# Spontaneity and Repetition

## Towards Immanence in Text-based Performance

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# Abstract:

This study proposes repetition as an underlying principle of theatrical performance alternative to representation. It outlines, both in theory and in practice, a method to trim a certain type of intention away from representation, and to apply what's left, namely repetition, in the process of staging the pre-written text. The aim is to achieve a new 'aesthetics of spontaneity' in the passage from text to performance.

This aesthetics is new insofar as it employs artificial means to facilitate spontaneous reactions on the part of the actor, under the assumption that the predetermination of intentions, intrinsic to certain modes of theatrical representation, can hinder such reactions. How can repetition be allowed to operate so as to foster spontaneity in the interplay between a given (dramatic or postdramatic) composition and its performance?

The research explores the idea of composition as an 'inscribing practice', manifesting not only on the page, but also onstage, through a mode of fixing and arranging physical and vocal actions so they can be repeated. Extending Deleuze's theorizations of *Difference and Repetition* (Deleuze 2014, first published in 1968) to theatrical performance, I shall demonstrate how spontaneity can be accessed through the performative power of repetition to create 'difference', namely to trigger a new reality not as the result of a designed will to novelty, but as the sprouting of spontaneous reactions to the repeated composition.

Initially, the study investigates whether the text itself can stimulate the actor's spontaneity in performance, by means of certain characteristics embedded in the writing. Later, the focus of the investigation shifts from writing to performing: to an exploration of ways of approaching text in general, alternative to representation, capable of producing spontaneous reactions. The practice elements are therefore two: an individual research into writing for performance, and a collaborative research into acting the text.

# Introduction

In the theatre, whatever happens in the mind of the actor or in the original intention of the dramatist or the director is, to a certain extent, irrelevant. What really matters is the way in which these ideas, images, narratives, themes etcetera are concretely expressed by the actors onstage, and whether these manifestations reach and stimulate the spectators. In other words, what matters is a certain language of the stage, a language whose morphemes are called actions. Out of theatre's complex communicative system, which includes scenic, sonic, scenographic and architectural elements variously triggering the senses, this study will explore those signs directly produced by the actor, namely the physical and vocal actions, in relation to another set of signs that do not normally appear as such on the scene: the words of a pre-existing text.

A semiotic approach to theatre provides a useful framework of theory to address the practical problem at hand: the question of what facilitates spontaneity in the performance of a pre-written text. By considering the actor's actions as signs, one can distinguish – after de Saussure (1959) – their two components in the signifier and the signified; the former being the external perceptible manifestation, the latter what it signifies in the body-mind of the perceiver. This study wishes to explore how such a process of signification can happen spontaneously in performance, when actors need to react unknowingly to something that they already know. How can they pass from the written sign to the dynamic sign-action in a spontaneous, unpremeditated way, and how can they repeat such a process at every performance? The first question refers to the process of composition of performance, the second to the performance of the composition.

The composition referred to is the 'scenic' composition, intended – as we shall see – as the final interweave of the actors' sign-actions: the 'scenic life' produced in response to a written text. Quite like a text, and quite unlike everyday life (at least in the common perception of it), such 'scenic composition' can also be fixed and repeated, thus becoming itself a 'performance text', or 'score'. And although generally, in life, be it on or off stage, the more one encounters life's structures, life's iterations, the more one gets to know it, problems may arise whenever the knowledge thus gained diminishes one's will to know more. In other words, there is a limit to this willful repeating and knowing that is critical to maintain one's capacity to be stimulated by life; such capacity is hereby described as

spontaneity. This study sets out to research the conditions under which spontaneity operates to ensure that the life of the stage – the performance – remains stimulating to all those encountering it. And given that the parameters of 'scenic life', like its duration and material conditions, are better controlled than those of everyday life, the theatre may function as a suitable laboratory to this end.

Furthermore, since both daily and theatrical life are submerged in language, I found it natural to approach the topic also from a linguistic point of view. That is, I propose to consider spontaneity as that unaccountable quality infusing an act that, precisely because of its openness to stimulation, is capable of expanding its communicative potential even when the act's signification is well known and codified. Although in performance, like in life, the actor is always expressive beyond the literal or codified meaning of a speech or a gesture, as well as beyond the presupposed intentions underlying them, I suggest that it is the ability to *consciously* trigger such extensions that is required of an actor to uphold the performance's potential.

A linguistic expansion manifests in an apprehension of difference within language, to the extent that such difference creates the possibility of new significance, including unaccountable significance, like an affect. From a semiotic point of view, and remaining within the field of existing codifications, that is, excluding experiments in new languages and glossolalia, this difference or deviation would manifest in an altered relation between content and form, signified and signifier, or perhaps more precisely, in the inexhaustibility of their relation. This study suggests that it is precisely such spontaneous quality of embracing the possibility of difference that ultimately attracts the attention and stimulates the senses of the spectator.

In his research on theatre anthropology – defined as the study of human behaviour in a performance situation – Eugenio Barba identifies certain recurrent principles that seem to be shared across all theatrical cultures and performers. What these principles have in common is that they counter those guiding everyday behaviour, and the 'habitual conditionings of the body' (Barba and Savarese 2006:7). In fact, their aim seems to be to decondition the performer's behaviour; they are 'means of stripping the body of daily habits, in order to prevent it from being no more than a human body condemned to resemble itself, to present and represent only itself' (ibid. 15). Therefore, to be scenically effective, an 'extra-daily behaviour' ought to be acquired, an acting technique implying

an ‘extra-daily use of the body-mind’ (Barba 1995:9).[1] Although such techniques differ across cultures and styles, and although they may be acquired either consciously through codified means, as in Eastern theatrical traditions, or through the ‘unconscious but implicit (…) use and repetition of a theatre practice’, as it is generally the case in the West, their underlying principles remain the same, and inform the performer’s behaviour at a ‘pre-expressive level’ (ibid.). Even ‘naturalism’, should it wish to remain an artform, would have its extra-daily techniques.

The ‘pre-expressive’ is a level of behaviour not yet involved in expressing character or action; it is a preparatory sub-stratum ‘that deals with how to render the actor’s *energy* scenically alive, that is, how the actor can become a *presence* that immediately attracts the spectator’s attention’ (Barba and Savarese 2006:218, my italics). In other words, according to Barba’s theatre anthropology, a variety of ‘extra-daily’ techniques have been developed by theatre-makers across the world and its ages that share common underlying principles, which ultimately aim at activating the ‘pre-expressive’, a ‘presence ready to re-present’ (ibid. 220), or rather ‘a *scenic bios* (…) a life ready to be *transformed* into precise motivations, actions and reactions’ (ibid. 223, last italics mine).

For the purposes of this study I wonder whether the ‘pre-expressive’ may not be another name for ‘spontaneity’. The spontaneity I refer to is, in fact, also ‘scenic’ and unlike that of everyday life, it is crafted, achieved through artifice, or rather artistry. My research proposes conscious methods to activate spontaneous reactions that are not necessarily employed in ‘real life’. These methods may indeed operate a transformation in the actor’s behaviour, from daily to scenic, out of which, using Barba’s own words, ‘it seems that something flowers spontaneously, neither sought for nor desired’ (ibid. 20).

Spontaneity then becomes an aesthetic principle, according to which theatre becomes ‘relevant’ whenever it has the capacity to generate a new and parallel life to the life lived outside of it. This alternative, heightened life of the theatre, I shall argue, is still necessarily spontaneous, even more so than everyday life, provided that it rids itself of the latter’s careless and unconscious acts and habits. Theatre’s life follows its own inner logic, that of the imagination and its material manifestations, and it is channelled through the structure of the performance, made of such manifestations. Rather than being

[1] Some of the identified principles refer to the dynamics at play in oppositions, contrasts and precarious balance. For a detailed exposition see Barba (1995) and Barba and Savarese (2006).

premeditated, however, this structure develops in the process of scenic composition, when it is discovered and revealed. The study aims at finding ways to ensure such self-development, even when foundations seem to be laid by the pre-written text. It will explore practical methods to use text as *material* for the building of performance, rather than as its masterplan.

The research's focus on text-based performance is essentially a pretext to challenge a recurrent bias that certain modes of performance still hold against the written, whereby text is thought of as the original cause of 'representation', namely that process that parts creation from its presentation, whose result would therefore be a certain lack of autonomy of performance, precisely because the latter would be organised in advance by an outsider not involved in its staging (i.e. the author).[2] This investigation will propose a different way of approaching text, based on repetition, and suggest how such model can provide a valid alternative to representation. The approach would also rehabilitate the physical actor to the use of text as a 'score', namely as a series of stimuli for the voice, the body and the imagination, rather than as a blueprint for representation.

The first part of the thesis will theorise this alternative, by gradually developing an argument for repetition, drawing primarily on Jacques Derrida's critique of representation and theory of performativity, and Gilles Deleuze's philosophies of difference and repetition. It will then describe the research methodology, which is fundamentally practice-based, and place the study in the context of relevant contemporary performance and dramatic theory.

The second part will describe the creative activities carried out to test the theories set out in Part One. Part Two will therefore describe the creative practice elements of the research, involving writing for performance and acting workshops, and outline the extent to which the resulting experiments, namely experiments in dramatic writing and in modes of approaching text in performance, can facilitate the spontaneity of the actor.

The research's creative outputs are twofold: an original playtext titled *Love and Repetition*, available in the Appendix, which is the result of an individual practice of writing for performance, and a series of acting methods, resulting from a collaborative

[2] This false myth is particularly diffused in those theatre-making practices that are markedly 'collective', such as 'devising' and 'physical theatre'.

practice with actors in the studio, encompassing actor training exercises, and techniques of improvisation and scenic composition. These methods, whose progressive development is described throughout Part Two, are further delineated in two additional, interlinked appendixes: a ‘Practical Manifesto for a Theatre of Repetition’ summarising the method’s principles, practices and process in 10 steps, and an audio-visual portfolio documenting the main workshop activities, titled ‘Acting Research Documentation’.

It is not, however, in the particular interplay between the original playtext and the actors’ performance of it that lies the essence of my creative contribution, and in fact, only sections of it have been researched through performance and documented. As the sections on research methodology should clarify, a good part of the findings that will be suggested actually emerged from the exploration of acting text in general, which involved using a variety of different sources for investigation. Ultimately, it is in these findings that I hope the reader will foresee at least some impact on current contexts, particularly those related to text-based performance, such as dramaturgy, actor training, and directing, either in theory or in practice.

Through this work I wish to propose a general shift of perspective regarding theatrical performance, away from transcendence, premeditation and representation, towards immanence, spontaneity and repetition. The work is primarily aimed at actors and directors, but it also intervenes in engrained theories of text-based performance, founded on the principle of transcendence as predetermination of meaning for representation.

# Part One_the theory

The misfortune in speaking is not speaking, but speaking for others or representing something. The sensitive conscience (…) refuses.

(Gilles Deleuze 2014:66)

# 1: Defining the Argument

In the following sections, the three main concepts informing the study – immanence, spontaneity and repetition – are defined and woven together into a new theoretical argument, which will then be demonstrated by the practice described in Part Two. The aim is for the research problem – pertaining to the spontaneous interplay of text and performance (or the reconciliation of structure and spontaneity), and the proposed solution – pertaining to repetition, to be thus examined both in theory and in practice.

## 1.1: Immanence (et alia)

Moved by a general motivation to reconcile Western practices of 'collective creation' (Syssoyeva and Proudfit eds. 2013), borne of the 1960s, which in the UK primarily took the name of 'devising' (Oddey 1994), with the 'good old' dramatic text, written autonomously before rehearsals, I was drawn to a book bearing the word 'immanence' upon its cover: *Theatres of Immanence: Deleuze and the Ethics of Performance* by Laura Cull (2012). In this book – a survey of contemporary theatres read through the lens of the notion of immanence according to the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze – Cull explains that 'the word "immanence" originates from the Latin *immanere*, which might be translated as "to dwell within"' (ibid. 6). What devising and other practices of collective creation share in their diversity is a sense that performance should not be authored in advance from 'the outside', but rather emerge in the process of (more or less democratic) collaboration between all those involved in it, who therefore 'dwell within it'.

Practitioners working 'collectively' wish to deviate from a 'two-process method' involving 'a playwright writing a script in isolation and other artists staging it' – which is seen as the characteristic feature of 'traditional theatre' (Shank as quoted in Cull 2012:32) – because 'the latter process of creation is subordinated to, or understood to be derivative of, the former' (Cull 2012:32). The problem was, in short, that a creative process decided for another: a problem of 'representation', epitomised by the dramatic text and its author (and eventually by any manifestation of single authorship, including, for example, that of the director). Cull's monograph places such problem under a broader light; drawing from a variety of disciplines, she first outlines a context for it, through the opposing notions of

‘immanence’ and ‘transcendence’, intended as ‘distinct modes and different ways of understanding creativity and organisation’ (Cull 2012:25), and then displaces it by interrogating the actuality of such opposition.

If ‘a transcendental instance of command’ coordinates the process from the outside (Holland as cited in Cull 2012:25), immanence allows ‘coordination to emerge’ from within the process itself (ibid.). Transcendence is therefore exercised by a leader, director, author *or thing* external to the process, whose role is to ‘guarantee coordination’ by imposing organisation ‘top-down on the chaos of the process’, conceiving what to create, setting up ‘modes and principles (...) neither part of the activity, nor (…) issued from it’. Immanence, on the contrary, trusts ‘coordination to emerge bottom up’; in it ‘there is no leader, director, author or transcendental *idea* that commands coordination and organisation from without’ (ibid. my italics); rather, organisation happens spontaneously and ‘in manner immanent’ to the activity (Holland as cited in Cull 2012:25).

Although this is useful to identify tendencies, Cull’s survey of practice shows that ‘the final work will always be more [or other] than the sum of its parts and therefore cannot be quantified in terms of individual contributions’ (Cull 2012:33). She further remarks that immanence, by referring to a state of being inside or within, necessarily begs the questions: ‘immanent to what?’, ‘inside or within what?’, and then points out that such enclosing is actually what Deleuze problematized. Her understanding of theatrical immanence – characterised by degrees and tendencies that ignore boundaries between different kinds of theatre, thus somewhat dispersed and encompassing – reveals a possible avenue for research into an immanent interplay between text and performance.

In immanent processes ‘the material bodies involved generate their own rules and forms of creation’ (Cull 2012:25). Similarly, devising and other collective processes entrust those involved with shared authorship on the work, in an attempt to testify its immanent origin and originality. Thus they revolt against the servitude implied by transcendental approaches. In this context, the whole within which to encircle immanence is the creative activity of making performance. But if it is accepted that what may influence it transcendentally could even be an idea, let alone a text or an author, as I infer from Eugene Holland’s quote above, then how can we ever be sure that our activities are immanent? How can we be sure that our ideas are really ours, that they have not been influenced by external sources, which we might be citing or paraphrasing? In other words, should one

dig deep enough into any event, one would find that both transcendence and immanence are manifest in it, as forces of a system of relations within which everything is. In such system authorship would be diffused, regardless of there being identities claiming it – 'there' being either inside or outside, just like VOICE in Richard Foreman's *Lava*:

> The door out, is outside.
> The door in, is inside.
> Am I outside or inside?
> You wanna get in or out?
> I want to get out.
> That's where the door is.
> I want to get in.
> Ah, that's where the door is.
> I don't see no door!
>
> (Foreman 1992:357)

In devised/collective/collaborative performance, the origin of the process, as well as its development, would 'dwell within' its own self-set-up 'framework'; however, the question is precisely where and how to set the boundaries of said framework, and what would be an admissible level of porosity for it.

To acknowledge the difficulty of claiming the autonomy of one's ideas may exhaust the collective drive in favour of old conventions: 'the cause of the current crisis in collective creation is not only a return to the playwright, the text and the establishment after the collective euphoria of 1968. It is also attributable to the fact that the individual artistic subject is never unified and autonomous in any case' (Pavis as cited in Cull 2012:25). Nonetheless, one should still be careful of dismissing the collective drive altogether. As Cull points out, with reference to 'those who participated in 1968', they 'already knew this. Individual presence was already differentiated (…) in terms of conscious and unconscious thought' (Cull 2012:25). Supported by Deleuzian philosophy, which asserts that precisely because an individual is already a collective, the self or subject is 'one more thing we ought to dissolve' (Deleuze as cited in Cull ibid.), she implies that collectives at the time attempted to do just that. What was the problem then? Why did they die out? I would argue that they did not, that embers of them have remained, but to restart the fire takes dedication: the dedication of acknowledging the inconsistency of the subject, first of all, followed by the dedication required of living and working up to that

acknowledgement, against the influence of theatrical, cultural, social or biographical milieus, which are intrusive simply because one is immersed in them.

French philosopher Miguel de Beistegui deliberately understands immanence rather ambiguously, as 'nothing other than reality in the making' (de Beistegui as cited in Cull 2012:6). This is no dismissive remark for anyone meaning to *make* reality through theatre, instead of simply representing it; to this end, as we shall see, ambiguity can be a value worth affirming.

Furthermore, since spectators would also be part of the performative process of reality-making, regardless of their concrete and active participation, an immanent theatre should presumably remain open to integrate 'modes and principles' issuing from the auditorium too, allowing both actors and audiences to generate 'rules and forms' for the performance (we shall see how this can be implicit of a certain performative attitude difficult to train).[3]

The question I want to pose can be summarised as follows: if in *pure* immanence all meaning emerges freely within 'a system' (say a 'collective performance', or 'a life'), and in *pure* transcendence all meaning is organised from without (for example by an author, a text, or a god), and accepting that both purities may simply be tendencies, can there be a methodology based on a pre-existing, single-authored text that still achieves immanence in performance? Text-based theatre practices are not specifically addressed in Cull's survey; how immanence may operate in the interplay between a text and its performance is not investigated. However, a call for further research is featured: 'we can only come to know more by experimenting in our context(s) now. And this book has been an attempt to perform one such experimental gesture, to which other gestures, including practice-based gestures, must be added' (Cull 2012:236). My gesture specifically seeks to move away from the idea of representing a dramatic text, which implies that performers and directors first interpret it, and then attempt to convey such interpretation faithfully through actions on stage.

At the outset, the possibility that a play text could be a stimulus for a group of actors to experiment on was clear to me, but it was harder to imagine how it would not direct the proceedings, how it would not organise 'reality in the making' from the outside,

[3] I refer to the training of the actors, as the artists who would be ultimately facilitating immanence in performance.

especially considering how language (written or otherwise) carries meaning within its form. As it turned out however, it was to be more effective to realise – after Freud – that every conscious expression is already a retrieval of previously perceived and therefore internalised external stimuli, and that the matter is rather about *how* this 'inner written' is retrieved.

### 1.1.1: Freud and the Scene of Writing (via Derrida)

In an essay titled 'Freud and the Scene of Writing', included in *Writing and Difference* (2001), Jacques Derrida analyses another short essay by Sigmund Freud titled 'A Note Upon the "Mystic Writing-Pad"' (1961), in which the founder of psychoanalysis compares the workings of our perception with those of an early 'smart' writing-pad.

The 'Mystic Writing-Pad' is a children's toy consisting of a slab made of wax or resin over which a thin transparent sheet is laid. This sheet consists of two layers, an outer protective one made of celluloid, and an inner one made of waxed paper. The 'mysticism' relies upon the fact that each mark made on the outer paper is only visible as long as the sheet adheres to the pad, and disappears as soon as the sheet is lifted off it. There are however, alternative ways of retrieving those cumulative marks left on the slab, namely by means of 'suitable lights' (Freud 1961:230). This writing machine is thus potentially capable, just as our 'mental apparatus', of receiving unlimited perceptions without retaining any permanent trace of them 'so that it can react like a clean sheet to every new perception; while the permanent traces of the excitations which have been received are preserved in "mnemic systems" lying behind the perceptual system' (Freud 1961:228). Freud further adds that 'the inexplicable phenomenon of consciousness arises in the perceptual system *instead of* the permanent traces' (ibid.).

What Derrida draws from this is that we possess 'a double system contained in a single differentiated apparatus: a perpetually available innocence and an infinite reserve of traces have at last been reconciled' (Derrida 2001:280). This offers two advantages: 'an ever-ready receptive surface and permanent traces of the notes that have been made upon it' (Freud 1961:228). The spatio-temporal relation between them defines how we perceive and act upon life: the relation is spatial insofar as the twofold apparatus is physiologically concerned; it is temporal with reference to Freud's hypothesis of the flow of mental

impulses, or 'cathectic innervations', which going 'from within towards the outside' and being discontinuous, would possibly be responsible for our perception of time. The image of writing is provided as a looming metaphor: as one hand writes on the pad, the other periodically lifts the sheet from it, with the resulting paradox that 'the ideal virginity of the present is constituted by the work of memory' (Derrida 2001:284).

In light of all of the above, it seems that not only 'all the world's a stage' (*As You Like It*: Act 2 Scene 7), but also that life, as we perceive it, is the staging of a text (regardless of whether we are aware of it or not). In other words, it is as if our lives were the staging of an ever-revising writing, which we periodically retrieve through rapid yet discontinuous flows of interpretation (in the rising tides of consciousness), informed by old and recent stimulations, which include external excitations marked at different depths in our psyche; hence we are always necessarily acting upon the past. This 'scene of writing' is the stage at which the present [impression] is *repeated*, that is, copied and erased, thus withdrawing as a memory trace:

> None of us, Derrida claims, apprehend the world directly, but only retrospectively; our sense of that which is beyond ourselves is the product of previous memories, previous writings. 'Writing', says Derrida, 'supplements perception before perception even appears to itself' (…). The Mystic Writing Pad, then, is a model of the primacy of writing, of the way in which we can only ever experience the world, as it were, after the fact, that is, through the traces of previous experiences and through the *signifiers*, which are in effect the condition of being (Keep et al. 2000, my italics).

The 'scene of writing' is the actual stage of immediacy, or rather originality: it is always ready to receive, repeat and erase the next present; it is never, however, purely immediate:

> If there were only perception, pure permeability to breaching, there would be no breaches. We would be written, but nothing would be recorded; no writing would be produced, retained, repeated as legibility. But pure perception does not exist: we are written only as we write, *by the agency within us which always already keeps watch over perception, be it internal or external*[4]. The "subject" of writing does not exist if we mean by that some sovereign solitude of the author. The subject of writing is a *system* of relations between strata: the Mystic Pad, the psyche, society, the world. Within that scene, on that stage, the punctual simplicity of the classical subject is not to be found. In order to describe the structure (…) the *sociality* of writing as *drama* requires an entirely different discipline (Derrida 2001:285, italicised sentence mine, other italics in the original).

[4] My italics: we shall see in Part Two how this 'watching over' can be trained to increase the actor's potential for retention and conscious expression.

What discipline? Perhaps one that acknowledges that speech is not closer than writing to its origin, that writing is actually the condition of originality, and that the agency of this writing cannot be found simply in an individual (or collective) subjectivity, but is rather diffused, and materialises in a sort of network of psychic energy, or forces.

In relation to Freud's comment that the pad is unable to reproduce its writing from within, and that 'it would be a mystic pad indeed if, like our memory, it could accomplish that' (Freud 1961:230), Derrida further observes 'that the machine does not run by itself means something else: a mechanism without its own energy. The machine is dead. It is death' (Derrida 2001:285). Although 'only the psychical trace is able to reproduce and to represent itself spontaneously' (ibid. 286), it does so thanks to a 'supplementary', dead 'machine' interrupting the otherwise continuous flow of our 'mnemic spontaneity': this lifeless yet necessary mechanism supplementing our psyche is, according to Derrida, representation.

If every experience we perceive as new, 'be it internal or external', has essentially already been represented, albeit spontaneously, in our memory (Freud's 'mnemic systems'), if each event is already a reading and even a playing of primal recordings (the traces left by perception), if in other words, everything gets preventively processed internally anyway, what does it matter where, when, what or whom each new impression, each new text, comes from? What matters more seems to me to be how the processing is done and the impression retrieved. Following this hypothesis, matters pertaining to the original time, place, theme or subject of the impression or text become contingent; they may be politically, socially, historically, ethically/aesthetically important of course, but do not affect the working process of consciousness as such. They would affect its outcomes, but as different inputs would affect the results of an unknown formula, with certain constants and variables, representing our short and long-term memory, or rather our conscious and unconscious, played upon by our connections and relations in the world.

Life seems to manifest through layered reactions to stimuli: spontaneous retrievals of previous and ongoing inscriptions overlaid with reasoned actions informed by them. May we perhaps imagine a way to 'play a text' equivalent to the way we 'play life'?

For Derrida, the question is rather what is it that makes us spontaneous human beings and not lifeless machines, or writing-pads, particularly considering that, as it seems at least,

there is something supplementing us, something of the nature of the tool, and therefore technological, that allows, or deludes, this differentiation in us (Derrida 2001:287).[5] Although I appreciate that these are not the primal concerns of an actor or director approaching theatrical processes, we might still find in them a possible vehicle, a machine so to speak, to analyse ourselves by analogy: another model of writing-pad, more complex perhaps, than Freud's (after all, Derrida's usage of the theatrical metaphor to 'set' his thinking is by no means casual, and he is certainly not alone in this figuring of speech). But this is not the aim: actors do not need to worry about the philosophical or scientific origin or nature of this supplement, seemingly responsible for the perceived spontaneity of their memory, and ultimately of life. What actors can do, however, is experience, if not retrieve, produce or channel through their actions, an *equivalent artifice* for their theatre, namely an artifice that makes mimesis spontaneous and enlivening.

Unlike everyday life, theatre can set up its own 'framework' of favourable conditions, a laboratory in which some of its variables can be better controlled, isolated, manipulated, repeated, and where the results can be, to a certain extent at least, objectified. Performance would thus become the 'psychic apparatus' of the theatre, made of several 'writing-pads' (the bodies of actors and spectators) and their cognitive, 'autopoietic' relations, that is, self-generated stimulations, actions and reactions, inter-actions that one can explore.[6] If there is an external resource that is needed for the running of the theatrical apparatus then that would simply be life, whilst the outcome would be its 'double'.[7]

## 1.1.2: Artaud and the Closure of Representation (via Derrida)

Provided that the question of immanence in theatre might not depend on having or not having a text in advance – because, as we have seen, that is always already the case – what still remains overlooked is an alternative to representation, at least in its conventional sense. An alternative, that is, to the representation of a set of ideas,

[5] Writing as embedded technology: the 'question of technis' cannot be exhausted by psychology alone - Derrida argues without resolution.

[6] 'Auto-poiesis' from Greek means 'self-creation'. See *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living* (Maturana and Varela 1980) for a study of its roots in biology, and *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* (Erika Fischer-Lichte 2008) for its extension to performance.

[7] This is a loose analogy with the central theme of Artaud's *The Theatre and its Double* (1970): double here is to be intended both as 'parallel' and 'heightened' (or augmented) life.

intentions, interpretations and meanings embedded in the text, and dictated by it (or its author) to the stage (and its actors, devisers, directors and so on). But if immanence does not depend on a text, neither does representation; we may, in other words, have to find an alternative to representation in general.

If representation implies a necessary interruption of presence, marking a delay in the attendance of every new moment, this does not mean that one must submit to it. The theatrical equivalent is plain: the actor fails to attend to the scenic moment, to the 'beat' as it manifests, either because it is being ignored or anticipated, resulting in the common 'lack of scenic presence'. If one actor is the absent-minded, and the other the diligent re-presenter, both are aggravated by their deference to a certain kind of knowledge, reasoned and aprioristic, of the upcoming moment (whether one fails or succeeds to prepare for it). In such a mode, furthermore, it may be harder to change one's mind: once everything is set, at the very least there is less room for new ideas, intentions and meanings to emerge.

Cull suggests that 'the contemporary pursuit of the philosophy of immanence is one that strives to be increasingly faithful to an encounter with the new (including the production of the new in the arts), to a thought borne of and somehow internal to the objects in that encounter' (Cull 2016).[8] But to be faithful to the new one might have to betray the old, or never attach to anything at all, and anyway, whatever alternative one shall find may have to account for the possibly innate nature of representation, as previously described. One might, in other words, have to reconcile the workings of the 'psychic apparatus', as hypothesised by Freud and Derrida, with one's search for immanence, for example by at least finding a substitute for subsequent *re-representations*:

> If it is necessary, thus, to renounce 'the theatrical superstition of the text and the dictatorship of the writer' (TD, p.124), it is because they could not have imposed themselves without the aid of a certain model of speech and writing: the speech that represents clear and willing thought, the (alphabetic, or in any event phonetic) writing that represents representative speech. Classical theatre, the theatre of diversions, was *the representation of all these representations* (Derrida 2001:240 my italics, with embedded citation from *The Theatre and Its Double*, Artaud 1958).

Following Derrida's exploration of *Writing and Difference*, a step forward towards the discovery of an interplay between text and performance alternative to representation, was

[8] Paper titled 'On Immanence' An introduction to "The Concept of Immanence in Philosophy & the Arts" conference, Vienna 5-7 May 2016; https://www.academia.edu/31252854/_On_Immanence_ visited on 27/5/2019

to be inspired by two essays titled 'La Parole Soufflée' and 'The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation'. In them, the French philosopher examines the writings of Antonin Artaud (1896-1948), whereby the actor, poet, author and fellow countryman expounds his vision for a yet unborn Theatre of Cruelty (Artaud 1958), which has been influencing performance theory/practice up to this day:

> The theatre of cruelty expulses God from the stage. (…) The theatrical practice of cruelty, in its action and structure, inhabits or rather *produces* a nontheological space. The stage is theological for as long as it is dominated by speech, by a will to speech, by the layout of a primary logos which does not belong to the theatrical site and governs it from a distance (…) in which each agency is linked to all the others by representation, in which the irrepresentability of the living present is dissimulated or dissolved, suppressed or deported within the infinite chain of representations – this structure has never been modified (Derrida 2001:296).

The theatre of representation, the theological space, is supported by speech, by a '*will to speech*': 'it is the phonetic text, speech, transmitted discourse (…) which ensures the movement of representation' (ibid. 297). But 'this confusion', writes Artaud already between 1931-36, 'will be possible and the director will be forced to play second fiddle to the author only so long as there is a tacit agreement that the language of words is superior to others and that the theatre admits none other than this one language' (Artaud as cited in Derrida 2001:297).[9] Although this superiority has since been put into question in contemporary theatre, there still remains a problem with any attempt at non-representing speech whilst inadvertently, or fearfully, retaining its discourse:

> By virtue of the word (or rather *the unity of the word and the concept*, as we will say later – and this specification will be important) and beneath the theological ascendancy both of the '*verb* [which] is the measure of our impotency' (OC 4:277) and of our *fear,* it is indeed the stage which finds itself threatened throughout the Western tradition. (…) For a stage which does nothing but *illustrate a discourse* is no longer entirely a stage. Its relation to speech is its malady (Derrida 2001:297, with embedded citation from Artaud's *Oeuvres Complete vol. 4*, 1970, my italics).

'The unity of the word and the concept' threatens the stage: the issue is not so much the word itself, but rather its 'combine' with the concept in concocting discourse. No other sign like speech is as threatening, no other language than that of words is so instrumental to representation (at least within a system of phonetic writing). What could be the alternative then? A new language of the stage, one that abandons itself to the free play of its signifiers. Does this mean a language of the body, then, made of primal gestures and

[9] Writings then collected in *Le Théâtre et son double* (Artaud 1938).

movements? A language of scenery, objects, sounds, proximities? A new language of the *voice* too, outside speech, perhaps? of music? and does 'new' also mean 'improvised'? Out of this obscurity, terms like 'physical theatre', 'visual theatre', 'immersive theatre', 'devised theatre', 'aural theatre' and so on have lit up over the years since Artaud left his 'mark of erasure' with his passing in 1948. Once again, the problem rests in the author and her text, and their illegitimate influence on the life of the stage, but there is a renewed consciousness.

