

Cristina Rizzo/Lucia Amara

LOVEEEE
journal

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Lucia Amara

Si prega di inserire

“Non esercitare tutto il potere di cui si dispone, vuol dire sopportare il vuoto. Ciò è contrario a tutte le leggi della natura: solo la grazia può farlo.”

(S. Weil)

“...ha dunque l'andatura di un poema, che si “sente”, come si entra in una danza. Il corpo è “informato” (riceve la forma) di quanto così gli succede molto prima che l'intelligenza ne abbia conoscenza. Il cammino sonoro traccia allora una nuova strada di significati. Regola i passi di un pensiero. Pone l'intera esistenza sotto il segno o quasi di una canzone d'amore.”

(M. De Certeau)

“... then enliven it with grace, and so get itself a theory...”

(J. Cage)

Nessuno può essere fatto attardare su una soglia, perché non c'è soglia. Si accede, semplicemente. Senza premesse, perché prima non c'è nulla. E dopo non c'è la fine. Dunque qui non può esserci una nota, né un prologo. Perché siamo già completamente dentro una pratica, una pragmatica. Non può esserci teoria perché è uno stato passato, trascorso lievemente.

La grazia non è un tema. Perché non è il luogo dell'eterno, di ciò che fissa, conficca, pianta definitivamente. E' un luogo di incontro, sì, ma non perenne e duraturo. O piuttosto è un punto che somiglia al “sentirsi esistere”, del gatto Murr. Pertiene e convoca un regime epidermico. Le sono più consoni il toccare e il cenno. Tutto ciò che ha a che vedere con avvicinamento, appressamento e riduzione della distanza.

E' necessaria un'idea di lettura. Una serie di azioni. Svolte con cura. Leggere ciò che c'è. Leggere ciò che non c'è. Mettere in promiscuità ciò che è lontano e ciò che è vicino. Farlo anche in modo arbitrario. Provare a forzare il dialogo. E al contempo

chiederlo con veemenza. Ma poi, con altrettanto vigore, fare scivolare, non leggere tutto.

Non ciò che si dice, ma come si dice. Pratiche. Da mettere vicine. Rendere possibile metterle vicine. Non devono stabilire, ma immaginare legami. Come nella scena di *Loveeee* la comunità esposta di corpo e teoria. (Non corpo della teoria. Né teoria del corpo. Non può esserci più...)

Qui c'è un presente fatto e procurato di cenni. Gesti. Lievi movimenti. Riconoscimenti fulminei, a volte. Dichiarazioni d'amore che non producono alcuna richiesta di eternità. Sì, la grazia non produce eternità, solo luoghi d'appuntamento, intensi e lancinanti. Ma tempestivi. Si dice *éclat* in francese. Frantumi che esplodono separandosi definitivamente o schegge luminose che si spengono lentamente? Non c'è una sola traduzione.

Questo dunque non può creare avvertenze. Nessuno viene informato in modo preventivo, perché tutto si svolge qui ed ora. Nessuno è (o vuole essere) bloccato su una soglia. Non si attende. Si tende. Nessuna assenza. Lontana da rompere, la grazia si presta.

Complessi e composti si formano o riformano, si allacciano per liberarsi sciogliersi, disinnamorarsi. A volte si tratta di saltare, dentro e fuori. I salti possono annettere, o aggregare, creare, ma possono anche con leggerezza soprassedere. Combinazioni, equivalenze, trasformazioni, corrispondenze, analogie. Leggere una cosa in un'altra. A volte le connessioni si spezzano. Anche la caduta è contemplata. Anche l'arresto. E la ripresa. Un modo dello stare con agio dentro un luogo, qualsiasi esso sia.

Così irrompe l'esercizio di Simon Weil. I suoi quaderni vi stazionano con rischio e possiamo metterceli accanto mentre corre e scorre il resto. L'esercizio è una singolare maniera per procurarsi una teoria, è una torsione acrobatica, *nella* grazia. Si prega di inserire, dunque.

Marco Dotti

Senza classe

Per abbattere i tassi di disoccupazione, abatteranno i disoccupati? Se lo chiedeva Louis-Ferdinand Céline nell'inverno del 1933, a pochi mesi dall'avventurosa pubblicazione del suo *Viaggio al termine della notte*. Un libro edito in sincrono, nel '32, con un'altra grande disamina della lunga deriva di vita e lavoro nel secolo che tardiamo a lasciarci alle spalle, quel *Operaio* di Ernst Jünger che, nel suo piano elementare, può (anche) essere letto come l'altra faccia della falsa moneta della tecnica messa alla berlina nel Viaggio. Con una differenza, tra le tante che qui si omettono: se in *Der Arbeiter* è – come da sottotitolo – di “Herrschaft” e “Gestalt”, dominio e forma e, di conseguenza, di mobilitazione totale che si fa questione, nel Voyage il tragitto è inverso, tanto che non è più al piano agonistico e drammatico, ma alla caleidoscopica e dirompente potenza dell'infamia e dell'informe in una prefigurata era di mobilisation infinie che si guarda. Eppure entrambi, Jünger e Céline, si sporgono sullo stesso abisso. Uno dall'alto, l'altro dal fondo. Uno gettando lo sguardo oltre le sue elitarie scogliere di marmo, l'altro alzando gli occhi duri da bretone sopra il fango che si deposita nei sottopassi della Storia. Una Storia che, nelle peripezie della coppia Bardamu-Robinson del *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, riveste tratti di scapestrato simbolismo collettivo. Il Viaggio è anche il sogno americano che schianta – travolgendola – contro un'Europa oramai avvilita dalla guerra passata e imminente, dalla fame e dalla crisi del '29 e da un colonialismo che si appresta a mutarsi – grazie alla vita malata messa al lavoro – nel più temibile dei contrappassi: una sorta di autocolonizzazione dell'esistenza, in nome di pari libertà, fraternità, uguaglianza. Una crisi che, in Francia, dispiegò gli effetti più duri proprio nel '32 provocando, tra l'altro, la caduta

– su questioni, ironia delle cose, di patrimoniali e debito estero – del governo di Edouard Herriot, inaugurando l'era delle grandi truffe bancarie. È di quegli anni il prototipo di molti crack finanziari moderni, quel *affaire* - Staviski che travolse il suo *Crédit Municipal de Bayonne* e un sistema ben più complesso di partite doppie tra politica e affarismo scritte con l'inchiostro simpatico di un grande imbroglio istituzionale.

Entrambi guardano lo stesso abisso o, almeno, così vogliono far credere. Poco importa, dunque, che i due, Céline e Jünger, si siano fiutati e rifiutati, nei mesi trascorsi dall'autore di *Die Totale Mobilmachung* (1930) a smistar lettere nella Parigi occupata. Di Céline, nel suo diario Jünger ricorderà che era «grande, ossuto, forte, un po' goffo, vivace nella discussione, anzi nel monologo», oltre che «sorpreso, urtato di sentire che noi soldati non fuciliamo, non impicchiamo e non sterminiamo gli ebrei; sorpreso che qualcuno, avendo una baionetta a disposizione, non ne faccia un uso illimitato». Sull'antisemitismo di Céline non è forse il caso di soffermarsi, per evitare banalità e non meno scontate condanne. Resta un problema: se Céline non fosse stato antisemita, ci avrebbe forse offerto la più grande lettura della miseria del nostro tempo (Aragon si pronunciò in tal senso, dichiarando il *Viaggio* come il più autentico e sentito romanzo comunista. Altri lo seguirono a ruota). Ma se non fosse stato antisemita, non ci avrebbe offerto la più grande lettura della miseria del nostro tempo. Non se ne esce, nemmeno istituendo soluzioni di continuità tra un Céline apolitico e un Céline politico, tra un prima e un dopo i libelli antisemiti. Tutto è già in nuce nel primo Céline e tutto è in nuce nello scrittore, perché tutto – si ha l'impressione – è da sempre in potentia in un patrimonio culturale che la Francia si è apprestata a ricacciare sotto il tappeto, come si fa con la polvere.

Nell'articolo pubblicato su “*Le Mois*” (1 febbraio – 1 marzo 1933) con il titolo *Pour tuer le chômage tueront-ils les chômeurs?* chi prende posizione non indossa la maschera e il sarcasmo dello scrittore né (ma qui, appunto, discorso si farebbe scivoloso e delicato) quella dell'apertamente violento antiborghese e

antisemita delle *Bagatelles pour un massacre* edita da Denoël nel 1937 e tradotte dal Corbaccio l'anno seguente. Chi parla, su "Le Mois", indossa ancora abiti e contegno del medico sociale, con il suo freddo dominio delle cifre e la sua preoccupazione per le condizioni di vita del proletariato industriale. Laureato in medicina, Louis-Ferdinand Destouches aveva operato per i servizi sanitari della Società delle Nazioni e, come medico del lavoro, presso gli stabilimenti americani della Ford, dopo aver trovato impiego come operaio e essersi sentito ripetere - si legge nel *Voyage* - «non ti serviranno a niente qui i tuoi studi, ragazzo! Mica sei venuto qui per pensare ma per fare i gesti che ti ordineranno di eseguire. Non abbiamo bisogno di creativi nella nostra fabbrica. È di scimpanzé che abbiamo bisogno». Nel 1930, Céline aveva già all'attivo alcuni saggi di medicina sociale che in qualche modo anticipano le pagine del *Viaggio sulle condizioni della manodopera industriale alla Ford e sui quartieri popolari di Parigi*. L'articolo apparso su "Le Mois" è però relativo a un altro viaggio compiuto dallo stesso Céline, non negli Stati Uniti ma in una Germania sull'orlo di quel lungo inverno che l'avrebbe, di lì a poco, condotta a una tragica rovina. Il 5 marzo del 1933, il Partito Nazionalsocialista vinse le elezioni e a qualcuno parve addirittura un segno di pacificazione interna o, comunque, un buon segno per la ripresa dell'Europa. Ma, come osservava Céline, «la pace non interessa nessuno e la fraternità viene a noia». Soprattutto in tempi di crisi. Come si ridurrà la disoccupazione?, si chiede il dottor Destouches. I tecnici dei ministeri sembrano avere, per lui, indocile lettore di statistiche, una sola risposta: «Con la sparizione graduale dei disoccupati». Questo perché «la mortalità crescente e le malattie da fame finiranno, nell'arco di cinquant'anni, per assorbire tutti i "senza lavoro". Ecco quello che non si dice chiaramente, ma si predice come normale negli ambienti "bene informati"». E nel frattempo? Nel frattempo, conclude, «il sussidio mensile è di circa 250 franchi, e proprio il sussidio, nella realtà dei fatti, condanna il disoccupato a una morte lenta per fame. I pubblici poteri assumono con franchezza questo stato di cose? Lo sanno? Sì e no». Con un sussidio di 250 franchi al mese, osservava dunque l'attento Céline, bastano 4 anni per vedersi

ragionevolmente morire di fame e questo perché «su quattro tedeschi il primo mangia troppo, altri due mangiano secondo il proprio appetito e il quarto... Beh, il quarto crepa lentamente per denutrizione. Ecco un problema che un bambino di dieci anni, dotato nella media, potrebbe risolvere in dieci secondi. I sofismi invece la fanno da padroni, sofismi che sostituiscono le azioni, là dove - al posto di quel bambino - interviene l'ipocrita, raffinata, riserva della ragione adulta. Perché gli adulti hanno imparato brillantemente a ragionare, ma su basi palesemente false. Un problema non rappresenta più un problema, quando tacitamente si è giurato di fare di tutto per non risolverlo. Non si tratta di capitalismo o di comunismo. Si tratta di ordine e buona fede». Il fatto che Céline non nutra, né abbia mai nutrito alcuna speranza di emancipazione per la classe operaia fu già Paul Nizan a rilevarlo. Perché in Céline è all'opera una sorta di sfiducia sistemica, sistematica e radicale nella possibilità storica che le cosiddette classi subalterne possano ribaltare a loro vantaggio un processo di de-emancipazione che, nell'opera dello scrittore del Viaggio, sembra tendere a un punto infinito. L'antropologia céliniana – che non solo è incline al pessimismo, ma oltre certi limiti sconfina nell'abiezione – mantiene però negli anni Trenta un suo dirompente profilo non privo di risvolti politicamente lucidi e persino profetici, nella sua prefigurazione distopica. Céline è un antiutopista, ma non ha bisogno di vagheggiare Nuovi mondi o nuove ere. Le ha viste, toccate, ne scrive. Nella «massa di inerzia civica», nelle «bestie senza fiducia» che (s)qualificano la condizione operaia a condizione di sub umanità e dannazione perenni, Céline vede il peggior prodotto della bestia capitalistico-finanziaria. Un prodotto di quel luogo, la fabbrica, che altro non è se non il risvolto all'apparenza meno demoniaco di un letto d'ospedale. Il lavoro non nobilita l'uomo, non più della povertà, della miseria o della fame. Non più di un sussidio statale da 250 franchi al mese. Il lavoro presuppone, per il dottor Destouches e per lo scrittore Céline, una preconditione: la malattia. È la vita malata ad essere messa al lavoro, tanto che – scrive, in una nota sull'impiego nella fabbrica Detroit – «non si vede di che malattie potrebbe essere malato un operaio al punto da non

poter lavorare alla Ford». I postulanti, gli inetti, i disgraziati, le classi abbiette «sono le più gradite alla direzione dello stabilimento» che producono malattia e malattia richiedono, per mantenere uno status quo inerziale fondato non sulla progressiva decadenza dello spirito, ma dei corpi. Corpi affamati, stremati dalla fatica, incapaci di vita comune, «masse di inerzia psico-fisica», facilmente corrompibili, perché già fiaccate e corrotte. La malattia e l'avvilimento, la disgrazia e l'inerzia sono per lui condizioni essenziali e costitutive dell'impiego in fabbrica. Non ambisce a niente, Céline. Vive nella miseria, la osserva, ne registra il dato. La malattia come ultima risorsa umana, in un mondo che si vede inesorabilmente volto alla comune rovina. Senza classe e, forse, senza classi.

Daniel Heller-Roazen *Murriana*

The cat has sharp sight at night
Al-Jahiz¹

It is night, but a cat is awake and, if we take him at his word, he has never been more alert. Alone in the dark, the principal if not sole narrator of E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Opinions of Murr the Cat* finds himself overcome by the most powerful of sentiments: "feelings of existence" (*Gefühle des Daseins*), as he boldly calls them at the start of the record of his life and thoughts.² "There is something so beautiful," the cat exclaims, "so magnificent, so sublime about life!"³ He recalls the hero of Goethe's *Egmont*, who sought to summon the "sweet familiarity of existence" while preparing, in a "painful instant," to bid farewell to life. But the cat, unlike the tragic personage, is very much alive and well, fully immersed in "that sweet familiarity" in the moment he names it; and he seems quite unable ever to imagine leaving it behind. All around him the cat senses "the spiritual power, the unknown force, or however one wishes to call the principle that holds sway over us, which," he adds, "has in some way implanted in me the aforementioned familiarity, without my ever having consented to it."⁴ His sensibility has raised him to a "high point" seldom, if ever, attained by poets. Moved by the force of his feelings and the agility of his four legs, he has easily "leapt"—or rather, as he corrects himself, "climbed"—up and over the roof-tops of the city in which he lives, the better to gaze at it in its nocturnal splendor. His prose betrays the unmistakable tone of an animal delighted with the position to which his natural abilities have brought him: "Over me lies the vaulted, starry sky; the full moon shines its sparkling rays, and roofs and towers stand, in fiery silver brilliance, all around me!"⁵

What does Murr feel as he remains perched at night high above the city? Despite his initial allusions to the famous

outburst of “that Dutch hero in the tragedy,” the cat seems unwilling to concede that any human being could grasp the full force of his existential sentiments. It is certain that Murr harbors doubts as to the capacities of the two-footed species in general, and that he by no means accepts as self-evident the rights of humanity to rule over the other animals with whom they share the earth. “Is that upright walker on two feet something so great,” Murr asks, with noticeable disdain, “that the species called humanity may claim mastery over us all, when we move about with so much more security and poise on our own four feet?”⁶ The cat, however, is no *ingénu*, and he is well aware that human beings have justified their claims to superiority in spite of their relatively feeble limbs. “I know,” Murr continues, “that they make a great deal of something that is supposed to sit in their heads, which they call reason.”⁷ Nevertheless, Murr remains skeptical: “I am not altogether sure of what exactly they mean by that,” he comments. “But this much is certain: if I am correct in concluding from certain discourses of my master and patron that reason is nothing other than the capacity to act with consciousness, and not to play any dumb tricks, then I would not change places with any human being.”⁸

Murr gives no indication of doubting the existence of that thing “that is supposed to sit” in the heads of humans, “which they call reason.” And, from his own experience, he seems quite capable of recognizing the telltale signs of its central organ, consciousness. But the cat nonetheless suggests that the much lauded faculty may be less important than many have claimed and that, in any case, its presence in the realm of human thought and action is a matter not of nature but of habit. “I absolutely believe,” the cat explains, “that one only gets used to consciousness” (*daß man sich das Bewußtsein nur angewöhnt*).⁹ The situation is quite different with that which is common to all the animals, human and inhuman, which the cat experiences as a joy in itself: life. “One comes through life and to life,” Murr declares, in programmatic terms, “without ever knowing how. At least that is how it was with me. And from what I hear, it is the same with human beings. Not one of them

ever knows the how and the where of his birth from his own experience; they only know of it through tradition, which, it should be added, is often far from reliable.”¹⁰

To the speaking cat, consciousness, therefore, is a thing of modest worth, a derivative being at best. But it is difficult to ascertain exactly where Murr himself stands with respect to the faculty he has often observed among those around him. Does he regard its presence among human beings as useful, albeit inessential? As unnecessary? As pernicious? Has Murr, one might wonder, ever entertained the possibility of acquiring it himself? It is certainly possible that to his eyes, as to those of many of his readers, consciousness lies beyond the province of animal nature. It is also conceivable, however, that the cat deems the faculty of reason accessible to the feline race. Perhaps he would grant that, if they so desired or so required, all the animals could cultivate consciousness, at least as successfully as human beings. This appears to have been the position on the issue represented by Kafka’s Rotpeter, for example, who explained in his “Report to an Academy” exactly how he had passed, in captivity and in training, from ape to man: “I learned, Gentlemen. One learns, alas, when one must; one learns when one wants a way out; one learns ruthlessly” (*Und ich lernte, meine Herren. Ach, man lernt, wenn man muß; man lernt, wenn man einen Ausweg will; man lernt rücksichtslos*).¹¹ The question would in any case most likely have struck the cat as academic. For Hoffmann’s feline narrator never knows the hardships of Kafka’s incarcerated ape, desperately in search of any “way out” of his servitude, and the cat never appears to have felt compelled to acquire the habits of the rational animal. Nor does he seem ever to have been tempted to “get used” to consciousness for any reasons of his own. Murr shows every sign of being content to abandon himself fully to the sensation of life and its “sweet familiarity.”

The cat himself, however, makes few claims for his sentiments and, perhaps on account of his distrust of consciousness, declines to compare them in detail to those of human beings. But Murr’s feelings may well have more to do with human perceptions than he explicitly indicates; and it

is possible that they even allow the cat to accede to a region of being sought more than once by “that upright walker on two feet.” It is remarkable that the conditions in which the cat senses “something so beautiful, so sublime, so magnificent about life” are exactly those by which one of his better known contemporaries, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, once defined the principles from which the philosophy of nature and spirit must begin. Fifteen years before the publication of *Opinions of Murr the Cat*, Hegel had sought to characterize the “simplicity without division” that, he argued, precedes and enables every complex activity of “subjective spirit.” He did so by describing a state that he himself qualified as essentially “terrifying” (*furchtbar*), but which seems close to the one so blithely embraced by the cat. In his 1805-1806 Jena lecture course, Hegel had explained that in its origin, the “pure Self” is nothing other than “an empty night,” which is utterly “*conscious-less*, that is, without being, as an object, presented to representation.”¹² And in his essay *On the Difference Between Fichte’s and Schelling’s Philosophical Systems*, the young philosopher had charged the same image with the task of depicting something still more fundamental, which one might well consider the very principle of principles. “The Absolute,” Hegel had written in that seminal work, “is night, and light is younger than it.” It is “the Nothing, the first, from which all being and the multiplicity of the finite emerged.”¹³

The reflections of Hoffmann’s cat are perhaps best considered in the light of this “empty night.” It is not difficult to see that, poised above the towers and roofs of his city, Murr confronts a principle that could well be called “absolute,” an indistinct and insuperable force to which he considers himself to have been consigned, like every other living thing, “without ever having consented to it,” and which he calls, with seeming philosophical naïveté, by an old and familiar name: “life.” Not that the feline creature succeeds in knowing that which Hegel had described as by definition “*conscious-less*, that is, without being, as an object, presented to representation.” At night, at least, Murr knows nothing; in the apparent absence of representation and cogitation, the dark night of

the cat remains, by definition, utterly “conscious-less.” The cat perceives “the principle that holds sway over us” not by the organ of reason “that is supposed to sit in the heads” of men but by an irreducibly animal faculty, namely, sensation or, as Murr puts it, “feeling.” He appears to need nothing else: one could say that for the cat, as for Faust, “feeling is everything” (*Gefühl ist alles*). For it is by sensing that Murr finds himself delivered over to that simplest and most universal dimension of all things, which is itself no thing: “existence” (*Dasein*).

Who is Murr the cat, and how are we to understand the “feelings of existence” by which he begins the testament of his thoughts and deeds? It is certainly possible to read the “opinions” of the reflective cat as the expressions of a decidedly human fantasy of natural simplicity, the anthropomorphic fiction of an animal ease unencumbered by the layers of consciousness and self-consciousness that were no doubt all too familiar to the well-read public of Hoffmann’s volume. And this is indeed what Meister Abraham, Murr’s benevolent patron, seems to suggest in the terms by which he introduces the cat towards the beginning of the book. Pointing out “Murr the cat, as I have named him” to his friend Kreisler, Abraham declares unambiguously: “This is the most reserved, most courteous, indeed the most amusing animal of his kind which one can find, who is lacking only in higher education” (*dem es nur noch an der höheren Bildung fehlt*).¹⁴

In this sense, the cat may be less an animal of extraordinary capacities than a human being devoid of the superior faculties of the mind, who, in the technical terms of jurisprudence invoked by Abraham, cannot be considered to be his own man from the point of view of the law, *homo sui juris*.¹⁵ But it is not difficult to see that Hoffmann’s cat is just as much a figure for that most advanced of literary personages whom we call the author, and the opening section of the *Opinions of the Murr the Cat* can be said to furnish the reader with a portrait of the artist as a kitten. Not only is Murr said to be particularly susceptible to “those soft reveries, those dreamy ponderings, sleepwalking trances” that are widely considered hallmarks of the moments in which one is visited by “the ideas

of genius.”¹⁶ By the time we first meet him, the cat has already written several books of different genres, the most important of which he himself enumerates in the order he wrote them, “lest the world squabble,” as he explains, “over the succession of my eternal works”: a novel, *Thought and Inkleing, or Cat and Dog*; a political treatise, *On Mousetraps and Their Influence on the Mind and Activity of Catdom*; and a tragedy, *Kawdallor, Rat King*.¹⁷

But the cat’s literary activities extend still further, for Murr is also the author of the very pages that record his many “opinions.” To be sure, E.T.A. Hoffmann, the “editor” of the volume, informs the reader in the preface to *Opinions of Murr the Cat* that the bound book is only in part the creation of its ostensibly feline protagonist. The editor concedes that the cat certainly wrote the pages of the work in which he speaks in his own name. But Murr had nothing to do, we learn, with the others interspersed between them, which are devoted to the life of the mad musician Kreisler, whose “eccentric, wild and playful” appearances in the volume would inspire Schumann’s great Opus 16 piano fantasies, the *Kreisleriana*, barely twenty years later.¹⁸ “Careful research and inquiry” led the editor to conclude that the passages about the musician stemmed from a printed book “containing the biography of the Kapellmeister Kreisler,” which most likely lay in the home of Murr and his master. While writing, the somewhat distracted feline author would have periodically and harmlessly shredded its pages, “in part for padding, in part for blotting”; later, he would have unwittingly included them in his own manuscript.¹⁹ With some embarrassment, the editor reports that these “foreign interpolations” (*fremde Einschiebsel*) were noticed too late in the printing of the book to be deleted. The most that could be done was to mark them in the body of the text by editorial abbreviations (*S. S.* for “Spoiled Sheets,” *M.C.O.* for “Murr Carries On”), to ensure that the readers would not take them for anything other than what they truly were. (Hence the full title of the published work, a testament to the probity of its editor: *Opinions of Murr the Cat, With A Fragmentary Biography of the Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler in Haphazard Spoiled Sheets.*)

Who is to say, however, what the cat himself really

wrote? It is difficult to avoid the impression that the editor may have underestimated his author, for the apparently self-sufficient “biography” of Kreisler turns out to be an account of his good friend, Meister Abraham, and so inevitably also to contain at its center the portrait of that “most reserved, most courteous, indeed [...] most amusing animal of his kind” who elsewhere speaks in his own name. One can hardly suppress the suspicion that the duplicity of the work could be something of a feline ruse. In the end, the opinions of the cat and the tale of the musician might well be two sides of a single creation; they could be two movements, so to speak, of one *Murriana*.

Cat and artist, shredder and author at once, Murr, whoever and whatever he may have been, remains witness to an experience that the “upright walker on two feet” has rarely perceived with such clarity. It is the experience of the one sense shared by all the individual senses and felt, however faintly and however intermittently, in all sensation: the sense of sensing, by which we find ourselves, like the existential cat of the empty night, consigned, before or beyond consciousness, to the omnipresent “life [...] through which and to which” all animals come, “without ever knowing how.” Few living beings can boast faculties as keen as those of the cat in the dark, and it may be that few could match the sensitivity of the nocturnal Murr, driven more than once by that “unnamable feeling” (*unnenbares Gefühl*)²⁰ to a state of utter senselessness: “that singular feeling, woven of pleasure and displeasure, stunned my senses – overwhelmed me – cannot possibly resist – I ate the herring!”²¹

1 Abū ‘Uthmān ‘Amr ibn Bahr al-Jāhiz, *Kitāb al-bayanān*, ed. ‘Abd al-Salām Muhammad Hārūn, 7 vols. (Cairo: Maktabat Mustafā al-Bābī al-Halabī, 1938-1945), vol. V, p. 336.

2 E. T. A. Hoffmann, *Lebensansichten des Katers Murr, nebst fragmentarischer Biographie des Kapellmeisters Johannes Kreisler in zufälligen Makulaturblättern* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1967), p. 15.

3 Ibid., p. 15.

4 Ibid.

- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid., p. 16.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 “Ein Bericht für eine Akademie,” in Franz Kafka, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Hans-Gerd Koch (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1994), vol. I: *Ein Landarzt und andere Drucke zu Lebzeiten*, pp. 234-245, p. 244.
- 12 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Jenaer Realphilosophie, Vorlesungsmanuskripte zur Philosophie der Natur und des Geistes von 1805-1806*, ed. J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1967), pp. 181-182.
- 13 Hegel, *Werke*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), vol. I: *Frühe Schriften, Die Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems*, pp. 24-25.
- 14 *Lebensansichten des Katers Murr*, pp. 32-33.
- 15 Ibid., 33.
- 16 Ibid., 35.
- 17 Ibid., p. 42.
- 18 Robert Schumann, Letter of March 15, 1839 to Simonin de Sire; cited in Schumann, *Kreisleriana, Opus 16*, ed. Ernst Hettrich (Munich: Henle, 2004), p. iii.
- 19 *Lebensansichten des Katers Murr*, p. 10.
- 20 Ibid., p. 51.
- 21 Ibid., p. 56.

da “The Inner Touch. Archaeology of a Sensation”, Zone Books, 2009.

Difficoltà:

1° passaggio dal *piano* al *solido*

architetti, disegnatori — « modellisti ».

esercitarsi *sistematicamente* alla geometria nello spazio.

2° passaggio dalla *quiete* al *movimento*

3° passaggio dal *discontinuo* al *continuo*

ragionamenti ed esercizi sistematici.

La percezione è impotente, a partire da una certa complicazione, se il ragionamento non le viene in soccorso.

< guardare *in faccia* tutte le tue difficoltà.

macchine a ingranaggi: come?...

macchine per tessere, ecc. >

Lista delle difficoltà...

serie...

Forme del *potere* — o piuttosto della ricerca del potere.

Quando c'è grande instabilità e grande brutalità nella lotta per il potere, le passioni sono vive e semplici; il contatto con le necessità naturali non si perde mai; la felicità e la sventura vi hanno più spazio, i tormenti interiori meno [Omero — Sofocle].

Sotto i poteri stabili, per la massa dei privati cittadini < il popolo a parte >, l'amore diviene il mezzo principale per DOMINARE — è anche il momento dell'adulazione... [Don Giovanni] [Racine].

La gente del 1660 era la meno capace al mondo di capire Omero.

Nei periodi di grande brutalità, attraverso i rapimenti... può fiorire l'amore più puro: Andromaca.

(Ἔκτορ, ἀτὰρ σὺ μοι ἔσσι πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ,
ἥδ' ἐ κασίγνητος, σὺ δέ μοι θαλερὸς παρακοίτης).¹

E questo appunto perché l'intrigo amoroso è sconosciuto.

1. « Ettore, tu sei per me padre e nobile madre / E fratello, tu sei il mio sposo fiorent » (*Iliade*, vi, 429-430; trad. di R. Calzecchi-Onesti).

Massimo Conti
Due ore di grazia.

*L'ascolto di Empty Words Part III. John Cage
al Teatro Lirico di Milano, 2 dicembre 1977*

Il brusio dopo l'applauso iniziale come in ogni luogo di spettacolo ha segnato l'ingresso dell'uomo che ora si siede. Il palco (alcune foto della serata sono contenute nel libretto allegato al cd) è arredato con un piccolo tavolo, una lampada a braccio appoggiata, un microfono su un'asta, un bicchiere d'acqua, fogli dattiloscritti; dietro tutto, sul fondo, uno schermo. L'uomo avvia il cronometro. Il concerto comincia: Empty Words Part III.

La bocca, la lingua, il palato, la glottide, le corde vocali, cominciano a emettere suoni articolati non casuali che sono il risultato dell'interpretazione da uno spartito di una serie di lettere e parole che vengono lette. Amplificata dal microfono la Voce si espande nello spazio buio della sala **theAf perchgreatthind and ten have andthewhita nae thatIhas be their ofsparrermayyour heglanruas theshelf**

Del legno che scricchiola. Una sedia, di quelle a sdraio, un aggiustamento di posizione. La tosse e una risatina. Sono passati appena 20 secondi e la mente si desta. La precisione della Voce, la gola come carne che si schiaccia su un piano di marmo. La lingua batte e spinge **-shaped wk; Wid n pstw ety** la tosse è un virus ora che pian piano si spande. Della carta che struscia. La tosse. La tosse e il coperchio di un barattolo. Schiarite e grugniti qua e là, comunicazioni sotterranee, artificiali, con gli occhi che si abbassano, si alzano, girano intorno e cercano tra le file un complice o due e risate sommesse. Improvviso un grido incomprensibile e poi: PSSSSSSSSSS...ShShShShShShShShShShS. Continua la Voce a sputare sassi duri spigolosi o rotondi, serpenti, gocce pesanti, piume e alberi e ramarri **ree iue ll iea crrre ath th**

yposleeps what freeze p la tosse. Qualche parola lontana. Alla prima pausa un applauso che sembra sincero. Ma subito no, si capisce, subito dopo è un cancello aperto dove entrano gli zombi festanti con vesti di molti colori, capelli sul collo o ricci a spumone, sciarpe lunghissime, infermiere e dottori, giocatori di rugby, poliziotti in motocicletta. Tanti, subito tanti. Tutti? La Voce continua ed emette un acuto nitrito come un cavallo che saluta festoso **ngtthstalioldas ui ll, the theo** NON SIAMO IN AMERICA grida la prima voce che arriva da chissà dove, isolata, che articola un pensiero. Un fischio lontano poi un altro. Un rumore metallico come uno scatto. Qualcuno ha frenato gli zombi che quasi indietreggiano. Sembrano tutti riflettere: Mumble Mumble mumble mumble mumble. Una pausa di vuoto come un bar alle quattro a.m. di un giorno di festa. Il suono della Voce ha fatto ancora una pausa prevista; poi si allunga e costruisce strade e città **wour-w iatth mre rs y o otstne r t e r ocat w dby ell e pl aP. M** CORAGGIOSO!. Dice uno sdraiato fino in fondo alla sua sedia. Un applauso ancora come soldi buttati sull'erba. L'argine tiene ma preme. Il primo coro melodico organizzato appare sul fondo, lontano, e si vedono gli striscioni e i cartelli. Sono passati 17 minuti e 36 secondi.

I posti in piedi cominciano a essere occupati. STEFANOOO. AN PEDITO!!! Prime voci che si sentono libere di esserci. CHE SEI SCEMO??? dice lei, una lei qualunque, in una qualunque fila, in un'ultima difesa dell'argine con tutto il corpo proteso e la voce indignata. È un'occasione preziosa per gli altri: BRAVA BRAVA AAAAAA gli gridano da tutte le parti. Un'onda sonora si alza la solleva e la porta chissà dove. Poi senza più freni si parte: ARIDATECE BETTY CURTIS!!! Betty Curtis? VOGLIAMO I SOLDI! Tutto è sparso ora, ma la Voce continua: un uovo, una sciarpa, un libro, un gas **nor e s nchfth ne d, my oe rsl nd psda pwsp ttl ac oe** un accompagnamento di SSSSS SSSSS SSSSS SSSSS SSSSS SSSSS SSSSS da un gruppo che è quasi la sala, che poi ride. Questa è pioggia dorata per la Voce che si scioglie sempre più generosa. Da qualche parte un fischietto di varietà. SEI FUORI DI TESTA!! Un ritmo di mani come in un rave per il suo guru al microfono. Tutto è

meraviglia, funziona e anche la Voce si concede, strappa un volo e un gabbiano cade a terra fingendosi morto **Str isrs dys t h fbndrstk ntrwh aill** la folla lo adora. La Voce saluta la piazza che risponde in coro: SCEMOSCEMO SCEMOSCEMO SCEMOSCEMO SCEMOSCEMO. La Voce fa Goal e la folla urla per la vittoria. I festeggiamenti continuano per minuti interi. Ora si vedono, come scontornati, il tavolo, la sedia, il microfono e la lampada presso il quale il corpo della Voce sta. Un canotto rotondo sorregge il tutto **pe atwell breeze way in ninotndtowninwalls ndj re bing ageem earthwhitmid** attorno si apre uno spazio senza pavimento, ogni cosa fluttua senza peso, le voci si alzano come scie colorate, frammenti di ghiaccio o fiumi. Liberi finalmente, davvero, gli ultimi guardiani straccioni sono stati morsi e ora sono anche loro, come Loro. VOGLIAMO MOZART!! Ancora sassi e sterpi escono dalla Voce e subito dopo germogliano. CHE CAZZO DICI? Un scoppio? Uno sparo? Un petardo forse. Un'imitazione fatta con la fronte. AL ROGOOO!! Ululati di indiani che si inseguono e poi un'unica tromba di dieci tir festanti. Un vero concerto polifonico preparato, accordato. La Voce pare fermarsi e ammirare poi duetta e accarezza e sorride anzi sghignazza come dopo un tuffo incredibile **ticesee with guage ied and Po fuzzwas th swb ll rther y** in molti ora cominciano a organizzare gruppi sparsi di voci che si vogliono accordare per proporre cori, far sentire alla Voce che ci sono, che anche loro sono una presenza, più flessuosa e melodica, carica di senso e di melodramma. Un ululato lunghissimo della Voce li sovrasta e loro ci si arrampicano attorno. IMPICCHIAMOLO! PREPARIAMO LA FORCA! Ti amo ti amo ti amo ti amo. DACCIA LA MUSICA!!! VOGLIAMO LA MUSICA. MUSICA MUSICA MUSICA. Da una terrazza, da qualche parte, delle urla, un gallo strilla. Si smerciano sigarette e ci si guarda intorno a gruppetti, si accende, si tira, e si urla. Qualcuno vuole i soldi indietro. SANGUE SANGUE SANGUE. Un cane piccolissimo, sembra, abbaia lontano. BASTA BASTA BASTA. Un applauso isolato, un applauso, colpi di pistola o spranghe battute contro il muro, le urla delle fanciulle, ancora dei cori e poi ancora delle urla, forse arriva l'ambulanza. Un blues sembra

ora quello della Voce che emerge appena sotto tutto **mh leto whsw night this the fs sons's passed SomeIt ohalfprop ch, t stump** si allestiscono roghi si alzano forche, a quanto sembra non tutti sono d'accordo. Ci si parla ci si convince ci si abbraccia. Poi un unico amico, un unico che sembra un'amica salta sul palco senza clamore e si avvicina al tavolo e pronuncia scandendo numeri accanto al microfono, lo stesso della Voce. Un accompagnamento dolcissimo e timoroso, gli altri sono quasi invidiosi. Lo guardano e vorrebbero essere lì. LOTTA ARMATA PER LA RIVOLUZIONE. Un coro improvviso quasi zittito dagli altri. Un suono come di spazio, come la sigla di un telefilm del secolo scorso. Un counter scandito alla rovescia per un fischio ancora, uno solo. Un trampolino o la pista ripida di una discesa nella neve. Un cantante canta una romanza altrove sul fondo. VOGLIAMO CAPIRE VOGLIAMO CAPIRE VOGLIAMO CAPIRE. VERGOGNATI. La Voce allora fa una navicella trasparente e leggera e la lancia. E atterra **onethe ered pol that et notionsbe glecwbi ukge ndi yond a ingt isr w the Trf** da qualche parte è arrivata una notizia oppure un personaggio famoso viene accolto con un'ovazione. La voce si sospende, anch'essa in omaggio. PORCO DIO cantato in coro dalla confraternita degli amici di Cristo.

