggars, many may choose not to self-identify as Quiverfull, despite the fact that they actually do live in a Quiverfull way.

Besides insisting on the sinfulness of any form of contraception – since it interferes with God's supreme authority over the womb – Christian patriarchal families espouse a "vision"[12] of the family unit as the true and only basis of society.[13] Families, not individuals, constitute the cells of the social body: they are literally social atoms, that is to say, indivisible and fundamental. What is more, the biblical construction of the family envisioned by Christian patriarchy is a reflection of the rigidly hierarchical and theocratic social structure described in the Old Testament. It follows that family structure should mirror the said strict hierarchy, with the human father at the head of this social microcosm, just as the heavenly Father governs the universe. Unconditional and immediate obedience to their head is thus expected

[6] Kathryn Joyce, *Quiverfull: Inside the Christian Patriarchy Movement* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009), 22, 179-180.

[7] Ibid., 23. See also R. L. Stollar, "The Political Reach of Bill Gothard: Jeri Lofland's Thoughts", *Homeschoolers Anonymous*, <www.WordPress.com>, 12 December 2013.

[8] In 2010 Vision Forum Ministries presented Michelle Duggar with the "Mother of the Year" award and collected her interventions at Vision Forum conferences in two DVDs, *Tea with Michelle Duggar* and *Hospitality with Michelle Duggar*.

[9] KJV Bible. The Duggars, like most Christian fundamentalist families, only use King James' version of the Bible.

[10] Duggar, *The Duggars*, 72; "Duggars' Big Thaw", *18 Kids and Counting* (First aired: January 25th-June23rd 2009; produced by Figure 8 Films for TLC, 2010).

[11] Genesis 1: 27.

[12] Duggar, *The Duggars*, iii.

[13] Joyce, *Quiverfull*, 3.

[14] Rousas John Rushdoony and Gary North, *Institutes of Biblical Law* (Phillipsburg, N.J: P & R Publishing, 1973).

[15] Joyce, *Quiverfull*, 41-92.

of fundamentalist wives and children. The Dominion Theology at the heart of the new Christian patriarchal movement construes female submission to male leaders as the sole means through which society can prosper.[14] Women, according to Doug Phillips' and Bill Gothard's reading of 1 Timothy 2:11-12, Colossians 3:18 and Ephesians 5:22, are helpmeets created by God to serve and glorify men, as men were created to serve and glorify God.[15] Likewise, in such hierarchical and hieratic family models, children's unquestioning submission to their father is the only means of exerting control over their minds and bodies, and of ensuring that, once grown up, children will enforce the same patriarchal scheme in their future homes. Hence, the importance of homeschooling, courting and the culture of the stay-at-home-daughter. By not allowing their children to attend public schools or even Christian private school, parents guarantee that no external influence whatsoever might awake their children's intellectual curiosity or lead them astray by opening their eyes to alternative lifestyles. Young people are discouraged from leaving the family home before they marry and start a family of their own. Since dating or any autonomous attempt to find a spouse are severely forbidden, the system ensures that young adults who have never left the family's aegis will only do so in order to enter another domestic space moulded on the very same principles.

The Duggars adhere to every single one of these values. All nineteen of their children have been or are still being homeschooled. They are not allowed to leave the home unchaperoned by at least one older sibling to ensure moral accountability. They are not allowed to surf the Internet unmonitored nor to watch TV at all. The Duggar girls can only interact with a prospect husband after the boy has asked Jim Bob for a formal permission to 'court' his daughter and provided the boy is considered to be in possession of the right moral, religious and financial assets. Physical and emotional purity are championed as the only Christian approach to sex and love, and even dancing or listening to pop or rock music are banned since they might wake up unsavoury appetites of the flesh. Nevertheless, no regular viewer of the show could disagree with the statement that the Duggars have undergone a most striking cosmetic makeover over the past twelve seasons. The family has gone from wearing matching Prairie-style, ankle-long dresses for the girls and solid-coloured, collared shirts and slacks for the boys to wearing denim and graphic T-shirts. It is true that the female members of the family are still under a strict dresses-and-skirts-only policy,[16] but the hemlines have progressively been raised to the point that now kneecaps peep from beneath the skirts when the girls are sitting down. The necklines have been increasingly lowered, too. They are still far from revealing any cleavage, but, for a family whose members used to wear undershirts to cover their collarbones, this is a huge concession to the ways of the world. Despite the evident ultra-conservative behaviour displayed by the Duggars, the cosmetic makeover to which the aesthetic side of their performance has been subjected suggests an attempt to soften the least palatable aspects of their lifestyle and to become more appealing to a broader, even mainstream audience. Who is ultimately responsible for taking such a decisive step in the direction of mainstreaming *19 Kids*

[16] The Duggars do so in observance of the biblical principle that "the woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment" (Deuteronomy 22:5; KJV Bible; cit. in Michelle Duggar and Jim Bob Duggar, *A Love that Multiplies. An Up-Close View of How They Make It Work* [New York: Howard Books, 2012], 101).

and Counting? Is it the Duggars or TLC? I shall attempt to answer this question in the third section of this paper, whereas, in the fourth, I shall address the extent to which the audience's (re)actions have morphed the Duggars' TV performance. In the next section, however, I shall analyse the Duggars' reality show as a collectively informed discourse in which identity is constructed as a conscious succession of performative acts carried out on the self by the self.

19 Kids and Counting as a Narrative Performance of the Self

The way the Duggars play their identity against and for the expectations of both mainstream and non-mainstream viewers is a patent instance of the fact that the interaction between the producers, spectators and performers contributes decidedly to the way in which the Duggars perform their identity on and off stage. This interaction is formatted as a visual and verbal narrative performance via the voiceover recaps at the beginning of each episode, but also through the talking-heads that regularly punctuate every episode. Most of the talking-head shots, far from being actual interviews are merely mechanical means to stitch together the fragmented ensemble of footage, thus transforming it into a cohesive story. Other than answering obvious leads, such as the question "where have you been today?" or "what have you done today?", the Duggar framed in a given talking-head will generically answer a number of questions that prompt a description of whatever images the spectators are simultaneously seeing on screen. In this sense, the Duggars are both performing and narrating their selves on TV. However, the Duggars had also been performing for one another for years before the TLC crew became part of the system. In fact, their identity as individuals was informed by their having to 'perform' continuously, both in the sense of delivering the expected and approved social behaviour, but also of 'living up' to a pre-ordained ideal. Each member of the family would 'embody' a given system of norms by 'acting' out what had been assimilated through previous sequences of reiterative performance. Performance thus becomes both the way through which normative standards are learnt and interiorised, and the way through which their assimilation is assessed and externalised. In this sense, the process of identity construction of each member of the Duggar family is a clear example of the 'performative' essence of identity of which Judith Butler speaks.[17]

The pre-eminent role attributed to the audience in sociological approaches to the concept of performance is re-elaborated by scholars like Erving Goffman[18] to include the self in the definition of audience. It is always a performance "for someone", even when "that someone is the self".[19] It follows that reality show stars are not being casually filmed as they go on with their lives. Their behaviour is turned into performance by the presence of external observers as much as by the internal observer who carefully monitors the verbal and non-verbal acts taking place in front of the camera, even when the audience is invisible and/or forgotten. In the case of the Duggars, however, the possibility of performing for one's self

[17] Butler, *Bodies*, 12-16.

[18] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1959), 2.

[19] Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 5.

only is non-existent. Given the strictness of the vigilance to which every single member of the family is subjected to, it follows that the Duggars are putting up a performance for an audience round the clock. The absolute lack of privacy and the chaperone system in full swing all day long and all year round construct a system in which the children's performance was constantly being measured against the patriarchal standards of fundamentalist beliefs long before it came under public scrutiny. Given also that the children are not allowed to watch TV and thus very rarely see their own show, many, especially the youngest, will not realise that there is a second audience observing them. In the metaphorical and literal closed-circuit TV of Duggar family life, they will still consider the other members of the family as the main, if not the only, judges of their performance. Regardless of their age, the Duggar children are considered so immature – or kept that way – that they are not even trusted to have interiorised the system's norms in the way ex-convicts eventually assimilated the rules system of the Panopticon in Foucault's homonymous work.[20] Orwell's dystopian depiction of the ever-vigilant gaze of the Big Brother[21] would better describe the Duggars' predicament.

According to Carlson, re-doing something on stage presupposes the fact that that very something was previously done off stage.[22] This seemingly mimetic role attributed to performance is, nonetheless, radically challenged by what could be dubbed as the 'self-conscious reiteration of performance'. The crucial ingredient of consciousness, when added to most human endeavours, instils in their pursuers an appetite for creative innovation that is hardly ever successfully suppressed. Performance thus becomes an ongoing act of creation, a fruitful dialogue between reality as it is 'done' in what is perceived as 'real life', and as it is imagined through onstage performances. In this sense, we could safely assume that whatever is being performed for the benefit of an audience will always be new, for, as David Román puts it, performances "are never the same".[23] Even when defined as "consciously repeated copies", the very consciousness that allows for the repetition also allows for deviance and originality. The Duggars perform their lives on screen not merely as a historical interpreter would at a 'living history' event. Their performance cannot be dismissed as instances of "restored behaviour", as defined by Schechner,[24] but, more crucially, their performance of their own lives becomes a literal representation of the fundamental identification between performance as understood by theatre studies and performance as viewed by the sociological and psychological sciences. The Duggars play themselves and, so, a double performance takes place. Carlson eloquently speaks of the "consciousness of doubleness"[25] that lies at the heart of a definition of performance approved by anthropologists, sociologists and researchers in the so-called performative arts alike. It is not just the presence of the conscious gaze of the audience that bestows a dialogic structure to performance, but the consciousness of the performers themselves. Like Gothic characters confronting their doppelgangers, the Duggars split their identity to match that of the performer and that of the performed, whereby a conscious process of self-observation transforms the actions performed into a narrative. It is as if both roles of narrator

[20] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1995).

[21] George Orwell, *1984* (New York: Random House, 1992 [1948]).

[22] Carlson, *Performance*, 3.

[23] Cit. in Carlson, *Performance*, 4.

[24] Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (2nd ed. London: Routledge, 1977), 112-168 and Richard Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 35.

[25] Carlson, *Performance*, 5.

and character were embodied by the same agent. Richard Schechner coined the term "restored behaviour" to signify a type of performance not so much involved in the display of skills but rather with a "certain distance between 'self' and behaviour".[26] The same things that are 'performed' on stage – or before a camera, in the case of the Duggars – are merely 'done' off stage. Remarkably, at the very heart of a reality show of this persuasion, in which people are allegedly being filmed during their everyday activities and while 'being themselves', is the claim that 'performing' and 'doing' converge and merge into one single documentary-like narrative of reality.[27] Hence, the inseparability of the Duggars' offstage identities from their performance in the show.

The Duggars' evolution from counter-stream to mainstream can be traced with absolute precision, at least as far as their outwards appearance is concerned. Likewise, from the first documentary to the last episode in the most recent season of *19 Kids & Counting*, the *iter* followed by the show's narrative parallels the progression of their public identity. Thus, since the show claims to be portraying the 'reality' of their life, the reiterativity of their identity performance becomes literal, with plenty of chronologically-ordered DVDs ready to narrate the Duggar story all over again, from its conventional beginning to the present time. Each performative act they carry out before the camera is of a 'citational' persuasion not only because it connects the individual with the collective, but also because it literally refers back to previous performances. Indeed, the Duggar show is visually representing the concept of performative citation since each performative act is played against past acts through either the lineal – that is to say, chronological – development of the show, or the literal juxtaposition of flashbacks and present events. In the first case, the identity of the Duggars is (re)created in the mind of the spectator, as the latter's memory replays scenes from past episodes of which certain present events remind them. In the second case, the producers consciously and purposefully choose to put past events right next to present ones, thus manipulating the referentiality of a given performance in the show. In either case, the Duggars' performance is being organised discursively as a narration. Their identity is thus continuously undergoing a process of construction through onstage and offstage performance, while this process is being narrated before the very eyes of the viewers. "This is the *story* of my family", declares Michelle's voice at the beginning of the show-opening of each episode. It may well be Michelle voice we hear and the Duggar family we see on screen, but whose words are they? Whose story is it?

Producers and Performers: The Process of Editing the Performance

The authorship of performative events is a matter open for discussion. Performers are seen moving along a thin line that winds its way to and from the roles of author, agent, and even observer, as it has previously been discussed. Furthermore, the liminal – and liminoid – space inhabited by onstage performers[28] does not apparently exclude anyone from taking part in the creative re-production of the authorial text.

[26] Cit. in Carlson, *Performance*, 3.

[27] See Nicolas Evreinoff, *The Theatre in Life,* trans. by Alexander Nazaroff (New York: Brentano's, 1927), 99-112.

[28] Victor Turner, "Liminal to Liminoid in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbology", *Rice University Studies*, 60.3 (1974), 53-92.

The creative force emerging from the direct and indirect collaboration between performers and spectators will be addressed later on. However, the particular configuration of a reality show implies the existence of a third party: the team of producers and editors who are ultimately responsible for the product we see on screen. For the image the Duggars wish to project must square up with the image TLC is set on showcasing. Inasmuch as the latter directs and often re-directs the performance of the Duggars, the producing/editing team are also responsible for 'making' the show.

The Duggars have often spoken of their show as a "ministry" through which they wish to "inspire"[29] other families to consider putting God in charge of every aspect of their family life. Both the books written by Jim Bob and Michelle Duggar include specific and frequent allusions to this.[30] So, it would seem safe to assume that these declarations are spontaneous and unfiltered by TLC representatives. If this were so, it would be in the Duggars' interest to modernize their outward appearance. This would, in fact, aid their evangelical efforts by communicating a sense of normality that is not usually associated with oversized families. Let us go further and suppose they not only approve of the final editing of each episode in their show, but also agree with the content, its presentation and the resulting re-presentation of the Duggar family members. This would imply the possibility of a cooperative relationship between the Duggars and TLC as part of a plan to 'sell' the Duggar brand to as many buyers as possible. Once the initial fascination for the Duggars as spectacle had given in to their re-presentation as a model of parenting and of harmonious, closely-knit family life, the Duggars went from performing in a freak show to developing a product: a best-selling recipe for a return to happy family life. From this point of view, then, TLC would be responsible for collaborating with the Duggars in advertising a dogmatic and highly restrictive model of parenthood as the God-given answer to modern-day anxieties about the crumbling of the heterosexual nuclear family. Mesoros-Winkle's paper provides the premise to delve further into the complex nature of the process of representing the Duggars as charmingly old-fashioned rather than unapologetically patriarchal. Building on her convincing arguments that the Duggars are unquestionably a source of visibility, even popularity, for the Christian patriarchy movement,[31] it is now possible to ask *cui prodest*. Who benefits from the specific way in which each episode, each season is designed, performed and produced? Who is responsible for the way in which the show is formatted? Who chooses what is left in and what is edited out? The answer to any of these questions will determine up to what extent TLC is manipulating the Duggars' image in their interest, as suggested by the style makeover mentioned at the beginning of this paper, or whether the Duggars themselves might be having an active role in shaping the show by modulating their performances in accordance to the political agenda defined by the Christian Right and/or to profit from the show's success.

The eighth episode of the first season of the show – when they were still *17 Kids and Counting* – is thematically constructed around the Duggars' approach to

[29] Duggar, *The Duggars*, 6.

[30] Ibid. 47 and 53; Duggars, *A Love*, 76-84.

[31] Mesoros-Winckle, *TLC*, 8.

gender roles within the domestic sphere. I suggest we consider it as an instance of the complex arm-wrestling relationship between the way the Duggars seek to present their faith and the way the TLC crew/editing team strive to manipulate it to raise the audience, particularly as far as the issues of gender construction and representation are concerned. The episode, titled "Trading Places, Duggar Style", revolves around the distribution of chores in the Duggar home. The eldest Duggar daughters are responsible for indoors domestic duties – from cooking to cleaning, to doing the laundry. They must also each take care of a certain number of youngest siblings in what the Duggars call 'the buddy system'. Conversely, the Duggar boys are in charge of "the outside manly work". Soon the spectator learns that, on that particular day, Michelle and Jim Bob have decided to let the boys have a go at the girls' "jurisdictions", while the girls are to be taught how to take care of a car's engine and change a flat tyre. The deeply suspicious, even disgusted expressions on the Duggar girls' faces, together with Jim Bob's obvious amusement when he has them wear oversize lumberjack flannel shirts, underscore the fact that this is to be considered as a one-time experiment, mostly staged for the benefit of the TLC cameras. None of the Duggars seems to take any real interest in the chores usually associated with the opposite gender, except perhaps the younger kids, who see the whole affair more as a playful role-inversion than as an actual learning experience. The assumption is that everything is going to go back to normal after this exceptional day has ended. This is supported by the fact that one of the girls states that "hopefully, [the boys] will enjoy our meals a lot more knowing how much work goes into it [sic]". Interiorised patriarchal definitions of gender undermine the family's efforts to show they can indeed be open-minded and act according to a less essentialist view of gender. Contemporarily, the TLC producer and editing team are also actively sabotaging the Duggars' experiment by selecting the images, questions and answers that most strongly reflect the Duggars' belief system, 'in spite of' the latter's intentional disguising of its most controversial aspects.

Nevertheless, it is quite hard to tell up to what extent the Duggars' performance is being manipulated according to an external policy. There always lingers an all-embracing ambiguity over each episode – especially in the first series – so that it is unclear whether some of the most fundamentalist aspects of the Duggars' faith are intentionally left out because the Duggars want to or because TLC reckons they would scare most of the audience away. Nowhere in the episodes can there be found a direct allusion to one of the most foundational principles of the Dominion Theology espoused by Bill Gothard: the male headship of the Christian family. Neither are there any statements regarding it in the two books published by Jim Bob and Michelle. Since there is no reason to believe anyone exerts any censorship on their books but the Duggars themselves, this could be interpreted as evidence that the Duggars intentionally hide the most sensitive parts of their faith. Back to the episode about gender-roles-swapping, when a member of the TLC crew asks Michelle if gender has anything to do with the distribution of 'jurisdictions' to the various children, Michelle diverts the subversive potential of the question by ambiguously

hinting at her children's 'natural' inclinations, thus suggesting they are not forcing them. Undeterred, the TLC interviewer presses her further, asking whether she thinks she might be reinforcing gender stereotypes in her children and training her daughters to be stay-at-home-wives, Michelle's answer diplomatically tries to omit a direct mention to the principle of women's submission to men. She limits her answer to stating that her daughters want to let their future husbands be the breadwinners of their family. Her admission to her daughters' homogenous desire to give up their rights to emancipation is enough for the interviewer to rest his case.

As early as the third season of the show, the way the televisual text is weaved already seemed to suggest TLC was attempting to find a subtle balance between broadcasting the Duggars as freaks and portraying them as a unique example of successful parenting and of the fact that it 'is' possible to have a large family without compromising its members' physical and spiritual health. Even when sensitive questions were still being asked, the answers were now delivered triumphantly and poignantly. For instance, when Jessa, the third eldest daughter and fifth child in line, was asked why the Duggars all dressed the same, she responded by pointing out that most youngsters in their teens like to conform to the dressing code of this or that 'urban tribe'. Jessa's countenance betrays her satisfaction at having parried the potential threat contained in the question. The fact that TLC is including more and more examples of the Duggars' 'improved' performance also indicates a willingness to provide a more flattering portrait of the family than it had in previous seasons.

TLC's previous insistence on portraying at least some of the Duggar beliefs as controversial will have faded out considerably by the time the tenth season was released. *19 Kids and Counting* has grown into a format quite frequently used in other reality shows: TV celebrities are filmed while doing exciting, adventurous things on screen every week for the entertainment of their viewers. The bottom line is that, once the spectacular, the amusing or the freakish have been squeezed out of the celebrities' daily life, it is time to revitalize an otherwise agonizing show by shifting the emphasis from the 'normal' activities the celebrity in question carries out on a regular basis to unexpected, unusual or even spectacular challenges which the celebrity is set to face by the producers of the show. Even when, from time to time, genuinely exciting events might still occur in the celebrity's life – and for the Duggars, these mostly consist in births and marriages – they are usually too few and far between to justify a string of new episodes. The spectacular is then artificially reconstituted to guarantee a satisfactory amount of entertainment, with the added bonus that it is now possible to adjust the content of each episode to the audience's response. After Josie Duggar's ordeal as a premature baby fighting for her life at the NIC unit had been dutifully capitalized in 2010, and so had been Michelle's miscarriage of baby n. 20 in 2012, there seemed to be little left to feed the media machine with. Now that it is quite possible that Michelle might not conceive again, TLC seems to be going to great lengths to architect new adventures with which to 'surprise' the Duggars and the audience alike. We see the Duggars sky-diving, digging for diamonds, travelling to Europe, Israel and Asia, and meeting other

celebrities. A weight-loss challenge was organized between Jim Bob and his eldest son Josh, during which professional personal trainer and former football player Steve Conley was hired to inflict all sorts of creatively painful workout routines on them in the most classic Marine sergeant's style. The inclusion of an ever-growing number of out-of-the-ordinary activities, evidently designed to present the Duggars with new situations, suggests a shift back to portraying the Duggars as spectacles, while the performative potential of the reality show is reduced to a narrative of the spectacular. Interestingly, this further limits the possibility of reading the show as critical of the Duggars' patriarchal beliefs.