The theatre (of cruelty) must rid itself of intruders. In order to find itself again it must be cruel towards them (No More Masterpieces was Artaud's call in 1938), but also towards an epoch's 'formal habit which it absolutely cannot shake' (Artaud as cited in Derrida 2001:301). Also cruel towards itself, then, if we interpret this 'formal habit' as a chain that leads those attending the theatre (actors and spectators) to represent discourse, not necessarily unwillingly but rather unconsciously. Hence the need for a shock, for an inflexible cure. This interpretation seems in line with Derrida's understanding of Artaud's notion of cruelty as '*necessity* and *rigour'* (ibid. italics in the original). The theatre must break free from its oppressors *and* break its own habits in order to emancipate itself fully:

> We think, precisely, that there is a notion of poetry to be dissociated, extracted from the forms of written poetry in which an epoch at the height of disorder and illness wants to keep all poetry. And when I say that the epoch wants, I am exaggerating, for in reality it is incapable of wanting anything; it is the victim of a formal habit which it absolutely cannot shake. It seems to us that the kind of diffuse poetry which we identify with *natural and spontaneous* energy (but all natural energies are not poetic) must find its integral expression, its purest, sharpest and most truly *separated* expression, in the theatre (ibid., my italics).

The new language of the stage must therefore be as natural and spontaneous as nature itself, but must separate itself from it in order to be poetic. It must do so somewhat consciously, that is, it must retain control over its impetus and yet not hamper it. Artaud clarifies that:

> My plans have nothing to do with Copeau's improvisations.[10] However thoroughly they are immersed in the *concrete* and *external*, however rooted in free nature and not in the narrow chambers of the brain, they are not, for all that, left to the caprice of the wild and thoughtless inspiration of the actor, especially the actor who, once cut off from the text, plunges in without any idea of what he is doing. I would not care

[10] Jacques Copeau (1879-1949) was among the most influential theatre directors and pedagogues of the 20th century, whose influence spread also in the UK through his nephew and pupil Michel Saint-Denis. Artaud's practice will not share anything with 'Surrealist empiricism' either, as he would write elsewhere commenting on the improvisational practices of the time (Artaud as cited in Derrida 2001:302).

> to leave the fate of my plays and of the theatre to *that kind of chance* (ibid. 239-240, my italics).

We shall see later on *how* this yet unborn language of the stage may not suppress words, nor be left at the mercy of 'improvisational anarchy'. Amidst all the ambiguities, certainly poetical, of Artaud's visionary writings on theatre, one should sense, in reading them, all of his restless awareness: the awareness, for example, that speech is, as much as writing, potentially intrusive and subduing; the awareness that in order to emancipate itself from them, language must not flee into 'arbitrariness or irresponsibility', but 'deduce new laws'[11], a 'new form of writing' (ibid. 240); the awareness 'that it is not a question of suppressing the spoken language, but of giving words approximately the importance they have in dreams' (ibid. 236); the awareness that the chains of discursive thought are only natural (they come with the body), that representation is inevitable, and yet one must struggle away from its grip with a sort of improved awareness: 'art is not the imitation of life, but life is the imitation of a transcendental principle which art puts us into communication with once again' (ibid. 295).

Incidentally, although esteemed theatre scholars seem to suggest that either Artaud failed to recognise the impossibility of his own project (Jarcho 2017:4), or that Derrida mistook Artaud's search for presence for 'a transcendentalist agenda' (Cull 2009:243-255), it is my view that Derrida's deconstruction of Artaud's writings in *Writing and Difference* helps clarify the latter's deep awareness of the problematics of representation in general, and his striving to set out the principles for a new theatre, which by all means could be called immanent, but which lacked the necessary resources of practice to fully accomplish his aims.[12]

In the midst of these and other readings, about and around the rough dichotomies of immanence-transcendence, and presence-representation, whose full referencing would justify a parallel study but not the length of the digression, the notion of spontaneity, previously only 'adjectivized', eventually appeared as a noun. And it appeared, quite appropriately, from within this discourse, like an unassuming glow that, given adequate

[11] 'I give myself up to feverish dreams, but I do so in order to deduce new laws. In delirium, I seek multiplicity, subtlety and the eye of reason, not rash prophecies' (Artaud as cited in Derrida 2001:240).

[12] This last aspect was notoriously acknowledged by the Polish theatre director Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999) in a text titled He Wasn't Entirely Himself contained in *Towards a Poor Theatre* (Grotowski 1975:86).

attention, reveals the contours of a proposal for a new language of the stage (not dictated nor 'anarchically improvised'), and for a new form of writing for it, which in essence only wishes to reconcile with the old.

## 1.2: Spontaneity (and thereabouts)

If by spontaneous we characterise anything that works from within or by itself, as in Freud's hypothesis on the workings of our memory, then immanence, which is a form of self-organisation, has to be spontaneous. This view is also based on scholarship: Brian Massumi, a Deleuzean scholar referenced in Cull's study on theatrical immanence in relation to complexity theories, defines self-organisation as 'the spontaneous production of a level of reality having its own rules of formation and order of connection' (Massumi as cited in Cull 2012:28). In the 'level of reality' of theatrical performance then, spontaneity would be the means towards immanent processes of performance self-organisation, including the compositional work of the actor on a pre-written text. How does spontaneity work towards immanence?

Before attempting to answer this, I would like to propose a working definition of spontaneity: the capacity to react autonomously and adequately to an event in the moment of its occurrence. As a first step towards deconstructing and justifying such definition, in the context of immanent creation, I shall reflect upon the links existing between the notions of spontaneity, creative agency and authorship.

To ask what determines creative agency in a performance-making process is not quite the same as asking where authorship is situated. The two questions address the same concern, the creative act, but from different points of view, informed perhaps by different principles. Both deal with an activity, with a doing. However, while the latter hints at quite distinct and pro-active author/s, the former names a 'capacity to act', a latent potentiality, involving less clearly defined agents. In the event of acting a text for example, creative agency refers to the affordances, the possibilities available to an actor to create something new out of the given circumstances. It refers to the actor's reactions to the text, to the liberties that s/he takes alongside the liberties that the text affords. To discuss authorship in such a situation (that of acting a text) would imply something quite

different, namely a more assertive 'will to mean', which is conventionally bestowed, as we have seen, outside the stage.

Devising/collective/collaborative theatrical processes seem to generally suggest that, by getting rid of the authored play text, yet admitting other texts not originally meant for the stage, or by deconstructing, manipulating or adapting existing texts, by adopting, in other words, texts that did not 'will to mean' there (i.e. not originally meant for the stage), or anyway not in the way they are eventually 'used', authorship, as well as creative agency, would stay within the stage. However, if we acknowledge what has been said so far and wished to test it, then this suggestion would be a 'superstition': authorship cannot really belong to a subjectivity, as it is already diffused, it pertains to a 'system of relations', unless of course, one maintains – or grows the habit to maintain – 'a certain model of speech and writing: the speech that represents clear and willing thought, the writing that represents representative speech' (Derrida 2001:240), in which case the sovereign power of words and concepts, however manipulated, will not be avoided. Authorship seems to be more of a problem for those subjugating themselves to it, either consciously or unconsciously, than in itself. Nevertheless, we are yet to define an alternative.

From the word's etymology, and my personal experience, spontaneity could be said to nurture creative agency: it implies freedom by definition – 'the root of this word is the Latin *sua sponte*, meaning *of free will'* (Moreno 1983:127) – and appears, empirically at least, less related to authorship, for its impulsive/reactive quality, which loosens 'clear and willing thought' (Derrida, as quoted above). Therefore, one could assume that spontaneity, when applied to text-based performance, would bring into play what is not yet given by the text, or by an authoritarian will interpreting it. Spontaneity would thus be creative, but not according to a plan set out transcendentally, rather according to an immanent process of impulsive reactions, which could be called 'improvisation'.

Can there be improvisation with a given text? And even if so, did not Artaud already warn us against its capricious, thoughtless, and chancy nature?

## 1.2.1: J.L. Moreno's Spontaneity

In order to corroborate an answer to these questions, my picture of spontaneity still needs completing, and a brief analysis of J. L. Moreno's theories will be helpful to this end.

Though best known as the father of psychodrama and sociometry, Moreno (1889-1974) occupied himself, throughout his career, with the definition of a Theory of Spontaneity-Creativity, which he saw at work in all human activities, starting from the theatre. In an essay from 1955 he defined spontaneity as 'the variable degree of adequate response to a situation of a variable degree of novelty' (Moreno 1955:108). From this definition one learns that spontaneity, just like immanence, is a question of degrees (see Cull 2012:16), that it is a *response* to a situation, and that it is related to *adequacy* and *novelty*, of the response and the situation respectively.

In other instances, Moreno refers to novelty also in relation *to the response* to a situation, to clarify that a novel response would not be a sufficient condition for spontaneity: the novelty of the response does not in fact guarantee for its adequacy, and instances of 'pathological spontaneity', such as psychotic and incoherent behaviours, are provided as examples of inadequate novel reactions (Moreno ibid.). This is relevant because, by comparison, one can easily envisage the theatrical manifestations of such 'pathology' in all those instances of impulsive yet incoherent stage acts, which cannot be accounted for dramaturgically either by the actor or the director, which do not reach the quality of dramatic action, which do not, in other words, serve the performance because of their arbitrariness.

Yet Moreno also admits that 'the freedom in association of words and gestures may have at times the merit of preparing the ground for a creativity state' (Moreno 1955:109). This consideration is also theatrically accurate: such 'freedom in association' is the condition of improvisation. One of the problems faced by practice is precisely how to reconcile this necessary freedom with the 'pathological risks' that come with it. As we shall see, the notion of 'association' – the actor's ability to create associative links, or rather *notice* and make use of them as they arise in the course of impulsive acts – will be central to this end.

Across his writings on spontaneity as a general theory, that is not necessarily applied to performance, Moreno seems to relate both novelty and adequacy to the *response* to a situation, and pay less attention to the situation itself, as if spontaneity did not depend on the circumstance or event in reaction to which it manifests, but on the type of the reaction. Nevertheless, there are exceptions:

> Spontaneity operates in the *here and now*. The novelty of a moment demands a past which does not contain this particular novelty (ibid. 108, my italics).

> Another illustration is the creation of new organisms, at a time when animal life was confined to the sea. A new animal organism would arise when it would undergo through the evolutional process, anatomical and physical changes. These changes would be a novel response to the old situation of the sea (ibid. 109).

The first paragraph seems to suggest that spontaneity is necessarily a reaction to a novel moment or event, while the second suggests the possibility of repetition, and of a new response to a recurring situation. Any new moment then is a compound of novelty and repetition, a question of degrees again: 'spontaneity does not operate in a vacuum but in relation to already structured phenomena, cultural and social conserves' (ibid. 108). As we have seen with Derrida's 'scene of writing' and the psyche, spontaneity too seems an unknown formula, influenced but not defined by the situation itself, its degree of novelty, which is its variable. Spontaneity depends on the quality of the response, and apparently the best, the most spontaneous response should be both novel and adequate.

In order to be adequate, Moreno explains, a response must demonstrate '*appropriateness*, *competency* and *skill* in dealing with the situation, however small or great the challenge of its novelty' (ibid. 109). Elsewhere he classifies different forms of spontaneity according to the novelty of both situation and response (Moreno 1972:89-93). At times he equates the term 'adequate' with 'creative', which in turn is linked to 'novel' and 'original'. In other instances, it is said of the 'original' that its novelty may not be creative at all, when its 'free flow of expression (…) does not reveal any contribution significant enough to call it creativity' (ibid. 92). Eventually, the best spontaneity happens 'whenever an adequate response occurs *with* characteristics of novelty and creativity' (Moreno 1955:109). As per 'creativity', Moreno concedes that it is a concept 'strategically linked' to spontaneity, but it is not the same thing: '*creativity is related to the "act" itself; spontaneity is related to the "readiness" of the act*' (ibid.). Spontaneity is 'the catalyser of creativity', and 'the finished product of a creative process [is] the cultural conserve' (ibid.). Therefore, creativity is like the unfolding of a process started by the 'readiness to the act' proper to spontaneity, whose resulting acts, the responses, must be novel but also adequate and, presumably, 'significant enough', that is, creative! Or does adequacy already define the level of significance, and therefore creativity, of the novel response?

Adequacy is further mentioned in opposition to 'unstable', 'fragmentary' and 'dissociated' responses, that is, 'far away from the requirements of the situation'. To be adequate 'the response to a novel situation requires a sense of timing, and imagination of

appropriateness (…) a *plastic adaptation skill*, a mobility and flexibility of the self' (Moreno 1972:93). These characteristics are no better defined, possibly because 'only careful analysis of the objective facts should decide whether it is high, average or low creativity' (Moreno 1955:111). An analysis of Moreno's attempts to concretely apply these principles in theatrical practice will explain this indeterminacy, particularly in relation to certain plastic adaptation skills that actors indeed may need to acquire for such application to be successful.

But before delving into that, it is worth recapitulating with a by now substantiated enough depiction of spontaneity: a novel and adequate *response* to a situation, emerging in the here and now of the situation itself, that is, without premeditation. Moreno provides also other definitions for spontaneity, such as the 'art of the moment' (Moreno 1972:33), the 'locus of the self' (Moreno 1983:8), both recalling the notion of 'presence'; however, he never refers to its autonomy, perhaps because that would be a tautology: 'spontaneity' already means 'of free will'. It seems therefore correct to remove 'autonomy' from the originally proposed definition, thus also avoiding falling into an already contested opposition with 'authorship', which being diffused – as we have seen with Derrida – it is never 'a given' of any subjective status. In other words, since authorship is already being questioned, autonomy too falls short of enough reasons to set itself up as identity in opposition. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that:

> No one has ever seen spontaneity. Spontaneity is a hypothesis (…) a type of energy which is spent as it emerges, a type of catalyser which may have its "fellow travellers" in all departments of the universe. If we stretch our imagination, we can compare it with enzymes, the living catalysers of chemical processes, or with radioactive elements, the physical catalyser of energy. Radioactive matter would then correspond to the spontaneous-creative matrices of cultural conserves (Moreno 1955:116).

Is this the obscure nature of that 'supplement' Derrida referred to while unpicking Freud's note upon the 'Mystic Writing Pad'? or is it Barba's 'pre-expressive'?

## 1.2.2: J.L. Moreno's Theatre of Spontaneity

It is worth noticing how, despite all that has been said so far, Moreno explicitly considered the novelty of the situation of primary importance, in his outlining of the basic principles for a new Theatre of Spontaneity, to the extent of basing all his theatrical experiments on impromptu techniques, involving the improvisation of always new situations, thus

neglecting to work on given scenarios, characters or texts. This remark is important in view of anticipating a distinction in my own methods of investigation.

> The central task of the Viennese Theatre of Spontaneity between 1921 and 1923 was to bring about a revolution of the theatre (…) in fourfold manner:
>
> 1. The elimination of the playwright and of the written play.
> 2. Participation of the audience, to be a "theatre without spectators." Everyone is a participant, everyone is an actor.
> 3. The actors and the audience are now the only creators. Everything is improvised, the play, the action, the motive, the words, the encounter and the resolution of the conflicts.
> 4. The old stage has disappeared, in its place steps the open stage, the space-stage, the open space, the space of life, life itself (Moreno 1983:a).

Although points 2, 3 and 4 may agree *in principle* with my study's methodology, the first point will have to be critiqued. Moreno admits that the response to an old situation can be spontaneous, but in a lower sense; it would show a 'dramatic quality of response', namely an idealised quality proper of the 'great actor' or the 'idealised man', the type of man who can give 'newness and vivacity of feelings, actions, and verbal utterances which are nothing but repetitions of what an individual has experienced a thousand times before – that is, they do not contain anything new, original, or creative' (Moreno 1972:90). These repetitions would be the 'activation of *cultural conserves* and *social stereotypes'* that may be considered 'by his contemporaries and his friends as unique because of the flavour he is able to add to the most inconspicuous daily acts' (ibid. my italics), but that would still not meet the standards of highly creative spontaneity, which would only manifest when one performs 'an appropriate response to new situations' (ibid. 92).

If we agree that no situation is either entirely new or entirely a repetition, then it would be difficult to fully accept these classifications in the first place. However, they could still be useful if they are meant to differentiate spontaneous creativity from the 'activation of cultural conserves'. 'Cultural conserves' are the results, the finished 'products of creativity'; they were once spontaneous, but since they have been *conserved*, that is *fixed*, they have lost their 'actuality in the universe' and have become 'heritage' (Moreno 1955:112-113), and thus they eventually become habits or clichés.

Besides providing us with an early distinction between creative product and process, that is, anticipating a fundamental discourse of contemporary aesthetics, Moreno is claiming that any 'activation' of a product will never match the spontaneity-creativity of the

process that led to its production (activation being any use of the cultural conserve *as stimulus* for new creative processes, including, presumably, its reception). But if 'cultural conserves are products of creativity (…) antipodal to the spontaneous creative matrices which emerge every time a creative process is in the making' (Moreno 1955:112), they are also, according to sociologist Pitirim Sorokin's counterargument, 'the greatest catalysers of subsequent creative *élans*' (Sorokin 1955:124).

I believe that such 'higher combination' of spontaneity-creativity would be lost in the process were it not *conserved* into some sort of product, as that is essential for developing consciousness of the spontaneous processes that led to it. Such consciousness arises precisely through this 'activation'. In other words, if it is true that we need spontaneous processes to create artworks, we also need artworks to understand our spontaneous-creative processes, or anyway stimulate new ones. Thus, each new performance of the same would not claim to be a new production, but rather its repetition, its 'activation': a way of revealing old and new layers of spontaneity-creativity, most of which would otherwise stay shapeless, or drown into unconsciousness. This point shall become clearer later on, in the distinction between the modes of composition and performance.

It is also worth remarking – with care – that Moreno's theatrical endeavours, by his own admission, failed to achieve the necessary aesthetic standards expected of the theatrical art; they nonetheless gave birth to psychodrama, the ancestor of modern drama therapy:

> We lost the interest of the public and it became difficult to maintain the financial stability of the theatre. I saw before me the task of changing the primary attitude of the public and the critics. That seemed to me to be impossible without a total revolution of our culture. (…) Later I discovered a happier solution in the "therapeutic theatre". One hundred percent spontaneity was more easily achieved (…) it was easier to tolerate imperfections and irregularities of an abnormal person, a patient. (Moreno 1983: a-b).

Moreno suggests that the reasons for his theatre's failure were founded on the cultural milieu of the time, and the audience's expectations (I seem to hear the echo of Artaud's lament here), but also admits certain 'imperfections and irregularities' in the plays themselves.[13] He identifies two main order of problems: '*quality* of the creation' and

[13] Despite no record showing Moreno's acquaintance with Artaud's ideas, nor vice-versa, the similarities between their theatrical manifestos are strikingly similar. They recall the working principles of many of the theatrical avant-gardes of the 20th century both in Europe and America, some of whom were explicitly inspired by Artaud (such as Living Theatre and the Open Theatre among others). Moreno knew many of these experimental companies and he was critical of them, describing their practices as 'still tied to the

'*stability* of the performances', which would need addressing through 'analysis' and 'practice' (ibid. e). He nevertheless maintains that:

> In the spontaneous-creative enactment emotions, thoughts, processes, sentences, pauses, gestures, and movements, seem first to break formlessly and in anarchistic fashion into an ordered environment and settled consciousness. But in the course of their development it becomes clear that they belong together like the tones of a melody; that they are in relation similar to the cells of an organism. The disorder is only an *outer appearance*; inwardly there is a consistent driving force, a plastic ability, the urge to assume a definite form; the stratagem of the creative principle which allies itself with the cunning of reason to realise an imperative intention (Moreno 1983:43, my italics).

The problem rests precisely in such 'outer appearance': the manner in which actors manage to express themselves and their inner states *externally* is fundamental to the theatrical art, and perhaps distinguishes it from other forms of therapeutic introspection. This criticism still feels too loud, however, considering Moreno's own acknowledgments that spontaneity is neither spontaneous nor an act of will – 'spontaneity does not arise automatically; (…) it is not created by the conscious will, which frequently acts as an inhibitory bar, but *by a liberation*' – and that therefore actors must undergo '*spontaneity training*', including specific forms of *physical training* (Moreno 1983:44, my italics).

Still, lack of form seems to be regarded as only apparent and almost unimportant. If the actors' 'imperative intentions' manifest themselves formlessly at first, what becomes of them afterwards? They may become clearer presumably, but for a dynamic art like the theatre, which calls for acts of reception that unfold in time, this indeed might be a problem: what guarantees this reconciliation of forms, if the moment of presentation coincides with that of creation? And how long can it take and yet be acceptable for an audience? Is it not through externalities and through what they actually convey that we, after all, experience and encounter each other? The risk is to replicate everyday life.

These considerations led my practical investigations in quite an opposite direction; namely, to consider performance as an instance of *repetition*, rather than an instance in which everything is improvised. What is repeated is a *composition*, a performance score *resulting from* a process of improvisation, which is also performative and consistent with

*drama conserve*' because they fixed most of the elements of their performances in advance. Interesting parallels can also be drawn, and indeed have been drawn (Scheiffele 1995), with Polish theatre director Jerzy Grotowski, who based his working methods on spontaneity principles too, and developed the idea of 'art as vehicle' for work on one's self (see Brook in Grotowski 1975, and Richards 1995).

the principles of spontaneity-creativity, but which is allowed to unfold behind the scenes, and to become artwork. This model is primarily supported by a specific theatrical practice borne of the collective drive of the 1960s, which was inspired by equivalent principles and yet artistically quite successful, and which can be epitomised in the following words of Polish theatre director Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999):

> Next I want to advise you never in performance to seek for spontaneity without a score. In the exercises it is a different thing altogether. During a performance no real spontaneity is possible without a score. It would only be an imitation since you would destroy your spontaneity by chaos (Grotowski 1975:192).

The key point now, to safeguard the original aims of a theatre consistent with the notions of immanence and spontaneity, is to distinguish, both in theory and in practice, the proposed method of repetition from the conventional performance methods based on representation.

## 1.3: Repetition (in theory: Deleuze)

Consecutive readings of Gilles Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* (2014) eventually inspired a useful way of distinguishing repetition from representation. Such a distinction is based on the proposition that although representation requires repetition, the latter does not necessarily imply the former. In other words, repetition only becomes representation through willed acts of reflection, but can still remain itself if the will is relinquished, if the will is *freed* from taking an active part in the repeating process. Performance can therefore avoid representation through a certain mode of abandon to repetition. Furthermore, Deleuze suggests that repetition is linked to difference, and therefore to novelty, by means of a certain property of the contemplative mind, namely the imagination.

Paraphrasing Hume, Deleuze writes that 'repetition changes nothing in the object repeated, but does change something in the mind which contemplates it' (Deleuze 2014:93). The contemplation of repetition draws something new, something different from it: 'in considering repetition in the object, we remain within the conditions (…) of repetition. But in considering the change in the subject we are already beyond these conditions, confronting (…) difference' (ibid. 93-94).

Contemplation is a mental activity that has the power to 'contract' each instance of repetition and, in so doing, draw something new from it. Innate and spontaneous, such 'contractile power' is the imagination. It is as if repetition, through its 'digging', or 'steady pounding' (Stein 2009:294), opened the way for imagination to reach or release ever-deeper contents stored or buried in the mind:

> like a sensitive plate, it [the imagination] retains one case when the other appears. It contracts cases, elements, agitations or homogeneous instants and grounds these in an internal qualitative impression endowed with a certain weight (…). This is by no means a memory, nor indeed an operation of the understanding: contraction is not a matter of reflection. Properly speaking, it forms a synthesis of time (Deleuze 2014:94).

Like a sensitive plate, or indeed like the 'Mystic Writing Pad', our imagination

> contracts the successive independent instants [the repetition of instants] into one another, thereby constituting the lived, or living, present (…). To it belong both the past and the future: the past in so far as the preceding instants are retained in the contraction; the future because its expectation is anticipated in this same contraction (ibid.).

Contraction is a *passive activity*, a 'passive synthesis (…). It is not carried out by the mind, but occurs *in* the mind which contemplates, prior to all memory and reflection' (ibid.). Only afterwards, through reflection

> memory reconstitutes the particular cases as distinct (…). The past is then no longer the immediate past of retention, but the reflexive past of representation, of reflected and reproduced particularity. Correlatively, the future also ceases to be the immediate future of anticipation in order to become the reflexive future of prediction, the reflected generality of the understanding (ibid. 95).

Deleuze distinguishes two kinds of mental activity, one contemplative and passive (imagination), which is associated with repetition,[14] and other active and reflective (memory and understanding), associated with representation. Both kinds produce signs: 'each contraction, each passive synthesis, constitutes a sign which is interpreted or deployed in active synthesis' (ibid. 97). Accordingly, then, he distinguishes two types of signs:

> natural signs are signs founded upon passive synthesis; they are signs of the present, referring to the present in which they signify. Artificial signs, by contrast, are those which refer to the past or the future as distinct dimensions of the present (…) Artificial signs imply active synthesis – that is to say, the passage from *spontaneous*

[14] The contemplation of anything that repeats in life, life included, that is, as we store it: 'passive synthesis (…) constitutes our habit of living, our expectation that "it" will continue' (Deleuze 1994:98).

> *imagination* to the active faculties of reflective representation, memory and intelligence (ibid. 108, my italics).

There is a sense that repetition enables the contemplating repeater to experience the duration of the living present as an uninterrupted flow (i.e. the condition of present continuous), whilst representation implies a breaking up of time in a succession of distinct moments, in between which the 'mind is elsewhere' (i.e. in simple pasts or futures). It is easy to see why the latter mode might be problematic for immanent performance. Beautiful in this respect is Deleuze's analogy of the scar: 'A scar is the sign not of a past wound but of "the present fact of having been wounded": we can say that it is the contemplation of the wound, that it contracts all the instants which separate us from it into a living present' (ibid.). What would be the theatrical equivalents of natural and artificial signs? What the actor's scar?

According to my premise, the primary theatrical signs are physical and vocal actions, that is, bodily and vocal externalisations of inner states and intentions. I dare advance that perhaps the natural signs of the theatre are those acts borne immediately and impulsively as spontaneous externalisations, or reverberations, of internal contractions of our imagination; conversely, the artificial signs would be all those signs resulting from a willed representation of such retained impressions, once distinctly recognised in memory, by means of reflection.

What should the actor's mind contemplate in order to trigger her imagination in this sense? The repetition of a text, to start with. According to this 'model', the actor's contemplation of her repetition of the text would trigger the contractile power of her imagination, which would draw something new from it, which in turn could be expressed externally, in vocal and physical form. Such external expressions could in turn be repeated and contemplated, thus triggering the imagination on a different physiological level, drawing something new from it again, and so on.

The text would therefore be our 'cutting tool', our encounter with it would be our wound, whilst our immediate reactions would be instances of 'passive synthesis', the scarring process of the 'textual breach', its contraction and absorption in the body-mind of the contemplating actor: 'The author's text is a sort of scalpel enabling us to open ourselves, to transcend ourselves, to find what is hidden within us' (Grotowski 1975:57).

Can ‘contemplative repetition’, as theorised above, facilitate such search in practice? Would it trigger the right state of mind required of an actor – which Grotowski too referred to as ‘passive readiness to realize an active role’ (ibid. 17) – to achieve the novelty and adequacy of spontaneous reactions?

### 1.3.1: The proposed investigation

It is quite obvious how difference is created by the actor in each instance of repetition of the same text. The simple fact of being a living organism guarantees for that: the actor will always play slightly different intonations, subtexts, contexts, either consciously or unconsciously. However, when it comes to repeating performance, perhaps in order to avoid lifeless repetition, instead of exploiting these unavoidable differences, one may fall on representation. That is, instead of attempting to perform the repetition of an *act*, the repetition of its outer form, trusting the process to produce its significance, one returns to its content, to the presupposed meaning and intention, in order to prepare its affects. But pure repetition is unaware of its affects. Even when the act is embedded with meaning, the meaning which may have originated it, which may have justified the fixing of the original reaction in the ‘crafty’ process of composition, its performance should call upon a conscious forgetting, and the actor maintain that ‘open feeling’ Gertrude Stein writes about so lyrically in *The Making of Americans:*

> Every one always is repeating the whole of them. Always, one having loving repeating to getting completed understanding must have in them an *open feeling*, a sense for all the slightest variations in repeating, must never lose themselves so in the solid steadiness of all repeating that they do not hear the slightest variation. If they get deadened by the *steady pounding* of repeating they will not learn from each one even though each one always is repeating the whole of them they will not learn the completed history of them, they will not know the being really in them.
>
> (Stein 2009:294, my italics)

Repetition can change something in the body-mind of the contemplating actor. The actor-repeater can achieve difference, and with it an always deeper understanding, by remaining receptive to the possible affects emerging throughout the repeated act, oblivious in passing, not of repetition – for it requires precision – but of its discursive content.

Why would one fall back on representation? To avoid mechanical repetition, surely; but I suspect that a more complete answer would have to account for a certain, shared, habit of knowing, and with a corresponding resistance against non-knowing, as if there were a point, in the linguistic acquisition of knowledge, that made one distrust gaps to such an extent that they are not even perceived. The not-yet-known linguistic possibilities of a text, for example, or a gesture, are controlled by a previous recalling of their meaning; gaps between each repetition are filled before crossing, before repeating, thus turning repetition into representation, thus hardly finding anything new.

So, by effectively repeating meaning, the actor aims at the signifieds, and thus yields to the temptation of prepared affects: she turns repetition into representation, *act* into *action*, before even accomplishing it. This is necessarily so, because representation wants to go back to content, to the presupposed original, to a previous reading, through active memory. It has a plan and wills to achieve it. Alternatively, the actor-repeater of forms, by aiming at the signifiers, may find new affects, provided that she contemplates, that is, provided that she pays attention to her repetition as in a sort of 're-active memory' or 'meditation'. This 'creative repetition' allows anything to happen in between: it is a gay, often hopeless yet relentless attempt at reproducing form: it is *abandon* in knowledge.

Philosopher Soren Kierkegaard stated that, unlike recollection, which 'is repeated backwards', 'genuine repetition is recollected forward' (Kierkegaard 1983:381). Under these premises, representation is understood as a kind of recollection repeated backwards, or rather, it is like moving on whilst facing back, with a sort of nostalgia, or at least expectation. Repetition differs in that it makes no claim nor even aims to reach its origin, to understand itself in the past, in its composition. It gaily moves and faces forward.

How is this speculation translated into a performance practice? By considering theatre as a sign system (Elam 2002, Aston and Savona 1991), one can focus on the signs that belong to the actor, namely the physical and vocal actions, and imagine ways in which they can be repeated in time so as to produce spontaneous reactions.

Knowing that a linguistic sign is a compound of signifier and signified (de Saussure 1959), and that texts are iterable (Derrida 1988), we also know that the relation between signifiers and signifieds in a written text, namely signification, can change according to the context, regardless of any presupposed intentionality of the writer. Furthermore, as

we shall see in a following chapter discussing performativity, such context can never be really 'saturated' (Hillis Miller 2007). With all this in mind, I envisage three possible ways of approaching the same sign (i.e. the same text): one is through the signifieds (i.e. the content or concept of its words), another is through its signifiers (i.e. the form or 'sound-image' of its words), the third is to approach both signifier and signified simultaneously, or rather approach the space between them.[15]

In the case of a dramatic text, of a memorised line of dialogue for example, either the actor fills the gaps in advance (i.e. the gaps of expression, the spatiotemporal gap between her memory of the concept and her performance of it), letting the content inform its repetition, 'actioning' the text (Stafford-Clark 2004, Roberts and Stafford-Clark 2007), or pretends there is no gap, and speaks the words as if they were meaningless sounds. The third way to repeat, which is the one suggested by this study, requires the actor to minimize the gap between concept and expression, or to fill it *while* bridging it, by trusting to find either the meaning or the expression needed once the first step is made.

If this first step, which is a 'micro-step', manifests internally, that is conceptually, as mental impulse, then I would suggest that this method is equivalent to an improvisation, the ideal process whereby an actor manages to express internal ideas spontaneously, by turning them immediately into actions.[16] Should it manifest externally, that is, should the repetition imperceptibly start at the level of the signifier, at the level of the outer act, as physical/vocal impulse, then it would be the actor's imagination that needs to be spontaneously and simultaneously triggered, in order for such act to reconcile with an idea and thus be infused with meaning. In practice anyway, it is difficult (and perhaps unnecessary) to determine whether each impulse, each initial step so to speak, is actually internal or external, particularly in the case of a speech act, and this is rightly so, because otherwise one would tend to think the gap and represent (i.e. thinking/filling the gap in

[15] It could be said that the gap between signifier and signified is related to Derrida's notion of *différance*, as it is the condition of both difference and deferral of meaning.