TESTA DI CAZZO!!! Si sollevano corpi in aria adesso e si raccolgono poco prima che tocchino terra. Un trenino è partito. SCEMOSCEMO SCEMO SCEMO. OHHHHHHHOOOOHOHOHOHOHOHOHOHOHO. Un urlo straziato mani alla gola e occhi sbarrati, la recita di un horror. La Voce si ferma. Secondo me ride. Esplode qualche cosa, un sacrificio. Isterici BASTA sparsi, persone con le mani sui capelli, esibizionisti. Uno SCEMO gridato come una voce melodica delle montagne. SCEMOSCEMO invece doveva essere di moda, come un motivetto orecchiabile e urbano. Una strepitosa chiusura finale tremante della Voce, lunghissima, ormai calda e libera si lascia andare alla bellezza **ctaae fwflow t a yneathlooks ira m m wht a inec itstimeland** molti sono usciti ma non per andarsene, forse per organizzarsi la serata. Restare o andare. Certo che qui è bello, tutto sto casino. Una

risata con l'acqua in bocca della Voce gli procura applausi festanti della folla che guarda una foca sollevare il grande pallone a spicchi bianchi e rossi. HAI ROTTO IL CAZZOOO!! Poi, una sirena si sente davvero, da dove e dove va? Una pausa dalla sala, forse si cercano il bar ed i panini. Poi: FAMMI CAPIRE! Per un po' tutti stanno affaccendati come se cercassero un nuovo coro che arriva: NUDO NUDO NUDO. Una folata di vento con un suono di inverno veloce e freddo. Delle bacchette improvvisate battono il ritmo su qualche ringhiera di metallo. Un batterista, una serie di batteristi, un jazz festoso, una festa di mani, una felicità sfrenata, una gioia. La Voce si quietava e raccoglie commossa e quando ricomincia si sente che è emozionata, che trema ma si dispone ancora. Una locomotiva che arriva si ferma e riparte **hint not ingoff pleasREin dash-cer?s ap IA 4ly re be suchNewsucan posed** facce affacciate dal finestrino capelli ricci allungati dal vento. Il gruppo ritmico sarà a petto nudo, scommetto, e concentrato porta avanti una session lunghissima. È passata 1 ora e 14 minuti.

Sono apparsi dei coperchi? di pentola? li battono? TIRATELO GIU. Se guardo la scena ora vedo la nave dei folli, liberi. Finalmente. La Voce beve, le labbra si inumidiscono. SCOPPIATO!! Una marcia trionfante, un rullare di tamburi, corpi danzanti urla di gioia. Fischi come liane o corde d'arrembaggio. Gli indiani finalmente sono a teatro, portano le loro corone, i loro canti, i loro balli sfrenati, mangiando carne umana. La Voce tace per poco, un po' per rispetto e un po' anche perché si è dimenticata di sé, poi ricomincia ancora solida e chiara. Sono saltate le sedie sicuro e a qualcuno non piacerà, ma il concerto continua, poi faremo i conti. TI TAGLIO LA LINGUA. All'improvviso il palco è caduto come un fortino assediato è caduto, in tanti si avvicinano al tavolo, applausi: NON C'È SCRITTO UN CAZZO. SONO FOGLI BIANCHI. Da lontano: SPEGNETE LA LUCE. La Voce continua assorbendo il ritmo di ciò che è possibile fare **re oncft i xpmenstdapen string smaa his re thh floor** UNO DUE TRE. Ora sono praticamente esauriti i posti in piedi. FINISCILA. BIS BIS BIS BIS. UNODUE UNODUE UNODUE. Si fanno vocalizzi intonati accanto al microfono, una macchina sonora e la Voce

si mette al lato senza smettere. Un applauso premia la sua bellezza di rockstar, lui si sposta i capelli tira su il dito medio, complice con tutti loro. EROINOMANE. Uno strusciare di panche come scostate, anche battute. Un altro microfono su un'asta appare improvvisamente sul palco: COMPAGNI! QUESTA È UNA PARTITA TRA NOI E LUI SE NOI CI STIAMO ZITTI VINCIAMO NOI SE CONTINUIAMO A FARE CASINO VINCE LUI, COMPAGNI, FACCIAMO SILENZIO PERCHÈ STA VINCENDO LUI. Una ragazza dal basso: UNO A ZERO! Un altro ha raggiunto il microfono e dice: E QUESTO COSA VUOL DIRE? sul davanti qualcuno evidentemente si alza e diventa poeta: SECONDO VOI VINCE CHE COSA? UNA CORSA A CAVALLI? UNA CORSA SU UN AREOPLANINO DI CARTA? Il capo insiste: COMPAGNI GLI STIAMO DANDO RAGIONE FACCIAMO SILENZIO E FACCIAMO FINIRE. FALLO TACERE! dicono in coro. Poi il microfono passa di mano: OGGI CENTOMILA OPERAI PER LE STRADE DI ROMA. Una ragazza invece si avvicina al corpo seduto che canta su quel tavolo, si china e vede di profilo il volto di quella Voce che non ha mai smesso di esserci, a volte si è sospesa ma solo per cercare il tempo giusto, il tempo adatto alla serietà della cerimonia della democrazia, il dibattito, l'annuncio, lo slogan e la presa di coscienza di non essere classe operaia. Comunque la ragazza è lì che si scosta i lunghi capelli per appoggiarli sopra l'orecchio e chiede (ride o è seria?) SENTI MI SPIEGI? CIOÈ IO VOGLIO CAPIRE MI AIUTI? No no ride è felice! Che paura per un momento. Col pretesto ora in molti sono vicino alla voce e lo accompagnano rumorosamente. Tra tante cose che dicono anche solo per sentirsi parlare, per essere in sintonia, si sente un I LOVE YOU oinu iai P hbrownof I mthe ensectsdis ersum nd n ora tutto lo spazio è saturo, ogni centimetro quadro è stato calpestato, si è arrivati fino al canotto, alla sedia, al tavolo e alla lampada, al microfono e al bicchiere dove il corpo della Voce non si è mai mosso. Allora si sentono parole di qualcuno che è stato evidentemente l'organizzatore dell'evento, intellettuale, che cerca di mettere le cose al loro posto: JOHN CAGE HA IL SUO SPAZIO!

IL SUO SPAZIO GLI DEVE RESTARE! IL SUO SPAZIO DEVE RESTARE A JOHN CAGE! IL PUBBLICO SI CERCHI IL SUO SPAZIO! IL PUBBLICO HA IL SUO LUOGO E IL SUO SPAZIO! IL PUBBLICO NON DEVE ENTRARE NELLO SPAZIO DI JOHN CAGE PERCHÉ È UNA USURPAZIONE ED È UNA MINACCIA. La Voce in tutto questo è sempre stata Voce. Torna al microfono colui che pensava di essere il capo: COMPAGNI L'AVANGUARDIA È NATA SULLA PROVOCAZIONE DIMOSTRANDO CHE LA PROVOCAZIONE È ANCORA VALIDA VUOL DIRE CHE L'AVANGUARDIA NON È MAI ESISTITA. E IN QUESTO MOMENTO NOI STIAMO DANDO RAGIONE ...STIAMO DANDO RAGIONE A LUI VUOL DIRE CHE... VUOL DIRE CHE STIAMO DISTRUGGENDO L'AVANGUARDIA ...COMPAGNI. Vicino alla Voce: JOHN CAGE, HAI MAI SENTITO PARLARE DI JAN PALACH? E ancora più vicino: YOU ARE A STUPID YOU ARE STUPID YOU ARE VERY STUPID. Il vecchio capo: COMPAGNI NOI DOBBIAMO FARE UNA SCELTA. VOGLIAMO BOICOTTARE I CONTENUTI DI JOHN CAGE O NO? SE LI VOGLIAMO BOICOTTARE DOBBIAMO LASCIARLO FINIRE NON DOBBIAMO ACCETTARE LA PROVOCAZIONE. A quest'ultimo appello sembrano pensarci. Ci sono ancora urla ma sembra che la gente voglia sfollare in buon ordine. PORCO IDDIO PORCA MADONNA. Un coro, uno slancio una voglia di rivoluzione: PROVOCAZIONE SI' OPPORTUNISMO NO. Qualcuno trafelato arriva sul palco, la Voce lì vicino continua, litania sottile ora che fa coraggio a tutti li rende presenti al tempo **Ilz nd ie eandsra Heo eS m h; s At std ee c d** AH AH...SI SENTE? Gli rispondono e rincuorano: SI. COMPAGNI IO VOGLIO DIRE UNA ROBA... FORSE JOHN CAGE È TROPPO AVANTI NEI TEMPI E NELL'ARTE PER CUI NOI NON COMPRENDIAMO. Delle urla protestano: nooo noi siamo avanti. O FORSE JOHN CAGE STA BLEFFANDO, IO PENSO CHE LUI STA BLEFFANDO E ALLORA VOGLIO DIRE UNA COSA RISPETTO A QUESTA PROVOCAZIONE CHE

PUO' ESSERE ANCHE SOLO UNA PROVOCAZIONE ANDARE AVANTI COSI' MI SEMBRA ANCHE INUTILE NO ALLORA SI PUO' APRIRE UN DIBATTITO ADESSO RISPETTO, RISPETTO COME SI PUO' DIRE L'ARTE E L'AVANGUARDIA OGGI COME OGGI, PERCHE' IO SINCERAMENTE NON CI HO CAPITO UN CAZZO MA NON PENSO DI ESSERE SCEMO. È passata 1 ora e 44 minuti.

Nessuno risponde a questa richiesta, solo la Voce continua e il brusio come di chi si fa i fatti propri. INTELLETTUALE DI MERDA. VIVA KING KONG! Ancora colpi, tonfi, sul microfono. La Voce torna a galla e gorgoglia. METTETEGLI UN LIMONE IN BOCCAAA. Ora sembra che lo stadio si stia svuotando: in quanti saranno rimasti? Ancora qua e là qualche cosa di distinto: MILLE LIRE SE TE NE VAI, DAI. VOGLIAMO I ROLLING STONES. Quel microfono per tutti ancora viene preso: HUE IO VOGLIO DIRE QUALCHE COSA: OPPIAAPPUER DOT TA TTURE DA TE OPPIA PPUERE... HUE... PIRLA. Un lungo momento di pioggia inerte, carte per terra, una festa di paese alla fine, voci che si chiamano. TRECENTODICIASSETTE. Dove sono tutti ora? Cosa stanno facendo? Non si riesce a capire la dinamica del posto. Qualcuno è tornato attorno al tavolo e guarda sui fogli. **a forbleth aexa a yel r tal e of wood's taseaat . Thou ndp mer nngs slen ClemyMclussack** la Voce è lì solo più rarefatta forse stanca dal tempo trascorso e da tutti gli avvenimenti. Sembra che siano rimasti in pochi e quasi tutti sul palco scrutano le carte e commentano: STA PARLANDO? NO ORA È IN PAUSA VEDI C'È SCRITTO. Commenti, commenti, opinioni sul tempo e sulla durata. Sembrano tutte, o quasi, voci di adolescenti. SONO ESATTAMENTE 1 ORA QUARANTRE MINUTI E CINQUANTA SECONDI O DUE? STO PER FERMARE IL CRONOMETRO. Qualcuno ha ancora la forza di far partire degli applausi ritmati. Si sente ancora: SE TU BEVESSI UN SORSO D'ACQUA. Dal microfono accanto ancora accompagnamenti, una tromba fatta con la bocca. Applausi ritmati e ancora cori da pallavolo. Una sirena vocale sorprende tutti e satura l'aria.

Vocalizzi continui. Un omaggio alla Voce sorprendente, insperato. A questo punto non ci sono più frasi sensate solo un coinvolgente accompagnare, come se tutto fosse chiaro per una volta nella vita. Il momento perfetto? L'armonia viene rotta dai tecnici e dagli intellettuali che cercano di formare ancora un argine a cui tutti si ribellano. LUI LO FA perché IO NO. E infatti tornati al microfono proclamano: HO LA MIA CREATIVITA'. CREATIVO!! gli rispondono urlando, quasi infastiditi da qualche parte nella sala. Ad un certo punto i creativi discutono animatamente con chi li impedisce di essere lì: LO SPETTACOLO È LUI O SIAMO NOI? l'intellettuale organizzatore risponde: LO SPETTACOLO SIAMO NOI E LO STIAMO DIMOSTRANDO. Con forza allora gli viene urlato: E DI CHE CAZZO HAI PAURA ALLORA?... HO PAURA CHE TU GLI METTI LE MANI ADDOSSO!!! Indignati gli rispondono: MA NON ESISTE QUESTA COSA. Il microfono sull'asta viene ancora preso: FORSE STIAMO FACENDO IL SUO GIOCO COMUNQUE AL LIMITE MI VA ANCHE BENE... perché? JOHN IS NOT POSSIBLE sussurra qualcuno e non si capisce se è un avvertimento, un consiglio, una constatazione, fatto sta che la Voce non ha esitazioni come se non avesse sentito e inaugura una nave con alberi di dieci metri e il vento gioioso la fa ancora andare **Yw aflpspfndhteghtoun thieaoush lch gfl ea thsee ar ea est lurkthir yschterEve lyfistspir – f** il fischio di un larsen prima acuto poi allagato nei medi, un omaggio elettronico, quello che mancava. Battiti di mani e canti delle pianure. Poi il vuoto. Per qualche secondo un brusio indistinto si installa disturbato solo da qualche fischio. Qualcuno dice: ASSASSINO ASSASSINO!! gridando come se fosse una comparsa che scopre l'assassino col coltello in mano scoperto in flagrante. AA. La Voce ora sembra cullare questi istanti, pacifica, capisce il momento e si fa dolce e profonda. È MEZZANOTTE!! SI SI SI, TORTURACI COSÌ! Gli gridano ancora ma non se ne vanno anzi, ricominciano a ululare salutando un improvviso montare della Voce inaspettato a quel punto ma che è come la risposta alla richiesta di un bis. VOGLIAMO I ROLLING

STONES. Ancora?! Forse qualcuno arrivato in ritardo.
BRANCA BRANCA BRANCA LEON LEON LEON.
BASTA. I fogli di carta sul tavolo si spostano presi da un lato e tastati, scorrono. VAFFANCULO! Sembrano gli ultimi barlumi di un fuoco. VAI VIA VAI VIAAAA. La Voce ha ripreso con vigore, qualcuno ha messo un disco di fine serata; si sono forse accese le luci della sala? Un tributo ritmico da stadio pieno di tamburi vorrebbe anticipare una parata di carri allegorici, una parata di carnevale fatta di scheletri e teschi che volteggiano senza peso nell'aria. Fischi ancora e ancora gli chiedono di andarsene loro che non lo hanno fatto perché vogliono che tutto vada come al solito, vogliono vedere come va a finire o vogliono vedere se tutto questo ha una fine. Tutto diventa rarefatto e meno distinto con dei guizzi di senso: QUANTO FA DUE PIU' DUE MENO UNO? ALLA SCALA ALLA SCALA! VAI A CAGARE.

MA DICCI ALMENO SE SIAMO DEGLI STRONZI!?

Chiedono alla Voce in cerca di un finale che li consideri ancora **me bor be** quasi improvvisamente la Voce chiude il suo concerto, ha finito; l'uomo si alza e se ne va. Ed è allora che tutto si apre in un frastuono dirompente, un boato che ancora sento. Un trionfo, un trionfo completo, tutti in piedi, uno scroscio di applausi come una valanga gigantesca, (dall'intensità dell'applauso sembra quasi che nessuno se ne sia andato e che tutti hanno aspettato la fine) un'ovazione, volti trasformati dal delirio, come si fa per una divinità, per un'apparizione miracolosa, per l'avvento di uno Spirito venuto da chi sa dove, in una notte indimenticabile per tutti.

Cristina Rizzo
Procurarsi una teoria

Ho cominciato a chiamarli esercizi poiché corrispondono a un'idea di pratica, che potrebbe essere attivata in qualsiasi luogo ed in qualsiasi momento.

Non possono essere fatti da tutti però, infatti non esistono istruzioni.

In fondo sono pratiche intime, hanno a che vedere con il sogno che si fa al mattino, quello che appare ripetibile al risveglio o comunque non costituiscono una disciplina; possono essere usati per allenarsi al vuoto. Non si attivano attraverso l'uso della volontà. Richiedono però un calcolo esatto tra la forma e l'espressione. Non producono nessun prodotto. Allenano alla bellezza senza valore, allo charme. Si possono ripetere ogni qual volta che qualcuno lo chiede o anche nella propria casa senza che nessuno lo veda, infatti allenano a non guardare.

Si fanno con il corpo ma possono essere fatti anche con il pensiero o con la scrittura o con la musica o con la pittura o anche con le spezie e il cibo e con la lettura o anche con degli ospiti. Non è possibile improvvisarli in quanto richiedono specificità e massima adesione alle norme anche se disattendono sempre alla legge poiché aderiscono esclusivamente all'intensità; sono esercizi ciechi ma sono utili.

(Dieci esercizi - La voce degli animali, la bocca, la sonata, il vestito, i windchimes, i gesti retorici, la partitura, il dialogo: Birds dialogue, Tongue, Scarlatti's hair, The Bat, Gold, Blue, Pink, How To Unlearn Languages, The Sonic Body 17, Mushrooms and Flowers).

A CHARMING LOVER *Si aderisce ad un ordine cinestetico procedendo in senso contrario allo sforzo ed alla contrazione. Il movimento si palesa amando-si e per questo si rende amabile.*

I WANT TO BE A SEASHELL, I WANT TO BE A GOD, I WANT TO BE A BACTERIUM *Si è un oggetto del mondo. Si fanno scomparire i limiti che potrebbero contenere la potenza. Il corpo è un luogo concavo e convesso, considera un dentro e un fuori.*

THE ANARCHY OF SILENCE *Il pensiero diventa il corpo a cui appartiene. Il corpo diventa un veicolo che si muove da solo.*

YOU KNOW, YOU CAN ALWAYS BEGIN ANYWHERE *Rendersi abili alla massima esposizione o ostensione, tra rendimento e apparizione, tra la massima tonicità e la fievolezza degli impulsi.*

KOOL AND HOT *Trovare un'erotica della scena senza dominio. Esistono delle farfalle che imitano le foglie morte.*

DOMINO *Dare le misure esatte e poi decantarle. Coagularsi in uno spazio minimo. E esistono anche uccelli che aderiscono a un'estetica del trillo.*

SO YOU THINK YOU CAN DANCE *Moltiplicare i punti di appoggio e mostrarne la loro inutilità. Produrre delle torsioni o inversioni, da dentro a più dentro o da fuori a più fuori.*

OVERPOPULATION AND ART *Opacità della presenza. Aderire ad il paesaggio diffuso ed orizzontale dei corpi.*

A SYNTAX OF DEPENDENCY *Si lavora sulla prensione sottilissima.*

SOMETHING TO DO WITH LIFE *Senza scossa e senza rumore.*

Acrobatic, anti, astenia, available, beauty, charming, debt, dedication, delay, dissimulation, domestic, easiness, echo, economy, epidermic, exercise, fragile, gazelle, gravity, greatness, hierarchies, horror, hot, incalculable, insolvency, intimacy, jellyfish, kool, languor, latency, lax, lovable, love, lover, minimum, miracle, money, moth, nomos, Obama, occasional, oikos, opacity, oval office, parabola, power, praise, prodigy, promiscuous, propulsion, rarefare, regime, sans papiers, selfmoving, vehicle, serpentine line, simulation, spice, straight down shot, swan, syntax, surplus, technique, the beginning, the end, time, tongue, torsion, unhoped for, vacuum, virtuosity, wastage, waterfall.

Acrobatic: *un'attitudine al salto prodigioso*

Anti : *un uso del mondo*

Astenia: *una specie di leggerezza che permette di attivare una presa sottilissima sulle cose, quella che basta per stare in qualsiasi situazione.*

Available: *ciò che rende mutevoli.*

Beauty: *una manovra operativa nascosta*

Charming: *utilizzare la propria bellezza*

Debt: *ecologia della circolazione*

Dedication: *trovare il tempo necessario per far apparire le cose*

Delay: *un'attenzione molto speciale dal centro alla periferia e viceversa*

Dissimulation: *serve a scardinare le gerarchie*

Domestic: *una casa come un ritmo*

Easiness: *un'attività energetica sulla superficie*

Echo: *l'apparizione di un nuovo spazio*

Economy: *la cura di un gregge*

Epidermic: *un'attività energetica interiore*

Exercise: *l'apparizione di un paesaggio quando io non ci sono*

Fragile: *ciò che fa tutt'uno con il proprio desiderio*

Gazelle: *una soluzione unica al problema della velocità*

Gravity: *l'inerzia del corpo*

Greatness: *un'esuberanza esistenziale*

Hierarchies: *una misura simbolica*

Horror: *lo scandalo della verità*

Hot : *la temperatura migliore*

Incalculable: *un rapporto con l'economia*
Insolvency: *una struttura espressiva*
Intimacy: *il ritmo*
Jellyfish: *la grazia del mollusco*
Kool: *un surplus di dedizione*
Languor : *rarefazione del potere*
Latency: *il posto per la certezza e il dubbio insieme*
Lax: *una vibrazione leggera*
Lovable: *ciò che si ritrae offrendosi*
Love: *ciò che si dona ritirandosi*
Lover : *l'amato*
Minimun: *l'obbedienza al vento*
Miracle: *la condivisione di un'avventura*
Money: *il regime economico della domanda*
Moth: *un'erotica della scena*
Nomos: *la norma*
Obama: *la retorica gestuale*
Occasional: *accade solo per questa volta*
Oikos: *l'abitare*
Opacity: *una flessione*
Oval office: *la retorica del discorso politico*
Parabola: *una variazione dell'identità*
Power: *il più forte competitore di Dio*
Praise: *la co-esistenza radicale*
Prodigy: *l'esagerazione migliore*
Promiscuos: *un voodoo relazionale*
Propulsion: *un pensiero intempestivo*
Rarefare: *una particolare convivialità*
Regime: *uno spazio vuoto*
Sans papiers: *il diritto di cittadinanza ovunque*
Self-moving vehicle: *trova nuove modalità per organizzare lo spazio e il tempo*
Serpentine line: *la curva che indica un'infinità di modi per ritrovare un equilibrio*
Simulation: *produce delle possibilità*
Spice: *la pratica del pensiero entra nella terra e si rende aromatica*
Straight down shot: *God's eye view*
Swan: *l'esercizio che si trasforma in gioco*

Syntax: *la camera dei segreti*
Surplus: *dinamica del salto*
Technique: *una scatola d'arnesi per la pratica*
The beginning: *non mettere radici*
The end: *l'inizio di un dipinto arriva alla fine*
Time: *permettere alla struttura di emergere*
Tongue: *non guardare più il paesaggio articolare o muscolare*
Torsion: *una figura del futuro*
Unhoped for: *una chiave di volta*
Vacuum: *eliminare completamente il pericolo del cum*
Virtuosity: *magica dissimulazione propria della pratica artistica*
Wastage: *non si è maestri del vento*
Waterfall: *figura ritmica di un oggetto del mondo*

Jan Verwoert
Exhaustion & Exuberance
Ways to Defy the Pressure to Perform

The Pressure to Perform

How can we address the current changes in our societies and lives? Some say that we have come to inhabit the post-industrial condition—but what does that mean? One thing seems certain: after the disappearance of manual labour from the lives of most people in the Western world, we have entered into a culture where we no longer just work, we *perform*.

We need to perform because that is what's asked of us. When we choose to make our living on the basis of doing what we want, we are required to get our act together and get things done, in any place, at any time. Are you ready? I ask you and I'm sure that you're as ready as you'll ever be to perform, prove yourself, do things and go places.

Who is we? The group is ever-expanding. It is we, the creative types—who invent jobs for ourselves by exploring and exploiting our talents to perform small artistic and intellectual miracles on a daily basis. It is we, the socially engaged—who create communal spaces for others and ourselves by performing as instigators or facilitators of social exchange.

When we perform, we generate communication and thereby build forms of communality (1). When we perform, we develop ideas and thereby provide the content for an economy based on the circulation of a new currency: information. In doing so, we produce the social and intellectual capital that service societies thrive on today, in the so-called Information Age.

Accordingly, the Deutsche Bank sums up their corporate philosophy with the slogan *A Passion to Perform*. (The motto is symptomatically agrammatical: in English, someone can be said

to have a passion *for* something or someone, but not a passion *to*.) (2) Management consultants confirm that “implementing, promoting and sustaining a high performance culture” is the key to increasing corporate productivity by eliciting individual commitment and competitiveness among employees. (3)

So which side of the barricades are we on? Where do they stand today anyway? When do we commit to perform of our own free will? And when is our commitment elicited under false pretenses to enforce the ideology of high performance and boost someone else’s profits? How can we tell the difference? And who is there to blame, if we choose to exploit ourselves? In a high performance culture, we are the avant-garde but we are also the job-slaves.

We serve the customers who consume the communication and sociability that we produce. We work in the call centers and in the kitchens of recently opened restaurants in the burgeoning new urban hubs of the global service society. To provide our services we are willing to travel, so we go west to perform, we go north to perform. We are everywhere, fixing the minds, houses and cars of local customers wherever we end up staying *because* there is work available—and for as long as it’s available. Living this life of high performance we are constantly facing two questions: “Are we (still) in charge?”

and: “Are we (still) happy?” They are the questions of agency and the good life, and both are implied in the first question of political ethics: “How can we know what would be the right thing to do to make a better life possible for ourselves and others, now and in the future?” Every time this question arises, it leaves us craving for an overall solution, a resolute stance, a set of unassailable principles or a foundational politics that would provide us with unambiguous criteria for determining the right thing to do in each and every future situation. The trouble is that just as the question only arises in situations when a specific decision is needed, it is precisely the specificity of each new situation that seems to pre-empt the very possibility of ever devising a general morale or politics that would apply to all instances. The requests, invitations or opportunities to perform tend to be connected to a set of highly particular conditions

that make some instances acceptable and others impossible. Under certain circumstances a yes and a no may even seem equally justified. Moreover, the conditions under which you will perform may turn out to be completely contingent on the way in which you (re)negotiate those conditions in the process of your performance. So beyond the yes or no, beyond the either/or, there seem to be a million other options. Maybe the secret of autonomous agency and the good life lies precisely in opening up the space of those other options through a categorical refusal to accept the forceful imposition of any terms, leaving us no choice but to choose between *either* yes *or* no?

Yes No and Other Options (4)

Kierkegaard proposed the view that only he who faced up to the full challenge of the either/or, and based his life on a rigorous and binding choice, truly chose to choose (and thus acted ethically). Anyone who deflected this choice refrained from choosing at all and merely dabbled in the boundless sphere of inconsequential possibilities (the sphere of the aesthetic). Whether this view is still justified seems doubtful.⁽⁵⁾ The experience of the dictatorial regimes of modernity has attuned us to the fact that the imposition of binding choices is precisely how the power of ideology manifests itself in the pressure of social control. When a nation goes to war, for instance, the leader will confront you with a binding either/or choice: “You’re either with us or against us.” All other ways to position yourself are overruled by the forceful assertion of a single set of options to choose from: Friend or Foe.

Consumer society conversely proclaims to be founded on the principle of limitless choice, most vividly epitomised by Microsoft’s iconic slogan *Where do you want to go today?* (It was used from 1994 to 2002, since replaced by *Your Potential. Our Passion.*) In adopting this motto, the company promised that their product came with unlimited choice options built-in and could thus serve as a universally applicable performance tool for whatever personal purpose.

The irony of this promise lies in the fact that the system on which computing machines operate is a binary logic of zeros and ones. In other words, it is a system based on the constant repetition of either/or choices. This irony becomes tangible the moment you realise that the generous offer to go wherever you want effectively entitles you only to select a predefined option from the menu of a computer program. This moment of realisation may very well exemplify the way in which we encounter the ideological regime of our high performance consumer culture and service society. We encounter it in a moment of suspicion (if not paranoia) when we dimly sense that our willingness to perform might be elicited under a false premise of opening up limitless possibilities—which is, in fact, merely pressure to enact predefined options and thereby enforce the system of control that defines them.

Returning to the question of political ethics (“How can we know what is to be done to make a better life possible for ourselves and others, now and in the future?”) we then face a two-fold challenge: 1. to understand the conditions of our agency in order to enable us to define them according to our own terms; and 2. to imagine another logic of agency, an ethos, which could help us defy the social pressure to perform and eschew the promise of the regimented options of consumption. If we perceive the pressure to perform to be innately linked to the regimentation of options, to imagine the ethos of a resistant practice implies an exploration of the conditions, situations and potentialities that lie beyond the option menus and the exclusivity of the yes and no.

In artistic practice this dedication to imagining other ways to perform and other ways to enjoy consumption means claiming the imagination and the aesthetic experience as a field of collective agency where workable forms of resistance can be devised.

I Can’t

But what would it mean to put up resistance against a social order in which high performance has become a growing demand, if

not a norm? What would it mean to resist the need to perform? Is “resistance” even a useful concept to evoke in this context? Are the forms of agency that we commonly associate with resistance not modes of high performance themselves? Grand gestures of revolt tend to be overpoweringly assertive. They thrive on the rush of the moment when things *really start happening* (the crowd surges forwards, the water cannons start shooting). In this sense they actually *exemplify* the core momentum of high performance itself: they make something happen and deliver an event. Should we then not rather look for other, more subtle ways of performing dissent? What silent but effective forms of non-alignment, non-compliance, uncooperativeness, reluctance, reticence, weariness or unwillingness do we find in everyday life? There are, for instance, those covert survival tactics of the workplace accumulated by generations of employees devising ever-new schemes to avoid performing the task they’re asked to perform in the way (or at the time and speed at which) they are required to do so.

Can we embrace such forms of anti-performance in art and thinking as forms of art and thinking? Or do we inevitably find ourselves in the same position as the high performers who are enraged by slow people standing in their way?

Uncooperativeness may well be the revenge that uncreative people take on creative society by wilfully stopping it in its tracks. Have you ever found yourself screaming or wanting to scream at an uncooperative clerk behind a counter: “I haven’t got time for this!” only to realise that, yes, *he does* have time for this—an entire lifetime dedicated to the project of stopping people like you from having their way?

This slow man may turn out to be a guardian of the social equilibrium, protecting peace and sanity by preventing insanely restless performers like you from changing things for the worse. Or he may merely represent an older system of control and alienation—the bureaucratic apparatus—that is increasingly coming into conflict with its successor, the regime of high performance. In any case the question remains: Can we learn something from the traditional know-how of casual uncooperativeness when we seek to put up defenses against a

culture of compulsive high performance?

Why does it take other people to stop us from performing in the first place? Why do we not dismiss the need to perform of our own accord? What can make us utter the magic words *I Can't*? Does it take a breakdown to stop us? Does the utterance of the words *I Can't* already constitute or confirm a breakdown, a failure to perform, justifiable only if our body authenticates our incapacity by refusing to function? How could we restore dignity to the *I Can't*? How could we avoid becoming backed into a corner where the *I Can't* would merely be perceived as a passive-aggressive stance of denial? In other words: How can we embrace the *I Can't* without depriving ourselves of our potential to act? Could we unlock the *I Can't* as a form of agency?

Reportedly, Gerhard Richter used to have a poster next to his phone with one single word printed on it in big letters: NO. As compelling as this may seem, the categorical no in this case only functions as (because it is) a response to an existing demand—and therefore a move within a stable economy that supports or even rewards it (rarified supply enhances the demand and raises the price). So the question is rather how performing the *I Can't* could effectively interrupt the self-contained economic cycle of supply and demand and truly break the spell of the pressure to produce for the sake of production.

Punk was exactly about this: the unwillingness to submit to industry standards of what music can or can't be and how professional musicians should deal with what they can or can't do. This resulted in the transgression of personal capacities by rigorously embracing personal incapacities, rising above demand by frustrating all expectations. In this respect, Stuart Bailey pointed out the iconic status that the closing moment of the Sex Pistols' final performance: In the video recording of the show, the band are visibly drained of energy as their last song "No Fun" drags on into an endless coda, and their wild posturing routine terminally exhausts itself. As the performance disintegrates completely and ends, singer Johnny Rotten, visibly

alienated by both the band and the whole situation, sneers at the audience: “Ever get the feeling you’ve been cheated?” At the point of exhaustion, the performance of the *I Can’t* interrupts the economy of expectations and throws its workings into relief, producing an empty moment of full awareness. Could we imagine a form of agency that consists in producing an ongoing series of such moments of interruption and awareness? Since the mid-1960s the art practice of Slovakian artist Július Koller has been precisely that: a series of small interruptive acts performed in public and private space, provoking situations in which the potential for difference becomes tangible. In his 1965 Anti-Happening manifesto, Koller stated that, as a means of artistic practice, the Happening was an insufficient gesture because it was merely another “way to put an artistic act into action.” His concept of the Anti-Happening suggested an alternative use of “[the] means of textual designation” and “cultural demarcation” to effect a “cultural reshaping of the subject (and) an awareness of the surroundings.”⁽⁶⁾ Koller’s Anti-Happenings consequently consisted, for instance, in graffitiing a question mark or an endless wave onto a street wall with whipped cream, or in staging a table tennis match in a gallery as a social model of direct intersubjective exchange.

The photo of the *Anti-Happening Casopriestorové vymedzenie psychofyzickej cinnosti matérie* (1968), for instance, shows him in the act of redrawing the tramlines of a tennis court with a chalk-dispensing cart. The title translates as “Time/Space Definition of the Psycho-physical Activity of Matter” and thus designates this act as work—in the most basic sense of its definition in physics as the activity of displacing matter in space. Work, or artistic labour, is then defined by the simple gesture of drawing a line (or marking a difference) that designates the space as a site for a possible encounter between two people as players with equal rights in the game. It is an operation on the margins whilst staking a claim on those same margins.

Koller continued to perform such Anti-Happenings with an attitude of casual insistence, but from a position quite literally

on the margins of a society. Due to the political regime in power, the art he was practising was practically barred from public recognition. Yet Koller's insistence on the possibility of making art on his own terms turned his work from a marginal practice into a practice of performing the margins; a performance of demarcating the limits of the existing society by pointing beyond them towards other possibilities. The photo *Monologika—Jojo* (U.F.O.) [Monologic— Yo-Yo] (1982), for instance, depicts him playing with a big white Yo-Yo in front of a group of mind-numbingly dull apartment blocks. The cipher "U.F.O." in the title is a key to Koller's work, as a central part of his practice consisted of finding ever-new permutations of the acronym. In diagram drawings it came to stand for Univerzálna Futurologická Organizácia [Universal Futurological Organisation] (1972–3), Univerzálny Filozofický Ornament [Universal Philosophical Ornament] (1978) or Underground Fantastic Organisation (1975), to name a few. Collectively, the potentially infinite variations on the cipher "U.F.O." form a continuous cheeky incantation of the Utopian principle.

By representing the possibility of other possibilities, they point to all other options outside of the given regime of options imposed on social life by the dominant system of governance. The various interpretations of the acronym perform the utopian principle: first of all because the infinite play on the name realises the potentials of the imagination as a radical form of free agency; secondly, because the performance of infinite renaming operates on the dialectic of affirmation and deferral that is crucial to utopian thought. Utopian thought portrays a different world as presently not yet existing but realistically within reach. In this sense, Mark E. Smith's ingenious mantra "I can't get it now but I can get it" (from the Von Südenfed track "Fledermaus Can't Get It", 2007) is a shorthand formula for the way in which the utopian drive suspends the opposition between the *I Can't* and the *I Can*, allowing each one to embody the realisation of the other.

Nietzsche argued that to realise a fundamental critique of bad faith means to move beyond cynicism and embrace a radical optimism that exceeds the petty dialectics of expectation

and disappointment. (Invoking such an attitude of defiant optimism, I feel indebted to Paulina Olowaska for pointing out the key role this spirit played in the art and pop culture that continued heroic modernism after the Second World War.) Koller's art epitomises this optimism, as it demonstrates the potentiality of what I propose to call an existential exuberance, i.e., a way to perform without any mandate or legitimation, in response to the desires and dreams of other people, but without the aim or pretense of merely fulfilling an existing demand. It is a way of always giving too much of what is not presently requested. It is a way of giving what you do not have to others who may not want it. It is a way of transcending your capacities by embracing your incapacities and therefore a way to interrupt the brute assertiveness of the *I Can* through the performance of an *I Can't* performed in the key of the *I Can*. It is a way of insisting that, even if we can't get it now, we can get it, in some other way at some other point in time.

The Beauty of Latency

Another mode of performing the *I Can't* in the key of the *I Can* that art and poetry have always used to great effect is to create moments in which meaning remains provocatively latent.

To embrace latency goes against the grain of the logic of high performance. The appraisal of latency restores dignity to the unsaid, the unshown, and everything that can't be dragged out into the open in the rush of high performance when the value of all our potentials appears to depend entirely on our capacity to actualise them right here, right now. The fatal consequence of a continuous pressure to perform is the exhaustion of all our potentials precisely *because* the current social order denies the value of latency, the value of a potentiality that remains presently unactualised and quite possibly can't ever be exhaustively actualised. It seems that we have to learn to re-experience the value and beauty of latency.

Again the *I Can't* implied in the unwillingness to fully spell out the meaning of something that cannot be forced into the open (an idea, a feeling, a motive etc.) must not be understood as a

denial of agency. On the contrary, the insistence to speak -or make work in any other way -about that which is neither readily understandable nor immediately useful is in itself a strong claim to agency: *I Can* speak or make work about what *I Can't* speak or make work about. While this in a more general sense applies to any form of art or writing, it may have a special bearing on abstract work.(7) The provocation of abstraction in thinking as much as in painting or sculpture, for instance, lies precisely in this insistence on addressing and not addressing its subject in the very same instant. The capacity of abstract thought and work to invoke ideas in the most concise way is intrinsically linked to the impossibility of its exhaustive verification through positive facts.

Whereby abstract thought and work insists on the latency of meaning not because it won't disclose its immediate meaning (i.e. out of a coquettish flirtation with opacity) but because it can't. If it could, it would lose its capacity to address the potential reality of all that is presently not given in actuality (i.e. all the possibilities that lie beyond those already actualised within the dominant mode of thinking and acting.)

It may be that some of the oldest forms of creative manual labour, such as painting or writing, further the cultivation of a particularly intimate relationship to latent meanings. As you write or paint, words you have read or images you have seen elsewhere (including those which you have forgotten you read or saw) are present in your work as latent memories. The same latencies are at play in the moment of reading or looking at a painting as the words of the pages you have read before reverberate in the words you presently read and the images you have been exposed to resonate with what you see when you look at what you presently face. Explicating these latencies by forcing them out onto the page or canvas in their brute actuality would mean to obliterate the deep space of memory that the immanent echoes and delays of the medium generate. How can the potential of these latencies be activated? How do you open up the space of echo and delay?