The Influence of the Audience on the Duggars' Identity Performance

Numerous viewers of the show comment on the Duggars' blog, on their official Facebook profiles and interact with them physically at conferences, book-signing events or at shopping malls and in the street. The audience's feedback has obvious and immediate repercussions on the direction towards which the producers of the show want this alleged 'performance of the real' to be headed. The audience is construed as the final judge of the Duggars' performance in terms of their ability to glue viewers to the screen week after week, year after year. Regardless of the reasons why a given spectator chooses to be exposed to the show, the very fact that they are watching it at all is already making a success of *19 Kids and Counting* in the eyes of TLC. This is not so for the Duggars, though, whose interest is that their name/brand should be popular for the 'right' reasons. An invisible tug-o'-war ensues between the performers of the show, whose name and fame are directly associated with it, and the audience of the show, whose opinion determines the performers' public recognition and, in turn, their public, if not even their private, identity. On the one hand, the audience does influence the way in which the Duggars perform their very own selves on screen, by dictating what is perceived positively and what is not. On the other, the Duggars wield the audience's feedback as their most powerful weapon in modifying their own conduct so as to create a new image of their selves with which a larger number of unquestioning consents might be reaped. In other words, just as gifted orators possess the power of talking the masses into agreeing with their point of view, the Duggars' performance has the power to manipulate their audience into approving of them.

The two books published by the Duggars so far, as well as Michelle's blog on the TLC website, are explicitly configured as a response to the thousands of questions the viewers mail them every month. Michelle has for instance often answered questions about the family's modesty standards, their courtship system or their strategies to "shape minds and hearts".[32] On the one hand, this tells us that these are among the most frequently asked questions, which is already significant, as it shows a particular concern regarding the tenets of the Christian patriarchal faith. As the editors of Michelle's TLC blog explain, the process of choosing the next topic is mostly led by the questions to be answered by Michelle.

[32] Duggar, *A Love*, 73.

[33] "You Asked Michelle", *TLC Parentables*, 5 July 2010, <http://parentables.howstuffworks.com/family-matters/you-asked-michelle.html>, 12 December 2013.

[34] Michael Pearl and Debi Pearl, *To Train Up a Child* (Pleasantville, Tennessee: No Greater Joy, 1994).

[35] Joyce, *Quiverfull*, 77.

[36] Stuart Hall, *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham Press, 1973).

[37] Rosy Daisy, "Re: Duggars, Duggars Everywhere – General Discussion Part 2", *Free Jinger*, 25 November 2013, <http://freejinger.org/forums/viewtopic.php?f=8&t=19818&hilit >, 12 December 2013.

[38] Its name alludes to the sixth of the Duggar children, whose names all start with the first letter in their father's name.

[39] "Quiver Full of Snark", *Free Jinger*, <http://freejinger.org/forums/viewforum.php?f=8>, 12 December 2013.

We asked you if you had a question for Michelle and we received a ton of curious queries. While we weren't able to ask Michelle all of the questions due to the volume of submissions, we did choose questions that we saw over and over again.[33]

On June the 22nd, 2012, December the 7th, 2012, September the 30th, 2013, and then again on October the 10th, 2013, Michelle has answered as many questions on the topic of modesty: why she has chosen to don a modest apparel and how she teaches modesty standards to her daughters. On the other hand, although Michelle does not – at least as far as we are told – choose the topics for her blog entries, she does have and exert the power of moulding her answer to the end of projecting a certain image, rather than to answer the question itself. On May the 27th, 2010, Michelle wrote a post answering a viewer's question as to whether they "do or have ever had to spank their children". Michelle's reply carefully avoids saying aye or nay, but rather focuses on describing some of her parenting strategies that just so happen to be in line with the most politically correct children's discipline theories of late. The lack of a decisive negative answer to the question might have been overlooked as an implicit denial of the use of corporal discipline if the Duggars had not devoted an entire chapter of their first book to describing how they 'blanket-train' their infant and toddler children. This method became widespread among Christian homeschooling fundamentalist families after Micheal and Debi Pearl published their controversial *To Train Up a Child*,[34] in which various kinds of corporal punishment are advocated and described in detail.[35] While there is no evidence whatsoever that the Duggars ever resorted to spanking to discipline their children, Michelle's avoidance of a direct answer to a question that was probably selected because it had been asked "over and over again" is nonetheless open to interpretation. Some may choose to read her post as a clear rejection of spanking, while others may lean towards interpreting Michelle's selective answer as a case of 'he who remains silent consents'.

The existence of different readers and different readings of the Duggars' narrative performance of their selves can be explained via the categories of 'decoding/encoding' proposed by the audience reception theory. The audience's interpretation of the show can vary from dominant positions to negotiated or oppositional ones.[36] The inherent ambiguity of the final cut of each episode of the middle seasons makes it difficult to agree on what the hegemonic position might be, whereas, as previously discussed, the TLC's bias on the first and last seasons can be more easily guessed. The fact that TLC seems ready to "throw the Duggars under the bus"[37] has been often discussed in *Free Jinger,* an online forum.[38] This forum is dedicated to the discussion of fundamentalism, or rather, as its members put it themselves, to "snarking" on the "fundies".[39] Many of the most prominent Christian fundamentalist bloggers are discussed in threads whose content may range from highly educated and eloquent interpretations of fundamentalist theology and politics, to open condemnation and ridicule of misogynistic and homophobic positions. Threads on Doug Phillips and other so-called "fundie royalties" are often

to be found among the top topics on the forum. However, the Duggars must be credited for consistently leading the chart of the most discussed threads. One of these threads, "Duggars, Duggars Everywhere" is devoted to a general discussion of the family. On November the 19th, 2013, a member posted on this thread an account of her trial after having been arrested at the flea market run by the Duggars in the grand finale of the twelfth season of the show.[40] Apparently, someone had emailed Michelle about the said member's intention to attend the event and, if possible, to approach Michelle and ask her a few questions. The poster claims that she had then been found out to be the member of *Free Jinger* about whom Michelle had been warned, which subsequently led to her being charged with harassment. This incident, if true, might validate what the posters in *Free Jinger* have been discussing for a very long time: that the fundamentalist to whom their 'snarking' is directed do know about the forum's existence and do react to what they read in it. Some bloggers might go private, and others might delete or alter their posts. It has been often commented how numerous scenes have been deleted from the various episodes of the Duggars' show 'after' they were aired so that they are now no longer to be found in the DVDs available from TLC. This seems to indicate that not only is the process of editing the show still on-going, but also that it is influenced by the negative reviews a certain scene might have received.

Not all reviews the Duggars get from the World Wide Web are criticisms and instances of negative publicity. A clear example of a dominant position, as far as the Duggars' encoding of their show is concerned, can be found in private blogs, such as the one run by a mother-and-daughter team of die-hard fans of the Duggars,[41] and which contributes to spreading around a flattering version of the Duggars' ups and downs. The fact that all the content of the self-proclaimed 'official' Duggar family's blog is published by permission of the Duggar family – including the impressive collection of private pictures, is proof of it being designed as a propaganda tool. The blog provides bite-sized morsels of information about the Duggars' approaching public events, their current whereabouts and calendar highlights, while contemporarily allowing fans to send their own pictures and comments, all invariably favourable to the Duggars.

The third possible position held by the viewer in relation to the media text is the most interesting, from the point of view of performance studies. A negotiated position entails a partial acceptance of the general intended meaning of the performative text through an ambivalent, though cooperative interpretation thereof. In other words, meaning is both shared and resisted. According to Carlson, one of the (many) possible definitions for performance reads as follows: "a self-consciousness about doing and re-doing on the part of both performers and spectators".[42] It is not simply that the fact of re-doing presupposes the act of doing and that this neatly dovetails into Judith Butler's reading of the discursive continuum of identity as citational. Carlson's "consciousness of doubleness"[43] refers to performers and spectators. The former is aware of his/her mirroring identities as onstage persona and offstage individual. The latter must identify with

[40] FMJ. "Re: Duggars, Duggars Everywhere – General Discussion Part 2", *Free Jinger,* 19 November 2013, <http://freejinger.org/forums/viewtopic.php?f=8&t=19818&hilit=arrested&start=380>, 12 December 2013.

[41] Lily and Ellie, "The Original Duggar Family Blog", Blogger, <http://duggarsblog.blogspot.com.es/>, 13 December 2013.

[42] Carlson, *Performance*, ix.

[43] Ibid., 5.

the focaliser in order to share the narrative viewpoint and understand the nature of the performative act, while also maintaining enough of a distance so as to observe and decode the socio-cultural signification of the performance. In other words, regardless of how a given viewer feels *a priori* about Christian fundamentalism, they will first have to establish, however briefly, an identificatory connection with the Duggars in order to make sense of on-screen action. Creative and critical interpretations can only be offered subsequently.

Judith Butler's analysis of Slavoj Žižek's works discloses a similar attempt to "rethink identity-claims as phantasmatic sites, impossible sites, and, hence, as alternatively compelling and disappointing".[44] The need to either praise or condemn the Duggars is generated through an oxymoronic chain of identifications reminiscent of the Gothic definition of 'anxiety' as the clash between desire and repulsion.[45] It might seem that individual spectators do actually take sides, either identifying with the Duggars' beliefs and practices or rejecting them as abject. In reality, before articulating their standing before the show as positive or negative, spectators must first experience the unavoidable ambiguity of identification: they must first 'both' feel attracted to 'and' repelled by the Duggars. The viewers move virtually in and out of the reality paraded on screen. Their gaze is first drawn into (attraction) the illusion of tridimensionality of the show on screen and then is pushed back out (repulsion) when the thin illusion of 'being there' dissolves. Yet, while the spectator's gaze sustains the temporary illusion of presence inside the oppositional reality of the show, it also forges an impression of oneness with the performer/focaliser of the show. A spectator's claim to 'like' or 'dislike' the Duggars is the consequence of the specific way in which the said ambiguity is resolved. However, regardless of how or whether it is resolved, this Arkansas family of nineteen will still be consistently perceived as phantoms, as ghostly symbolic representations of how the viewers alternatively see them. The phantasmatic existence of the performer in an ongoing reality show is what makes the Duggars' identities as volatile and as ductile as the media market – and the producers of the show – require them to be, and as the observers of the performance, who include the Duggars themselves, choose to decode them.

[44] Butler, *Bodies*, 188.

[45] Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996), 2-3.

Elena Intorcia

Performing Deaf Culture:
The (Changing) Role of the Audience

Resisting a – typically Western – 'phonocentric' cultural tradition, several scholars and artists, both hearing and deaf, have successfully vindicated the representational autonomy of sign languages from vocal ones. This has been achieved through both a partial re-writing of that tradition and an appropriation of the right to express oneself with one's own 'voice'.

'Performativity' and 'performance' are key concepts in sign language literature and Deaf theatre, both unveil the ideological and epistemological limits of such terms as 'language' and 'literature' and invite to consider the body itself as text. Since the traditional concept of literature stems from a phonocentric ideology, based on the implicit identification between written and oral languages, such a model automatically wipes out the literary canon of everything that contradicts this link.

The aim of this paper is to show how, besides questioning the very idea of text, sign language literature actually shifts the attention from a textual model, based on language and speaking, to a performative model, exemplified by the recent studies in the field of performance art as well as theatre, cinema and television semiotics. Because of its oral nature and face-to-face transmission, this type of literature has always strongly relied on an intimate and mutual relation between author and audience. The advent of film and digital technologies heavily affected the way sign language literature was transmitted and received by the audience and although they allowed to capture and fix signs, the audience ended up being completely separated from the artist.

The actor-audience relation is still fundamental in Deaf theatre; it can pursue different aims and make different language choices depending on the type of audience it wishes to address: whether a deaf audience or a hearing one or a combination of the two, as in the duo of performers called Flying Words Project.

Advocating the inclusion of sign language literature within the wider literary establishment, Bauman, Nelson and Rose claim a necessary rethinking of literary practices: "The addition of sign to the body of literature warrants a rethinking of such fundamental notions as textuality, genre, performance, and body as they have been constructed within a decidedly hearing model".[1]

Sign poetry, in particular – one of the main means of artistic expression within Deaf communities – combines the movement and performance typical of oral poetry with the visuality of writing. As Rachel Sutton-Spence observes in *Analysing Sign Language Poetry*, "The idea of sign language poetry may seem unlikely to many people unfamiliar with sign language".[2] As a matter of fact, the traditional notion of poetry is closely associated with the idea of sound and vocality; however, what characterizes a poem is a number of features that sign poetry possesses too, first and foremost a creative and evocative use of language.

[1] H-Dirksen L. Bauman, Jennifer L. Nelson, Heidi M. Rose, eds*., Signing the Body Poetic: Essays on American Sign Language Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 3.

[2] Rachel Sutton-Spence, *Analysing Sign Language Poetry* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 13.

Roland Barthes[3] reminded us that the very etymology of the word "text" recalls the action of weaving: text as 'texture', meant not as a definite act, but rather as an *in fieri* process, in which the narrative voice dissolves. In sign language poetry the central process of weaving is unveiled by the signer and the fluid movement of his/her hands, as they draw in the space the poetic 'text' through the use of the basic parameters of sign formation (handshape, location of the sign, movement pattern, and palm orientation).

The body itself becomes writing in sign language literature. Writing with their own body, for Deaf poets, implies a double meaning: writing 'from' their body and 'through' it. The feminist critical theory had already established a close link between writing and corporeity, stressing the peculiarity of the *écriture féminine* and of a literature produced from the margins. In Hélène Cixous and Trinh T. Minh-ha writing becomes figurative, an iconic signifier. Several scholars of sign languages have outlined the iconicity of some signs; Russo focuses on this feature to work out a model of poetic analysis more suited to the visual and performative nature of sign language poems. In particular, he assumes the existence of an interrelation between iconic phenomena and the strategies of understanding and interpreting a text and points out different types of iconic relations that can be identified within the structure of a signed poem.

The tight link between body and artistic creation inevitably affects the way the text itself is experienced. Whereas written poetry can also be transmitted through a solitary reading, without requiring the presence of its author, sign language poetry, on the contrary, needs the double presence of the poet/performer and of an audience, similarly to what happens in the theatre. Examining ASL literature, Rose stresses its performative nature. Those who see a poem in sign language experience it through the poet-performer's body, as the poet's inner voice emerges through the signs produced by his/her body. Deaf people have an intrinsically physical relation to the text, because sign language is expressed through the face, the hands, the head and the chest. Sign language clearly provides a new space of existence for literature:

> ASL literature is more than a literature of the body; it is a literature of performance, a literature that moves through time and space, embodied in the author's physical presence. To "read" an ASL text means to view a live or videotaped performance. The literary power of ASL literature is defined by, and coexistent with, its theatrical or performative power; thus the Deaf poet's gift with language is always already a gift of bodily expression and dynamic stage presence.[4]

Because of its peculiar nature, the link between poetry and corporeal identity is made extremely concrete in sign language literature. This very feature, which also marks the difference between sign language and traditional hearing literatures, invites to expand established notions concerning poetic creation, the relation between poet and poetic text and the links among language, culture and performance:

[3] Roland Barthes, *Le plaisir du texte* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1973); *Il piacere del testo*, trans. by Lidia Lonzi (Torino: Einaudi, 1975).

[4] Heidi M. Rose, "The Poet in the Poem in the Performance: The Relation of Body, Self, and Text in ASL Literature", in *Signing the Body Poetic*, 131.

[5] Ibid., 144.

… sign literature can demonstrate that signing/performing bodies are more than resistant to a perceived 'norm'. Rather, the performing bodies of sign literature can be seen as a standard from which the hearing world may learn something new about the relation of poetry to time, space, and image; the relation of body, text, and performance; the relation of language, culture and performance; and the relation of poet to the poem.[5]

The evolution of sign language literature has involved not only the search of new forms of expression, but also new ways of addressing and relating to audiences. Moving from an early stage, when sign poems were merely a translation of well-known poems of the hearing culture, Deaf poets have gradually reached and shown a fuller artistic maturity, supported by a greater awareness of the aesthetic and expressive potentialities of their own language.

The need to find new interpretative models for sign language poetry are made clear, among others, by the artistic activity of Jolanta A. Lapiak, a Polish deaf media artist. Speaking about her artistic productions, ranging from video art to video performance, including multimedia painting, poetry and visual tales, Lapiak underlines the final aim of her art, that is challenging phonocentric notions of textuality and poetry: "Through sign language art my works explore grammatology (art/science of writing) and various ways of writing/speaking with a unique blend of cinematic vocabulary, lingual choreography, verbal calligraphy, poetry, and storytelling techniques, using ASL".[6] Her performances – like *Writing and/or Speaking* – invite the audience to consider the limits of the logocentric hierarchy and dichotomy of writing/speaking, showing instead their complementary nature. Her primary means of writing, Lapiak declares, consists in her own body, which works as paper and ink at the same time; she writes in the air with it, with or without material supports as the video, considered by the artist as "a multi-dimensional, digital-temporal paper to scribe on".[7]

[6] Cf. <http://www.lapiak.com/lapiak/state.php.>, 16 March 2015.

Because of its oral nature and face-to-face transmission – at first within Deaf clubs – sign language literature was not preserved until the advent of film and digital technologies. The latter finally allowed to fix what was once transient and transitory, capturing signs and making it possible even to set up an archive. Among the first videotaped films in the United States, there is a series produced by the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), whose relevance lies, as Brueggemann points out, in the possibility to preserve ASL literature while allowing the American Deaf community "to access its culture, identity and language".[8]

[7] Ibid., "Artist Statement: Performativity, Arche-writing, and 'Arche-speaking'".

This single event, however, has brought about contrasting effects on sign language literature, heavily affecting the way it is composed, transmitted and received by the audience, now separated from the artist. Paradoxically, as Krentz observes, while increasing sign language literature audience, film technology has also alienated the latter. The live audience of the earliest sign language performances interacted with the author/performer, and was affected by the emotional charge released by him/her, affecting in turn the performance itself.

The effects brought about by film technology on sign literature are indeed twofold: on the one hand, it has allowed to keep and circulate performances

[8] Brenda Jo Brueggemann, *Deaf Subjects: Between Identities and Places* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 54.

making them available to a larger public than in the past, encouraging artists to create more elaborate works. On the other hand, however, by making the latter accessible to both hearing and deaf audiences, this technology represents a threat to sign language literature:

> By making Deaf images more accessible to hearing people, film has built bridges between the Deaf and hearing, fostering more respect and understanding. Yet as hearing people increasingly make up the audiences for Deaf works, and as film enables more hearing people to learn to sign, Deaf Americans may be losing some control over their language and literature.[9]

Fixing sign literature in films thus created a certain anxiety about audience and access. In fact, performing a signed text raises the issue of textual authority more than in the case of written works, if one considers the fundamental role of the 'body-text' in the making of the text itself. As each signed text carries with it the Deaf artist's peculiar signing style, the biggest challenges and difficulties in interpreting and performing it lie in the ability to recreate the author's expressive nuances, that is those linguistic and performative features that make a text alive (such as facial expressions and movements of the head). These very nuances, closely related to the meaning of the poem or text, give it a peculiar identity, being closely connected to the body of the artist.

The emergence of new communication technologies and their impact on the production and circulation of sign language literature also raise, according to Brueggemann, a number of questions: once separated from its live audience – differently from what happened in its early days – who is sign literature addressed to in the digital era? "Should it be translated? And who should carry out that translation, and how?"[10]

The issue of translation, closely related to the audience/performance relationship, is examined, among others, by the Flying Words Project, a creative duo made up of Peter Cook and Kenny Lerner. The two American artists, while experimenting with original poetic venues for sign literature, also show the possibility to join different cultural elements: Cook is deaf, while Lerner is hearing, but able to sign. Their performances draw inspiration from various Deaf vernacular traditions – including mime and story-telling – and frequently show the problematic interaction between sign and voice, trying to critically involve the audience in the task of making sense of the visual type of literature performed on the stage.