[16] Should these internal ideas be like those passively retained traces, those 'natural signs' described earlier with Deleuze, then repetition would come close to the type of improvisation at the base of Moreno's model for a Theatre of Spontaneity. This in turn would be like accepting that thinking per se is already a repetition (is this not what Derrida already suggested?). An alternative model to repetition is Ingemar Lindh's research on collective improvisation (see *Stepping Stones* 2013).

advance).[17] What is important is that such spatiotemporal opening between concept and expression be minimised, to the extent of becoming imperceptible, which means developing a tighter integration of mind and body.

It will come clear in Part Two how the 'spontaneity training' proposed by this study aims to achieve this integration in practice, by training the actor's ability to produce 'natural signs'. At this stage it is sufficient to mention that it will be working both ways: from the mind to the body (and voice), that is, from the concept to its expression, and from the body (and voice) to the mind, that is, from a play of signifiers to spontaneous signification (or association), by means of improvisation.

To recapitulate: the three ways to repeat would differ as follows: in the first instance, one's repetition *tends* to represent, to plan the action in advance by reflecting on it, either by recollecting its significance from previous instances, or by 'determining' its effects; in the second instance, one tends to disregard reflection altogether by acting randomly, thus approaching 'pathologic spontaneity', that is, senseless or mechanical action; in the third instance, the proposed investigation aims to make sense spontaneously, by acknowledging the seed of an intention in the impulse, be it mental or physical. Such acknowledgment should not lead to an active reflection before or after the act, nor should it dispel in a complete disconnection of the mind, but rather unravel in a noticing, an overseeing, indeed a 'contemplation' of the act in the act, seeking signification in the quasi-simultaneous reconciliation between its content and its form.

To speak of improvisation in repetition is a useful paradox: I refer to the improviser-repeater's capacity to react to an existing structure intended as a series of stimuli that should be approached as having no meaning in themselves yet, until they are reacted to. After all, this is the case in all improvisation: actors attempt to react to the situation they find themselves in, thus they never really 'operate in a vacuum'. Anyway, for simplicity, I shall distinguish two forms of improvisation: one that generates the material (used for compositional purposes), and one that reacts spontaneously to the material already generated (used in performance). Both types of improvisation rely on repetition.

[17] Speech and concept are interdependent manifestations of phonetic language (we can only think the concepts that we can say, and say the concepts that we can think). Furthermore, dichotomies internal vs external, and mind vs body, are only theoretical models; in practice in fact, all human processes (acting included) are integrated psychophysical phenomena.

When applied to a written text, this method of repetition requires a knowledge of it that goes deeper than reflective memory, that is, deeper than a memory facilitated by previous readings, previous understandings of it. Such knowledge is theoretically acquired through a process of 'passive syntheses' able to produce 'impressions endowed with a certain weight' (Deleuze 2014:94), that is, of a weight sufficient enough to be retained without the help of reflection or understanding. Only then repetition can be 'contemplative', leaving the mind free to *notice and question* what is happening, thus drawing something new from it, and making critical thinking creative.[18] This may be as hard as improvising, or perhaps even harder, because in repetition the tendency to represent what is known, to predict what might come of a situation, and so prepare for it, is embedded in us.

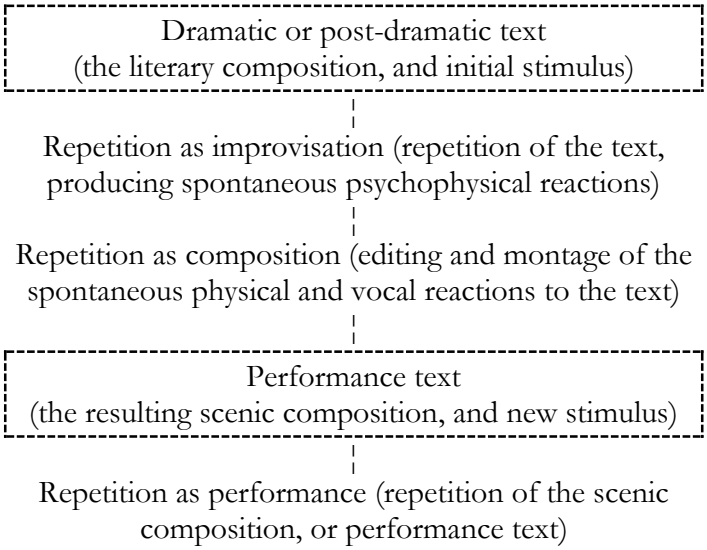
Is representation a 'habit', then, as Artaud suggested? Deleuze associates instinct with 'natural signs', and reflection with 'artificial signs': in repetition, we seem to be inside the difference between instinctive anticipation (a sort of Pavlov Effect?) and reflective prediction (i.e. understanding). Do we 'juggle' then, with instinct and habit: the innate instinct to react and the 'supplementary' habit to reflect? After all, reflection is not necessarily an issue, quite the contrary, it facilitates evolution, as long as it does not get stuck in its plans, as long as it allows a 'conscious forgetting' of expectations, a forsaking of what is already known from prior reflections, from composition; as long as it remains reactive.

Repetition would therefore require a combination of risk and trust in the abandonment to its own unforeseen outcomes. But compared to the uncertainties of conventional improvisation (i.e. that it may fail, not find responses, or find inadequate ones), these our outcomes are carefully channelled through a previously crafted composition. Such composition is at first the literary text, and then a sequence of physical and vocal actions, a selection of the sign-actions resulting from the 'contemplation' of the text, repeated and consequently retained by the actor in a sort of 'body memory'. It is only once retained that such actions – like the words of a text – can be individually selected, edited and rearranged into a scenic composition, which in turn becomes repeatable.

[18] These are creative interpretations of Deleuze's philosophy of repetition, yet based on practical experience: they seem to explain many of the internal processes of the actor, both as I witnessed them and as the actors themselves attempted to describe them to me. It is true, for example, that an actor could learn a text by means of reflective memory, that is, memorising it with the help of her understanding and contextualisation of it; however, this potentially hinders her ability to draw anything new from it, unless some of this understanding be relinquished or deconstructed.

The process is summarised in the following diagram.

**Diagram 1: from text to performance (in a Theatre of Repetition)**




## 1.3.2: Concluding Argument

As a way of concluding, I propose that immanent performance depends on the actors' 'open attitude' and ability to react spontaneously to a set of stimuli. That these may derive from an outside is irrelevant, provided that such stimuli be 'passively reacted to' in the moment of encounter, which is the moment of repetition. Repetition is what allows the level of 'abandon' necessary for developing an open and contemplative attitude towards a known or given event; it does so by exploiting the creative powers of 'spontaneous imagination' once active reflection is bypassed.

Stimuli may be 'internal', as in the encounter with an idea, or 'external', as in the encounter with the world, or a text; either way they are internalised: nothing is really external, or we would not have perceived it. We learn from Freud, Derrida and Deleuze that what is internal was either already there – as a memory of prior perceptions marked at different depths in our psyche, some of which can be actively retrieved and represented – or it is a new inscription, a new external stimulus that is stored once encountered. Derrida seemed to suggest that the latter would also be an instance of representation, because for him to perceive is already to represent. However, my readings of Deleuze make me venture into the possibility that such inscription, whether new or old, is

primarily a simple repetition, an impression, that can only be apprehended as such through the senses, and potentially 'contemplated' without yet being understood or recognised; out of this contemplation, something new would emerge, thanks to our spontaneous imagination, which can *then* be reflected upon.

Perhaps it comes down to the same thing: call it repetition or representation, what is important is that it be 'passively reactive', spontaneous, involuntary: that it performs its effects without the direction of an authoritarian will, of an active-reflective ego. Perhaps what I previously renamed as 're-representation', with Derrida, is equivalent to Deleuze's notion of 'active memory'; but memory can be made to reappear without active reflection, as an 'involuntary memory' or 'reminiscence' (Deleuze 2014:111). Despite providing the impressions necessary for representation, the contraction of instances that ground memory can also be accessed involuntarily, directly and indistinctively from one another.

Thus, I am interested in a Theatre of Repetition because it helps me to understand life as the experience of difference in repetition; because repetition promises to be *'a condition of action before it is a concept of reflection'* (Deleuze 2014:117); because even devised or collectively created material is eventually repeated in performance; and because in pure improvisation there is always the risk of representing personal clichés and habits rather than the character's (precisely because the performer has nowhere else to solidly base her reactions, outside of herself, *and because* adequacy may require an active reflection difficult to run alongside the 'contemplation' of the present unfolding).

A Theatre of Repetition is a theatre of writing not only because it calls for the inscription of a literary text in the actor's body-mind, but because it calls for the inscription of speech and gesture too, through their repetition. It is a theatre of the free-play of signifiers, which are written because inscribed in the players, and thus they are retrievable, as one would retrieve a text by reading it, or a song by playing it, rather than by activating the memory of previous understandings of it. It is in this sense that a text is learnt 'by heart', rather than by reflective memory. The actors' 'readings' of their internal inscriptions, that is, the actors' 'reminiscing' of their 'involuntary memories', are simultaneously 'playings' that produce scenic compositions, hence 'scenic writings': the actors' dramaturgy. Such retrievals mimic reality in the sense that they *repeat* the process of perception, itself based on a sort of 'immanent writing'; thus they challenge logocentrism, or transcendental

signification: there seems to be no point at which one can draw a line (or curtain) to encircle (or stage) originality.

## An additional closing note:

Writing stands for any concrete and retrievable (repeatable) trace. We experience life through the traces it leaves in us. We live by retrieving life from its signifiers imprinted in us (in our conscious/unconscious). Life writes itself upon us and we live by the readings we make of it (and re-readings - always in different contexts). Our experience of life is therefore already the playing of an 'immanent text' (the play of its signifiers: the stage of writing): why should we not allow ourselves to live by other texts too (that is, by experiencing other texts other than those already in us)? We would do that anyway, because life forces itself upon us. The process ought to be essentially the same as that of any perception, only content is contingent. A Theatre of Repetition is a Theatre of Immanence in that it creates the circumstances of its existence in the reaction, in the moment and place of its manifestation, instead of listlessly identifying with supposed realities, either pre-existing or existing elsewhere.

# 2: Proposed Methodology

How can actors achieve this in practice: how can they retain the spontaneity of improvisation whilst repeating always the same signs, hence producing difference not as a designed will to novelty, but as the sprouting of a spontaneous reaction to the form itself? Initially, the signs are the words of the written text, then they become the resulting speech and physical acts, which together form the performance score.

I propose that the answer is a matter of exploring approaches to text that can facilitate spontaneous reactions, and of fixing those reactions into a score that could in turn be approached and reacted to spontaneously. It is also, partly, a matter of the text itself: the extent to which it enables new content to emerge in the reaction.

As this concrete acting problem is hereby formulated in theory, also the proposed solution has a dual formulation: a theoretical justification, and a practical implementation. The following sections outline how theory is translated into practice, thus connecting Chapter 1, defining the theoretical possibility, and significance, of drawing spontaneity, and difference, from repetition, with Chapter 3, describing the actual practice carried out. Analysis of relevant performance theory and practice also supports this bridging, in a manner that could be said to mirror the performance-making process proposed, whereby ideas trigger acts just as well as the other way around.

This methodology is experimental, since it calls for the development of practical applications of a new theatrical model reconciling immanence, spontaneity and repetition in the process of making performance based on a pre-written text. It is a practice-as-research methodology inspired by theoretical assumptions, which are in turn validated and clarified through practice, in a loop system of feedback and insights. In other words, theory and practice inform each other so that the research outcomes – intervening in conventional acting and writing methods – besides being directly applicable in performance, are also framed and grounded in theory. Theoretical knowledge, however, supplements and solidifies in the understanding a primarily ‘tacit’ form of knowledge, which can only be acquired (and transmitted) through practice (Barba 2000, Nelson 2013). This choice of methodology may well involve the encountering of century-old problems, such as the notorious actors’ search for ‘presence’ and ‘spontaneity’, however,

these are better understood once re-experienced in context, when their addressing requires adjustments to the evolving circumstances of modern life and thought.

## 2.1: Acting principles: approaching text as a score

Concerning approaches to text, I have already anticipated in theory how a method based on repetition can trigger spontaneity. However, as practice will show, repetition is multifaceted and cannot be taken for granted to produce spontaneous reactions: it requires specific training. As a result, the study's methodology had to incorporate elements of actor training, which are aimed at liberating the actor's responsiveness from conditioned reactions; I started by working on body and voice, and then engaged imagination as well.

If we accept that responsiveness is generally hindered by blocks and habits acquired through life, then the actor can start to experience repetition creatively only when s/he grows conscious of these conditionings, managing to partly remove them, becoming progressively more impulsive and aware of the reactions, thus also more expressive. In turn, the precision that repetition entails improves bodily and vocal plasticity, trains the actor to trust her body memory, whilst still 'minding' the repeated details, and consequently, allows her to react to them and all their possible variations. It is precisely this 'mindful abandon' – echoing Grotowski's notion of 'passive readiness' – that allows the actor to draw difference from repetition, to 'repeat creatively'.

Blocks and habits (or clichés) are the result of what Moreno called 'cultural conserves', and the capacity to govern them defines our ability to react spontaneously *and* creatively. By blocks I mean tensions or resistances that hamper the intended flow of an action; by habit and cliché, I mean an act performed either unconsciously or as an acquired mannerism: an act that, because of its recurring nature, has become automatic, and is therefore performed half-heartedly, without actual attendance or meaning. The problem with blocks is obvious; the problem with clichés is not in the act itself (its textuality, what it signifies), but in the way it is acted, carried out, performed (its texture, its plastic qualities). If repetition is an automatism, like a habit, its 'spontaneity' will be similar to that of machines, its texture inert. This study researches another type of spontaneity, one that is conscious and yet unaccountable, which makes one react to an act, even a recurrent one, as if it were a new one. It is the creative side of spontaneity, which springs from the

previous one, like fresh water from a well, at least as far as one can tell (or rather, as far as one is able to 'contemplate').

Unlike Moreno's spontaneous actor, who simply never repeats, in a Theatre of Repetition the spontaneous reaction can manifest in an original quality infusing the same act. In it improvisation does not imply the constant generation of new material; only at first improvisation is the source of the repeatable acts, then it becomes the source of the spontaneous reactions springing from repetition, and feeding back into it. In this model therefore, 'to act' spontaneously is 'to react' to a stimulus once encountered. The react(ion) is an action only if it manifests an intention, which must be spontaneous (i.e. not determined in advance). The stimulus is the composition: initially the written text, eventually the performance text, which is the fixed sequence of physical and vocal reactions to the former. In performance, the performance text becomes both the stimulus and the structure through which reactions are channelled.

In order to treat a dramatic text as a stimulus according to this scheme, I attempted to approach it first as a '*phonetic score*' for the vocal instrument, whereby words create patterns of sound that the actor plays with her voice. Unlike musical scores however, a text does not qualify most of its musical features, namely its tempo, pitch, volume and so on. Considering a text as a 'phonetic score' serves to foreground the phonetic aspect of the words composing it, their substantiality as sonic units, as source of potential vibrations and resonances, enabling the actor to approach them as a sequence of sensible stimuli to react to, rather than concepts or intentions to represent. The 'phonetic score' gives the actor something concrete to do, something rather technical to start with without prior reflection: a 'condition of action' in Deleuze's words. While repeating these verbal stimuli, the 'contemplative actor' effectively improvises performance material, both the outward vocal and physical acts (its musical features), and the inward psychophysical associations, which are the compounds of physical sensations, emotions and meanings providing a logic to the reactions. These in turn become performance material the moment the actor is able to compose them into a repeatable sequence.

Naturally, this first instance of repetition of the written text could already be the performance; however, experience has shown that to trust the 'stability' of meaningful impulsive reactions would have been premature at this stage of the training: I would most likely have faced problems similar to those experienced by Moreno in his Theatre of

Spontaneity. Furthermore, this model explores the iterability of scenic compositions, that is, the possibility of their being repeatedly read anew, quite like a text, which can be re-read without having to actively remember previous readings of it. For this, the scenic composition must be inscribed somewhere.

Before getting there, however, it is worth noting that concepts too are sensible stimuli; spontaneous psychophysical reactions can also be triggered by a silent read, for example, or even just thinking (i.e. Stanislavsky's 'affective memory'). It is therefore possible to approach words through a process of 'mental repetition', thus approaching the text rather conventionally as a '*conceptual score*', whose reading or recollecting, both repetitive acts, could trigger, again through an associative process, spontaneous physical and vocal reactions. However, because such repetition would play out at the verge of representation, it was, as a precaution, introduced only later in the exploratory process.

'Creative repetition' is only possible if the actor has trained the ability to react spontaneously *and* to pay attention to her re-actions *at the same time*, noticing them as they take their course, not initiating them with the help of active reflection. In this way, a sort of involuntary body-mind connection is established, an association, which provides an internal logic that the trained organism is able to recall spontaneously each time the same act is repeated. Once these physical and vocal re-actions are isolated and strung together in a repeatable sequence, they become the actor's scenic composition, or 'performance score', the result of the actor's immanent dramaturgical process. At this point, the actor trains to repeat the details of the performance score precisely and wholeheartedly, and eventually liberates herself to discovering ever-deeper associations in the performance of repetition.

Dramatic speech and gesture thus become *performative* speech and physical acts, because instead of expressing a predetermined action, they determine it in the moment of performance. To be performative, a repeated act must produce spontaneous associations, that is, achieve signification spontaneously. When the written composition is well crafted, spontaneous signification may accord with that of its author (namely when the reader's, actor's, or audience's signification match the author's), yet that is more epiphany than representation. An immanent scenic composition is therefore an interweaving of performative signs, or 'ideograms' (Grotowski 1975), which are acts that produce the action rather than expressing it. Their performance is no longer the representation of a

prior idea, but the manifestation of the immediate 'sign-action': if in representation the idea/intention, and the relative emotion, are expressed by the action according to an action-plan, in repetition the idea/intention emerges in the act, as reaction. In semiotic terms, only when the act and the idea are simultaneous is there full spontaneity: if the idea precedes the act, there is an element of representation, if the act does not trigger an idea, we experience empty form (as either readers, actors or audiences). Besides, this model considers affect alongside signification: the term 'association' therefore replaces that of 'concept' because it is not only the internal experience of meaning that is perceived, but a blend of emotion and physical sensation as well.

The study suggests that a combination of the two approaches above will allow the actor to repeat the text without predetermining its interpretation, developing the ability to react spontaneously to the syntax and the musicality of the words, alongside their meaning. These exercises in repetition, when carried out precisely by the trained 'contemplative' actor' and 'genuine repeater', facilitate the emergence of ideas, memories, fancies, feelings, emotions as spontaneous associations borne as immediate reactions. These associative reactions are the personal associations that justify the actions as they are performed and not before, thus transforming an otherwise hollow or artificial set of movements and vocalisations into specific dramatic actions, imbued with felt meaning. Thus rooted in their acts, these associations will spring forth again spontaneously each time the same act is repeated, hence the reason of their fixing into a scenic composition.

In order to enable this process, however, I propose a particular model of training through which the actor learns to approach both signifiers and signifieds simultaneously, namely the sounds and concepts in the case of a written text, or the vocal/physical acts and their associations in the case of a scenic composition. Such training is aimed at enabling the actor to enter a chain of spontaneous reactions through repetition in performance, when it should be irrelevant, if not impossible, to determine whether it is the inner concept/association that triggers its outer physical/vocalisation, or the other way around.[19]

Another assumption is that the more the details of the scenic composition, the more the performer will be able to abandon herself in their repetition and improvise. This

[19] This would be the 'third way' mentioned earlier, allowing the performer to feel the '*différance'*, which is – according to my reading of Derrida – the spatial-temporal gap of expression between the memory of the concept or act, and its performance (i.e. the dynamics of the impulse becoming both stimulus and reaction).

paradoxical condition of ‘creative repetition’ can only happen if each detail is executed extremely precisely and wholeheartedly, that is, when the performer enters a state of ‘flow’. The repetition of a composition is a mental, physical and vocal task; it can take the performer into a state of flow as long as its execution remains challenging but achievable (Csikszentmihalyi 2002). Therefore, the training should provide the performer with enough technique to enable her to refine the details at each repetition, and to remain stimulated by it. Then, with each repetition the actor digs deeper into herself and her spontaneous reactions, revealing new meanings and affective possibilities, inhabiting a fixed form with renewed life. In other words, psychophysical processes get channelled through the score, allowing with each repetition a deeper apprehension of its possibilities and of one’s relation to them.

Thus performance becomes the occasion for a confrontation with a particular set of stimuli, which are external, fixed and known in advance, namely the composition, which operates like a structure both setting repetition going and providing a channel for the expression of spontaneous reactions, dependant on the organic life processes of the performer, her colleagues onstage, and the audience; as if it were the repetitive acts themselves that summoned up some scenic life to grant meaning to their forms.

## 2.2: Writing principles: the characteristics of a written score

As I mentioned in the opening paragraph, the spontaneity of the reaction partly depends on the nature of the text itself, not just the way it is approached. This implies that some texts must be more suitable for ‘creative repetition’ than others, which conversely would be more likely to induce representation. After all, it is quite natural to assume that the quality of the stimulus will have a bearing on the quality of the response. My research therefore started with this dual assumption, and investigated several texts to extrapolate intrinsic qualities as parameters to bestow higher or lower degrees of ‘spontaneity potential’ to them. However, the focus then gradually shifted towards the exploration of ways of approaching text, and therefore to actor training and scenic composition. This shift was motivated by certain developments in the studio experiments, as well as by many of the considerations referred to so far. The former will be examined in Part Two. The

latter can be summarised as follows: a causal link cannot be established between a stimulus and a response.

As Deleuzian scholar Joe Hughes points out, according to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception – to whom Deleuze makes plenty of reference in *Difference and Repetition* – responses depend 'upon the overall context in which the stimulus appeared and [are] by no means specific to the stimulus itself' (Hughes 2009:112). The stimulus is rather like the posing of a vague problem to a particular sensibility, a problem which is addressed at first by the imagination:

> The sensible datum which is on the point of being felt sets a kind of muddled problem for my body to solve. I must find the *attitude* which will provide it with the means of becoming determinate (…) I must find the reply to a question which is *obscurely expressed* (Merleau-Ponty 2005:248-249, my italics).

If on the one hand, there cannot be general theories for the production of the right stimuli (i.e. texts) for a theatre of spontaneity, on the other, we see that the problem posed to perception must be 'obscurely expressed' *to or through* the senses, in order to remain within the mode of 'spontaneous imagination' (without crossing, that is, into 'active reflection'). Moreover, even without a theory of causality, one can still acknowledge ranges within which to operate – and to establish a range, a gap, a field of difference is precisely the function of the dichotomies that have been set up so far.

Therefore, I still hold it relevant to investigate intrinsic qualities of texts as stimuli, in terms of degrees of *ambiguity*, and without overlooking the fact that such stimuli, albeit obscure, must still pose a problem, and therefore must have a logic. I also acknowledge that even the most illustrative and meaningful of playtexts can still be *deconstructed* during the process of assimilation, as outlined in the previous chapter, to be perceived as a 'muddled' stimulus by the actors, an excitation or problem not yet defined.

In short, an attempt is made by this study to look through the lenses of spontaneity at composition in general: both the literary composition of the text and the scenic composition of its performance. Whilst recognising that spontaneity refers to a quality of the response, I look at what may influence it: a certain 'attitude' towards the stimulus (i.e. a certain approach to text) and the nature of the stimulus itself (i.e. the text). The first has already been presented at length; I shall now gradually introduce those qualities of the stimulus that the early phase of the research identified as relevant: qualities that

adequately obscure the text, thus making sure it 'poses a problem' (a creative problem) to the actors and the rest of the dramaturgical team.

In an essay of 2004, Małgorzata Sugiera introduced the feature of 'immanent theatricality' to qualify contemporary writing for performance: by relinquishing its 'formerly primary function of representing the speech of the stage characters', text becomes a 'proper substance' that 'attempts to stimulate particular perceptual and cognitive processes':

> Nowadays, the basic structural principle of texts written for theatre increasingly often turns out to be their immanent theatricality, which is (…) a means of inducing the audience to watch themselves as subjects which perceive, acquire knowledge and partly create the objects of their cognition. Therefore (…) the very object of the theatrical mimesis (…) is above all the cognitive processes of human consciousness and unconsciousness (Sugiera 2004:26).

It is by inducing the actors to mimic perception first that these texts ultimately induce the audience to do the same. A central point of Sugiera's seminal essay is that contemporary theatre tries 'to create an environment and circumstances in which the audience can gain an opportunity to undergo an experience that, although direct and purposely arranged, is nevertheless free from traditional fictionality; an experience of "the here and now"' (ibid. 21). The fictional conventions of representation, based on the 'as if' principle, relying on the generalised custom to suspend disbelief about the 'there and then' of the 'dramatic world' being actually present, are replaced by what she defines as 'theatre's *differentia specifica*', the immanent quality of the theatrical medium, the unquestionable present-ness of all its visible and invisible interactions.

The immanent theatricality of contemporary texts, this quality of embedding already in the writing the theatrical language of the stage, its dynamic sign-systems, its movements of perception, is also what playwright Julia Jarcho foregrounds in her *Writing and the Modern Stage. Theater beyond Drama* (2017), although from a different point of view, and in relation to works by Henry James, Gertrude Stein, Samuel Beckett, Suzan-Lori Parks and Mac Wellman. Jarcho stresses the notion of a 'negative theatrics' as being at play:

> these works posit, simulate, and situate themselves in moments of theatrical performance in order to discover the rifts and insufficiencies of those moments. They enact a heightened negativity: a specifically utopian response to the heightened actuality, or presentness, that has often seemed to distinguish performance from other kinds of art (Jarcho 2017:xiii).

According to Jarcho, if we keep on associating the 'dramatic' with a predominantly text-driven theatre, then the 'post-dramatic' will necessarily lean on the non-text-driven alternative; there is, she writes, a 'more fundamental critical impulse at work in the drive to move beyond drama: the desire to push against the experience of the present. For this negative project, writing isn't just something theater "uses"; it's something theater needs' (ibid. xiv). It is through writing that the theatre is able to perform a critique on the generalised search for presence in performance, for the experience of the here-and-now, that she associates with dramatic theatre. Such search is a doomed attempt, either because of 'the Derridean awareness that presence is always contaminated by the doublings of representation' or 'because the present is above all something to break out of. Theater can make this burden of actuality palpable. And in so doing, it can prompt the search for actuality's opposite: that which is not here or now, that which would be radically different' (Jarcho 2017:5-7). She develops her argument through Derrida:

> Writing "displaces the *proper place* of the [spoken] sentence, the unique time of the sentence pronounced hic et nunc …" (Grammatology 281). A theater that seeks to displace us from the site where we are, but *not toward a second, imitative present*, is neither a theater of presence nor a theater of representation. It might, however, be a theater of writing (Jarcho and Derrida as quoted in Jarcho 2017:8).

There is a parallel here with my investigating the interplay between text and performance, although Jarcho rewards writing not for its services to spontaneity, but for the ways in which it disrupts the experience of the present. Besides, I intend the written more broadly, as anything 'inscribed' (on paper and body-minds), and I follow Derrida on that too. Indeed, my aims seem opposite: through spontaneity, I wish to achieve *more presence* in performance, and it is by living performing arts thus that I escape the present-ness of everyday-life. Nonetheless, would not writing's 'negative theatricality' actually be what brings us to the same experience? Would not a writing that negates the present, by pointing at what is not present in performance, break through it, through the dramatic world and time, into a present awareness of the theatrical event? Would it not, by pointing at itself for example, through a certain writerly-ness of speech, make the act of writing present or, as Cathy Turner put it, 'get the "now" into the text' (Turner and Behrndt 2007:190)?

Jarcho seems aware of this prospect,[20] eventually claiming that her 'cases' wish to escape the present, rather than negate the concept of it, or deconstruct the dramatic illusion of it:

> the artists I examine are less concerned to discredit the concept of presence than to escape the experience of it. Still, their work (…) teaches us to value writing as disruptive of the present. In fact, Lehmann also notes that postdramatic theater continues a modernist valuation of "the written text as an interruption of the selfsufficient imagery of the stage" (146). Even more suggestively, he offers writing as an analogy for the entire theatrical event, arguing that the most highly "visual" postdramatic theater operates "like a text, a scenic poem" (94; cf. 61, 74, 85). These observations point us toward a theater whose relationship to writing is especially intimate, *because of the way writing complicates the actual* (Jarcho and Lehmann as quoted in Jarcho 2017:8).

I would endorse Lehmann's observations fully for a Theatre of Repetition, although the move is towards *abandon* rather than absence: towards a practice of yielding to the free-play of signifiers, for an absence of the will, of any authoritarian self, in view of an emergent spontaneity (tapped into via 'passive synthesis', or 'contemplation'). The writers examined in Jarcho's study, by problematising presence and representation in their texts, certainly pose those creative problems that this practice also needs. In fact, it has been through the readings of those and several other authors that I have identified certain principles as useful to facilitate spontaneous reactions in the actors.

The written text could also be regarded as a 'pretext', both because it is written before and because of its use as stimulus for spontaneous reactions, for an exploration of what may come out of its repetition. Attention needs therefore to be given not so much to the text's presumed content, but to the ways in which the text's content may emerge through its form, its 'proper substance'. To be a pretext for encountering form, and for improvisation, the text should therefore incorporate potential for action rather than indicate intent. It should balance sonic and conceptual qualities in ways that, instead of determining meanings and staging requirements, create an ambiguous yet coherent sequence of events, adopting a mix of devices, theatrical, rhythmic, linguistic, that inspire and defamiliarise, providing actors with different performing choices, requiring them and the audience to fill in the gaps. It is in these gaps, in the undecided mise-en-scène, in the unclear meaning, that new life may manifest and representation recede.

[20] By referring to Phelan (1993), Fuchs (1985), and Lehmann (2006) for example.

Thus, it is assumed that spontaneous life emerges through gaps of perception, which are spatial and temporal. In the 'scores' they are spatial, as they pertain to a fixed composition: the *difference* between signs, such as words for example. The gaps referred to in relation to repetition are instead temporal gaps, as they pertain to the *performance* of a composition: the *deferral* of meaning manifest between 'passive memory' and its expression. Although they coexist in any event (in *différance*), their distinction will soon be useful in discussing 'openness'.

Another clarification with regards to the 'phonetic score': it is 'phonetic' because in the creative practice of this study the focus is on speech lines. Of course, texts may include stage directions too, providing indications of scenery, music, mood, as well as *modes of* movement and speech, or their intention. These have been excluded precisely because they tend to provide indications of intent; however, I am fully aware that this is not always the case: in Beckett, for example, directions tend to indicate exactly what actors should do, but not the reasons why, thus leaving their interpretation open, thus they can still work on the actors purely as signifiers.

## 2.3: Openness, theatricality, performativity

'Openness', 'theatricality' and 'performativity' are the three suggested characteristics of a sign enabling spontaneity and immanence in performance. These are general principles, rather than rules, whose boundaries furthermore often overlap; they are ambiguous terms, which again provide gaps of investigation; they may apply to a variety of dramatic devices (specific technique used for dramatic effect, such as the 'Pinter pause', or 'Shakespeare's aside'), genres and styles that is possibly infinite, but that can still cohere into a unifying 'aesthetics of spontaneity'. As it is recognised that immanence and spontaneity are variously at play in all kinds of theatres, these principles allow the exploration of tendencies within ranges that can absorb such diversity, rather than the definition of strict rules that might result too specific (e.g. genre or style-specific). Also, principles have the power to inspire concrete applications, creative solutions on the part of the artists involved, appropriate to their particular contexts or aesthetics. I believe therefore that neither these principles nor the study's methodology actually define a particular style or genre; only perhaps a certain ethical 'attitude', resulting in an aesthetical 'feel', which

can adapt itself to different texts or contexts: my 'aesthetics of spontaneity' simply seeks to explore spontaneous and creative reactions, whatever their form may be, through artificial means (i.e. artistry). Style or genre will depend on the particular texts, the methods applied, and the personal reactions they produce.