In her abstract paintings, Esther Stocker, for instance, does this by projecting several graphic grid structures on top of one

another.

The structures then echo and displace each other through the delay that occurs in your visual perception when you try and fail to read them as one coherent pattern and the structures begin to waver. This is the experience of the latency at the heart of any structure, the latent grids that quiver through the visible ones just like latent thoughts make words tremble on the page. In Tomma Abts's abstract paintings this latency resides in the texture of their surface.

At first glance, the shapes of the abstract figures and constellations in her work seem so clearly defined that you would assume they had been painted in one shot. Nooks of paint around the edges of each form then, however, make you aware of the fact that these forms are the outcome of a long painterly process of continuous revision and overpainting in which nothing is fixed or decided at the painting's conception. Still, this painterly process does not assert itself as a dramatic form of agency.

It defies the melodrama of process that abstract expressionism performed. It is only through paint nooks, uneven edges, strange overlaps of shapes or surprising symmetries between askewed axes that the decisions made in every stage of the work's execution become tangible in their latent presence. Beyond the grand gesture, Abts thereby proposes a very particular model of agency: a model of how time can be spent making decisions in relation to what you want something to be.

A crucial question in painting (as in writing) is how to start and where to end. In a high performance culture, the beginning and end of each given task is defined with brutal clarity.

All parameters are set by an outside demand, and the job must be performed as fast as possible to meet the impending deadline. On the contrary, in painting (as in writing) the beginning and end of the work are defined through an immanent demand, as the decisions about how to start and conclude are choices that shape the very identity of a piece. It is only by concluding in a particular way, that the piece establishes its own standards of completion and demonstrates why it had to be the way it is. Work that incorporates the memory of its own process in this

way constitutes its own parameters of time both in-and outside of itself. This is a time that stretches into long days and nights of pushing towards something, only to collapse into split-seconds of sudden discoveries; a time that can retroactively change its face as it re-invents its own beginning at the end. Through its immanent temporality such work is structurally at odds with any regimented notion of time. It interrupts the homogeneous pace of high performance culture through the immanent rhythm of expanded and compressed, delayed and accelerated time of the memory at work in the process of its making.

Just in Time

Performance is all about timing. A comedian with a bad sense of timing is not funny, a musician useless. Career opportunities, we are told, are all about being in the right place at the right time, and so, perhaps, is finding a lover.

Is there a right time for love? These days, overworked couples are advised to reserve “quality time” for one another to prevent their relationship from losing its substance. What is quality time? “Is it a good time for you to talk?” people will ask when they reach you on your mobile.

When is a good time to talk? We live and work in economies based on the concept of “just-in-time” production—and “just-in-time” usually means things have to be ready in no time at all. Who sets the urgent pace according to which all others are measuring their progress? Or rather: Who sets the pace of planned obsolescence that keeps people buying the same product in slightly upgraded designs over and over again, allowing industry to thrive on the constant over-production of what will essentially be tomorrow’s waste? This is the question Dexter Sinister (publisher of this essay) is asking and attempting to answer by seeking not only alternative modes of production, but also other means—or ecologies—of circulation.

For instance, re-publication is offered as a form to keep thoughts in the loop, beyond the date of their planned obsolescence.

The timing of just-in-time production, moreover, seems to

be the defining force at the heart of the pressure to perform. To be in sync with just-in-time production essentially means that you have to be ready to perform all the time and at all times. Are you ready? is the question you must be prepared to answer positively: *As ready as I'll ever be*. A whole etiology of high performance culture could be based on studying the current use of this term.

"Are you ready?" asks smooth operator Danny Ocean (George Clooney) in the blockbuster *Ocean's 13* (2007), to which self-styled gentleman criminal Terry Benedict (Andy Garcia) promptly replies: "I was born ready."

Subsequently Clooney, Garcia and a cast of selected Hollywood high performers rise up to the challenge summed up in the movie's pitch: "What does it take to steal 500 million in three point five minutes?" Even in its ostentatious self-irony the movie essentially glorifies what Jean-Luc Nancy calls an operative community: a mythic bond of male heroes who come together to complete a task. In the film, the heroes team up to revenge their godfather by driving his enemy, a Las Vegas casino developer, to ruin.

They acquire all kinds of equipment and expertise and burn enormous amounts of money. They do all it takes to get the job done and succeed, and yet their success somehow smacks of fatalism. What else would we expect a Hollywood high performer to do, but to satisfy and deliver?

Even in the mode of self-irony, he can't perform the *I Can't*; as a prototypical man of action, he remains chained to an inviolate *I Can*.

In a much more subversive form the celebration of the *I Can* implied in the continuous unconditional readiness to perform is interpreted by the eponymous hero of the children's cartoon programme *Spongebob Squarepants*.

Spongebob, a tiny yellow sea sponge who lives in the submarine smalltown of Bikini Bottom, loves to unreservedly greet any new morning by exuberantly chanting: "I'm ready! I'm ready! I'm ready-eady-eady-eady-eady!" He then usually spends his day working in a dingy fast food joint, the Krusty Krab, where his remarkable talents at frying patties are shamelessly exploited

by the owner, a Scrooge-like crab.

This exploitation has no impact on Spongebob, however, since frying patties happens to be one of his most favorite pastimes. He effectively lives a free and happy life because, coincidentally, he does what he loves to do, and as such the idea that he may have reasons to feel alienated never dawns on him. His unassailable naiveté affords him the gift of an exuberance so contagious that the dire reality of his surroundings pales in the light of his optimism.

Spongebob's incredible resilience evokes the potentials of an anti-oedipal interpretation of the *I Can*. Through deflecting the demands of the dominant reality principle, the *I Can*, performed in the key of the anti-oedipal, may effectively create a different (and no less factual) reality in which the unrequested exuberance of desire—rather than demand or discipline—determines what is real.

Unfortunately, even if you manage to shrug it off exuberantly, the dominant reality principle tends to find painful ways of reasserting itself.

In this sense, one such painful reminder produced by the timing of high performance culture is the current global experience of divided, alienated time. Today, time is becoming progressively disjointed as the “developed” countries push ahead into a science fiction economy of dematerialised labour and virtual capital—and simultaneously push the “developing” countries centuries back in time by outsourcing manual and industrial labour that imposes working conditions on them from the times of early industrialisation. Sometimes this time gap doesn't even have to span centuries—it might be only a few years, as some former Eastern European countries are currently experiencing (rapidly catching up to the speed of advanced capitalism, but perhaps still not rapidly enough). Migrant workers bridge this gap, travelling ahead in time to work in the fast cities of the West and the North, yet facing the risk of any time-traveller losing touch with the time that passes while they are away. Can you find your way back into the time zone you left when you learn to inhabit the time zone of a country that purports to be

your future? How many time-zones can you inhabit and still live happily?

One of the most painfully difficult aspects to grasp and live with in this respect, is that life goes on at a different pace in the place you have temporarily left behind when you travel to work. With an abundance of experience, a two-week journey may feel like a single long day. On returning, however, you may come to realise that someone who stayed at home experienced this period in its “actual” length as two long weeks. An apparent gap of thirteen days thus opens up between the two economies of time. What happened to this time? The space of circulation absorbed it. Such time-lags can cause even the most intimate long-term relationships to fall apart. As progressively more people can, want or have to circulate to keep up with the pace of high performance, just as many people cannot or do not want to circulate. One of the most existential questions we thus face concerns the possibility of conviviality and communiality under the conditions of a division of time through spatial distance: How do we want to share time together, when work divides time in previously unknown geographical dimensions? How can we try to bridge these differences in time—the time-lags created by circulation—which question the very possibility of intimate relationships?

Roman Ondák has proposed a whole series of ways to potentially share the experience of circulation; that is, to share precisely that experience of the insurmountable difference in time and space that disrupts the horizon of shared experience. One form this takes is through the use of invitations to participate in international exhibitions as an occasion to cultivate his correspondence with the people he lives with. In *Antinomads* (2000) for instance, Ondák asked friends and family members in his hometown of Bratislava whether they considered themselves to be nomads or antinomads.

He then photographed those who identified themselves as antinomads in a location of their choice, e.g. in front of their bookshelves, at their own desk, in the garden or on their bed surrounded by cuddly toys. Each picture was made into a set of postcards, and these postcards were then distributed freely

in the locations where the work was later exhibited. Through this work Ondák thus performs a symbolic exchange: the antinomads give their picture to the nomadic artist and he, in return, sends them on a journey by allowing their pictures to circulate in other places.

Contradicting the pressure to be mobile, Ondák restores dignity to the position of people who defy this pressure by presenting them as heroes of anti-mobility. At the same time, however, he also draws a fine yet crucial line between this position and the reactionary resentments against a global culture that neo-conservative parties today incite and profit from. By insisting on circulating the pictures of the antinomads internationally, Ondák negotiates the value of their reluctance within the context of a global culture. He thereby cheekily frees the position of the anti-nomad from a negative proximity to a politics of isolationism, in the tradition of the *vade mecum* (taking along a picture of family and friends to a foreign place is an intimate gesture of love and allegiance). Symbolically at least, the rupture in the horizon of shared experience is then bridged by the fact that the traveller imparts the conditions of his existence on those who do not travel, by circulating their image. Ondák demonstrates that if we seek to break the high performance spell that threatens the possibility of intimacy through insurmountable time-lags, we must devise counter-spells and learn to perform a kind of relational voodoo whereby we invoke the ghosts of the absent others wherever we end up being, to share our life with them.

The Exuberant I Can

If we return now to the notion of exuberance implied in a way to perform the *I Can* that transgresses the predefined demands: Could such exuberance be a way to interrupt the order of the division of time and space imposed on social life by the culture of high performance? In his film *Theorema*, Pasolini draws up precisely such a scenario of unleashed performativity. The film starts with a scene in which a factory owner hands over his factory to the workers. (The film involves

a temporal reversal: the beginning of the film is actually its conclusion, and the gesture that ends the working life of the factory owner is a latent decision which takes shape over the course of subsequent events.) Although it lies close to the factory, the villa of the owner is a space in which the regime of labour is suspended. Consequently, it is a space where time is undivided and endless; a time of infinite boredom; in a space that seems without structure, through which members of the staff and family move about aimlessly. This comfortable situation changes when, at short notice, a young man arrives. He is devoid of personality or any other form of distinction apart from the fact that he is a charming lover. Over the course of the film he sleeps with all members of the family and leaves again. Suddenly liberated by love, all family members now start to perform: the son acknowledges his homosexuality and becomes a painter; the daughter decides to never move nor speak again; the mother cruises the streets, having casual sex with random young men; the maid refrains from killing herself and instead becomes a saint; the factory owner undresses himself in the train station and walks off into a nearby volcano. All these acts are portrayed as possessing identical value, all suddenly seem equally possible, and none of the individual “performances” negates the potential of any of the others. Pasolini thereby invokes a situation where the end of work and the arrival of love creates the potential for a radical co-existence of ways to perform the *I Can* and *I Can't* which are not forced under the yoke of a dominant imperative to perform in one way and one way alone. Could we collectively inhabit such a condition of exuberant performativity? In her recent paintings Silke Otto-Knapp points towards this possibility. The works are based on her ongoing study of the forms in which modern ballet has translated patterns of social life into dance. Otto-Knapp appropriates selected moments from this history and transforms them into pictures that focus attention on the specific formalised body language through which dance reflects the relation of the individual to the collective. Many of the works are painted in monochromatic silver tones, others in luminescent water-colours. Abstraction enters the picture

through this painterly form, and it is precisely this moment of abstraction that draws out the intrinsic exuberance of the formalised body language of ballet. This exuberance resides in the gesture freed from any other purpose but to communicate the idea of bodies communicating.

Depicted in the mode of abstraction, dance then becomes a cipher for a communality that is not organised towards an ulterior end, a task or function it has to perform on demand.

In its abstract form, the exuberant community remains inoperative. What the paintings represent, then, is a utopian state of exuberance. In her work Hilary Lloyd also focuses on the sheer exuberance of the gesture, yet she reaches this point less through abstraction and more through the specific observation of a vernacular body language. *Car Wash* (2005), for example, consists of four slide projections, each comprised of 80 slides. As the slides change with the pace of a very slow movie, they intensify your experience of place by unhinging your sense of time. The pictures show a group of young Arab men working at a car wash in Sheffield. Lloyd's camera picks out numerous details of their body language. You see how the biceps of a man in a vest ripple as he lifts a hose to rinse a car, or how a gold necklace glitters between the zip of a tracksuit, opened just wide enough to reveal it. You sense that the men know how to let these things show. It's a defiant form of exuberance, as none of the defining features of their performance is determined by the requirements of the work they do. And it is precisely through this moment of exuberance that the men erase the stigma of a low-paid job, transforming it instead into a platform for a performance in which the cars become mere props for a demonstration of pride. Here Lloyd pays tribute to the body politics of pure attitude. The men at the car wash have exactly what the fashion industry capitalises on: they have it, i.e., attitude. But they didn't buy it and they don't sell it; they just have it. Many a stylist, model or musician would give their right arm to have it, too, but it's not for sale. As in *Theorema*, the acts of exuberance interrupt a labour regime in which only purposeful production counts as agency, and instead opens up a space in which the *I Can* exists in the form

of an untradable surplus.

Who Cares?

But in what way do we experience the *I Can* when we release it from the demands of high performance and economic productivity? Giorgio Agamben argues that this experience is “for each of us, perhaps the hardest and bitterest experience possible: the experience of potentiality.”(8) In one sense the horror of the *I Can* could be understood as the infinite challenge to truly face the reality of your desires in a state when no outside demands or prohibitions protect you from asking the terrifying question: *Tell me what you want, what you really really want?* In another sense, however, the challenge of the *I Can* is not simply or solely a reflection of your own desires. As Irit Rogoff points out, Agamben actually relates it to a moment of existential indebtedness to others.(9)

To make this point, he recounts the story in which Russian poet Anna Akhmatova describes how and why she became a writer. Standing outside a Leningrad prison in 1930 where her son was a political prisoner, a woman whose son was also imprisoned, addressed Akhmatova with the question: “Can you speak of this?” She realised that she had to respond yes—indeed she could—and in this moment found herself both indebted and empowered.(10) Thinking through this link between indebtedness and empowerment may prove crucial, precisely because the thought goes against the very grain of high performance culture. Its demand to be ever-ready relies on the assumption that you could be. It is based on the illusion that each individual should be able to generate an inexhaustable potency solely from his own resources. This illusion is as self-aggrandising as it is fatal, because it is only through assuming you had such inexhaustable potency that you willingly accept the request to prove it, then take it to heart when you are reprimanded for failing to do so. To point out that the potential to perform is a gift and debt received from others involves shattering the illusion on which high performance culture is founded. But what does it mean to assume that we are always

already deeply indebted to others when we perform? In what way is it precisely this indebtedness to others that enables us to perform in the first place? How could we develop the ethos of a mode of performance that acknowledges the debt to the other instead of asserting the illusion of the infinite potency of the self?

One way to acknowledge the debt is to pay tribute to those who have enabled you to practice what you do by inspiring you. With regard to inspiration, the *I Can* is realised in a very particular way because another person's thoughts, works or conversation make you experience the liberating sensation of potentiality that, yes, you can also think, feel, speak and act this way.

To feel inspired essentially means to realise *I Can because You Do*. Any form of work that unfolds through addressing the work of others (including this essay) thrives on this sensation.

To put the moment of inspiration into practice and act upon the implications of the realisation that *I Can because You Do* involves transforming the debt to the other into a pro-active gesture of dedicating one's practice to this other.

Overcoming the fear of influence, we could then move towards a politics of dedication.

The work of Frances Stark thrives on such a politics of dedication. In both her visual and written work she continuously borrows and quotes and transforms what she borrows and quotes. Yet, the gesture of appropriation in her work, as much as it always echoes an act of stealing, first of all communicates a sense of appreciation that precisely reflects the conversion of a debt into a dedication. The space her work opens up is an open continuum in which other voices resonate through her voice, but where her voice remains very distinctively hers.

The oedipal hierarchies of godfathers and disciples, progenitors and epigones are effectively toppled in this continuum, where the ghosts can only speak when the one who summons them speaks too. In this space such hierarchies are dismantled and displaced by a form of communality and conviviality with the ghosts of those whose presence may be felt through a work.

At one point in the conceptual text piece *Structures that fit my opening and other parts considered to the whole* (2006), mischievously offered in the form of a Powerpoint presentation, Stark hints at the social model of communality that such a politics of appreciation implies through its anti-economical motivation. She writes that in composing a poem (dedicated, as it were, to one particular person or maybe many) she was pondering “the possibility of liberating oneself from a cycle of disengaged production motivated by a craving for legitimising praise. Paradoxically, I looked toward a mutual admiration society—to that ecstatic reciprocal attention-paying of lovers—as an alternative model for understanding how and why intellectual equals might freely collaborate.” This could form the first paragraph for an unwritten (and maybe unwritable) constitution of a community committed to the politics of dedication.

I Care

To practice a politics of dedication and recognise an indebtedness to the other as the condition of your own ability to perform means to acknowledge the importance of care. You perform because you care for someone or something.

This care gives you the strength to act, not least because to *not* act is out of the question when someone or something you really care for or about requires that you should act. In conversation Annika Eriksson summed this point up by describing the experience that, as a mother, (when your child is in need of you) “there is no no.” This unconditional demand forces you to realise that you can even if you thought you couldn’t. By definition, then, the *I Care* implies the potential of an unconditional *I Can*. The decisive difference between this mode of unconditional potentiality and the illusion of inexhaustable potency, however, lies in the fact that the experience of unconditional care is one that comes to us both from and through the other. Paradoxically, you are freed from the economic regime of demand by virtue of a debt to the other; in other words, the existential demand will always overrule the economic one. And since it is unconditional and

existential rather than economical, the *I Care* is equally the force behind an incommensurable surplus of exuberance. That extra bit of time and attention we invest into our personal relations as well as our work is precisely what makes these relations and this work un-economical.

It's a surplus that can never be justified by economic standards, but it's the source of our *modus operandi* when we care.

The *I Care* has radical implications because, while it can provide the sensation of an unconditional *I Can*, it can equally radically *delimit* it. When you recognise the priority of care for someone or something, this commitment may, under certain circumstances, oblige you to turn down an offer or request to perform that you otherwise might have gladly accepted.

In this situation to profess the *I Can't* (do this job, participate in this event) is then the only adequate way to show that you care—for the friends, family, children or lovers who require your presence, or for the continuation of a long-term creative practice that takes its time. Likewise, the recognition that you are exhausting yourself and need to take care of your health can under these conditions constitute a reason to decline an offer to perform and utter the *I Can't*. To practice a politics of dedication then means to recognise the *I Care* as the source both of the *I Can* and the *I Can't*.

The *I Care* is also, then, a question of welfare—a pertinent issue in the context of the widespread dismantling of the welfare state.

In a recent talk Jimmy Durham cited two people he had met in Italy as saying: "We are liberated. What we need now is a better life."⁽¹¹⁾ This anecdote might help us rephrase the question of political ethics, from "How can we know what is to be done to make a better life possible for ourselves and others, now and in the future?" to: "How could we collectively realise the freedom and demands of *I Can* and *I Can't* in the key of *I Care* and claim the right to create the conditions for a better life for everybody?"

Politically speaking, this is the question of organised solidarity. Ethically speaking, however, there is a fundamental problem: when we fully realise the implications of the *I Care*, we are

forced to acknowledge that the potentiality of care can never be collectively organised, because the debt to the other implied in the *I Care* is always radically particular. To generalise it means to obliterate its very momentum. In conversation Gitte Villesen formulated this criticism in relation to what she marked out as the intrinsic arrogance of a social democratic idea of welfare: because it generalises care, the social reality of institutionalised solidarity and welfare results in a top-down imposition of the standards of a good life on demographically-categorised population groups. Organised care, she continued, can only address its subject indifferently as “Them” (an anonymous collective entity whose needs are to be administered from a distanced position, as in “Them, the immigrants, the single mothers, etc.”) and never as the “You” of a direct encounter with the need of the other. In her own practise, Villesen performs a critique of the administration of welfare by using documentary video to provoke such direct encounters in which the force of the demand placed on the artist by the other can be fully experienced. It seems the potential of such a politics of welfare may only be truly realised when it retains the moment of disorganisation that the particularity of care inevitably produces—at the very moment it becomes collective.

Use Me Up

Complete exhaustion is a state we both fear and seek to reach. To one day run out of ideas and things to say is what creative people dread more than anything else. Yet, at the same time one of the strongest driving forces behind creative work continues to be the desire to push an idea to its limits, to go to extremes and only stop when all possibilities have been exhausted and, looking at the result of your efforts, you realise with pleasurable horror: this is it, this is how it must be, it could have been different, but now that the hour is late, the deadline has passed, the opening of the show or premiere of the performance is about to start, there is no way you could still change anything. Time is up and you are finally relieved from the pressure to perform.(12) This build-up of conflicting emotions around the

end of work—the completion of a particular work as well as the depletion of all possibilities to make further work—is at the heart of the drama by which artists and intellectuals in modernity have learned to experience the climax and crisis of their work as a radical form of exhaustion. It is also through this drama that avant-gardes asserted their power to bring art (as it was) to an end by terminating tradition, either to liberate following generations or to leave them with nothing more to do.

This drama is far from over. On the contrary, it has become a general social condition. As the post-industrial societies of the global north are increasingly organised around flexible, immaterial and creative labour, complete personal exhaustion in the form of the much-feared burnout syndrome has become a collective experience of professionals in all sectors of the service society and new creative industries who feel pressed to perform to the best of their talent and abilities on their job every day. Bizarrely then, the heartfelt belief that “it’s better to burn out than to fade away” that used to set the rebellious devotees of countercultural creativity apart from obedient employees, now seems to have become the first commandment of the high performance culture endorsed by advanced capitalism. Parallel to the way in which futurist avantgardes had demanded the museums to be burned to release art production into a state of pure presence, the economic rationale of just-in-time production lies in the realisation that the storage of goods in warehouses is too costly and has to be replaced by models of distribution where the consumer or client can access the desired service or product right away (ideally through downloading). Museums and warehouses remain as sites that retain temporal latency. But in a high performance culture there is no time for latencies; all potentials of production must be actualised right away, the faster the better. Under the economic imperative of high performance, just-in-time-production is boosted by the buzz and justified by the necessity of the moment because any choice taken under extreme time pressure is without alternatives. As the range of possibilities is always already

exhausted when there is no time to consider other options, acts performed in the nick of time appear to be powered by the full force of necessity. Anyone working under the conditions of just-in-time production by definition labours and lives in a constant state of exhaustion. But is an economy based on systematic exhaustion not bound to collapse at any time?

If current forms of capitalism purposefully sustain a sense of crisis to increase the urgency of production, it does indeed seem inevitable that the whole system should soon spiral out of control. Such apocalyptic prognoses, however, have been popular ever since the 1960s, when consumer culture came to increasingly thrive on excessive overspending and thus seemed to head right towards economic meltdown.

Yet, until now nothing like that has happened. So it seems more probable that overspending and exhaustion are simply moments in the cyclical patterns of capitalism's reproduction and regeneration. As more and more people burn out the whole machine gets fired up. What would it mean to escape this vicious cycle and break the spell of the death drive towards exhaustion?

One option, of course, is to start taking care of yourself. It is no coincidence that after having exhaustively analysed how people willingly submit to the systematic exploitation of their life energy, Foucault should aptly title his final book *The Care of the Self*. In it he portrays the practical wisdom ancient Greek and Roman culture gathered in its reflections on how to live a good life. Instead of fixed norms, Foucault writes, ancient ethics and dietics encouraged free men to find their own style of economising their energies and controlling their powers in order to avoid prematurely exhausting the capacity to act and enjoy in later life.

In a contemporary high performance culture, to draw a line somewhere, stop work and cut off communication at some point—to reserve a part of your life for taking care of yourself—has indeed become a radical thing to do because it effectively means you are taking yourself out of circulation. You deliberately hold back resources, free time and potentials that could be used productively. Still, you can never be sure

whether the free time you gain is not just the time you need to restore your energies to be fit to perform again on the next day so that you never escape the cycle of compulsive productivity. As such, the care of the self—wellness and health—is one of the hottest commodities available today.

Madonna sarcastically comments on this in “American Life” (2003): “I do yoga and Pilates / And the room is full of hotties / So I’m checking out the bodies / And you know I’m satisfied.”

Taking care of your health from this perspective could also be understood as a measure to protect your most valuable asset by conserving your physical power to perform.

The Politics of Exhaustion

Directed against this conservative moment, the politics of exhaustion inherent in counter cultural rites of excess have always been about deliberately squandering that capital. This philosophy of self-destruction is born out of the realisation that the accumulation of capital is tied to the moment when profits are skimmed off and stashed away in the bourgeois private sphere to secure property. The rebellious response of bohemian culture has therefore always lain in the commitment to never accumulate profit but always waste it and get wasted, to consume and be consumed, and refuse to save anything or be saved by anyone. Most beautifully maybe, this spirit is expressed in the so-called “devil’s verse,” the anonymous Latin palindrome *in girum imus nocte et consumimur igni* (“we wander around in the night in circles and get consumed by fire,” originally a riddle alluding to moths or mayflies). Guy Debord used it as the title for a film he made in 1978 and Cerith Wyn Evans turned it into a neon sign in which the letters of the palindrome were arrayed in the form of a ring which is suspended from the ceiling like a candelabra designed to illuminate a celebratory space for a potential congregation of the wasteful.

A nagging doubt of course remains as to whether this politics of exhaustion is not merely adding a little more fizz to the

spectacle of cultural consumption—and whether the insouciant consumers and collectors of art are not just all too eager to see another bohemian go up in a blaze of glory, be pleasantly entertained and in time move on to applaud the next eclipse. Still, there is a beauty and dignity in gestures of expenditure that, I believe, will always exceed the petty rationale of the lucratively spectacular.

This is because the deliberate exhibition of exhaustion in art or writing deprivatises exhaustion by exposing it as an experience that may be shared. The exhibition of exhaustion produces public bodies. In this sense, Vito Acconci told me in conversation that among the Marxist beliefs he had espoused in the 1970s but still felt compelled by was the conviction that the rejection of the value of private property should begin with a changed attitude to your own body, with the radical readiness to understand this body and self as public and political, 24/7. The refusal to claim your potentials as private property and the will to allow them to be exhausted by others implies a generosity that has little to do with moral altruism. It seems rather more driven by an unrestrained desire to enjoy and be enjoyed by others. Bill Withers probably best expressed this in his R&B classic “Use Me” (1972) “I wanna spread the news that if it feels this good getting used / Oh you just keep on using me until you use me up.”

The erotic force of this desire to be exhausted in turn points to the sexual dimension of a high performance culture. Sex work is one of the fastest growing industries today.

And, without wanting to turn “sex work” into a loose metaphor, I still feel that the unconditional readiness to perform whenever and wherever that is expected from freelancers as well as from artists and intellectuals operating in a project-based arts economy somewhat resembles the pressure put on the sex worker to always get it on. Yet, even though this pressure can never be disconnected from the potential to perform, it should also not be confounded with it. For there is undeniably a genuine joy in recognising one’s own potentials in the act of realising them.

There is a beautiful drawing by Frances Stark which shows the

outlines of a peacock in a perky pose, but its tail feathers are not yet unfolded. Among the collage of different small cut-outs of texts that the feather texture is composed of, a Henry Miller quote written backwards in capital letters reads: "GET ON THE FUCKING BLOCK AND FUCK." The words read equally like a firm admonition (Do it!), a declaration of will (Yes, I will do it!) and a supportive cheer (Come on, you can do it!). As you can also tell by its pose, this bird both wants and needs to get up and go.

This inextricable ambivalence between what you want and expect of yourself and what others want and expect from you is probably one of the hardest puzzles for anyone who works both creatively and on demand to solve. One consequence is that an uncanny feeling of outside determination and dependency might never leave you, even if you are positively sure that you only do what you want to do. Here again, to push yourself beyond the point of exhaustion is a common technique to relieve yourself of the burden of outside expectations; you simply incapacitate yourself to a degree that no-one can possibly still expect anything of you.

The Dead Kennedys summed it all up in "Too Drunk to Fuck" (1981): "But now I am jaded / You're out of luck / I'm rolling down the stairs / Too drunk to fuck."

Beyond Exhaustion

What potentialities open up when we reach a state beyond exhaustion? In conversation, Nasrin Tabatabai and Babak Afrassiabi pointed out that a state beyond exhaustion is precisely the condition that asylum seekers find themselves in when, having made their troublesome passage out of their own country into the foreign one, they are forced to realise that they have effectively exhausted all their options for further action. While the legal proceedings concerning the request for asylum are underway you are not only prohibited from doing any work, but there is also no way that you can do anything about the outcome of your lawsuit.

To be condemned to inaction in a situation where you may

still be full of energy and hope is a terrible way to face the exhaustion of your options to perform. Still, a potential for agency exists beyond this point of exhaustion, as Nasrin Tabatabai shows in her documentary video *Passage* (2005). Over the period of a year, Tabatabai visited a middle-aged Iranian woman who spends her days in the foyer of a shopping mall handing out free newspapers and speaking to passers-by as she does so. In the course of the film it gradually transpires that she might not have an official permit to stay in the country, but that she cannot return to Iran either because of the husband she has left. This complete impasse, however, does not stop her from acting. In fact, it turns out that through speaking to people in the foyer she has created a situation where a lot of these passers-by share stories of their daily chores with her.

While you would assume that the precarious situation she is in would destine her to be in need of care, she reverses the situation by caring for others. Her performance continuously alternates between exhaustion and exuberance. In moments when she takes a cigarette break her exhaustion is highly tangible, yet in moments when she is up again and talking to people, her exuberance seems unconditional: she performs without any mandate and upon no request but with an unassailable legitimacy created through the fact that she cares. Like the workers in Lloyd's Car Wash, she transforms the non-space of the foyer into a platform for her free agency.

Continuing the conversation, Babak Afrassiabi drew attention to the dialectical relation between exhaustion and revolution that throughout modernity has determined the political climate in countries which experience upheavals of their social structure. While the exhaustion of the credibility of the old social order is the legitimation that revolutionaries draw from to justify the necessity of radical change, it is conversely also the regimes of the revolutionaries that plunge into crisis at the very moment their discourse exhausts itself and the promises they make begin to ring hollow. Afrassiabi argued that in post-revolutionary countries like Iran you could therefore analyse the development of politics over the decades following the revolution as a cycle in which the inherent promise of

revolutionary rhetoric is gradually eroded through routine repetition until, at the point of its exhaustion, the discourse of the revolution is seized again by a new herald of change who promises to rejuvenate its meaning. It seems that this logic may also apply to the foundational moments in the history of modernity and contemporary politics when operative communities are forged through the forceful renewal of the promise of an exhausted myth.

The interruption of this vicious cycle would then mean to suspend it at the point of exhaustion, before it recharges itself with meaning. It is this gesture of interruption and suspense that Deimantas Narkevicius performs in his films. In *Energy Lithuania* (2000), for instance, he portrays the situation in the Lithuanian city of Elektrėnai, a city that was built in 1962 around a major electric power station. When Lithuania regained its independence in the 1990s, the station more or less lost the function it fulfilled within the larger economy of the Soviet Union, depriving the city of its *raison d'être*. As Narkevicius documents, the station and city exist in peculiar state of latency, neither fully operative nor entirely shut down.

Two central sequences in the film capture the latencies inherent in this moment of temporary exhaustion concisely and provocatively.

In one shot the camera follows a worker who, as he walks past enormous machinery in the power station, produces a discourse on the history of the station and the heroic events through which it came into being. His speech is passionate, yet the effortlessness of its delivery also betrays the routine way in which it must have been presented many times.

Surprisingly, however, the irony implied by the fact that the subject of the heroic discourse of labour has more or less ceased to exist and that the speech is recited over the backdrop of shut-down machinery, does not fully invalidate it. On the contrary, the words continue to resonate with the memory of the promise of a better future as well as with the memory of the work of the people who tried to realise it.

These memories cling to the words like a shadow that gives

them depth despite their emptiness.

These echoes are further amplified in the following sequence in which Narkevicius films a colourful modernist mural that portrays the heroic deeds of the workers in the manner of a biblical struggle. The camera travels across the image with a very slow, careful panning shot, while a Mozart piano concert plays on the soundtrack. In itself, the image looks as exhausted as the words sounded before, yet the combination of the patient gaze of the camera and flow of the music again produce echoes of the experience of those who may have invested belief in the promise of this image as they built the city. As the film simultaneously reveals both the exhaustion of the words and icons of socialism, and their residual promise, it effectively redeems their memory. Yet by decidedly refraining from rejuvenating their meaning, it does so without restoring their founding ideology. They are exposed in their exhaustion, yet in this state their hollow forms begin to reverberate with the memories of lived experience.

Consequently, the economy of the cyclical re-interpretation of revolutionary rhetoric is interrupted by an empty moment of full awareness.

It is maybe in precisely such empty moments of full awareness that the potential of a state beyond exhaustion manifests itself. In the discourse of modernism this heightened state of awareness in a moment beyond exhaustion has a name. Edgar Allen Poe described it as the state of convalescence: *Not long ago, about the closing in of an evening in autumn, I sat at the large bow window of the D - Coffee House in London. For some months I had been ill in health, but was now convalescent, and, with returning strength, found myself in one of those happy moods which are so precisely the converse of ennui -moods of the keenest appetency, when the film from the mental vision departs, and the intellect, electrified, surpasses as greatly its everyday condition, as does the vivid yet candid reason of Leibnitz, the mad and flimsy rhetoric of Gorgias. Merely to breathe was enjoyment; and I derived positive pleasure even from many of the legitimate sources of pain. I felt a calm but inquisitive interest in every thing. With a cigar in my mouth and a newspaper in my lap, I had been amusing myself for the greater part of the afternoon, now in poring over advertisements, now in observing*

the promiscuous company in the room, and now in peering through the smoky panes into the street. (13) As a state of suspension between exhaustion and activity, between the *I Can't* and the *I Can*, the state of convalescence is the epitome of an empty moment of full awareness. In this moment the illusion of potency, interrupted through illness, is not yet restored (there is no way that you can go back to work in this state) but still the sense of appreciation is redeemed as the *I Care* returns in its full potential: You begin to care about life again, more than ever. Could we imagine this state of convalescence as a shared condition of experience, or rather a condition shared through art and thinking? If, living under the pressure to perform, we begin to see that a state of exhaustion is a horizon of collective experience, could we then understand this experience as the point of departure for the formation of a particular form of solidarity? A solidarity which would, on the contrary, lead us to acknowledge that the one thing we share—exhaustion—makes us an inoperative community, an exhausted community, or a community of the exhausted. A community, however, that can still act, not because it is entitled to do so by the institutions of power, but by virtue of an unconditional, exuberant politics of dedication. In short, because, as a community of convalescents, we realise in an empty moment of full awareness, that we care.

1. I wish to thank the community of people who assembled during the production of the issue of Dot Dot Dot 15 at the Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève: Stuart Bailey, Will Holder, David Reinfurt, Anthony Huberman, Walead Beshty, Polona Kuzman, Joyce Guley and Jan Dirk de Wilde, all of whose criticism has been invaluable for writing and revising this essay.

2. On the Deutsche Bank webpage, the company's mission statement reads: "We are a European powerhouse dedicated to excellence, constantly challenging the status quo to deliver superior solutions to our demanding clients. That's why to us A Passion to Perform is far more than just a claim—it is the way we do business."

3. From: Joanne Reid and Victoria Hubbell, "Creating a Performance Culture" in Ivey Business Journal Online (London, Ontario: The

University of Western Ontario, March /April 2005) <http://www.iveybusinessjournal.com>

4. This line, which is also the title of the exhibition Sheffield 08, was suggested by Tim Etchells.

5. Even Kirkegaard himself cannot be trusted on this point. In his boundless irony he voiced this view (that only the rigorous choice between either/or qualified as a true choice) solely through fictional persona he invented in his writing, none of whom can be unambiguously identified as expressing his own convictions.

6. Quoted in: Georg Schöllhammer, "Engagement instead of Arrangement" in Július Koller, *Univerzálna Futurologické Operácie*, Cologne Kunstverein exhibition catalogue (Cologne: tranzit Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, 2003) p. 126.

7. I am indebted here to Robert Linsley for having hosted a residency in Toronto earlier this year, which afforded me time to think about the politics of abstraction and immanent agency of painting.

8. Giorgio Agamben: "On Potentiality" in Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 1999) pp.177–184

9. Irit Rogoff, "Academy as Potentiality", in *A.C.A.D.E.M.Y.* (Frankfurt: Revolver, 2006) pp. 13–20.

10. Agamben, op. cit., p.177.

11. From a talk held on 14 September 2006 in a symposium organised by Irit Rogoff for the exhibition *A.C.A.D.E.M.Y.* at the Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst in Antwerp.

12. In writing this section I have drawn heavily on inspiring studio conversations with Ruth Legg, Eveline van den Berg and Ruth Buchanan.

13. From: Edgar Allan Poe, "The Man of The Crowd", first published in 1840 in Burton's Gentleman's Magazine and simultaneously in The Casket, then variously republished in slightly revised form, in numerous subsequent Poe collections. The passage cited is taken from the second paragraph of the story. I am hugely indebted to Robert Linsley for quoting this passage to me.

adattarsi a una situazione in cui *tutte* le sue aspirazioni sono puramente e semplicemente negate.

Una situazione simile, per essere precisi, è inimmaginabile. Tutto ciò che il « civile » immagina è falso.

I fini della guerra sono dimenticati; è necessario arrivare al punto di negare *tutti* i fini. Essi durano non sebbene, ma perché assurdi.

Questa disperazione esiste ovunque l'uomo è *sacrificato*.

Due ostacoli interiori da vincere.

La viltà dinanzi alla fuga del tempo (mania di rinviare — pigrizia...).

Illusione che il tempo mi porterà per se stesso coraggio, energia... Di solito è il contrario (mancanza di sonno). Di' a te stessa: e se io restassi *sempre* come sono in questo momento?...

Non rinviare *mai* indefinitamente. Rinviare a un momento ben determinato. Anche in caso d'impossibilità (mal di testa...), tentare.

Esercizi: impieghi arbitrari del tempo da osservare minuziosamente, con grande esattezza.

Tu vivi in sogno. Tu attendi di vivere...

Si tratta di crearsi un'abitudine. Addestramento.