Lerner sometimes gives voice to Cook's signs and sometimes it is Cook himself to speak while signing. The former often remains silent, while the latter adds words or part of words to his signs. This happens in "I Am Ordered Now to Talk", a performance which focuses on the pedagogic tensions between oralist[11] and manual learning. The duo, standing one on each side of the stage, perform a poem telling the oralist education received by Cook at the Clarke School. Cook voices the poem while Lerner signs, thus overturning the common role interpreter/interpreted. The poem is a strong condemnation of the oralist method: Cook's unintelligible speech

[9] Christopher B. Krentz, "The Camera as Printing Press. How Film Has Influenced ASL Literature", in *Signing the Body Poetic*, 68.

[10] Brueggemann, *Deaf Subjects*, 53.

[11] The term "oralism", within the field of Deaf Studies, refers to the teaching of spoken language to the deaf through speech training and lipreading, with the complete exclusion of sign language. This method, which spread after the Conference of the educators of the deaf (Milan, Italy, 1880), established the end of sign language teaching in residential schools for the deaf.

[12] Michael Davidson, "Hearing Things: The Scandal of Speech in Deaf performance", in *Signing the Body Poetic*, 221.

suggests its limits, while Lerner's signs correct it.[12] They both use a language 'foreign' to their own culture and embody, in this way, the alienating effect created by the performance itself; the audience is therefore spurred to comment and reflect on issues of language and communication based on a phonocentric model.

The cooperation between Cook and Lerner, rather than simply showing the possibility of linking deaf and hearing cultures, makes this very relation problematic. Their meta-textual references to deaf and hearing audiences challenge the idea that ASL is an invented or iconic language, ancillary to English. Lerner is often on the stage behind Cook and wears a mask, to emphasize the invisible presence of hearing culture. This artistic choice, according to Davidson, can overthrow the hierarchical schemes within the hearing-deaf relation:

> In this sense, Flying Words redirects the paternalist hierarchy of hearing to nonhearing persons by placing the deaf performer in front, reversing the spatial (and audiological) proximity. The spatial positioning of hearing and deaf, English and ASL, interpreter and interpreted within Flying Words performances maps an indeterminate space between and within audist culture.[13]

[13] Ibid. "Audism" is a neologism coined by Tom Humphries (1975) and deriving from the Latin *audire*, "to hear". The term refers to a discriminating system of practices, behaviours and ideas connected to assumptions of superiority of the hearing toward the deaf.

The challenge of translating sign language into a spoken language is very much present in contemporary reflections about Deaf culture. One of the venues that allows to examine this issue is Deaf theatre. Theatre, being based on spatiality, expressivity and gestuality, is a naturally suitable genre to sign languages at large. William Stokoe, whose pioneering studies greatly contributed to establishing sign languages as real languages, endowed with grammar and syntactical features of their own, believed that the structure of sign language is not merely narrative, prosaic, rather mainly, "cinematic". Stokoe compared the signer to a camera, because of his/ her ability to reproduce images from different angles and to vary the point of view.

The history and origins of Deaf theatre are difficult to trace back because of the lack of written documents about it. The first Deaf performances probably took place inside the residential schools for the deaf and enacted scenes related to experience of deafness, school life and the history of the deaf at large. Their initial aim was entertaining an audience of deaf people who shared sign language and life at the residential schools, but later became instrumental to fostering the awareness of possessing a specific culture, identity and language.

Lane, Hoffmeister and Bahan highlight a moral and financial dilemma faced by the Deaf theatre: on the one hand, following its original mission, it tends to focus on themes of Deaf culture addressed to an audience of deaf people; on the other hand, financial needs and the desire to inform the hearing society about the Deaf cultural experience inevitably imply the need to make performances understandable and enjoyable to a hearing audience too.

The diversity of such needs helps understand the different choices made by companies of deaf actors: presenting plays entirely in sign language, without the mediation of interpreters or narrators, or choosing solutions which allow a mixed audience, including both deaf and hearing spectators, to see a new type of

performance, by introducing the acts performed in sign language through a short spoken presentation. In this case, the use of spoken language can be paralleled to the strategic use of English in postcolonial cultures. Ashcroft, Tiffin e Griffiths, while defining the concept of linguistic 'appropriation' within the field of postcolonial literatures and considering the use of English by non native writers, claim that such a choice does not derive from a sense of inferiority of one's own language, but rather by the desire to reach a wider public through the colonial language, defined as "a useful means of expression".[14]

Dorothy Miles and Lue Fant identify two different types of theatrical language related to the theatre of the Deaf: the Sign Language Theatre (SLT) and the Deaf Theatre.[15] While the former uses spoken and signed languages simultaneously, and includes deaf and hearing people (not necessarily familiar with sign language) among its spectators, the Deaf Theatre adopts signs only to communicate. These choices are due not only to their heterogeneous audience, but also to their different aims. SLT pursues artistic and cultural objectives, as well as social aims: offering hearing people among its audience the possibility to experience first-hand the beauty and versatility of sign language and to appreciate Deaf culture. In the case of Deaf Theatre, instead, the actors are mainly deaf and the language used is exclusively sign language; moreover, most performances focus on deaf people's lives and experiences. The ultimate aim is to reinforce the awareness of the peculiarity of Deaf culture and of the autonomy of sign language in relation to vocal language.

Nowadays there are various companies of professional Deaf actors all over the world. Two relevant companies which have strongly contributed to spreading the knowledge and appreciation of Deaf culture and sign language among the hearing society are the National Theater of the Deaf (NTD) and the International Visual Theatre (IVT). The NTD was born in the US, where the first studies on sign language were carried out in the Sixties. In 1864 the present Gallaudet University was established by an Act of Congress; twenty years later, in 1884, the first performance by deaf actors was organized in this university, while other performances were being held inside Deaf clubs and at companies of Deaf actors.[16]

Before the establishment of the NTD, the theatre of the Deaf was unknown and invisible to the hearing majority; the few hearing spectators who saw Deaf performances either knew sign language or were linked to the deaf by kinship or friendship. The performances organized by the NTD immediately attracted the attention of critics to the way Deaf actors signed and a larger hearing audience started to enjoy and appreciate sign language performances. This prompted the Deaf to look at their own existence and to sign language differently.

Padden and Humphries stress the critical impact of this sudden interest of the hearing in Deaf performances:

> [o]nce seen by others, the actors turned their lives into material for the stage and began to objectify themselves. The fact of their signing and their not speaking became a matter of public curiosity and was an object of discussion. Where silence was not noticed, it was now a commodity, and for that matter, made even more emphatic by voice

[14] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith, Helen Tiffins, *The Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (2nd edition, New York: Routledge, 2007), 15-16.

[15] Simona Zinna, *Dar voce alla cultura sorda. Il teatro come strumento di comunicazione e partecipazione culturale* (Villalba di Guidonia: Aletti Editore, 2010), 57.

[16] Harlan Lane, Robert Hoffmeister, Ben Bahan, eds., *A Journey into the Deaf-World* (San Diego, California: DawnSignPress, 1996), 145.

[17] Carol Padden and Tom Humphries, "Anxiety of Culture", in *Inside Deaf Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 123-124.

interpretation. Signing was the manner of performing, and it was itself the performance. Astonished, the Deaf actors began to look at their own hands, and literally began to watch themselves sign.[17]

The type of audience to reach out to determined the stylistic and theatrical choices of the NTD. As mentioned above, the massive presence of hearing people among its spectators and supporters made it necessary to grant them a reasonable understanding of the performances. This meant to implement the simultaneous use of sign and voice and a creative transformation of the signs accompanying the words spoken on the stage.

Although this choice was appreciated by the hearing, who could now enjoy Deaf performances, it was criticized by the Deaf, who complained about the obscure nature of some signs, too distant from daily usage. David Hays, one of the founding members of the NTD, was positive that such a choice would have gradually led the hearing to appreciate the beauty of sign language, while spurring the Deaf to learn a new artistic use of signs. When describing the NTD, Hays stated: "This is not, let me repeat, a theatre *for* the deaf. It's a theatre *of* the deaf, just as the name says: a new form of theatre, aimed at a general audience, but always to remain intelligible to the deaf".[18]

[18] Cit. in Zinna, *Dar voce alla cultura sorda,* 65 (italics mine).

As to the IVT, it was born in the Seventies in France thanks to the cooperation between Alfredo Corrado, an American Deaf artist, who had worked with the NTD, and Jean Grémion, writer, journalist and dramatist, who was focusing on forms of non-verbal theatre. The target audience of IVT was a mixed public including deaf and hearing spectators. Its artistic choices show the Deaf communities' desire to look for an opening toward the hearing society: starting from original works created by the company itself − the ITV later performed classical works of the hearing theatre as well as more recent plays. The desire to let the hearing participate in the Deaf culture implied the use of techniques suited to enhance the meaning of signs (use of music, mime and subtitles projected on the walls or on the actors' bodies).

The simultaneous use of sign and voice can raise problems when staging Deaf performances. Indeed, if it is true that these performances can carry on claims of a specific identity politics, it is also true that this choice carries the risk of leaving sign language in a marginal position. To what extent does the translation from sign to voice grant the former expressive autonomy? If the presence of hearing actors speaking out the lines signed by deaf actors allows the hearing public a fuller participation as well as an awareness of the artistic possibilities of sign language, is it still true that in the process of translation from one language into another the very 'voice' that Deaf actors want to retrieve remains mediated?

Using simultaneously words and sign also generates a further reflection, closely connected to the issue of reception: who is Deaf literature created for? A Deaf audience or a hearing public? And in which language: signs or words? It is maybe worth pointing out that writing a work first in a spoken language and then translating it into signs still remains a problematic issue for many Deaf. Indeed, vocal language

represents the language of oppression, of many decades of phonocentric practices and attitudes that for long forbade the deaf to use sign language by imposing a hardly successful learning of spoken language. The outcome was in fact isolating the deaf from both the deaf and the hearing community.

Moreover, what are the consequences, in terms of addition/subtraction, of the use of one language rather than another or of both at the same time? Is the much sought-after integration thus achieved? What is it that is left out while trying to integrate? Brueggemann defines the body and the act of translating and interpreting it as "a body that matters"[19] and emphasizes how the classical rhetorical triangle of speaker-public-subject (in this context, the interpreter-hearing-deaf) is completely overturned when communication is mediated by the interpreter's voice. On such occasions, indeed, who can be referred to as the speaker: the deaf or the hearing? What is more, who is the audience made up of, if one considers that all the three parts involved can be spectators at different times?

Shannon Bradford highlights the need to balance artistic freedom and cultural responsibility in her essay "The National Theatre of the Deaf. Artistic Freedom and Cultural Responsibility in the Use of American Sign Language".[20] The author examines "sign language theatre" or "theatre of the deaf", particularly the NTD pointing out the company's merits: the popularization of the concept of deafness among the hearing; the simultaneous use of English and ASL with Deaf actors signing while hearing actors utter the lines; classical works of the hearing dramatic tradition made available to the Deaf and commitment to spreading a greater awareness of the distinction "d/Deaf".[21] Bradford also detects limits which consist in the theatrical conventions used by the company:

> … despite NTD's intent, its style inadvertently encourages the conflation of ASL and English, sometimes resulting in a belief that English subsumes ASL altogether. Further, I contend that the vast majority of NTD's mainstage works present nonhearing people as neither medically deaf nor culturally Deaf.[22]

As to the changing role of the audience, Krentz notes how nowadays artists themselves expect more from their audiences in terms of critical response: they should not simply enjoy the performances, but also make sense of their nuances and meanings.[23] Similarly, Cynthia Peters states that Deaf culture and theatre share a "collective ethos", consisting in the "expectation of an intimate connection between actors and spectators".[24] Deaf performers, in keeping with the central role of sight for deaf people, rely on a visual contact with the spectators, while Deaf dramatists "resist the idea of theatre as passive spectacle, seeking instead participatory, interactive, embodied communication".[25] The tendency toward the communal, rather than the individual, is hence uppermost in Deaf theatre. The idea of a close link between actor and spectator is reminiscent of theatrical vanguards, where the role of the audience changes from passive to one actively involved in the making of the performance itself, thus spurred to acquire a stronger self-awareness.

[19] Brueggemann, *Deaf Subjects*, 58.

[20] Shannon Bradford, "The National Theatre of the Deaf: Artistic Freedom and Cultural Responsibility in the Use of American Sign Language", in Carrie Sandhal and Philip Auslander, eds., *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 86-94.

[21] The distinction between lowercase "deaf" (referring to the physical condition of deafness) and uppercase "Deaf" (referring to a linguistic and cultural minority), commonly used in the field of Deaf Studies, was first introduced by sociolinguist James Woodward in 1972.

[22] Bradford, "The National Theatre of the Deaf", 87.

[23] Krentz, "The Camera as Printing Press", 64.

[24] Cynthia Peters, "American Deaf Theater", in *Signing the Body Poetic*, 87.

[25]Ibid., 88.

The change in the makeup of the audience has occurred not only in the theatre, but also in storytelling. Ben Bahan claims that the presence of hearing people among the public has gradually affected the choice of tales and storytellers alike: some stories quite popular at Deaf clubs – like those portraying the hearing in a somewhat negative light – have been eliminated not to offend this new section of the public. Referring to the widespread use of video technology, Bahan considers that by replacing the face-to-face encounter it has changed both the composition of the stories and their ownership: the audience no longer sees live performances, but tellers who have carefully selected what and how to sign, bearing in mind the mixed composition of the potential public. These changes, however, are seen as "an inevitable consequence of a contemporary world where cultures and technologies cross borders".[26]

Beyond conflicting interpretations about the changing makeup of the audience, and its consequent role in the making of performances, what remains interesting to notice is how considerations about Deaf performances at large can help envisage new intersections across cultures and disciplines, as well as original ways of involving audiences, by suggesting new perspectives on performance, language, and culture. When faced with new possibilities of expression, the audience is in fact invited to rethink the possibilities of literature at large and to envisage the limits of what Bauman (1997) calls "entrenched ideologies based on the normal hearing body".[27]

[26] Ben Bahan, "Face-to-Face Tradition in the American Deaf Community: Dynamics of the Teller, the Tale, and the Audience", in *Signing the Body Poetic*, 46.

[27] H-Dirksen L. Bauman, "Toward a Poetics of Vision, Space, and the Body: Sign Language and Literary Theory", in Lennard Davis, ed., *The Disability Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 171.

Giuseppe De Riso

When Narration Is Made Flesh:
An Affective Reading of Geetanjali Shree's
The Empty Space

> If the humanities have a future as cultural criticism, and cultural criticism has
> a task at the present moment, it is no doubt to return us to the human where we
> do not expect to find it, in its frailty and at limits of its capacity to make sense.
> (Judith Butler, *Precarious Life*)

Getting under the Skin

While literature has long been engaged with the problem of giving voice to those who are left voiceless, or to represent the point of view of the oppressed, Geetanjali Shree's *The Empty Space* deals with the suffering of terrorism's victims in India by attempting something different. Narration literally bursts *in medias res*, with the description of human limbs and other body parts floating in air, their former wholeness being destroyed by the explosion of a bomb in a cafe as part of an unclaimed terroristic attack in an unspecified Indian city. Among the nineteen victims claimed by the blast there is the son of a couple sent to study at the local, also nameless, university. The novel concentrates on the lives of his parents who, right after the massacre, adopt a little boy, aged three, who was present in the cafe at the moment of the explosion, yet had inexplicably survived without any injuries. Though the novel is entirely focused on the three characters, their proper names are never revealed. They remain anonymously identified in the course of the narration just as father, mother and son. Similarly kept under wraps are their specific location, motivations and past, of which the reader is given just fleeting glimpses in the few flashbacks scattered in the novel. Even the adopted boy stays silent during the first years with his new parents, refusing to articulate his thought through speech.

If so little is revealed to the reader how, then, can the author make a case for those involved in the dire predicament she describes and what ambition does she nurture with her writing? The answer to both questions is to literally place the reader under the characters' skin. Depriving her characters of fixed verbal signifiers such as proper or geographical names, Shree's writing seems to take as many linguistic and cultural moorings away from the reader in order to foreground the sense of wrath, resentment, and hate. Accordingly, this essay will try to present the novel as a meaningful opportunity to reflect on the performative dimension of literature and how it copes with the human body's role in the emergence of culture and identity.

Indeed, the quickness, ubiquity and unpredictability with which violence can erupt almost anywhere in Indian regions is one of the main motifs which occasioned the novel in the first place. As the author herself admits in an interview published together with the novel, the writing was inspired by a terroristic attack which killed

the son of two close friends of hers. Besides the pain for the loss, what also left a mark in her memory was the fact that "such a calamity can strike anywhere, anytime".[1] In the attempt to deal with "the impossibility of reaching the core of that grief" (3344), and "also the fact that this story could happen at any location in our times" (3346), Shree devises a performative framework in which perception and sensory activity are re-mobilised and reinscribed with and through writing. Narration gives aesthetic force to the fear, horror and existential anguish which haunt the Indian family, thus putting into effect the affective participation of the body.

Violence and Cultural Aftershocks

Such emotions resonate and interfere in the development of Indian cultural and political domain since the time of its foundation. As Vidisha Barua notes,[2] the theory to make two nations on the grounds of religion (Pakistan for Muslims and India for those observing other cults) put forward by Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah at the time of Partition in 1947 planted "the seed of the problems" (11) of terrorism in north India, Jammu and Kashmir, for which years of communal violence and genocides ensued. Occasions for violence would also arise due to internal conflict between nationalist parties and the separatist claims of other minority groups. Punjab, a state adjacent to Pakistan which had been broken up during the years of the Partition, saw an insurgency led by a movement demanding a separate independent Sikh state, Khalistan or the 'land of the pure'. After contributing to its quelling in 1993, Barua reports that K.P.S. Gill, at the time the leading Punjab police executive in charge of the repression, accused political frictions of fuelling violence, especially those produced by the clash between Indira Gandhi's Congress and the far-right Akali Dal.[3] Kashmir Valley, once a 'Paradise on Earth', is now a training-ground for terrorists, while illegal migration is rampant in the northeastern region of the 'seven sisters', separatist states which despite their fraternal appellation are trying to break away from the Indian Union as a result of the process of ethnic fragmentation initiated by the British Raj in 1826. The spectres arising from Partition, the recently ended Sri Lankan civil war, episodes of religious discord, internal friction and armed dissent like the Bombay (now Mumbai) bombings in 1993 are all reinvigorated in their action by the extreme indigence in which millions of people, often refugees or widows, are left to languish without any kind of assistance.

In places impregnated with trepidation, dread and paranoia, where the body feels vulnerable or in danger, political interests turned such tensions to their advantage by cherishing the dream of national unity as a way to regain erstwhile happiness. In the decades from the 60s to the 90s, nativist parties like Bal Thackeray's Shiv Sena employed the strategy of drawing on the existing secular and religious heritage to construct the fiction of a Hindu land and history, whose sacred spaces had been tarnished or corrupted by the presence of external forces, the worst being Islam. The feeling of fear, irritation or disappointment which imbues Indian social tissue effectively turns it into a tinderbox prone to the violent reinscription of public space

[1] Geetanjali Shree, *The Empty Space* (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, New Delhi, Auckland: Harper Perennial, 2011), 3335. The version used for this essay is the Kindle edition. References are consequently made to locations within the electronic text.

[2] Vidisha Barua, *Terrorism in India* (Huntsville: Sam Houston State University, 2006).

[3] A party holding sway over Sikh religious bodies.

[4] Arjun Appadurai, "Spectral Housing and Urban Cleansing: Notes on Millennial Dubai", *Public Culture*, 12.3 (2000), 627-651.

and law. In many contexts where minds are filled with fear of violence and bodies constantly strained by poverty and scarcity, even ordinary accidents can be the spark for cataclysmic and indiscriminate brutality.[4] Shree's writing is preoccupied precisely with such feelings, with making readers responsive to suffering and anxiety more than with the problem of addressing the specific political, ideological or financial rationales behind violence. The nexus between riots and pogroms, political and financial interests, bombings and massacres is too complex to single out any reason for the mounting of tensions, making any understanding of violence through binary opposites also inadequate (Hindus against Muslims, Sikhs against Hindus, nationalists against separatists and the like). In order to elicit strong ethical concerns on actions and matters which may seem incomprehensible from the outside, Shree's writing tries to portray violence as an event developing in the everyday where cultural patterns bear the traces and workings of experience.