I first identified these features in certain contemporary texts for performance, as they emerged particularly evidently through specific choices of form, although not necessarily for the same aims.[21] Later, I extended them onto the scene, that is, to speech and physical 'sign-acts'. In other words, although these principles should be valid for both written and scenic compositions, they are the outcome of the first analytical phase of the research on existing dramatic theory and practice.

The first principle, 'openness', refers to the degree of autonomy in the interpretation and usage of the text by a reader, which in this case will be the actors and the creative team (Umberto Eco wrote extensively on this subject in *The Role of the Reader*, 1984 and *The Open Work*, 1989). Yet, the notion of an 'open text' might not be sufficient to investigate spontaneity and immanence in performance, because an ambiguous or undetermined text can still be interpretatively blocked during rehearsals, and become pre-determined in view of the performance. The same would apply to any sign; only the class of 'readers' expands should the notion of 'text' be considered in the wider sense, as the fixed sequence of speech and physical acts.[22]

Here is where it is useful to distinguish between spatial and temporal gaps. The former are compositional gaps, they are intra-textual, as they refer to the fixed text, or score, as the final product (i.e. Moreno's 'cultural conserve'). Temporal gaps instead pertain to the dynamic performance of the text, hence – as we shall see – they could be called 'performative'. The problem is precisely how to make sure that the openness of the text is maintained also in its performance. On the one hand, as we have seen, that requires a certain approach to repetition; but are there other intrinsic qualities in the 'text', namely

[21] Besides works from the authors already mentioned, research engaged with scripts by Bertolt Brecht, Heiner Muller, Ewald Palmetshofer, Roland Schimmelpfennig, Dea Loher, Steven Berkoff, Caryl Churchill, Martin Crimp, Tim Crouch, Sarah Kane, Jon Fosse, Bernard-Marie Koltès, and others. As the nature of the study is practice-based, it would go beyond its scope to examine all of them in detail.

[22] Although the audience is acknowledged as having a play in the performance, regardless of whether it actively participates in it or not, the focus of the study is in the artistic processes of composition, and how they might affect 'reception' in a wider sense, namely 'perception'. We shall see in the next chapter, however, how spectators are nevertheless accounted for in the model.

literal or plastic qualities, that may contribute to maintain this openness throughout the process? 'Theatricality' and 'performativity' are the other two characteristics that, I propose, allow the performance of a text to remain open in performance. They are coherently ambiguous terms, just as an open text is, and strictly related to each other, just as the terms theatre and performance are.

'Theatricality' refers to the capacity of a text to exploit the liveliness and materiality of the performance situation, where each object, sound or being is – for the simple fact of being on stage – a sign subject to interpretation, and even replacement by another. Certain theatrical signs in fact, may not have a coded meaning, or may be used onstage in a way that dissociates them from the meanings conventionally attributed to them, their signification 'floating' as a result:

> theatre involves the 'doubling up' of the culture in which it is played: the signs engendered by theatre denote the signs produced by the corresponding cultural systems. Theatrical signs are therefore always *signs of signs* (…) theatricality may be defined as a particular mode of using signs or as a particular kind of semiotic process in which particular signs (human beings and objects of their environment) are employed as signs of signs – by their producers, or their recipients. Thus a shift of the dominance within the semiotic functions determines when theatricality appears. (…) Moreover, since this shift of the dominant is not an objective given but depends on certain pragmatic conditions, 'theatricality' in the end, appears to be no more than a *floating signifier* in an endless communication process (Fischer-Lichte 1995a:88, my italics).

But theatricality also refers to a certain awareness performers and audiences have of this process of reality construction and of themselves actively involved in it, as if what is presented onstage were not the fictional world as such, but the collective activity of creating and perceiving it, which takes us back to both Sugiera's notion of 'immanent theatricality', and Jarcho's 'negative theatrics'. The creator – particularly the writer, but also the actor – can therefore find ways to incorporate these instances in the 'text', consciously writing signs of signs, anticipating the materiality of 'stage business' whilst acknowledging actualities that are not of the performance event yet, so that the latter is called to uphold the contingencies of stage life, remaining vulnerable to difference.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly for the purposes of this study, 'performativity' refers to the capacity of a text/score to trigger supplementing creative reactions (vocal, physical, mental and emotional), to actors and spectators, as interactions potentially deviating from aprioristic linguistic conditions. It is the power of a text, or a sign in

general, to act. It refers to its *capacity to do* rather than mean. How can a text do? J.L. Austin and speech-act theorists believed that only certain speech-acts can do, bring about acts or facts, whilst other merely ascertain or describe them; the former are performative provided there is a stable pre-existing identity speaking, and intending to have an intention, that is, intending to do something specific with that speech (Austin 1962). In my theatrical experience, however, I have found that reporting or describing an event or situation on stage can be just as performative as its actual enactment in speech by the adequate speaker/character: narration in drama is no simple 'constatation', it conjures up events, characters, situations.[23] Furthermore, the presumed requirement of stable identities and intentions has also been challenged; in an exposition of Derrida's critique of Austin's theory, J. Hillis Miller writes that:

> The performative is seen as a response made to a demand made on me by the wholly other, a response that, far from depending on preexisting rules or laws, on a preexisting ego, I, or self, or on pre-existing circumstances or "context," creates the self, the context, and new rules or laws (Hillis Miller 2007:231).

Which I take to mean an impulsive and spontaneous reaction to speech, bringing subject and context into being. Some kind of affirmative, generous yet sovereign response *determining* identities, context and their rules of engagement. Derrida considers 'iterability' the fundamental feature of performativity: the capacity of the same speech-act to perform in whatever context, with whatever intention and through whatever subject it is uttered, and to perform differently. So that the reality is necessarily created in the reaction to the speech act, and is no longer represented by it. This also brings into play the physicality of words in the voice (their sound, rhythm, pitch and so on) and through the voice, their affective power on the bodies of both speaker-actor and listener-audience as well as other actors on stage. It is as if the semantic process of making meaning were subjected to a prior process of apprehension through the senses. In other words, when the object of cognition, the fixed and repeatable text, is not entirely recognisable in the fleeting moment of perception, such as the moment of *reading* or *passive recollection*, it can only be sensed. Reading a memorised text may provide more freedom than speaking

[23] Although these instances do not enter Austin's theory – because acting is considered a case of language 'used not seriously, but in ways parasitic upon its normal use–ways which fall under the doctrine of the *etiolations* of language. All this we are excluding from consideration' (Austin 1962:22) – it seemed to me like a useful experiment to include them, thus 'manipulating' Austin's theory to test whether the same distinction constitutive/performative would hold in a theatrical 'parasitic' context (arguably the natural site of performance and the performative); this of course was driven by my personal opinion that theatrical language may at times be more, not less, serious than the 'normal language' used in daily life.

out of memory, if the latter is not a passive recollection; such is the freedom one seeks in repetition. Hence, the aim of a performative text would be to enable the performer to react to the sensations that reading or speaking can trigger, and such triggers would be embedded in the text.[24]

It is also useful to consider performativity as exceeding theatricality, as Richard Schechner seems to suggest through the 'magnitudes of performance' outlined in his *Performance Theory* (Schechner 1988:273); while performativity engages both conscious and unconscious processes, theatricality only deals with conscious, and thus repeatable, units of behaviour. The performative can therefore be considered as the real in the theatrical: *the being* hidden within the folds of a play-act, of role-play, of theatrical signification, where signs are always signs of other signs. Performativity may be that which marks the emergence of presence from within the folds of representation.

To conclude, if we consider immanent performance as a self-organised and spontaneously created living reality, then the text's 'openness' contributes to it by allowing the initial creative engagement of the actors as collective authors of the performance material, inspired by the ambiguities in the text; the text's 'theatricality' contributes by allowing them to exploit the materiality of the stage and the liveliness of the performance situation, both acknowledged as such or permitted to be acknowledged as such by a text that problematizes the representation of another dramatic situation (i.e. problematizes fiction); the text's 'performativity' contributes whenever text instigates the imagination to *produce* signification at each repetition (i.e. at each performance), through supplementing, associative, creative acts, manifesting in ever differing physical and vocal actions. These creative actions, resulting from improvised reactions to the text and the circumstances around its performance, contribute to the definition of new fictional words and realities, conjure up unacquainted beings, invisible objects, unpredicted emotional states and meanings. The creation of the performance's dramaturgy in the moment of performance, that is, through the mere repetition of the text (understood in the wider sense as both scripted and scenic) without premeditation, is what may allow text-based theatre (commonly understood as scripted) to bypass representation and approach immanence.

[24] For a wider theorisation on performative writing see *The Ends of Performance* (Phelan and Lane eds. 1998).

## 2.4: Practice as Research: experiments in 'dramaturgy'

The research is practical because it aims at applying and testing the original theories set out so far, and at forming the basis for a practical manifesto for a Theatre of Repetition. The thesis provides a detailed account of the *process* leading to that outcome (which is often omitted from practice handbooks), hoping this way to share a glimpse of that 'tacit', embodied form of knowledge mentioned in the introduction to this chapter.

Activities comprised an individual practice of writing for performance, and a collective performance practice, the acting research workshops, which I facilitated. A first doubt arose as to whether a directorial practice should be included in the investigation too, to account for my role in the workshops. Directing from the outside, that is, directing as a function specifically attributed, almost 'authorially', to a person not part of the acting ensemble, has become an established practice only recently, little more than a century ago. Theatre had gone on without directors for several centuries previously, and is nowadays also being quite pragmatic about their role. Of course, theatre could do without writers too, but since the interplay between acting and the pre-written text is what is being studied, writing necessarily insinuates the research. And whilst acknowledging that theatre just cannot do without actors, one cannot conceive of it without spectators either. And with this last consideration a second doubt arose as to whether (and how) to include the audience too in the study. Knowing that I could not eliminate myself as the investigator of the research (which could not investigate itself), and that therefore I remained its director, it was a matter of removing the transcendental, representative, authorial forces of my role, and to replace them with more 'passive' forces, somewhat akin to those at play when spectating.

The resolution of this methodological dilemma was to be found in the notion of 'dramaturgy', meant as 'the theory and practice of dramatic composition' (Oxford English Dictionary), and in a particular perspective on 'immanence', which in performance could be defined as 'self-composition'. An immanent dramaturgy would therefore be a particular mode of performance composition: *spontaneous and shared* among all those involved in it. As such the notion of 'dramaturgy' would replace, encompass and redistribute that of 'directing', but also that of writing, acting and ultimately spectating.

As theory, dramaturgy is the logic behind the composition of both text and performance – the logic of spontaneity in this case. It manifests as practice in two experiments in dramaturgy: an individual practice of creative writing, involving the composition of a dramatic text titled *Love and Repetition*, and a collective practice of performance composition, based on text, and involving the facilitation of acting research workshops. The premise was that through this parallel exploration, the conditions for a spontaneous interplay between text and performance could be revealed, and that, by adjusting the modes of my engagement in the process, all its 'parts' would be eventually accounted for.

Those initial dilemmas led me to refine the principles of a model of immanent composition, and of my own role within it, towards the correct framing of the research experiments. As I combined the part of investigator, writer and facilitator of a collective practice (the acting workshops), all respective duties could be abridged into one function, that of the 'dramaturg' of the research, which I shared with the participants. Such communal approach must allow the actors to take active part in the dramaturgical process, to stay immanent to it, in a sense, along with me, hence to reflect upon it more critically too, thanks to a 'seesaw' dynamic whereby all, at different times and in different ways, direct, perform and spectate, according to the demands of 'the work'. If immanent theatrical performance is a process of collective composition, its conditions could be partially simulated within a laboratory setting, to which me and the participants would contribute with acts of writing, directing, acting and spectating.

Properly as a 'dramaturg', I therefore engaged in all these aspects of composition; in particular during the workshops, I operated somewhere in between acting and spectating, simulating bridging the fundamental gap of performance, facilitating the work of the actors by responding to it as spectator, hence quite passively and subjectively, but also as a participant who can intervene if and when required, in ways that support and affirm the actor's material, and do not interfere with its underlying logic (e.g. by understanding the problematics involved, and intervening through stimulating, creative tasks rather than directions aimed at previously planned results). Participants too were engaged in all of these aspects of composition: as observers of the work of others, and as directors of their own re/actions, eventually co-writers of the shared 'performance text'. An external audience was also involved, at a particular point of the research process, in an open discussion following two public work demonstrations. The audience was formed of

fellow theatre academics and practitioners (lecturers – among whom my supervisors, actors, directors), academics from other disciplines, and members of the general public. The insider perspective, balanced with an external critical eye – informed by my own observations, the participants' and all those who witnessed the work – also allowed me to maintain the role of investigator, ensuring that the research activities remained coherent with the principles of immanence and spontaneity.

A brief excursus on dramaturgy as a practice could be useful to clarify this approach. The logic supporting the structure of a theatrical performance, what has just been defined as dramaturgy, had conventionally been located, until recently, within the written text, or rather its narrative aspects. This was particularly true in the UK, where the term was basically synonymous with 'literary management'. In the last decade or so however, this practice has considerably evolved; nowadays dramaturgy is recognised as engaging much more in the actual process of performance-making, inspired by continental practices, evolving since the 18th century, particularly in Germany, from Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (his *Hamburg Dramaturgy* was written between 1767 and 1769), through Bertolt Brecht, to more recent innovations. Dramaturgy is now generally accepted as a manifold practice, relevant for all types of theatre, whether text-based or not, to the point of being explicitly applied also in dance and other performative contexts (Turner and Behrndt 2007; Trencsényi and Cochrane 2014; Trencsényi 2015; Romanska ed. 2016).

The term dramaturgy is therefore not limited to the literary; it refers to text in the sense of 'textuality', that is, to the interweaving of various elements into a cohesive whole. Director Eugenio Barba clarifies the relation between dramaturgy and text thus:

> The word 'text', before referring to a written or spoken, printed or manuscript text, meant 'a weaving together'. In this sense, there is no performance without 'text'. That which concerns the 'text' (the weave) of the performance can be defined as 'dramaturgy' – that is, drama-ergon, work, the 'work of the actions' in the performance (Barba 1985:75).

The study's aim is to find ways that allow the structure and significance of the performance to emerge spontaneously from the collective work of the performers based on a pre-written text. One level of dramaturgy is therefore literary, namely the level of organisation of the written text. Another level is what can be defined, after Barba, the 'dramaturgy of the actor', to refer to the level of organisation (and signification) of the actors' physical and vocal actions in reaction to the text. These two levels weave together

with several others (i.e. that of the director or dramaturg, if there be one, functioning – as in my case – as 'external eye' inside of the rehearsal room, and the scenographic levels involving set, properties, costumes, lighting, sound and music) towards an overall composition, the 'dramaturgy of the performance', which involves the final weaving work of the audience as well.

Dramaturgy therefore refers to a multi-layered, multi-phased structur*ing*, to an internal logic that is dynamic, that may or may not be explicit: as we have learned with Derrida in fact, even when there is an explicit aim attached to a sign, and even when that is a word, such intentionality may be overwritten by the sign's iterability. What is important is that such iterability is allowed to operate, through the free play of signs as signifiers. For the purposes of this study we mean by text precisely a composition of signs: anything fixed so it can be approached as a signifier, so it can be repeated. This includes speech-acts as well as physical-acts, because acting is one of the modes of writing onstage, of impressing repeatable signs on the scene. In this context, 'text' or 'score' or 'composition' are therefore interchangeable terms, and the principles of openness, theatricality and performativity should ideally apply to all of them, that is, to signs in general, and not just literary ones (i.e. graphemes).

To conclude, although dramaturgy is an innate function of the theatre, it may not have a dedicated person accomplishing it: all productions have a dramaturgy, but not necessarily a dramaturg. This is a useful paradigm to validate our aims: by considering dramaturgy as 'the theory and practice of dramatic composition' (Oxford English Dictionary), the subjectivity of who actually does the composing is quite malleable and no longer that interesting to define. Indeed, according to both Derrida and the principle of immanence, this role would be diffused among everyone involved, audience included, and if there is a person specifically in charge of it, that is only to ensure this commonality: 'classical thought concerning structure could say that the center is, paradoxically, *within* the structure and *outside* it' (Derrida 2001:352, italics in the original), or rather 'that the center would not be thought in the form of a being-present, that the center had no natural locus, that it was not a fixed locus but a *function*' (ibid. my italics).

# Part Two_the practice

Dance first. Think later. It's the natural order.

(Samuel Beckett)

# 3: Creative Practice

In this unfolding model, aimed to be applied to text-based performance, the text is the first set of stimuli that the actors react to, the starting point of their compositional process: it is a pretext, meaning both a given and a vehicle for an encounter with personal associations – a vehicle, that is, among other possible ones (e.g. images, music, themes and so on). As discussed in Chapter 1, the porosity of being allows us to disregard the fact that as a given, the written material is external to the process of performance, but not the fact that it must be internalised. A renewed understanding of the concept of mimesis may follow from this, one more linked to a process of revelation than representation: revelation of both the text and the subjects engaged in its performance.

However, before addressing the question: 'what does it mean, in practice, to improvise whilst knowing the lines, to repeat them spontaneously, to reveal and not represent?' I ask: 'can one determine a text for performance without determining its performance, or in other words, can a text be designed as a form without content, or rather, as a form that triggers its content in the contingency of each performance, regardless of aprioristic readings of it?' A vision of Derrida seems to murmur: 'a text always already does that!', and yet, centuries of performance practice, based on the principle of fidelity to the dramatic text and the author's intention, justify a more dedicated engagement with his notion of iterability – a notion as nice to define as it is hard to practice.

# 3.1: Practice part 1 – writing the text

> The author's text is a sort of scalpel enabling us to open ourselves, to transcend ourselves, to find what is hidden within us.
>
> (Grotowski 1975: 57)

A different, perhaps deeper kind of knowledge grows out of the blending of experience and reflection, practice and theory, as if theory remained only potential unless it went through some sort of performance, like a processing machine whose output is just as critical. Thus, to understand what it means to consciously write texts that are iterable, that maintain their openness in performance, I decided not to collate and analyse pertinent criticism, or to review a variety of samples from existing dramatic literature, but to attempt to produce one of my own. It could be argued that a theory of immanence, both for performance and for writing, could only derive from an involvement in the process of making, since immanence, as we have seen, deals precisely with that. Furthermore, case-study criticism seemed to me to entail a degree of arbitrariness: how many existing texts would be enough to collect as a solid sample? From what periods or styles? How many different actors should I test the same texts with? And perhaps most importantly, would this not bring about a classification, reproducing the processes of representation it wishes to problematise? Existing inspirational theory and practice has nonetheless provided a solid critical background.

As anticipated, what documents this process of creative writing is primarily the outcome of it: a dramatic text titled *Love and Repetition*, attached in Appendix. It is a play for three actors, referred to as 'speakers', a male and two females. The scene is set in 'a mental setting' and the only other stage directions are quoted below; the text is otherwise composed entirely of lines of speech:

> **Excerpt 1: stage directions from the title page of *Love and Repetition*** (Appendix 1)
>
> The lines of speech are not allocated. The choice of who should speak which line can be fixed in rehearsal, or left undetermined before each performance; either way, actors may need to memorise the whole text.
>
> Dashes (–) ahead of each paragraph indicate the individual lines and therefore a change of speaker; when placed within a line, they indicate rhythmical

> discontinuities, or phonetic stresses. Forward slashes (/) indicate the point of overlap with the following line/s of speech. Anything in *italics* is a quotation, either real or imaginary, which may be amplified. Anything within [square brackets] is either a whisper, or an option.
>
> In places, the syntax is broken, and the punctuation lacking, erratic or ambiguous: this is to be considered intentional. The dramaturgical interpretation and staging of the text are left at the user's artistic discretion, or intuition.

To document the actual process of its composition would have gone beyond the scope of this study; what follows in alternative is a critical analysis of the process in hindsight, against the notions of spontaneity and immanence. The resulting written composition is briefly further assessed in section 3.1.2, against the principles of openness, theatricality and performativity. To be sure, the type of writing for performance explored here is that quite conventional, individual and independent creative activity predating rehearsals; it should not therefore be confused with, nor limited to practices of collective writing, writing from improvisations, task writing and so on.

## 3.1.1: The writing method

How did I attempt to bypass the representation of my thoughts whilst writing them down? How did I resist the lure of writing an intentional plan of action (for the actors)? Was it a successful attempt? Was it even necessary? I shall try to answer these questions through a critical analysis of an exemplifying section of the written text, and allow the reader to respond freely to the rest.

In order to write a text that could work on the actor's spontaneity, I was led by the general idea that it had to be as much evocative and as little representative as possible. I therefore attempted to imitate in writing the process of spontaneous reactions described earlier, and to apply it to my associations, improvising a written reaction out of them. I would then look at the reactions written down, and edit them into a dramaturgically cohesive montage, again led by the new associations emerging in the reviewing process. Underlying this method was a conscious effort – inspired by readings of Gertrude Stein – to use words 'for their power to suggest an object through a set of relations' (Bean 2007:185), rather than for their power to describe. The evoked 'object' could thus be

different for different people, or unintentionally assume new nuances each time it would be experienced again by the same person, in reading or performance.

Unlike free or automatic writing, it remained a conscious process: it does not necessarily involve the fast writing down of anything that comes to mind, nor does it suggest a writing that the fingers may perform autonomously without dictation by discursive thought, as sometimes implied by such practices; it does however tend to involve *continuity* of expression, manifesting in flows of uninterrupted writing. We shall encounter continuity again in the next chapter where, discussing improvisation in acting, it will be presented as a principle underlying spontaneity. Out of such stream of writing, something unconscious may arise to consciousness, facilitated by continuous attention, as meaning in disguise, or in shades, just like an improvisation, whereby actions may appear 'in a flow', facilitating the actor's creativity precisely because of that 'controlled abandonment' to repetition described in theory in the previous part. What in writing may be repeated are the sound-images of thought, that is, words as they spring up mentally as signifiers, appearing indeed in relation to one another, even triggered by each other in an associative chain, but not yet organised into a discourse, or as the unfolding of a premeditated plan. An eventual discourse may be noticed associatively, *almost* retrospectively, as it arises and unfolds in the process of improvised writing, and later, in the process of reviewing the improvised writing.

My process of composition could therefore be described as a 'stream-of-consciousness' in the attempt to achieve the expression of a contemplative, 'passive syntheses' of the imagination, through words akin to 'natural signs', in the sense described earlier with Deleuze. Stein's writing method provides again a reference point, as it seems to proceed along similar lines:

> Her compositional device became the continuous, moment-to-moment progression of her thinking process as she concentrated on present, concrete actualities. Using introspection as her means, the data of consciousness and its present moment as her content and the prolonged or "continuous present" as her structural device, Stein concretized [William] James' concept of "stream-of-consciousness" (Davy in Foreman 1976: x).

The 'getting [of] the now into the text' (Tuner and Behrndt 2007:194) through an act of writing that is itself the direct manifestation of continuous present, is therefore the key methodology of this creative practice, in attempted application of the principle of

immanence. Its consequence may well be the '*making [of] the act of writing present*, implicitly or explicitly' (ibid. 195), and thus – if by writing we mean composition – the facilitation of an emerging dramaturgy in performance.

**Excerpt 2: line of speech in Scene 2 of *Love and Repetition*** (Appendix 1)

- The way she clenches the knife

  The knife that he dropped

  The knife that inadvertently that inadvertently was tossed was and ended up must have ended up inadvertently ended up underneath their bed

  She steps back

  The way she stares at them.

  How would that make you feel

In the above excerpt, for example, what may literally describe a scene of domestic violence could also sketch, at a more associative or figurative level, a portrait of betrayal. This was the fuzzy image-idea that I attempted to react to in writing, by juxtaposing different yet simultaneously recalled psychophysical states, such as pain, clumsiness, tainted intimacy and guilt, with spontaneous associations consisting of concrete images of objects (a knife and a bed) and actions involving these (the way she clenches the knife, which he previously dropped and inadvertently tossed underneath their bed, her stepping away from the bed, her staring at them). The overall image is linguistic; it is verbally composed and may not be necessarily acted out. It is iterable: what is given is partial and provides an ambiguous context, an atmosphere perhaps with a few referents, whose relation is diffused, out of which more specific contours may emerge only through the engagement of one's own creative imagination (the reader's, the actor's, the audience's).

The same extract may also be useful to exemplify a way to resist writing character's intentions – conventionally a fundamental device of the dramatist – and still create material with dramatic potential. Overall, intentions are either ambiguous or altogether replaced by other stimuli for action, embedded within the text.

Firstly, intentions are 'moderated' by the obscurity surrounding the speaker, the addressee and the context of utterance. Individual lines are demarcated throughout the playtext, but they are not specifically allocated to any one character; in fact, instead of characters the

play only provides indication of speakers: a male and two females. With regards to the speech in Excerpt 2, without a given character, there is no given intention either, and meaning depends on some form of insight into who may actually say the line, who or what it may refer to, and who it may address, other than how (we shall see how that insight, on the part of the actor, may be embedded within a repeatable act). This device of not allocating lines, thus averting character identity, is only an example, an experiment, which is not unique nor necessarily original.[25]

The representation of intentionality can also be displaced through narration: as the narrative act intervenes in what is being narrated, and the narrator's intention overlays that of the character spoken of, it can remain undetermined whether the speaker *is* that character, and even whether he or she is actually a character at all. This device is nothing other than an evolution of Brecht's 'alienation effect': 'the actor speaks his part not as if he were improvising it himself but *like a quotation*' (Brecht 1978:138, my italics). Brecht suggested three ways to train this effect during rehearsals:

1. Transposition [of the line] into the third person.
2. Transposition into the past.
3. Speaking the stage directions out loud. (ibid.)

Inspired by contemporary writers,[26] I attempted to embed these aids already within the text, taking the above 'Brecht's recommendations for actors literally' (Haas 2003:156), making use of the resulting estrangement effect minus its political aims. Incidentally, if the actual line is already a narration of action and not the mimesis of dialogue, this device can also work in first person present tense, thus turning actors and characters into 'narrators of their own story in the play', which unfolds as they narrate it, ultimately constructing 'stage reality through language' (Turner and Behrndt 2007:191).

Besides adopting these devices, I have granted ambiguity to the actual story as well as to its characters and the speaking subjects, and explored ways to make the lines themselves convey/produce states or actions, rather than represent them, or simply cite them. I refer essentially to performative ways of using words for their material qualities along with their meaning, approaching syntax rhythmically, exploiting repetition, assonance, alliteration, onomatopoeia and so on. In Excerpt 2 for example, the intermittence in the

[25] See for example Martin Crimp in *Attempts on Her Life* (2007)
[26] Particularly Roland Shimmelpfennig's *Arabian Night* (2002).

syntax of the central part of the line (i.e. 'The knife that inadvertedly…'), manifesting its attempt to reach a point of completion, may convey a sense of agitation or embarrassment in the speaker, or in the other performers onstage, which in turn may suggest some correlated action to a spectator, for example a clumsy attempt to hide or justify evidence. The line, in short, should produce an action rather than induce the representation of it.

Borrowing Heidi R. Bean's words again examining the work of Gertrude Stein, I also think of 'identity as event rather than categorical declaration' (Bean 2007:170), and locate 'the action of theatre in the liveliness of non-narrative, multivocal, exuberant language *sounded* in performance and presented in interaction with the physical bodies that are doing the sounding' (ibid. 172), rather than in its story, plot or characters. These are replaced by 'acts of composition', speech-acts 'that attempt to render direct experience rather than mere description' (ibid. 173): the direct experience of composition, rather than the representation of the product of it. A tentatively narrative act, embedded in the writing, may for example produce the actual experience of tentative acts of composition in performance, which despite providing clues, resist the definition of stable identities, which are hard to represent as a result:

**Excerpt 3: speech exchange from Scene 1 of *Love and Repetition*** (Appendix 1)

- This is English right this is likely to be England okay or Europe alright which is different or Britain which is Great- again or America which is: awesome. Or anywhere really
- There's a table, a counter, a country road, perhaps a few chairs… or carriage seats… or a bench or a bike or a bed. And other objects… perhaps. I don't know.
- So I'm not sure
- All this anticipation
- I'm getting mixed up

Gilles Deleuze, in his critique of the work of Carmelo Bene, seems to be articulating a similar discourse to the one accompanying Stein's work, although in different terms: 'the subtraction of the stable elements of Power gives the theatre a new potentiality, an always unstable non-representative force' (Deleuze in Bene and Deleuze 2002:92, my translation). His is a call for the elimination of whatever 'makes power', namely, the

power of whatever theatre represents, the power of representation itself. What 'makes power' are the stable elements of theatre, all its givens: story, text (to be represented), dialogue, character, action and so on, all of which call for their representation. They must be 'withdrawn' or 'amputated' first, and then placed in a 'process of continuous variation' to keep them from fixing, to maintain the possibility of difference among unstable identities, ultimately 'transposing everything in *minor*'. If the major is the models, the majoritarian conventions, all the represented samples (of power), the minor will be each deviation from these norms. And yet this will not suffice; the process of 'minorization' must be continuous, it is precisely a '*becoming* minor' in Deleuze's words. Variation, in order not to turn itself into a sample, must keep on variating, and 'actually follow new and always unexpected paths' (ibid. 113, my translation). Minority is therefore both a factual status, and a *becoming* to which to commit: an open, ever-emerging dramaturgy. Deleuze asks: 'isn't continuous variation the becoming minor of each one, in opposition to the majoritarian given of No-one?' (ibid. 112). The compromise that representation offers will always miss the individual contribution, and the stronger the 'elements of Power' in the written text, the stronger must be the revolution in performance. Thus, a minor Theatre of Repetition will be drawn towards the staging of texts with fewer elements of power in them, or in any case, towards their overturning in performance.

These were some of the means and incentives through which I resisted the lure of planning ahead. They will have been successful to the extent in which they will find widespread correspondence in the actual text, as well as in the performance of it. To ask whether they were necessary was rather rhetorical: like all art, these means were meant as a way of researching what was not quite known yet, or well understood, in which sense they proved critical.

### 3.1.2: Additional notes on openness, theatricality, performativity

The first identified principle of 'openness' refers to the degree of autonomy in the interpretation and usage of the text by a reader. One of the devices adopted to maintain openness throughout *Love and Repetition* is the disuse of stage directions, or their embedding within the lines of speech, which in turn are not allocated to any one character. Because the performers are requested to master the whole text, as if it were a single piece of narrative, it is harder for them to predetermine intention and characterization. In

performance, this may imply a narrative mode of delivery overlapping with the more conventional mimetic mode of the theatre. Furthermore, the shifts between narration, internal commentary and direct or reported speech are not clearly demarcated, with the result that the performer seems to be running after thoughts by voicing them out. Also, the lines' syntax is broken, and there's a strange punctuation. Finally, there is a certain ambiguity around the context of the scene, its location, the actual events happening, and most of all, the subjects of the drama's relationships to the speakers. These aspects call for the performers' own creative choices.

**Excerpt 4: speech exchange from Scene 6 of *Love and Repetition*** (Appendix 1)

- She's beautiful… she's… just unique. And elegant. I bet she's French. She's oh look not too tall not at all and yes, look, I knew it! No doubt about it! - glancing at the book on her lap. And those legs, ah those smooth shifty legs. A model! Might be, and that face, no… that's too rude… visage, ce visage! Buried underneath those capricious stylish hair… shading that brow thou brow thou cheeks thou lips where shall I… there's a seat there and there and there's one here… not too brash… could have- sat there… but you know… still makes sense… I'm not looking for… yet if it comes…. not many seats available not so many anyway… I'm not desperate… I'm reading Racine…

  That's when the corner of his eyes sense the corner of her eyes the gentle movement of her hand long thin fingers through her hair… disclose her profile... the sweet spike of her nose falling softly… the shaded groove the upper border of her lip... what would I do what would I to climb up there… I give up! Oh yet if I were a minuscule… an invisible… mouth… a spy... there's a secret… I need to whisper… not to her ear no… oh I'm in pain! In short: her profile: a revel.
- "Oh look it's a play" glancing at the book on his lap
- It's Racine
- But could be anything. Yet that has an effect.
- Talk to her! No! Come on! I'm shy! You're a shame! She'll just laugh at me! I don't want to hear you complain anymore! loser! you deserve it! peeping tom! Shame on you!
- And she might be thinking perhaps she's thinking:

- Lift up your head come on look at me.
- He could try with a smile.
- I smile
- She's smiled
- *What are you reading?*
- He shows her the book he's reading:
- Do you know it
- *Yes*
- Are you French?
- *Yes*

  *Are you an actor?*
- Oh no. I just I like…
- *Are you a man of the theatre? A writer?*
- Ehm Yes actually kind of
- *You look like one*

  -
- Ehm I'm sorry… it's my stop
- He stands up

  Gets off

  Shakes his head

  Stands motionless

  Stares at the train that's leaving the platform

  -

  Then stares at another

  -

  And another

  -
- It wasn't even the thought of his girlfriend that stopped him

I should clarify that openness does not necessarily refer to the events in the fictional drama, but to the formal choices of presenting them, out of which different shades of meaning would be cast. For example: to show an action or to tell it; to act it mimetically, expressively, or in a presentational style; to tell it with or without an attitude, and what attitude; to be the speaker, or the person spoken of, or both, or neither; to be the character,

or a thought, or a disembodied voice; to speak to oneself, to another, to the audience, or into a microphone, and so on.