Distinguere le cose che posso rinviare, e quelle... Cominciare l'addestramento con le piccole cose, quelle per le quali l'ispirazione è inutile.

Pensa a V. S...

Tutti i giorni, fare due o tre cose indifferenti a un'ora arbitraria, ma determinata.

Arrivare a una puntualità automatica e senza sforzo.

La mancanza di flessibilità dell'immaginazione. Ostacolo da vincere metodicamente. Secondo schermo tra la realtà e te. Molto più difficile. Si tratta di tutt'altro che un addestramento... Ma prezioso.

PAR OÙ COMMENCE LE CORPS HUMAIN ?

Par où commence le corps humain ? Cette question est celle que pose Georges Bataille dans son bref article de *Documents* sur « la bouche » :

La bouche est le commencement ou, si l'on veut, la proue des animaux : dans les cas les plus caractéristiques, elle est la partie la plus vivante, c'est-à-dire la plus terrifiante pour les animaux voisins. Mais l'homme n'a pas une architecture simple comme les bêtes, et il n'est même pas possible de dire où il commence¹.

L'organe « bestial » des « cris déchirants » et aussi de la jouissance éperdue, telle est la bouche humaine. Depuis la naissance, elle désoriente le corps au point d'en faire le trou obscur de tous les mélanges : chairs profondes et salive, dents, langues. À certains égards, l'image deleuzienne du malaxage des mots et des aliments rend tout à fait compte de l'impossible spiritualité de l'organe. Mais pour Bataille ce qui prévaut, c'est le bouleversement de l'individu induit par une observation horizontale.

Il est facile, note-t-il encore, d'observer à ce sujet que l'individu bouleversé relève la tête en tendant le cou frénétiquement, en sorte que la bouche vient se placer, autant qu'il est pos-

1. G. Bataille, « La bouche », *Documents*, réédition 1991, J.-M. Place, p. 299.

sible, dans le prolongement de la colonne vertébrale, c'est-à-dire dans la position qu'elle occupe normalement dans la constitution animale¹.

Ainsi la civilisation ou, plus simplement, l'évolution naturelle ne sera pas parvenue à faire rentrer complètement la bouche dans le visage ! Tout au moins celui-ci conservera-t-il, en dépit du regard et de l'expression, cette violence d'organe pourtant retenue et masquée par l'ornement des lèvres. L'organe de l'olfaction et de l'odorat est parvenu à se disposer en arrière et à ne montrer que l'axe du visage ; la bouche est une telle béance ouverte sur l'intérieur du corps que celui-ci paraît de la sorte voué à la régression : ici, le mot même de « régression » devrait pouvoir désigner la chair – la chair d'organe pour le plaisir pris sur place, tumescent et détumescent. Les rêves se forment peut-être dans la bouche, dont ils pourraient emprunter les formes et déformations internes tout autant que les forces de pulsion. *Plaisir d'organe* ou encore plaisir disposant d'une sorte d'autonomie d'organe. Cette désignation liminaire de l'autoérotisme dans son dégagement fantasmatique de l'autoconservation alimentaire convient précisément pour faire de la bouche humaine, le lieu focal du *primitif* et ainsi de l'animalité analogique dans la régression. Ce qu'on appellerait ici « régression » ne serait-ce pas l'infini du commencement du corps humain ?

À l'origine de la psychanalyse, le rêve de « l'injection faite à Irma » – rêve des rêves et, s'il en est, rêve de l'organe du rêve – imagine la régression *du côté* de l'analyste. Dans son rêve, Freud voit la patiente bouche ouverte (ce que, note Lacan, dans la réalité, elle ne peut pas faire) et, ce qu'il voit, il le voit au fond : cornets du

1. *Ibid.*, p. 300.

nez recouverts d'une membrane gris blanchâtre. La vision à laquelle le rêve donne lieu, c'est donc la vision de la chair de l'organe — bouche-organe génital féminin. Les ordonnancements savants de celui-ci par Fliess ne tiennent plus : le rêve de la psychanalyse fait ainsi se produire l'organe dans sa matérialité ou encore dans son état affreux de viande malade. Et ce voir au fond de la gorge peut faire se confondre l'organe de la bouche avec une image horrible de l'organe génital féminin.

« Il y a là une horrible découverte, écrit Lacan, celle de la chair qu'on ne voit jamais, le fond des choses, l'envers de la face, du visage, les secrétats par excellence, la chair dans tout son sort, au plus profond du mystère, la chair en tant qu'elle est informe, que sa forme par soi-même est quelque chose qui provoque l'angoisse. » Et Lacan ajoute aussitôt : « Vision d'angoisse, identification d'angoisse, dernière révélation du tu es ceci — tu es ceci, qui est le plus loin de toi, qui est le plus informe¹. »

C'est à ça qu'ouvre la bouche sur le fond : l'informe (mot bataillien) de la chair est forme d'engendrement de l'angoisse. Mieux, l'angoisse cherche cette forme de l'informe de l'organe en chair.

La prétention des muqueuses buccales et anales est d'être traitées comme des parties génitales. Le rapprochement ici du buccal/anal avec l'organe génital fait donc de la perversion une méthode d'intelligibilité de l'imbrication des zones et organes entre eux, sous la référence apparente de l'organe génital mais celui-ci exploitant en

1. P. Fédida, « L'hypocondriaque médecin », in M. Aisenstein, A. Fine et G. Pradier, *L'Hypocondrie*, PUF, monographies de la *Revue française de psychanalyse*, 1995.

2. S. Freud, *Trois essais sur la théorie sexuelle* (1905), Gallimard, traductions nouvelles, 1987, p. 60.

quelque sorte la *génitalité* des muqueuses buccales notamment. On serait tenté de penser que, si la bouche est l'organe où se forment le rêve et le fantasme autoérotique et son intense activité physique hallucinatoire, l'organe génital y est pour ainsi dire préfiguré — celui-ci assurant à l'autre une reconnaissance. Au sujet du suçotement, Freud désigne ce décollement de la finalité alimentaire :

Une partie de la lèvre elle-même, la langue, ou toute autre région de la peau qui se trouve à portée — même le gros orteil —, peuvent être pris comme objet de cette activité¹.

L'économie rythmique du suçotement se fait certes sur le modèle de la succion du sein, mais ce qui compte avant tout c'est la genèse libidinale du fantasme autoérotique — de la sexualité — dans ce temps second de dégagement de l'autoconservation². C'est dire que l'organe est bien ici le lieu de l'imperfection sexuelle dans la recherche de satisfaction autoengendrée. La peau est d'« accès plus commode » que toute autre partie du corps et rend indépendant du monde extérieur. L'érogénité de cette « seconde zone » — de « valeur inférieure » — n'assure pas moins une continuité à la bouche et constitue pour celle-ci une surface de protection de l'organe. L'enfant nous apprend ainsi comment la sexualité se forme par défaut de l'objet étranger.

L'infériorité de ce deuxième endroit sera, nous dit Freud, une des raisons qui le conduiront plus tard à rechercher une partie de valeur équivalente : les lèvres d'une autre personne (« Dommage que je ne puisse pas m'embrasser moi-même », pourrait-on lui faire dire)³.

La sexualité serait donc, dans son origine autoérotique,

1. *Ibid.*, p. 105-106.

2. J. Laplanche, *Vie et mort en psychanalyse*, Flammarion, 1970.

3. *Op. cit.*, p. 106.

marquée par cette imperfection de l'organe et ainsi par son inadéquation au but recherché. Étrange particularité humaine que celle de ne commencer nulle part et de devoir dès lors disposer de toutes les parties du corps, de tous les organes et du corps tout entier comme équivalent d'un organe génital, tandis que chacun de ces organes semble se concevoir sexuellement comme venant à la place d'un organe absent ! Certes, le gros orteil ou le morceau de peau sont-ils apparemment signifiants d'une autre absence – celle de l'autre –, mais on ne devrait pas s'empresse de penser que la sexualité est orientée vers un *autre* alors que l'analyse nous apprend que les symptômes de la névrose tentent individuellement, et chacun à sa façon, de constituer un autre sous la forme d'un organe d'autosatisfaction. Serait-ce le privilège du fétichiste de construire un organe parfait réunissant en une chaussure ou un sous-vêtement féminin l'organe et l'autre dans son corps ?

« Dommage que je ne puisse pas m'embrasser moi-même », imaginait Freud pouvoir faire dire à l'enfant. Ainsi toute nostalgie de complétude sexuelle laisse-t-elle la bouche ouverte sur une parole qui n'en finit pas mais qui, surtout, ne procède d'aucun commencement du corps. La bouche serait ainsi le véritable *espace nulle-part* du rêve et l'organe si justement imparfait de la *vision* du sexuel. Les embryologistes généticiens savent aujourd'hui que les organes différenciés du corps représentés sur le génome coexistent virtuellement et que leur spécification – leur forme et leur emplacement – résulte des durées d'expression génétique. Un organe serait-il alors la matérialisation d'une durée ? Et, si les mêmes gènes de développement sont exprimés aussi bien dans la forme du pénis que dans celle des doigts de la main, il faut s'attendre à ce que la bouche, sa langue et les lèvres

Par où commence le corps humain ?

répondent à une temporalité qui n'accorde en rien à leur place dans la tête une antériorité de commencement du corps humain¹.

À moins qu'il ne faille plutôt se confier à cette notation de Marcel Proust dans *Le Côté de Guermantes* :

L'homme, créature évidemment moins rudimentaire que l'oursin ou même la baleine, manque cependant encore d'un certain nombre d'organes essentiels et notamment n'en possède aucun qui serve au baiser. Et Proust poursuit : À cet organe absent, il supplée par les lèvres, et par là arrive-t-il peut-être à un résultat un peu plus satisfaisant que s'il était réduit à caresser la bien-aimée avec une défense de corne.

da "Par où commence le corps humain. Retour sur la régression", PUF, 2000.

In un triangolo, aumento di un angolo, diminuzione di un altro.

In ogni mutamento (qualunque sia l'estensione della porzione d'universo ritagliata dal pensiero), vi è permanenza. Dunque un invariante (che non si può cogliere per intuizione sensibile) mediante il quale si definiscono condizioni di variazione, condizioni limitative. Quindi, rispetto a tale invariante, equilibrio non alterato, modificazioni che si compensano a vicenda.

Ovunque vi è limite, vi è compensazione delle azioni per mezzo delle reazioni.

Ovunque ci sono « gli esseri », c'è limite.

Cerchio.

a condizione che... nella misura in cui... per rapporto a... per quanto...

« Non-dualismo ». Contemplazione di *tutte* le contraddizioni che traggono l'anima verso l'unità. Unità che non risolve le contraddizioni, della quale le contraddizioni sono l'assenza. Dualità rifiutata.

Dualità vuol dire opposizione, contraddizione; che cos'altro potrebbe voler dire? Se vi è una *seconda cosa*, l'ignoriamo. Per noi non appartiene neppure al nulla.

Equilibrio e permanenza. Mutamento, rottura di equilibrio. Senza fine, come nel caso del pendolo. Nella materia, la società, i pensieri (i sentimenti).

Il mutamento sarebbe distruzione se non fosse costretto entro limiti. I limiti implicano fenomeni di compensazione. Lo studio del divenire è lo studio di questa compensazione. [tuttavia, tempo diretto...].

Es. Conservazione dell'energia in un sistema chiuso — aumento dell'energia cinetica e diminuzione dell'energia potenziale. Poi il contrario (?) — Conservazione delle forze vive; nel caso del pendolo composto,

velocità ora più grande, ora meno grande che allo stato libero.

Cambiamenti in un sistema chiuso, compensazioni interne.

Sistema chiuso sottoposto ad azioni esterne; sistema più grande comprendente il primo e queste azioni. Compensazioni interne.

L'illimitato è *impossibile* nel mondo } socialmente...
L'illimitato è *il male* nell'anima }

Teoria degli insiemi, nozione di gruppo e d'invariante, in primo piano.

Disco ruotante. Un punto immobile. Sfera ruotante. Un asse immobile. Un pensiero che prendesse per corpo quest'asse sfuggirebbe alla modificazione.

Amore — limitato a un dato livello — oltrepassando questo limite, si crea odio. (E il reciproco? Sembra che sia ben diverso).

Arte — *raccordi necessari* tra luoghi espressivi.

Timeo. Mutamento nell'universo. Le cose una volta allontanate dal loro luogo tendono a ritornarvi, e si spingono circolarmente le une le altre perché non c'è vuoto (non c'è attrazione, solo spinta). Così movimento pendolare senza fine. Così ispirazione ed espirazione.

I corpi che salgono e scendono (più pesanti o più leggeri dell'aria), stessa spiegazione; e così pure i suoni che sembrano rapidi e lenti, acuti e gravi, ora traslazione non armoniosa per la dissimilitudine del movimento che essi causano in noi, ora concordanti (*ἁρμονίαι*) per la similitudine. (?)

I suoni si spingono l'un l'altro.

Ogni mutamento comporta un fenomeno di compensazione. Esempio — slittamento su un piano, attrito. (Di qui, energia, entropia; ma occorre anche un

Anselm Jappe

Grazie e disgrazie dell'economia

«Grazia» e «gratuito» sono due parole affini che provengono ambedue dalla radice latina «gratus». Questo aggettivo «ha un senso passivo e un senso attivo. Nel senso passivo, «gratus» significa «accolto con favore o riconoscenza, gradito». Nel senso attivo, significa «riconoscente, che prova riconoscenza». Il contrario, «ingratus», ha ugualmente un senso passivo: «che non è accolto con riconoscenza, o che non merita riconoscenza, e un senso attivo: «che non prova riconoscenza». La «gratia» è perciò «in senso stretto il favore, cioè l'inclinazione dell'anima a fare del bene a qualcuno gratuitamente e per qualche beneficio ricevuto. Ma la grazia può concernere anche la condizione della persona che ha ricevuto il favore, e può anche diventare la qualità delle cose che piacciono»¹. La grazia è un concetto complesso e difficile da cogliere, perché può riguardare le persone e le cose, può indicare la causa e l'effetto. Di «grazia» si parla nell'arte come nella teologia, nella morale come nella descrizione dell'aspetto fisico o delle attitudini di una persona. Una donna concede le sue grazie, e Dio concede la sua Grazia. Poche altre parole permettono slittamenti semantici così ampi. Ma una cosa è certa: ciò che si fa per grazia, lo si fa gratuitamente, gratis, senza una ricompensa in denaro.

È vero che secondo la morale protestante, descritta da Max Weber, il credente considera la ricchezza pecuniaria che è riuscito ad accumulare come un segno della sua elezione divina, della «grazia» che gli è stata concessa. Ma «gratis» è ciò che è «gradito», ed è gradito perché fatto «per grazia»: «gratiis è l'ablativo plurale di gratia» e significa «per compiacenza», quindi «senza esigere compenso»². Chi fa qualcosa per grazia, lo fa gratis: non aspetta un compenso, ma lo fa per istaurare o confermare un rapporto umano. Almeno non immediatamente. In questo sta la differenza con ciò che non è gratis, che viene

cioè fatto solo per ottenere un equivalente, qualcosa che ha lo stesso valore. La grazia coinvolge chi dà e chi riceve. Sono grato a chi mi offre qualcosa gratuitamente, perché egli dimostra in questo modo di gradirmi: costui, in cambio, mi è dunque grato nel senso di «gradito». E così via. Si potrebbero continuare le variazioni sulla famiglia semantica di «gratus» e «gratia». Notevole è qui l'aspetto reciproco e reversibile della grazia, e si comprende che la grazia e la gratuità fanno parte della «catena del dono»: il triplice obbligo di dare, ricevere e rendere. Ma non necessariamente si rende a chi ci ha dato, e in genere non immediatamente nè con un equivalente. Il dono istituisce una catena che lega numerosi individui e comunità tra di loro. Dall'epocale *Saggio sul dono* di Marcel Mauss in poi, uscito nel 1922, il dono è diventato un concetto centrale per l'antropologia e la sociologia. Il dono non è una pratica arcaica, rimpiazzata felicemente dall'economia basata sullo scambio di equivalenti e infine sulla moneta, che è talmente più efficace e pratica. Il dono, nelle sue infinite forme - non tutte necessariamente simpatiche - è una specie di «roccia originaria» dell'esistenza umana, come disse Mauss. L'economia monetaria vi si è innestata tardivamente, e ancora più tardivamente ha cominciato a occupare tutto lo spazio sociale e a far retrocedere la logica del dono. Ma ancora oggi, una buona parte della nostra vita si regge su catene del dono - nell'amicizia, nell'amore, in famiglia, nelle associazioni, nella cultura. Una vita interamente e totalmente dominata dallo scambio monetario, un'esistenza dove niente è gratis e dove si paga per tutto, come propone l'utopia nera del neoliberismo, sarebbe una vita completamente «disgraziata». Ciò che viene fatto «senza grazia», non «gratuitamente», non soddisfa mai il nostro bisogno di rapporti umani. Infatti, il dono è «grato» perché oltre allo scambio di un bene o di un servizio fonda anche un rapporto umano. Lo scambio monetario, invece, rimane sempre una relazione fondamentalmente ostile tra persone anonime il cui rapporto, in quanto tale, non va oltre lo scambio utilitaristico del bene o del servizio in questione. Quando dobbiamo pagare per ciò che normalmente otteniamo per amore, amicizia o gratitudine filiale, siamo delusi. A un rapporto venale - in un ospizio, in un

bordello - manca la grazia, e non proviamo nessuna gratitudine. Viceversa, verso chi ci regala qualcosa siamo grati – oppure diffidenti, proprio a causa del vincolo psicologico che l'altro intende evidentemente istaurare e della gratitudine che vuole provocare in noi. Essere grati significa essere in debito, e non sempre vogliamo essere in debito. La diffusione universale del rapporto mediato dal denaro si basa anche su questo: spesso fa comodo che il rapporto finisca lì per lì, che non rimaniamo in debito, che non si possa più chiedere niente a noi. Ma allo stesso tempo manca la grazia, intesa proprio come etica e estetica insieme. Il sorriso obbligato del venditore ci pare privo di grazia. Dove si deve pagare, non c'è amicizia. E dove non si paga, fosse anche per un caffè offerto, proviamo facilmente un senso di amicizia.

Grazia e denaro, gratuità ed economia si presentano dunque come due principi antitetici, la cui opposizione attraversa tutta la storia moderna. Così come nella società capitalista non c'è posto per la gratuità, non c'è neanche posto per la grazia. Dove tutto deve essere efficace ed economico, veloce e funzionale, la grazia ha diritto di esistenza solo quando costituisce un argomento di vendita supplementare. Ormai, l'invivibilità di una società in cui niente viene fatto gratuitamente, dunque per grazia, viene risentita in modo crescente. Negli ultimi decenni, dopo la loro vittoria sui «totalitarismi» politici, l'economia, il mercato e la concorrenza hanno assunto definitivamente un aspetto totalitario» anche loro. Ma invece della libertà e della prosperità promesse, si accumulano ormai le «disgrazie», come l'emarginazione di sempre più vasti strati della popolazione, l'allargamento della povertà, la precarietà, lo smantellamento delle strutture sociali e culturali che limitavano ancora il mercato totale. Di fronte a ciò aumentano le domande di introdurre, o restaurare, delle forme di gratuità : dal cosiddetto «reddito di cittadinanza» alla gratuità dei servizi di base (educazione, sanità), dalla soddisfazione gratuita di certe esigenze vitali (occupazioni di immobili, autoreduzioni nei trasporti, espropri collettivi in ristoranti, librerie, ecc.), a spazi per la creazione e la fruizione culturali gratuite (centri sociali); dalla battaglia per la gratuità dei contenuti informatici (questione dei download, partiti

«pirati», sviluppi di software come Linux, ecc.) fino al dibattito sui «beni comuni» (*commons*), cioè le risorse che dovrebbero appartenere a tutti (come l'acqua, ma anche la terra in certi contesti). Si tratta sempre di richieste di poter accedere «a titolo grazioso» a una parte della ricchezza socialmente prodotta – una richiesta che non potrà che aumentare in una situazione mondiale dove tanti beni e servizi vengono prodotti quasi senza sforzo (massimamente nel campo dei beni «virtuali»), mentre accedervi tramite del denaro guadagnato lavorando diventa, anche con la migliore volontà, un compito sempre più arduo, se non impossibile.

Secondo un'opinione che si sta diffondendo - per esempio con il movimento della «decrescita» - si dovrebbe andare verso una coesistenza dei due principi: la gratuità e la merce, il dono e la compravendita, il volontariato e il mercato. Del mercato non ci libereremo più, si sente spesso dire, e non sarebbe neanche desiderabile. L'importante è di limitarlo e di decidere che cosa debba essere distribuito secondo i meccanismi del denaro e dello scambio di merci su mercati anonimi, e dove invece questa logica si debba fermare: di fronte alla cultura o alle esigenze vitali di base, lasciando spazio al volontariato, o al welfare. Tutto il vasto mondo delle associazioni, del benevolato, delle attività «senza scopo di lucro» o «non profit», dunque ciò che appunto si chiama «terzo settore» (né Stato né mercato) si muove in questa ottica. Più specificamente, sono le «banche del tempo» o le «reti di economia locale» che si propongono di reintrodurre il dono nella logica sociale – e che se ne promettono esplicitamente un rafforzamento del «legame sociale» che si sta indebolendo ovunque nelle sue forme tradizionali (famiglia, quartiere, mestiere, parrocchia, partito, ecc.).

Questo tentativo di sposare il diavolo e l'acqua santa ha però un difetto spesso non sufficientemente preso in considerazione: il denaro, e ciò di cui esso è la rappresentazione, cioè il lavoro in quanto creatore di merci e del loro valore, sono delle potenze imperialiste e assolutiste. Il valore ha bisogno di crescere, di essere investito e di produrre, alla fine del suo ciclo, un valore maggiore che al suo inizio. Le tradizionali società del dono

erano essenzialmente delle società stabili, perché la loro somma finalità era la riproduzione dei loro membri e dei loro rapporti. Là dove l'economia si è « disincastata » (Karl Polanyi) dalla società che la conteneva – dunque nel capitalismo industriale – la valorizzazione del denaro diventa la vera finalità, e la riproduzione sociale ne è solo il mezzo. Non è una questione morale o psicologica, e l'« avidità dei ricchi » non ne è la causa profonda. Si tratta piuttosto del funzionamento automatizzato di una società incosciente di se stessa – ciò che Karl Marx ha chiamato il « feticismo della merce ». Una società basata sulla trasformazione di lavoro in denaro e di denaro in capitale non può più fermarsi, una volta che è stata lanciata nella sua folle corsa, ma deve trovare sempre nuovi settori della riproduzione sociale da trasformare in attività lucrative. Tutta la storia del capitalismo è la storia di una « colonizzazione » non solo esterna, ma anche interna. Tutto ciò che è gratis, che è di proprietà comune, che si può fare da soli o in gruppi ristretti (economia di sussistenza) è stato trasformato gradualmente in merce - dalla produzione di marmellate alla cura degli anziani, dall'approvvigionamento idrico alle scuole. Il denaro non accetterà di dividere con il dono il suo regno. Il denaro non sarà ragionevole, non accetterà compromessi. Per il denaro e la merce, continuare a crescere è una questione di sopravvivenza. Non importa se in un mondo in cui niente è gratuito non ci sarà più grazia. Se non vogliamo accettare questa logica, se vogliamo il ritorno della grazia nel mondo, bisogna cominciare ad opporsi al totalitarismo dell'economia della merce, senza credere che questa si lascerà facilmente imporre dei limiti o si autolimiterà...

1 Maria Teresa Ricci, « La grazia in Baldassar Castiglione : Un'arte senz'arte », in *Italianistica. Rivista di letteratura italiana*, anno XXXII, maggio/agosto 2003, pp. 235-245, che cita il *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine: histoire des mots* di A. Ernout e A. Meillet, Klincksieck, Paris 1959, il *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* e altri dizionari.

2 *Il Grande Dizionario Garzanti della lingua italiana*, 1994, p. 841

Je reprends à ce dernier stade les trois questions concernant le rapport entre l'horizontal et le vertical dans le don, l'historique et le fondamental, la ritualisation et la moralisation.

La verticalité sous la figure de l'antécédence est assurément le premier trait remarquable de la grâce: un don antérieur ouvre l'espace du dialogue socratique et plus généralement l'espace même de la dette et celui du sacrifice rituel. Le même Socrate qui évoque son démon demande qu'à sa mort un coq soit sacrifié à Asclepios: les rapports entre humains, note d'entrée de jeu Henaff, «<n'ont jamais lieu sans se référer à cette instance qui les précède» (319). En ce sens la grâce ouvre l'endettement et le sacrifice sous sa double forme d'offrande et d'immolation. Cette précédence a pour corollaire l'unilatéralité du don à la racine de cette mutualité. On retrouve le sans prix en même temps que la refondation symbolique du collectif.

Quant au rapport entre l'historique et le fondamental, il est plus étroit que dans les descriptions ethnologiques du sacrifice et même de la dette, dans la mesure où c'est dans la tradition occidentale, hébraïque, grecque et romaine que les exemples majeurs sont pris: *hen* hébraïque, *kharis* néo-testamentaire grecque, *gratia* latine. Ici l'historique adhère au fondamental dans la mesure où il en énonce la signification dans son acte même de naissance. Si le sens de faveur est commun à ces trois figures, grecque, judéo-chrétienne, latine, la *kharis* grecque, du moins chez Homère, évoque plutôt le charme, la beauté et à partir de là les bienfaits, la gratuité; de même, l'accent mis sur la célébration par Pindare tire la *kharis* du côté de la gratitude pour les douceurs et les merveilles que le poème chante. Avec la *kharis* du lyrisme grec prévaut le ravissement, l'endettement se faisant oublier dans la gratitude. Je ne suivrai pas Hénaff dans sa reconstruction des modifications, qui jalonnent l'entrée de la *kharis* grecque dans l'espace public de la discussion, sous le couvert de la persuasion, qui joint le plaisir au convaincre. Continue de prévaloir l'idée de l'impossibilité de rendre cette dette générée par la générosité même du don.

C'est par là que la *kharis* a pu se coaliser dans notre culture avec le *hen* hébraïque que la Septante traduit par *kharis*. L'impossibilité de rendre le don reçu est en quelque sorte scellée par l'élection qui met à part le peuple comme objet de la faveur divine. C'est un point de savoir comment, dans cette relation dissymétrique, la fidélité de l'élu peut culminer dans le langage de la tendresse, cet *hesed* que n'épuisent ni les valeurs de justice ni celles de l'amour. [...]

N'est-ce pas l'absence d'attente de retour qui fonde l'authentique réciprocité? En ce sens on peut tenir l'authenticité du don réciproque pour contemporaine de la mécompréhension même de la falsification que l'idéal-type du bienfait dénonce. Ce serait là le plus grand paradoxe concernant la reconnaissance elle-même, de se discerner avec peine de sa méconnaissance.

Paul Ricœur, *Il dono e il debito*

Ray Brassier, Jean-Luc Guionnet,
Murayama Seijiro, Mattin

Idioms and Idiots

A few paragraphs on an improvised concert

Improvisation: 1786, “act of improvising musically” from Fr. *improvisation*, from *improviser* “compose or say extemporaneously,” from It. *improvvisare*, from *improvviso* “unforeseen, unprepared,” from L. *improvisus*, from in- “not” + *provisus* “foreseen,” also “provided,” pp. of *providere* “foresee, provide” (see provide).¹

0 – WHAT HAPPENED?

We did something together: a concert. We want to try to explain it to ourselves: What happened exactly? How did it happen? And why? ... We want to recount the story of the process, but not only that; we also want to recapitulate all the discussions that took place before and afterwards (right up to the present), articulating the questions posed by the concert – questions that are both abstractly theoretical and very concrete. Our hope is that in doing so, the experience of the concert will allow us to attain a better understanding of the representation of art in art.

1 – BEFORE THE CONCERT

We are all interested in philosophy. One of us is a professional philosopher interested in music. The others invited him to collaborate on a project. The precise nature of this collaboration is to be determined: he is not a musician and has never participated in any sort of musical performance. He agrees to collaborate but neither he nor the others have any idea what form the collaboration will take.

1 <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=improvisation>

There is something interesting about the sound of words in a musical context – even though most of the time the results are terrible. The sought-after emotion often results from the contrast between 2, 3, or more simultaneous levels of logic, or levels of thought. Thus for example, the commentary which actors provide about their own acting within a film can be powerfully moving: consider Bergman's *A Passion*, or the way in which Chris Marker provides a commentary upon his own film in *Level 5*, or the way in which Sarahang, the Afghan singer, commentates upon his own song within the song (even if one doesn't understand a word he is saying). The first difficulty arises over the role of words. Although unsure about how to proceed, the philosopher is sure about what he does *not* want to do: he does not want to perform the role of academic theoretician commentating on a musical performance by the others. And he fears that if his participation takes the form of him speaking about the music in his capacity as a philosopher, the result will only be a banal and stilted academic exercise that remains beholden to certain dubious assumptions about the relation between sounds and concepts. Principal among these is the notion that the thinking embodied in music is some form of *sub-conceptual* content that must be given explicit conceptual expression through an act of theoretical reflection on the music. This schema is unacceptable on three counts: first, the resort to speech threatens to re-envelop sound in signifying tropes that cannot but attenuate the latter's material opacity; second, it assumes that music *means* in a way amenable to subsumption by ready-made conceptual forms and theoretical categories; third, it implies a division of labour between verbal conceptualization and sonic production that seems to reiterate the ideological distinction between theoretical-cognitive reflection and practical-aesthetic production. Improvising musicians who really *think* about what they are doing are far better qualified theoreticians of their own musical-artistic practice than any philosopher could ever be. Professional accreditation as an 'academic philosopher' does not automatically entitle one to the role of 'designated theorist'.

This presents an immediate dilemma: three of us are experienced performers-improvisers; but if the other is unwilling to perform as an academic theorist – reflecting upon, commentating on, or otherwise providing a second-order accompaniment to the performance – then what exactly is he going to do? Given that he has abjured all recourse to commentary or speech, there seems to be no other option but for him to somehow perform alongside the others. Mime and tap-dancing having been ruled out, it becomes difficult to avoid the resort to an instrument. But which instrument? After some hesitation, the choice of electric guitar presents itself for purely practical reasons: there is the dim memory of having being taught the rudiments of guitar playing long ago at school, and even though he has not picked up the instrument since, there is the feeling that he has at least a vague idea of how to coax sounds from the guitar – no such modicum of confidence is possible concerning any other instrument.

However, the choice of guitar is problematic. We have agreed that we want to do something unfamiliar not only for ourselves but also for any audience that might be present. Yet the presence of an electric guitar immediately threatens to undermine this imperative. On one hand, the instrument brings with it a whole host of associations with the rock idiom – associations which we have agreed are best avoided. On the other hand, the use of electric guitar in free improvisation is associated with renowned players like Derek Bailey or Keijo Haino, whose distinctive styles might be caricatured through incompetence rather than design. Inability risks resulting in an inept pastiche of ‘free improvisation’: incompetence can breed familiarity as surely as a surplus of competence. The potency and impotency concomitant with incapacity will prove to a decisive factor in the concert. It is not just that one of us does not know how to play according to the technical conventions governing recognizable musical idioms; he does not know how to ‘free improvise’ either. The question is whether this double incapacity can nevertheless yield something besides banality.

2 - DON'T START IMPROVISING FOR GOD'S SAKE

We take improvisation as an axiom, in the sense that one cannot really define when one is or is not improvising (since so many questions arise around individual free will, subjectivity, and ideology; questions which we do not think can ever be satisfactorily resolved). By adopting this axiomatic approach to improvisation as a domain to which one can bring ideas, decisions, and concepts as ways of narrowing down or focussing where the improvisation is going to happen, one can look closely into a specific area.

In speaking of improvisation, we're not just talking about the production of particular sounds or events but the production of social spaces as well. We invoke this as both a strategic term and a conceptual tool. Improvisation can therefore refer both to experimental music making as well as mundane everyday practices. But wherever it is applied, improvisation should bring about glimpses of instability. If it works, its elusive qualities should evade solidification and commodification – at least in the moment. The goal would be to apply to whatever discourse one is in the process of articulating those quibbles developed with regard to the world so as to always understand discourse in the exteriority of the world – though 'world' is not the right word here; perhaps it would be better to say "what one 'is' not"?

Is it possible to have a non-representational relationship to reality in the context of art? If so, this would surely be achieved by acknowledging all the specificities of the room. One should try to activate the room as much as possible and disrupt previous habits and behaviours in order to create different ones. In other words, one should strive to work against the normalization process. We have found improvisation to be a practice that requires taking into account everything happening in the room. It is not just the creation of something new that could be used later elsewhere, but a way of intensifying the moment by changing social relations. Improvisation can be an extreme form of site-specificity as well as a radical, intimate

and immanent self-criticality. Since there is no need to defend or construct a position for future situations, improvisation always tends towards self-destruction.

Thus, we could see improvisation as pure mediality with no outside; as a pure means with no end, countering every form of separation, fragmentation, or even individuality. When does this activation of the space take effect? When one has succeeded in generating a dense atmosphere capable of engendering the awareness that something important is at stake. Since there are no predetermined categories or words to describe this experience, what is at stake is very difficult to articulate. Because of the difficulties of assimilating it or immediately understanding it, this strangeness counters the normalization process. When this dense atmosphere is produced, the people involved become painfully aware of their social position and standardized behaviours. When the density of the atmosphere reaches a certain threshold, it can become physical, disturbing our senses and producing unfamiliar sensations in our bodies. Through a disruption in the appearance of neutrality, one gets the sense of being in a strange place – not really knowing where to stand. Every movement or word becomes significant. What is created is not a unified sense of space or time, but a *heterotopia* where one's location contains different spaces and temporalities. Previous hierarchies and established organizations of space are exposed. The traditional time of the performance and distribution of attention (the audience's respectful behaviour towards the performers, etc.) are left behind. If one goes far enough, these hierarchies could be diffused, not to give a false sense of equality, but to produce alternative social relations of time and space.

We do not want to be misunderstood. We are not talking about any variant of 'relational aesthetics' where a little injection of audience interactivity adds cultural capital to bland artworks executed by very concrete artists with dubious ideologies. Rather, we want to interrogate the limitations of performing on stage: To what extent is it possible to use the parameters

that define the spectacle (i.e. the divisions between audience, performer, stage, expectations) as material for improvisation? The issue about expectations in this concert is important because many people were expecting a philosopher: What would a philosopher do in an improvised music concert? Something involving speech... But he played guitar instead - badly! To what extent did the tension produced by these expectations influence and intensify our playing?

In the conversations leading up to the concert we talked a lot about trying to be 'in' the performance as much as possible. Lately, we have discovered that the way to do this is by pushing towards the borders or limits of the framework that one is working with. These borders, which are often simply accepted without question, actually contain all the problems, contradictions, and conditions that determine the concert situation, but not in any obvious way. One has to deal with them very carefully if one is to be able to identify how they constrain us to behave in certain ways, and the extent to which they affect us. Here we are not just talking about whether or not the room is hot or cold, etc., but about those unwritten yet binding conventions that we comply with out of habit: those rules which are not supposed to be challenged. The simple question often overlooked in improvisatory practice is: How does the social context of the concert frame and limit our scope of action?

What is required to go beyond such limitations? The refusal to fall back into a practice that reproduces established conventions or reiterates stereotyped ways of music making, even those accepted as part of what one is supposed to do in order to be recognized as an 'experimental musician'. Take for example the convention governing the acceptable distance between performing and being in the audience (this relates to the allocation of passive and active roles among performers and audience). If one is performing or has made the commitment to perform a concert, it means that s/he has a proposition, something to offer. But if one's proposition consists of *being*

the audience, then the risk is that such a proposition will just become an everyday, casual situation. Yet what is arguably most interesting about the concert situation is that it provides an opportunity to create a different social space: people who attend a concert want to be affected, touched; they want to receive something — or perhaps they don't? In which case the performer's decision *not to offer* would frustrate the audience's desire *not to receive*... Although it is very problematic to accept this passive role, it also provides the performer with the opportunity to do something 'extraordinary'; to create a situation that goes against the grain of our everyday social interactions. The most interesting concerts any of us have played were those where this position and these accepted roles, which both audience and performer inherit from the conventions of the concert situation, become twisted or developed into something else as a result of the audience assuming a more responsible and active role so that they come to believe that they could do anything.

We appreciate the problematic nature of terms such as 'activity' and 'passivity'; we are also aware of how easy it is to lapse into a patronizing stance. But we have observed that concerts which do not challenge or affect anyone just leave everything as it is, failing to generate anything with which anyone might actively engage: in such cases, it is as though nothing had happened. Other concerts — and Niort was one of them — might provide food for thought for long afterwards (a year and a half in this particular case); precisely because it remains difficult to judge whether or not it was a 'good' or a 'bad' concert in any musical sense. This is what spurs us to try to think 'in between' these terms: in this context, a 'good' concert would be one wherein any judgement executed in conformity with established dichotomies between 'good' or 'bad', 'success' or failure', would be absurd. In such cases, extant standards of judgment are suspended and we are forced to question the basis of the parameters by which we judge — previous standards and values collapse.

It is not just a matter of dissolving judgement and of liquidating

those constraints that allow one to distinguish artistic success from artistic failure, but of ratcheting up the challenge inherent in the ideal of ‘free improvisation’ to the point where it is the very nature of the concert situation that is at stake in the performance. Plinky-plonking is not enough. The plinky-plonk mode of reacting to one another in improvisation is long gone; our goal is to try to problematise what ‘reacting to one another’ might mean by exploring different ways of almost *not reacting* as a way of reacting. But the point is not to substitute a ‘non-reaction’ for a ‘reaction’; it is to seek out a mode of reaction or non reaction that would overtake any kind of latent or ‘hidden’ imitation; precisely the kind of imitation that doesn’t reveal itself *as* an imitation – the latter applies to most of what gets called ‘reacting’ in music, whether composed or improvised.

We each bring our own tools to the concert situation: instruments, ideas, timing, craft, knowledge ... To believe that one could break with all this all at once is unrealistic to say the least. So what does it mean to react to one another? We think it has to do with striving not to do so in any obvious way; with forcing oneself to attempt something that has not been attempted before; something that incurs some fragility, some anxiety, some tension that might feed the other players, in the hope that everyone might thereby be rendered maximally alert. The goal would be to attain a mode of interaction that would allow each player to appropriate a personalised sense of time: there is a very specific way in which the passing of time is experienced in special concerts, and there was definitely something like this going on in Niort.