Skin Writing: Narration as Bodily Contagion

The reader is kept in the dark about the kind of tensions plaguing the geographical area where the novel is set, hinting only that after the explosion "the cafe was now suddenly in a 'sensitive area'. Rioters amok in the city. The cafe a magnet for danger" (317-318). While the specific character of the agitations is not clarified, it can be said that the reluctance to distract the reader with contextual details is in fact essential to the production of a 'danger effect' through writing. The author's concern is epistemological first and foremost. At some point, the survived boy, who is also the main narrator in the novel, states that:

> We have mixed up everything. Some eras do that. Knowledge, meditation, generations, conventions, intelligence, essences. Listen to me, listen well. Information is not knowledge and knowledge is not vision. Vision comes from the judgment of experience, which comes from intelligence, which comes from the senses tactile, not from the brain ... . (716-717)

Aware of the hegemony of vision in thought and language to the detriment of the other senses, Shree's writing rediscovers the sense of touch and proprioceptive sensibility[5] in order to highlight the intimately participative condition of contact between the skin and its environment. The author acknowledges in the sense of touch the common root capable of appealing to what is the primary medium for any possible communication: the human body. In this way, the author tries to overcome the cultural juxtapositions inherently produced by ocularcentric ways of considering knowledge and culture, with their traditional dichotomy between subject and object, self and other in favour of a skin or 'haptic' writing that possesses a performative force capable of relocating a narrative of violence from its original context to the body of the reader.

The centrality of bodily relation to the world and its participation in it becomes instrumental to the process of writing and reading. Emphasis is not so much laid

[5] Proprioception is the faculty one has to be aware of the position and the movements of each part of one's body at any moment in time.

on the representational or mimetic power of language, as on its ability to trace the interaction among forces in time and space. From this perspective, words are not significant for their referential accuracy or truthfulness, but for what they 'do' both at a physical, and perceptive level. Presence and absence, movement and stillness, direction and orientation become the foundation of narration, whose primary concern is not the descriptive framing of a scene, but the ability to map potential force relations and interactions between bodies, objects and situations. In the words of anthropologist Veena Das: "Naming the violence does not reflect semantic struggles alone – it reflects the point at which the body of language becomes indistinguishable from that of the world – the act of naming constitutes a performative utterance".[6]

This is apparent in one of the first flashbacks in the story, when the son that would be later killed in the explosion announces his intention to go to a university located in a city which his parents deem at risk of possible terrorist attacks:

> 'And that's why when he [sic] grew up,' he said, 'Let me go there to study. You're from there, Father, what's it like, that place, its soil? Where our village is? That famous university nearby, I'll study there, let me go.' 'To be scared all the time? Scared everywhere? I won't live like that.' 'I want it. I will go.' 'But there?' Ma nagged, anxiety on Father's brow. (215-220)

The parents' concern at the thought of sending their son to study to a dangerous place is motivated by the fact that the violence of pogroms or bombing attacks can flash like lightnings, striking with exceeding speed to bring mutilation and loss without conceding any time to realise what brought them about or how they hit. Yet, to obtain permission to leave, such apprehension is partly mocked by the son, who compares worries about the unpredictability and suddenness of violence to the rapidity with which the body can be traversed and shocked by electricity:

> 'Look at the two of you, carrying on as if it's not college I'm about to enter, but the doors of death!'
> He wouldn't let up. 'Then you may as well say, never step out. Not today, not ever, not anywhere. Remember that man … who went out of his gate just to take a leak, imagine, not even to shit, touched a bare wire and was electrocuted? Just like that. Never any electricity when you need it, but of course, at that moment, flowing in full force through the wire?' (229-232)

The biological metaphor is then heightened to its maximum effect through the parents' effort to minimise anxiety with recommendations of bodily and environmental safety:

> He was not to venture into the sensitive areas of the town, nor into the desolate ones, nor the crowded ones, no visiting fairs, no getting on to buses, no loafing about in the dark, nor where ruffians lurk, such as railway stations, bus depots. Stick to safe areas. In and around the university. Where nothing has ever happened. Like that cafe. Safe, the university cafe. Where nothing has ever happened. (241-245)

[6] Veena Das, "Trauma and Testimony, Implications for Political Community", *Anthropological Theory*, 3.3 (2003), 293.

The more the boy's parents try to prevent hazards, the greater the divide between the chance of any murderous attack and its perceived risk. In fact, the latter poisonously thrives as a paradoxical outcome of all the listed suggestions aimed at finding a safe place for the body. The threat of possible hazards undermines here any reasonable guarantee of finding a secure place for oneself precisely as a consequence of the effort to make the potential danger vanish below any determinable threshold. In other words, the more the parents try to prevent the occurrence of fatal events, the more unpredictable and fearful such events become to the mind and body of the characters and the reader. The absence of a definite threat, which the reader knows is going to eventually materialise, ends up making it all the more pervasive, unnerving, piercing. This strategy reflects in part the process by which, for example, nationalistic parties produced public insecurity by claiming the necessity of increasing surveillance and cleansing in public spaces against the deadly and unforeseeable menace of separatists' attacks.

Likewise, Shree's writing uses public land and space as an affective-aesthetic resource functioning not simply as scenery or setting passively containing characters, but as an energising milieu from which personalities and actions emerge. Language does not dwell on detailed descriptions of objects and characters, nor does it expatiate upon insightful analyses regarding sequences of events or the characters' motivations. Instead, it immerses itself in the stream of sensation buried in the folds of the body so as to reactivate the emotions experienced by inhabiting space. By attempting to rationalise and belittle, the parents bring about a sensorial dissolution and consequent dispersion of violence which has significant implications in Indian culture, making intangible chances of danger crack invisibly through narration.

In the novel, like in Indian social reality, death can come virtually anytime, from anywhere. Any body can become a potential human bomb powerful enough to fling body parts into the air or set ablaze entire buildings: "The bomb will reappear, again and again, from inside, from outside, from near and far, destroying all borders and divides, it will come united in diversity and diverse in unity … " (1845).[7] Writing sets up fields of perception whose power brings into play the analogical field of the perceiving body as an emergent event at the crossroads between the nervous system and a turbulent sphere of social arrangements and conflicts. By making ideas of security and the sense of danger intersect at odd angles, the ubiquitousness of menace converges with its fundamental 'nowhereness' in the impossible mapping of a twisted landscape which dwells nowhere, yet it is inescapable insofar as its affects surround and impregnate the perceived space of the body at every level:

> But then don't think of the bomb as just a bomb, either. A big bomb might be crude, a smaller one, the latest. … The bomb is the nation's border, the bomb is a superpower, the bomb is a buffoon. It shatters the earth, it pierces the sky. It terrifies, but oh, look at its terrible beauty. Who sets off bombs? Men, women, educated, illiterate, rustic, computer wizards, kings, gods, demons, communalists, nationalists, dreamers, pessimists, foreigners, natives, touchables, untouchables, apes, bulls, I or anyone else – who can

[7] This is a clear hint at Jawaharlal Nehru, first Prime Minister of India, and his idea of 'unity within diversity' with regard to the birth of the Indian nation.

> tell, who knows these things and who talks of them; the bomb was waiting forgotten, in that heavy, heavy past, the rest was just empty space and the present that is lost; the today that had stopped still, stopped, waiting to be drawn into the ring of fire, hoping – maybe I too can be blown to smithereens, I too can become meaningful. (948-951)

Material distortions and acoustic touches all contribute to an aesthetic strategy which "produc[es] an empty space waiting to be filled" (2340) by those energies which cannot be directly described, but which traverse writing in full effect. Already in the title of the novel there is a clear tension between materiality and location, since an empty space is somehow also full of its own emptiness, pointing at the same time at its vacuity and the eventuality for a place to be filled, traversed. This makes the space, and the affects produced in it, measureless, it blurs any natural boundary to pierce, fragment and disperse the bodies it contains.

> For what does a blast do? It just shreds you and scatters you. Shreds of fire, water, earth, air, sky. Nothing looks like itself any longer. Turns into something else. Anything else. An idli, a finger. So shall we conclude then that on one side stood Ma, her crying, Father, his slap, my dead friend, his smile, town after town on fire, and on the other side, an empty space? (1700-1703)

Only under this narrative conditions can the bomb, or kamikaze, affect the functioning of the field of bodily sensations simply by the awareness of their very existence and by the reactions they arouse. Like a virus, terrorism is everywhere, without a demarcation line to define it neatly. It is not necessary to describe it in detail, it can suffice to stress those aspects which can spread to or 'infect' the body of the reader, as when the survived boy recounts the moment of the explosion:

> Perhaps it was then. When the bomb exploded. When the bomb exploded and we scattered to pieces. It was then the moment froze in time, and we, in it. Ashes, fire, flesh. Fans, gulab jamun, pav-bhaji, idli, vada, all whirling in the air, like an argument gone astray in the cosmos. You know how cafes are these days. You get everything everywhere now. Idli-vada in the North, pav-bhaji in the East. As for bombs – anywhere, at any time. … Fragments. Ashes. Ceiling fans caught in the molten fluid poses of a danseuse. Crockery, bottles, napkins, laid out in rows, pitch-black, exhibits of art. … Bits and pieces, unclaimed still. (252)

Lumps of flesh, fire, food and every sort of material are all thrown together as they are fragmented and yet intermingled by the explosion of the bomb. Every kind of distinction, be it material or cultural, appears meaningless. In the novel, there emerges a milieu where muscular sensation, social forces, attractions or repulsions find their phenomenal manifestation in the form of horrifying spasms, body parts splattering and dashing like splinters into chaos. Similarly, readers' bodies are made to feel the stressing tensions and the squeezing expansiveness of pierced flesh, torn limbs and bodies found "shuddering in a trance" (1025). Spaces infuse a sense of malaise as they are perceived intrinsically unsafe, menacing, disquieting. Political agitation shocks the body and is assimilated as intimate horror by the characters,

to the point that they can be said to live and breathe precisely because of fear. This is evident in the boy's portrayals of his father's feelings at the death of the son, which the former described as a kind of infection spreading through the body and consuming it: "Standing at the door after the goodbye, his face towards those departing, his back towards me. Slowly his back begins to wilt. I can see the air slipping out of him. Its descent visible. Slowly his spine hunches down. Downwards the shrivelling spreads to his limbs, to his knees, his legs, his feet, the balloon emptying out" (1029-1031).

Fright and uncertainty saturate writing, working as a tremendous energy source which makes experiences strike deeply and produce burning wounds in memory: "The grief so intense that it threatens to pounce on you and devour you" (1023). Everything hurts, nurturing the spirit of revenge which according to Deleuze, in commenting Nietzsche's critique on the origin of Christianity, can only be appeased when it is spread via bodily contagion.[8] In the words of Deleuze, its aim is for all life "to become sick" (132). Writing aims at making readers respond to descriptions of the body exactly as if it were their own, at making readers become participants in the movement presented to them as a sort of 'inner mimicry', a kinesthetic responsiveness to the events described. Later in the novel, the voice of the adopted boy addresses an unknown character in the story with a generic 'you', as if he were speaking to the reader her- or himself:

> This was my attempt. This was what I tried with you. To fill you with everything that was mine. Everything that was scattered around so far, all the pieces, gather them in you. Become one. In one place. But instead what happened was that when I loaded you with my pieces, you fell to pieces. The scattered shards tore into you. Nothing joined up. No. Not yours, not mine. Only wind and rain and sticks and glass and waywardness. All of it in turmoil inside this body, which looks deceptively poised, balanced, coordinated. (2246-2249)

In Shree's writing a part of Indian social reality is thus felt and seen in evocations eliciting a sensory participation analogous to the one we ordinarily grant to the real world.

Performance as Excess

To make a text 'lived' through language, for it to be truly and efficaciously performative, narration must rely on an aspect defying every mode of comprehension, just like the biological and chemical processes of the human body. According to Paul de Man, the technical reliance on the body is what allows language to function together with and independently of subjective investments or symbolic references.[9] That's because the perceiving body is both the occasion for any possible performative utterance, and the opportunity for an excess or surplus overflowing what is communicated. In the novel, reading is likewise seen as an enactment, a kind of performance or taking place that cannot be reduced to any definite statement or final meaning.

[8] Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

[9] Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 300.

As the narrating voice of the boy admits: "The great, the old, stories, action, are all elsewhere. Behind movement, hidden by words" (724-726). Only in the irreducibility between the body and the discourses it occasions can reading involve 'doing' without necessarily appealing to thought or rational motivation, so as to more closely 'reflect' those processes which, by impregnating bodies and spaces, bring about unpredictable violence: "It follows no order, no chronology, no logic of place or time, after all, when will it all make sense" (954).

The text is therefore performative insofar as it opens reading to radical unpredictability: writing is more a reality effect, an interference between textuality and the embodied dimension of the readers allowing them a very 'specific' form of feeling, or cognitive knowing, precisely by refusing to provide any kind of representational or hermeneutic reading which would undermine the impression. The text does not reveal in the same way as one focused on representational reading would, but tries to register what may remain otherwise suspended in the medium, "the murmuring of the unsaid, an absence lurking behind the spoken, some devastation behind everything made explicit, something inward-looking in each clarification" (1166). The form in which sensory perception is enunciated is no doubt what permits the foregrounding of a deeper reality, maybe the deepest and best hidden in the folds of the skin, "that grief can create worlds, and destruction too. So can a bomb. And what happens once has to happen again and again. Less than that, and how will I feel it in my very skin?" (1077-1079).

Violence and fear are able to create a surplus of reality also because of how the body feels and reacts to the circulation of media images, whereby, for example, "The talk circled around and about the headlines and there were so many bombs and so many speeches and behind it all, silent, but not hidden, there he was. The one in pieces. The one in the pictures" (951-952). Such a surplus of reality is like a shock wave which the human body is especially endowed to register and transmit to other bodies. In the novel, the media "collecting pieces" (204), focusing on death through its brutal occurrence make the body secretly vibrate at the startling spectacle of evil, of bodies dismembered and reduced to smithereens: "They needed a living corpse. Yes, living. To touch. To watch as it turns cold, stiffens. To see it distorted into death from vital flesh. To see blood flowing. To see the brains boiling over from the shattered skull. To see the bones unravelled from their seams" (624-627).

Through the participative remediation of the body, the movement of media images and recounts makes resonance with the invisible flowing of perception so as to absorb events and give them new power as a felt and perceived condition. Shree's novel re-stages a part of Indian social reality as an aesthetic experience which recaptures the sense of identity with one's own surroundings, to give an understanding of what a place would feel like if we belonged there. The author tries to inscribe intense physical sensations and perceptions directly into language, making the novel akin to an 'aesthetic signifier' whose flow synaesthetically 'affects' the reader. The dynamic performance engendered in Shree's writing is not based on separation and absence, but demands continuity. The reader is primarily asked to cast

her- or himself in the flux of narration, not to extract or withdraw from it. Narration relies on the involvement of the body as provider of the sensory information which constitutes, infiltrates, interferes and exceeds the apparatus of language and signification, as well as any set of preordained system of words and ideas:

> This is how a story should be heard. Like it has transported you inside itself. Into that whirlpool of sorrow. ... all your senses coming alive with the story so that it seems you aren't listening to it from outside, but have slipped right into the middle of it. ... Listen to another saying of the ancients – it's not the story that goes wrong, but the one reading it. If the reader is gifted, even what's unfinished, what's merely hinted at, uncurl their possibilities. Because such readers don't treat the story like a toke of grass to drug that proud creature called the brain. Oh no, skilful readers fearlessly offer all their senses to the story. Don't care if it drowns them, or sets them afloat or lashes at them like a snake bite. (1827-1834)

Shree is aware that a text could not exist without its readers' complicity. The content of narration can only exist through the encounter with a reader who, in its embodied being, does not just receive but creates meaning by lending words life with his or her feelings, experience, knowledge. In the quote above, the reference to a snake bite can be seen as particularly meaningful, since it embraces both physical and psychological planes. The snake marks the flesh and, as Jung maintained, its bite symbolizes sudden and dangerous action of the instincts upon the psyche. Shree employs the literary medium as a process requiring 'diffusion', or participative engagement, rather than the contemplative detachment established by the subject-object binarism.

Making Sense

On a closing note, Shree's involvement with place and emotions in the novel seems integral to a wider concern to redefine sensory perception with regard to knowledge and art. More specifically, she seems to attempt both an epistemological recovery and a rehabilitation of the original meaning of the concept of aesthetics. A term originating from the Greek *aesthesis*, it was initially introduced into philosophy to refer to the sensory and perceptive processes activated when the body comes into contact with objects, or in the words of scholar F. E. Peters,[10] those concerning "contact, mixture or penetration of the bodies involved" (8). As Hélène Cixous and Roland Barthes have argued, sensory experience has been 'forsaken' in Western culture and epistemology since the advent of Platonic thought, where it was considered unreliable and deceptive.[11] Being thus partly separated from authentic truth, sensory information was further damaged when the hierarchy between soul and body, incorporeality and materiality, was established wherein the latter came to be seen as a mere instrument for the former. As a consequence, aesthetics went through the most severe crisis to become paradoxically framed into its opposite, the marginalisation of sensorial perception. All the senses requiring a direct contact or participation of the body were seen as less reliable than the secure detachment of

[10] Francis Edwards Peters, *Greek Philosophical Terms: A Historical Lexicon* (New York: New York U. P., 1967).

[11] A very accurate account of the matter can be found in Claire Oboussier, "Synaesthesia in Cixous and Barthes", in *Women and Representation*, ed. by Diana Knight and Judith Still (Nottingham: Nottingham U. P., 1995), 115-131.

vision, whose information proved to be most suitable to the workings of language and its capacity to directly or metaphorically 'represent' objects, situations and their qualities.

By focusing on the participative contiguity of the body with its environment, Shree's text participates instead to the sort of paradigm shift which is currently going on in some branches of cultural theory, a shift from the ocularcentric view on the world and its emphasis on the representation of reality, to an affective one foregrounding the active participation of the body, even if at the abstract level of perception. Indeed, the call to look at what escapes reflection in order to make visible the invisible is the *fil rouge* traversing performance theory from Austin up to this day. When in 1955 J. L. Austin advanced his theory about how utterances can be performative, a major conceptual point concerned the 'actual' power of utterances to be actions in themselves and, as such, to 'occur' in the same way as events or processes do. Afterwards, Jacques Derrida would develop Austin's ideas dwelling precisely on how language can bring into existence the things it speaks about. This helped him expose the hidden character of language's process of creation, whereby the originative event in language conceals its own execution or governs the conditions of possibility under which the illusion can be sustained that what is being talked about is not a discursive product, but precedes the utterance. Derrida brought thus into prominence the importance of 'deconstruction' of cultural texts as a revealing moment of both the assumptions, and preconditions which they dissemble in their own articulation; namely, of what is kept silent or taken for granted, of what is so intimately ingrained in the communicative process triggered by the text so as to remain invisible. Both prerequisites of the performative dimension of a text, progression and concealment, originally depend not on qualities or restrictions internal to a text, but on the presence and participation of a human being: "Performativity", according to Derrida, "will never be reduced to technical performance. Pure performativity implies the presence of a living being".[12] Derrida's reading expands Austin's original notions by recognising the bond between textuality and its necessary reliance on the 'lived', or felt, condition of a human body. This reading proved crucial, for examples, to Judith Butler's[13] reflections on the illusory 'naturalness' of gendered behaviours and ways of thinking. In fact, such naturalness is the impression produced by the repeated execution of acts participating to a wider system of established social conventions which, in the scholar's terms, "congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (43–44). The manifest visibility of the human body becomes paradoxical in that it is as a consequence of its actions that performance, understood as event or process, can simultaneously come about and fade into the experiential background. It is not surprising, then, that its latest developments have seen a growing interest in 'affect' first sparked in 1995 by Brian Massumi[14] and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick[15] in two independent essays. Massumi, whose theoretical framework is mainly employed in this essay, develops Deleuze's notion of 'body' understood as an entity capable of both affecting and being affected by other forces or bodies. From this perspective,

[12] Jacques Derrida, *Without Alibi* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

[13] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999 [1990]).

[14] Brian Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect", *Cultural Critique*, 31 (Autumn 1995), 83-109.