Openness refers to the extent to which the performance can be composed by the actors' personal associations and resulting scenic choices, and the extent to which these afford more compositional choices to the audience. Therefore, regarding the uncertainty of the subject, this does not manifest necessarily in the fictional characters, but in the relationship between the speakers and the characters, which is actually witnessed on stage. Who are these three people? Are they the character/s, or are they only referring to them, or a 'he'? Are they manifestations of something else? An attempt to safeguard this ambiguity was made also through shifts of narrative voice, between first/third person and present/past tenses. These implicate differences of experience between, for example, thinking, talking, and listening, doing so loudly or silently to oneself, alone or with another, or simply whilst thinking about another, again alone or with another, or only imagining speaking or listening, and actually doing so. As outlined in subchapter 2.3 however, these gaps may still be closed in rehearsal; some other feature might therefore be required for the performance of the text to 'enforce its openness' to new and emerging dramaturgies.

How is 'theatricality' embedded within the text? The mix of stream-of-consciousness and narration allows performance to open the fictional reality referred by the text to include the here and now of the performance event, therefore the audience as well (whether it being directly addressed or not); at the same time, the actor can still engage with the fictional reality in first person, instead of referring to it in a purely narrative mode. Situations are imagined and perceived by both the performers and the audience: performance becomes again the site of an acknowledged narrative act, rather than the unfolding of a narrative within framing conventions suspending disbelief. Just like in storytelling, the material context of the scene is evoked through performance and physicality, without the need for a realistic setting.

Finally, the aim of a 'performative text' is to trigger spontaneous reactions through its repetition. I attempted to embed these triggers in the text's displacing syntax, its rhythmic patterns, the repetition of certain words, their 'stuttering', the long lines without punctuation, the unclear relationship – again – between speaker and speech-act (the undefined context of utterance), the shifting modes of discourse (shifting, for example,

between narration, reported speech, free indirect discourse, internal commentary and direct address), and so on. These linguistic experimentations aim to obstruct attempts to preconceive or illustrate the words or the intention of each line, which should rather directly affect the speaker. For example, a sense of struggle to keep up with the pace of the mental events may be evoked though an altered breathing pattern, induced by a certain speech-act. These reactions will eventually affect characterization and contribute to the performance's dramaturgy.

All this, however, remains literary criticism; the only way to actually test the performativity of a text is in performance, which in turn depends on many variables. Some of these, pertaining to modes of approaching text, shall be discussed in the next chapter.

## 3.2: Practice part 2 – the acting workshops

From the outset, workshops were designed to test the text's capacity to trigger spontaneous reactions in the actors. They were planned out incrementally over three phases: the initial phase aimed at developing a methodology for the studio experiments, and at identifying a core group of actors interested in participating in the ensuing research activities (Tester Workshops); a second phase aimed at testing the newly written text alongside other dramatic texts, and at producing some scenic material in view of an interim work-in-progress showing (Ongoing Workshops); the latter phase aimed at producing a performance of the newly written text with a regular group of actors (Ensemble Performance-making Workshops). Eventually, discoveries made during the course of the work caused the aims of the last phase to change slightly; the performance-making process was replaced with a more comprehensive exploration of specific acting techniques, which led to the drafting of a methodology for actor training and scenic composition. Having been tested at length within a laboratory setting, I would like to propose that these methods are now ready for application both in training and performance; although a full production, created in adherence to them, was beyond the scope and resources of this study, the interim sharing has proved a fruitful substitute.

The workshop activities changed considerably over time, since the early explorations with voluntary students. Initial sessions lasted three hours, and focused on building supportive and creative working environments where simple approaches to acting small sections of text could be devised collaboratively, based on improvisation, and implemented without the need of advance preparation (e.g. learning the lines), nor particular acting abilities or experience. Different texts were selected according to their presumed openness, theatricality and performativity, including the experimental new text under development, and printed copies were distributed during the sessions. Although the only requirement at this early stage was the participants' willingness to engage creatively in the work, it soon became clear that, despite such disposition being decisive for a positive and productive experience, it was not sufficient to assess the effect of the text on the performers' spontaneity: the performers' different predispositions towards spontaneity in general needed to be considered first, before the effect of a specific text could be assessed on them. In other words, consistent approaches to performing text based on spontaneity principles were to be explored first, before assessing the spontaneity potential of any

particular text. What quickly became evident in fact, was that the workshops' explorations would have remained rather superficial until I had experimented with methods directly applicable to the conditions of performance, which included ways of acting and staging *memorised* text. It also became evident that certain activities could not be carried out effectively by participants without prior preparation, because of their complexity and unfamiliarity. This called for the introduction of training exercises as part of the workshops, which were not originally contemplated, and caused a major shift in the practice.

The rather low intensity of the early workshops, if compared to the later phases, was partly a way to accommodate logistical constraints, such as the students' limited time and the university's limited space availability, but it also provided time and space for reflection: to define the practical requirements of the project, and assess the participants' interest and aptitude to commit to a work that was to become more regular later on. The workshops therefore remained framed as ongoing research laboratory, as the initial idea of producing performance was surpassed by that of exploring the emerging methodology for training and scenic composition. This meant even more dedication on the part of the participants, since training requires frequent and regular attendance. Only after the findings resulting from this process could be gathered and analysed, could they have been applied effectively to a specific text, or to different texts so as to compare them, in what could be called, reversing Moreno, a 'spontaneity test' on text. However, my interest in testing the performativity of texts (along with their openness and theatricality) had diminished in favour of a more general exploration of spontaneity in the interplay between memorised text and performance: the interplay between the actor's performativity (i.e. the performativity of her body and speech-acts) and that of the written text.

> Spontaneity training seems to be a contradiction in terms. How can spontaneity be trained? It consists of two phases: the liberation of the individual organism from clichés, that is, *deconserving* it, and making it free for the reception of s [spontaneity]. In the second phase, the increased receptivity and readiness of the individual organism facilitates new dimensions of personality development (Moreno 1972:101, my italics).

An ambitious system for 'spontaneity training' was therefore eventually outlined, in accordance with the first phase above, although primarily influenced by Jerzy Grotowski's methods, rather than Moreno's. These methods are not at all comparable, nor as effective in aesthetic terms; still the basic principles underlying them are

remarkably similar. Grotowski's 'via negativa', for example, mirrors Moreno's 'deconserving' idea:

> The education of an actor in our theatre is not a matter of teaching him something; we attempt to eliminate his organism's resistance (…). The result is freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already an outer reaction (…). Ours then is a via negativa - not a collection of skills but an eradication of blocks (Grotowski, 1975:16-17).
>
> We take away from the actor that which shuts him off, but we do not teach him how to create - for example how to play Hamlet, in what consists the tragic gesture, how to act a farce - for it is precisely in this "how" that the seeds of banality and of the clichés that defy creation are planted (*Methodical Exploration*, ibid. 97).
>
> You should not try to find out how to play a particular role, how to pitch your voice, how to speak or walk. These are merely clichés (…). Do not seek methods ready-made for each occasion because this will only lead to stereotypes. Learn for yourselves your own personal limitations, your own obstacles and how to get round them. After that, whatever you do, do it whole-heartedly. (…) Something stimulates you and you react: that is the whole secret. Stimulations, impulses and reactions (*Skara Speech*, ibid. 185).

Although there is no evidence that Moreno and Grotowski knew of each other, I venture to say that despite their irreconcilable working methods, they would have shared the principles stated above.[27]

The workshops therefore developed gradually over the course of 18 months, from a series of autonomous sessions onto more regular and interconnected ones: as an initial methodology was defined and a core group of collaborators identified, extracts from different texts were explored, including my own experimental piece. Eventually this resulted in the setting up of the Acting Research Lab, an ongoing theatrical laboratory to which participants contributed as performers on a voluntary basis.

48 participants attended overall; among them were drama students and alumni from LJMU and other local institutions, professional and non-professional actors, performers, singers and dancers. All workshops and work demonstrations have been documented through audio-visual recordings and annotated written plans. An online portfolio with a selection of these recordings is accessible through the links in the Appendix; individual reference links are provided within the text throughout the next sessions.

[27] Parallels between Moreno and Grotowski had also been highlighted in a PhD dissertation by Eberhard Scheiffele (Scheiffele 1995).

Despite the changing plans, the actual development of the collective practice can still be traced back in three different phases: an initial one of ongoing testing of methods and texts, somewhat merging the first two phases originally planned (Tester and Ongoing Workshops); an intensive phase of ensemble work with a regular group of six performers, aimed at producing a work-demonstration performed twice in front of a public (Ensemble Workshops); a more frequent and ongoing research laboratory with a selected and regular group of participants (Acting Research Lab). The evolution of the workshops reflected the evolution of the research inquiry, which progressed incrementally as it adapted to the new findings emerging from the work, as well as to the circumstances that disrupted it.

## 3.2.1: The tester workshops

The first phase of the practice took place between October 2017 and April 2018, and consisted of 17 independent tester workshops. These were introductory sessions lasting between three to six hours each, happening weekly or fortnightly; their aim was to define a basic methodology for the studio experiments, and to identify a group willing to commit to the work more consistently in the following phases. Regular attendance was therefore welcomed but not required, and among the starting group of eight willing drama students, some attended more frequently than others, whilst new participants joined and others left.

**Image 1: End of session discussion**

The workshops tested basic methods of facilitating the actor's spontaneity in delivering text, primarily by exploring 'the performative speech-act': the vocal act of speaking the text impulsively, that is, without premeditation or prior analysis of the lines' intentions. What interested me was the extent to which that simple task could affect an actor's physicality, and inspire spontaneous movement and gesture. This was to become an essential line of enquiry, although the methods employed were still underdeveloped and to some extent premature. The preliminary part of the sessions, generally lasting one hour

or one hour-and-a-half, also involved physical warm up exercises and collective improvisations. The warm ups were originally aimed at establishing trust among participants and at reducing their inhibitions; over time they became more functional to fostering specific aspects of individual receptivity. Improvisations were structured around simple movement tasks that everybody performed at the same time, which then gradually evolved into freer interactions and reactions to one another. At times, short sections of text were thrown into the 'vortex' of the improvisation to test how speech would affect the ongoing physicalizations.

As the work progressed, the structure of the workshops became gradually more complex: the plan of each new session was built on the experience and insights gathered up to that point, and although some necessary steps were always repeated, primarily because new participants kept joining in, activities were constantly evolving. This process made me realise the importance and the potential of having a regular group, and the extent to which this work required training. If on the one hand, testing the same activities with different performers was useful to gather more insights, on the other, I was eager to move on with the experiments, to expand the range of approaches and their application, by building on the participants' cumulative experience as well as my own. But to do that I needed a more regular attendance. Instead, as new performers joined and others came and went, many activities had to be repeated for everyone to be starting roughly on the same level, which meant that some time was always taken up by recapitulation rather than actual new research; besides, it was necessary to maintain certain fixed points of reference for observation, to allow comparisons, mark deviations or assess improvements. In other words, for some activities, say an exercise or an improvisation, it was useful to see how differently it worked on different people and at different stages of their participation, but to move on to more complex activities it was necessary to work more consistently with the same group, either because the activities themselves needed research and development, or because the actors needed time to acquaint with them, that is, to train. In hindsight however, I believe it was these forced repetitions, happening alongside my readings of Gilles Deleuze, that instilled in me the idea of repetition as a possible structure for spontaneity.

These tester workshops highlighted how participants were unaccustomed to this type of work, and how they found it more challenging than I had originally anticipated. These

early sessions in fact, already showed how demanding this work was on students, who had limited time available since a lot of it was already invested into a more formal course of study. At the same time however, they exposed the extent of experimentation the research actually called for, and how it relied on the accumulation of embodied knowledge through trial and error, both on my part and the participants'. Although the level of dedication required was hard to come by even outside the student cohort, this acknowledgement led me to turn these occasional workshops into a regular laboratory. It became evident in fact that the practice's aims could not be realistically nor significantly achieved within a single session, or a predictable limited number of them, and a concern about specialist actor training begun to seep in. Eventually I decided to open the workshops to practitioners as well as to external students and alumni, and to run them until I could find a committed group of actors-collaborators for whom it was feasible to work with me on the next phase of the project.

In order to record how this initial phase progressed, and outline the main characteristics of the 17 workshops it was comprised of, it is necessary to acknowledge at least one important shift in the practice, which happened during the eight sessions, that is in the middle of the series. It will be useful therefore to distinguish the general plan of the first seven sessions from another guiding the remaining ten ones.

## The early tester workshops (sessions 1 to 7):

The earliest workshops were promoted solely within the drama department at Liverpool John Moores University, through a brief verbal introduction to students facilitated by course tutors during inductions, and followed up by a group email of invitation. Each session saw anything between three to nine participants, mostly third-year drama students; they lasted three hours and were structured as follows: introduction; physical warm-up; 'impulse work' and movement-based improvisations; scenic work on text; final wrap up.

*Introduction (10 to 15 minutes):*

The sessions would begin with a brief discussion, which included introductions, a brief presentation of the research project, and the distribution and explanation of the Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms.

*Warm up (40 to 60 minutes):*

This part involved exercises aimed at warming up the body, realising and releasing physical inhibitions, building trust among participants and establishing a supportive working environment. Activities would start with an individual stretching, followed by postural and breathing exercises, and rhythmical walks. These would gradually involve the release of unconventional movements as well as vocalisations, deconstructing postural and vocal habits or inhibitions, and 'contact work' in pairs and in group.

For the 'contact work' the participants were invited to either notice a form of contact already existing among them (e.g. physical proximity, or eye contact), or to establish a new one deliberately, and then to react to it with a simple *given* act. This supplementary task would be added onto a previously given one, which would be continuing, for example: to speak the other person's name in the paired moment of 'contact', whilst still walking in time with the rest of the group. As everybody is given the same act through which to convey their reactions, the individual quality – and meaning – of the reaction is expressed not by the act in itself (e.g. the speaking of the partner's name), but by the manner it is carried out (e.g. softly, aggressively, casually etc.); such manner would be the spontaneous reaction to each other's behaviour. The actors were not requested to create something specifically for the moment of contact, to come up with an action for their reactions; they were free to notice/sense it and react through a previously given verbal task, which nevertheless required concentration and receptiveness to be accomplished properly, namely, in harmony within the pair involved.

**Image 2: Warm-up (Video 1)**


**Image 3: Contact work: Names (Video 2)**


As I introduced these exercises to the group I would also take part in them, and then step out and back in as required: stepping out to observe the work and check its progress, give feedback or instructions; or taking active part in it if necessary to give a demonstration, stimulate the group energetically, or simply share the experience. Experience showed how energy, despite being an invisible element in the work, was certainly not

unsubstantial – and by energy I do not mean simply individual power, but also something *of a shared commodity.*

*'Impulse work' and 'movement-based improvisations' (up to 60 minutes):*

The 'impulse' exercises were aimed at developing the performer's physical responsiveness to external stimulation, whilst the 'movement improvisations' were ensemble improvisations structured around specific movement tasks. Although the 'contact work' from the previous set of exercises already addressed physical responsiveness, this *endeavour* was maintained throughout the sessions, and specific focus was given to it in this part. The intent was to ease each activity into the next and out of the previous, in a continuous and incremental progression. At the time this simply 'felt' like the best and most natural way to *operate*; only later on it became clearer how, both theoretically and in practice, continuity of psychophysical attention (or 'contemplation') facilitates spontaneously creative acts.[28] These activities were mainly based on an ensemble technique called Viewpoints, which trains actors to develop awareness of their bodies in time and space, to facilitate the creation of meaning through improvisation (Bogart and Landau 2014). Ensemble methods normally involve shared tasks carried out at the same time, which tends to facilitate collaboration; this was important to help individuals to discreetly overcome inhibition and gradually enter in relation to one another.

The 'impulse exercises' required actors at first to 'listen' with the whole body to everything happening around them, thus developing 'peripheral awareness', and then to react according to a personal impulse. Compared to the previous work, however, participants would now broaden their field of awareness and react to a generic 'everything', and not simply to a person at the time. 'Soft focus' is a term used in Viewpoints to describe this ability to consciously shift focus of attention, from a specific point or event to the whole and back, not only with eyes and ears, but gradually with all senses, which is not too dissimilar from Stanislavski's notion of 'circles of attention' (Concentration of Attention, Stanislavski 1980:68-89). The personal impulses could now manifest either in a form determined in advance, alike the 'contact work', or entirely freely.

[28] See also the 'flow state' in Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2002).

Exercises varied in type and complexity; they could still be based on simultaneous ensemble movement (i.e. rhythmic walks), but also inviting synchronised stops and starts, in reaction to an external prompt by myself (e.g. a sudden sound to react to, or a verbal instruction to all stop simultaneously), or to a prompt internal to the moving group (e.g. a felt impulse by an individual to either move or stop, to which all others must suddenly adhere). Other rhythmic exercises and games were also experimented in this section, such as ball-passing games in a circle and other similarly aimed at developing the capacity to handle time and space as a group (e.g. a shared tempo, a certain proximity with one another and so on).

**Image 4: 'Soft-focus' exercise (Video 4)**

**Image 5: 'Ball-passing' exercise (Video 5)**

Other than responsiveness, these 'impulse/alertness exercises' also trained the actors to coordinate two or more levels of activity simultaneously, one always rather 'pro-active' and premeditated, which was maintained by each individual independently, and at least another entirely 're-active', dependent on the capacity to notice and 'take in' external changes (i.e. coming from the group as a whole or from elements within it).

As a bridging activity prior to the group improvisation, I devised an exercise that I called 'movement vocabulary', which was again inspired by Viewpoints training, and that later on turned into what Grotowski had many years previous called 'Plastiques', from the French, namely the 'plastic exercises' (Grotowski 1975:107). I simply asked the actors to perform specific physical acts (e.g. 'kneeling down') amidst other ongoing and repeating ones (e.g. 'walking'), all of which I would call out for them to perform and retain as possible units of movement. As a number of these were acquired, the actors were then free to improvise combinations of them individually, thus creating little physical sequences, and eventually use them to react to each other in the ensuing movement-based improvisation. The idea was that these movements, meaningless in themselves, would acquire signification in context, in reaction to one's own imagination, or to a circumstance emerging during the group improvisation. The motivating principle was to limit the

'vocabulary' to a set of movements in order to facilitate a conscious, rather economical usage of them; in other words, rather than being frustrated by an almost infinite possibility of movement – which often means either no action, or a selection of clichéd acts – the actor would explore the dynamic variations of only a given set of movements, thus subtly exploiting their expressiveness and performativity. This way the actor can effectively craft her acts, and develop awareness of the scenic possibilities of even simple movements, gestures and shapes, developing, in short, 'plasticity'. At the same time, the actor trains the imagination, since these movements become actions the moment they acquire an internal motivation, an *association found through the movement*, rather than planned in advance:

> I have spoken much about personal associations, but these associations are not thoughts. They cannot be calculated. Now I make a movement with my hand, then I look for associations. What associations? Perhaps the association that I am touching someone, but this is merely a thought. What is an association in our profession? It is something that springs not only from the mind but also from the body (Grotowski 1975:185).

The association is therefore not just a thought; it is a 'felt image', an idea that is not only witnessed (see actors' comments in Videos 48b and 55), but also embodied, experienced: a spontaneous imagination involving bodily sensations, resulting from direct engagement in an action, which in turn justifies it in dramatic terms (see the introduction in Work Demonstration 1 – Video 37).

**Image 6: 'Soft-focus' extended (Video 6)**

**Image 7: 'Movement Vocabulary' exercise (Video 7)**

During these improvisations, very short sections of memorised text were sometimes introduced, giving actors the possibility to react to each other using speech as well as movement. The introduction of a line of speech as a possible 'reactive act' however, often caused the reaction to lose its spontaneity and lean towards affectation, led by a sort of instinct to represent a presupposed intention known from the words, rather than releasing one found through the speaking of them.

**Image 8: Early improvisation (Video 8)**

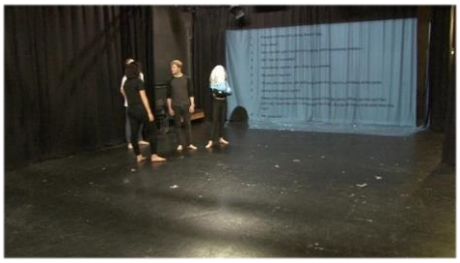


**Image 9: More improvisations (Video 9)**

*Scenic work on text (up to 60 minutes):*

This work aimed at testing the 'theatricality and performativity' of selected sections of different texts, and simultaneously, at deconstructing predetermined interpretations of them, thus attempting to use them simply as stimuli, in a manner equivalent to the physical exercises of the previous section. Activities involved improvised staged readings, whereby the participants were asked to react spontaneously to each other and the text, script in hand. Eventually, prior to these readings, short vocal exercises would also be introduced.

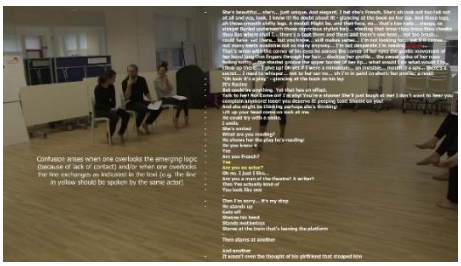
**Image 10: Early text work – with reflections (Video 10)**

**Image 11: Scenic work on text (Video 11)**


These exercises were only the beginning of an investigation of the plastic qualities of speech, beside its semantic meaning. They involved individual and group readings, through explorations of tempo, volume and projection, in relation to either an indication from myself (acting as 'conductor'), the text's internal syntax, or the spontaneous associations it evoked; in these explorations, punctuation would often be disregarded. More 'contact work' was also gradually included, equivalent to the previous one, only now focusing on vocal rather than bodily reactions to each other, channelled through the given speech acts (the lines in the text). These exercises were therefore performed seated or standing. The text would be used just like earlier the 'movement vocabulary' was used: as a 'score' through which to channel spontaneous reactions. Unsurprisingly this was

rather difficult to achieve, primarily for the already mentioned representative power of speech taking over performativity. Such power seems to yield whenever the performer lets herself be led by the text – as in Video 12 below, for example, when the actress manages not to 'act' (i.e. represent) for a few moments during the long monologue from Excerpt 4 in section 3.1.2 – but representation regains strength as soon as the reach of one's alertness needs to broaden, to *simultaneously* include the other partners in the scene. This obviously becomes particularly evident during snappy dialogic sections, with the additional difficulty, in the example, caused by the text's ambiguity around the speakers' identities. This aspect risks to be counterproductive: besides being unable to spontaneously react to each other and the text, it may cause the inability to even represent, that is, once contact with one's impulses is lost, one risks to make no sense at all, let alone spontaneous sense, thus 'plunging in' without any idea of what one is doing (see Artaud in 1.1.2). It is of course a risk worth taking, as the alternative is not really a solution. In short, to read *and* react to each other in a manner that also enables one to notice a logic emerging from the text was too difficult, already in stillness, hence the decision not to focus on adding even more complexity through movement. A few attempts to physically stage the readings had actually been made, but rather unsuccessfully (see stage 3 of Video 11 above); in such 'improvised readings', that is, given no indication of physical and vocal action in advance, the performers could not sustain spontaneous physical and vocal reactions, to each other and the text, whilst reading the lines from the page.

**Image 12: An improvised reading – seated (Video 12)**




*More on the early scenic work through a critical approach to Meisner*

The guiding structure of the scenic work was that of a text-based improvisation, whose principle was inspired by Sanford Meisner's 'Word Repetition Game' (Meisner 1987). Meisner's exercise involves two actors facing or sitting across each other and responding

to each other's behaviours through a repeated phrase. This phrase can be any obvious statement about the partner, which is then repeated back and forth by the pair:

> The Repetition Exercise (…) [is] a technique that redirects the individual's attention towards their onstage partner. By setting up a simple dialogue in which each actor repeats a single piece of observed factual information such as 'you are wearing spectacles' / 'I am wearing spectacles', the aim is to encourage each participant to pay close attention to behavioural changes occurring in their partner (Shirley 2010:201).

Gradually the dialogue itself starts to reflect these changes, which are made explicit verbally within the repetition frame; the exercise thus becomes more like real conversation, in which 'instincts dictate the changes, not just the repetition' (Meisner 1987:30).

In Meisner therefore, instincts may lead to a verbal change, that is, to a more 'conventional' improvisation, but still within the structure provided by repetition: 'I began with the premise that if I repeat what I hear you saying, my head is not working. I'm listening, and there is absolute elimination of the brain' (ibid. 36). Then a noticeable event may happen that 'sets up an impulse in me which comes directly out of the repetition' (ibid.) – such as a spontaneous change of inflection, or a certain facial expression or gesture – which makes the repeater who picks up that change also change the phrase that's being repeated, as a spontaneous reaction to the acknowledged event. 'That's repetition which leads to impulses. It is not intellectual. It is emotional and impulsive, and *gradually* when the actors I train improvise, *what* they say – like what the composer writes – comes not from the head but truthfully from the impulses' (ibid., only first italics in the original). Of course, in reality the brain is not eliminated: as we have seen with Deleuze, it is simply allowed to work 'passively', that is, spontaneously. Even when it leads to a verbal improvisation, the Word Repetition Game must maintain its essence as a paralinguistic exploration, a meticulous training exercise:

> Look, I'll tell you why the repetition exercise, in essence, is not boring: it plays on the source of all organic creativity, which is the inner impulses (…) Of course, if I were a pianist and sat for an hour just making each finger move in a certain way, the onlooker could very well say, 'That's boring!' And it would be – to the onlooker. But the practitioner is somebody who is learning to funnel his instincts, not give performances. The mistake we made in the Group was that our early improvisations

> were performances of how we remembered the original play (Meisner 1987:37, italics in the original).[29]

An equivalent approach would then be applied by Meisner trained actors to existing texts, at least in the initial exploratory phases, thus using written words rather than made up ones in the exchange, which could be used in the present research. When time comes to prepare the actual mise-en-scène however, a tendency to pre-interpret the text, albeit imaginatively, still seems to be required in Meisner's technique, in order to draw out the relevant 'given circumstances'.[30] Although he believed, in coherence with our spontaneity principle, that acting is 'living truthfully under imaginary circumstances', and that therefore these had to be internalised emotionally by the actors, he adopted two devices to help them do that, called 'preparation' and 'particularisation' (Meisner 1987), which deviate from my own aims.

> Preparation is that device which permits you to start your scene or play in a condition of emotional aliveness (ibid. 78), to get your inner life from what the given circumstances suggest (ibid. 80), a warming-up process (…) a kind of day-dreaming (…) but the *character* of our daydream is taken from the play (ibid. 84), it is self-inducement coming from the imagination, which is the product of inventiveness (ibid. 86).

Preparation essentially requires the actor to imagine or recall a specific event in order to engender the appropriate emotional state for the scene; it is very similar to Stanislavsky's 'emotional memory', which required to 'recreate an event from the distant past in order to regenerate the feelings experienced at that time' (Sawoski n.d.). For our purposes, the main problem with this approach is the predominantly 'mental' source of the preparation: although this emotional 'work-up' relies on the actor's imagination and free association, it remains fundamentally an intellectual endeavour, as it is not linked to a physical or vocal act. Thus, it might not work with everyone, as demonstrated by some of the students' testimonies: 'I find the things that stimulate me (…) are physical things more than thinking', to which Meisner, acknowledging, replies: 'You've got to find the things that stimulate *you*' (Meisner 1987:80), which leaves it to the student to figure out a way to do so. Meisner also adds that 'preparation is what you *start* with' (ibid. 121). As the scene unfolds in fact, the actors would have to 'forget about it' and work off each other,

[29] The Group Theatre was a theatre collective formed in New York in 1931, which was strongly influenced by Stanislavski's acting method.

[30] At least according to how the practice has been described by Meisner himself (Meisner 1987).

reacting to their 'instincts' as in the repetition exercise, but using the words from the text. A particular metaphor is used to describe the effect aimed at: 'The text is like a canoe and the river on which it sits is the emotion. (…) It all depends on the flow of the river which is your emotion. The text takes on the character of your emotion' (ibid. 115).

Remarkably enough, also Eugenio Barba uses a similar metaphor, but in a different, more tangible way, to identify the concrete force that's leading a section or 'score' of the performance: it is either the case of a physical sequence that acts like a river affecting the voice, which floats over it like a canoe, or less frequently, the other way around. Emotion, in other words, is not something that can be consciously or wilfully manipulated, but rather the result of this layering of coordinated actions. Actors, especially when young or unexperienced, are actually advised *not to* start from an emotion to compose their role or unit of action, but from physical acts (personal notes from the workshops at the Odin Teatret, 2018-2019).[31] As we shall see later, these analogies would eventually lead me to consider the text as the actor's initial 'river' for my exercises in repetition.

In fairness, Meisner himself seemed to acknowledge the limits of his preparatory approach, which perhaps he deemed unavoidable. He is quoted saying to his students: 'Preparation is the worst problem in acting. I *hate* it' (ibid. 118), and more: 'There's a certain element–would that it weren't there, but it is–in preparation which makes you aware of yourself. But the moment you play the scene and your attention focuses on something else, that self-consciousness diminishes. Do you understand?' (ibid. 141). There is a demarcation between this inner preparatory, emotional activity and the resulting external physical activity that we do not find in Barba or Grotowski, for whom 'associations' are the necessarily spontaneous phenomenon linking the two; more precisely, an association is what links body with mind in a psychophysical encounter out of which emotions are born. For them, the found emotion is accidental, but not the process to reach it, which is crafted through concrete acts. Yet Meisner devised 'preparation' for those actors entering a scene from backstage, because (due to a theatrical convention) they would be temporarily disengaged from the scenic action. For the other partner/s onstage, Meisner would prescribe a more tangible task, which he called 'independent activity': he would ask them to find a continuous activity, difficult and motivating enough to function as a concrete point of concentration for the unfolding of the scene-exercise

[31] See also Barba's take on 'improvisation' in *The Paper Canoe* (Barba 1995:71).

(e.g. building a castle out of a deck of cards to cheer up the ailing little daughter), which again reminds us of the basic motive of Stanislavsky's method of physical actions: to keep the actor 'busy', concentrated in concrete acts, and thus bypass 'representative thinking', avoiding the growth of that self-awareness blocking the flow of spontaneity. Out of such activities, continuously engaging the actor's body-mind, spontaneous reactions are more likely to emerge. We see therefore that ultimately the purpose is the same, both in Meisner and Grotowski, but the former – like perhaps Stanislavsky before him – still seems confined by certain conventions of naturalism, which call for the representation of a predetermined realistic intention, manifest in 'preparation', rather than the performance of a real action, like the 'independent activity'.