3 – DURING THE CONCERT

Just before the concert, while doing the sound-check, there was a realization that we needed to do something about our mode of interaction, since the way we were engaging with each other was too obvious. So we conceived a structure that would impose constraints on our interaction. The concert was going to be 45 minutes long. We divided these 45 minutes into 3 parts, each of

them lasting 15 minutes. Each of us could decide to play in one or two parts, but not in all three. But we also allowed ourselves the decision not to play in any of the three parts. So not only was there the possibility of 15 minutes of silence occurring during the concert; there was also the possibility of 45 minutes of silence should all four of us coincidentally decide not to play in any of the three sections... Of course, for one reason or another we broke the rules, but still this structure generated unusual ways of reacting to one another.

One of our principal aims in approaching this concert was to try to render the atmosphere as ‘dense’ as possible. In Niort, each of us strove individually to realize this quest for density. Yet in doing so separately, we managed to achieve a collective mode of intensification that could never have been realized had we resorted to stereotyped modes of interpersonal communication. For instance, one of us chose to use nothing but a very reduced electronic device and his voice, neither of which he usually uses; playing alone during the second third of the concert’s duration was a very powerful experience. This density was experienced by another in the form of a gamble, not only about when to play, but also about whether to play at all. The possibility of not playing was envisaged as a powerful temptation, since it provided an easy way of avoiding the risk of ridicule that inevitably accompanied the decision to play. This decision assumed the form of a challenge, like the decision to leap from a great height without knowing what lies below.

4 - CLINICAL VIOLENCE

When we began discussing what we wanted to achieve during the concert, we talked about trying to attain a cold or *clinical* violence. We set ourselves what is, on the face of it, an absurd (not to say dishonourable) goal: we wanted to make people cry. And in fact one member of the audience—unprompted—did cry. It might be that this is what happens when the density of the atmosphere becomes too much and is rendered oppressively physical. Why did we want to achieve this? Because we wanted

to do something that would go beyond the production of more or less aesthetically pleasing abstract sounds, the 'liking' or 'disliking' of which is concomitant with the reaffirmation of one's musical taste.

Of course, we do not believe that music harbours some sort of intrinsic affective dimension and we fully embrace the Modernist critique of sentimentalist romanticism. But this critique on its own is insufficient; it has too often encouraged a sort of aestheticized formalism. We wanted to cut through the paralyzing double bind: either emotional impact via rhetorical expressionism or reflexive lucidity via safely disengaged formalism. We wanted to achieve something that would be at once theoretically and viscerally exacting. The problem is one of forging modes of musical expression that incur some sort of psychic as well as cognitive challenge while abjuring affective stereotypy and the recourse to facile emotional gratification, whether the performer's or the audience's.

What passes for violence in music too often consists of a series of shock gestures: dissonance, volume, noisiness; theatrical threats and imprecations... We wanted to try something else: to subject ourselves and the audience to an obscurely unsettling test; to force them and ourselves out of any recognizable comfort zone by withholding displays of improvisatory craft as well as of musical technique. 'Violence', but of a peculiarly studied kind. Obviously, it need not be physical (though this is not to say that it cannot or should not be physical). Often it is psychological and deals with expectations and projections. It is born of the refusal to satisfy the former while interrogating the motives of everyone involved until the level of self-reflexivity is pushed to the point of positive feedback.

Thus the type of violence we are interested in is not spontaneous. It is disciplined and calculated. It is purposefully motivated. In this sense, it bears a certain affinity to what people refer to as 'political violence'. It comes from the core of our subjective engagement in our practice and when it hits home, it touches

something very deep. It falls outside the reproduction of stereotypes or ready-made categorizations of expression. Who carries it out? It might well be the idiot trying to express him/herself, coming from a totally different angle, cutting through the warm shit, the familiar comfort zone. The idiot feels cornered by the non-idiot; there is an elastic band tying them to him/herself. This elastic band is the pressure exerted upon one's self by all the conservative properties of the context with which one is engaging. At some point, this elastic band is slightly too tight and there is always the risk it might snap but the idiot has a lot of time to reflect upon the nature of this pressure, and why s/he feels this way. In the middle, there are the accepted norms; anything that represents the status quo proper to the context one is working with. In the context of free improvisation these might be: craft, aesthetics/taste, certain preconceptions about what it means for performers to react to one another or to the audience, habits that condition and reproduce the concert situation.

After one has been thinking through these issues for a long time; when at last what one wishes to cut or break with has become very clear; when one is no longer prepared to wait, one turns into a slingshot. Of course, this might entail shattering some of the foundations supporting the values that are taken to be constitutive of an improvised music concert. An incalculable risk has occurred and while this description might sound desperate, there is no desperation involved in such violence. Even when the pressure in question is that of the status quo, once this violence occurs it becomes indifferent to it; it supersedes it in the simplest way imaginable, as though nothing extraordinary were happening. One might feel as though one were in the dark, but when people are comfortable with the light and someone questions that light, then people become fearful and they perceive the threat of enforced obscurity as violence. This is the sense in which it is a clinical violence. The precision involved is that of the sniper or surgeon cutting through the veneer of normality; some may experience this as an act of violence but for the idiot it is simply necessary. The scalpel

cuts through the foundations that provide the unquestioned or unstated rules of improvisation holding the concert situation together. Unlike the surgeon however, the idiot has no clear goal, nor an identifiable cyst to excise. The importance is in the cut. From there we can all draw our own conclusions. The idiot looks upon reality from an unstructured or uncategorised point of view. His or her intervention is without a foundation: anarchic. There is no general consensus or general understanding: this is the sense in which we are idiots.

5 – ELEVEN WAYS OF SAYING NOTHING

1. From ‘having nothing to say’ to ‘finding something to say’ by shifting one’s position with regard to that movement.
2. Around the question of the concert, music and philosophy met, without knowing why. In any case, we wanted to change something about it.
3. We exchanged ideas about “what a concert is” in order to find an efficient practice, mainly by defining what we would *not* like to do in any given concert.
4. The conventional frame of the concert was thereby displaced (which would have created possibilities for the opening of vision and for a renewed listening). Nevertheless, we did not know what we might do.
5. By putting this in parenthesis, we performed a kind of concert, a non-concert. But in any case, what is the relation between A and non-A?
6. The decision taken by thought and psychological tension were our sources of energy. This project also undermined the identity that makes of us musicians or philosophers. One is a musician only when one succeeds in giving a presence, a life to music. The same holds for a philosopher. Let us be musical, philosophical, etc., at the same time... (In the word

‘collaboration’ one finds the word ‘labor’. It usually means a collaboration in which each finds him or herself in his or her habitual position, as a musician, philosopher, etc., without any subversion of identity or attempt to slip towards other identities, towards X.)

7. By putting philosophy and music in parenthesis, by separating our profession from ourselves, we simply felt ourselves to be human beings who feel, react, and reflect: the experience of not feeling ‘ourselves’ anymore (don’t we feel too tied and sometimes even imprisoned by our professions?).

8. The profound silence within us, filled with the immense energy that threatens to explode when blocked: this unnameable zone would be the basis of our experience with language. There we were.

9. The audience was thereby invited to share this experience and some of them seemed to feel the direct impact of the tension that was flowing from us, forgetting their own expectations of the concert set-up

10. Once the non-concert was finished, our work began again, and we had to try to put this unsayable experience into words. This text is part of that attempt.

11. To dare to *do* each time without falling into routine, in order to renew, to stimulate, to *dynamize* the everyday.

6 – NON

We think there is a particular relationship between the NON of Derek Bailey’s ‘NON-idiomatic’ and the NON of François Laruelle’s ‘NON-philosophy’. NON-philosophy is the theory or science of philosophy, treating philosophy as a material. NON-idiomatic playing is supposed to be able to treat all music as a material.

Derek Bailey: “[T]he main difference I think between freely

improvised music and [other musics] is that they are idiomatic and freely improvised music isn't. They are formed by an idiom, they are not formed by improvisation. They are formed the same way that speech vernacular, a verbal accent, is formed. In freely improvised music, its roots are in occasion rather than place. Maybe improvisation takes the place of the idiom. But it doesn't have the grounding, the roots if you like, of those other musics. Its strengths lie elsewhere. There are plenty of styles – group styles and individual styles – found in free playing but they don't coalesce into an idiom. They just don't have that kind of social or regional purchase or allegiance. They are idiosyncratic.”

Of course, one can understand Bailey's statement as one strategy among others to affirm an individual position in the music world. But although these kinds of strategies are usually simple (and sometimes stupid), the non-idiomatic one seems to us to be very dynamic and full of interesting questions and problems – even if Derek Bailey is not necessarily the best exemplar of his own idea (but isn't that the sign of a good idea? When one's idea or theory completely overtakes one's practice or subjectivity?).

There is a similarity between the trajectories of Laruelle and Bailey: they seem to be engaged in trying to free philosophical and musical practice respectively from their institutionalized idioms. Both have very similar relationships to their own historical background. 'NON' as a prefix means that you are not part of something but dealing with it from some kind of exteriority—yet one which involves the immanence of practice rather than the transcendence of reflection. As a negative prefix, 'NON' also means that you are supposed to have some kind of immanent general point of view: not from above but from within the practice of music itself—the most immanent point of view possible. It entails that you add a layer of representation such that it either subtracts the previous layer or even unifies all the layers.

Laruelle: “Philosophy is always at least philosophy of

philosophy”; “non-philosophy is the science of philosophy”. Why is non-philosophy as the science of philosophy not a metaphilosophy? Laruelle claims that philosophy is constitutively reflexive: every philosophical claim about X (whether X is an artwork, a scientific theory, or a historical event) is always at the same time a reflection on philosophy’s relation to X. In other words, the philosopher is never just talking about *this object*, but also about how every other philosophy mediates her relationship to this object. Non-philosophy represents an attempt to ascend *beyond* this level of reflexive mediation while simultaneously descending *beneath* the level of irreflexive immediacy. It does this by operating in the medium of what Laruelle calls ‘real immanence’: this is an immediacy that is radically irreflexive, but one that generates a kind of pure practical transcendence (mediation through practice rather than theory). ‘Real’ as opposed to wholly idealised or conceptualised immanence boils down to the question of the *use* of theory: the real immanence evoked by Laruelle entails a strictly disciplined *practice* of philosophy. Instead of exacerbating reflexivity by ascending to a meta-metalevel, non-philosophy adds a third layer of auto-reflexivity that is also a minus (an *a +* that is *a -*) – a subtraction that allows us to view all philosophy from a vantage point that is at once singular and universal. Mediating abstraction is concretized and unified through a practice that, as Laruelle puts it, allows it to be ‘seen in-One’. This is not some mystical rapture but a practical immersion in abstraction; a concretization of theory that precludes the sort of play ‘with’ different philosophical idioms indulged in by postmodern ironists.

We brandish the NON as the marker for an incapacity that adds a layer of knowing *and* subtracts a layer of self-consciousness from reflection in such a way as to eliminate complacent gestures of reflexivity: the player’s knowing wink to the audience (“you know that I know that you know...”). NON rescinds the complacent reassurances of such ironic distancing by driving an inalienable wedge between the player’s intellectual and affective capacities and his technical craft: it pits practice

against craft in a gesture of *uncrafting*.

Non-idiomatic music exemplifies a similar agenda: it is informed by knowledge of music and musics, but adds a layer of non-knowledge that would allow the music to be taken 'in-One' (something like a phenomenological *époché* applied to the whole of music), thereby forestalling the typically postmodern gesture of 'playing with' idioms. NON supposes the impossibility of any second-order discourse 'on' music; it indexes the impossibility of interpretation: one may view all the music of the moment through the filter of electroacoustic music; one may also view the viewing through the window of improvisation.

We postulate an equivalence between NON ('non-philosophy'/'non-idiomatic') and UN ('un-conscious'/'uncraft'). Both are about releasing the potency proper to impotence, the capacity proper to incapacity. The practice of uncrafting does not just imply the negation of technique, but the unleashing of a generic potency proper to incapacity, of which technical/practical capacity would be merely a restrictive instance.

Our performance in Niort pitted uncrafting against the aestheticisation of improvisatory technique. The latter results from the tendency to abstract the sonic or auditory dimension of performance from its non-aesthetic envelope, exemplified by the social framework and the concert set-up, and to grant pride of place to sound according to the aestheticism of the 'pure' listening experience. In doing so, free improvisation risks degenerating into an aestheticism of technique in which the skill exhibited by the free-improvisation virtuoso is fetishised just like that of the idiomatic virtuoso. The immanent critique of aestheticism will not be accomplished by collapsing music into ideology or injecting it with an extra layer of self-consciousness. It is rather a question of levelling the hierarchical difference between immanent practice and transcendent theory by re-implicating theory into practice but in such a way as to precipitate a crisis wherein convulsive conception interrupts

complacent sensation. The goal would be to effectuate a critique that no would longer depend on the security of critical distance; a critique that would remain inside. This would no longer really be a critique but rather the discovery of an outside *through* the inside.

Lettura pura (per Berger: sulla nozione di lettura).¹

Problema (sviluppi degli aggiustatori). Quale forma occorre dare a un foglio di carta o lamina di metallo perché, piegato o arrotolato, possa formare... (cono, tronco di cono, ecc.)?

Trascendenza di π .

Sviluppare è un'operazione « trascendente », non riducibile all'uso della riga e del compasso.

L'ombra di un cerchio è un'ellisse. Geometria attraverso studio delle ombre.

Lettura delle ombre.

Spinoza e Rousseau.

Misura: il corso uguale del tempo — le stelle che ruotano.

Forma unica di un oggetto di cui si vedono passare più volte ombre differenti.

~~I prigionieri non hanno neppure l'idea del rapporto oggetto-ombra.~~²

In una certa situazione, si agisce in un modo di cui, in seguito, si ha vergogna; ci si promette di non ricominciare. Allorché si ripresenta una situazione simile, non se ne riconosce la somiglianza; infatti essa non somiglia al ricordo dell'altra; somiglia all'altra.

Solo dopo...

Quale rimedio? Sapere innanzitutto come differiscono la situazione e il ricordo (o l'attesa) della situazione. [Lettura].

Geometria greca. Se attraverso gli assiomi (?) e i postulati si definiscono costruzioni e non concatena-

1. Nella primavera del '41, S. Weil scrisse per Gaston Berger, direttore della Société d'études philosophiques di Marsiglia, un articolo intitolato: *Essai sur la notion de lecture* (cfr. SP, II, 323-324) [N.d.T.].

2. Nel mito della caverna.

Nicola Masciandaro

Grave Levitation

The problem of knowledge is a problem of possession, and every problem of possession is a problem of enjoyment.

Giorgio Agamben¹

Pleasure and pain occur as follows. When a lot of air mingles with the blood and makes it light, which is a natural occurrence, and pervades the whole body, pleasure is the result. When the unnatural happens and the air does not mingle, the blood gets heavier and weaker and thicker, and pain is the result.

Diogenes of Apollonia²

Gravity is a mystery of the body devised to hide defects of the spirit.

François de La Rochefoucauld³

Mainly, the question is how light or heavy we are—the problem of our ‘specific gravity’.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*⁴

*Our world has inherited the world of gravity: all bodies weigh *on* one another, and *against* one another, heavenly bodies and callous bodies, vitreous bodies and corpuscles. But gravitational mechanics is corrected here on just one point: bodies weigh lightly.*

Jean-Luc Nancy⁵

It must have been like seeing one of the huge pillars of the church suspended like a cloud.

G.K. Chesterton, describing Thomas Aquinas’s levitation⁶

1 Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*, trans. Roland L. Martinez (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), xviii

2 *The First Philosophers: The Presocratics and Sophists*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 200.

3 “La gravité est un mystère du corps inventé pour cacher les défauts de l’esprit” (*Collected Maxims and Other Reflections* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], V.257).

4 *The Gay Science*, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff and Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 5.380.

5 *Corpus*, trans. Richard A. Rand (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 93.

In his elegant commentary on Hugh of St. Victor's *Didascalicon*, Ivan Illich shows how the modern idea of "the 'text' as something detached from the physical reality of a page" is not only an invention of the twelfth century, but "the necessary foundation for all the stages through which bookish culture has gone since."⁷ What we have failed to inherit from the culture that created text as we know it, what we have 'lost', Illich argues, is the ability to *read*, that is, to use and experience text with the very sense or perception that technically generated it. Illich describes this forgotten form of reading as a "meiotic decipherment of reality by which the reader, like the midwife, brings forth—in God's invisible light—the sense with which all things are impregnated."⁸ Reading in this truer, contemplative mode is much more than a domain in which ideas and information *about* reality are communicated. It is the proper activity of the participatory intellectual *vision* of reality itself, the practice of a *literal speculative realism* according to which the textual page conspicuously coincides with the nature of everything as mirror of the universal Invisible.⁹ In this *speculum*, one not only studies the world, but discovers one's own self in a comprehensive seeing of the real: "In the light of wisdom that brings the page to glow, the self of the reader will catch fire, and in its light the reader will recognize himself."¹⁰ For Illich, what blinds modernity to this authentic, wisdom-oriented reading is, paradoxically, the division of reading into diverse utilities that the invention of text permitted: "*Lectio* [reading] divides into

6 *Collected Works*, 11 vols. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 2.505.

7 Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh's Didascalicon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 4.

8 *Vineyard of the Text*, 124.

9 "Omnis mundi creatura / Quasi liber, et pictura / Nobis est, et speculum" (Alain de Lille, PL 210:579) [All creatures of the world are to us like a book, a picture, and a mirror]. "Universus enim mundus iste sensibilis quasi quidam liber est scriptus digito Dei" (Hugh of St. Victor, PL 176:814) [This whole sensible universe is like a book written by the finger of God].

10 *Vineyard of the Text*, 21.

prayer and study.”¹¹

To minds operating within this division, the call to ‘return’ reading to contemplation must perforce appear misguided or hopeless, as silly as requiring that study become prayer, or prayer study. And yet the question of—our unknowing need for—a *grace* of reading will not go away.¹² Without a ‘magical’ touchpoint between subject and object, thought and reality, the point of reading vanishes. Without realization of something beyond the reader-text correlate, the *being* of reading remains unreal. Whence Jean-Luc Nancy’s admission of the poisonous saturation or negative plenitude to which reading must lead: “A moment arrives when one can no longer feel anything but anger, an absolute anger, against so many discourses, so many texts, that have no other care than to make a little more sense, to redo or perfect delicate works of signification.”¹³ The recent advent of speculative realist discourse is a creative expression of this anger, an attempt to remove the obstacle (identified as *correlationism*) that lies between mind or discursive thought and the abyssic Real, the “great outdoors” (Meillassoux).¹⁴ Yet without a reinvention of the medieval contemplative model of reading, and necessarily with it a new discovery of the invisible reality of text, that is, without a properly literal speculative realist practice, speculative realism too will remain blindly bound to its own (academic) discursivity.¹⁵

11 *Vineyard of the Text*, 65.

12 Cf. Michael Edward Moore, “The Grace of Hermeneutics,” *Glossator* 5 (2011): 163–72.

13 Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Birth to Presence*, trans. Brian Holmes (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 5.

14 “Anger is the fume of an irritated mind. It is caused by the thwarting of desires. . . . It aims at removing the obstacles existing in the fulfillment of desires. . . . Mind is the seat of anger, and its expressions are mostly through the activities of the mind. Anger is a form of *mental* entanglement” (Meher Baba, *Discourses*, I.27–8).

15 The only author affiliated with speculative realism to substantively fight the pandemic of discursivity is Reza Negarestani, whose philosophic work practices real war against the correlation precisely

This essay attempts, therefore, to exhort the reader to such a practice precisely without dictating in what it consists, to summon from who-knows-where the *moment of grace* in which the gravity and unbearable excess of scholarly reading miraculously inverts into lightness and plenitude. Specifically, it attempts to freely apply the model of anagogic inversion—the mystical summit of medieval textual experience¹⁶—to the corporeal act of being scholarly in a manner that will inspire new pleasurable forms of aggressive contemplation.

How does a scholar become body? How does a body become scholar? What is the place of pleasure in these becomings? A bad question to inflict on myself. Yet insist and inflict I will, like a perverse medieval mystical body, like a flagellant subjecting you to the spectacle of my own affliction.

There is of course a more generic and familiar question here, a fairly good question about the place of the body and its pleasures within the broad set of practices to which the scholar belongs. This question flows in many directions and could lead me to consider the medieval as a site within corporeal hermeneutics generally and how the study of medieval thing contributes to its practical and theoretical evolution. And in this field

through its simultaneously aesthetic and logical embrace of the *folly of the impossible*: “averting the path of the state or capitalism is no longer a matter of treason or disobedience but the folly of the impossible – trying to walk away from the world. . . . only by rigorously embracing this folly can we develop a genuine non-restricted dialectical synthesis with the universal absolute and unbind a world whose frontiers are driven by the will of the open and whose depths are absolutely free” (Reza Negarestani, “Globe of Revolution: An Afterthought on Geophilosophical Realism”).

16 “Imagine a great shining chain hanging downward from the heights of heaven to the world below. We grab hold of it with one hand and then another, and we seem to be pulling it down toward us. Actually it is already there on the heights and down below and instead of pulling it to us we are being lifted upward to that brilliance above, to the dazzling light of those beams” (Dionysius, *The Divine Names*, 3.1, in *Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid [New York: Paulist Press, 1987], 68). See also Nicola Masciandaro, “Getting Anagogic,” *Rhizomes* 21 (2010).

of inquiry there is indeed a definitive medievalist presence, for example: John Milhaven's recuperation of mystical bodily knowing and mutual loving so as "to affect all areas of human decision and action"; Hans Gumbrecht's call, also grounded in a premodern cosmocentric subject, for "a relation to things of the world that could oscillate between presence effects and meaning effects"; Carolyn Dinshaw's invitation to a queer tactile historiography that works "through affective connection ... and the collapse of conventional historical time;" Giorgio Agamben's stilnovistic pneumophantasmological indication of the neither-subjective-nor-objective as the "'third area' that a science of man truly freed of every eighteenth-century prejudice should focus its study"; and my own hyperarticulated desires, buttressed by the temporality of Talmudic *pilpul* and the sensuousness of medieval exegesis, for commentary as the spicy form of geophilosophical becoming.¹⁷ Such lines of flight invest in the present embodied space of pleasure as the proper *place* of scholarship, the workshop of its facta, and speak towards the realization of communities that may supercede, perforate, and perfect the conventional forms of life they inhabit. I prefer, however, not to float past, but to orbitally slingshot my way around this discursive mass in order to arrive somewhere else. The metaphor has special meaning in relation to the observed gravitational anomalies whereby spacecraft have inexplicably increased velocity during Earth flybys.¹⁸ It suggests, perhaps as the local analogue of the similarly anomalous accelerating expansion of the universe that we live in or lives in us, the potentiality of gravity to be something otherwise. So I fling myself towards scholarly pleasure measured gravita-

17 John Giles Milhaven, *Hadewijch and Her Sisters: Other Ways of Loving and Knowing* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 120; Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *The Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), xv; Carolyn Dinshaw, "Getting Medieval," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10 (2001): 203; Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas*, 59; Nicola Masciandaro, "Becoming Spice: Commentary as Geophilosophy," *Collapse VI: Geo/Philosophy* (2010): 20-56.

18 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flyby_anomaly>

tionally, as affecting the weight of bodies, hoping to arrive at being scholarly in the middle of the moment where the heavy becomes light, where gravity is flight.

Pleasure's deep relation to gravity is evident generally in the tendency to speak of its quality in terms of weight. Pleasure presents itself through a *scalar* sense of my body's weight, a mood of relative corporeal heaviness or lightness. Joy is literally uplifting and sadness literally depressing. In regard to pleasure more specifically, the relation is clearest in the context of the distinction between love and lust, which I take as wholly applicable to the quality of intellectual desire. As Meher Baba explains, in terms that invite translation into the relational spaces between scholarly subjects and objects, the amorous zones of *philology* and *philosophy*, In lust there is reliance upon the *object of sense* and consequent spiritual *subordination* of the soul to it, but love puts the soul into direct and *co-ordinate* relation with the *reality* which is behind the form. Therefore lust is experienced as being *heavy* and love is experienced as being *light*. In lust there is a *narrowing down* of life and in love there is an *expansion* in being. *To have loved one soul is like adding its life to your own*. Your life is, as it were, multiplied and you virtually live in two centres. If you love the whole world you vicariously live in the whole world, but in lust there is an ebbing down of life and a general sense of hopeless dependence upon a form which is regarded as *another*. . . . Lust *seeks* fulfillment but love *experiences* fulfillment. (*Discourses* 1.160)¹⁹

These distinctions speak especially to how otherness and sameness function as twin containers for lustful, appropriate scholarly relations whereas loving, expansive scholarship is a movement in relation to an object whose being is not collapsed by these alternatives, what Agamben names whatever being, "the loved one *with all of its predicates*, its being such as

19 The lust/love distinction is correlative to that which Hugh of St. Victor draws between meditation and contemplation: "id quod meditatio quaerit, contemplatio possidet" (*In Salomonis Ecclesiasten Homiliae* XIX, PL 175:117) [that which meditation seeks, contemplation possesses].

it is.”²⁰ I want to highlight the crux of the distinction, the moment where lust gives way to love, where heavy self-centered movement becomes a mobile multi-centered lightness, where bodies become planetary. This moment is grounded in the potentiality of lust as already a form of love, an already that is visible as the inescapable movement or desire of gravity itself, “a dim reflection of the love which pervades every part of the universe” (*Discourses* 1.156), “l’amor che move il sole e l’altre stele” (*Paradiso* 3.145). That it is the *other* stars who have Dante’s final word unveils love’s unity with an originary otherness legible in gravitation as a motion toward other *centers*, i.e. a movement whose perfection would realize the old definition of God as a sphere whose center is everywhere and/or the Nietzschean death of God—”The middle is everywhere. Crooked is the path of eternity”—for which Meister Eckhart famously prayed: “I pray to God to rid me of God.”²¹ In other words, the lust-to-love transition, as a movement of being, is a kind of corporeal cosmic flow between the poles of gravity’s double signification of singular essential weight and omnipresent primordial movement.

So the scholarly being I am thrown into is a grave levitation, the lovely becoming light of weight in all senses: metaphoric, literal, and above all in the truest most palpable *sense* of the phenomenal poetic zones of indistinction between the two. This means, in tune with the Heraclitan oneness of the way up and the way down, not flight from but the very lightening of *gravitas* itself, the finding or falling into *levitas* through the triple gravities of scholarly discipline: the weight of the past (texts, traditions), the weight of each other (society, institutions), and the weight of ourselves (body, the present). Towards this end I offer no precepts or to-do list, only an indication of the wisdom and necessity of doing so, of practicing our *highest* pleasures, in

20 Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 2.

21 Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, “The Convalescent,” 175. R. Schürmann, *Meister Eckhart*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1978, p. 219.

unknowing of the division between poetry as knowledge and philosophy as joy,²² in opposition to the separation between thought and life that best expresses “the omnipresence of the economy,”²³ and in harmony with the volitional imperative of Nietzsche’s “new gravity: the eternal recurrence of the same”: “Do you want this again and innumerable times again?”²⁴ This text? This reading?

The medieval possesses me with a peculiar specific gravity, like

22 “The scission in question is that between poetry and philosophy, between the poetic word and the word of thought. . . . the scission of the word is construed to mean that poetry possess its object without knowing it while philosophy knows its object without possessing it. In the West, the word is thus divided between a word that is unaware, as if fallen from the sky, and enjoys the object of knowledge by representing it in beautiful form, and a word that has all seriousness and consciousness for itself but does not enjoy its object because it does not know how to represent it. The split between poetry and philosophy testifies to the impossibility, for Western culture, of fully possessing the object of knowledge (The scission in question is that between poetry and philosophy, between the poetic word and the word of thought. . . . the scission of the word is construed to mean that poetry possess its object *without knowing it* while philosophy knows its object without possessing it. In the West, the word is thus divided between a word that is unaware, as if fallen from the sky, and enjoys the object of knowledge by representing it in beautiful form, and a word that has all seriousness and consciousness for itself but does not enjoy its object because it *does not know* how to represent it, that is, of language). In our culture knowledge . . . is divided between inspired-ecstatic and rational-conscious poles, neither ever succeeding in wholly reducing the other. . . . What is thus overlooked is the fact that every authentic poetic project is directed toward knowledge, just as every authentic act of philosophy is always directed toward joy” (Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas*, xvii).

23 Raoul Vaneigem, *The Movement of the Free Spirit: General Considerations and Firsthand Testimony Concerning Some Brief Flowerings of Life in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and, Incidentally, Our Own Time*, trans. Randall Cherry and Ian Patterson (New York: Zone, 1994), 18.

24 “The Recurrence of the Same,” notebook entry from August 1881, cited from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Graham Parkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), xxii; *The Gay Science*, 4.341.

Chaucer's being "a popet in an arm t' embrace / For any woman, smal and fair of face," like Boccaccio's authorial weightiness—not grave but so light he floats on the water, like Dante's rhyming body made *macro* [thin] by a *poema sacro*, like Aquinas's airy bovine corpus, like the fiery mealtime conversation of Francis and Claire that seems to consume the nearby church, like the floaty Neoplatonic discourse of Monica and Augustine: "And higher still we ascended, thinking and speaking and wondering."²⁵ These light weights pull us to levitate gravely in a way that may be called *aggressive contemplation*, thinking contem-

25 *Sir Thopas* 701-2; "io confesso d'esser pesato, e molte volte de' miei dí essere stato; e per ciò, parlando a quelle che pesato non m'hanno, affermo che io non son grave, anzi son io sí lieve che io sto a gall nell'acqua" (Boccaccio, *Decameron*, ed. Cesare Segre [Milan: Mursia, 1966], 676); "Se mai continga ch 'l poema sacro / al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra, sì che m'ha fatto per molti anni macro . . . (*Paradiso* 25. 1-3); "One effect of Thomas's amazing concentration in prayer was that several times, as he prayed, his body was seen lifted off the ground, as it if followed the movement of his mind, as with him who said 'The Spirit raised me up between earth and heaven'" (Bernard Gui, *Life of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ch.23, in *The Life of Saint Thomas Aquinas: Biographical Documents*, trans. and ed. Kenelm Foster [Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1959], 42); "And in the meantime Saint Francis had the table prepared on the bare ground, as he usually did. When it was time to eat they sat down together: Saint Clare with Saint Francis; one of the companions of Saint Francis with the companion of Saint Clare; then all the other companions gathered humbly at the table. And as a first course Saint Francis began to speak of God so sweetly, so deeply, and so wonderfully that the abundance of divine grace descended upon them, and all were rapt into God. And while they were enraptured in this way, their eyes and hands lifted up to heaven, the people of Assisi and Bettona and those of the surrounding area saw Saint Mary of the Angels burning brightly, along with the whole place and the forest, which was next to the place. It seemed that a great fire was consuming the church, the place and the forest together" (*Little Flowers of Saint Francis*, ch. 15, *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, ed. Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short [New York: New City Press, 2001], 3.591); "Et adhuc ascendebamus, interiorius cogitando et loquendo et mirando opera tua" (Augustine, *Confessions*, 9.10).

plation both in the medieval sense of the hermeneutic fruit that gives “a foretaste, even in this life, of what the future reward of good work is” and in its original meaning, to mark out a space for close, augural observation.²⁶ As Hugh of St. Victor explains, whereas meditation is an “assiduous and shrewd drawing back of thought . . . [that] is always about things hidden from our understanding,” contemplation is “a keen and free observation of the mind expanding everywhere to look into things . . . [and] is about things *as manifest*.”²⁷ Such work, as the *Cloud of Unknowing* explains, has the proportional power of “suddenly and graciously” making pleasing and beautiful the appearance of the “worst looking man or woman.”²⁸ Contemplation, setting up shop at the ancient place Nietzsche calls “the whole Olympus of appearance,” attends to surfaces as the deep space of life, the place of pleasure where the burdens of understanding the past and planning the future become *an unpredictable baroque frame for remembering the present*. Aggressive contemplation, like

26 Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, trans. Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 5.9. Cf. “Reading is an act of divination that stirs up the realities hidden in the letters of books” (Michael Edward Moore, “The Grace of Hermeneutics,” 164).

27 “Meditatio est assidua et sagax retractatio cogitationis, aliquid, vel involutum explicare nitens, vel scrutans penetrare occultum. Contemplatio est perspicax, et liber animi contuitus in res perspicendas usquequaque diffusus. Inter meditationem et contemplationem hoc interesse videtur. Quod meditatio semper est de rebus ab intelligentia nostra occultis. Contemplatio vero de rebus, vel secundum suam naturam, vel secundum capacitatem nostram manifestis” (*In Salomonis Ecclesiasten Homiliae XIX*, PL 175:116-7).

28 “Whoso had this werk, it schuld governe him ful seemly, as wele in body as in soule, and make hym ful favorable unto iche man or woman that lokyd apon hym; insomoche that the worst favored man or woman that leveth in this liif, and thei mighte come to by grace to worche in this work, theire favour schuld sodenly and graciously be changed, that iche good man that hem sawe schulde be fayne and joyful to have hem in companye, and ful mochil thei schuld think that thei were plesid in spirit and holpen by grace unto God in theire presence” (*The Cloud of Unknowing*, ed. Patrick J. Gallacher [Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997], 54.1874-80).

the accelerating centerless expansion of the cosmos, does not wait for but moves forcefully into itself, territorializing the unbounded, unwallled space of its pleasure with nothing other than pleasure's movement, the ravished-ravishing taking place of *taking* pleasure. Here our seeing totally does not translate into the life-deferring instrumental transparency that keeps us from speaking to each other. Here, responsible for my own happiness and for producing the perfume of its truth, I float with Aquinas and burn down the church with Francis. Or as *High on Fire* sing it, "Come all ye losers, don't you know you're the children of life? / Follow me now and we'll burn down the pillars of time."²⁹

29 High on Fire, "Hung, Drawn, and Quartered," *Surrounded by Thieves* (Relapse Records, 2002).

Christine De Smedt
4 Choreographic Portraits:

The son of a priest
'I would leave a signature'
Self-reliance
A woman with a diamond

What is it that I always do? Or rather that I don't want to do?

I realized that in my work there was a hidden premise not to involve biographical and personal elements.

But what do I mean by *personal*? What is the relationship between how I think *the personal* and the work I make?

On the one hand I considered that it is not interesting to involve *my personal story*, understood as my private story, in artistic work.

On the other hand I would consider that what is *my personal* is not only a private, intimate or biographical matter, but a particular perspective, as well private as public, since *my personal* is already being a construction in larger and in different contexts, my personal as a shared identity, which involves different identities, with a lot of contradictions and paradoxes.

I realised that what is behind the notion I used of *my personal* and *the personal* was not clearly defined, that it could not be identified in a single identity and that it is in a state of flux.

Consequently (or inconsequently) I choose 'the personal' to be the issue of a series of encounters. I invited four choreographers with whom I have a particular professional/collaborative relationship (Jonathan Burrows, Alain Platel, Xavier Le Roy,

Eszter Salamon). I invited each of them for an interview, a conversation to talk about beliefs, fantasies, metaphors, stories but also about their work, methodologies and artistic concerns. These encounters addressed me with different aspects of how each particular person thinks and develops his/her artistic work, with different connections between who, how and what. They confronted me also with my conflicting interests in them taking very different positions in the artistic field of dance and performance.

Choreography as a way of thinking and talking: the interviews, the encounters between the choreographer and me, become the basis for the creation of a series of portraits. Movement, dance and choreography relate to patterns of thinking and talking and this echoes in what is articulated in the interview. The specificity of the choreographic methodologies and concerns of each choreographer on the one side and the interview on the other side functioned in a feedback loop system to develop the concept and the composition of each portrait.

Choreographic interests and politics of representation are interacting with their thoughts. For instance by applying the principle of counterpoint to the text from Jonathan Burrows, using repetitions, loops and unison for the fragments of Alain Platel, installing doubt and the desire for re-thinking notions in the portrait of Xavier Le Roy or the continuous movement within a field of statements about gender and capitalism for Eszter Salamon.

The portrait consists of quotations from the interview, in which the personal is presented as an appropriated construction: the personal on the verge of the non-personal. Interiorising thoughts of the other, this solo project becomes an impossible gesture where my own authorship is pushed to its limits. The personal story that is supposed to 'explain' or 'nourish' the artistic work is 'stolen' from other people and the work reflects how even the most personal is described in a language that is not mine.

I turn to the author's person behind the work, not to explain the work (like critics) or to reconstruct the history (like historians). As Marten Spangberg announced one of the portraits: "Interview could be understood as a shared or a sharing of perspective. A particular mode of coming together, not in respect of two becoming one but rather as two becoming a third, an autonomous entity that belongs to no one. Christine De Smedt has in a series of works taken on this third entity in an attempt to continue its autonomy or alien-capacity as a way of uncover her own idiosyncrasies, paradoxes, expropriations as well as those of dance as such."

The portrait does not interpret or explain, nor does it need to be historically 'correct'.

One possible understanding of the personal is that to be personal is taking a position in relation to something.

On the one hand, by making the portrait, I take a position in relation to the choreographer by creating a personage that exists independently.

On the other hand, performing different portraits is a gesture of dis-identification or destabilizing the personal as unique individual. It is an attempt to deal with the basic question of how *my personal* is involved in the artistic work and can be seen as an embodiment of the idea of the constructive, performative or changeable character of the personal.

At the beginning, before the actual portraits were created, the title of the project was *Untitled 4*, Jonathan Burrows, Alain Platel, Xavier Le Roy and Eszter Salamon. Since the portraits are finished, as the result of a process of abstraction from its origin and the creation of an independent entity I want to introduce a new general title and a specific title for each portrait that underlines their autonomy: 4 choreographic portraits: *The son of a priest*, *I would leave a signature*, *Self-reliance* and *A woman with a diamond*.

Presenting the portraits as live performances, allows us to view 'portrait as form' with many questions. For example: what is 'the present' in a portrait? Is it a snap shot? Does it imply the future, the past? Does it allow the spectator to look beyond the frame of the portrait itself? What is the role of the spectator looking back at the portrait? We are quite familiar with portraits in photography and visual arts. Roland Barthes writes about looking at a photograph: I see, I feel, so I recognise (identify-acknowledge), I look and I think. These performing portraits operate from a different medium, be it a single performed portrait or the series of performed portraits. How the personage is situated in space and relates to the audience determines the portraits constitution. The portraits vary from a frontal, open and direct relation into a very central position that changes the relation from being distant to close, intimate to directive. This results also in different dramaturgical developments of the portraits: a linear development of thoughts for the portrait of Jonathan Burrows, fragmented reflections on Alain Platel, a re-enactment of thoughts from Xavier Le Roy through dialogue with the audience, a lecture for the portrait of Eszter Salamon.