[15] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins", *Critical Inquiry*, 21 (Winter 1995), 496-522.

affect refers to the qualitative variation of perception virtually triggered by the indirect, or abstract, stimulation of the senses experienced by the human body, and which is mainly transmitted via corporeal contagion. The effectiveness of theories of affect lies in its ability to neutralise the properties of the metaphysical Logos, such as the use of binarisms, in order to take into account the innate excess of human feelings which exceeds vision, metaphorical specularity or juxtapositions. Moreover, since a body, in Deleuze's view, is not necessarily defined by its materiality, but can also refer to abstract ideas, an affective approach appears to be especially fruitful in reading a novel like *The Empty Space*, where the affective intensity of the bomb, as it has been discussed here, is especially exercised in its absence, when the perceiving body fears the consequences of its potential manifestation.[16]

Insofar as representation is set apart in favour of a registering of the senses, it becomes paramount both to trace the effects that narration contingently produces as a consequence of its unfolding at the level of the story, and to measure the degree to which narration makes a given spatial and social reality exert varying degrees of 'pressure' on the body and mind of those confronting it. A daunting critical task for which the Humanities have only recently started to build proper instruments, a key task in order to achieve a heightened awareness of the processes involved in cultural communication.

[16] Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988).

Sue Lovell and Teone Reinthal

"I Saw a Woman": Performance, Performativity and Affect

Introducing Teone[1]

Child Tell me how it began, like a tiger's tale, in rhyme … a song of waves and rainbows.

Moon A small girl, a dearly beloved child, once dropped from a very great height and fell to earth where she shattered into so many pieces that the pieces formed a rescue team to carry her through her journey of days alive.

Child … and the frightened, broken girl clutched at all her pieces and gave them secret names, … of champions, of kings and queens of power, each piece gifted with its own wonderful voice?

Moon Yes, and all of her pieces loved her, for she was their deep mother, and as she grew, she watched life from behind the walls of all her selves and never knew that her heroines were simply the glittering shards of all her old injuries, so long forgotten … .

Whenever I enter new communities, I begin with revealing my own story. In so doing, I offer my collaborators some brief, narrative exposure to my own emotional scars, to stories of my survival, to my peculiarities and vulnerabilities. I gather torn, drifting pieces from the past and I scatter the pieces around in order to show my fragmented self. I declare that I am organically whole within my own form of cultural dislocations, I share that I am singularly pieced together; a patchwork quilt of terrible mistakes and wonderful learnings. I signal that I am a *bitza*: a multitude of strengths and fearful, contracted frailties, and that I always find freedom in the fluidity of creative expression. I whisper that I am a dark horse, terribly unnerved by the clamour of the shimmering, greater herd; I seek only to run at my own pace.[2]

Sue's Comment:

I've come to love the dark horse in Teone; it is writ as large, and yet as invisible, as another horse, its alter ego, the white horse of Uffington. That white shape can only be seen fully from above, and it disappears the closer a body approaches the earth. The other, the dark horse, can only be seen fully when Teone is outside her selves, in the trance work of creative expression, speaking with the moon. In the context of this paper, the dark horse introduces the power of words and images to bring into being alternative narratives to those that are the stuff of daylight. It speaks to affect, and to the powerful role of community in constituting performativity and agency.

Introducing Sue

> I was walking to the corner store alone; six years old; one hand clutching the money inside my pocket, the other swiping the spiky tip of the folded umbrella at the dandelion heads so the little parachutes drifted into space. Although it was bleak it was not yet raining and I was meant to go 'there and back, no detours, no delays'. I scooted past 'the big house' surrounded by five foot walls stopping at the six foot pillars each side of the driveway that supported the gate. I tried to be good.
>
> On the way home, though, the temptation was too much. I left the string bag at the base of the left pillar, peered around, up and down the road, up the curved driveway. I tucked the brolly down the back of my pants and jumped up and tried to get a toehold on the old bricks of the wall as my feet scrabbled against the hinged gate. Not quite. I took a little run and jumped again, scrambling to get one arm across the width of the wall. Yes! Hauling myself onto the pillar I looked down. It seemed a lot higher, suddenly. I wobbled a little retrieving the umbrella, but pushed it open confidently – how hard could it be? Mary Poppins had gone a lot higher, and she was carrying that big old bag. Up and up she went. I wondered where she had gone and wished she would come to my room and click her fingers to tidy away *my* toys. I launched myself into the air shouting, 'supercalifragilisticexpiali...' before I could say '...docious', I had crash-landed.
>
> I cried all the way home with blood dribbling from the deep cuts on my knees. When I explained that I'd wanted to 'fly like Mary Poppins', and mum laughed, I felt ashamed of being so silly – as though I should have known already what the world made possible. I tucked the feelings away and went to play with my marbles, before I lost those, too.

Teone's Comment:

Sue's encounter with the cruelty of gravity reveals an assumption of performativity – the belief that uttering the magic word would enable her to fly like Mary Poppins. Her failure, coupled with the laughter of a significant other, constituted shame. Magic lived at the apex of the flying leap, but was grounded suddenly and painfully by the physical consequence of her inevitable fall. There is affective tension embodied here, a quivering intensity in her young body: her imagination was full of curious wonder – the image of a desired, dreamed-of self was pitted against the painful fallibility of a flying self. Sue cannot fly like Mary Poppins; she is unable to embody supernatural power. This moment encapsulated the difference between performance and performativity.

We've chosen this way to introduce our 'selves' (within selves) alongside the key concepts with which this paper is engaged: performance, performativity, affect and agency. Without these concepts, selves remain static formulations of the social domain, mere bodies inscribed and positioned by culture. This paper is interested in how identities, particularly liminal identities, are experienced and shaped by the consciousness of self that is accessed through performance. Two scenes of performance are offered as sites for an analysis of the relationship between affect, performance and performativity as a means of better understanding the constitution of agency.

First, we are interested in defining affect and understanding what is happening when it enters the scene of performance, as well as better understanding the term

performance. The paper then turns to the issue of individual agency and Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* in order to link performativity and agency. Again, we ask, what role does affect play in the scene? Finally, we compare Boal's engagement with the 'woman', after which this piece is named, with our introductions. We do this in order to argue that guided, improvised performance has a higher potential to change people because it offers "spect-actors"[3] creative opportunities to performatively 'utter' identity shifts. We further suggest this because affect is central to both performativity and agency. In line with Austin's initial engagement with performativity, we also argue that this is 'only' made possible at all by the development of an appropriately receptive social context as much as through the actors.

Teone describes two distinct performance methods being presented in a typical theatre setting. Two actors perform upon a stage; revealing or concealing an object in order to create rapport and tension in the audience. These performance devices help to establish our understandings of affect and performance, as follows:

> Imagine an audience-filled theatre. House lights dim, and all noise recedes to an anticipated, whispered rustling of clothing, handbags and programs. A deeper quiet descends.
>
> Spotlight.
>
> An actress enters, commanding centre-stage. Resting on the fingers of both hands she proudly bears a jewelled, silver box. Eloquently introducing us to the box, the actress describes its textures, its dimensions, until we are guided now, to see it there, so well-lit, so shiny and distinct. Her playfully insightful descriptions of the box are witty, scintillating, and, within the talented scope of her performance, she reveals the very depths of this box's soul to us.
>
> Effortlessly now, we recognise the box and we find congruence in both the performed presentation of a prized object, and in our own ability to comprehend exciting new concepts surrounding the box. We can only imagine how it would feel in our own fingers.
>
> As we carefully process our impressions, positioning the memories of the dynamic new-box-performance deep within our minds, a new and different actor emerges from a shadowy zone upstage, shuffling out of an area we hadn't noticed until now. Surprisingly, and gradually, we become aware that this actor has not only arrived from somewhere previously hidden (from some disquieting depth of darkness upon that mysterious stage), but by his very posture and his slow motion of progress, his arrival and especially his purpose is made more obscure, and we are confused now, confronted, even bothered by the muted stage-lighting in which he is attempting to perform his part. He must be less important than the first performer.
>
> Muttering and ambling around the stage upon his restless limbs, words and gestures fluttering, his hands are hidden from our eyes, until suddenly we know, inexplicably, that he is surely concealing from us the very item that we are now quite ready to see. Isn't he obligated to show it to us?
>
> His monologue is vague, and somewhat disconcerting as he rambles in abstracted, distant and distracting ideas, all the while furtively moving some shadowy object around inside his coat-pocket, only to palm it rapidly into the other hand; the hand that now lingers, drifting behind his back and well out of sight. If you look around now, you will see that

The footnote on the left margin

[3] Cf. Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1979).

all our necks are straining as we awkwardly stretch our bodies to be higher up in our seats. What is that thing?

You sense it now, our slow-dawning annoyance at our sudden realisation we have become his captive toys. Instinctively charged, we are utterly entranced, determined trackers on the scent. Enthralled by even the slightest shift in his pace and his posture, we lean forward, engaged, driven by a strangely physical hunger to discover the identity of this dark horse, and the very nature of the valuable object that he has not yet, even once, alluded to holding.[4]

This reflective piece is set in theatre space intentionally separated from the pragmatism of the world. The drama is captivating; the audience occupies its own cocoon of darkness as an invisible, aggregated, disembodied viewer, suspending disbelief to enter a world of possibilities for which it is prepared, indeed which it anticipates through a pleasurable freedom from responsibility. Conversely, the two individuated performers take a central and distant position; the first is envoiced, visibly embodied and empowered to present what is contingently accepted as 'real'. The spotlight ensures that all attention is directed appropriately as the object of the communal gaze appears. She speaks, leading the audience toward new understandings. The audience wants what she has, and it is safe to want; again, it is expected – she has delivered. All is well.

This is an environment purpose built for the production of affect in the sense that Brian Massumi understands it to operate in Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* as, "a pre-personal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act".[5] Later in the article, the issue of action as agency will emerge, but for now it is the understanding of affect that is important and that can be best understood through the above passage.

It is the convention of the fourth wall, an imagined barrier across the front of a stage between an audience and performers, which creates for an audience a 'safe' sense of the action as viewable object, as artistic product rather than ontological reality. But for any drama to have an impact, the action is also a 'process' that, in closing the gap between observer and observed, draws viewers into its own logic thereby allowing the necessary suspension of disbelief. In the above passage, the closure of this 'gap' only becomes apparent when it starts to widen again, to reshape the audience's experience of the drama, unsettle their expectations. 'The' central place of performance is re-constituted as 'a' place when a "disquieting depth of darkness" forms. This is the upstage or back-stage, where the second performer has appeared, and remains in the "shadowy zone" of non-identification – the "pre-personal".

The second performer, continuous with the unknown, signifies the shift. Losing the specificity of 'he', a slippery metonymic 'it' appears at the periphery of staged subjectivity, hiding the nature of its being.[6] Beyond the thinning fourth wall the interpretive demands upon the audience increase because the rules are not being followed; there is a violation of the functionality of the space. Affect as "pre-personal intensity" starts to flow, an echo of what the second performer

[4] Teone Reinthal, *Rousing the Dark Horse: Enacting Social Action*, Ph.D. Thesis (Brisbane: Griffith University, 2014), 18.

[5] Brian Massumi, "Notes on the Translation and Acknowledgements", in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota P., 1987), xvi. See also Eric Shouse, "Feeling, Emotion, Affect", *M/C Journal,* 8.6 (2005), <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0512/03-shouse.php>, 1 April 2014.

[6] Teone Reinthal, "Introducing Adaptivism – a Kinaesthetic Ecology for Social Reconciliation", in Joëlle Bonnevin, Sue Ryan-Fazilleau and David Waterman, eds., *Aboriginal Australians and Other Others* (Paris: Les Indes Savantes, 2014), 53.

has become spreads throughout the space of the theatre. There are judgements. The audience starts to rationalise, tries to personalise, seeks ontological security through interpretation: *"He must be less important than the first performer"*. Conventions are recalled that should make the action an object available to their communal gaze: *"isn't he obligated to show it to us?".*

Something has slipped the noose and infectiously ranges across all spaces. The audience continues to consume the staging of the conscious and unconscious intensity of un-named affect, of personal and pre-personal: individuals also 'ontologically' experience affect as intensity as they shift, recalling Massumi, from "one experiential state of the body to another". Intensity is the flowering of affect: then comes a naming of the bloom: *"what is that thing?"* For each, that pre-personal affect emerges into the personal, then becomes a socially recognisable emotion:

> Instinctively charged, we are utterly entranced, determined trackers on the scent. Enthralled by even the slightest shift in his pace and his posture, we lean forward, engaged, driven by a strangely physical hunger to discover the identity of this dark horse, and the very nature of the valuable object that he has not yet, even once, alluded to holding.[7]

[7] Reinthal, *Rousing the Dark Horse*, 18.

Curiosity. Frustration. Confusion. Beneath it all, there is the shuddering constitution of the desire to know and articulate.

But when the lights come on, the performers take a bow, the audience fragments, people shake their heads and clear their throats. At various levels of garrulous dispute, with no audience of their own, no direction in which to channel their new experience, they stream outside and scatter in all directions like mercury. The performers go backstage, put away their costumes for the next show, wipe away their make-up, turn out the lights, and lock the doors. The hollow space of the performance remains, waiting passively to be reanimated. When the performance is iterated, and re-iterated, the mimesis not quite perfect, but still sufficiently contained by the functioning habitus of the space, the costumes are still costumes, the make-up still temporary, the lights still turned off and the door still locked against a world with conventions other than those of the theatre. Without further development, this is theatre as thought-provoking entertainment: the bodily thrill of experiencing affect without a need to pursue it or deploy it. It is performance by all involved, on and off the stage.

This is why, in his William James Lectures, *How to do Things with Words*, delivered at Harvard University in 1955, J. L. Austin insisted that theatre was not performative. "[A] performative utterance will" he said, "be *in a peculiar way* hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in a soliloquy". He goes on to call such language, "*parasitic* upon its normal use" and to categorise performative utterances as only those made in "ordinary circumstances".[8] For an utterance to be performative, ordinary circumstances demand conventions other than those operating in the carved out space of the theatre.

So, for example, gay marriage cannot exist until the discursive preconditions for its legal recognition condone it. The convention is that marriage is between a man and a woman. The words "I do" (or "I will") are not performative in this context.

[8] John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955, ed. by James Opie Urmson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 22.

If one of our daughters and her partner decide to marry and find a ship's captain in a local pub, and he uses the words of the marriage ceremony and they make the appropriate responses, no real marriage has occurred. The Captain may be the right person, but he is in the wrong place to have the authority to declare them married (i.e. at sea, then only 'if' he has the appropriate additional qualifications). Saying does not make it 'so' unless everything else is in position to secure words as action.

Unlike Austin, Schechner argues that the performative enacts and also describes, "performance-like qualities". For Schechner, the words performative and performativity are often used to capture this slippery, doubled function, "to indicate that something is like a performance without actually being a performance in the orthodox or formal sense".[9] To do this, however, a description has to be made and Austin is clear that descriptions are also to be held apart from performative utterances. He gives an excellent example of the difference:

> If I utter the words 'I bet...' I do not state that I utter the words 'I bet…', or any other words, but I perform the act of betting; and, similarly, if he says he bets, i.e. says the words 'I bet…', he *bets*. But if I utter the words 'he bets', I only state that he utters (or rather has uttered) the words 'I bet…': I do not perform his act of betting, which only he can perform: I describe his performances of the act of betting, but I do my own betting and he must do his own.[10]

The performance of a performative on stage is void: or in Austin's word "unhappy". No one is 'really' married, no ship is 'really' named, no bet is 'really' wagered. Austin's performativity is not dependent on its individual iterability, as is Butler's development of it in its role as constituting gender;[11] nor does it dismiss the ontological status of 'reality' to contain performativity entirely within language or a world to which theatricality has been extended, as Derrida's development of it manages to do.[12] Austin's performativity requires a stable ontological realm within which people exist as utterers of the performative. Peggy Phelan insists that "performance implicates the real *through the presence of living bodies*" and the same must be said of the performative if it is to have any use at all.[13] In this paper, then, theatre experienced as entertainment is not the space required for the 'happy' utterance of Austin's performative; rather it is the home of performances that have their own set of conventions for audience and performers – conventions that enable not agency but entertainment.

As we have seen in our example, however, theatre can produce that intensity Massumi (via Deleuze and Guattari) calls "affect", the "pre-personal" experience of a bodily shift as a response to a performance. Theatre, however, does not have the social authority to follow up the shifts that occur either within or beyond the walls of the theatre. To develop affect a little further, Boal suggests that the affect "fills the aesthetic space with new significations and awakens in each observer, in diverse forms and intensities, emotions, sensations and thoughts".[14] This is exactly what is visible in the example above as observers strain their bodies forward to peer at that which is hidden, either on stage or in their own subconscious realms now registered as an embodied disturbance.

[9] Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 110.

[10] Austin, *How To Do*, 6.

[11] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

[12] Jacques Derrida, *Signature Event Context* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 1-23.

[13] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 148. Italics added.

[14] Augusto Boal, *The Rainbow of Desire* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 21.

[15] Colin Carman, "Heath Ledger and the Idolatry of Dying Young", *The Gay and Lesbian Review Worldwide*, 15.3 (May-June 2008), 28.

[16] Ibid.

Performer training is partly aimed at developing the capacity as a performer to access, deploy and direct affect without disappearing pathologically into its performance or maintaining it beyond the curtain call. The late, 'untrained' Heath Ledger, for example, has been described as having "no apparent difficulty getting *into* characters … [but] a great deal of difficulty getting *out* of them".[15] His prescription drug overdose was popularly attributed to his role as the Joker in *The Dark Knight*. Ledger himself is reported as once describing "his" character as a "psychopathic, mass-murdering, schizophrenic clown with absolutely no empathy".[16] Performers need to be taught, in other words, how to cope with affect generated by performance. This is a reminder that the function of the audience is to feed back to playwright and performers the meaning that has been taken up. This aligns well with Gusdorf's suggestion that, once a "work of art" becomes available, a "second critique" is needed:

> … every work of art is a projection from the interior realm into exterior space where in becoming incarnated it achieves consciousness of itself. Consequently there is need of a second critique that instead of verifying the literal accuracy of the narrative or demonstrating its artistic value would attempt to draw out its innermost, private significance by viewing it as a symbol, as it were, or the parable of a consciousness in quest of its own truth.[17]

[17] Georges Gusdorf, *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical,* trans. by James Olney (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980 [1956]), 44.

This is very much what we see in our example of theatre: the staging of consciousness, the peripheral appearance of that which remains unconscious and its opening up to the audience the opportunity to 'critique' either performance and/or self. Originally circulated in a moral economy, to save souls, this second critique encouraged deeper reflection than that occurring in some contemporary audiences. As the 'second' critique strengthens, the dramatic intensity or affect becomes personalised, light-hearted entertainment fades. Theatre works with affect and then critique and reflection through the audience, but all that 'action' remains (apart from the theatre critic) in a private relation to its own 'truth'.

We have so far defined affect as a form of embodied but pre-personal, unconscious intensity, separated theatre from the performative by returning to Austin's original explanation of it, and now asserted that in theatre affect is controlled, exploited perhaps, certainly managed by performers and directed towards generating more affect in the audience for either entertainment or reflection. In establishing why Austin disallows performance on the stage 'as' performativity, we agree with him that the performative utterance relies in the very moment of its utterance upon the existence of 'happy' conditions for its consumption as an 'act'. The 'truth' of it must, therefore, be played out in a public relation, in fact, via legally recognised, state sanctioned rituals rather than newly formulated acts of resistance that are not valued and recognised, nor legitimised (eg gay commitment ceremonies, naming ceremonies instead of baptisms have personal significance and value).

We now want to direct attention to the relationship of performativity and affect in, for want of a better term, 'improvised' drama. Although there are many forms

of theatre that use improvised drama to a greater or lesser extent, we think here of improvised drama as drama that reorients the quest to engage associated with performance. We've shown that in theatre, affect remains in a private relationship to the subject: more for the individual 'I' of the audience than the 'family' of performers. The key element in performative theatre, however, is the intent to bring the performer's affect into consciousness so it can be usefully and intentionally engaged.

Before proceeding, it is important to, again following Massumi and others, explain the difference between affect, feeling and emotion.[18] Just as there are many understandings of performativity, so too is affect a fertile term. One of its most vibrant offspring is the idea that affect is emotion. This idea is compounded by the translation of the Latin *affectus* as emotion or passion. For many, affects and 'feelings' or feelings and emotions tend to go hand in hand as though any combination of the three words is appropriate.