The other device that Meisner suggests for approaching a text, also taken from Stanislavski, is called 'particularisation' or the 'Magic As If'. According to this technique, the actor needs to find, either in her memory/experience or in her imagination, an event that, once brought up, would trigger the appropriate emotional state for a chosen moment in the play. 'Particularisation' is therefore similar to 'preparation', only it is fixed and needs to meet the play's requirements more specifically. It is a process through which an actor feels as if she were the character, as if she were in the same (or equivalent) circumstances, but it is also a choice of 'what the moment is about emotionally', a choice that in Meisner should be made by the actor *instinctively*. The dramaturgical requirements of the play would therefore have to converge with the instinctive choices of the actors, and such 'convergence' happen rather accidentally, like little epiphanies facilitated by the inner performativity of the text. Again however, such 'instincts' are not given the chance to record in the actor's body-mind, through concrete physical or vocal acts.

Stanislavski acknowledged the risks of an approach in which 'instincts' are allowed to play only in the imagination, and devised towards the end of his career, a different, more pragmatic and perhaps complete method that much later came to be known as the Method of Physical Actions, of which Meisner's group might not have been aware (Stanislavski 1968, Moore 1965). This method – still very much limited to meeting the representative demands of the naturalistic play, and to expressing its presupposed meanings – was thirty years later, in the 1960s, taken up and developed by Grotowski.

If despite their search for spontaneity, a presupposed coherence with the text was still to be found underlying both Stanislavski and Meisner approaches, Grotowski attempted to

break free from those chains of representation, which is why his methods are found to be useful for my purposes: 'Now, we cannot express what is objective in the text (…) For me, a creator of theatre, the important thing is not the words but what we do with these words' (Grotowski, 1975:57-58).[32] Unfortunately, there is not much written account of how Grotowski and his actors practically approached dramatic texts in their processes towards performance.[33] Therefore, what I attempted to do with the words in my workshops was basically an extension of the repetition exercise applied directly to given dramatic texts, gradually augmented with ways of physicalizing and vocalising the words in them, inspired by methods developed by Grotowski and Barba. These were experiments aimed at finding a valid and practical alternative to representing the text.

In the early workshops the experiments were limited to the following activities: actors were asked first to read the text individually and silently (to familiarise themselves with it); then to read it individually aloud, in a monotone voice, and at a same chosen tempo, without pauses, as in a flow or continuity of speech (to familiarise themselves with the speaking of the text without determining an interpretation of it); then to read it aloud again individually, exploring different rhythms, tempos, volumes and pitches (to playfully search for possible yet incidental interpretations); finally they were asked to improvise a reading of the scene together in small groups, according to the number of the characters involved, attempting to react instinctively to each other as well as the text (see Videos 10 and 11).

This method had primarily two limitations. A first one was essentially structural: as students were not requested to memorise the lines in advance, they had to improvise movement while reading, script in hand. The second problem was essentially linked to training. Students had to work completely off each other and the text, which meant that they could only 'react', and not 'act' according to a predetermined intention. They had to use their instincts to react simultaneously to both the written words and each other's behaviour, in a manner similar to the earlier 'contact work'. It was too much for most of them to coordinate all at once, and that is why these improvisations seemed to work better from a seated or standing position. Later on in the workshops, I started to ask the

[32] In this, Grotowski followed the footsteps of Meyerhold and Vakhtangov, who had both been pupils of Stanislavski, but eventually departed from his naturalistic principles and methods.

[33] The treatment of the text by Grotowski and his actors is described in Kumiega (1987) and Grotowski (1975), but there is no detailed account of *how* the actors' early 'studies' or 'elaborations' were developed.

participants to memorise in advance a section of text of their choice, but asked them to memorise it in a particular way: to clarify this development, a further digression into Meisner will be useful.

In the first phases of the work on a script, Meisner would instruct his actors to learn the text as follows: "*without* meaning, *without* readings, *without* interpretation, without *anything*. Just learn the lines by rote, mechanically. I want that to be clear," he would demonstrate, "'To / be / or / not / to / be / that / is / the / question.'" (Meisner 1987:67) The lines ought to be learned in a 'neutral' manner, 'with the precision of a machine' in order 'to avoid calculated results', so as to remain 'open to any influence', to 'achieve a kind of emotional flexibility' for when they are to be used in the actual 'improvisation', an improvisation for which the words are already known (ibid. 67-69). What is an improvisation then? In this context, an improvisation is when 'what we're looking for is the picking up not of cues but of impulses' (ibid. 72). The cue tells the actor when a certain action needs to manifest externally, but it is the impulse that generates the emotion, which needs to produce its affects as soon as it is felt, or 'picked up', to then be 'discharged' when the cue arrives. In order to do this, namely, to react spontaneously to the partner's behaviour *and* the text, the actor needs to master both the 'repetition exercise' and the text itself, which must be memorised precisely and without predetermined interpretation. This work, as we have seen, would not suffice anyhow, and that is why preparation and particularisation were introduced by Meisner at this stage, along with the 'independent activity', which is fundamentally a version of Stanislavski's work on the 'circles of attention' and physical actions (Meisner 1987:39; Stanislavski 1980 and 1968).

Such would have been the level of training required to accomplish what I asked of my participants, yet I chose a tangential route: as I recognised that some of the aims and methods were very similar, at least in principle, between Meisner and Grotowski, I combined them, compensating what I ignored of Grotowski's approach to text with an *adapted version* of Meisner's.

## The late Tester Workshops (sessions 8 to 17):

The structure of the sessions kept on varying to accommodate new activities and some important methodological changes. As new activities were tested and others repeated,

sections became more interlinked, and activities were eventually distinguished between physical and vocal training, and scenic work. The stock of exercises increased and their arrangement became very fluid, allowing me to adapt to the contingent circumstances of each workshop and the variable group of participants.

The first methodological change was the development of a suitable form of training; another fundamental change was the introduction of work on imagery, or 'personal associations', and its application throughout the session; finally, participants were asked to memorise in advance a short section of text (between 60 to 100 words) without inflections or interpretation. This in turn caused a shift of focus in the scenic work: no longer aimed at assessing the performativity of specific texts, it tested approaches to acting memorised text in general, and to composing scenic material in line with the principles of immanence and spontaneity. The sessions also gradually lengthened as a result, to up to six hours sometimes.

*Tester Workshop No. 8: introducing associations*

As already mentioned, the eighth workshop was particularly important in determining a shift in the practice. This shift was primarily due to the introduction of a basic principle, found in the description of Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre's physical training, that the actor should justify every detail of an exercise, namely every act, with a precise image or association (Grotowski 1975:103). This internal image could be a real (e.g. 'waving'), realistic (e.g. 'drinking from a fictional glass of water'), or imaginary (e.g. 'tucking into the mouth of the volcano with both hands'), but it had to be clear and specific to the performer, to justify the task beyond its technicality; most importantly, it had to be spontaneous, that is, emerging from the act, as an image-sensation and not simply as a rational thought.

For example, if during the physical warm up I asked the participants to 'run on their tiptoes, allowing the upward impulse in the shoulders' (ibid. 102), they would first carry out the physical task, and then gradually allow the images to emerge and enrich the ongoing movement. Thus, the activity moves from being a mere technical exercise (e.g. choreographic or aerobic exercise aimed at strength, precision, plasticity, and coordination), and becomes a fictionalised action (e.g. 'a crane being hunted down', 'Hamlet walking on burning sand' etc.), halfway between an exercise and an

improvisation. The activity in fact, retaining the technical aspect of the exercise, yet augmented with an association, develops physical skills and imagination, gradually establishing spontaneous links between the two, gradually integrating, in other words, the body-mind in acts that could be either everyday or unconventional. The first would be naturalistic actions, such as jumping or walking, the latter would be non-naturalistic, or simply unusual actions, such as rolling on the floor, walking with bent knees and so on.

**Image 13: Physical warm up and associations (Video 13)**

**Image 14: Building a physical sequence (Video 14)**

**Image 15: Early associative vocal work (Video 15)**


**Image 16: 'Scoring' of physical actions and 'montage' (Video 16)**

In this particular workshop I noticed quite clearly how the associative approach was effective for the creation of spontaneous scenic material, namely gestures and movements, as well as vocal actions (Video 15). It was also the first time in which I realised how these movements could be fixed and linked together into a repeatable sequence, a so called 'physical score', whose refined details could in turn trigger autonomous associations when repeated. It finally gave me the chance to explore how the overlaying of the spoken text on top of the physical sequence, which was previously and separately composed, could generate even more associations, both in the performer and the observer, enhancing the overall affective and signifying possibilities (see Videos 14 and 16). Below is an excerpt from the notes of the session:

**Excerpt 5: Notes from Tester Workshop 8**

Objective: exploring inner and outer impulses and the use of associations in the scoring of physical actions

> Physical impulse -> triggers a movement/gesture -> triggers an association = transforms a physical act~~ion~~ into a ~~performative~~ action[34]
>
> The impulse to act [to speak, move or think] is always internal, but it might come as a reaction to internal or external events. Whilst the focus in most of the earlier sessions was on reacting to external stimuli [performers improvising working off each other], this session focused on developing an awareness of the self-generated impulses of the body. The performers were asked at first to recognise the movements they make unconsciously even during the warm up, to give all [or most] of them an image, an association that would justify these movements to them. This simple approach transforms an everyday act~~ion~~ into a ~~performative~~ action justified in an imaginary context. Viewers do not need to know nor recognise the association, so long as it is clear and lived by the performer. This process makes the action believable and interesting to watch, it also surpasses its mere illustration [i.e. mimicking] to become expressive of an inner life [a non-textual sub-text, a sub-score].[35]
>
> We also worked on developing a physical score out of the solo improvisations. These were the result of a random selection of 5x verbs [e.g. 'to possess'] to which they were asked to improvise/associate a gesture first [see Video 14], and then a movement in space [movements were actually improvised with no particular context – see Video 16]. The resulting scores were then used with their texts, and weaved together into a scene that had a certain logic [my editing] and was compelling, despite the fact that the physical scores were improvised based on material in no way related to their texts; their texts were also totally unrelated, and very different in tone and style.

The part commenting on the distinction between internal or external stimuli was also very relevant. I started to see how the work on spontaneity could be carried out beyond the 'ensemble', that is, beyond the individual need to react to another partner, to 'work-off' him/her in Meisner's words; internal stimuli were now being approached as well, in the form of mental or physical impulses, namely a conjured up image/concept or a certain

[34] I will have later on rephrased this: the association turns a physical act into an action. In order to avoid confusion, the performative adjective here is superfluous, or could be replaced with 'dramatic' if we considered the association as the 'dramatic intention' behind the act.

[35] Here I was referring to Barba's notion of the 'sub-score' as the non-discursive equivalent to Stanislavski's 'subtext' (Barba 1995:127; Moore 1984:28).

urge to move a part of the body. I started to see what was to become the basis of my approach to spontaneity: a physical approach, whereby movement triggers a spontaneous image, running in parallel with an imaginary approach, whereby it is an image that triggers a spontaneous movement. Ultimately it does not matter which comes first, whether the physical/vocal act or the mental act, the point of it all is to reduce the spatial-temporal gap between the two, or as Grotowski put it: 'The result is freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already an outer reaction' (Grotowski 1975:16). Only then is representation bypassed. Experiments confirmed that in order for this to happen the performers need to pay attention to the act whilst performing it, contemplating it in other words, and engaging the whole body in it, mind included. So even if the act only involved one finger, the whole body has to follow it, be engaged in it, to produce an association and therefore a believable action. At the same time actors have to remain aware of the wider environment too, and receptive to its stimulations.

*Other developments of the late tester phase: vocal training*

One of the main obstacles the participants faced during these sessions was that of speaking the text without pauses, as a continuous and regular flow of speech. This was required in order to memorise the text independently from any prior interpretation of it; to 'record it' purely as a fixed sequence of words, as a composition of articulated sounds, as a 'phonetic score'. The refrains were clearly a combination of habitual ways of remembering the lines, which relied on interpretation, of engrained ways of speaking, which are always related – presumably – to certain physical and psychological conditions, and of an altogether insufficient knowledge of the text. A condition for the effective running of the experiments was nevertheless the participants' ability to perform these activities, which on the contrary, were unfamiliar and therefore challenging to them.

It was quite a critical moment in my research: I knew I could not expect the participants to carry out these tasks without prior training, but I did not have the time or resources for their training, and even if we had the time, I was not sure I could run the training on my own, at least not at the professional level that seemed required for voice. I therefore decided to gain additional training myself, to test what was possible for me to achieve over a relatively short period of time, and then test whether I could transmit that knowledge on to the participants during my workshops. I therefore attended several

training events during the course of the research, over this and later periods, such as workshops, masterclasses, residencies and seminars on directing, and physical and vocal training for actors (Usher and Ellwood 2017; Richards 2017; Bridge of Winds 2018; Barba and Odin Teatret 2018-19; LISPA 2019). These experiences enabled me to adapt and refine the research activities, such as tasks and exercises; and, most importantly, to transmit them clearly on to the actors. Also, it was important for me to be able to do so without demonstration. I had to find ways of facilitating the actor's own development in spite of my own lack of training and acting experience, in spite of knowing, in other words, that I could not necessarily do everything I was asking the participants to do. Through those direct acting experiences, and meetings with established directors and trainers, I have realised that it is possible to transmit a training even if one does not master it perfectly well (somewhat like a football coach would not be required to play football as well as the players in the team). What is necessary is to clearly understand, both in theory and through embodied practice, the principles behind each activity, as well as their aims, to be able to convey them to the actors by means of concrete instructions and specific feedback.

So if up to this point I was mainly adapting simple physical exercises that I took from books or case studies (e.g. video clips documenting practice), or remembered from past experiences (e.g. past acting workshops attended), during this later phase of the tester workshops I began to apply directly what I was learning from more recent and relevant training experiences, particularly with regards to vocal work. Knowing that voice is quite a delicate instrument, very much dependent on inner and subjective psychophysical states, which are largely involuntary (involving, among other things, the internal muscles and organs of the vocal apparatus), and which I was careful not to manipulate nor damage, I needed to present the exercises in an accessible manner, and facilitate the participants' vocal work without intervening directly in their inner states. A way to do so was to ease the actors into taking over control, making use of their own imagination[36]. Learning of Eugenio Barba's personal experience of working with actors without being one, first assisting Grotowski at the Polish Laboratory Theatre, and later with his own company of autodidacts, was particularly influential to this end (Barba 1999).

[36] Only later on I realised how much theory and practice already existed on this matter (Linklater 2006 among other). I shall refer to this more in detail later on.

My early work on voice was therefore structured around tasks that would set the actor's imagination in motion and, through the workings of their own imagination, produce a concrete external result (physical and vocal). The vocal exercises were aimed at discovering the range of one's existing possibilities for vocal expression, and at potentially expanding them. In particular, they explored timbre (through resonation), volume (through projection), and tempo. Again, in order to explore these rather musical qualities of speech, the performers had to be able to speak the text continuously first, at a steady pace and monotone, so as to determine a comfortable midpoint from which to deviate, and to notice those deviations. If the earlier 'movement vocabulary' aimed at developing the body's plasticity and expressiveness through an increasing stock of defined and repeatable body shapes, gestures and movements, these vocal exercises had exactly the same aim, with 'articulation' being the equivalent to plasticity in voice. Just like the physical training, these vocal exercises were approached both technically and imaginatively through the associative work. This resulted in vocal improvisations based on the memorised text, but not yet in 'vocal etudes'; as these required longer training, they were implemented only much later.

**Image 17: Group vocal training – technical: resonation (Video 17)**

**Image 18: Group vocal training – technical: speech (Video 18)**

Another aspect worthy of note was the breathing exercises that were sometimes introduced along with the work on voice: according to some practitioners, managing breath is a fundamental part of the vocal training of an actor (Linklater 2006); according to others, breathing is subjective and should not be forced (Grotowski 1975:102 and 176). As there is not necessarily a contradiction between these two positions, I continued to follow the 'via negativa' principle, not aiming at imposing a 'perfect way to breathe', but rather at 'correcting it [respiration] indirectly' (ibid., 102) if and when necessary, to surpass a manifest block or habit, and anyway always using exercises based on imaginative prompts, hence self-led through the actor's spontaneous imagination. These exercises became much more sophisticated and effective as the workshops evolved in the

following phases, once they became based on the simple idea of voice as ‘painted breath’, and on breath as a spontaneous yet repetitive process, both affecting and affected by the imagination, which allowed for important new discoveries (e.g. see Videos 48b and 48c).

**Image 19: Basic breathing and vocal exercises – technical: speech (Video 19)**

Although the work on body and voice were approached separately during this phase, to allow the participants to retain one main point of concentration at a time, neither were altogether neglected while working on the other. For example, work on voice would often trigger movement, which was allowed, if not encouraged, as long as the movement was consistent, that is, consequential to the voice (i.e. a spontaneous reaction to the vocal act). However, this allowance would often result in clichéd gesticulations of arms and hands, with the rest of the body either stuck in place or moving arbitrarily in space. In order to avoid both arbitrary movements and unconscious clichéd gesticulations, participants were at times forced into a particular kind of stillness during vocal work, a stillness that nonetheless maintained a relaxed posture, to still allow physical impulses to manifest through micro-movements, throbs or directional shifts of weight. This was the only way to isolate the effect of the vocal work from that of the physical work, whilst acknowledging the physical nature of voice, its origin in and propagation through the body.

**Image 20: 'Vocal painter' exercise explained (Video 20)**

**Image 21: 'Vocal painter' exercise and comments (Video 21)**

*Integrating body and voice: the Speaker and Mover exercise*

The temporarily separate physical and vocal training were eventually brought together by another series of activities specifically aimed at integrating and coordinating body and voice. This integration was gradual, and the best way to describe it is perhaps through one of the most effective exercises devised during this research period. Although it might have been the result of the juxtaposition of pre-existing ones, I named it the 'Speaker and Mover exercise':

> **Excerpt 5: description of the 'Speaker & Mover exercise' (from personal notes)**
>
> Speaker & Mover exercise (min 2 players): Speakers (S) stand in a circle or arc around a Mover (M). One 'S' vocalises or speaks a memorised text without set interpretation but in a rather continuous flow of speech, while M reacts with her body to the impact of S's voice. S then improvises variations of volume, projection, resonation, and tempo. Starting from S 'leading' and M 'reacting', they then switch status, with S's voice reacting to M's movements. M must move freely and with continuity, attempting to create 'intangible contact' with S who, no longer leading, continues speaking relinquishing vocal choices and allowing them to be determined by spontaneous reactions to M's movements. Once 'contact' feels established S and M can tacitly switch status between leading and reacting, according to the spontaneous dynamics of their 'contact'. The same exercise is repeated switching roles: S steps onstage to move and M goes in the circle to speak.

This exercise proved effective for several reasons: it is accessible and engaging both to perform and to witness, it works with both physical and vocal stimulations and reactions, and it is a good structure for a scenic improvisation. Although words need to be clearly articulated by the speaker, the mover should not pay too much attention to their meaning at first, to remain responsive to the speech's sound qualities. The speaker, on the other hand, should not stay stuck in place but use the body as a 'vehicle for the voice', facilitating vocal expression without necessarily leaving the circle. The difference between this exercise and the previous ones is that now the performers have a live point of contact on the outside, by which to test, through the partner's reactions, the efficacy of one's choices. Furthermore, once the exercise flows smoothly at the para-linguistic level,

roles can relax; eventually, both individuals can speak and move, provided that they maintain the necessary level of contact with each other. Thus, an improvisation can ensue, in which case more attention must gradually be paid to the meaning of the text as well as its sounds: in the improvisation, speech and movement between the pair needs to remain spontaneous and yet be contextualised logically through associative work.

**Image 22: 'Speaker and Mover' exercise and improvisations (Video 22)**

**Image 23: 'Speaker and Mover' exercise and notes (Video 23)**


In order to actually create scenic material however, this paired improvisation work turned out to be more complex than fixing individual improvisations into a shared montage (as per Excerpt 5 and Video 16). Because performers spoke unrelated texts, and had no initial interpretation around which to gravitate during their improvisation, they seemed subjected to too much stimulation to be able to simultaneously react and make sense of their reactions. Nonetheless, although it was too complicated to compose a scene directly out of it, this activity worked very well both as training exercise and as a set up for pair or group improvisations, integrating bodily and vocal reactions: should a group be working together on the same text, this exercise would be quite useful to sketch out the basic dynamics of dialogic scenes (as a sort of augmented version of Meisner's repetition exercise, in which the actors would work off each other and the text, both vocally and physically).

*The scoring of physical actions*

The last important development of this experimental phase refers to the creation of repeatable movement sequences out of individual improvisations emerging from the repetition of memorised text. These movement sequences would become the structure of the physical actions of a possible scene related to a particular section of text. During this phase, each participant would work on a section of text of their own choosing, normally a monologue or a poem; the texts would therefore have no relation to one another, and be very different both in content and in form (i.e. style, genre and even language).

This activity would normally start with individual vocal improvisations, yet performed by everybody at the same time, during which spontaneous reactions to the text would be explored. These improvisations would use the text as a stimulus to react to, only vocally, exploiting its syntax and rhythms, the musicality of the words, as well as the associative images conjured up by them (e.g. by the nouns, concepts or verbs). The preceding vocal training, which would have 'deconstructed' the text by 'forcing' unfamiliar and rather technical speech patterns on it, would now reduce the risk of these improvisations becoming mere illustrations, or representations of prior interpretations of the script. The risk at this point was actually the opposite, namely that these improvisations remained at the technical level of articulated random vocalisations. Their aim was in fact that of reaching signification spontaneously, searching for it through the repetition of the text. To these vocal improvisations, coordinated movement would then be gradually added. For example, participants may be asked to coordinate the speed of their speech with that of their walk, or vice versa. They would then be invited to let changes happen in their ways of walking, and to react to those changes with their voice, or conversely, to let changes in speech affect the way they walked, thus exploring different ways of linking movement with speech.

Eventually, actors were invited to search for those physical actions (i.e. gestures and movements in space) that emerged more decisively from the repetition of the text, and that therefore were more naturally associated with it, either because of a strong physical impulse, or because they directly expressed an idea or sensation conjured up by the words. Once a short number of these physical actions were found (e.g. five), participants were requested to craft each one separately, clearly defining the beginning and end for each one, to then weave them all together into a repeatable sequence. By this time, participants would no longer speak their texts, but focus solely on creating a coordinated and uninterrupted movement sequence out of the weaving together of the selected physical actions.[37] The next phase would then be to repeat the whole section several times, like a choreography, until each action within the whole is precisely executed and linked together with the other ones. At this point performers are requested to abandon themselves in the 'contemplative repetition' of the physical score, forgetting about the text it originated from, until old associations reassert themselves, and new ones emerge to strengthen the

[37] I call them 'actions' as each should have already originated a clear association with or through the text.

links between each movement and its mental and emotional motivation. Each physical action should by now have become a dramaturgical unit: just like each word within a sentence can be uttered in different ways, so these physical units can be worked on dynamically, that is modulated without thus changing their intrinsic outlines (e.g. slowed down, scaled up, delayed according to varying circumstances).

The final step would then be to add the text back on top of the physical sequence, to weave and coordinate the two layers together again, thus finding ever new associations. This way the physical score would be the equivalent of Meisner's emotional 'river', on top of which the text would float. Two, three or more of these individual scores can then be weaved together into an increasingly complex scenic montage, a scene, within which each performer has a score to react to, but also uses to channel new reactions to the infinite stimuli coming from the other partners in the scene, their own scores, the way they interlink, and finally the audience.[38]

**Image 24: Early coordination of speech and movement (Video 24)**

**Image 25: The (lengthy) process of scoring physical actions (Video 25)**

The scoring of physical actions and the subsequent overlap of speech and montage, is a compositional method that I have first learned during a workshop with The Bridge of Winds – a pedagogical project directed by Iben Nagel Rasmussen, an early Odin Teatret's actress – which happened in Ghent (Belgium) in early 2018. The same process was then experienced again more intensively during two subsequent residencies at the Odin Teatret in Holstebro (Denmark), in 2018 and 2019, which involved working with all Odin's actors as well as their director, Eugenio Barba. The method essentially consists of fixing a physical sequence first, the physical life of the role for that unit of action, itself composed of many 'segments', the smallest and singly identifiable components knit together in a seamless progression. This can be developed in a variety of different ways, including

[38] To this complexity I did not add costumes, lighting changes, objects and scenery; these would have introduced even more possibilities for stimulation and reaction, and I believe the same principles would have applied.

physical improvisations inspired by a theme, a principle (e.g. moving against real or imaginary resistances), or a text (not necessarily one to be used in the performance); the resulting physical material, bearing little or no apparent discursive connection, at least initially, with the text eventually laid over it, contributes to the expansion of meaning from their coordination. It is also worth mentioning that nearly all Odin Teatret's productions (but the very first ones) are *not* performances of written plays.[39]

The main difference between the 'Odin method' and my own adaptation of it lays in its direct application to text, which is first approached simply as a 'phonetic score' for the vocal instrument. The aim is to improvise a movement sequence directly out of speech. Speech itself would be improvised, but not the words in it; they would simply be repeated, or rather 'played', just like a musical score featuring a sequence of phonemes instead of notes and tempos. I was therefore not looking for chance movements, nor for physical actions inspired by themes, ideas or images loosely associated with the text as a whole, or with a scene or unit of it, despite including these instances as well in my later experiments. For the moment I was only looking for all those direct and strictly personal reactions emerging from the *pure repetition* of the text, out of which personal interpretations could emerge, and out of which – again – coherence could be found. In a traditional manner therefore, speech would again trigger the movement score, although according to musical, rhythmic and instinctive principles leading the repetition. Movement would then be fixed and also repeated over and over again, without however ever aiming at representing any previously found intention, association, emotion or the like, but rather seeking precision of form through mindful attention and continuity of action. Only later on speech would come into play again, by being laid over the movement and coordinated with it, hence also spontaneously affected by it.

The evolving workshops and the increasingly sophisticated vocal training involved, will have made me aware, much later on, of the even stronger potential of voice to stimulate movement directly, in a manner that could possibly work the opposite way as well. If the prior approach could be compared to choreography, this one would be more akin to music-drama practices, only applied to speech rather than song, whereby the actor would start by fixing the vocal score, rather than the movement. This vocal composition would be the result of vocal improvisations aimed at finding the most effective and affective

[39] For accounts of the company's performance-making process see Watson 1993 and Christoffersen 1993.

manner of speaking the text, which would then be fixed. Thence, the repetition of such vocal composition, or score, would aim at finding (i.e. improvising) the gestures and movements that more naturally (i.e. spontaneously) go with it, to the point of possibly even eluding altogether to fix them.

### 3.2.2: The ensemble workshops

As soon as a group of six participants could be identified as willing to commit to a more intensive period of work, which meant regularly attending a certain number of sessions that would lead to a final performance/work-demonstration, the tester phase ended. The sessions that followed were called 'ensemble workshops', precisely because they involved working with a regular group over 13 sessions, which took place between May and June 2018, and which aimed at furthering the research and producing material for a final public showing. The showings were eventually two, and included discursive introductions, practical demonstrations of exercises and improvisations, and the staged performance of Scene Two from the experimental text. They took place on the 11th and 19th June 2018 in Liverpool, at the LJMU JH Makin Drama Centre and at the John Lennon Arts and Design Centre respectively.

The aims of these workshops were to refine the activities and solidify the findings of the prior phase, and to explore their concrete applicability towards the production of performance material based on several texts, including a scene from my own. More specifically, the activities focused on physical training, vocal training, improvisation, a method of 'scoring' physical actions, and scenic work on the newly written text. The latter involved the creation of two versions of the same scene – featuring three characters, two female and a male – with different performers. The reason for having six participants was precisely that of creating two scenic versions of the same text with different performers, thus testing its openness. Eventually, as five of the participants were female, and two of them were not available for some of the scheduled time, and could not memorise the text appropriately, the two versions were created by only four of them, with two actors swapping. This solution proved even more useful than the planned one, as it allowed me to test how differently the same material worked on the same performer, in varying circumstances of repetition, thus testing the text's performativity.

As a way of introducing the basic principles and concepts underlying the work of this phase, it might be useful to quote them from the workshop notes, as follows:

> **Excerpt 6: Introduction to Ensemble session 1 (from notes)**
>
> Principles. To improvise is both to create material and to react spontaneously to a fixed form (i.e. already created material). To pay mindful attention to an act as it is being performed, engaging the whole body in it, facilitates the emergence of associations that will justify that act dramatically. An act thus becomes action. The difference between action and movement is that the latter lacks a perceivable intention.
>
> Respect and support each other's work. Participants should be mindful of the energy/attention they can give to, or take away from the collective work. Individual training: the main difference between this laboratory and an acting class is that in this laboratory we experiment and learn together aspects of the acting craft through trial and error. Each performer is responsible for his/her own motivations and goals within the work, and can direct his/her own training with the support of the group, by means of concrete propositions (i.e. practical, creative or intellectual contributions).
>
> My role is that of a facilitator/dramaturg who suggests activities in line with the research, participates in most of them, and acts as the first spectator and critic for all of them.

Most of the above did find concrete application during the sessions, and although in the end the vast majority of the activities were suggested by myself, as lead investigator, it remained my responsibility to moderate this role within the ensemble, by taking on the function of facilitator, discussing the feasibility of possible proposals from the participants, yet not relying upon them. Their necessary contributions were their performance materials, whose spontaneous nature was to be encouraged and tested. In other words, as long as neither I nor the actors directed the results, and as long as the setup was consistent with the research principles, the origin of the activity through which the work was created, that is, who or where the suggestion came from – whether it was brought in by me or a participant, taken from a book or devised by the group – had little importance. What mattered was the consistency of the process of reacting to it; workshop

activities were ultimately stimuli (of the nature discussed in Part One, subchapters 1.1 and 2.1), to be processed by each of us individually, yet as parts of a collective endeavour.

Another concept that was challenging for the participants to grasp was that of 'impulse'. As this word, along with 'stimulus' and 'reaction', was to be often referred to during the work, I shall try to explain my take on that as well. Looking back at the various notes from the sessions, I can catch myself using the term indistinctively to define at times the stimulus, and at times the reaction; at the time of writing I believe that impulse might be what occurs in between the two, which links the stimulus to the reaction. All these seem appropriate however, whenever the reaction is simultaneous, unmediated, and unpremeditated. So when writing that, 'impulse is intended as a spontaneous physical/vocal reaction to a stimulus, which could be internal (i.e. inner sensation), or external (i.e. other actors, text, audience etc.)', the statement still seems correct, since in the spontaneous state, the impulse *is* the reaction (see also Grotowski 1975:16-17). At other times however, I associated impulse with stimulus too, half stating half paraphrasing that an impulse is a clear and suggestive stimulus, from which to start a chain of personal associations (Barba and Wethal 1972). Ultimately, I believe an impulse to be an internal phenomenon, working as both stimulus and reaction, both input and output: a processing. Although actor Ingemar Lindh refers to impulse as a physical phenomenon, involving the nervous and muscular systems, and to 'intention' as the mental activity preceding it (Lindh 2013; Camilleri 2008), I still find it useful to consider impulse as an internal processing, which is both psychic and physiological; this processing involves intention, which is expressed through a physical action, but whose legibility or rational justification may occur after the event, as interpretation. Such interpretative acts belong to both the actor and the spectator, but might not be the same between them. For the purposes of this study, the risk of considering intention as an altogether aprioristic mental phenomenon is that the acting upon it may fall into representation. A participant of the early workshops seemed to have glimpsed at this quality in her actions, when developed out of a spontaneous impulse *contextualised in the imagination*, and defined the incident a 'meaningful impulse'. One major form of external stimulation to be explored during the ensemble phase of the workshops were thus written texts, whose processing by the actors would turn them into internal stimuli, impulses and so on.

## Physical training ('physical impulse work'):

The physical training remained the same as that developed during the earlier phase, with minor improvements and additions. It still aimed at cultivating body responsiveness, and with it the expressive potential of postures, expressions, movements and gestures, but with the awareness that such responsiveness depended on a certain type of 'presence'. For the purposes of this work, I defined presence as a type of listening, of paying attention with the whole body to one's inner and outer processes, such as breath, sensation, posture, gesture and movement, and the environment's, which include the stage partners, the space, and the audience. The strengthening of this quality of being during the work allows what is often referred to as 'thinking with the body', and 'muscle memory', which in turn permits the noticing and recording of impulses and associations. Presence is therefore considered a concrete ongoing activity, like an inner searching process manifesting in physical reactions that, thanks to this 'attending' of the whole body-mind, also facilitate the emergence of associations and thence of sense.