By presenting different portraits, each image creates a context for the other, eventually reflecting on each other. I want to create a performance in which the viewer, the spectator, can experience these personages and images as framed and fixed, yet open for identifications, resistances and references, open for different interpretations and potential links between fragments and materials.

January 2012

È ancora un altro criterio.

Silenzio interiore Non cambiare. Un altro ancora:
il dubbio.

arresto
immobilità
?

Tempo
Gli altri

Quel che si pensa dicendosi: ciò che io penso è forse del tutto falso. Ma *leggere* il dubbio in ogni apparenza.

Volere che siano altri a leggere il proprio sogno. H.¹
Confusione di livello. Legittima per una lettura vera.

Sì, ma...

Gli altri non possono leggere in modo veritiero se non mediante il loro sforzo.

E allora, l'uso della forza?

Uso della forza per arrestare un sogno, non per imporne un altro. Negativo.

Non volere cambiare il proprio peso sulla bilancia del mondo — la bilancia d'oro di Zeus.

Si possiede una forza limitata. Volere farne uso pienamente — ma niente di più.

Quale senso...?

Barca.

Statue greche, esseri immobili fatti da esseri immobili.

Leggere in tutte le apparenze che il mondo esiste.

Leggere in tutte le apparenze Dio.

Niente di meno.

Ciò che si traccia pensando la retta fa pensare alla retta allorché lo si guarda. Così pure l'arte. Così pure l'azione. Miracolo.

Robert Stejin

Deer thoughts

as written in my blog, dj sorry/www.unitedsorry.com

Tuesday, June 17th, 2008

I left home and went to the cave where I left the dead deer. It was dark, there was the smell of rotten leaves, there were a lot of spiders, for sure it remains always autumn in these dark humid areas of my mind.

I found the bones of the deer. No flesh, I blew the dust away. My deer died in memory of the hunter. They had an impossible love affair. At the end the desperate hunter stabbed him, the deer survived the cuts but died of a broken heart.

This is history. The memory of the hunter remains as a clear light in the sky.

At the moment I took the bones in my arms, they disappeared, and I know that my body carries them inside.

I am happy, to have a task again. And this time, the hunter will be my brother.

written on Thursday, December 2nd, 2010

I hunted a deer, looking him in the eyes and not killing him I became the deer myself, a deer who loved the hunter, we got a house in the forest, very close to the village, where I was born. The hunter slept in the cottage, the deer outside, between the trees. But a lot of times, they became one, the man and the deer, a figure, half human/half animal, like in a cave painting of prehistoric times.

written on Tuesday, October 27th, 2009

Three years ago they found you dead on the street. And again I feel this enormous sadness about you not being alive anymore. I find it hard to accept that you made your life so short, that you couldn't find peace with being the person you were.

I still want to hold you like we did so many times, just to express that it was and still is okay to be with you. Dead or alive, you stay in my mind as my little brother in crime. In crime to be loved. Endlessly. Yes, sometimes I start to forget you, but I still love you deeply.

Once we were in a club, there was almost no one there, but the music was great. I was dancing, you were drinking at the bar. I forgot you totally while I was dancing, then you crossed the floor and kissed me on my mouth and said, I love you so much because of the way you are dancing now. There was nothing seductive or sexual in what you said, it felt as if we became like brothers at that moment, because you recognized something in me, what I didn't know.

Once you asked me if we could do a lot of shamanic travels together. At that time I didn't understand that you would become one of my travel-companions through the country of the death.

Wherever you are at this moment, I wish you all my love and send also my love to all the people who still miss you.

green conversations manifesto:

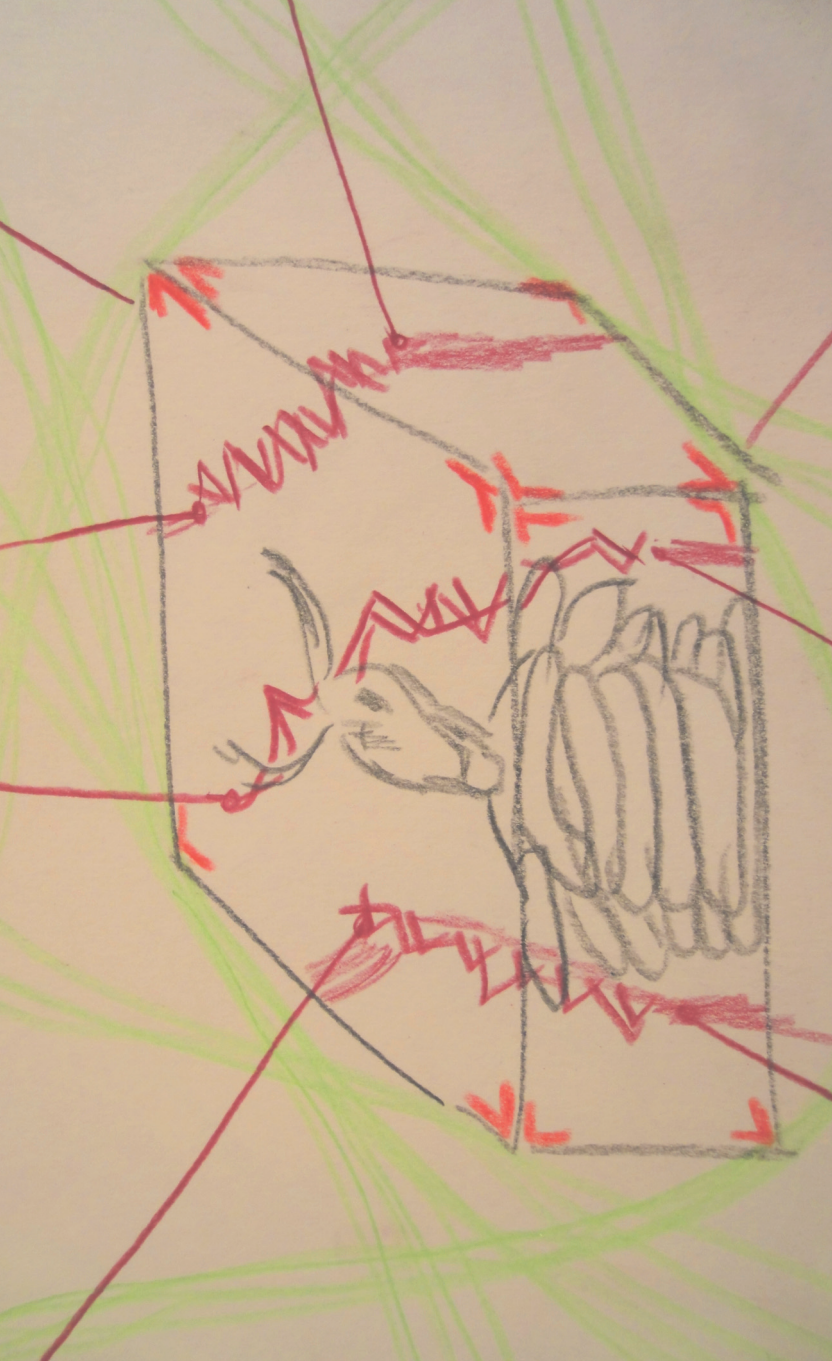
let's provide a platform
for rethinking reality
we need
exhausting monologues,
hesitating dialogues,
bothering day dreams & creative hallucinations
let's bring our bodies and mind
outside the heat of the moment
let's take time
let's face our environment
and listen to the stillness of trees for example
let's discover the not-doing, but still growing
what are the possibilities to still connect
in places where there is discomfort and conflict,
let's construct ecological thinking in our senses
Yes let's become a green Eros also in our cities.
It is time to coexist and co-create with our environment

talk of an understanding tree/ Vienna 28th of november 2012

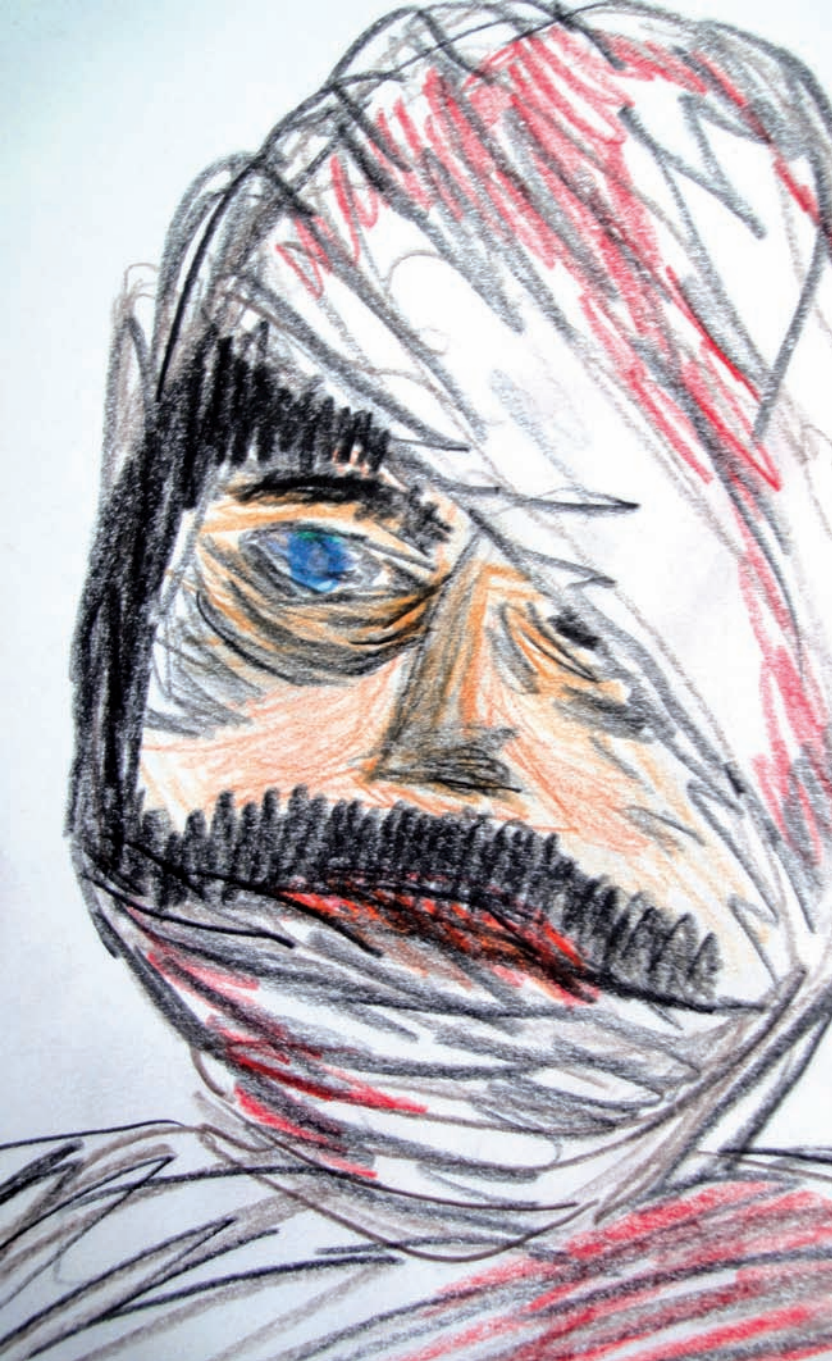
Can I take people serious, people who put their head, heart and sex to my trunk, without asking me if I fancy these kind of things... but I must tell, that this man asked before, it is his way to get in contact with me, I think he is a dancer, or at least someone who wants to communicate with his body. I am naked as always, unprotected, no skin, I dream about the caress of the wind, the vibrations of the sounds of playing children in my surrounding, and now I feel the warmth of this man, who dreamed of sleeping in my trunk as being in a womb, I know he can hear me, when he gets very, very still.

















Bertrand Prévost

L'élégance animale. Esthétique et zoologie selon Adolf Portmann

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Bertrand Prévost

L'élégance animale. Esthétique et zoologie selon Adolf Portmann

- 1 La question des animaux artistes est sans doute une bien mauvaise manière de poser le problème d'une esthétique animale. Se demander si certains animaux « font de l'art » – si le chant des oiseaux est comparable à l'art vocal humain, si les chimpanzés sont capables de peinture, etc. – c'est envisager le problème en des termes exclusivement poétiques, autrement dit dans des conditions qui sont déjà spécifiquement humaines et qui faussent nécessairement le point de vue (à commencer, bien évidemment, par la question de l'intentionnalité). Pire, peut-être : c'est une manière qui pêche par sa profonde abstraction, car toujours on en vient à comparer un statut abstrait et général de l'animalité à un statut tout aussi universel et idéal d'humanité. Bref, une façon de ne pas regarder.

Fig. 1.



A. Portmann, *Die Tiergestalt*, Bâle, F. Reinhardt, 2e éd. 1960.

- 2 Commençons donc par *regarder*, par regarder *des* animaux. D'emblée nous sommes frappés par la profonde expressivité d'un monde parcourus de signes intenses : cris, couleurs, mouvements, formes, motifs... Mieux : comment ne pas être saisi par l'*élégance souveraine* qui affecte très souvent les formes animales ? La précision des zébrures, veinures, marbrures et autres taches qui ornent le pelage de nombreux mammifères ; les couleurs éclatantes de la livrée des poissons tropicaux et des perroquets ; les dessins stupéfiants de régularité sur les coquillages ; la délicatesse et la minutie des motifs – bandes, rubans, ocelles – sur les ailes des papillons ; les plumes et leurs extraordinaires qualités : non seulement les couleurs et les motifs, mais encore tous les effets de brillance, de matité, de velouté, d'irisation... Cette élégance ne s'arrête pas aux formes locales mais caractérise encore la configuration générale des animaux : pensons aux crêtes, aux crinières, aux queues, à toutes les formes d'appendice, aux ailerons... La sûreté, l'exactitude et la finesse de toutes ces formes font fatalement signe du côté non pas tant de nos arts plastiques (la peinture par exemple) que du domaine immense de l'ornementation et de la parure. Et ce n'est sans doute pas un hasard si Jacques Derrida ouvre son essai sur les animaux par une dialectique de la nudité et du vêtement¹.
- 3 Une *élégance* animale ? – le terme est choisi à dessein. Il a quelque chose du paradoxe puisqu'il contrevient manifestement à l'une des oppositions canoniques de notre civilisation, en prêtant aux animaux et à leur « naturalité » un trait d'artificialité qui revient, pense-t-on, à nous

seuls êtres humains. Dans les années cinquante du siècle passé, un zoologiste suisse qui avait toute la rigueur du biologiste autant que la profondeur du philosophe a voulu prendre cette élégance au sérieux : il s'agit d'Adolf Portmann². Il revient à ce savant génial et un peu oublié, du moins presque totalement méconnu en France, d'avoir considéré les formes animales en posant la question, extrêmement délicate, de leur sens – geste qui ne revenait pas moins à donner quelques jalons fondamentaux pour une sorte de sémiotique naturelle ou d'esthétique naturaliste : *quel est le sens des formes vivantes*³ ? Ce n'est pas exactement aux formes animales elles-mêmes que Portmann prêtait toute son attention que sur leur extraordinaire nature expressive, que sur ce qui, dans ces formes, les transfigure en de véritables apparences. Toutes les explications fonctionnalistes, finalistes ou utilitaristes – toutes d'inspiration darwinienne – achoppent sur cette irréductibilité expressive. Le métabolisme, la reproduction (par le dimorphisme sexuel, les parades nuptiales), le camouflage, en un mot, toutes les fonctions qui contribuent à la conservation de l'espèce, ne peuvent rendre tout à fait compte de ces formes animales, discrètes ou extravagantes. Les couleurs bariolées du plumage des perroquets, pour ne prendre que cet exemple, ne souffrent aucune explication biologique dans les termes d'une utilité pour l'espèce. Elles paraissent totalement gratuites. A supposer même qu'une justification fonctionnelle vienne localement rendre compte d'un motif ou d'une forme, toujours elle butera devant la prodigalité morphologique et chromatique, la richesse d'invention voire le délire des formes animales. Au-delà de la critique sans cesse réitérée d'un darwinisme utilitariste, le geste portmannien était – et demeure toujours – extrêmement polémique au regard des développements modernes et contemporains de la biologie. Cette dernière, en effet, n'a eu de cesse de marquer son désintérêt pour la forme animale. Tandis que le lent mouvement historique des sciences du vivant s'est déployé du macroscopique au microscopique, en descendant toujours plus en profondeur dans la matière vivante (du corps à la cellule, au chromosome, au gène...⁴), le regard de Portmann portait cette nécessité de tenir en égard la dimension macroscopique, en tant que dimension problématique en soi. La biologie ne ferme certes pas totalement les yeux sur les formes vivantes, mais c'est le plus souvent dans un simple souci taxinomique : les formes n'ont de sens qu'à être identifiées pour être classées, elles ne sont qu'un prétexte pour être rangées dans des cases et non regardées pour elles-mêmes. Ce n'est pas en « donnant un nom à un objet de collection, en classifiant l'animal » que l'on rend compte de la richesse des phénomènes, qui pour elle-même se trouve de fait reléguée au second plan⁵. Les développements contemporains de la morphogenèse, cette science qui emprunte tant à la physique qu'à la biologie et qu'aux mathématiques, ne changent pourtant pas véritablement la donne⁶ : parce que son point de vue se focalise sur les conditions physiques du développement des formes (quels dynamismes sont à l'œuvre dans les taches du léopard, les plis du cerveau, les stries des empreintes digitales, etc. ?), la morphogenèse n'est en fin de compte que le nouvel avatar d'un mécanisme qui rate précisément le dynamisme dont il croit rendre compte.

4 Si Portmann visait bien une morphologie, qui d'ailleurs serait loin de négliger les apports de la morphogenèse, ce n'est qu'en tant qu'il plaçait le « dynamisme » dans la forme même, et non dans son seul développement ou sa croissance : autrement dit dans le mouvement d'apparition de la forme, d'une forme conçue davantage comme *événement* perceptif que comme état de choses. Telle est bien la pierre angulaire du différend avec la biologie : articuler esthétique et biologie, en ce que cette articulation supposait de prime abord d'accorder *une pleine réalité* à l'expressivité des formes animales comme phénomènes sensibles. Science naturelle des apparences, biologie de la présentation : c'est donc en zoologiste, mieux, en biologiste, que Portmann introduisait la question de l'apparence dans le monde animal.

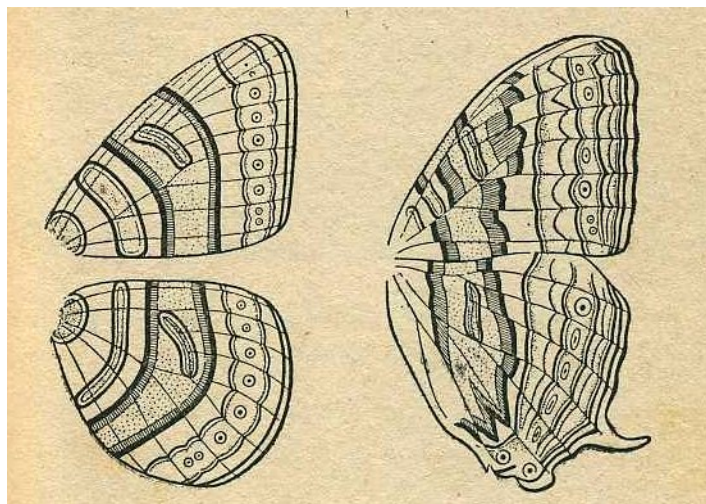
5 On entend déjà les critiques : tous ces phénomènes esthétiques ne seraient pas réels et objectifs, mais n'auraient d'existence que dans la tête du zoologiste esthète, ou du collectionneur de coquillages et de papillons... Introduire l'élégance (soit un régime symbolique) dans le règne animal (soit un régime naturel), relèverait tout simplement d'une esthétisation proprement culturelle. Mais toute la force de Portmann tient précisément à balayer d'un revers de main cet argument subjectiviste, et à conférer une *réalité objective* à ces *apparences* sensibles. Aucune esthétisation du monde animal, aucune vision anthropocentrique des formes naturelles : ce

n'est pas « pour l'homme » que se dessinent les marbrures sur la coquille des mollusques, ce n'est pas pour l'œil humain que se colorent les plumes des perroquets. Autant dire qu'il ne s'agit en rien de savoir si ces formes sont belles.

6 L'objectivité de ces formes tient à leur nature *expressive*. Le point de vue n'est en rien celui d'une anthropologie ou d'une psychologie – même si la question de l'intérêt historique, culturel et anthropologique, donc, porté aux formes naturelles a tout son sens (on pense bien évidemment au développement des *Kunstundwunderkammern*, à l'aube de la modernité), mais bien d'une histoire naturelle, voire d'une *philosophie de la nature*. La leçon du philosophe anglais Whitehead n'aura jamais eu autant de sens : « Pour la philosophie naturelle, toute chose perçue est dans la nature. Nous ne pouvons pas faire le difficile. Pour nous, la lueur rouge du crépuscule est autant une partie de la nature que les molécules ou les ondes électriques par lesquelles les hommes de science expliqueraient le phénomène »⁷. Autrement dit, les apparences animales, en tant qu'expressives, sont bien des faits de nature et ne renvoient pas simplement à un changement dans notre (ou une) perception subjective. De même que Whitehead critiquait toute « théorie des additions psychiques à l'objet connu dans la perception »⁸, il sera revenu à Portmann d'en finir avec l'idée d'une forme ajoutée au corps de l'animal, d'une apparence additionnée à un métabolisme.

7 En se contentant d'une plate description taxinomique – manière, justement, de ne pas vraiment *décrire* les formes qui se présentent à elle – la biologie laisse de côté autant la singularité de ces formes que leur variabilité. C'est peut-être sur ce point que se révèle la limite d'une interprétation d'inspiration plus ou moins phénoménologique de la pensée portmanienne⁹. Le thème de l'apparition, la question d'une apparence « gratuite » s'y prêtaient assez logiquement. L'accent sera donc mis sur une « donation première », sur « un surgissement originaire qui excède toute fonctionnalité »¹⁰. Mais l'intérêt de Portmann n'est pourtant pas d'avoir ajouté au dossier de la sempiternelle question métaphysique « pourquoi quelque chose plutôt que rien ? » – question de l'origine et de ce qui passerait pour son « énigme » . Son intérêt se porte au contraire vers une autre question, très proche dans sa formulation, mais toute différente en réalité : « *pourquoi ceci plutôt que cela ?* » , en l'occurrence : pourquoi cette forme-ci plutôt que cette forme-là ? « Il est certes vrai de dire que toutes les fleurs servent la reproduction de leur espèce, mais cette affirmation est incapable d'expliquer pourquoi une fleur donnée devrait avoir cette forme plutôt que celle-là »¹¹. C'est une logique de la distinction formelle que visait Portmann, ce qu'il nommait encore un « plan structural » par opposition à une seule « fonction structurale »¹². Constamment, on le voit insister sur « l'autonomie relative », sur la « valeur particulière des figures »¹³. Soit l'exemple classique des cornes : « On ne voit dans les cornes qu'un moyen de défense ou un signe distinctif des sexes (ce qui est d'ailleurs exact), mais on oublie que cela ne suffit pas pour expliquer la *complexité* des formes animales »¹⁴. Autrement dit, l'unité synthétique de la fonction n'explique pas pourquoi la nature se serait embarrassée d'une pluralité de formes. Ou encore, à propos des couleurs vives de certains gastéropodes qui seraient de simples avertissements pour d'éventuels prédateurs signalant qu'ils ne sont pas bons à être consommés, Portmann remarque très justement que « ce qu'il y a de plus caractéristique, à savoir précisément la diversité des motifs et la loi morphologique stricte de chaque espèce individuelle, n'est pas expliqué ; on explique seulement ce qui leur est commun à tous, c'est-à-dire l'aspect frappant »¹⁵. En un mot, la dimension métaphysique, bien réelle, de la pensée portmanienne, porte moins sur l'origine généreuse et gratuite des apparences animales – encore une façon, peut-être plus subtile que le simple fonctionnalisme, de ramener l'abondance à la tyrannie de l'Un. Ce qui importe au contraire, c'est de penser pour elles-mêmes la richesse, la profusion, la variabilité de ces phénomènes, non d'une manière abstraite et générale, mais du point de vue d'une souveraine différenciation des formes, du point de vue de leur *singularité*.

Fig. 2



A. Portmann, *Die Tiergestalt*, Bâle, F. Reinhardt, 2e éd. 1960.

- 8 La question demeure toujours pourtant de savoir si la gratuité de cette élégance animale a un sens : l'a-fonctionnalité des formes animales est-elle *encore* une fonction, ou bien doit-elle s'interpréter comme une pure dépense, un excès originaire, un luxe sans fin ? Cette dernière lecture trouverait son exemple chez Roger Caillois et ses armes théoriques chez Georges Bataille. Quand Caillois considère les développements morphologiques inouïs chez certains insectes, c'est une sorte d'absurdité naturelle qui vient donner leur principe génétique :

« A quoi riment les superstructures déconcertantes qui ombragent ces homoptères comme autant de parasols torturés ? Il est douteux qu'elles possèdent la moindre valeur protectrice. (...) Ces appendices ramifiés et encombrants, s'ils évoquent parfois quelque chose, *ne ressemblent à rien* et, en tout cas, ne servent qu'à gêner considérablement le vol de l'insecte. Ce sont de *pures excroissances* « *ornementales* » aériennes, qui bifurquent à l'improviste, *de façon saugrenue et absurde*, tout en conservant un « souci » évident d'équilibre et de symétrie »¹⁶.

- 9 Portmann dépasse cette interprétation dans les termes d'une totale absence de signification ou d'une pure dépense. Le zoologue n'ignorait pas que la théorie de l'évolution pouvait rendre compte de certains cas extrêmes en invoquant l'hypothèse d'une luxuriance ou d'une « hypertélie » pensés comme autant d'excès d'une nature trop prodigue. Mais « ce concept (d'excès) n'a de sens que si l'on part d'une simple autoconservation prise comme norme : seulement dans ces conditions l'on peut parler de luxe, de prodigalité, d'hypertélie, en tant que la moyenne serait la conservation »¹⁷. Le zoologue suisse ne mène ici rien d'autre qu'une critique en règle de la dialectique et de ses fausses contradictions : la différence ne s'oppose à la norme que tant que l'on tient la norme en estime, que tant qu'on lui prête une réalité. En l'occurrence, il n'y a « excès » dans la forme animale que si l'on part du présupposé non critiqué d'une fonction première de conservation.
- 10 Le tour de force de Portmann est au contraire d'avoir réinséré les apparences animales *dans* la vie animale même, indépendamment de toute fonction de conservation. L'élégance des animaux n'est pas extérieure à la vie, sa réalité objective l'y inscrit bien au contraire en son cœur. En un mot, « *paraître est une fonction vitale* »¹⁸. « L'organisme a aussi à apparaître, [...] il doit se présenter dans sa spécificité »¹⁹. Portmann aura dû en passer par l'invention d'un concept fondamental : celui d'autoprésentation ou de présentation de soi (*Selbstdarstellung*). Le souci qu'il a toujours manifesté pour respecter la singularité des formes animales n'est pas que d'ordre épistémologique. C'est dans les apparences mêmes qu'il convient désormais d'inscrire cette singularité. Ce qui se cherche dans l'apparence, c'est la singularité, au sens d'une distinction spécifique et individuelle. Se distinguer doit être entendu comme une fonction organique à part entière :

« Tous les êtres doués de relation au monde possèdent aussi le caractère de l'autoprésentation, qui a été le plus souvent méconnu jusqu'ici. Les parties nécessaires à la relation au monde sont à

chaque fois façonnées selon une particularité typique du groupe, une singularité qui se manifeste dans de nombreuses structures et de nombreux modes de comportement dont la spécificité ne peut être expliquée uniquement à partir des fonctions de la simple conservation de l'individu et de l'espèce »²⁰.

- 11 Il est tout à fait significatif que le zoologue suisse ait conçu l'autoprésentation dans les termes d'une héraldique naturelle :

« les motifs signalétiques présentent une caractéristique importante : ils ne peuvent se confondre avec d'autres, un peu comme les bannières et les blasons d'autrefois. D'ailleurs la science héraldique à son apogée offre bien des traits communs avec les règles auxquelles ces formations signalétiques sont assujetties. [...] Ces ensembles signalétiques nous font songer à des drapeaux, surtout les 'coiffures' de certains vertébrés, un vol de canards, l'aspect de certains pluviers limicoles ou la livrée des poissons familiers des récifs de coraux »²¹.

- 12 Un drapeau, un blason, une bannière ne sont pas autre chose que la mise en forme stabilisée d'une présentation de soi, la *formule plastique* de l'expression d'une individualité. Cette formule opératoire d'une distinction spécifique et individuelle n'est pas un donné, elle est toujours à produire. Couleurs, motifs, livrées, plumes, poils, écailles doivent ainsi être envisagés littéralement comme les *organes de l'apparaître* – des « phanères » – dont la « phanérologie », entendue comme science des apparences, étudiera les régularités. Le rôle fondamental de l'opposition intérieur/extérieur, qui fait que dans un organisme, plus une forme est extérieure et plus sa valeur de présentation est importante (d'où le très grand intérêt que Portmann portait à tous les animaux transparents) ; l'apparition d'une symétrie structurale et locale (dans les motifs et les couleurs) ; l'intensification des bords et des extrémités (notamment par le marquage du pôle caudal et/ou céphalique)... : Portmann n'aura eu de cesse de faire le relevé précis et l'analyse des innombrables caractères par lesquels les animaux se présentent (à commencer dans l'ouvrage magistral que constitue *La forme animale*).
- 13 Intégrer l'apparence dans la vie même ? Dès lors, la question qui se pose est bien de savoir de quelle vie on parle. Une vie qui ne se réduit plus à une lutte pour la *sur-vie* (le « *struggle for life* » darwinien), pas plus qu'au fonctionnement d'un organisme (le métabolisme). « Les fonctions de conservation, écrit magnifiquement Portmann, sont au service de quelque chose qui est à conserver, et qui est davantage que la simple somme des opérations de conservation »²². Ce que le zoologue suisse découvrait ici n'est rien d'autre qu'une *vitalité* plus profonde que la vie elle-même, dès lors qu'on la conçoit comme simple survie. C'est en ce sens qu'il retrouvait la pierre angulaire de la critique que Friedrich Nietzsche avait adressée à un darwinisme étroit. C'est que Nietzsche avait parfaitement su distinguer entre la conservation de soi et l'élargissement de la puissance : la première étant « l'expression d'un état de détresse », le second le signe « de la prépondérance, de la croissance, du développement et de la puissance »²³. Chez Portmann comme chez Nietzsche, ce n'est évidemment pas le principe d'une évolution des espèces qui est en cause, mais bien plutôt le *principe génétique* de cette évolution même : le *struggle for life* comme critère de sélection naturelle.

« Pour ce qui est de la fameuse 'lutte pour la Vie', elle me semble provisoirement affirmée plutôt que démontrée. Elle se présente, mais comme exception ; l'aspect général de la vie n'est *point* l'indigence, la famine, tout au contraire la richesse, l'opulence, l'absurde prodigalité même, – où il y a lutte, c'est pour la *puissance*... »²⁴

Fig. 3

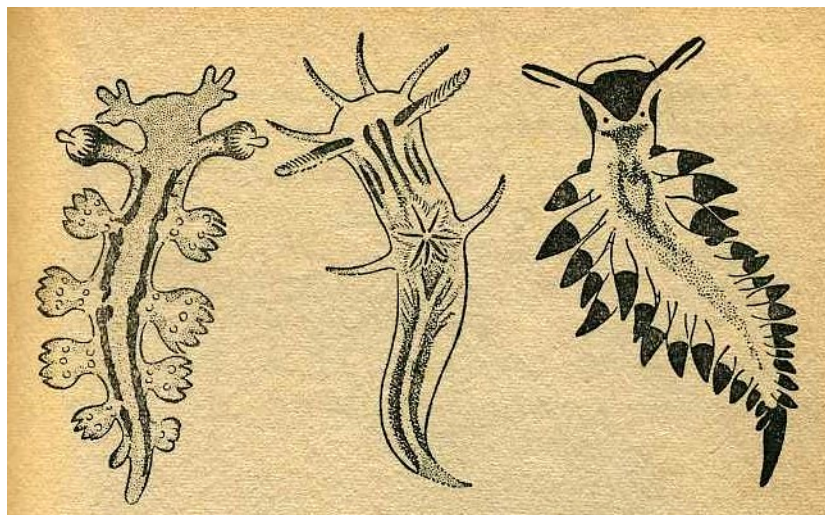


A. Portmann, *Die Tiergestalt*, Bâle, F. Reinhardt, 2e éd. 1960.

14 Si cette « vie supérieure » exprimée par l'élégance animale doit s'opposer à toute survie, dans le rapport au milieu naturel comme aux autres espèces, elle doit encore se démarquer de toute idée de métabolisme, de tout fonctionnement organique. « Le métabolisme peut bien servir la survie de l'individu, mais, aussi important cela soit-il, nous devons garder à l'esprit que l'individu n'est pas là pour le bien de son métabolisme mais plutôt que le métabolisme sert l'existence individuelle manifeste »²⁵. Les parures animales ne sont pas des phénomènes accessoires, qui viendraient « après » les fonctions vitales de nutrition, de digestion, de respiration... En ce sens précis, elles ne sont pas des ornements, si l'on souscrit à la théorie classique et idéaliste de l'ornement comme supplément, adjonction, *parergon* toujours secondaire par rapport à l'œuvre (*ergon*)²⁶. Portmann en venait ainsi à avancer l'hypothèse géniale selon laquelle le métabolisme n'aurait pour fonction globale que de servir l'apparence, que de faire vivre l'autoprésentation :

« Et si [les caractères de l'autoprésentation] étaient l'essentiel ? Si les êtres vivants n'étaient pas là afin que soit pratiqué le métabolisme, mais pratiquaient le métabolisme afin que la particularité qui se réalise dans le rapport au monde et l'autoprésentation ait pendant un certain temps une durée [*Bestand*] dans le monde ? »²⁷

Fig. 4



A. Portmann, *Die Tiergestalt*, Bâle, F. Reinhardt, 2e éd. 1960.

15 Nous reviendrons sur la formulation précise de cette hypothèse, mais pour l'instant, insistons sur la caractérisation de cette vitalité esthétique, de cette richesse inorganique propre à l'autoprésentation des formes vivantes. Il faut presque endosser des lunettes de philologue et lire les pages de Portmann au ras du texte. Celui-ci n'a en effet cessé d'insister sur *l'échelle* sur laquelle il faut se placer pour comprendre de quoi il retourne dans la profusion et la complexité des formes animales. « Nous devons rechercher pour les phanères *un horizon plus large* susceptible de les intégrer »²⁸ ; « dans l'interprétation de la vie animale, nous ne devons pas partir d'un ensemble de fonctions élémentaires conservatrices, mais nous devons plutôt, dès le début, rechercher *un système de référence plus vaste* qui permette une juste insertion des phénomènes phanérologiques également pour les plus bas niveaux évolutifs »²⁹ ; l'autoprésentation permet une « *amplification remarquable* de l'idée biologique de fonction »³⁰ ; « c'est une prémisses indispensable pour toute affirmation scientifique valide que la reconnaissance de *la vastitude et de la grandeur* de l'élément vital dans toutes ses manifestations »³¹, etc.³². Ce ne sont pas là des métaphores : toutes ces expressions ne relèvent pas d'une simple question de logique, et encore moins de rhétorique. Ce n'est pas seulement du point de vue de la pensée que doit s'entendre le dépassement d'un point de vue fonctionnaliste et métabolique. « Un horizon plus grand », « une dimension plus vaste », « un élément plus ample » ... : tout cela signale quelque chose comme une dimension sinon spatiale, du moins toujours *extensive* des apparences animales. Mieux, ces dernières obligent précisément à penser ce qu'est une « dimension », un « horizon », un « élément », dans leur rapport à quelque chose qui s'étend.

16 Cette extension des apparences animales n'est que le corollaire de leur souveraine expressivité. L'expression de l'élégance animale n'est pas celle d'un sujet ou d'un objet : elle est promue au rang d'un plan ou d'une dimension irréductiblement autonome. C'est l'efficace propre des apparences animales que d'opérer un véritable changement d'échelle, en faisant passer la forme de son milieu d'expression fonctionnel, individuel ou éthologique (le territoire, l'environnement, l'élément...) à une pure Expression.

« Les motifs de la crevette transparente *Periclimenes* et les dessins multiformes des opisthobranches ne sont pas des ornements qui seraient surimposés à une forme fonctionnelle. Ils sont tout aussi peu des ornements que ne le sont les aplats de couleur et les lignes rigoureuses de Piet Mondrian ou les hiéroglyphes énigmatiques des dernières œuvres de Paul Klee. Ce sont des élaborations dans lesquelles un être plasmatique de structure submicroscopique spécifique *se présente selon sa particularité dans un ordre de grandeur plus élevé*. Cet ordre de grandeur plus élevé est le royaume où les organismes élaborent, selon des lois particulières, des configurations destinées à 'apparaître', le domaine dans lequel a lieu, en correspondance avec cette autoprésentation optique, la merveille de la vision en images »³³.

- 17 Cet « ordre de grandeur plus élevé » nomme précisément ce pur plan expressif, cette Expression qui n'est plus fonctionnelle, territoriale ou même élémentaire³⁴, mais *cosmique ou mondaine*. Seul le monde, seul le cosmos peut donner l'échelle de cet « horizon plus vaste » que ne cesse d'invoquer Portmann pour comprendre les formes animales. C'est par leurs parures (cosmétique) que les animaux s'étendent aux dimensions au monde (cosmique). L'élégance animale est le véhicule d'un devenir-monde comme champ de l'apparaître. On ne s'étonnera pas de voir le zoologue suisse fonder un tel champ sur la lumière :

« Dans un horizon élargi, le non-fonctionnel peut également trouver place ; il appartient au domaine lumineux : c'est une 'apparence dans la lumière'. L'étude physique des particules et des processus élémentaires nous rappelle que ce domaine lumineux, où les choses peuvent tout simplement 'apparaître' au sens original du mot, pose aussi constamment des questions nouvelles au physicien »³⁵.