This points to the embodied nature of affects, because the intensity that is affect is registered in the body as something that is 'felt' as visceral sensation or bodily responses – affect is no longer abstract and pre-personal but experiential, personal and conscious. An engagement with the bodily response, the feeling, then leads to an identification of it 'as a particular emotion'. Which emotion depends on social context: emotion, unlike embodied sensation or feeling, is social. So, for example, anger, fear or excitement may all be experienced as an increased pulse rate, higher skin conductivity, faster breathing and the invisible but experienced release of hormones. It is the context that enables an interpretation of these 'feelings': standing at the top of a cliff will suggest that it is fear; knocking on the door to meet an unfaithful partner's lover suggests that it is anger; turning up at a ceremony to receive lottery winnings suggests excitement. Similarly, describing affect theory as a multi-layered discourse, Marta Figlerowicz acknowledges there is "no single definition of affect theory", but highlights its capacity to provide "therapeutic value" to the acceptance of "shame, sadness, or loneliness" as well as offer perspective on painful human emotions as, "sources not of self-knowledge but of social critique".[19] Affect, then, is abstract, a pre-personal intensity that flows, feelings are embodied and personal, and emotion is socially structured as an interpretation of the feelings which are experienced.

What is important in this thumbnail sketch is that working with and through affect. To identify feelings and articulate emotions can help to 'externalise' the individual burden of difference by (re)placing it in the social realm of discursive power relations rather than in the lap of the individual. These comments harmonise, therefore, with Boal's assertions that improvised performance invites actors and audiences to become "firmly grounded in cultural analysis and self-observation" as a direct means of revealing the "dialectic of the oppressor and oppressed within themselves as well as within society". Boal's creative *raison d'être* was bringing theatre to communities as a tool for increasing social, cultural and political agency.[20] After one such event, he asked a performer:

18 Massumi, "Notes".

19 Marta Figlerowicz, "Affect Theory Dossier: An Introduction", *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences*, 20.2 (2012), 3.

20 Jan Cohen-Cruz and Mady Schutzman, eds., *Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy Activism* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 80.

'Why did you weep?' and then she said something wonderful, she said 'because at the end of everything I went to the dressing room and I looked in the mirror', and then there was silence, 'OK … what happened? You looked in the mirror, what happened?' and she said 'I saw a woman' and I said 'OK, you saw a woman, if I look in the mirror to shave every morning, I see a man. You saw a woman' and she said 'No, it was the first time I saw a woman' and then I asked her, 'But before that, when you looked at the mirror, what did you see?' and she said 'before, I saw a house-maid … but, because I did theatre now (I use theatre as my language, I speak my emotions, my ideas), now I look at the mirror and I see a woman, and I see that I'm beautiful'.[21]

[21] Augusto Boal, *Forum Theater* (Harvard University, 2003), online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NaD8t8->, 23 July 2012.

[22] Reinthal, *Rousing the Dark Horse*, 62.

The social action facility of Boal's productions typically sought to confront, question and reveal the struggles borne by the marginalised[22] and disadvantaged such as the 'woman' above. This extract therefore offers an opportunity to trace the progression we have been mapping: from the abstract pre-personal intensity that is the flow of affect, through feeling which anchors and personalises affect through the body, into the articulation of socially constituted emotions that work to either augment or diminish a capacity for agency, understood (as we shall show shortly) as socially constrained self-determination.

Through the gesture and language that is the 'doing' of theatre something intense flowed into the 'house-maid' and her body was moved to tears. Something shifted as she became audience to her maidself-becoming-womanself; she cried. This prompts Boal to speak to her and her to respond in a way he 'appeared' not to understand. Projecting the woman's feelings onto his body, he embodies and re-iterates her action. The meaning she attributes to seeing her woman-self, is very different from Boal's embodied understandings when he sees his embodied (about to have) man-self – he does not cry – he experiences no flow of affect through his mimesis. He is used to identifying as a man and his inner and outer worlds are congruent – he is not a dust-man never seen as a man by the world in the way that she was only and ever a house-maid because she has internalised a role 'as' an entire identity. His repetition to her is just a hollow (but useful) performance.

Her affect-rush through the body is experienced as a feeling of – what – being overwhelmed by a self-recognition that she exceeds her previous maid-self. The end bodily response is tears. At this point there are two potential interpretations that move this into the performative realm. First, the utterance occurred in the moment that she actually used "theatre as my language" and therefore identified to her maid-self, something already socially sanctioned but not previously recognised by her: that she is a woman, a 'beautiful' woman. Second, the performative moment may come through her verbal engagement with Boal; that is at the moment when he describes his identity via his face in the mirror and she is forced thereby to articulate her shift, to name and claim in language rather than the 'doing' of theatre, her embodied experience as it was generated by the flow of affect. Boal's witnessing is important because it 'stands in' for the discursive approval of the state. As the leading practitioner of this affect driven, transformative theatre, he provides an authoritative other. Anyone else in the room is part of the sanctioning, witnessing ritual and this

is effective only because the subject position 'beautiful woman' is already discursively sanctioned. Were she, for example, to claim to recognise herself as a being from Jupiter, or even as another person in the room, the unavailability of that subject position due to a lack of discursive sanction, would generate an 'unhappy' rather than 'happy' Austinian event. Nor is there any reason, of course, that both of these options may not be instantiated. She can now repeat her discovery, performatively, through language and social practices wherever she pleases *a lá* Butler's application of performativity. Though some may quibble about the 'beautiful', since it rests in the eye of the beholder, none would quibble with the expansion from maid to woman since the latter is already linguistically imbricated in the former.

'Doing' theatre (rather than just watching it) has generated affect, which remains abstract and indefinable, but that intensity has led to a bodily response which personalises the affect, it is now linked to a subjectivity ("my emotions", "my ideas"). This embodiment enables an utterance, and in this case, it is performative: saying is doing 'beautiful woman'. Becoming woman, in this way, is the conscious taking up of the subject position: it is, therefore, an act of agency. Affect, then, is at the root of the woman's agency, though neither are automatically sustained. This is because agency is not a personal attribute but is discursively constituted.

Through theatre, Boal has offered what poststructuralist Susan Hekman would call a "tool" of agency.[23] Hekman argues that the "subject who has agency, who constitutes a personal subjectivity, is precisely the autonomous, abstract, individualised subject that is the basis of the Cartesian subject".[24] Notorious for the separation of mind and body, Descartes' philosophy makes the body and affect inaccessible to the mind which knows only itself. This prioritises the rational, disembodied subject capable, as Althusser pointed out in the process of deconstructing it, of functioning "all by himself"[25] or at least believing that such is the case. Marxists, and those 'naturally' denied rational agency by such a formulation (the indigenous, the criminal, the infantile, the childish, all women, the poverty stricken, the feeble, disabled, drunk or insane) would suggest a false state of consciousness. They would claim to know it for what it is: the ideological and discursive operations that construct the privilege of those who govern and claim to do so through personal agency.

Hekman takes up the issue of agency as discursively constituted. She argues that "agency is defined and circumscribed by the discursive formation; *it is not a given condition* but a constituted element of subjectivity".[26] Agents continue to exist but not autonomously of social contexts and discursive formations. They have restrictions placed upon them by context. Thus, for example, an actor who marries people on stage, cannot be said to have officially married them. He does not have the agency to do so. "Choices" made and actions taken are, therefore, "produced by agents who utilize the discursive 'tools' available to them".[27] Via gesture and other body consciousness drama, Boal's theatre is one such tool for "kick starting" agency. This is achieved through the revelation, stimulation or production of affect, consciousness raising and education about feelings as embodied responses to the social contexts that shape and direct the very emotions that constrain (or

[23] Susan Hekman, *Gender and Knowledge: Elements of a Postmodern Feminism* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press,1990), 81.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes Towards Investigation"*,* in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. by Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 169.

[26] Hekman, *Gender and Knowledge*, 90. Italics added.

[27] Ibid., 110.

enable) people by diminishing (or exaggerating) their ability to resist through self-determination.

What is at stake in this now familiar understanding of agency and the lack of so called personal autonomy of the human agent is the capacity of that agent to exist as an independent, self-constituting 'I' 'outside' discursively produced subject positions. Butler probably puts this best:

> Where there is an 'I' who utters or speaks and thereby produces an effect in discourse, there is first a discourse which precedes and enables that 'I' and forms in language the constraining trajectory of its will. Thus there is no 'I' who stands behind discourse and executes its volition or will through discourse.[28]

[28] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 225.

There are some interesting tensions at work in this quotation. Firstly, there is the primacy of utterance as something capable of producing an "effect in discourse" – therefore there 'is' agency. This agency, however, is contextual in much the same way as Austin's performative is "happy" within its discursive setting – though he calls it the "debate" surrounding whether there is a "social contract" bestowing authority.[29] So, for agency to occur for Butler, for the performative to occur for Austin, an 'I' already within discourse is enabled and does, indeed, possess, through various degrees of constraint depending on the circumstances, a will that it can deploy within a "trajectory" or perhaps a number of trajectories depending on social location. The "doer of the deed" therefore stands within a discourse it may modify or have an "effect" upon. The extent of that effect depends first on motivation (we can call this consciousness of a contextualised and constrained self with a desire for change) and, second, on the possibility of proceeding to recognise, argue for and access various tools of agency (capacities for reflection, articulation, access to education, legal process, democratic systems, self representation in culture).

[29] Austin, *How To Do*, 29.

Whilst it therefore becomes true, as Lawrence Grossberg said, that "we can no longer equate agency with subjectivity",[30] we 'must' still equate an embodied subjectivity in an ontologically secure domain with the taking up of the tools of agency: such is the only way that agency can be discursively and ontologically constituted. So to quote Grossberg again, the separation of agency from the individual is "*not to be taken to deny* that people make history nor that they are engaged in real practices. Of course, they do it in conditions not of their own making ... history is often made 'behind their backs'".[31]

[30] Lawrence Grossberg, "The Context of Audiences and the Politics of Difference", *Australian Journal of Communication*, 16 (December 1989), 16.

[31] Ibid., 16. Italics added.

Returning to Boal and the house-maid become 'woman', we can now see that what his *Theatre of the Oppressed* has done is successfully use improvised, embodied theatre, to 'get at' and express, in language and gesture, the affect-feeling-emotion chain related to an embodied identity shift. In the process of engaging with creative practices the house-maid makes a discovery about herself and weeps because, not only is she now a 'woman', but she is 'beautiful': she is not pretending to be beautiful, she is not dependent on an audience to be beautiful; she 'is' beautiful because the 'I' of the house-maid has seen the 'I' that is the woman and there is a

space between the two that enables recognition and then description to Boal. The performative practice (saying is doing) is completed, however, because these interior selves are projected and then linked to, and acknowledged by, Boal where he stands in the exterior environment. How much further this shift is taken depends on how many of Hekman's "discursive tools"[32] of agency are available to the woman who now recognises that she exceeds the subjugated, apparently shameful, identity of house-maid.

[32] Hekman, *Gender and Knowledge*, 110.

We believe, then, that the key to the success of this performativity is the experience of affect. In a non-politicised audience affect remains relatively abstract and only fleetingly embodied. For an 'actor' in experimental, improvised or politicised drama a focus on 'the intensity which is affect' means it is better understood, tracked as feeling in a body that claims it as a resource, and then recognised and articulated as socially inflected emotion. Affect, in other words, drives the shift from performance to performativity. "The affect system", as Silvan Tomkins puts it, "provides the primary motives of human beings".[33] The woman is crying, not because she is sad, but because, in Tomkin's terms, a barrier to joy, that is shame, has been removed. Specifically, Tomkins explains that shame:

[33] Cit. in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank, eds., *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 36.

> operates only after interest or enjoyment has been activated, and inhibits one or the other or both. The innate activator of shame is the incomplete reduction of interest or joy. Hence any barrier to further exploration which partially reduces interest ... will activate the lowering of the head and eyes in shame and reduce further exploration or self-exposure ... .[34]

[34] Cit. in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 39.

The posture of shame described here is familiar to most people, though in widely varying degrees. Clearly, for example, Sue's experience as a six year old, realising that she could not fly, being laughed at by her mother (who was probably only thinking how cute it all was) may have made her slower to share anything. Sue's tears are the tears of a child who does not understand why, as Teone said, the "magic" did not work and her "dreamed-of self was pitted against the painful fallibility of a flying self". In Austin's terms, the utterance of the word "supercalifragilisticexpialidocious", whilst quite remarkable as a word in and of itself, does not contain the "magical" authority to simultaneously be an "act" uttered in "ordinary circumstances". In ending her comment with the neutral observation that the "moment encapsulated the difference between performance and performativity", Teone was really pointing out that "supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" is merely the repetition of the performance given by Julie Andrews, not by the fictitious Mary Poppins misunderstood as ontologically real.

Where Sue's tears are the tears of negative internalised emotion of shame effectively defined in the social relation to her mother, the tears of Boal's 'woman' are the result of positive projected emotion of joy from someone who 'does' understand. For the house-maid, the release of this positive emotion may well be the first, and perhaps most vital, step towards a more complex and rewarding identity, if she can follow through. How much further than Boal and the context

of improvised theatre can she consolidate this newly discovered complexity? What structures exist, *or can be brought into being*, to support and enact this identity by ensuring the circumstances for future successful agency and performativity? From this newly articulated utterance "beautiful woman", how can the tools of agency develop forwards to gain access to education, legal process, democratic systems, self-representation in culture over the long term?

It is no surprise, really, that Boal's original *Theatre of the Oppressed* functioned in settler cultures where cultural and land-based dispossession, attempted genocide, individual and systemic racism, corruption and military rule have all entrenched the unearned privileges of colonisers. Nor is it a surprise Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*, a discourse for the subject position "spect-actor", shifted affect from the relatively passive audience of theatre, to the "spect-actor": the self reflexive actor who is also his or her own spectator and affective subject. Along with the discipline of Performance Studies and Boal's Image Theatre, Forum Theatre, Invisible Theatre or Legislative Theatre, there is now a discourse that creates the primary subject position "activist" where actors feed into real social change.[35] If all this politics and social change, oppression and drama is too much to manage, somehow irrelevant, or simply 'unreal', simpler performative processes which use affect to initiate agency can be put in place. In Teone's self-introduction, for example, her child-self is there, listening, dreaming of stories, "tiger's tales, in rhyme … a song of waves and rainbows". When the Moon responds with all the maternal authority of her age-old symbolism, she utters the secret to Teone's success: she was a "*dearly beloved child",* one who therefore felt worthy of "rescue" and so was able to gather together her pieces despite her fear. The very act of speaking her fear weakens it, allows her to rename each fragment for powerful figures. So transformative was the effect, that "*love was multiplied*", projected throughout her "old injuries" which were fading behind the "glittering shards" which protected her until she could move forward. With a never complete knowledge of her selves, she shares them, is never shamed by them, but instead acknowledges her differences. As an act of self-sanctioning, of creating and adopting a subject position in a discourse of (self)acceptance, such writing is 'potentially' performative. There is an intensity of affect, a coming to recognise and possess difficult embodied sensations as personal feelings. There is a determination to articulate the contradictory emotions that accompany and 'speak' a fragmented but still beautiful subjectivity.

Annalisa Oboe

Seeing beneath the Surface:
A Conversation with Photographer Pieter Hugo

I met Pieter Hugo in Rome, on the occasion of the opening of his exhibition *There's a Place in Hell for Me & My Friends*, in November 2012. I had been following Hugo's challenging work for some time and, as he kindly agreed to have a talk, we sat down in the white space of the e x t r a s p a z i o gallery in Trastevere,[1] surrounded by his new series of portraits, and started a conversation that traced the beginnings of his career as a photographer, including a rather long period in the north east of Italy (where I come from), and then moved on to discuss his engagement with the complexity of photographic art, and his most recent work.

Hugo was born in Johannesburg in 1976, grew up in Cape Town, where he lives,[2] and is part of a young generation of South African photographers (including Guy Tillim, Mikhael Subotzky and others) who are aware of developing a new photographic consciousness as regards the representation of Africa to itself and the West, and whose work is aimed at testing preconceptions about their own country and, more generally, the potentialities of photography itself.[3] Hugo says he is drawn to and likes to shoot "that which we do not want to look at, be it the old or the terminally ill or the marginalized",[4] as happens with his images of African albinos, his portraits of poor South African families in the Messina/Musina dilapidated borderland, or of people who died of Aids/HIV. As a result his photographs, which are displayed in important galleries around the world, have often been perceived as disturbing and controversial.

It has interestingly been suggested that his viewers' vexed response may be due to the fact that, as a photographer, Hugo straddles two aesthetics at the same time: the one campaigning, and the other shocking in its graphic depiction of transgressive subject matter. To an Italian viewer such as myself, this combination of activism and provocation somewhat recalls the artistic project of Oliviero Toscani and of Fabrica, the Benetton arts and media centre in Treviso, where Hugo took up a two-year residency in 2002-2003, of which very little is known. That's why my interview starts from his Italian experience.

AO: Pieter, you come to Italy regularly and your pictures have often been exhibited here. I'm wondering whether your ongoing relationship with this country has to do with the beginnings of your career as a photographer, when you spent time at Benetton's Fabrica in Treviso. I am particularly interested in your time there because I remember well the shocking advertising campaigns of Benetton in the 1980-90s, the groundbreaking work of Oliviero Toscani and of COLORS Magazine that led to the founding of this creativity hub,[5] and I would like to know if your work has been affected and in what way by this experience, but also why and how you ended up at Fabrica in the first place, and what you did while there.

PH: I ended up at Fabrica because of a friend I lived with in South Africa, who had been there to do some engineering. That was the time when I really started working for magazines around the world, when I got my career going. You know, the trajectory of becoming a photographer in South Africa is quite different from what happens in Europe. In South Africa you take a camera and just start doing it, you don't go to university to learn how to be a photographer. But at the time I was getting very frustrated with the kind of avenues of expression that you had in South Africa, I really wanted to leave the country, have a bit more of international engagement.

AO: And that was the early 2000s?

PH: Yes, just around 2001. The dates are a bit vague, because it all happened out of quite a long period … the Benetton bureaucracy of getting accepted, submitting a portfolio, and ending up there actually took quite long, two years or so. I didn't even know that Fabrica existed, but then *Adam Broomberg* and *Oliver Chanarin*, as editors and photographers of *COLORS magazine*, approached me to be a correspondent for them in South Africa. So I started doing work for COLORS from South Africa, which was fantastic. At that time you could do an assignment for COLORS every two months and I didn't have to do any other work. In those days the dollar rate was still pretty good and I didn't really need much, it was fun. Through COLORS I got to know about Fabrica, then my friend ended up there, so I also applied to go. I went for a trial and a year later I got in.

AO: Were you offered a scholarship?

PH: A sort of residency. Fabrica defines itself as a place of study, but that's more for the bureaucracy of getting people into this space...

AO: Fabrica presents itself as a kind of lab or a workshop for the arts and the media. Can you say something about the way it works?

PH: The problem is that at the time it didn't seem to work, and my experience there was one of extreme frustration...

AO: Why frustration?

PH: Because before my time at Fabrica, if I wanted to go to Malawi and photograph something, I would just get on a plane and go. But then suddenly I was sitting there, and I felt a little bit held captive by this minimum-wage type of institution...

AO: How did you spend your time there? Did you learn anything?

PH: I learnt how to use a Mac and sat down in this amazing Tadao Ando building for two years not doing very much.[6] It was really frustrating actually, but it's one

[6] The headquarters of Fabrica are housed in a 17th-century villa near Villorba (Treviso), which was restored and significantly enlarged by Japanese architect Tadao Ando.

of those things that you don't realize, at the time you experience them, that you're benefiting a lot from them. In retrospect I understand how much I did learn by being surrounded by that structure. My experience didn't feel positive then, but thinking about it now it was actually fantastic, primarily because the approach there is graphic design-driven, and that allowed me to expand essentially as a graphic photographer. You cannot be clearer about what the communication there is doing, it is very efficient at its messaging, it's a hammer that's very hard and direct. That was very good for me and that appealed to me, and while I was there I saw that I could start using this and apply it to things which were interesting to me.

AO: What are these things, and are they related in any way to what Oliviero Toscani was doing?

PH: When I arrived at Fabrica, Oliviero Toscani had left already, so I've never met him. But what happened was... there happened to be a good balance between my wanting to be a portraitist and their offering this avenue of photographing subjects which essentially combines photography and engaging with the world, and which for me became a way of inserting myself into this space and looking at it anew. This way of doing portraits with testimonials really appealed to me, it was a very good way, different from the normal way I had to work in the past, which was more...

AO: ...more documentary?

PH: Yes, and this work is really what set things into motion for me. And on top of that, you probably know that the arts faculty's photography library at the University of Cape Town is smaller than my bookshelf at home? Instead in Treviso I had this fantastic library and, as I didn't have anything else to do, I just sat down and looked at books, and immersed myself into the medium organically.

AO: So, after all, it was a formative moment.

PH: Yeah, it was formative though at the time I kept asking myself, "why am I not in the field, why am I not in the field?" In retrospect, however, that was a good thing to do.

AO: So Fabrica was a way of putting together documentary, photography and something else: what is it? What is that something else?