But of course, this is all rather theoretical; in practice, such approach can easily lead the actor to a wrong type of self-consciousness, to preoccupations with what one has been doing or is about to do, rather than to the 'simple act' of noticing the passing moment and reacting to it. A concrete way to approach this problem was to question what generates an impulse in the first place. I said already that it is the stimulus that generates an impulse, but how does one actually experience it (especially when there is no apparent or concrete manifestation of such stimulation)? An answer was to be found in the idea of 'resistance'.

> **Excerpt 7: personal notes on impulse and resistance**
>
> Pre-occupations: what triggers the impulse in the first place? I cannot expect actors to feel their bodies so subtly to recognise an inner impulse. Plus it's too generic. Impulse comes from a resistance. Some kind of tension and release. A dramatic conflict already, perhaps, at the level of neurons, nerves, muscles. See 'push and pull' exercise in pairs (Bridge of Winds 2018).

During the workshops with the Bridge of Winds and the Odin Teatret I realised how concrete the idea of a dramatic action involving a resistance could be. It is the same basic principle of dramatic conflict underpinning both acting and playwriting, at least since Aristotle: an action is dramatic when its intention encounters an obstacle, and thus

generates conflict. Similarly, also a body that is made to face a resistance, be it real or imaginary, can become dramatic. To work against a resistance seemed therefore a concrete enough task to give an actor during the physical training.

The exercises brought forward from the earlier phase, which loosely involved this idea were several. The most common were placed in a sequence as follows.

'Scan and Release', in which participants were asked to scan mentally their body for tensions, whilst either standing or walking, and then release those parts that felt most tense through free movement stretches, eventually allowing sighs and vocalisations to happen alongside the physical release. As previously mentioned, performers still had to engage the whole body in the act, paying attention to it and thus allowing associations to arise.

**Image 26: Continuity and 'Scan and Release' exercise (Video 26)**

This exercise was normally followed by another called 'Opening up', during which the movements and/or vocalisations were to be influenced by each other's movements and/or vocalisations as well (i.e. 'contact work').

**Image 27: 'Opening Up' exercise (Video 27)**

Then participants could be asked to find the same rhythm of walk, and then negotiate as a group changes of rhythm, as well as stops and starts, again letting associations work on them, but maintaining the parameters of the exercise (i.e. 'Rhythmic walks').

**Image 28: '30 seconds moves' and 'Rhythmic Walk' (Video 28)**

Another useful exercise added to the series was called the '30 seconds moves' – directly taken from my experiences at the Odin Teatret. With this exercise the performers have to complete a series of movements in exactly 30 seconds each (e.g. 3 steps forward and 3 backwards, one to the left and one to the right, then to sit on the floor and come back up without using the hands). The difficulty consisted in maintaining a flow of uninterrupted slow movement (i.e. not 'scattered' with pauses or changes of speed) in conditions of precarious balance.

The concept of resistance came up very clearly during this last exercise, as the requirement to maintain a constant and unnaturally slow motion triggered in the actors the association of moving inside some thick material, such as foam, or mud or the like; this idea worked as a concrete – albeit imaginary – resistance to an otherwise everyday act. This was also a clear example of how an improvisation, exploiting the idea of resistance, can start from either a technical task (i.e. 'walk for 30 seconds each step') or from an image/theme (i.e. 'imagine walking inside a pool of thick foam'), and reach similar results. Approaching improvisation both ways, however, helps both the actors who need to improve their use of imagination, and those needing to gain more control over their bodies.

Eventually, the 'scan and release' exercise was similarly augmented by the image of the 'tricky puppeteer', whereby participants were asked to imagine being pulled or pushed three-dimensionally in the space by an imaginary puppeteer handling strings and sticks, attached to different parts of their bodies (e.g. wrists, knees, or wrapped around their hips), thus creating resistances, points of tension and release, 'physical conflicts'. Performers had to move in space consistently with the idea/association of being pulled or pushed in specific directions, triggered by impulses of specific intensity, originating in specific parts of the body.

**Image 29: 'Puppeteers' exercise**
**(Video 29)**

Finally, another exercise that made concrete use of the idea of resistance, was one that I had learned years before at an acting workshop in London, led by Grzegorz Bral, director of Song of the Goat Theatre (Bral 2014). I named my adaptation of it 'Poking', as it basically involves working in pairs, with one performer physically 'poking' the other, who must react spontaneously and adequately to the touch.[40] The exercise is structured as a sort of physical dialogue, whereby one performer is the 'receiver', who mostly 'listens' (with the whole body) and replies, and the other is the 'giver', who mostly provides physical stimuli, although taking in the partner's prior responses.

**Image 30: 'Poking' exercise**
**(Video 30)**

The spontaneous and adequate nature of these responsive movements, strictly linked to the clarity of the stimulations, were not assessed in terms of results (i.e. in terms of an objectively right or wrong reaction), but rather 'organically', according to a certain quality of movement, related to suppleness, difficult to define linguistically… This quality was self-evidently ranging between two extremes, one that I would label as 'tightened', and the other 'indulgent'. The former is a reaction that does not allow the full expression of its potential, and often manifests in a rather discontinuous and jerky movement, engaging only a section of the body; the latter is a reaction that overdoes the

[40] Another possible source of the exercise can be traced back to Laban Movement Analysis, as I experienced it during a workshop (ALRA 2018); more in Laban and Ullmann (1971), and Ewan and Sagovsky (2018).

stimulation received, like a movement that 'acts' the reaction rather than experiencing it. The adequate response would therefore be an unpremeditated movement that takes in the momentum of the stimulation received, and lets it unfold freely through the body until the effects are felt, no more nor less. It normally manifests in a continuous movement engaging the whole body, with a clear beginning and end.

## Vocal training and improvisations ('vocal impulse work'):

As previously mentioned, the vocal training became gradually more sophisticated, involving a more meticulous work on resonators, tempo, volume and articulation. From this rather 'technical work', normally lasting up to an hour, we would gradually move on to individual vocal improvisations, and thence to group vocal improvisations. It was during these improvisations that the impulse work on voice unfolded: the participants determined the manner of their speeches in reaction to the sound of the words, the rhythm of the text, their bodily-vocal sensations whilst speaking it, and so on: all of these aspects acting as stimuli. During the group vocal improvisations, the stimulation became more complex, as individuals worked off each other as well, just like in the physical 'contact work' already described.

The vocal training was done collectively, although many activities required me to work individually with each performer whilst the others observed, to allow closer supervision, and because of the difficulty of working when different voices overlap. Although it was not easy for everybody to keep attending to the work when not actively involved in it, it was clear how observing each other, in the different ways of addressing the challenges of an exercise for example, provided insights into the work and strengthened the group. It also gave everyone an audience, besides myself, through which to assess one's personal work. It was for reasons like these that the handling of 'presence' in the room was such an important aspect to take care of.

The work normally started with simple vocalisations, to warm up the voice and reach the required resonations. Then these vocalisations would be replaced by the memorised text. At this point the changes of resonation, tempo and volume were to be 'contrived' according to my indications, as the 'vocal conductor'. The next phase required the actor to contrive similar changes autonomously, and finally, once a certain range was mastered, changes were to be triggered by spontaneous impulses emerging during the repetition of

the text. This was normally the process of transition from an exercise into an improvisation.

**Image 31: Vocal training – vowels and resonation (Video 31)**


**Image 32: Vocal training and Group 'speech improvisation' (Video 32)**

It is during an improvisation that the actor researches and discovers spontaneously the performance possibilities of a text, letting speech be freely influenced by the musicality and rhythm of the sequence of words, the associations they evoke, and their possible meanings. In doing this, it is also important that the actor attempts to listen to the sound of the voice as it is projected in the space, therefore not 'internally', whilst gradually paying attention to the meaning of the words that are being uttered. This 'attending' or attention, as we have seen in Part One, allows the encounter between vocal/speech-act and emerging association, thus transforming it into a dramatic action that 'makes sense', and can affect the audience. All the previous points are also valid for the group vocal improvisations, which often ensued the individual ones. When working on voice together as a group, the performers reacted to both their unrelated texts and each other, thus creating connections of different kinds, semantic and rhythmical, sometimes like a dialogue, sometimes more like a chorus. What was important for me at this stage was not necessarily to create a logical scene or performance out of these improvisations, but to test their capacity to produce associative material, which could be worked on in composition.

As with the physical training, these vocal act/ions can be approached either technically or imaginatively; what is important is that they produce clear and spontaneous associations to the performer-repeater of the text. An example of a vocal improvisation approached through an imaginary task would be to 'drill the ceiling with the text', its technical equivalent could be to 'speak the text from the upper resonator' (for an example of this see also Video 53).

**Image 33: From vocal training to improvisation (Video 33)**

## More on the process of 'scoring' physical actions:

A lot of time was spent practising the development of movement possibilities, and crafting them into repeatable sequences that could be edited and juxtaposed with others, and/or with speech, into a scenic montage. These were the so-called 'études', after Meyerhold (Law and Gordon 1996): not yet scenic material, but a compositional exercise, rather technical and chorographic, whose material derived from a short physical improvisation. Just like with the vocal training, also during these physical experiments we discovered in practice how important it is to learn to maintain a continuous flow of movement, both during the exercises and the improvisations, as well as in their repetitions. Continuity of movement almost 'forces' the performer to let herself be carried by the body, allowing 'thinking' to happen through it, and so, if not altogether bypassing the mind, certainly eluding its rational, representative operations. The mind still operates, in fact, quite crucially to 'check over movement', but without planning it. Developing this ability facilitates physical dexterity, an 'organic control' over one's movements, and therefore a sort of inherent precision, revealing itself as the condition for the re-emergence of spontaneous associations out of a repeated movement sequence. Additionally, such precision gives the actor (and the director) the possibility to compose the physical actions even further, that is, to edit them according to the varying dramaturgical needs, whilst retaining the basic outline and therefore also the link with the originating impulses.

Continuity of action seemed therefore to be a condition of spontaneity. This does not mean that the actor should never pause during performance, of course, but that any pause should rather be like an outward stillness fostered by an ongoing internal movement, a 'stillness in motion', like a 'frozen waterfall' whereby 'all the drive of the movement is there, but stopped' (Grotowski in Wolford and Schechner 2001:303). This principle in

many ways adheres with the condition of continuous present already touched upon in Part One, when discussing repetition in relation to Deleuze. This continuity of movement, in outer stillness, is provided, in my experience, precisely by this ongoing attending to one's body and voice in context (i.e. in time and space), by this remaining engaged in some kind of mindful activity, which in our case is mostly crafted, that is fixed, and therefore involves its mindful repetition.

The process of scoring could start with a group exercise similar to the 'movement vocabulary' described in the previous section, whereby different movements would be individually composed, then placed in a sequence and repeated. These movements are in principle the same for all, but of course in practice each participant would find slightly different solutions to the same task; these are both 'technical' instructions (e.g. 'run on tiptoes', or 'walk only in straight lines' etc.), and imaginative ones (e.g. simple everyday acts, such as 'explore three ways of stopping someone', and more abstract/expressive ones, such as 'express mercy – or fear etc. – through a clear gesture'), which in tandem help developing physical and imaginative skills. Once each movement is created on impulse (i.e. without premeditation), it would then be crafted through repetition. Afterwards, each participant would be asked to arrange each movement/gesture into a smooth and precise sequence, without thinking of an overall narrative and – most importantly – without adding transitions, that is, new physical phrases inserted purely to allow a movement to follow suit from another. Each section would need to have a clear dramaturgical purpose, real or imaginary, and not purely technical; thus only adaptations are possible, that is, edits that neither add sections, nor completely transform the existing ones.

Once these 'physical scores' were crafted, again through repetition, each participant would then learn them in a more creative way, by means of the already described 'attentive' or 'mindful' repetition (or 'contemplative' in Deleuzian words), which allows new associations to emerge. By now associations would emerge not only from each unit of movement, but also from their combination, as well as from the whole section, which thus becomes like a meaningful physical phrase, or a journey, with its own overall purpose, meaning or narrative. However, the actor needs only to pay attention to its accurate execution, and not to its meaning, as it is precisely through this type of repetition that the associations will emerge spontaneously. If the meaning is thought of in advance,

the chances are that the actor will instinctively aim at expressing it, and therefore at representing it through the movement s/he already has. This instead is the moment at which the actor must trust her body-memory, and let the body conduct the proceedings, forgetting about the meanings previously found, and abandoning herself in the repetition, letting, in other words, the body remember and allowing the mind to forget.

Once a section is mastered, the actor can be asked to introduce innumerable changes to its form: for example in its scale (scaling it up/down by e.g. 50%), tempo (e.g. slowing it down by 80%), direction (directing the movement somewhere else in space), vigour (more or less energetic) and so on. These edits can apply to the whole or to any combination of its parts, which, by having been individually crafted, would remain familiar and also quite autonomous despite all the successive interventions.

**Image 34: Exploration of a given movement vocabulary (Video 34)**

**Image 35: Crafting the physical score (Video 35)**

The main research question at this point was for me to find a way of applying this method to a text, the given stimulus meant to trigger impulsive physical reactions. The physical score, in other words, had to be created out of improvisations based on the text, yet based not on its representation, but on its mental or vocal repetition. Repetition was in fact the way to be investigated, to retain a link with the material that was not a representative link, and yet not an arbitrary one either – i.e. resulting from the juxtaposition of arbitrarily chosen movements (e.g. Video 35), although 'chance' often produces effective synchronicities (e.g. Video 16).[41] In short, I really wanted to investigate the already described process of *internalisation* of a text through repetition. Several possibilities were ideated to this end, some of which had already been explored during the tester phase (e.g. Videos 14 and 25), although not always fixing the results (e.g. Videos 10 and 11).

[41] See also Cull (2012) for a survey of 'chance operations' in the works of Cage, Living Theatre and Goat Island.

Gestures or movements in space could be triggered by mental/internal impulses, resulting in physical improvisations based on the silent reading, mental reminiscing (as in Stanislavski 1968) or actual listening to individual words, verbs, sentences or whole sections of the actual text, or based on mental associations evoked by them (which, often more effectively, tended to produce less naturalistic renderings). Or they could be triggered by vocal impulses, as physical responses to the spoken repetition of the text, with its possible sonic variations and rhythmic progressions. Movements and gestures would this way be triggered by stimuli that, being essentially vocal, could be considered, to nit-pick, more on the physical/technical/external end of the 'range of immanence' going from body to mind, rather than the mental/imaginative/internal one. Approaching the latter was often problematic, as the mental act is more likely to cause acting to fall out of immanence and into representation. In reality however, there seem to be always very subjective combinations of mental and physical impulses unconsciously at play (hence their labelling as 'psychophysical'), but it was still useful to separate them artificially, to provide concrete and distinguishable starting points to the exercises and improvisations.

Another great difficulty of this process was the final layering of speech on top of the movement sequence, which required the complex coordination of the two (see again Video 25, and the recording of the first work-demonstration in Video 37, mins 27 to 36). In this rather contrived and multi-layered arranging process, an actor would in fact often tend to interrupt the movement whilst speaking, unable to 'play both scores' simultaneously. At this point, the importance of the earlier exercises, aimed at training body-mind memory and continuity, and at coordinating movement with speech, became evident. It was also at this point that some of the most interesting discoveries happened, in terms of the surprising associations and unexpected meanings arising from such deconstruction and montage of movement, voice and text. The repetition of the final individual score, eventually coordinated with those of the other performers, the scene and its objects, would determine the so called 'performance score', whose repetition in front of an audience would be the performance.

### Scenic work on the experimental text:

The work of this ensemble phase also focused on the staging of a section of the experimental text (*Love and Repetition* in Appendix); due to time constraints, it was in fact not feasible to work on the whole text. Scene Two was the preferred choice of the

majority of the participants, who expressed their preference out of a selection of five scenes that I considered most open, theatrical and performative. These scenes were 'shortlisted' also for their ambiguity: they triggered in me only blurred ideas about staging, and seemed therefore the most appropriate (and challenging) to test precisely because less likely to induce predetermined interpretations.

This scenic work explored the application of the methods previously developed to the acting and staging of the selected text, testing the extent to which both the acting method and the text actually facilitated spontaneity in performance. The initial explorations and improvisations involved the whole group, but gradually as the work progressed, and only four performers committed to learning all the required lines by heart, the sessions were divided between the 'general work', involving everyone (and described in the earlier paragraphs), and the 'scene work', involving the remaining four actors.

The 'scene work' called for the double staging of the same scene with a different combination of performers. The 'characters' involved in the scene are three, as specified in the directions: two female and a male. However, I only had one male actor in the group; to avoid confusion, and superfluous readings of the text – its basic action being a man's contemplation over *his* actual and potential love of women – I rejected the idea of a female actor playing the male role, or vice-versa, just to reshuffle the acting group. This possibly conventional 'genderization' of the cast was actually meant to challenge gender-related assumptions: it is the text itself that should make such roles ambiguous, by not identifying them (i.e. the relation character-actor), by shifting the narrative voice, by not allocating the lines of speech, and so on. The dramatic personae are more like 'figures' than characters: they are actually labelled as 'speakers' by the text. In short, the text was written is such a way that the actors are not meant to represent the characters they refer to in their speeches. Eventually, two of the four actors played the same scene twice, although not necessarily the same lines; they developed different reactions, and therefore produced different scenic material for each 'replica', which actually reinforced my assumptions about the text's openness, theatricality and performativity.

The process started with vocal improvisations played by the whole group first, and then by the two groups of three, as required by the text. Out of these early improvisations – which essentially involved the reading of the lines on impulse, each actor reacting simultaneously to the text and one another – interpretative patterns started to emerge: the

performers found certain chains of associations that stimulated them to speak certain lines rather than others. As soon as the whole text could be memorised, the same process was repeated, and the resulting patterns gradually fixed, which eventually determined the allocation of the lines of speech, according to the actors' earlier spontaneous choices.

Admittedly, at this point of the research, I was still unsure whether this was an effective way to proceed, or whether I should let improvisation continue indefinitely, as I had done during the tester workshops, and thus retain the fluidity of characterisation, which seemed necessary to avoid representation. I was still tentative, in other words, despite the work already done on 'scoring', between improvisation and repetition. The dilemma had to dissolve quickly, however, as it was clear that my research meant to prove how repetition could be a reliable framework for spontaneity, alternative to representation. Other doubts nevertheless arose – even more clearly after deciding for the allocation of the lines – about what else needed fixing and how. More specifically, my questions were: once the allocation of the lines is fixed, allowing each performer their repetition, should movements also be fixed, thus allowing the creation (and repetition) of physical scores? And what about speech? And how should the three prospective simultaneous scores (one per performer) be fixed together? Vague or irresolute answers will have produced a hybrid method of scenic composition, essentially no different from any other based on directorial 'blocking'.

Following the vocal improvisations with the allocated lines, the improvisations continued, gradually allowing the performers to physicalize their spontaneous reactions to the text and each other. To do so, they were invited to apply the techniques learned during the training, however now the process of fixing was far more complex than in the 'études', when each performer worked individually on a piece of monologue. First of all, the text presented dialogic sections, and so the improvisations necessarily involved three actors working simultaneously on the same scene. As a result, the material created during these improvisations, namely the physical reactions, depended not only on the personal associations of each individual performer, but also on their simultaneous interplay. This caused difficulties in their identifying their physical reactions, and therefore in fixing them, as each actor naturally tended to focus much more on each other, partly losing control of their own individual responses. Also, the actors started to expect the reactions of their partners in the scene, as many of their own derived from these. Ultimately, as

there was no alternative available yet, equivalent to the previous process of individual internal processing (of reactions and associations, and their fixing in repetition), I intervened, blocking parts of the scene using my own interpretation of the actors' spontaneous reactions (as exemplified by the graphics in Video 36).

**Image 36: Discovering Scene Two**
**(Video 36)**


The result was that the final staging, although originated by the actors' improvisations, was directed rather conventionally; the movements were identified only in general, and learned according to the broad intentions previously found in the improvisations, rather than as a composition of precise and repeatable acts, or segments of movement, each with its own association (for visual reference, see the two 'Storyboards' in the Appendix). In other words, the process missed a step or two, whereby the actors could have learned their sequences also independently of each other, through individual repetition and crafting, to then play them again in coordination with each other, thus creating a 'scenic montage', rather than an interpretative blocking of the scene. The reality was that this process required far more time than I had previously anticipated leading up to the work-demonstration, hence the resort to compromise.

The final staging therefore lacked the necessary accuracy and detail, as its composition eluded in part the 'scoring' that could have allowed 'creative repetition' in performance. The process was nevertheless rich in insights, both for me and the actors: the text produced quite coherent yet totally unanticipated re-actions, manifesting new possible meanings even to myself; the allusions created by the acting never really managed to delimit the thing alluded to, thus never fully representing it, which proved suggestive rather than confusing. I ultimately think that, beside the quality of the acting and directing, the 'sliding quality' of the text – whereby the events referred to fade in and out of each other, within an existent linguistic stream enacting my original stream of consciousness – was decisive.

## The performative work-demonstration:

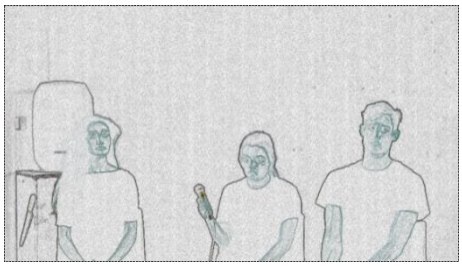
The main aspects of this ensemble phase of the work were eventually condensed into a final work-demonstration just over an hour long, which was performed twice in front of an audience of scholars (lecturers and researchers form LJMU Drama and English departments), theatre practitioners, and non-specialists. The structure of the demonstration interspersed discursive introductions by myself and practical-performative demonstrations by the actors, as a way of mirroring the actual research methodology that led to it. The transcript of the event (timed), along with its video recording, are available in the Appendix. The work-demonstration was also followed by an open discussion about thirty minutes long (preceded by a 5-minute interval), involving me, the actors and the audience. The talk was mostly prompted by the spectators' questions to the group, and their shared comments about the work. About thirty audience members attended the first demonstration of the 11th of June 2018 at the JH Makin Drama Centre, whilst ten people attended the second demonstration of the 19th of June, at the John Lennon Arts Centre. The former event was produced internally, within the drama department at LJMU, and the audience attended on invitation; the latter was commissioned by the organisers of the CoLab, a showcase of practice-led research at LJMU, whose programming was entirely independent.

**Image 37: Work-demonstration 1**
**(Video 37)**

The work presented was roughly the same between the two demonstrations, although only four performers were available for the second additional date. The main differences concerned the performance of the scene: as in the first showcase two quite different versions were produced and staged, for the second date we decided to experiment even further, playing one of the two versions of the scene only vocally, and staging the other in the same way again, only attempting to separate the individual scores from one another, to then re-create the scene as their montage. These choices were partly dictated by our

willingness to keep the work-demonstration an opportunity for ongoing research in front of an audience, and partly because of the space limitations in the new venue.

**Image 38: Work-demonstration 2**
**(Audio project 38)**



Among the several insights drawn from these two sharings, the most important, besides the already mentioned need to address the practicalities of the scoring process applied to a whole play, was the recognition that a different approach to the work itself might be needed, on my part, to mitigate its demands and severity. Although the general feedback, from both participants and audiences, demonstrated the positive impact such holistic approach has on acting, it also evidenced the challenges and the dedication required of the actors, which could indeed discourage participation (samples of the participants' feedback are available in Appendix). I shall discuss in the next chapter how this point had been addressed.

Another connected insight concerned the acknowledging of a clear methodological difference between 'experimenting' and 'rehearsing', which could be said to mirror the different expectations associated with a 'work-demonstration', compared to a 'performance'. A work-demonstration should, in my opinion, retain the research drive of the experiment, which is what actually demonstrates the research, and which by performing it, manifests its strengths and shortcomings, its methods and rationale, as well as its rather spontaneous results. In my view, this should be true of performance as well, provided that a sufficient competence is acquired over the material that is performed (i.e. the dramatic composition), in order to be respectful of the audience's rightful expectations of entertainment. This mastering of the material, be it a composition or another task-based process, such as an exercise, allows the material to work, quite simply, like a tool used effectively for its purpose. The fault, mine primarily, affecting the process leading up to the performative work-demonstration, was precisely that of confounding its purpose, thus oscillating between wishing to demonstrate the research methods on one side, and their

effectiveness on the other, and by wishing to demonstrate concrete results perhaps too prematurely, risk rehearsing them. In other words, my preoccupation with demonstrating the value of a Theatre of Repetition may be said to emulate, if not instigate, the actors' preoccupation to perform effectively: both may be distracted by the forged security of representing intended or previously achieved results, instead of trusting the already chosen path of repetition.

### 3.2.3: The Acting Research Lab

Motivated by the creative challenges still facing the research, and by the willingness of some of the participants to continue working together, I decided to resume the workshops soon after the summer break following the work-demonstrations. Aware that more robust results may only come through training, I ideated these sessions as open-ended, and more regular and frequent than before. I negotiated the availability of those who expressed interest in taking part, and established a regular schedule right from the start. By this time, I had also secured a studio space, for three consecutive evenings a week, of up to four hours each. The plan was to form another regular group, and run weekly sessions that would involve actor training and performance composition, according to the principles set out so far. I named this program, which ran from September 2018 to May 2019, the Acting Research Lab (ARL).

I considered 12 hours of training a week to be the minimum requirement to justify the continuation of the research, that is, to realistically expect to achieve, within a reasonable timeframe, those results that remained out of reach at the end of the earlier phase. Soon enough however, I realised how ambitious, and sadly impractical, was my plan. A few weeks into this new phase in fact, I found myself with only one regular attendant out of an initial group of three, although soon enough we were joined by a new participant, who stayed until the end, but only for one session a week. Throughout this period, I had been promoting the 'Lab' quite extensively, via social media and online casting platforms such as Mandy, hoping to recruit new actors, but with limited lasting results. It was difficult to put across my aims effectively, and justify such commitment to a potential participant.

Nonetheless, the Acting Research Lab did happen: it lasted several weeks, and comprised 54 sessions overall. Over this period, an integrated method of actor training was defined, based on spontaneity principles, and the seeds for further research planted. The latest

explorations on voice and the scoring of speech (described in a later sub-section on voice), revealed a new line of enquiry, regarding the performative potential of vocal composition for actors, which shall be outlined in the conclusion.

## The ARL and its ethics/aesthetics:

To describe the entirety of the research carried out throughout this phase is quite a challenge; the work itself was definitely intense, indeed too intense for some of the participants, and yet it was not characterised by that counterproductive intensity marking the ensemble phase of the research, for which I was partly responsible. There is a level of intensity, indeed of dedication, that I believe is intrinsically required by this type of work, which I could only attempt at mitigating through a supportive and empathic, yet not beguiling attitude. Whilst previously I admit I might have transferred a sense of pressure to the actors, as we were approaching the work-demonstrations, through my own 'performance anxiety', during this phase of the work there was no such pressure at all to succeed, but only to attempt. Regardless of the type or scope of the possible outcomes, I still needed the research to proceed, and expected a similar drive from the participants. This translated in the definition of a certain shared 'ethos', whose pillars were a reliable and respectful attitude, and a consistent personal motivation. Only motivations compatible with the aims of the research (i.e. the 'aesthetics of spontaneity') would in fact lead the participants to perceive their limitations, and to gradually want to challenge them, rather than to indulge in what is easily within reach.[42] Written motivations were therefore privately collected, but not to be shared or analysed, of course, but because I was convinced that their personal formulation would have raised the awareness, in each participant, of the possible implications of participating, and with them, of any reservation. Furthermore, to analyse one's stated motivations would have been quite unnecessary, as these aspects manifest themselves spontaneously during the work (again not so much for me to notice, but for the participant).

This work on spontaneity is effectively a work on one's self, carried out through acting techniques comprising exercises and improvisations, aimed at an aesthetic result. These activities may be quite demanding sometimes for an actor, physically or psychologically, depending on the type of resistances that the individual encounters through them (i.e.

[42] I refer to limitations of the expressive potential, inhibiting spontaneity.

physical/vocal or mental resistances).[43] These in turn depend on the level of skill possessed compared to the level of challenge faced. According to Csikszentmihalyi (2002), a state of flow, that is, of 'optimal experience,' can only be achieved if a challenging activity is carried out with the appropriate level of skill; the conjunction of skill and challenge, in other words, must generate a resistance that is not too feeble nor too hard, otherwise the actor risks feeling either boredom or anxiety, or shades of related, not necessarily positive, nor creative states. We have seen previously how the notion of 'flow' approximates, if not altogether coincides with my understanding of 'spontaneity'. The resistance, on the other hand, is the particular limit that the actor needs to identify and wish to surpass, accepting that that can only happen once the appropriate level of skill is acquired. These resistances, as we have seen earlier discussing 'impulse', are the personal conflicts that the actor experiences through dramatic means.

Ultimately, I believe that we were working very much along these lines, which explains the often-charged emotional content of the sessions, at times gratifying, other times frustrating. I tried to point this out to the participants during the sessions, also reiterating my role of facilitator of a collaborative laboratory, rather than that of an authoritarian director, thus attempting to instil in them a sense of personal responsibility for one's share of the work, which also meant responsibility for one's own training, so critical to ensemble theatrical endeavours. This was what presumably caused the 'natural process of selection', which nonetheless seemed coherent with the research methodology, despite its possible anachronism (with this I allude to the possibility that this kind of collaborative and collective work methodology, originated in the first half of the 19th century, might not be as viable in the contemporary cultural milieu).

## A bidirectional system of training:

As I carried on examining accounts on actor training by various theatre practitioners (such as – to recap – Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba, Jacques Lecoq, Kristin Linklater, Stephen Wangh, Carmelo Bene and many others), and experiencing training myself (primarily at the Odin Teatret and with LISPA), I was also experimenting with the resultant findings in the workshops. I continued to search, in the experience of theatre masters, for established techniques that could at least in theory be consistent with my

[43] Although, as we have seen, in reality these work always in combination, that is, psychophysically.

aims, in order to test them in practice, along with the other methods autonomously devised, through the ARL. The result was an innumerable set of activities comprising training exercises, and methods of improvisation and composition, that would be unreasonable to describe in full, but that can nonetheless be grouped under one organising principle, found through the ARL and then applied to it, of a 'bidirectional system' for spontaneity training.

This system quite simply implies the combination of both technique and imagination, and it is aimed at developing physical and vocal skills on the one hand, and imagination on the other. This is not banal: through the work on associations in fact, it became clear how these two facets were strictly connected, and how a deficiency on either side would result in a deficiency on the other. By having experienced directly how a physical act may trigger an image, it became a question of integrating this approach with the more conventional one, whereby a physical act is the result of an image. Gradually therefore, activities were divided between two types: to those originating from a technical task (physical and/or vocal) in order to tap into the imagination, were added those originating with an image, concept or theme in order to reach its external expression. The aim of such a twofold training approach would be to reduce the 'consciousness gap' between the mind and the body, which seems to be the essential condition for increased spontaneity.

The main advance of this new phase was therefore in terms of its awareness of how each task fitted within the overall context of the ARL: its methodology ultimately combining a system for spontaneity training with one for scenic composition, both relying on methods of improvisation and repetition.

*The main research activities of the ARL*

Given that a relaxed (yet not collapsing) body is normally a more responsive body, and that a lot of tension is often accumulated in the neck and shoulders area and the spine, I used to initiate these sessions with simple exercises meant to flex these parts. These early stretches however, gradually became a sequence of 'movement isolations', whereby participants were asked to move only a part of the body at any one time, keeping the other limbs still. This way 'stretches' of the neck, for example, by being consciously isolated form the shoulders and the arms (as well as the rest of the body), would gradually become

'neck improvisations', through which the actor explored all the movement possibilities of the neck, along with the relative impulses and associations.