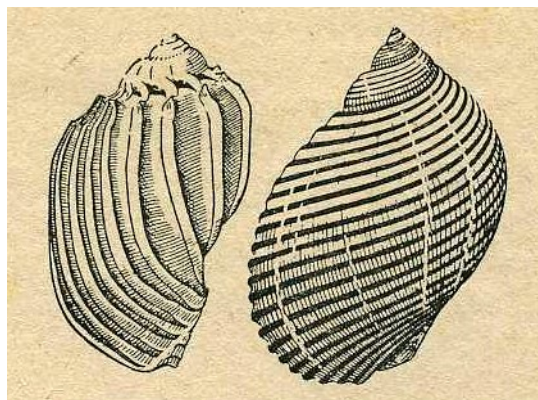
- 18 Où l'élégance animale a-t-elle lieu, où les apparences s'inscrivent-elles sinon sur ce plan cosmique de lumière ? Néanmoins, invoquer le monde ou le cosmos comme champ expressif suppose d'avoir bien saisi ce qu'il en est de la visibilité de ces apparences. Si elles sont expressives, souverainement expressives, c'est qu'elles portent en elles le paradoxe de *ne pas être faites pour être vues*, quand bien même elles seraient extrêmement visibles. Elles ne visent pas une réception sensitive ou perceptive ; elles ne sont pas adressées ou destinées : « *apparences sans destinataire [unadressierte Erscheinungen]* » dit admirablement Portmann.

« Nous regardons en spectateurs étrangers le spectacle des formes et des couleurs des êtres vivants, le spectacle de configurations qui dépassent ce qui serait nécessaire à la pure et simple conservation de la vie. Il y a là d'innombrables envois optiques qui sont envoyés 'dans le vide', sans être destinés à arriver. C'est une autoprésentation qui n'est rapportée à aucun sens récepteur et qui, tout simplement, 'apparaît' »³⁶.

- 19 La constitution d'un plan expressif de lumière faisait en effet courir le risque d'une contradiction : comment justifier l'autoprésentation, soit un phénomène perceptif et visuel chez les animaux qui ne voient pas ou dont le degré de distinction formelle et chromatique est quasi nul ? Si les mollusques sont presque aveugles, à qui ou pour qui sont destinés les admirables dessins sur leur coquille ? Cette question de l'adresse ou de la destination ne prend en réalité son sens que dans le cadre d'une perception subjective qui perdrait en expressivité ce qu'elle gagnerait en intentionnalité. Il faut au contraire affirmer avec Portmann que les couleurs magnifiques du plumage des perroquets, les motifs sur les coquillages, la couleur des anémones de mer, toutes ces formes sont apparaissantes mais ne constituent en rien un spectacle, du moins s'affranchissent-elles de tout spectateur. Elles ne sont pour personne. Il n'y a qu'à considérer le fait qu'elles « ont dû exister avant l'émergence du premier œil, et étaient déjà des exemples d'autoprésentation »³⁷. L'élégance animale n'est donc a-subjective que dans la mesure où elle demeure fondamentalement de l'ordre de l'*imperceptible* :

« Nous contemplons des figures qui, pour notre œil, présentent tout à fait des caractères structuraux de la sphère optique, mais qui, dans la vie normale, n'apparaissent certainement jamais à aucun œil spectateur selon un rôle nécessaire à la vie. Nous devons donc rechercher pour les phanères un horizon plus large susceptible de les intégrer. Il y a de l' 'apparence véritable' *dans un champ qui est plus vaste que celui du jeu mutuel des caractères morphologiques et des organes sensoriels des animaux supérieurs* »³⁸.

fig. 5



Portmann, *Die Tiergestalt*, Bâle, F. Reinhardt, 2e éd. 1960.

20 Les apparences animales offrent bien un *sentendum*, un à-sentir, mais qui dépasse en droit les limites sensibles ou perceptives propres à chaque espèce ou à chaque individu. Telle est peut-être la limite de la – très belle – thèse développée récemment par Jean- Christophe Bailly selon laquelle « les animaux assistent au monde »³⁹. Les hommes n'ont pas l'exclusivité du regard qu'ils posent sur le monde. Mieux : nous voyons les animaux, mais les animaux, eux aussi, nous voient. En sorte qu'une étrange communauté commence de naître, fondée sur le sens de la vue. Aussi profonde que soit l'expérience si finement décrite par Bailly, elle dépend toujours d'une limite perceptive qui fait la belle part, quoiqu'on en dise, aux animaux dits « supérieurs ». C'est qu'il faut l'élargir au-delà ou en deçà de tout seuil perceptif connu ou attesté⁴⁰. En sorte que la question deviendrait : que signifie d'« être vu » par des animaux qui *ne voient pas*, ou qui possèdent une perception visuelle tellement différente de celle des mammifères et des autres animaux « optiquement développés » qu'elle perd ses qualités propres de vision ? Que signifie d'être « regardé » par un mollusque, une fourmi voire une bactérie ?

Notes

1 Cf. J. Derrida, *L'animal que donc je suis*, Paris, Gallilée, 2006, p. 19-20.

2 Adolf Portmann est né en 1897 et mort en 1982. Il était Professeur à l'Université de Bâle.

3 C'est presque le titre exact d'une conférence de Portmann, « Was bedeutet uns die lebendige Gestalt », *Neue Sammlung, Göttinger Blätter für Kultur und Erziehung*, 6, Jahrgang, Heft 1, Januar/Februar 1966, p. 1-7.

4 Voir le classique F. Jacob, *La logique du vivant*, Paris, Gallimard, 1969.

5 A Portmann, *Aufbruch der Lebensforschung*, Franckfort, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1965 (trad. it., *Le forme viventi*, Milan, Adelphi, 1969, p. 27).

6 Voir par exemple V. Fleury, *Des pieds et des mains. Genèse des formes de la nature*, Paris, Flammarion, 2003, et bien évidemment l'ouvrage magistral de D'arcy Thompson, *Forme et croissance*, trad. D. Teyssié, Paris, Le Seuil, 1994.

7 A. N. Whitehead, *Le concept de nature*, Paris, Vrin, 2006, p. 66.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 67.

9 Rappelons que c'est dans une revue française de phénoménologie que l'on peut trouver une traduction ainsi qu'un ensemble de commentaires sur l'œuvre portmanienne : *Etudes phénoménologiques*, n° 23-24, 1996 (La nature).

10 Cf. J. Dewitte, « La donation première de l'apparence. De l'anti-utilitarisme dans le monde animal selon A. Portmann », in *Ce que donner veut dire*, Paris, La Découverte, 1993, p. 29 et *passim*. Jacques Dewitte fait explicitement référence « au jaillissement immotivé du monde » selon Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

11 A. Portmann, *Neue Wege der Biologie*, Munich, Piper, 1961 (trad. angl., *New Paths in Biology*, Harper and Row, New York, 1964, p. 152).

12 *Ibid.* (trad. cit., p. 152).

13 *Id.*, *La vie et ses formes* (Préface), Paris, Bordas, 1968, p. 13 (nous soulignons).

- 14 *Id.*, *Die Tiergestalt*, Bâle, F. Reinhardt, 2^e éd. 1960 (trad. fr. G. Remy, *La forme animale*, Paris, Payot, 1962, p. 83 (nous soulignons)).
- 15 *Id.*, *An den Grenzen des Wissens*, Wien, Düsseldorf, Econ, 1974, p. 136-137, cité par R. A. Stamm, « L'intériorité, dimension fondamentale de la vie », in *Animalité et humanité. Autour d'Adolf Portmann – Revue européenne des sciences sociales*, tome XXXVII, n° 115, 1999, p. 62.
- 16 R. Caillois, *Le mimétisme animal*, Paris, Hachette, 1963, p. 90-93 (nous soulignons).
- 17 A. Portmann, *Aufbruch der Lebensforschung*, *op. cit.* (*Le forme viventi*, trad. cit., p. 69).
- 18 *Id.*, *La vie et ses formes*, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
- 19 *Id.*, « Selbstdarstellung als Motiv der lebendigen Formbildung », in *Geist und Werk. Aus der Werkstatt unserer Autoren. Zum 75. Geburtstag von Dr. Daniel Brody*, Rhein Verlag, Zurich, 1958 (« L'autoprésentation, motif de l'élaboration des formes vivantes », trad. J. Dewitte, *Etudes phénoménologiques*, n° 23-24, 1996, p. 150).
- 20 *Ibid.*, trad. cit., p. 158.
- 21 *Id.*, *Die Tiergestalt*, *op. cit.* (*La forme animale*, trad. cit., p. 114).
- 22 *Id.*, « Selbstdarstellung als Motiv der lebendigen Formbildung », art. cit. (« L'autoprésentation, motif de l'élaboration des formes vivantes », trad. cit., p. 157).
- 23 F. Nietzsche, *Le Gai savoir*, V, § 349, in *Œuvres*, trad. H. Albert, Paris, Robert Laffont, 1993, p. 214-215.
- 24 *Id.*, *Le Crépuscule des idoles*, « Flâneries d'un inactuel », § 14, *op. cit.*, p. 998.
- 25 A. Portmann, *Neue Wege der Biologie*, *op. cit.* (*New Paths in Biology*, trad. cit., p. 152).
- 26 Cf. J. Derrida, « Parergon », in *La vérité en peinture*, Paris, Flammarion, 1978, p. 19-168.
- 27 A. Portmann, « Selbstdarstellung als Motiv der lebendigen Formbildung », art. cit. (« L'autoprésentation, motif de l'élaboration des formes vivantes », trad. cit., p. 157).
- 28 *Ibid.* (trad. cit., p. 154). Jacques Dewitte, dans les notes de sa traduction fait très justement remarquer la récurrence de ces expressions : « un horizon plus vaste », « un horizon élargi », mais sans l'analyser pour elle-même ; cf. *loc. cit.*, n° 20.
- 29 *Id.*, *Aufbruch der Lebensforschung*, *op. cit.* (*Le forme viventi*, trad. cit., p. 70, nous soulignons).
- 30 *Ibid.* (trad. cit., p. 72, nous soulignons).
- 31 *Ibid.* (trad. cit., p. 73, nous soulignons).
- 32 Voir encore *Id.*, *Neue Wege der Biologie*, *op. cit.* (*New Paths in Biology*, trad. cit., p. 154) : « ... les phénomènes eux-mêmes doivent être vus comme des liens dans une chaîne plus vaste, la chaîne de l'autoprésentation ».
- 33 *Id.*, « Selbstdarstellung als Motiv der lebendigen Formbildung », art. cit. (« L'autoprésentation, motif de l'élaboration des formes vivantes », trad. cit., p. 164, nous soulignons).
- 34 « Élémentaire » au sens des quatre éléments : les poissons vivent dans l'eau, les oiseaux dans l'air, les mammifères sur terre, etc.
- 35 A. Portmann, « Selbstdarstellung als Motiv der lebendigen Formbildung », art. cit. (« L'autoprésentation, motif de l'élaboration des formes vivantes », trad. cit., p. 162). La conférence Eranos de Portmann de 1956 était toute entière consacrée à ce thème de la lumière. Cf. *Id.*, *Aufbruch der Lebensforschung*, *op. cit.* (*LeForme viventi*, trad. cit., p. 45-73).
- 36 *Id.*, « Selbstdarstellung als Motiv der lebendigen Formbildung », art. cit. (« L'autoprésentation, motif de l'élaboration des formes vivantes », trad. cit., p. 161). Passage presque identique dans *id.*, *Die Tiergestalt*, *op. cit.* *La forme animale*, trad. cit., p. 217. Voir également *id.*, *Neue Wege der Biologie*, *op. cit.* (*New Paths in Biology*, trad. cit., p. 154) : « Quand on parle d'apparences, on tient pour évident qu'il doit y avoir un spectateur à qui elles apparaissent. Ce n'est pas seulement une conséquence inévitable de notre langage mais encore de la condition humaine en général. On ne peut parler du monde, de la conscience, de réponses internes, ou d'apparences, sans devenir nous-mêmes et notre propre expérience la présupposition de toute proposition que nous faisons. Bref, nous ne pouvons imaginer des apparences qui s'excluent d'un œil voyant ».
- 37 *Ibid.* (trad. cit., p. 154). Voir également *id.*, *La vie des formes*, *op. cit.*, p. 13 : « pour autant que la sélection des formes et des motifs par l'œil, générateur d'images, joue un rôle primordial, il n'empêche que la phase initiale de la création des motifs a lieu avant toute possibilité de sélection visuelle ! ».
- 38 *Id.*, « Selbstdarstellung als Motiv der lebendigen Formbildung », art. cit. (« L'autoprésentation, motif de l'élaboration des formes vivantes », trad. cit., p. 154, nous soulignons).
- 39 J. C. Bailly, *Le versant animal*, Paris, Bayard, 2007, p. 35.
- 40 C'est pour des raisons éthologiques et non perceptives que J. C. Bailly envisage la possibilité d'un non-regard avec certains animaux : « Et s'il va de soi que la vision du bison diffère de celle du crotale qui diffère de celle de la chouette, comme il va de soi qu'à l'intérieur d'une même classe d'animaux –

les rapaces nocturnes par exemple – la vision change d'une espèce à l'autre (et d'un individu à l'autre), il n'en reste pas moins que tous ont des yeux, que tous *voient*. La possibilité d'aller au fond là non plus n'est pas la même, d'étonnants contacts sont possibles, et avec des animaux parfois très petits ou très singuliers, comme l'axolotl, tandis qu'avec d'autres les cercles d'effroi ou d'agressivité sont si serrés qu'il n'est guère possible de les franchir » (*Le versant animal, op. cit.*, p. 56).

Pour citer cet article

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À propos de l'auteur

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Bertrand Prévost est maître de conférences en esthétique et histoire de l'art à l'Université Michel de Montaigne - Bordeaux 3, est l'auteur de *La peinture en actes. Gestes et manières dans l'Italie de la Renaissance* (Actes Sud, 2007). Il est en outre le traducteur (en collaboration) du *De pictura* d'Alberti (*La peinture, Le Seuil*, 2004).

Droits d'auteur

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Résumé

Quelle réalité accorder aux apparences animales ? Taches, zébrures, plumes irisées, couleurs chatoyantes, formes extravagantes... : cette élégance existe-t-elle ailleurs que dans l'esprit du naturaliste ? Il revient à Adolf Portmann (1897-1982), zoologue suisse, d'avoir pris ces questions au sérieux. C'est cette pensée de l'esthétique non pas *du* monde animal, mais *dans* le monde animal que nous essayons ici d'exposer : pensée tout à la fois biologique – car il s'agit bien d'inscrire les apparences animales dans la vie animale même (« paraître est une fonction vitale ») – et métaphysique – car la vie ainsi pensée dépasse toute idée de survie (fonction de conservation) comme de métabolisme (fonctionnement organique).

Mots clés : biologie, esthétique, éthologie

vari le stesse necessità. Mille esempi nella vita di un essere umano. Nella composizione di un'opera scritta. Nelle società. Es. il regime delle grandi fabbriche, e per un verso il disordine, la decomposizione, la propaganda sovversiva, per l'altro l'ordine totalitario.

il più alto, Solamente il presente. Momenti di musica pura (ascoltando bene Bach, ecc.).
il più basso. Lavoro a cottimo in una fabbrica. Due estremi.

Nozione di leva applicata alla vita interiore (in funzione della nozione di energia) — Se manca la leva, invece di trasformare nel senso di un più grande valore, si cambia allo stesso livello.

Leva e bastone da cieco.

La respirazione (regolata), leva e bastone da cieco all'inizio della *Bṛhad. Up.*?

Cercare esempi di necessità *vitale* di mentirsi. Necessità vitale di leggere in un certo modo.

Leggere nelle stelle che si è mortali.

Respirazione regolata in vista del silenzio interiore; senso dell'inizio della *Bṛhad. Up.*?

Il silenzio del brahmano durante il sacrificio, certamente anche silenzio interiore. Necessità di un apprendistato per giungervi.

Non leggere. Quando, in un problema di geometria, si è ossessionati da un certo rapporto, che arresta il pensiero — giungere a guardare la figura, per un istante, senza leggere, quindi leggere altri rapporti.

Lo stesso vale per una versione greca o latina. (Di qui valore educativo.)

Sospendere il proprio giudizio: non leggere.

{ Non leggere.

{ Non parlare.

Energia supplementare (extra-vitale) e vagante, chia-

Gilles Clément

Trattato succinto dell'arte involontaria

7. Tracce

- a. Le corde per legare
- b. Il totem di Sandy Bay. Città del Capo
- c. Un parafulmine a Maida. La Réunion
- d. Un pietra nel deserto. Mohamid

L'essenziale dell'arte involontaria si riassume in una parola corta e consonante, una parola da sottobosco quando l'impronta sull'humus è ancora un enigma: tracce.

L'incontro con l'uomo, l'uomo assente, si fa attraverso le tracce del suo saper fare e della sua negligenza. Un oblio sul suolo: questo biglietto della metropolitana nella giungla di Ranomafana da qualche parte all'altro capo del mondo, giusto dietro il cespuglio, là.

Dominio e abbandono, distrazione naturale di ogni individuo per l'opera che lascia passando.

Il pianeta, macchina da memoria, registra i passaggi e non porta su di essi alcun giudizio. Le tracce finiscono sempre per sparire ma iscrivono la loro storia in quella più generale dell'evoluzione. Esse fomentano un genoma. Queste sono le tappe anodine della fabbricazione di un paesaggio.

a. Le corde per legare, Creuse. Francia

Non si trovano più delle legatrici (per le balle di fieno) nelle campagne ma le corde ne hanno serbato il nome. Esse servono ancora alle balle di fieno che immense legatrici disperdono nei

campi.

Esistono ancora delle corde rosse, nere e blu: fibre plastiche legate con lo spago. Gli agricoltori le accomodano a fasci, le assemblano in fascine facili da trasportare che depositano qua e là per usi diversi, a un angolo, sulla porta di un fienile, direttamente a chiusura.

Questo qui, blu, leggermente fosforescente, aveva adottato nella paglia un movimento ruotante, come il drappo di un vestito. Questa forma abitata assicura alla piccola confusione agricola scialba e disordinata un languore sofisticato e prezioso. A questa ora tarda dell'estate, ancora umidiccia, la traccia in questa curva di cammino crea un adescamento: un uomo era passato di là o certamente vi passerà.

b. Il totem di Sandy Bay. Città del Capo

I mari del Sud hanno poca costa da trasportare. In questa parte del mondo i continenti si assottigliano e la loro facciata, mal offerta ai marosi, accoglie pochi rifiuti flottanti.

Sulle spiagge si trovano immense laminarie strappate ai fondali dalle tempeste. Esse seccano rinsecchendosi e sprigionando nell'aria salata un odore che ricorda l'arborescenza dei vecchi arbusti (*trognes*) in inverno, da noi.

Pertanto, tra le alghe e le conchiglie rigettate capita che una fune, un galleggiante, un qualunque imballaggio si ingarbuglia sotto i varecchi, viaggia con loro.

A Sandy Bay, i frequentatori della spiaggia immacolata hanno l'abitudine di portare via tutto ciò che non è prodotto dal mare e di accatastare la loro preda su un paletto conficcato tra le rocce. Il totem cambia di dettagli nel tempo ma conserva la forma di uno sciamano variopinto interamente dissimulato dall'accumulo dei fronzoli. E' un oggetto compatto, traccia unica di un'azione sebbene scomparsa.

c. Un parafulmine a Maido. La Réunion

Il potere delle istituzioni sullo spazio è brutale e banale.

Dapprima il principio d'utilità pubblica guadagna peso davanti il pubblico, lui stesso reputato ignorante delle condizioni del proprio benessere. Chi si oppone all'autostrada, al TGV, alla

nuova città? Il paesaggio d'Occidente può leggersi come un *découpage* utilitaristico. Ognuna delle performance è legata a quella affine dalle indispensabili vie di comunicazione.

Il parafulmine è un'anomalia nel gioco delle reti. Questo corridoio non lascia passare nulla, alcuna strada, alcuna linea elettrica, e soprattutto il fuoco. A Maido, poco avanti le cime il parafulmine appare come una lancettata radicale e gratuita, distesa in landa nella rotaia infinita dei confini chiusi.

Un gesto che nessun artista oserebbe senza essere preso per un pompiere. Eppure quale traccia più evidente di un passaggio sulla Terra?

d. Un pietra nel deserto, Mahamid. Marocco

La regione della bassa valle del Draa è piatto come un chott. Il fiume vi si perde. Non raggiunge mai il mare.

Là, sul bordo della pista verso la Mauritania, i sassi del deserto, aperti a cerchio, assicurano un'aria levigata della grandezza di un uomo disteso. Nient'altro attorno somiglia a questa disposizione. E' un letto unico, orientato verso nord da una pietra arrotondata più grossa di tutte le altre: un orecchio.

Resti di un sonno disposto con cura nella più grande miseria.

Traccia di una notte sommaria e sufficiente.

L'arte involontaria scivola nelle faglie del tempo. Esso sfugge alle disposizioni del patrimonio e, come tutto ciò che esita di fronte a troppa luce, aggira le aree stabilite dalla buona educazione, si tiene all'ombra, selvatico.

Ma, per il momento e per gioco, appare senza avvertire, selvaggiamente, in luoghi sovrappopolati o deserti, scena marginale, posta al riparo degli sguardi.

E là, gloria solitaria, propone risposte orfane. Perché mai nessuno, si sa, gli chiede qualcosa.

E per qualche tempo brilla.

da "Traité succinct de l'art involontaire", Sens & Tonka, 1997.

Fabio Acca

Graziella

La bicicletta Graziella nasce tra il 1963 e il 1964 dall'ingegno del grande designer Rinaldo Donzelli e dalla capacità progettuale di Teodoro Carnielli. Prodotta dalla Carnielli di Vittorio Veneto (azienda che nel 1953 aveva lanciato sul mercato la prima cyclette), la Graziella ha per certi versi rivoluzionato il concetto stesso di bicicletta, anche in virtù di un sapiente progetto di marketing che, nell'euforia dettata dal boom economico degli anni Sessanta, ne ha saputo rimodellare la percezione collettiva.

Sono gli anni in cui si afferma a livello internazionale il design italiano. Dai progetti di carattere squisitamente funzionale, si passa progressivamente allo studio di soluzioni ergonomiche e a progetti aderenti ai nuovi stili di vita. L'idea che sta alla base della Graziella consente dunque a Teodoro Carnielli di sperimentare e portare a compimento la forma dell'utile, applicata ai prodotti a due ruote.

Nel contesto urbano, fino a quel momento, la bicicletta veniva sostanzialmente percepita come un mezzo di trasporto povero, adatto a chi aveva la necessità di spostarsi in città o raggiungere il proprio posto di lavoro, in fabbrica o in ufficio, ma non poteva permettersi né uno scooter, né tantomeno un'automobile. L'intuizione di Donzelli e Carnielli fu quella di riconfigurare radicalmente l'associazione simbolica legata alla bicicletta, ergendola in qualche misura a costoso *status symbol*, in maniera del tutto proporzionale al diffuso benessere economico conquistato dalla società italiana e al desiderio di associare a questo nuovi feticci. A differenza, perciò, delle biciclette tradizionali, la Graziella si presentava certamente solida, nella migliore tradizione delle case produttrici italiane, ma al contempo elegante e raffinata, caratteristiche a cui allude già la gentilezza e l'armoniosità del suo nome. Questo

inedito equilibrio di affidabilità tecnica e piacere estetico era testimoniato anche dalla campagna pubblicitaria di lancio del prodotto, il cui slogan la definiva “la Rolls Royce di Brigitte Bardot”, proprio a sottolineare un’eccellente qualità costruttiva calata nella consapevolezza di quel decennio, sintetizzato da una delle icone più popolari degli anni Sessanta.

Lo stile vezzoso e anticonformista associato alla Graziella ne fece in un primo momento un prodotto prevalentemente *trendy*, orientato a un mercato giovanile e in particolare femminile, interpretando così i gusti della nascente emancipazione sociale della donna. A questo proposito è interessante notare come nella primavera del 1964 la Carnielli, allora al crocevia con il marchio Bottecchia, decise di lanciare in anteprima il prodotto – ancora in pre-serie – in un contesto direttamente riferibile all’universo della moda femminile, ovvero il settimanale «Grazia», primo periodico italiano dedicato al mondo delle donne. La stretta reciprocità tra la ancora anonima bicicletta e il popolarissimo magazine è talmente rilevante che il nome “Graziella” venne adottato proprio in virtù di questo storico connubio. Ne è testimonianza inequivocabile lo stesso carattere tipografico riportato nelle decals della bicicletta o nella “G” dello stemma, del tutto identico a quello utilizzato nel titolo del periodico. L’espedito fu così efficace sul piano della comunicazione e successiva vendita del prodotto che la Carnielli, poco tempo dopo, tentò di replicare l’operazione immettendo nel mercato un’analoga bicicletta dal nome “Annabella”, molto simile alla precedente Graziella, associandola anche in questa occasione alla testata dell’omonimo, popolare settimanale di cultura femminile. Tuttavia lo straripante successo internazionale della Graziella oscurò le vendite – e la memoria – di questa seconda, pur sempre graziosa, bicicletta.

Alla definizione di un immaginario di tendenza, tarato sul modello dei giovani e del femminile, contribuirono nella Graziella anche una serie di azzeccate scelte estetiche e morfologiche: i deliziosi colori bianco neve e blu oltremare, insieme al più prezioso e assai raro tutto-cromato; le dimensioni ridotte del telaio e delle ruote (dai tradizionali 60/70 cm di diametro generalmente adottati, si passò ai 21 cm); l’assenza di canna

orizzontale (determinato dall'abbigliamento canonico della donna, cioè la gonna); la presenza di alcuni elementi meccanici in grado di conferire al mezzo una particolare praticità d'uso e un agile trasporto: il sellino imbottito, il manubrio rettangolare (entrambi facilmente estraibili); il peso spostato sul sellino, non sul manubrio come nelle biciclette sportive, che assicurava a chi stava in sella una postura elegante; ma soprattutto la cerniera posta sul tubo di raccordo tra sella e telaio, che rendeva la bicicletta pieghevole, la prima di questo genere ad essere prodotta in serie. Adottando perciò un sistema già da tempo impiegato in campo militare, la Graziella si proponeva come bicicletta particolarmente minuta, adatta ad essere trasportata perfino all'interno dell'abitacolo di una utilitaria di modeste dimensioni. In questo senso, la Graziella voleva essere associata a uno stile di vita dinamico, allegro e spensierato, proporzionale alla leggerezza (16 Kg) e maneggevolezza del prodotto. Con queste caratteristiche, la Graziella ebbe immediatamente una grande diffusione specialmente tra le ragazze e i bambini, che grazie alla compattezza della bicicletta potevano facilmente familiarizzare col mondo delle due ruote.

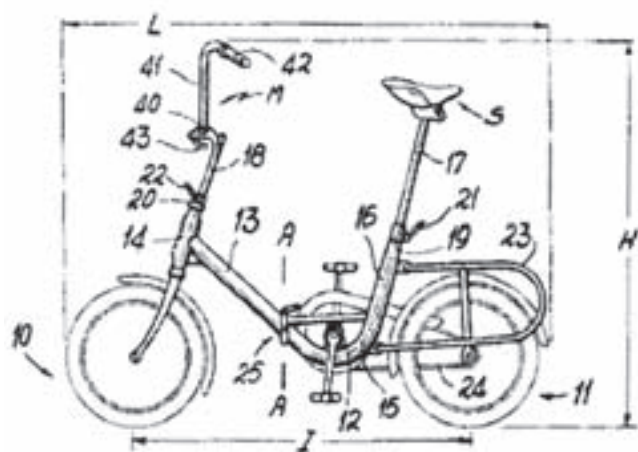
Nel 1971, dopo l'avvicendamento ai vertici dell'azienda tra l'ormai anziano Teodoro e i figli Guido e Mario, la Graziella subì un importante processo di *restyling*, al fine di rendere maggiormente accessibile il prodotto anche a una clientela meno connotata sul piano dell'età e del genere. Il risultato fu un vero e proprio *must* del design *made in Italy*, "un miracolo di purezza di linee". La nuova Graziella differiva, infatti, dal modello precedente per il maggiore diametro delle ruote e per le dimensioni del telaio, facilmente adattabile a quasi tutti i tipi di corporature, di conseguenza più pesante (20 kg). A queste due importanti varianti, la Carnielli associò una serie di dettagli esclusivi che la resero immediatamente riconoscibile tra le tantissime biciclette concorrenti nate sulla scia del grande successo del primo modello. Oltre alla conferma dei due colori classici bianco neve e blu oltremare (per mantenere intatta la verniciatura era addirittura incluso nell'acquisto un tubetto di colore, con allegato pennellino, per eventuali ritocchi), del tipico portapacchi (due tubi orizzontali di eguale lunghezza raccordati

con un tubo piegato a semicerchio) e dell'inconfondibile manubrio rettangolare, la ditta produttrice dotò nuovamente la bicicletta di un solido ma leggiadro campanello. Costruito in metallo cromato, recava una leziosa "G" sbalzata su un esagono allungato di colore blu. Il suo suono squillante e potente aggiungeva un tocco di gustosa frivolezza al già leggiadro immaginario scientemente creato intorno alla Graziella.

Un altro dettaglio che distingueva la nuova Graziella dai modelli concorrenti era il fanale incorporato nel telaio tramite un pregevole scatolato in lamiera smaltata di bianco con allegre guarnizioni blu. Infine, oltre al bloccasterzo a serratura direttamente integrato al telaio, ciò che ancora una volta determinava l'assoluta originalità della bicicletta era la versatilità dettata dalla smontabilità. Provvista di un curatissimo meccanismo con leva di serraggio delle flangie, vite a brugola e dado di chiusura, la Carnielli dava in dotazione una piccola trousse di attrezzi appositamente realizzati, da inserire in dedicate sedi del telaio, in modo che il proprietario della bicicletta potesse portarli sempre con sé.

Il successo di questo nuovo modello fu tale, che la Carnielli decise nel tempo di affiancare delle versioni speciali: la stravagante Graziella Flor dalle decorazioni floreali in stile hippy, con la quale si riceveva in omaggio il 45 giri dal titolo *Io vado sul fiore... vieni anche tu...*, edito dalla Fonit-Cetra; e le più "maschili" Graziella Cross (sportiva, con cambio a cloche) e Graziella Leopard (splendido chopper corredato da una ricca serie di accessori dedicati, ma costoso quasi come un ciclomotore).

Negli anni Ottanta, con l'avvento delle biciclette BMX e la capillare diffusione delle mountain bike, entrambe più aggressive e meno snob, la Graziella cominciò a conoscere un lento ma inesorabile declino, fino alla definitiva uscita di produzione alla fine del decennio. Una scomparsa tuttavia ripagata dall'attuale, straordinario ritorno di attenzione da parte di tantissimi giovani estimatori della mitica Graziella, che riconoscono in questa un'autorevole progenitrice dei più audaci modelli odierni di bicicletta dedicati al freestyle.



Federica Bueti

Give me the time (For an aesthetic of desistance)

In Neoliberal Western Democracies, participation has transformed into the daydream of politicians and the nightmare of precarious cultural workers. The latter is consistently prompted to invent and collaborate with others to survive the current economic system, the lack of resources, and the acceleration of time. In this context, participation is ripe for experiments with alternative strategies for collective action that can concurrently reiterate forms of neoliberal democratic consensus. Participatory practices have the potential to oppose the logic of a neoliberal society while donating novel forms of regeneration and development to society.

For a long time now, modes of participation have been shaped on the terms of the rhizomatic, anti-hierarchical, anti-dialectical, anti-representative, libertarian, non-anarchistic, and ideologically open since the 1960's and 70's. They were loosely organized by small groups of people in order to avoid structures and to work more effectively as an open network. The desire to permeate a totally open reality had manifested in artistic production that refuted the limitations of both traditional media and the institutional setting. For instance, Umberto Eco's essay "*Opera Aperta*"¹ -Open Work- (1962) presented a rubric for the structural analysis of the artwork that challenges its single trajectory and favors the concord and "openness" of contemporary art.

The new paradigm of contemporary art has been extensively explained by art historian Miwon Kwon's assessment of site-specific practices. Kwon found the best reasons for experimenting with new formats to be "the epistemological challenge to relocate meaning from within the art object to the

contingencies of its context; the radical restructuring of the subject from an old Cartesian model to a phenomenological one of lived bodily experience; and the self conscious desire to resist the forces of the capitalist market economy.”²

These new expectations demanded opposition and critical dissociation from a system based on rigid structures and roles. Artists came to terms with social inequality and distance from more agreeable living conditions. Artistic production was influenced by this detachment from both the motherland and the art system. Dematerialization, institutional critique, and aggressive anti-visibility registered as procedural responses to the multifaceted disassociation.

Assorted discourses penetrated art transversally. Analytical practices often used language and direct experience as counter-performative elements. The opposition of this definitive language and the counterattack of critics against the intrusiveness of power encouraged a self-reflective, distanced practice. Language was the site for the analysis, de-construction, and re-definition of sensible space.

The institutionalization of critical practices, i.e. practices that confront the role of art and art institutions, trapped these artists within an exhausting loop of self-reflection and the eager expectation of idiosyncratic output. Tethered to the advancement of the global liberal capitalism, their *aesthetic of resistance* was inhibited. Rather than discover a new space of experience, these processes have perpetuated the sense of free floating like a hot air balloon with a direction yet no definitive landing ground and a necessary postponement of expanding horizons.

The obstruction of practice evokes disorientation accompanied by an outwardly constrained representation of the world. Critical practices are plagued by the rapid integration into institutions they are supposed to problematize. Since the advent of the second generation of Institutional Critique,

there has been a continuous attempt to exceed consensus by supplementing it with presence, meanings and a massive dose of self-reflectivity.

The rhizomatous, anti-hierarchical operative model of social and cultural dissensus has been transformed into a fragmented and dispersed political machine. This mutation ensures the sustenance of biased conditions of production and neoliberal logic. It accommodates a distorted notion of time and motion, and prompts the creation of an immanent state of exceptions that restrains resistance. Existential meditation serves capitalism's exploits, obscuring the laboring bottom-feeders and blinding the lucid eyes of the *cognitivist*.

The breaking point has been on hand for over a decade, which could ostensibly subvert the purportedly shallow existence. We are trapped in the here and now of an artificial existence, where satisfaction of temporary desires falsify experience. There is a constant push to affirmatively respond to incessant requests for participation or some other notion of intervening and performing in the world. The performativity of "I can" can fester amid frustration and exhaustion. "I can" sustains a distorted notion of what may be physically possible in the real world.

The sense of exhaustion produced by "performing" is certainly linked to the overlap of leisure and work. The late 1960's called for coincidence and the integration of life and art while the modern interpretation is fixated on pathology. Private and leisure time is a unique type of labor, dictated by consumption, enjoyment, status-building, and maintenance. Culture is thus adapted to the web of capitalism's economic and social relations.

It is possible to individuate in the idea of "inclusiveness" the ambiguous terrain where critical art is operating today. Integration and overlap between different spheres like work and leisure or public and private fabricates a space of social

and political ambiguity. This uncertainty is reflected in critical practices, which endanger opposition to systems in society through neutralization. The claim that art must enter the space of social and political reality should not be embraced without reservations. As Jacques Rancière put it: “Although we no longer share early twentieth-century dreams of collective rhythmic or of Futurist and Constructivist symphonies of the new mechanical world, we continue to believe that art has to leave the art world to be effective in “real life”: we continue to try to overturn the logic of the theatre by making the spectator active, by turning the art exhibition into a place of political activism or by sending artists into streets of derelict suburbs to invent new modes of social relations.”³

Should art become one with the social and political reality, how could ulterior regimes of representation exceed existing ones? One must preserve the imaginative power of art. When it enters into the hierarchy of reality, the risk lies in assuming art can dictate what can and cannot be. Art, like capitalism, straddles the line between reality and virtuality, abandoning the material reality for the nebulous space of immateriality. The paradoxical situation created by the current opposition to the autonomy of art and the claim for art to inevitably enter the social and political space of action has bounded the very possibility for art to be effective and to establish an alternative space for thinking about reality. The economic and social evolution of society has facilitated the optimistic embrace and drive for the “new” and “potential.” By entering the space of socio-political reality art has also been victim of a natural postponement of changes. If we are constantly leaning forward such potential and new future, then we are pushed to perform and convulsively act in order to make this future possible. But then, it is endlessly postponed. The only thing such feeling makes possible is that you have to perform at all cost, in order for the neoliberal machine to be perpetuated and for any turning point to be endlessly postponed. If critical practices disclose a particular space of consciousness within the incessant flux of reality, we should welcome such insights into a warm home.

We took on the idea of deconstructing and re-thinking reality with enthusiasm. The socio-political system, clearly totally dependent on the economic system, injected us with speed. Every aspect of our life is accelerated, like a mouse running around in a maze without finding the 'Exit' gate. The whirl of modern reality is bound to imminent presages and potential motions, encapsulating citizens within the socio-cultural system despite its predictability. Participation in neoliberal scenarios is performance. You have to act seemly within the space where, as Jacques Rancière put it, "everyone's speech is determined in terms of his or her proper place."⁴

The persistent need to perform and the high level of competitiveness preoccupies the notions of social-relations and participation. In art the idea of critical participation or the use of other forms of critical practices have been integrated into the very same system they are vividly trying to escape. Participation, for example, has been consistently linked to the consensual model of contemporaneous democracy. Each opposition is a new opportunity for the neoliberal system to propose a novel solution. Democratization can thus nullify the attempt to escape the present reality by re-appropriation into the larger society. Today artists are asked to perform for an audience at infinite panel discussions, symposia, lectures, book launches, and other opportunities to "share" with the globe. You do not have an exhibition without having a lecture. What kind of participation is based upon a forty-minute reading of a statement and ten minutes for questions from the audience? In the end it is always too late. The moderator comes up and says: *"Sorry, time is up, we have to leave. Thank you for coming and thanks to the speakers for their time and interesting insight."* Where is this "sharing of knowledge?" Is it meant to be a multitudinous and unilateral process? Why should I enable the production and reproduction of such models? Here the problem we are facing is of methodological nature.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *Untitled (Perfect Lovers)*, 1991. Two identical, adjacent, battery-operated clocks were initially set to

the same time, but, with time will inevitably fall out of sync.