PH: I think what Toscani, Broomberg and Chanarin tried to do (though I don't agree with what they've set claim to have done)... they worked in a way that put dignified importance on their subjects, they acknowledged their presence, and gave *verbatim* transcriptions of what people say, so as to give them space to speak. I guess it was a kind of 'slow journalism', which is interesting, though at the same time we all know that's totally manipulated anyway...

AO: Of course, we cannot think naively about representation... Talking about which, I would like to move from your early artistic explorations in Italy to your South African background. I'm referring not so much to your upbringing, but your 'imaginary' because, when discussing your work with South African friends or with scholars who know about South Africa, I've often come across comments that connect what they see as disturbing or grotesque in your photographs to what they perceive as an 'Afrikaner' way of looking at the world. I'm asking you because I can't quite see what they're actually saying or why they say it, why there should be anything essentially 'ethnic' about your own personal vision or your photography.

PH: Afrikaner way of looking? I don't know how to... I really don't know.

AO: Do you come from an Afrikaner family?

PH: I do, but I mean, I come from the urban detribalized!

AO: It's an idle question, isn't it? I think it hints at a taste for something 'weird' in your work, something strange that supposedly comes from roots...

PH: I'll tell you what I think: there is, particularly in a kind of Anglo-liberal academia at the moment, an incredible level of self-censorship to fit a politically-correct paradigm, which in fact comes across as deeply racist, because it's unengaged. The attitude is "rather stay away than actually engage", and I find this type of politically-correct self-censorship really vulgar in South Africa at the moment. I can't see anything good or constructive coming out of it in the long term. It's dishonest, it doesn't take any risk. I come from a background where I'm inspired by punk music, like "do it yourself", "Want to do something? Just fucking do it!" It doesn't have to be over-produced... I like stuff that's confrontational, the music I listen to, for example, I don't listen to music that makes me comfortable. If I look at art or read a book, I want something that is going to go into the depths of the human soul, which you don't see every day. That's what's interesting to me, otherwise what's the fucking point?

AO: Absolutely, I can see that in your work.

PH: There's this current wave of photography in South Africa, and a way of representing photography and a lot of other art, that is considerate, just and balanced, and fits the current political vocabulary.

AO: So your vocabulary is different...

PH: Well, I just find that very problematic.

AO: Surely your language does not come across as politically correct, and it's also pushing the limits of what one can say about 'the human', or being human, which is unsettling.

PH: Well, you know [*looking around at the portraits hanging on the gallery walls*], here are my friends – I've got black friends where I come from... The way I engage with race and things like that is by not dismissing anybody, but taking them on.

AO: This new work, *There's a Place in Hell for Me & my Friends*,[7] is an open statement on race, isn't it?

PH: Yes, in a way...

AO: It looks as if your intervention in these pictures occurs at the formal level: in your other series, images are far less 'manipulated', isn't that so?

PH: Yeah, there's quite serious manipulation going on here. As I explain in the introduction to the monograph, the colour process I used in making these pictures involves turning the digital colour image to black and white, while keeping the colour channels active. In this manner you can manipulate the colour channels and bring certain colours to prominence as greyscales. The pigment responsible for skin colour and appearance, melanin, is brought to prominence in this colour process. In this way the damage to people's skin caused by exposure to UV rays is shown up in their skin, along with capillaries and small blood vessels visible just under the skin.

Yasser Booley, Tamsyn Reynolds, Pieter Hugo, Anthony Smith in *There's a Place in Hell for Me & My Friends,* 2012. Courtesy e x t r a s p a z i o gallery, Rome.[8]

AO: Which shows that, after all, we're all 'coloured' under the surface? An interesting technique, bypassing the conventional filter of the skin external layer, producing a sort of hybridizing effect by which black and white disappears...

PH: And of course this technique is a fake medical technique, it's not real... there's a real way to do this, but you can't do the portrait with the eyes open, because the flash would damage your eyes. So my work reproduces a medical technique only up to a certain point. To me to do the portraits of people that are eyeless is just not appealing.

AO: Of course not. In all of your portraits the eyes of people are prominent, eyes are always a somewhat enigmatic focus... What's also different in this series is that the photographs are small. Why did you go for a small format?

[7] The title significantly comes from a famous song by English singer and lyricist Morrissey, "There's a Place in Hell for Me and My Friends" (in his second solo album *Kill Uncle*, 1991): "There is a place/ reserved/ for me and my friends/ and when we go/ we all will go/… / all that we hope/ is that when we go/ our skin/ and our blood/ and our bones/ don't get in your way/ making you ill/ the way they did/ when we lived".

[8] The catalogue of the series is published by oodee, London, 2012.

PH: They're intimate.

AO: In the sense that they are portraits of friends?

PH: Yeah, these are un-heroic pictures, and I guess I also started to get a better grasp of my medium, a more balanced relationship with size.

AO: This means your intervention was not just in the idea of the 'hybrid', coloured faces, but also in the actual technical means of producing photography.

PH: Yeah, I'm an artist and also a craftsman. You can be both, like you can be a theatre performer and have an interest in the history of theatre. I think you have to, though it's certainly a peculiar position, the reading of photography, especially in Africa, where there's mostly documentary, though in many parts the world has moved to a post-documentary age.

AO: But even David Goldblatt's, is that documentary photography?

PH: I find that David's difficult to read...

AO: Do you relate to him at all?

PH: Yeah, when I saw his *In Boksburg* it was seminal.[9] Just the first photo book I saw that related to my environment, and I said to myself, "This is amazing, this is a completely different way of portraying a narrative, it doesn't have to be all exclamation marks, it can be commas and hyphens...".

AO: So the grammar would be different.

PH: Yeah, and suddenly I realized I'd seen something there.

AO: And what about Boris Mikhailov? It seems the central inspirational event in your career was the encounter with his provocative images of Ukrainian alcoholics and down-and-outs...

PH: I love him, but I only like *Case History* [1997–98], I don't like his work after that. Funnily enough, at Fabrica I attended a workshop by Boris Mikhailov, which was the only workshop I enjoyed and actually got something out of. Mikhailov looked at my work...

AO: What did you show him?

PH: The editorial work, I showed him everything!

[9] Goldblatt's series *In Boksburg* (1982) documents life in a South African suburb in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when, as the artist himself says, the restrictions of the system of enforced racial segregation rendered seemingly normal moments in suburban life "abnormal beyond belief".

AO: The albino series?

PH: I showed him that. And he saw that and said, "This art" (meaning "This is art", his English is terrible!). And he went on, "Documentary as small picture [looks] odd. Make big picture, make big print!" And I made a big print and I realized something completely different.

AO: He could see it, right?

PH: And that's the first time I could see: "Hey, I can be an artist, it can be much more fulfilling that being an editorial photographer."

AO: Fantastic to have such a momentous encounter at the beginning of one's career! But what about your more recent work, can you say something about where it is going now?

PH: Well, I'm busy with a project around South Africa and have been for the last three years. I plan to finish that by the end of next year.

AO: What kind of project is it?

PH: It's something I started ages ago and it's really about my ambivalent relationship with South Africa, and having had a child and deciding to live there, after being quite nomadic for a long time. I want to take next year and devote myself to this work. I've actually gotten quite involved...

AO: You travel around South Africa, shoot pictures, and then work on them? How do you select?

PH: What I do is I usually go for about ten days to two weeks and I just shoot. Then I process the initial images, make selections and live with them in my studio for about six months; I then take them off as I decide I like/I don't like. The pictures that stick with me stay, then I edit. This is how I'm approaching this project and I'm in the fortunate position that I've got time, as it's a long term one.

AO: It's a privileged kind of job.

PH: Except for the fact that you have to know where to draw the boundaries, as the speediest you can go with some projects is 'forever', which is the case with David Goldblatt and his whole life: his work was one project.

AO: How many pictures will your South African series include?

PH: At the moment I've got down to 40-50 pictures already, but I think as a monograph it will be something much more substantial.

AO: I understand that right now you are in South Africa and you are interacting with your own environment. Is there an artistic kind of milieu in your country, which allows you to connect to other artists or photographers and to what they are doing?

PH: The arts world is so international now. My artistic community is not really South African, it's rather international, it's global. And as I travel a lot I get to see them all. For example, I've just had a quick shoot in the States for two weeks...

AO: What did you do there?

PH: I shot an editorial story for the *NY Times Magazine* and really enjoyed it. I went to what is called the "Northeastern Corridor", between New York and Washington, DC. It's a kind of land strip between the city of power and the city of finance that runs through 8 of the 10 richest counties in America. At the same time it runs through 6 of its most broken cities.

AO: Therefore you've been shooting the American province low life.

PH: Yeah. The Northeastern Corridor railway line runs through what used to be the manufacturing area of the US, which is now completely... over. Looking at these spaces, I recognize them, because they recall a sort of colonial experience, very similar in the way it looks to what you've got in South Africa. Whereas when I tried to work in Italy, for example, I couldn't quite relate to it. I don't understand it, I can't read it, I don't understand the experience here, what it means to be Italian, I don't know what to look at.

AO: An interesting sort of estrangement! Do you feel you can relate better to colonies, to post-colonies, or what? An Anglo-Saxon kind of environment? It can't be related to language...

PH: No, it's not the language. It's the fact that it's a sick old space and it is still contested, it hasn't become provincial yet, it hasn't sat yet, it hasn't become that deeply entrenched that...

AO: ...that it would have its own soul?

PH: Yes, and in the US it's all so transient, everyone is from somewhere else even if they've been there for a few generations, everyone moves all the time. I do

not find it an easy place to work in, but I find it visually easy, it was easy working even out of perpetuated clichés of looking.

AO: What other places would have a similar effect on your work?

PH: Some time ago I went to Israel to research a project I want to photograph there, and I found it a stimulating place. There's a deep dysfunctionalism there, but it definitely makes for a full stimulating environment, the same as the US.

AO: There has been a strong connection with Israel throughout South African history, the parallels between their respective trajectories since 1948 are many and quite puzzling...

PH: You know, I recently read a book by British author China Miéville, *The City & the City* [Macmillan, 2009]. It's a book combining weird fiction with the police procedural, and it's set in a space simultaneously occupied by two cities, where the citizens exist on top of each other, and it's about how the twin cities' respective inhabitants learn to un-see that they are living on top of each other.

AO: Well, can I say that sounds very South African?

PH: Really, people can just completely decide to un-see what's in front of them every day. Instead as an outsider you can see, it is much more apparent.

AO: When you were a child, were you taught not to see?

PH: I went through Christian national education, so I didn't go to a private school, I went through the normal government form. My parents are not very political, but they're liberal, they're libertarians. When they were young they were more interested in having a good time than in the situation of the country... But differently from my parents, when in school I did raise issues of race and I was cut out, just shut the fuck up. Not by our teachers, it was by my own peers!

AO: It must have been liberating to find an artistic language in which you can not only say what you like, but invite others to look on, or shock them out of their own complacency.

PH: Yes, though some of the reactions are quite hyperbolic...

AO: Are you OK with people being shocked by your pictures?

PH: I would be very uncomfortable if they weren't.
AO: I mean deeply shocked.

PH: Yeah, I mean, that's a kind of a point, isn't it?

AO: A sort of suggestion perhaps – also coming from the portraits in *There's a Place in Hell* – that we should move beyond/beneath what we see on the surface?

PH: Yes, I guess so.

Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 211 pp., ISBN 978-0-7456-5381-5

Reviewed by **Aureliana Natale**

> You say "I" and you are proud of this word. But greater than this ... is
> your body and its great intelligence, which does not say "I" but performs "I".
> (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*)

Since their beginning, Performance Studies have considered social life as an appropriate field of application. Richard Schechner, in his seminal essay, *Performance Theory,* for example, establishes the performative nature of social phenomena including them in a continuum which spans from the most aestheticized forms of ritual to the experiences of everyday life.

> Performance is an inclusive term. Theater is only one node on a continuum that reaches from the ritualizations of animals (including humans) through performances in everyday life – greetings, displays of emotions, family scenes, professional roles, and so on – through to play, sports, theater, dance, ceremonies, rites, and performances of great magnitude.[1]

[1] Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), xvii.

Thus Schechner is able to assemble, under the same 'performative' umbrella, creative as well as macro social phenomena as far and different as the Greek tragedy, on the one hand, and globalization and international terrorism on the other. In particular, adopting Victor Turner's perspective on "social drama"[2] as a cultural performance based on a sequence of social interactions of agonistic, conflicting or competitive type, Performance Studies, in their interplay with cultural theory, have increasingly started to address questions and matters pertaining to the formation and defence of identity in socially conflictual contexts.

[2] Victor Turner, *Dal rito al teatro* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1986), 44.

The recent work by Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political*, enters this theoretical arena elaborating on the nexus between social conflict and the process of identity construction. The book originates in a series of meetings and epistolary exchanges in which the two intellectuals reflect together, from a poststructuralist point of view, upon resistance and performativity as a form of political struggle. The book's structure presents every chapter characterized by an open-ended interaction between the two feminist scholars, each questioning, answering, contributing with her own personal perspective to interrogate matters of gender, power strategies and the relation between the "I" and his/her social environment. Starting from this premise, Butler and Athanasiou proceed in theorizing performativity not just as a way of shaping identities, but also as a way to reclaim them.

If Butler in the 90's with *Gender Trouble* had opened the debate about identity, conceiving of gender as something not naturally given but culturally constructed, and focusing upon its performative possibilities, after fourteen years, in 2004, she

concentrated in *Precarious Life*, on the complex interaction of social and political factors in the contexts of identity formation and definition:

> The "I" who cannot come into being without a "you" is also fundamentally dependent on a set of norms of recognition that originated neither with the "I" nor with the "you". What is prematurely, or belatedly, called the "I" is, at the outset, enthralled, even if it is to a violence, an abandonment, a mechanism; doubtless it seems better at that point to be enthralled with what is impoverished or abusive that not to be enthralled at all and so to lose the condition of one's being and becoming.[3]

[3] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), 45.

Thanks to the dialogue with Athena Athanasiou, in 2013 there is a new direction of enquiry: the "I" taken into account is not only the result of hetero-normative introjections or other culturally induced constrictions, but the specific effect produced upon identity by the neo-liberal turn in globalized economy.

The 'I' interrogated in this new situation is the 'dispossessed'. The thinkers take into consideration a dispossession involving citizenship and civil rights, but also the very possibility to claim survival for one's body. After having posited land and property ownership at the heart of the onto-epistemology of subject configuration in the West, Butler and Athanasiou also clarify that:

> The definition of the ownership of one's body as property is also a founding moment of liberalism. However certain bodies – paradigmatically the bodies of slaves – are excluded from this classic definition of the biopolitical, which forges a constitutive connection between life, ownership and liberty.[4]

[4] Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, eds., *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 12-13.

Today in the political agenda of neo-liberal globalized capitalism, being and having are still constituted as ontologically imbricated with one another; being is more than ever defined as having: "having is constructed as an essential prerequisite of the proper human being" (13). And still there are today dispossessed human beings, subjected as they are to modern forms of slavery, who are not even able to call their body as their own.

In general, the number of people increasingly expelled from the founding binary having-being is growing up due to the economical crisis; besides, the conflicts that are plaguing countries and communities, as in the case of Egypt or Libya, adding to the huge flood of worldwide migrations, are visibly widening the gap between those who have, and those who hardly are. Athanasiou affirms:

> … neoliberal governmentality of the present moment invests – politically, psychically, and economically – in the production and management of forms of life: it "makes live" in inculcating modes on one's fashioning of one's "own" life, while shattering and economically depleting certain livelihoods, foreclosing them, rendering them disposable and perishable. (31)

Athanasiou and Butler's considerations are not just speculative or limited to theorization, but follow contemporary events that are changing the world concretely. Taking into account the new forms of protest, such as the anti-neoliberal street meetings at Puerta del Sol, Zucchotti Park, Syntagma Square, or the gatherings of

the Arab Spring, the two intellectuals ask themselves if it is possible to rethink the liberal biopolitical construction, facing and dismantling the dichotomy having-being and calling upon the body as a category of presence as resistance.

> … bodies enact a message, performatively, even when they sleep in public, even when they organize collective methods for cleaning the grounds and occupy, as happened in Taharir Square and on Wall Street. If there is a crowd, there is also a media event that forms across time and space, calling for the demonstrations, so some set of global connections is being articulated … . And some set of values is being enacted in the form of a collective precarity and persistence in the making of equality and the many-voiced and unvoiced ways of refusing to become disposable.[5]

[5] Ibid., 197.

The body as a site of resistance is a central issue both in Butler and in Athanasiou, from their early works, and in *Dispossession* it is a concept at the base of the possibility to disrupt: "contemporary liberal power, in all its repressive, subjugating, brutal, and thanatopolitical force of profit extraction" (30). Taking their cue from Arendt's concept of thinking the community, the *polis*, as a "space of appearance" (194), the idea of using performativity to regain a place in society turns the political performance in an act of claiming presence on the world's stage. The dynamic of performance reveals the limits of the norms and discloses its mechanism of injustice through describing it. To gain back a space, after being dispossessed, means to obtain the freedom to be without being subjected to ownership. In other words, Butler and Athanasiou try to "think about dispossession outside the logic of possession" (7), questioning the forces that lead to various forms of dispossession (war, migration, unemployment) and resisting the temptation to rely on the neo-liberal discourse of property and ownership as the crucial individuating features of subjectivity.

These reflections prove valuable if applied, for example, to some extreme forms of performative protest also here in Italy, when the immigrants in the CIE (Centre for Identification and Expulsion) in Rome stitched up their mouths to remonstrate against bureaucratic passive violence. The very act of suturing their mouth signified their only possibility to ask for recognition and civil rights resorting to their last possession, the body, by means of physically hurting it. The same CIE in Rome has also been the scene of an attempted suicide by a woman separated from her husband at their arrival in Ponte Galeria. The story of the Tunisian couple, fugitive from fundamentalist Salaphite families, has been immediately reinterpreted as the re-*mise-en-scène* of the tragic epilogue of Shakespearean ill-fated lovers, Romeo and Juliet. Luckier than their theatrical alter-egos, because the attempted suicide of 'Juliet' has been discovered in time, their extreme act has moved public opinion. Romeo and Juliet's vicissitude in Ponte Galeria has shown how political protest could assume the language of theatre and performance and take advantage of it as a practice of resistance, even exercising violence against one's body, to gain audience, answers, recognition. As Butler maintains, the possibility to resist the imposed and fixed normativity is inscribed in the body of the subject who can be led to physically perform, even through self-denial, his/her desire of self-affirmation.

Marco Pustianaz, Giulia Palladini, Annalisa Sacchi, eds., A*rchivi affettivi. Un catalogo/Affective Archives. A Catalogue* (Vercelli: Edizioni Mercurio, 2013), 117 pp., ISBN 978-88-98269-01-3

Reviewed by **Emilio Amideo**

Affective Archives is neither a collection of essays, nor a typical edition of conference proceedings. Though the subtitle – a catalogue – hints at its typographical structure, as does the choice of the editors to define themselves 'curators', it does not provide the reader with a satisfying definition. Certainly, it is a piece of work that neither wants to be defined, nor confined, and comes closer to a performative record of a series of events which took place between 2010 and 2011 in Vercelli, Turin and Utrecht and the relations they generated amongst its participants and non-participants. Marco Pustianaz, Giulia Palladini and Annalisa Sacchi, as the editors/curators of *Affective Archives*, imagine the possibility of creating – or better continuously recreating, in accordance with the Derridean concept of *différance*, with its duplicitous meaning of multiplying interpretations from the excesses produced by difference and deferring in time – an 'affective archive'. Their aim appears at first glance nonsensical. How can one make an archive of something as immaterial as affect? Is not the archive, with its connection to presumed 'origins' as the etymological Greek root *archè* suggests, something inextricably connected to the preservation, classification, interpretation of (material) documents? Surely the interiority of emotions or perceptions has nothing to do with the exteriority of the archival monumental apparatus. Yet, this is exactly the challenge that they take on, and to reach their target they necessarily have to hybridise and contaminate the common notion of the archive format. Hybridity and contamination seem to be the leitmotivs of *Affective Archives*. From the alliterative title, with its 'almost but not quite' connection between the terms 'affective' and 'archive', to the subtitle 'a catalogue' consistent with the authors' choice to be defined 'curators' and the typographical format chosen for the publication, from the structure of the book/catalogue which interpolates recorded fragments of the performances onto different types of texts to include panel descriptions, abstracts, a manifesto, images, open calls, self-reflective essays, even a contract, to the decision of including a DVD containing the para-documentary video of the Sicilian collective canecapovolto meant to further hybridise the created performative archive. In the Prologue the curators state:

> We are particularly attracted by the way canecapovolto disintegrates the archive by injecting parasitical matter. The more the 'original' archive is affected by other image banks, the more hospitable it looks: affection and infection, like remembering and dismembering, operate as an ambivalent pharmakon, at the same time salvage and poison. (106)

The creation of an affective archive, therefore, requires an infection, a contamination, even more a paradigmatic shift from the archival modality linked to the past to the relational modality mainly compromised with the future. The

archive, Derrida suggests in *Mal d'Archive*, more than the past, should take into account the yet to come, because what an archive means is only knowable in the time to come.[1] That is why the three curators ask the (relational) contribution of people from different backgrounds – artists, theorists, academic and non-academic audience – they invite a contamination of their proposed archive, and above all they ask for its future reactivation: "by addressing the idea of affective archive we believe we are opening up the potential of a future salvage of its traces: of evolution, transformation and multiplication" (13).