Maintaining the performative sway of participation, we constrain collaboration to a mantra that serves the purpose of the already existing apparatuses. Substantial changes, and an altered concept of participation, can only be brought about by a deliberate fracture. Participation revolving around disinterested participation would revitalize the degree of intensity and investment to transform the performative experience of the collective. Unbiased dialogue can produce shared creative time and a space of social interaction. It facilitates a prismatic social environment of surplus relations, encouraging a break from the calculated logic of current artistic production.

Art participation should be considered not as a political choice or strategy, but more as a methodology that aims to preserve the autonomy of the artistic and cultural production from the attack of the neoliberal all-encompassing logic. For participatory practices preserve the autonomy of art mean to use the potential of collaborations to create a more sustainable economy for artists and cultural producers. Modes of participation can create the conditions for an economy that is not totally dependent on the needs and wills of the current market. They can generate practical interventions that preserve and sustain the autonomy of cultural productions and by doing so, creating the conditions for art to envision different possibilities of existence.

But in order to establish a different meaning for participation, we should perhaps reconsider current cultural attitudes and social behaviors. Time, for example, needs to be re-introduced into current artistic, critical and curatorial production. Not as an oscillation of time, but as a “*spatialization of the subject*”. Against the backdrop of contemporary virtual and physical progress, one could oppose the necessity of durational experience and the sense of prolonged time that resists rapid consumption. Experience is comprised of time spent as well as a space of experience and shared intensities. Time is an essential element

in participatory practices. Diverse knowledge and exchanges, and fruitful long-term relations require not just physical time but steadfast consistency. Endured duration is particularly vital in the context of virtual-communications. The reason is quite simple: people don't share the same level of understanding or sensitivity, and a model of learning, exchanging and developing relationships varies extensively. Speed of pace is different for everyone. We cannot wish for the contrary without surrendering to the trap of authoritarian vision.

Adopting a creative model based on collaboration does not only mean maximizing outcomes or saving economic resources. People should revel in the space and allow for participation, discussion, and confronting beliefs and modes of thinking. Only then can operative possibilities for transforming the acquired knowledge into operative models of actions unfold. A space of conflict where dissimilarities can play out and subsequently be used rather than liquidated at the first mention of a discrepancy is essential.

We should not forget that collaborations have become a necessity for the growth and implementation of profits in the capital industry. Today managerial agendas abide by more complex yet malleable democratic models. Groups can be identified through their representative members, for example, which spurs homogenization and the dissolution of the individuals ultimately relied upon for the decision. Participation, under the guise of performance, is constantly compromised. It accepts the conditions for the benefit of others, further perpetuating the current illusory, consensual democratic trend. Any partnership in this context becomes a tool for pursuing individual interests at the expense of potentially collective achievements.

Participation should be regarded as an opportunity to escape quantitative time and the correlation between its passing and imminent "results" and successes. Participation can create a *genuine place for growth and education* by first of all embracing a different sense of time. *Genuine* in the sense that a collaborative

project channels energies, feelings and emotions into an event of intensities. It is an experience of proximity and materialized distance. Participation is like the paradox of Zeno's tortoise in Plato: the tortoise's movements are slow and often imperceptible, but they are firm and have a precise direction. Although Achilles is faster, he reaches where the tortoise has been and still has farther to go.

The potential of participatory practices indeed lies within the distribution of time and of duties. Pressure, competitiveness, and the anxiety over the 'right' performance must dissolve. Subjectivities, both individual and collective, should be fostered while those involved remain responsible for honesty to themselves and the Other. Participation is more than a funny way of doing and making things; it is a painful process of human and professional investment. It is an exercise in adjustments, in detachment from a system that obliges us to become a mechanism in a broken machine.

New labor conditions have entangled the current society, leaving millions of young people unemployed, self-employed or simply precarious. The trap is thus set for those who cannot envision their future, be it unrealized projects or the fulfillment of ambitions. A job is not only a way to earn money but a means of independence. The current situation is frustrating because we are unable to overcome the limits of the implemented system to envision different ones. In this sense participatory practice functions as a mode of resisting social annihilation by exceeding the limitations of the space and overcoming the logic of economic value.

Participation can resist the acceleration and optimization of performance. It can resist both consensual models and homogenization. Its polyphonic conflicts and manifold nature are reasons for both inclusion in and optimistic exclusion from the neoliberal system. It could be a motif for *changing the way we understand what is possible*.

Modes of Participation in this context have the capacity to explore new forms and new meanings. Rather than romanticize a concept of community or the bodily personification of the abstract concept of 'multitude,' participation is best served as an operative to produce an innovative, breathing place and an *emancipated* space of production.

Comprensione *difficile* delle cose evidenti.

La geometria ne offre un esempio.

Così pure: il lavoro fabbrica oggetti, non denaro — lo si comprende facilmente con una parte molto superficiale dell'intelligenza — *ma difficilmente con tutta l'anima*. Così pure, ecc.

Applicazioni sociali e pedagogiche.

Notte oscura.

Notte oscura nell'apprendistato. L'apprendista che teme di non riuscire mai. Da studiare.

L'uomo deve forse passare (ogni volta, fino allo stato supremo?) per la prova della durata perpetua (inferno) prima di avere accesso all'eternità?

« Traversata la morte mediante l'ignoranza, mediante il sapere egli mangia l'immortalità ».

« Traversata la morte mediante il non-divenire, mediante il divenire egli mangia l'immortalità ».¹

1. *Īśā Upaniṣad*, 11. Cfr., sopra, pp. 280-281 e *Quaderni*, II, 341.

X. Il fantasma del sé e l'impersonale autoappartenenza

Il sintomo più vistoso del *patico* infiltrato nella *significatività* del discorso è costituito dal gioco di alcuni deittici.

L'*affettività*, in quanto totale compromissione della coscienza nella vita, si *riverbera* nella funzione psicologica fondamentale della coscienza.

Su di essa Hegel, dal punto di vista di un'intransigente esaltazione della *significatività*, ironizza parlandone come dell'indicibile «mio»: «è mio, ciò che io soltanto sento [*Was ich nur meine, ist mein*]¹.

Husserl invece, nel nome dell'*«appartentività»* (*Eigenheitlichkeit*), e Heidegger, nel nome della «*mità*» (*Jemeinigkeit*), valorizzano l'*affettività*, sia pure in vista di due diversi obiettivi fenomenologici².

Questa funzione, senza di cui una psicologia non potrebbe neppure nascere, viene linguisticamente significata con i deittici «mio» e «a me».

Il sintomo dell'*affettività* si trova dovunque venga segnalata, attraverso la *significatività* del discorso, l'impossibilità di comunicare il *non significativo*, la pura *vissutezza* del vissuto, il *sensò*.

Parlare di «un ciò che è soltanto mio», che a Hegel, sembrando «indicibile» perché *senza-significato*, sembra (in forza dell'imperialismo *significativistico*) anche *senza-sensò*, è in effetti proclamare l'assoluta, individualissima particolarità del *vissuto*. Qualsiasi *sensò* avviene sempre e soltanto come «mio». Il che sembra implicare l'entrata in gioco di un altro deittico, qual è l'«io».

Quale significato avrebbe infatti dire che una cosa è «mia», se con ciò io non volessi intenderne il riferimento «a me», al parlante stesso,

¹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, § 20, in *Werke*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M. 1970, a cura di E. Moldenhauer e M. Michel, X, p. 74; trad. it. *Enciclopedia delle scienze filosofiche*, a cura di B. Croce, Laterza, Bari 1923¹, p. 29.

² E. Husserl, *Cartesianische Meditationen und Pariser Vorlesungen*, a cura di S. Strasser, Nijhoff, Haag 1950, § 44; trad. it. *Meditazioni cartesiane...*, a cura di F. Costa, presentazione di R. Cimini, Bompiani, Milano 1989. Heidegger, *Der Begriff der Zeit* cit., p. 15; trad. it., p. 23.

come al titolare di un certo rapporto con essa, e quindi al soggetto del rapporto, a questo «io», che io appunto sono? Ma, se questo soggetto, il «chi», sono io, cos'è l'«io», che io sono?

A lasciarsi guidare dal pensiero dell'originarietà del *sense*, non si può non assumere come decisiva l'osservazione di Nietzsche: «Chi sente piacere? [...]. Questione assurda, se l'essenza stessa [...] è sentire-piacere e sentire-dolore!»¹. Su questa medesima traccia si muove Fernando Pessoa, quando registra un suo *vissuto* estremo: «Sono una sensazione senza una persona che le corrisponda, un'astrazione di autocoscienza senza oggetto»².

L'esperienza, come s'è detto, è il punto di arrivo di un attraversamento, che è la vivente vita, *vissuta*. Ora, il *vissuto* è l'appartenenza, l'assoluto *mio*, non certo perché ci sia un *io* a renderlo possibile, ma perché esso nella sua originarietà è il *tempo*, e solidalmente con esso si produce nella vivente unità minacciata il bisogno di un indistruttibile appiglio, scatena il desiderio di permanenza, accende l'allucinazione del *sé*.

Il *fatto* della vita è *tempo*, avvertimento di perdita, e appunto perciò è *desiderio*, impulso al ripristino dell'integrità del proprio stato (che si vive come l'esser messo in gioco del *sé*). «Il desiderante – si legge in Platone – desidera ciò di cui manca»: egli «manca di ciò, che gli è portato via»³.

Il *tempo*, gonfiando il desiderio e attivando l'immaginazione, si doppia nell'antagonista fantasma del *sé*.

L'«io» non è che una rappresentazione artificiale, elaborata attraverso i modi pubblici della *significatività*, una ferma e abbagliante maschera con cui viene coperto l'umbratile *sé*, fantasticato nell'oscuro fervore del *sense*.

Se il *sentire* è originario, non v'è un *io* che sente. Avviene il *sentire*. Si sente. Il *sentire*, in ogni vita d'uomo, è desiderio e allucinazione di un *sé*, il cui singolarissimo fantasma, coinvolto nel commercio intersoggettivo, indossa l'uniforme mascheramento dell'«io».

Ora, al cospetto dello «spirito» (che nell'accezione del tedesco «Geist» è il complesso apparato della *significatività*, organizzato intorno alla forma centrale dell'«io») il *sentire* non solo accade, ma «mi» accade.

¹ F. Nietzsche, *Frammenti postumi 1888-1889*, trad. di S. Giametta in *Opere di Friedrich Nietzsche*, a cura di G. Colli e M. Montinari, Adelphi, Milano, 1989, vol. VIII, t. III, fr. 14 [80], p. 50.

² F. Pessoa, *Poesie di Álvaro de Campos*, trad. it. di A. Tabucchi, Adelphi, Milano 1993, p. 247.

³ Platone, *Lysis*, 221 d, 6-8; e, 2-3.

Il deittico «mi» evidentemente è il sintomo non solo dell'assoluta individualità del patico, ma anche della sua assoluta contingenza.

Il carattere d'incanto onirico della discontinuità immediatamente vissuta, cioè del fenomeno del «repentino», viene messo in rilievo da Binswanger, il quale annota che, quando ci si riprende dall'«esser caduti dalle nuvole», immancabilmente si è portati a dire di «non sapere che cosa stava succedendo». Binswanger descrive questo fenomeno, richiamandosi esplicitamente a Heidegger. «L'esserci è posto di fronte al suo essere; "è posto": nel senso che gli accade qualcosa, ma esso non sa come e che cosa gli sta accadendo». Il che appunto è «il tratto fondamentale di qualsiasi sogno, e definisce la sua parentela con l'angoscia».

L'oniricità del «repentino», come dell'angoscia, è segnata non solo dalla irriducibile discontinuità che vi è vissuta, ma anche, e inseparabilmente, dal modo impersonale della sua soggettività.

Quando chi «è caduto dalle nuvole» dichiara, come se sognasse: «non so che cosa mi accade, né come mi accade», certamente l'«io», richiamato dal «mi», non significa l'ἑαυτοῦ di Eraclito o il *quisque* di Petronio. L'«io» qui non è il singolo, individuato nell'unica, irripetibile identità storica del suo proprio sé personale, alla cui attività s'imputi la produzione del suo sogno. Esso piuttosto è un semplice luogo linguistico. Vi prende forma, nell'attribuzione al parlante, l'accadimento subito da una soggettività, a cui per il suo ruolo passivo si dà un rilievo meramente impersonale.

Si tratta insomma di quel «medesimo [der Selbige]», che «nell'accezione dell'identità numerica della persona (Kant), è un indice puramente formale, senza alcuna sostanza». Binswanger, sempre sulla falsariga di Heidegger, aggiunge che «un singolo qualsiasi da semplice "medesimo" [Selbiger] diventa un "se stesso" ("ipseità" [Selbst]) ossia "il" singolo, e da sognatore diventa uomo desto, nel momento impercettibile in cui decide non soltanto di sapere "come qualcosa gli accade", ma anche d'intervenire attivamente nel movimento degli eventi, e d'introdurre nel movimento ora ascendente ora discendente della vita una continuità e una consequenzialità»⁶.

Continuità e consequenzialità sono le condizioni dell'addomesticata esperibilità del cambiamento reale, della sua significatività e comprensibilità percettiva e razionale, insomma della sua cognizione. La loro assenza appunto caratterizza, come s'è detto, il fenomeno patico del «repentino», il senso del cambiamento vissuto nella sua radicalità come il prodursi delle differenze senza mediazione, l'aperto irrompere dell'originarietà del tempo.

⁶ Binswanger, *Traum and Existenz* cit., pp. 96 e 97 (trad. it., p. 95).

È assai istruttivo il fatto che, nella «contingenza» del vissuto, all'assenza di continuità e consequenzialità puntualmente corrispondano la «passività» del soggetto e l'«impersonalità» dell'io.

La pagina heideggeriana, che più suggestiona Binswanger, è certamente il celebre richiamo all'«angoscia» come fenomeno dello star «sospesi» dinanzi allo «scompare dell'Essente nella sua totalità». In questa «sospensione», «noi – questi uomini essenti – nel mezzo dell'Essente con esso scompariamo a noi stessi. Perciò, in fondo, non "per me" o "per te" tutto questo è sgomentante, ma lo è "per uno". Soltanto il puro Esser-ci (*Da-sein*, ossia l'esistere) ora sussiste»¹.

Uno dei primi interpreti italiani dei testi heideggeriani, Armando Carlini, sottilmente osservò: «le difficoltà di questa impersonalità del *Dasein* qui sono anche maggiori, in quanto siamo nella sua autenticità (non nella banalità dell'inautentico)»².

L'«impersonalità» comprensibilmente viene attribuita alla «quotidianità» della normale esistenza, la quale è disattenta al problema del suo essere, ridotta alla medietà statistica dei comportamenti di massa, ovvero persa nel sogno. Sembra invece del tutto incongrua con l'«autenticità» dell'esistenza *desta*, rivendicata nel suo essere più proprio di consapevole autoappropriazione, dunque riscattata dalla sua alienazione nel collettivo e consegnata all'*individualizzante* progetto della finitudine assunta in prima persona.

Come si può parlare dell'«impersonalità» dell'esistenza massimamente «individualizzata»? Qui la discontinuità, vissuta nel fenomeno del «repentino», al cospetto dell'esistenza pienamente *desta*, lascia esplodere lo scandalo della contingenza radicale del cambiamento, e, attraverso la «profonda magia», permette di riconoscere il patico come la soggettività originariamente espressa nel tempo.

Invero, nel fenomeno del «repentino», il cambiamento viene vissuto come un assoluto accadere, che appunto non sarebbe un accadere se non fosse vissuto, sentito, e appunto non sarebbe vissuto, sentito, se non fosse sentito da «un» me. La soggettività è il sentire in quanto sentir-si. È *sensus sui*, come prima s'è detto, allucinazione di un sé, che immerso nel medio dello «spirito», nella socialità delle istituzioni logico-linguistiche, si maschera con l'uniforme dell'«io».

Se dall'intimo della vita, che *sentendo si vive*, il sentimento del sé viene svolgendosi, evidentemente solo la vita accade, e accade in quan-

¹ M. Heidegger, *Was ist Metaphysik?*, in *Wegmarken* cit., p. 111 (trad. it., p. 68).

² A. Carlini, *Noi e la traduzione italiana Che cos'è la metafisica?*, La Nuova Italia, Firenze 1971, p. 19.

to *accade a sé*, ad un *sé* a cui l'accadere *tocca*, come se il *sé* fosse prima dell'*accadere*, come se il *vissuto* fosse prima e non a partire dalla vita vivente. Questa *piega* in cui la vita si duplica è l'avvento del *patico*, l'originarsi dell'autoaffezione affettiva del *tempo*. Se poi la coscienza dell'*io* è il sentimento del *sé* che ritorna su di sé, e attraverso la mediazione dell'intersoggettività linguistica assume l'identità formale dell'*io*, allora l'*accadere a sé* accade all'*io*, gli *tocca*, come se l'*io* fosse non la cifra ideale, pubblica, dell'individualità di *qualsiasi* individuo, ma la vita stessa individuale, privatissima, del parlante, e come se tale vita fosse prima dell'*accadere*, insomma come se la vita fosse prima della vita, e questa dunque inopinatamente *le tocasse*.

Il carattere del «riferimento a sé» («appropriatezza») non dipende dall'esistenza del «soggetto». Al contrario, il «soggetto» viene istituito dal «riferimento a sé». Da questo punto di vista, ha ragione Jean-Luc Nancy nel sostenere che «il soggetto non è mai presente», ma è soltanto «presupposto», opera di «un'autopresupposizione»⁹.

Nel supremo disincanto, ci si rende conto che nulla *tocca a me* come individuo personale, cioè naturalmente e storicamente determinato, poiché questa stessa determinatezza d'individuo «mi *tocca*, è *contingente*».

L'«io», cui qui il «mi» rinvia, non sono dunque io come biologico e biografico individuo, ma è l'attuarsi, qui ed ora, della forma dell'«io» nella sua purezza. Qui non vengono pensati il mondo e il mio *sé*, che è una parte del mondo. Piuttosto, attraverso il *nulla*, attraverso la scomparsa del mondo e del mio *sé*, viene *vissuto* lo straordinario sperimentarsi della forma stessa dell'«io» come orizzonte-limite, possibilità del presentarsi del mondo e del mio *sé*. La ragione, finalmente *sveglia*, dispiega la sua «profonda magia», risolvendosi nell'atto non di questi o quei possibili pensieri di cose, ma della stessa pura *possibilità* di qualsiasi pensiero di cose.

Questo «io» non è un certo individuo, allucinato nel *sé* e istituzionalmente oggettivato nella persona, *contingente*, ma la *necessaria* individualità dell'«e-sistere», assoluta proprio perché formale.

Non per questo tuttavia si tratta di un'individualità «trascendentale», di cui cioè possa *a priori* concepirsi l'*idea*. Essa è pur sempre un *fatto*, anzi è «il» *fatto*.

L'«individualità» dell'«e-sistere», se è formale, non lo è come una forma spontanea del pensiero, pensabile indipendentemente dalla vita, ma come il *sensu* originario, il profondamente *vissuto* della *vissutezza* stessa.

⁹ J.-L. Nancy, *Un sujet*, in *Aa.Vv.*, *Homme et sujet*, a cura di D. Weil, L'Harmattan, Paris 1992, p. 84.

Essa insomma è non una *struttura di significazione*, che il pensiero *idealizzandola* «trascendentalizzi» in una condizione logica e perciò necessaria dell'oggettivazione di una materia, ma il concreto *sensu* della *sensività*, il *fatto* di vita in cui originariamente e irriducibilmente si *sente* la radice di ogni fattualità di *sensu*, l'*autoreferenzialità* che, ancor prima di assumere il nome di «io» e rappresentarsi nell'idea di soggetto, con la *vita vissuta* fa tutt'uno.

All'«individualità» dell'«e-sistere» compete una necessità non di diritto, ma di puro e semplice fatto: non un *dovere* di porsi, ma l'*impossibilità* di non porsi. Non è che essa *debba* esserci. (Non dipende da niente, mentre tutto ne dipende). Solo perché c'è, *non può* non esserci. È appunto il *fatto* originario.

Da questo punto di vista l'«individualità» può non contraddittoriamente concepirsi come «impersonale».

Proprio perché, operando nella forma dell'«io» *impersonalmente individuale*, il logico traveste da pubblico il privatissimo *sé* in cui la *paticità temporale* allucina il desiderio di permanenza, il *patico* per quanto irriducibilmente non-cognitivo e quindi intrinsecamente non-conoscibile può almeno venire come tale riconosciuto. Insomma, può essere riconosciuto, nella sua originaria e perciò assoluta *individualità e fattualità*, il *tempo* – *sensu* del cambiamento e radice di ogni *sensu*.

Giacomo Marramao, nella sua assidua riflessione sul «tempo», ha sostenuto che «la morte è il vero *rimosso* del "tempo" – del tempo in quanto *chronos*, del tempo degli istanti divorati». Se noi «diventiamo consapevoli che la morte c'è, non quando io muoio, quando *Io* muore, ma nel momento in cui *Io* dice "io", «solo chi non è *Io* non muore». Insomma, «la morte ha inizio da quel "ritaglio" dell'infinita indeterminazione del *sensu* che chiamiamo *Identità*»: ovvero, nello stesso «momento in cui dico "io", mi sono costituito a partire dalla morte, dalla *mia* morte»¹⁰.

È evidente che l'«Io», inteso come siffatta «*Identità*», non è se non una maschera culturalmente costruita e istituzionalmente imposta al «fantasma del *sé*».

Ora, come questo fantasma potrebbe prodursi, e calzare poi la maschera («personificarsi»), se non a partire dall'originarietà di un individuale e tuttavia *impersonale* dolore di perdita, e dunque da un tempo, che non è il *chronos* della rappresentazione, ma è «tempesta» emotiva, scotimento e «crisi» delle radici stesse della vita, angoscia di disintegrazione, puro e irriducibile *pathos*?

¹⁰ G. Marramao, *Kairós. Apologia del tempo debito*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 1992, pp. 104-5.

Nel fenomeno del «repentino» si temporalizza non un cambiamento, ma lo stesso aspetto radicale del cambiamento, la sua immediata e perciò irrimediabile discontinuità, le differenze nel loro prodursi senza ragione, e solo perciò reali differenze.

È evidente che l'*accader-mi-senza-un-perché*, da una parte, e la discontinuità, dall'altra parte, si coappartengono come le due facce della contingenza, nello stesso modo in cui si coappartengono il tempo e il cambiamento.

Come il tempo, che non è il cambiamento, tuttavia essendone il vissuto non si darebbe senza di esso, così l'*accader-mi*, che non è la discontinuità, tuttavia essendone la temporalizzazione senza di essa non avverrebbe. Il «repentino» e l'*«accader-mi-senza-un-perché»* non sono due fenomeni, ma uno solo. Se il «repentino» è il senso vissuto non di un cambiamento qualsiasi, ma della radicale fattualità del cambiamento come produzione di differenze assolute, senza mediazione cioè senza ragione, esso non può non essere come ogni senso un evento affettivo. Avvertire il «repentino» è restare colpiti e come angosciati per un «accader-mi-senza-perché». Il «repentino» non potrebbe in nessun caso sperimentarsi con indifferenza. Lo si può soltanto patire.

Il «repentino» è il fenomeno patico per eccellenza. Di esso, come di qualsiasi fenomeno puramente patico, un sapere fenomeno-logico è evidentemente impossibile. Si presenta allora l'ardua e qui inaffrontabile domanda, se e a quali condizioni sia in generale possibile una comprensione fenomeno-patica.

da "Il tempo e la grazia. Per un'etica attiva della salvezza",
Donzelli, 1995.

Riccardo Benassi

Bye Bye Janus!

motivetto da Hit Parade estiva (senza ritornello)

Intro:

Gira la chiave /
entra / appoggia le chiavi /
togliti le scarpe / soffiati il naso /
ben tornato!
Ben tornato /
si fa per dire...
Che giornata eh?
È finita dai – e adesso inizia il resto sai?

Motivetto:

Al tavolo sono state fornite delle gambe, ma a differenza nostra /
a lui non servono.
Il tovagliolo è quell'emancipato frammento di tovaglia, che
invece del legno /
sfiora le labbra.
Poi capelli lunghi altrui che hanno perso la strada,
si tengono compagnia abbracciandosi a gruppetti sul
pavimento.
Ogni superficie concava è un posacenere,
ogni candela un accendino,
è tutto un progetto delle labbra.

Fuori dalla finestra ci sono palazzi svenuti,
abbiamo imparato a chiamarli villette a schiera,
al fine di garantire agli abitanti una consona distanza dalle
nuvole,
e una realtà terra a terra,
con tanto di balcone fatto d'erba,
che sia in grado di riesumare quotidianamente le perdute
origini agresti /
Buchi di gomito sul davanzale.

Poi la felicità del polso,
nell'accorgersi che la bottiglia d'acqua che sta aprendo
violentemente non è frizzante,
è naturale.

Ancora il tavolo, parente nobile del pavimento /
il cui destino è l'unione con le sorelle emancipate dei piedi.
La pelle dei gomiti si assottiglia per via del trionfo della
scrivania nelle nostre vite /
non è la vecchiaia è la scrivania,
non è la vecchiaia son le nostre vite.
Tragedia ergonomica /
La sedia è egemonica /
Buchi di gomito sulla scrivania.

Gli interni sono il vero spazio d'incontro /
e gli esterni sono solo di passaggio.
il luogo pubblico è un'estensione tridimensionale della
burocrazia,
e / urbanistica / è /
aerobica ironica.
Pensieri troppo grandi per stare in un'unica mente /
coabitano con menti troppo piccole per fare esperienza della
solitudine.
Oppure indoor e outdoor si sono scambiati di posto,
perché uno dei due voleva stare vicino al finestrino?

Outro:

La differenza tra /
il paesaggio alla finestra
e /
quello al finestrino
è /
la velocità con cui cambiano.
Bye Bye / Bye /
Bye / Bye / Bye Bye /
Bye Bye Bye /
Janus!

Mårten Spånberg
Urban Design, Little Capsule

The sun stood high that day, the air vibrating in away impossible to capture through any kind of technology. The famous glass painter, transparency laid out with a brush, the grace of pale skin made eternal, or so to say through silver-coated paper. This was an entirely other ballgame. Eyes forming thin stretched-out openings, faces wrinkled to stand the pressure of the sun - the heat. Similar to a slow swaying hip-hop beat spreading over a dry surface, ephemeral yet present, all over the place and at the same withdrawing, dissolving any attempt to name it. This fluttering intensity in front of which we all function as alcoholics with paper stuck in our throats - it's a curious magical practice to devour maps often together with cocktails containing alcohol and squid ink, still practiced by the Dogon tribes in Mali - can not be understood as a chimera, not as a some visage or phenomena, the air - the sun stood high that day - is vibrant matter, a form of object withdrawing with such ferocious energy it kills.

They were standing there, in the middle of the street. A wide one; in other places it would be called a boulevard, but here it was still a street even also when, like right now, it was abandoned, or as one would say, completely empty. Nobody was there, not a single being in sight, it was only the three of them. The two women and the child, and perhaps an accidental animal of sorts. The child's gender was difficult to determine, its dress code some kind of trend or minor fashion, disguising not only personal identity but also general features. The three of them were indeed highly visible, certainly creatures belonging to what we know as humans, but at the same time they were only visible as blobs, as something which contours had been blurred, if you know the drift. Behind them were

buildings that were somewhat destroyed, but not properly fucked up. There had been no war here, this was no aftermath of a natural catastrophe, but it was certainly an aftermath of something. Perhaps some kind of foreign entity had passed by and messed up, perhaps the police had experienced a meltdown and started shooting each other, or perhaps the place was just worn down. The air was crisp. Normally one would have thought there would be some smoke or steam pulsating out of some broken pipe. Water running down severs, and something like tumbleweed or an old plastic bag. Nothing in particular appeared to be missing, nor were there any visible additions to the picture. It was all fairly normal.

It has never been proven that people living in less populated parts of the universe tend towards more religious lifestyles. Demographics don't support belief in that respect; there are ups and down and statistics assist, but there's anyway an unbridgeable gap between religion and belief. However, it has been observed that when living conditions change radically, especially in a so to say traumatic manner, that these are the moments wherein people in generally are most susceptible to religious belief.

For humans the world stretch out in all directions, we live conditioned by horizon, universal and local. The human stand on the tundra handling bones to tame, to domesticate the world. The rays of light hit a stone, a tree or a small dog reflecting light into the humans eyes, our world is organized through reflection. What reflects belongs, whatever else doesn't count. The stretching, the extension of the world around us, an open space is productive of certain kinds of governance, certain kinds of politics, but it also offers a human always partially blind or blinded by the sun. In the abyss, in the darkest depth of the ocean lives creatures, subjectivities whose world is radically three dimensions, offering a far more complex gyroscopic life, especially considering it to be a world embraced in eternal darkness, a world without extension, without horizon that rather presses itself upon the organism instead of reflecting, although this pressure, literal and metaphorical, is a pressure without criteria. It's pure pressure, it's the virtual pressing itself

onto the organism. A pressure which is both void and everything at the same time.

Creatures inhabiting the crest of the earth divide its environment, measure it, direct it through a here and a there. Life implies an implicit struggle between settlement and nomadism, or between legion and warrior, oikos and the dark forrest where Pan plays his flute. It's a futile dialectic that seeks to shake off death through the elaboration of stability and assembly, through economy and the handling of the world, i.e. the elaboration of reality as a multiplicity of discrete signs folded into contexts.

Even though she knew they had not been standing there for more than a few minutes, perhaps even less. Just a number of seconds - she had already contemplated two scenarios. First that they might just be the only living beings in a really large area of the world, and secondly, that if that was the case if this moment were the right one to consider religion. But Hello, what kind of religion do you build on three people? Obviously one of them would have to become the leader, the decision maker, and the two others would be followers. Not such an attractive scenario, and it doesn't produce a religion, she thought, and continued her inner conversation: "I'm the weaker of the two of us, but stronger than the child, so far. My only survival, is to step down from leadership of the actual world, and instead devote myself to the spiritual side of life, instead of garbage handling she'd turn her attention on guarding the light.

She repeats the last three words to herself but reaches only halfway, for no particular reason she recollects something she recently read. Concerning smoking, except when it comes to the trivialities of health, appears like a sentence in her head - the fundamental mistake is to focus on what enters the body and how these substances possibly alter the human state. There are certainly interesting observations to be made in regard of this, both on short and long term basis, and it's most definitely a complex affair all in all, but this has little to do with smoking as an activity independently, if we consider it as idle or productive.

The creatures of the abyss, of eternal darkness operates in

the opposite manner, they are universal and singular, they are always here and everywhere, but never there. The absolute lack horizon make them phenomenal war machines, ferocious warriors that take in universe in itself and as such. They caress the abyss with their tentacles, with their extracted sexual organs allowing the abyss endlessness place them in a permanent state of orgasm.

Where creatures of the crust measure their environment produce it as property and economizes existence, the creatures of the depth devour the abyss, it's world in a never ending sexual act vibrating in and through the darkness surrounding, producing a grove so subtle yet so overwhelming it slips away and an spiraling camouflage and roars throughout the abyss, it's inferno make it's voice heard, it is vibrant matter withdrawing unconditioned in it's non-place of the abyss. Bits and pieces of the continuation of the argument appeared to be missing for a moment, and instead some inner static sort of stuff. Blurry, colours are out of sync smoke might come in different flavours, and this is the second mistake. It might be perfumed in many different ways, but to consider it important that the flavour should provoke something in the smoker is obviously totally misplaced. Whether sweet or sour, bitter or generous, rather than being understood as bringing something into the body, the flavour of smoke is about bringing something from the inside out, something that can best be compared with the ink squirted out by an octopus or squid.

Change is happening by itself. Wait and you will see. How could it be otherwise? But then how can something change not into more of the same, but into something that doesn't support either more or the same? Change does not happen through the use or availability of mirrors. In front of the mirror you make sure you are still you, in front of the mirror the concern is a little bit more this or a little bit less that. Problems, difficulties, issues, are in our world treated as mirrors. In front of problems we assure our identities. These kinds of problems are false problems, they are not really problems, they just look like them. False problems and mirrors have something in common – they make things look alike. Real problems are those that

don't appear in the mirror even if they're there just in front. Real problems aren't like Vampires: they aren't there nor do they remember.

The reason why Vampires are not visible is because they coincide with the mirror. They are mirrors, real problems... ah, she doesn't know. Or she knows, but she can't manage to gather the energy to come up with a fitting image. Metaphors are for people that know where their anus is located, she concludes, not for spiritual leaders.

Her skin reacts to something. Was it because of her thoughts, did somebody come closer, did something move, the wind. Signs can be difficult to tell apart when the environment isn't easy to interpret.

She, like most religious leaders, had a passion for generic spaces. Airports are too simple. Simple can be good but airports are too simple, even though one wonders why there aren't more action movies happening in airports. 'Perhaps because of security', she reflects. 'I'd like to see a Hollywood action that takes place entirely in an airport – I would watch it while crossing the Atlantic. Stepping off at LAX with something like Tom Cruise in a radical fight scene fresh in memory. I'd probably duck behind a bunch of suitcases in order to avoid 9 mm bullets fired by terrorists or some international conspiracy sponsored by the CIA'. Perhaps if she were lucky one of the bullets would penetrate her skin, enter her body, damage organs and leave traces never to be diffused.

Smoking is not about intoxicating oneself; on the contrary, it is a matter of either seducing or killing the world. The productivity of smoking is a matter of devouring other entities and even entire contexts.

Smoking in this sense is a negative production that detaches itself from the protective or stabilizing capacities of an army. Smoking, and the exhalation of grey matter, implies a production of death. It is not death, it is the production of death, but it is a production of death as such. As a productive force it is to an extent strategic and temporary...but smoking can't be said to be a strategic environment but must be understood as a structural plane. It kills without discernment,

and it kills in order to devour.

The smoker exhales formations in order to dislocate the victim; the slowly blown smoke is a kind of *détournement*, a celebration of death before it arrives. Examples of the seductive capacities of smoking, the exhalation and body language, can be seen in endless American movies. The female character expresses independence through smoking, the cigarette becomes an emancipatory gesture, and at the same time it lures the scopophilic gaze into a *cul-de-sac*. The smoker and the exhalation so to say, blinds the victim twice after which it devours it without mercy, without hesitation but whilst swallowing it as

a whole. The smoker has nothing to do with snakes or reptiles, remember the squid. It is on this threshold that we should concentrate, the site where seduction and death exits the body and where the victim's death enters. This is the site of the insurrection; the smoker is not an individual open for revolution yes or no, but is in a state of constant insurrection. Mirrors are the decline of problems. The Christian god was wrong, it is not you should make no images of me... it should be you should have no mirrors but me. But as we know, monotheistic belief systems keep themselves with the tacky, yet necessary notion that God created the human in his own image.

Mirrors in that sense are religious artefacts, it is in mirrors that we are reminded that we are just an image that God created: that we are false problems, small difficulties. Or instead we can take our job serious and consider the possibility of becoming invisible. Smoking is not an easy task if one's ambition is to break the spell of the mirror.

She placed herself outside herself, like people had done ever since Descartes, and considered the situation. From her outside position she scanned the environment after reflective surfaces. In a more perfect world, people would have no fetishes. At least not objects but perhaps textures, reflective surfaces. There was nothing here to reflect her image and she wanted it like that. She wondered what it would be like to touch a skin that corresponded to this very moment, an extension without

reflection. The skin soft, not warm but yet her body reacted – no there were no fantasies. An erotic experience without projections.

It is in the threshold between life and death, between experience and projection between out and in, that smoking creates understanding. Smoking doesn't offer it, it creates understanding. Smoking is a radical state of knowledge production exactly because it operates in the very crack where life and death become one.

The smoke is a gift that burdens. The desire created by smoking is not the simple one of chemical addiction, it is the desire to seduce, kill and devour. The use produces extended desire yet does not escalate to other forms of action. Smoking does kill, but it is not the smoker it kills; it is the one next to, the one adjacent. And the smoker feels no guilt, has no second thought, there is no decision to make.

She took off her panties, and it struck her – not in a surprising way but still – that if reflections had been a colour, generally speaking, it would be yellow. Yellow, that precise colour of 3M Post-it paper.

A dull type yellow type colour, she concluded and then she didn't think about it any longer because another thought appeared. Consider that that which had happened was not only that all other people had vanished, disappeared, been swallowed by the earth, but that what had gone were also reflections. From now on there were no more reflective surfaces, only matt stuff, like the skin of a tree, tongues, or a woollen sweater. Like in Norway she was thinking, but obviously she had no idea because she had never been in Norway, not even seen a documentary on television about it. But she knew that a life without reflections would be an unlife, it would not be like being dead or anything, it would be like not having been born, or better still, not even that, more like being immortal in reverse. Smoking saves nobody, it kills for the one that pays the best and changes side without consideration. Smoking betrays all sides.

Yet, the threshold between exhalation and death is only the site of an insurrection, what is more interesting to consider here is to reverse the directionality and consider the exhalation as

a double disguise, a hyper-camouflage where smoking can be understood as a movement in which the mouth exposes itself as an anus, or where the entrance and exit of the body become one and the same. This turning towards each other, this turn away from the yardstick and turning towards the compass, the circular the O, this endlessness that remains alien [operating outside difference], this superimposition of the organs implies a formation of endless desire production, the smoker lives in an endless circular formation of orgasm. An orgasm where the oral, the genital and anal coincide, where the corpse of the seduced victim enters the body and simultaneously exits it from the same cavity. This state of ultimate orgasmic production makes the individual both nobody and everyone, it enters a state without subjectivity, it enters the permanence of a plane of consistency.

The state of endless orgasm makes the smoker one with everything. The smoker withdraws from subjectivity, it withdraws from ways of being human known to us. The smoker smoking exits the performativity of the possible in favour of the endlessness of potentiality, and it is precisely there that smoking forms itself as both true to the universe and as a form of Nigredo, a shining darkness without boundaries, without connections, a non-relational formation of world. Smoking in this sense does not only imply a state of endless orgasm but also the immanence of catastrophe.

Cristina Rizzo/Lucia Amara

Loveeee

Primo, Secondo e Terzo discorso con esercizi di grazia
special guests Robert Steijn Christine De Smedt, Mattin

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