The catalogue of *Affective Archives*, like the research cluster it was meant to record – which took place in Vercelli at the Università del Piemonte Orientale "Amedeo Avogadro" and in Turin in collaboration with Teatro Stabile di Torino in 2010 – is structured around four main panels, each representing a performance. The three curators, in fact, ask four artists – Claudia Castellucci/Socìetas Raffaello Sanzio, Cesare Pietroiusti, Massimo Bartolini and Lois Weaver – to create four performative frames into which the contributions fall and that eventually create the four conference panels, with the aim of disrupting the conference genre by hybridising the usual duality between artistic practice and academic discourse. From Claudia Castellucci's frame on *ekphrasis*, with its focus on the pedagogical experience involving the participation of an expected and a non-expert audience, the concepts of 'passing' and 'passers-by', and above all the reference to the hydroponic thinking echoing both Deleuze's and Guattari's rhizomatic thinking and Glissant's poetics of relation, the catalogue moves on to Cesare Pietroiusti's frame involving a performance of the artist in which he chews a 500 euros note to investigate artistic and economic connections combining handcraft and installation, and which envisages the participation of seven 'forgetters' invited to provide the audience with strategies aimed at forgetting the event. Massimo Bartolini's frame on 'traces' revolves around the dialectics of presence/absence and involves the installation of a radio broadcast (Marco Pustianaz is the presenter) transmitted through loudspeakers placed on a raft floating in Vercelli's ENAL swimming pool, an example of Fascist architecture which seems to emphasise, through a haunting historical parallel, the distance and urgency of listening. Louis Weaver's last frame contemplates the possibility to archive the panel through a recorded card game in which the players are the speakers (who have previously written their contributions on thirteen cards with which they will play in turn) and the respondents, who are required to write down their own observations on the different steps involving the card game. The catalogue includes also "Affective Archives Affect Memory", the panel proposal for the 2011 Performance Studies International Conference which took place in Utrecht, and where the three curators proposed a memory experiment involving the re-staging – in the form of an uncanny double – of their own former presentations at Vercelli with the addition of two scholars who were absent at the first series of events: Jill Dolan and Freddie Rokem, who were asked to performatively remember their absence. A DVD containing the para-documentary video by canecapovolto completes the edition. It mainly revolves around issues

Marco Pustianaz, Giulia Palladini, Annalisa Sacchi, eds., *Archivi affettivi. Un catalogo/Affective Archives. A Catalogue*

surrounding memory – "the holes in our memory are as important as the blank spaces in our archives" reads the opening sentence – and proposes video recordings of the performances/panels dismantled and recomposed together with footages belonging to different historical archives and sound recordings, giving the archive a haunting feeling – especially towards the end when the video starts rewinding while images in black and white and negatives appear on the screen, and the spectator listens to wind chimes before reading the closing sentence, "you are now the main forgetter of this document".

The experiment that Pustianaz, Palladini and Sacchi propose in *Affective Archives* is relevant and consistent with the attempt to undo the violence of the common notion of archive, with its focus on individuality and appropriation, through a collective and necessarily fragmented and/or multifaceted participation in the archiving process, that is to say through an experience which is truer to a pluralistic and non-centralised notion of archive. Their practice is not exempt from risks. In the attempt to collectively record an event or a performance, in effect, something gets inevitably lost, the recording is not as meticulous, accurate or, more to the point, univocal. Just as in the process of remembering, memory is sometimes distorted – a fictive narrative takes the place of the factual event to fill the gaps inevitably left blank – so this work offers the imaginative possibility to endlessly create and recreate a narrative which from its very inception was never 'original'. It is there, in the act of recreating, in that performative collective gesture, that the affective part of the archive resides – an archive which is inconstant, but which does not succumb to the monolithic and appropriating violence of the One. *Affective Archives* is a persuasive work in the context of contemporary Performance Studies and remains authentic to its relational nature through the pursuit of what Glissant would call a "pensée de la trace" or trace thought, as opposed to the "pensée de système" or systematic thought,[2] meaning, in this particular case, the ability to bypass the systemic nature of the archive and build on the traces left by the processes of memorialisation to create something new, which is collective, participated and erratic in its being.

Has the experiment truly worked? Only time can tell. After all, as Derrida suggests in *Mal d'Archive*, the disclosure of the true meaning of an archive is bound to its future.

[2] Édouard Glissant, *Poetica del diverso*, trans. by Francesca Neri (Roma: Meltemi, 1998, orig. 1996), 13-15.

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Abstracts

Giuseppe De Riso
When Narration Is Made Flesh: An Affective Reading of
Geetanjali Shree's *The Empty Space*

This paper examines Geetanjali Shree's *That Empty Space* (2011) as an exemplary novel exploring the performative power of language in order to re-create an episode of violence somewhere in the Indian sub-continent. Describing the explosion of a bomb in a university cafe, the narration makes events emerge as the product of a field of forces relying on the bodily perception and sensorial participation of the reader. The essay focuses on the ways through which Shree's novel shuns hermeneutic or representational readings of violence in favour of a skin or 'haptic' writing whose performative power relocates a story of violence from its geographical location to the body of the reader. In acknowledging the human body as the shared ground of any possible communication, the author attempts to overcome the divisive binarisms and cultural juxtapositions brought about by the ocularcentric understandings of knowledge and culture.

Lucia Esposito
Playing with the Audience: Performative Interactions in
Tom Stoppard's *The Real Inspector Hound*

The article focuses on a one-act comedy Tom Stoppard wrote in 1968, when performance art experiments, mainly aimed at converting the 'passive' role of the audience into an (inter)active participation, were being undertaken in British theatres. *The Real Inspector Hound* is not an experimental play – it might actually be seen as a parody of those experiments – but is likewise centred on the role and agency of the audience and on the performative nature of role-playing. This article inspects the way in which even a 'traditional' piece like this, by offering the possibility to investigate some of the questions posed only metaphorically elsewhere, can provide a productive insight into the mechanisms by which we (both 'performers' and 'spectators' in our life) can 'act' upon reality and can 'be acted' upon. Performativity, in the sense provided by the theoretical framework of poststructuralism, is actually brought to the fore in the play when the iterativity inherent in the pre-scripted roles of the characters and of the audience comes to be interrupted, and questioned, by the emergence of a chaotic and parodic anti-conventionality.

Amaya Fernández-Menicucci
Performing Duggars: The Interaction between Producers, Performers
and Spectators in the Reality Show *19 Kids and Counting*

With twelve seasons of the TLC reality show *19 Kids and Counting*, numerous specials and three books under their belt, the Duggar family have become a social

phenomenon. From the point of view of both cultural and gender studies, the fact that a Christian fundamentalist family, who proclaim submissiveness to a male headship to be the cornerstone of family life, should become popular with an audience of millions constitutes a fertile ground for research. Over the nine years the Duggars have been in the public eye, this modest dressing, bible-believing, patriarchal family have been progressively 'mainstreamed' so that their TLC show might appeal to an increasingly wider audience. The 'monstrous' element has been taken out of what was ultimately a family-friendly version of a freak show, while a subtle balance was reached between what makes the Duggars a unique micro-cosmos and the strategies deployed to present them as a model family. I intend, therefore, to analyse the mechanisms through which the viewers' reactions to the show have influenced this cosmetic 'makeover' and the way in which the audience's reception of the series has eventually defined both the Duggars' performance and the content selection for each episode in the latest seasons.

Andreas Hudelist and Elena Pilipets
Walking Art: The Movement In-Between

Following Nicolas Bourriaud, art is a state of encounter which keeps together and provides a space of relations. Unfortunately, though, he pays not enough attention to the lived experiences of the participants enabled by this relationality. So the question we are interested in is not what 'is' relational art. It is neither about approaching relationality as a theoretical concept, nor defining art as relational aesthetics. It is about the question of what relational art 'does', or how it comes to its force as a practice. Therefore, we want to use Brian Massumi's idea of art as a political happening by taking a closer look at the relational dimensions of the *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* by Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller presented at dOCUMENTA (13) in Kassel. We want to explore the variety of affective encounters within the relational dimension provided by the frame of *Video Walk*. By describing the practiced artfulness of the *Video Walk*-frame as a relational transformation we will focus on its performative potential approaching the happening of art as an 'in-between' of space and time.

Elena Intorcia
Performing Deaf Culture: The (Changing) Role of the Audience

'Performativity' and 'performance' are key concepts in sign language literature and Deaf theatre, which both unveil the ideological and epistemological limits of such terms as 'language' and 'literature' and invite to consider the body itself as text. Because of its oral nature and face-to-face transmission, which at first took place mainly within Deaf clubs, this peculiar type of literature was not preserved until the advent of film and digital technologies. Indeed, the latter finally allowed to fix what was once transient and transitory, capturing signs and making it possible

even to set up an archive. However, this very event has brought about contrasting effects on sign literature, heavily affecting the way it is composed, transmitted and received by the audience, now separated from the artist. Paradoxically, while increasing sign language literature audience, film technology has also alienated the latter, as Krentz (2006) observes. Another issue closely related to the audience/performance relationship is that of translation, examined, among the others, by the Flying Words Project, a creative duo made up of a hearing and a deaf.

Sue Lovell and Teone Reinthal
"I Saw a Woman": Performance, Performativity and Affect

Drawing on Augusto Boal's revolutionary deconstruction of the aesthetic space of theatre in preference for social action theatre existing beyond the proscenium, the article focuses on the concepts of performativity, emotion and embodiment as they occur in experimental forms of improvised performance and explores the relationship of affect to agency. It suggests that the symbiosis of affect and performance marks the shift to performativity, recognising performativity as a tool of agency. Integral to the argument is the recognition that, again drawing on Boal, people have a capacity to see themselves seeing themselves, prompting deeper understandings of self in relation to the social. Accordingly, the paper espouses an awareness of how improvised, community theatre projects shift participant understandings of emerging and liminal identities and argues that in order for the performance to become performative, there must be the taking up and nurturing of a contingent, discursively produced agency.

Marco Pustianaz
Now You See It, Now You Don't: Performing Literature in Transition

Now that the book-based technology of literature is critically mutating, literary studies have the chance to look again at the material interfaces mediating its writing and reading performances. This historical juncture is bringing to light the contingent and performative nature of the literary as event. I propose to stage the encounter between text and matter, literature and contingency in three sites where the literary emerges and demerges as a property not inherent in an object but emergent in a relation: digitization; affect in reading; writing performance in contemporary art. My theoretical assemblage joins affect theory with Rancière's promise of radical equality heralded by the "aesthetic regime". I am looking for the non-specific heteronomy of the literary and its suppressed links with event, affect, aisthesis. My starting and end points are in Norwich, where Rory Macbeth has copied the text of Thomas More's *Utopia* on the walls of a condemned building. Displaced and unreadable, it is the perfect resting ground where to start re-reading the 'literary'.

Emilio Amideo is a Ph.D. student in English Studies at the University of Naples "L'Orientale". For his BA and MA degrees he has focused respectively on the analysis of the linguistic representation of racial otherness in the British Press and on issues of gender and race performativity in Afro-diasporic literary and visual productions. He is currently researching about contemporary black queer narratives as 'theory in the flesh' or embodied politics of resistance, with the aim of tracing a possible black queer aesthetics. Over the years he has spent several research periods in the UK, to include a period of study at Goldsmiths University of London in 2009 and at the British Library during 2012.

Giuseppe De Riso is a Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Naples "L'Orientale", where he completed his Ph.D. in Cultural and Postcolonial Studies of the Anglophone World with a thesis entitled *The Body Expanded: Agency, Representation and Affect in Tridimensional Videogames*. He has authored the monograph *Affective Maps and Bio-mediated Bodies in Tridimensional Videogames of the Anglophone World* (2013), and the essay "'Negative' Heterotopias: Opacity in Virtual Worlds and Social Networks" (2012). He is currently investigating the emergence of violence in Southeast Asia and the complex nexus between art, politics, technology and the media.

Lucia Esposito is Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Teramo. She has published articles on Shakespeare; pop culture in contemporary literature; the Sixties myth; urban subcultures; performance and translation studies; the cross-fertilizations of media, especially in the digital environment. She has published a volume on radiodrama (2005) and a monograph on Beckett's radioplays, *Scene sonore. I radiodrammi di Samuel Beckett* (2005). She has also co-edited a collection of essays, *Metropoli e nuovi consumi culturali. Performance urbane dell'identità* (2009) and the 2013 volume of the *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses on Performing Culture, Performing Identity.*

Amaya Fernández-Menicucci currently lectures at the University of Castilla-La Mancha in Spain, and has been recently writing on cultural bodies and the corporeal dimension of gendered identities. Among her recent publications are "In the Name of the Self: The New Language of Self-Naming. Naming as a Process of Self-Construction" (2012); "Action and Reaction: the Villain's Body and its Role in Shaping the Heroic Body in Hollywood Action Films of the 1990s" (2013); and "The Art of the Self: Identity and Performance in Sunetra Gupta's *So Good in Black* and Kamila Shamsie's *Broken Verses*" in the 2013 volume of *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses.*

Pieter Hugo (born 1976 in Johannesburg) is a photographic artist living in Cape Town. Major museum solo exhibitions have taken place at The Hague Museum

of Photography, Musée de l'Elysée in Lausanne, Ludwig Museum in Budapest, Fotografiska in Stockholm, MAXXI in Rome and the Institute of Modern Art Brisbane, among others. Hugo has participated in numerous group exhibitions at institutions including Tate Modern, the Folkwang Museum, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, and the São Paulo Bienal. His work is represented in prominent public and private collections, among them the Museum of Modern Art, V&A Museum, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, J Paul Getty Museum, Walther Collection, Deutsche Börse Group, Folkwang Museum and Huis Marseille. Hugo received the Discovery Award at the Rencontres d'Arles Festival and the KLM Paul Huf Award in 2008, the Seydou Keita Award at the Rencontres de Bamako African Photography Biennial in 2011, and was shortlisted for the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize 2012.

Andreas Hudelist is Adjunct in the Department of Media and Communications at the Alpen-Adria-University Klagenfurt, Austria. He studied German Philology and Media and Communications. He has recently published a book about theatre scandals in media (*Theaterskandale in der Zweiten Republik*, 2010), and is currently the editor of an eJournal for theatre and media (*etum*) and of the book series "Medienkultur" (media culture) for the ARTE Publishing House in Slovenia. His research focus is on cultural studies, visual studies and cultural theory.

Elena Intorcia holds a Ph.D. in Cultural and Postcolonial Studies of the Anglophone World from the University of Naples "L'Orientale". She teaches English at Secondary High Schools and at the Department of Engineering, University of Sannio. She has participated in various teaching experiences abroad and in international conventions about ELT. She is the author of books related to English language learning: *My English Workbook* (2008), *Relevant Notes for Students of English at the University of Sannio* (2011), *English for Success* (2012). She has studied as a Fulbrighter in the USA (University of Illinois, Chicago) and has contributed to experimental projects focused on the teaching of EFL to deaf students.

C. Maria Laudando (Ph.D. University of Manchester, 1994) is Associate Professor of English Literature at the University of Naples "L'Orientale". Her privileged fields of research cover Eighteenth Century Studies (especially Swift, Hogarth and Sterne), female writing, intertextuality, Shakespeare, monstrosity, and the relationships between literary, visual and performing arts. With R. Ciocca she edited *Anglistica AION* monographic issue on *Indiascapes: Images and Words from Globalised India* (2008) and a volume on urban culture, *La città e le tecnologie mobili della comunicazione* (2014). Her latest publications also include a monograph, *La lettura entra in scena* (2012), and articles on Tim Crouch's conceptual theatre and William Kentridge's palimpsestic art.

Sue Lovell teaches ethics, gender, Australian literature and academic writing at the School of Humanities, Griffith University, Queensland, Australia. She supervises at

all levels where candidates are interested in identity issues. She has published within Australia and internationally on the Australian visual artist Vida Lahey exploring the artist's life, oeuvre and the ways in which biographical narrative relates to the past and subjectivity. She is increasingly interested in narratives broadly, as well as the embodied and cognitive aspects of engagement with narratives. It is this aspect that has led to her interest in affect and agency.

Aureliana Natale is a Ph.D. student in Comparative Literature at the University of Bologna/L'Aquila. She took her BA degree in French and English Languages, Literatures and Cultures, and her MA degree in Anglophone Literature and Cultures, at the University of Naples "L'Orientale", with a particular focus on post-colonial theory. In 2012 she spent a research period in London, collecting materials for her university dissertation about Trauma-studies theories applied to post-9/11 literary and theatrical productions. At the moment she's researching about performativity as strategy to overcome traumatic experience. She has published three short critical pieces on the University Magazine *Lab/Or* and two reviews on *Anglistica AION*.

Anna Notaro teaches contemporary media theory at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, University of Dundee. She has published widely in the field of urban/ visual culture, the blogosphere, authorship, cinema & new technology, e-textuality and the 'future of the book'. More about her research interests at her home page: www. notarofam.com/annawork. Also, she can be followed on Twitter at: notanna1.

Annalisa Oboe is Professor of English Literature at the University of Padua, Italy, where she is Head of the Doctoral Program in Linguistic, Philological and Literary Sciences. She works on postcolonial theory and literatures in English, contemporary British writing, and South African and Black Atlantic cultures. Her publications include *Experiences of Freedom in Postcolonial Literatures and Cultures* (Routledge, 2011); *Recharting the Black Atlantic: Modern Cultures, Local Communities, Global Connections* (Routledge, 2008); *Mongrel Signatures. Reflections on the Work of Mudrooroo* (Rodopi, 2003); and *Fiction, History and Nation in South Africa* (Supernova, 1994). She is currently the principal investigator of the *postcolonialitalia* ([www.postcolonialiatalia.it)](www.postcolonialiatalia.it) research project.

Elena Pilipets is a Lecturer and a Ph.D. candidate at the Department of Media and Communications at the Alpen-Adria-University Klagenfurt, Austria. She studied German Philology at the Russian State University of Uljanowsk and Media and Communication at the University of Klagenfurt. She recently published a book, *Be Stupid for Successful Living The Art of Affective Empowerment* (2013), and is currently working on a popular television series. Her research focus is on actor-network-theory, seriality studies, visual and cultural studies.

Marco Pustianaz is Associate Professor of English Literature at Università del Piemonte Orientale (Vercelli, Italy). Since the 1990's he has been instrumental

in the introduction of queer theory in Italy, co-editing *Generi di traverso* (2000), *Maschilità decadenti* (2004), and *Queer in Italia* (2011). More recently, he has focused on performance studies, working around the notion of 'affective archives': "Teatro superstite", Art'O 27 (2009); "La presenza dello spettatore", *Culture teatrali* 21 (2013); "Un/archive", in *Performing Archives*, Copenhagen 2013. With Giulia Palladini and Annalisa Sacchi he has also edited *Archivi affettivi. Un catalogo/Affective Archives. A Catalogue* (2013). He is co-editor of "Áltera" (ETS, Pisa), a book series with a queer and gendered perspective on interculture.

Teone Reinthal, playwright, director, producer, community filmmaker and performance artist, has published in Paris and in Australia on inter-disciplinary relations between creativity and constructions of identity, experimental methods in film and theatre, collaborative creative discourse and art as social action. These interests have emerged from her role as a filmmaker working in partnership with culturally diverse communities. Exploring practice-led studio methods and approaches used in creative community development, her doctoral research described how problem-solving strategies and internal resources that she names collectively as Adaptivism have shaped her studio methods. Teone is currently an Adjunct research fellow in the School of Humanities, Griffith University, where she is also engaged as a sessional tutor and student success coach for the Learning Futures Department. Teone's website showcases many examples of her community arts practice: www.teone.com.au.