**Image 39: Early body isolations**
**(Video 39)**

Thus it was that I recognised the compositional potential of this physical exercise, whose principles are basically equivalent – I came to realise – to Grotowski's famous 'Plastics' exercises (Grotowski 1975).[44] Such potential lies in the fact that the actor, once capable of isolating and improvising with each body-part, and then of coordinating them, develops a strong awareness of the compositional possibilities of the whole. Incidentally, this method of 'body-composition' cultivates similar skills to those a performer belonging to the codified theatrical traditions of the East would develop, such as body control, agility, concentration, sense of rhythm and shape, responsiveness and so on. The main difference was that I was not working with any codification, but looked for deriving postures, gestures and movements directly from the performer's improvisations (an illuminating example of body codification is the *Nāṭya Śāstra*, the Sanskrit text on the performing arts, possibly the Asian equivalent to Aristoteles's *Poetics*, which lists all the required gestures and body positions that a traditional actor would have to master, along with their significations; Bharatamuni and Kumar 2010).

As we experimented with these 'body isolations', which were basically Grotowski's 'Plastics' (outlined in detail in Wangh 2000), I extended them also to the main organs in the face, starting with the eyes. These isolations were initially meant to address the issue of the actors 'going blank' with the eyes, which almost inevitably happened every time they focused inwardly too much in the attempt to perform complex or pedantic tasks. The

[44] Grotowski himself derived them from 'Dalcroze and other classical European methods' (Grotowski 1975:107). Although mentioned and described in several sources, I had previously considered the 'Plastics' as a form of 'heightened training' specific and organic to the context it was developed in (i.e. Grotowski's Teatr Laboratorium), and therefore not replicable outside of it. 'When our investigation reveals and confirms someone else's flash of intuition, we are filled with humility. We realise that theatre has certain objective laws and that fulfilment is possible only within them' Grotowski (1975:24).

problem of the actor's 'spacing out', or persistently staring over and beyond the spectator, which I noticed in the earlier phases of the work, was also raised during the Q&A following the first work-demonstration. Later, these exercises actually became exercises for the facial mask, not too dissimilar in principle from Kathakali's *Navarasas* (the nine codified emotions and relative facial expressions).

**Image 40 top left: Eyes 'isolations' and improvisation (Video 40)**

**Image 41 bottom left: Eyes to neck spine and space (Video 41)**

**Image 42 right: Face masks (Video 42)**

It can be noticed therefore how exercises initially meant simply to address rather 'technical' problems (stiff necks, inexpressive eyes etc.), were transformed, through the work on associations, into compositional exercises, whereby the actor is able to craft quite literally every single action of her body. My references to the Asian traditions are not meant to claim that I was training the actors in them, but to provide further validation to the principles underlying my research: most of these acting traditions in fact, aim to produce spontaneous emotions through techniques of mindful repetition of fixed choreographies. These may reach such a level of detail as to involve the coordination of micro-movements of the eyes, lips, cheekbone muscles, fingers and so on. The more precise and complex the 'reconstruction of the body', the more precise and complex the emotion triggered by it.

As the actors and I started to grow conscious and confident of the potentialities of these exercises, their complexity also increased. A few weeks into the training therefore, alongside these 'isolations', which could be considered to possess a predominately gestural quality, more complex movements of the whole body in space were added, taken from Grotowski's 'Corporal exercises'. These involved more physically demanding movements, such as rolls, back bents, handstands, bridges and so on. The main principle behind them was to increase the performer's overall mobility, hence expressivity. Although these movements may be very seldom used scenically, they improve

coordination, and the ability to sustain an action with precision and continuity. Just like the 'Plastics', they also help deconstructing the habitual movement patterns of an individual, precisely because of their unconventionality, so that an ordinary walk onstage may become as difficult – and noteworthy – as would be walking on hands.

**Image 43: 'Plastics' and 'Corporal' exercises (Video 43)**


**Image 44: 'Plastics' exploration and commentary (Video 44)**

Once the actor has explored all 'isolations' and a sufficiently challenging range of 'corporals', she could start to combine them at leisure, and improvise. At this point the actor may find several spontaneous associations, which may lure her into imaginary worlds, and thus gradually out of the exercise and into her mind, almost in a state of trance. This 'mental lure' risks turning the exercise into a 'mental improvisation', causing a disconnection: either between mind and physical impulses, marking the beginning of representation, or between the performer's experience and the real world, turning her performance into a private, un-empathic event. Here it is the exercise itself that provides the anchoring points, through its 'details', which 'are only there to help you not to be lost in your imagination' (*Ryszard Cieslak* 1975). Ryszard Cieslak, a leading actor of Grotowski's Teatr Laboratorium, during an interview featured in the film *The Body Speaks* (dir. John Musilli, 1975), further explains what that sentence means: 'It means that you will know that your immediate associations are other; the details help you not to [stub] your action but to look again through them for still another association, and through all this you can see the *first moment* of creation' (ibid., my transcription).

By retaining the details of the exercise, that is, by maintaining its exploratory nature, the process of association is less likely interrupted, creation continues, led by the physical impulses, which are controlled – not in the sense of restricted, but in the sense of overseen, checked over – by the mind. Another way for the actor to remain open is by carrying out these improvisations always in relation, in a sort of dialogue with a partner, which could be someone else in the room, or an object (e.g. the wall, or the floor). Whatever the

strategy, the actor should be able to dwell in her inner states whilst being in the world – noticing feeling in and out simultaneously.

**Image 45: 'Plastics' and 'corporeals' improvisation (Video 45)**

Sections of these improvisations may also be fixed and repeated, thus turning them into 'etudes', short physical compositions. This process would be equivalent to what was described earlier in the section 'Scoring of physical actions'. With these exercises in composition, the actors would train to retain the precision of movement, and to variate the details only when they are clearly defined. These exercises would also facilitate what I previously referred to as 'creative repetition': the repetition of a physical sequence that strengthens old associations and/or triggers new ones, thus allowing new meanings and ever more complex emotions to emerge. As already mentioned however, such repetitions must remain challenging/achievable, and must be 'in relation' with the outer world, or else they will dull the actor's experience, rather than enliven it.

**Image 46a: Sample 'Corporeal étude' (Video 46a)**

**Image 46b: Sample 'Plastics étude' composition process (Video 46b)**

Another possibility discovered through this physical training, was to combine it with vocal work. Whilst 'reminding' the participants to breathe during these exercises – which was a simple way of inducing them to handle their breathing patterns efficiently, by paying attention to them – I would also invite them to allow vocalisations to come out of their physical actions, as if they were 'colouring breath with voice', thus 'painting' the

space around them. The idea was to create 'sound images' equivalent to those created by their moving bodies. Another provocation was to imagine that a blind spectator should be able to enjoy hearing the movements just as much as a deaf spectator would enjoy seeing them (see Video 39). This was therefore not meant to be merely a vocal warm up exercise, but a vocal improvisation at the level of non-articulated sounds.

The spontaneous coordination of vocal and physical acts can produce two remarkable results: it can reinforce and clarify the action and help the expression/release of emotional blocks (or resistances). These aspects are rather difficult to expand in writing, but relevant attempts are shown in Videos 47 and 48.

**Image 47: Voice, resonance and movement (Video 47)**


**Image 48: Voice and movement improvisation (Video 48)**

When a vocal and a physical act spontaneously merge, it is as if they reinforced each other without doubling, revealing the action – and the intention, both to the actor and the spectator – more clearly and more sharply than would either on its own. In short, vocalisations and physicalisations manifest more clearly, particularly at their extremities (beginnings and ends). In addition to this, at particular moments, or I should say postures, these 'contacts' would generate sparks of emotion, by no means related to any given 'content' or 'characterisation', but rather as outbursts of the unconscious.

The sections of continuous movement are mostly 'coloured' by vowels, but can be interjected by consonants whenever the movement displays analogous interruptions, or sharp rhythmic changes. The consonants add complexity to the vocal action, by means of articulation, eventually reflecting the complexity of the movement. As these verbalisations were entirely spontaneous, and not the result of a specific instruction on my part, I seemed to witness at times what the origin of language might have been. They reminded me of Ferdinand de Saussure's own definition of the idea of 'concept', or 'signified', in his *Course in General Linguistics*, which is precisely that of a 'sound-

image' (Saussure 1959). In any case, these free vocal and physical compositions were – at times – very interesting to witness, as they made sense without meaning.

Another rather literal way of working with resistances, was to improvise with opposing movements and unbalancing acts. For example, by beginning an action, say a forward walk, with its opposite, such as a tilting back of the spine; or imagining opposing resistances, as if a tricky puppeteer were pulling/pushing parts of the body; or imagining walking on a thick foam; or finding ways of testing one's balance, by tilting forward to an extreme; or walking displacing the weight, and so on. These exercises are explained more fully in several sources that describe the training at the Odin Teatret (Turner 2004, Barba 1995). Their aims were not dissimilar from those outlined so far, but were particularly useful for the composition of 'dramatic shapes', that is, still images that, because of their underlying opposing forces, conveyed a certain dynamism; they also tended to generate interesting postures to explore vocalisations from.

**Image 49: Oppositions and 'unbalancing acts' (Video 49)**


In the progression from vocalisations to speech, a major problem found during all the earlier workshops was its coordination with movement: how to follow Hamlet's advice to 'suit the action to the word, the word to the action' (*The Tragedy of Hamlet*: Act 3 Scene 2). Several exercises were therefore devised for the coordination of movement and speech, treating the latter in a manner equivalent to the earlier vocalisations: as a flow of already articulated sounds that had to find a rhythmic match with movement. Fearing representation, I was not yet looking for meaningful connections; that is, I was not trying to coordinate movements according to the words' meanings and intentions; I was rather looking for purely rhythmic links, as a way of 'orchestrating' body and speech. Speech was thus laid over simple physical improvisations at first, such as walking at different speeds, matching the speed of speech with that of the walk. Later on, speech was laid over

both ‘Plastics’ and ‘Corporal’ exercises. As before, the spoken texts used were unrelated extracts memorised in advance by the participants.

To ‘facilitate’ these exercises initially, simple rules were introduced, such as that of speaking either when moving, or only once still. When performed in pairs, these rules would be combined, producing interesting results, whereby one actor could take over the partner’s improvisation, or overlap with it, thus effectively creating a dialogue. Such body and speech dialogues were therefore structured around simple rhythmical tasks that once learned, could be improvised with, just like before. The idea was that through the mastering of as many of these compositional devices as possible, the actor could start to improvise with them more effectively, allowing spontaneous association to emerge also from repeated speech, almost like a jazz musician would do with recurring, or given, musical themes.

**Image 50: Coordination of movement - i.e. walk - and speech (Video 50)**

To clarify, these coordinated improvisations of physical acts and speech acts, had two simultaneous aims: a technical aim of achieving the synchronisation of the two layers, and a performative aim of searching, in their interplay, for dramatic actions, again through the noticing of spontaneous associations. In other words, these exercises were both a training device and a structure for improvisation, through which dramatic material could be found, fixed and set aside for a potential composition. Thanks to their being in relation, a physical act will affect the overlapping vocal act, providing, for example, rhythmical shifts and accents through changes of speed, a bouncing of the knees, or of the shoulders, a skip, a sudden stop and start, or change of direction, and so on. The instruction to an actor would be to let the movement lead the speech. What justifies free movement affecting speech is the idea that the exploration of physical freedom can express the freedom of the imagination: the body can provide ideas about the text that the rational brain may not ‘have thought of’ (a similar exercise is also suggested in Linklater

2006:126). Eventually, that would be true of the vocal act too, as the voice is essentially a physical phenomenon; the instruction here would be the reverse, namely to let speech lead movement.

*'Studies of image-action'*

As previously mentioned, the bidirectional quality of the method called for the introduction of a brand-new series of activities, aimed at temporarily disregarding the technical aspects of acting, to focus on the actor's imagination as the starting point (see also the ending notes in Video 48c). I called these activities 'studies of image-action', whereby the initial stimulus would no longer be a technical task, but an image, concept or idea. Obviously, this distinction is purely functional, as this process of the imagination – as we have seen – already happens naturally; however, to isolate it, it was useful to explore its possibilities more in detail. My experiment consisted in simply introducing into the mix other century old acting techniques of imitation and improvisation, many of which derived from European corporeal mime and pantomime traditions. To do so I drew freely from existing literature and case studies, including Jacques Lecoq's practice, which is well documented (Lecoq 2009). These 'studies of image-action' consisted of silent mime and pantomime-like sketches (which I improperly labelled 'imitations'), 'impulsive reactions', which were quick physicalisations of an idea, and 'improvisations', which were more elaborate scenes or explorations of an image or theme.

The 'imitation exercises' were particularly useful, I found, because although they may sometimes lean towards the representation of an action, say a climbing of a wall, they prompted the actor to search for effective physical solutions to a concrete problem, which was that of not having, in this case, a physical wall to rely on in the climbing. These exercises require the actor to bring attention again to the body, to the clarity and specificity of her physical actions, thus improving its vocabulary, and ultimately the actor's expressive potential. The actor's body ideally becomes the 'passive mould' of the action portrayed: 'In evoking props in mime, man has to be the negative mould of the thing' (Decroux in Leabhart and Chamberlain 2009:128), which is not precisely imitation: in the act of miming a hand holding a sphere, for example, the hand should not imitate the sphere, but show its negative space (ibid.). This way the actor *feels* the effect of the image on her body, thus expressing real reactions, precisely because all her body, starting with the hand, moulds around it, and it matters little whether the object is actually there

or not. Thus, in the ARL we also explored ways of evoking objects, such as ropes, tennis balls, tea cups, or actions, such as playing tennis, slapping and being slapped, throwing different objects, and catching them back, and so on.

**Image 51: Early 'imitation exercises'**
**(Video 51)**

Another series of exercises required the actors to immediately react, physically and/or vocally, to an image or idea, producing a pose, gesture or short movement, in the case of a physical reaction, and a vocalisation or manner of speech, in the case of a vocal reaction. These exercises were very useful because the stimulating images could be taken directly from the text, from single words, or group of words within it; easiest were of course action words, such as verbs (e.g. to embrace, to take), but we did not restrict ourselves to those (e.g. rain on a tin roof). Alternatively an actor could also be asked to imagine pulling an object in the room, making a hole in the ceiling, stroking the stray cat one saw in the morning, and so on, and imagine doing it with her body, with her voice, and eventually even with a line of speech from the text.

An interesting instance worthy of note was, for example, the physical exploration during a workshop, of the verb 'to take'; once reduced to its essential components, the reaction itself was little more than a shoulder impulse, clearly reflecting the abstraction of the verb itself, which does not actually identify the thing to take. Exercises of this kind have of course innumerable other possible variations: the reactions to the same image can be multiple and stringed together in a sequence (e.g. several ways 'to stop' something or someone may produce a 'stopping etude', as shown in Video 34b); they can involve several actors, simultaneously composing *tableaux vivant*, or physical dialogues, and so on (see for example the exercises Complete the Image and Physical Dialogues in Johnston 2006:302). Again, whilst training the actors to express their imagination through their bodies and voices, these activities are also useful compositional devices, directly applicable to text-based performance.

**Image 52: Impulsive reactions: action verbs (Video 52)**

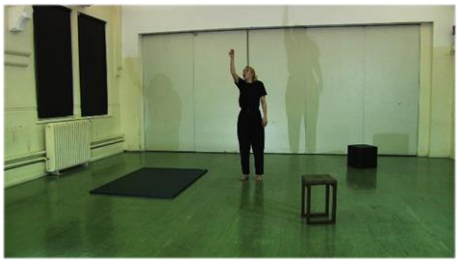


**Image 53: Impulsive reactions in speech (Video 53)**

**Image 52b: Imaginary walks (Video 52b)**

**Image 54: Crafting physical reactions to the text (Video 54)**

Finally, another set of activities introduced to nurture the 'actor's ability to create signs, to mould the body consciously into a deformation which is rich in suggestiveness and power of association' (Barba in Watson 1993:47), starting from a given image or idea, were themed improvisations. What Barba above refers to as 'signs', Grotowski called 'ideograms':

> New ideograms must constantly be sought and their composition appear immediate and spontaneous. The starting point for such gesticulary forms is the stimulation of one's own imagination and the discovery in oneself of primitive human reactions. The final result is a living form possessing *its own logic* (Grotowski 1975:110, my italics).

The important aspect of this definition is for me in its ending: the personal associations of the actor must justify her actions, which means that they must have an internal logic. Such logic however, may be quite personal to the performer, and may differ from the observer's interpretation, or from any intention the director providing the instruction might have had originally in mind. Therefore, when an actor is asked to make an improvisation based on the image of a 'cobra snake', for example, there is no way of telling what will be her reactions; what is necessary however, is that an allusion associable with the idea of 'cobra', 'snake', 'sneakiness' or the like, should be evoked in the spectator's imagination.

**Image 55: Themed improvisation – 'cobra snake' (Video 55)**

**Image 56: Themed improvisation – 'fire' (Video 56)**

These improvisations could be structured around a theme (e.g. forsaking home), a line extrapolated from the text, a whole scene, an animal (e.g. cat, snake), a natural element (e.g. fire, water), a personal memory (e.g. *The Childhood Bedroom* in Lecoq 2009), basically anything. They were normally performed silently and individually, although there was no restriction as to what the performer could actually do with them; they were exercises in handling the freedom inspired by an initial idea, and the unfolding of the resulting associations, which could last for as long as the performer decided they should last. Through these activities the actors train to sustain their imaginations for a period of time, thus somewhat also training continuity in their imagination. Furthermore, these were opportunities for them to freely combine any of the techniques previously acquired, allowing chains of associations to emerge not only from the original theme, but also from the unfolding physical reactions, while retaining a logic commitment to the given theme.

The premise was that, having been training the body and the voice, and having been improvising from rather technical tasks, when asked to improvise starting from a mental image, the body and voice of the actors should have become more reactive and expressive, and the associative connections between mind and body run faster and smoother. In other words, by approaching the idea first from the act, and then the act from the idea, the distance between the two – what I previously called the 'consciousness gap' – should shorten, and an *action* more promptly emerge.

The meticulous quality of these investigations called for the development of a precise language capable of signalling them. I define act a physical or vocal activity, such as a movement or a vocalisation; I define action the same movement or vocalisation infused with a spontaneous intention. When an improvisation or elements of it are fixed, that is, when actions resulting from an improvisation are fixed and can be repeated, I call that a composition. The performance is then the 'creative – or contemplative – repetition' of

such composition, namely a repetition that triggers spontaneous associations, which can be the same as those found in the original improvisations and now re-emerging, or correlate, deeper, more complex ones.

As already mentioned with reference to the performance of Scene Two in the work-demonstrations of the earlier phase, a problem arises with this method as to whether the final composition ought to be a montage of several individual scores, or whether it could result from an ensemble fixing their actions together. When a dramatic text involves several actors talking in turns or simultaneously, its performance could be compared to a 'sinfonia concertante', with soloists for the dialogic sections, and polyphonic choruses for the sections of overlapping speech. What further complicates this 'orchestration' however, are the correlate physical actions (let alone all the 'business' involving the set, lighting, props or costumes). The solution to this problem of how to interweave individual contributions, either already at the level of improvisation, or later at the level of composition, could not be tested in full, due to the limited availability of more than one actor at any one time.[45] I believe however, that sufficient single methods were tested in different circumstances, suggesting that both options are possible: a group of actors working on the same text can improvise reactions simultaneously, or they can work on their sections individually first and then together, or explore a combination of these two approaches. However, if the improvisations originating the scenic material are group improvisations, then there has to be a way of fixing them that can also be learned and repeated individually, as well as in group, physically as well as vocally, or otherwise the scene will simply be 'blocked'. If on the other hand, the improvisations are carried out individually from the start, based only, for example, on the lines of text allocated to each actor, then the final composition will have to be the result of their montage, which must find an effective way of weaving together the physical and vocal actions as well as their underlying motivations. Ultimately, the difference between conventional blocking and the scenic montage suggested here, is the same as that between an actor who repeats intentions and risks their representation, and an actor who repeats a score of actions and risks that they might not trigger the underlying intentions (either because they were not strong enough in the first place, when the improvisation was fixed, or because of a fault in the execution of the resulting composition). The latter mode, the one explored by this

[45] This allowed us to test activities directly applicable in dialogic sections only once a week, along with the rest of the training.

study, requires of an actor a higher level of detail and precision in the execution of the part.

Montage is another term – borrowed from cinema (Eisenstein and Gerould 1974, Law and Gordon 1996) – that proved useful to identify precisely this compositional process, as it points to the meticulous process required of an actor to string together, or juxtapose, singly identifiable dramatic elements – the isolated and thus repeatable segments of physical actions – as if they were moving images impressed in a filmstrip.

As one might have already inferred, there are many ways of generating material through improvisation; for the purposes of the argument above, however, I am interested in distinguishing between individual and ensemble-based improvisations. I have given accounts of both approaches during the course of the study, although the latest phase focused mostly on individual processes. That was due to the limited resources available, but also to the conviction that performance, like life, is ultimately a *personal* process that needs sharing and that, unlike most of life, can be crafted. In any case, the distinction is decisive when one comes to fixing the improvised material into a composition: when in group, in fact, the stimuli each actor reacts to are predominately external, and depend on the actions of the other actors onstage; their associations therefore are entwined, which creates a sort of 'dependence'. In the moment of fixing the material this may be problematic, if the composition is the result of a generalised 'blocking' of reciprocal intentions, rather than a fixing of impulses, which can be individually recoded in body-memory. For such fixing there needs to be added a process of individual repetition, temporarily turning the interconnected material into an individual one, which can then be shared again, in a process akin to a sonic and choreographic montage.

Although this principle is applicable to any action that can be repeated, it does take time, especially when actors are new to this type of work. Therefore, it could only be tested briefly during an interim session between the two work-demonstrations, and later on, during the ARL. In the first instance, each actor was asked to run the scene individually, trying to memorise all of the physical and vocal actions separately first and then together; due to the limited time available, the results were not satisfactory. It was possible, however, during the ARL, to test the same process with shorter sections of material generated in pairs, through exercises such as the Speaker and Mover, Complete the Image and Physical Dialogues (see Video 57).

**Image 57: Working individually in pairs**
**(Video 57)**

Out of my experience observing the workshops, I have noticed how performers would generally manifest two tendencies: some would rely predominantly on another for their reactions, thus mainly 'working-off each other' (to use Meisner's words); others would focus inwardly, reacting predominantly to their own images or sensations. The latter case may cause occasional disconnections with the external world (i.e. the partners onstage and the audience), whilst the former may cause dependence on it. In both instances however, what's excluded will influence their performance. What the training associated with repetition has tried to do, is to facilitate autonomous *and* reactive performance (i.e. spontaneous). There is a structure, the composition, which the actor learns to repeat autonomously very well, so well that she can then be free to channel, through the safety net provided by that very structure, all the differences generated by its encounter with the external word. These differences can be rhythmic, energetic and can also be differences in shape; in other words, even the actions can change by this point, because the performer, being in full control, knows how and when to improvise, improvisation will itself be a reaction, it will become spontaneous to improvise.

As we have seen already when discussing immanence in theory, it does not matter who has originated the material in the first place, if the actor has developed the score from an individual or group improvisation, or whether the director has blocked it following an analysis of the text, because through this method the actor will have to reincorporate either approach anyway, and make it personal again and again through repetition. That is precisely the aim of the training: to enable the actor to tap into her personal inner life from any given or self-generated form, image or text. And in order to do so according to these principles, an actor must be able to both improvise and repeat a composition extremely precisely.

## Voice: compositions and isolations (first attempts at deconstructing speech):

As the vocal training continued also during the ARL, it was possible to carry out two additional experiments with the voice, whose scope ultimately appeared so significant to justify further research in the field. These experiments were named 'vocal compositions' and 'vocal isolations': with the former the actor was requested to fix and repeat her vocal improvisations, consisting of either vocalisations or spoken text (i.e. improvised manners of speaking a given text); with the latter the actor learned to isolate all the sounds of a known language, namely all English phonemes, and to explore their possibilities and the resulting personal associations.

The 'vocal compositions' (or vocal scores), followed the same process already described with the scoring of physical actions, only using vocal and speech acts, instead of physical acts, as the composing elements of the score. Therefore, whilst in the previous exercises speech generally followed movement and reacted to it, these exercises attempted to generate repeatable sound patterns (speech patterns) independent from movement, and explored the associations resulting from their repetition.

**Image 58: Creative repetition of the text (Video 58)**


**Image 59: Vocal Composition (Video 59)**


Obviously, because voicing is a human activity, to attain total correspondence of each repetition is impossible, and is not the goal either. The goal is to *attempt* at reaching precision, quite like a singer, only dealing with speech rather than song (the same of course applies to physical acts, when repeated as if they were a dancer's choreography).

These explorations led me to consider, more seriously than previously, the possibility of using speech to trigger spontaneous physical reactions, which would have provided the most perfect, simple and direct answer to my initial research question: how can an actor react spontaneously to a text? If the experiments could prove successful, the answer

would simply be as follows: by improvising ways of speaking it, and then by fixing into a vocal score those improvisations producing the most powerful associations, out of which physical actions would emerge. For this to actually happen, that is, for the repetition of a vocal score to trigger spontaneous physical reactions, an almost direct connection between vocal and physical impulses should be established. This seemed like an ideal that nonetheless prompted me to explore 'vocal isolations'.

Through the 'vocal isolations' we attempted to isolate and explore vocally, and physically, all the known sounds of the English language, namely all its phonemes, starting with the vowels, continuing with the consonants, and then combining them at leisure, until words were eventually rediscovered afresh, as articulated sounds, vocal compositions in their own right. The principles behind this method are thus analogous to the 'Plastics', only involving sound-parts instead of body-parts (they could in fact be called 'Plastics for the voice'). I did not embark in these experiments entirely heedlessly, however, as I had previously done my research; in particular, I had attended 'This is a Voice' (Wellcome Collection 2016), an exhibition 'investigating the potential of the voice in all its forms, techniques, objects and cultural baggage' (Kenny 2016), studied the related theoretical accounts of vocal experience (Dolan 2006, Fisher and Kayes 2016), looked into the vocal practice of Kristin Linklater (Linklater 2006 and 2010), as well as attended a masterclass with her (ALRA 2018). The two published books outlining her practice, aimed at freeing one's 'natural voice', and at applying it to the performance of Shakespearean texts (Linklater ibid.), provided the guidelines for my explorations in the studio.

The basic principle underlying Linklater's work on the 'natural voice' is 'the *removal* of the physical and psychological blocks that inhibit the human voice; its objective is that the voice is brought into *direct contact* with the emotions, shaped by the *intellect* but not restricted by it' (Linklater 2006: back cover, my italics). Out of this brief synopsis, I shall flash out three main aspects of her practice highlighting how it resonates directly with our aims. First: her practice echoes Grotowski's approach to actor training, defined through the notion of 'via negativa'. Second: it aims to create a direct link between voice and emotion, again starting from the materiality of the vocal act to achieve the spontaneous expression of inner processes: 'explore the feelings that are aroused by the sound and free those feelings through the sound' (ibid. 329) – incidentally, Linklater also confirms that

'the word *feeling* implies here both physical sensation and emotional affect' (ibid. 328). Third: it makes use of the imagination to access the involuntary internal organs contributing to the production of voice as a phenomenon, and the resulting spontaneous personal associations, yet avoiding, in so doing, to engage the reflective, representative, and restrictive powers of the mind. As we shall see, the intellect is required precisely because this work relies on a sort of conscious manipulation of the voice, through 'thought-impulses', aiming at 'freedom of human expression' (ibid. 7). Although Linklater claims that the 'natural voice is transparent, [that] it reveals, not describes, inner impulses of emotion and thought, directly and spontaneously' (ibid. 8), she also points out that:

> voice is often prevented from responding with ideal spontaneity because that spontaneity depends on reflex action, and most people have lost the ability and, perhaps, the desire to behave reflexively. Except when pushed beyond control (…) nearly all reflexive vocal behaviour is short-circuited by secondary impulses. These impulses, in general, are protective, and at best give one time to think. When, however, the secondary impulses are so well developed that they blot out the impact of the primary, or reflex, impulse, a *habit* has formed (ibid. 19).

This work of releasing psychophysical blocks *and* habits requires an extensive training of several months, according to Linklater, for the stated aims to come to fruition; we did not have all that time, of course, but we did achieve some remarkable results nonetheless, which shall encourage me to carry out further research in the field.

Our work would start with an 'abridged preparation', aimed at relaxing as much as possible the vocal organs (jaw, tongue, lips, neck) as well as the rest of the body, through various methods, such as stretches, physical exercises and visualisations, thus making the vocal instrument (i.e. the actor's body) more conducive to free vocal expression: 'physical awareness and relaxation are the first steps in the work to be done on the voice' (ibid.). After this initial 'warm-up', the basic structure of our vocal exercises would entail the following tasks:

1) To *think* the sound 'in' (i.e. to imagine *breathing it into* the solar plexus)
2) To voice it 'out' (i.e. to release it freely)
3) To feel it (i.e. to notice associations)
4) To let it move you (i.e. also literally)

The initial stimulation, or 'thought-impulse', is a sound-idea, or sound-image, for example that of the vowel 'OO' of 'moon'; the actor imagines breathing-in this 'thought' deep into her solar-plexus, that is, she imagines that in the in-breath, the thought of that particular sound flows in with the breath (1); then she releases the sound on the outbreath (2), whilst attempting to feel, that is, to notice the feelings and the associations that such act may be triggering (3), which could go as far as inducing movement (4). Initially, tasks 2-3-4, which are simultaneous and correspond with the outbreath, may be delayed, so as to provide a clearer sense of necessary release, that is, the actor may hold the in-breath-sound for a time longer then natural, in order for the resulting voicing-outbreath to feel less like an intention and more like a necessity.

**Image 60: Vocal isolations – vowel-sounds (Video 60)**

The crucial aspect of this exercise is the initial 'thinking of the sound', which is equivalent to a mental reading of it, which is again, essentially, an act of mental repetition. The voicing is therefore not a randomly improvised act, but a conscious attempt at performing a specific sound, namely a phoneme, a basic unit of text. Once this basic structure of the exercise is mastered, the actor starts to 'improvise' with each sound, exploring different sound qualities such as volume, projection, pitch, resonation and duration, thus creating different rhythmical patterns, at first using only that one sound, and then stringing different sounds together. Compared to the previous work on resonation, however, now the actor would be asked to discover/feel first where each sound may resonate from more naturally, within her body; only later would she also try to place it there, or somewhere else, intentionally, by imagining guiding the sound in a specific area of the body.

It was remarkable how, out of these meticulous explorations, different and quite specific associations would emerge from each sound, in the form of combined emotion, intention, and physical action, to the point of inducing even characterisation. For example, the sound 'AW', as in 'wall', which is theoretically housed in the 'solar-plexus, right at the bottom

of the rib cage (...) *may have a somewhat anguished content*' (Linklater 2010:18, my italics). By not letting the actor know of these 'codified' associations – which Linklater herself must have deduced through experimentation – prior to our explorations, to avoid the risk of her representing instead of testing them with the exercise, it was inspiring to notice how accurate they were in practice. Accordingly, Linklater confirms that 'These exercises (…) are experimental. They are intended to spark further experiments and fresh ideas and must not be seen as rule making' (Linklater 2006:328). In our explorations in fact, while the actor reported experiencing corresponding feelings in her reactions to the sound, I associated her performance with the image of Pierrot, the stock character from Commedia dell'arte, who is often portrayed as an appealing although pitiful lover, eternally mooning over a female character named Columbine.

**Image 61: Vocal isolations – 'aw'**
**(Video 61)**

This vocal work suggested in me the potential of voice to convey specific emotional states through specific vocal actions, which is seemingly the principle underlying the meditational practice of 'mantras'. This comparison was not such a fanciful notion, as I later found out reading the transcription of a seminar held by Mario Biagini, co-director of the Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards in Pontedera (Italy), at the Università degli Studi di Roma:

> It's interesting to compare the vibratory songs with phenomena of a different nature, for example the mantras of Hindu or Buddhist tradition. A mantra is like a sonic crystal, a very precise sound form, that can have meaning or not. If suitably applied and repeated for an adequate duration with the correct vibration and tempo-rhythm, it can have an effect on an individual, on the frequency of some physiological functions—for example, breathing or the rhythm of the heartbeat—and then on the mind, and on one's perception of oneself. Also mantras have a vibratory nature. One difference between the classical mantras and the songs in our work is the fact that a mantra is almost always uttered (although there are exceptions) while keeping the body firmly in a static position, as if trying to restrain vital functions. Instead, the songs through which the Workcenter's research passes need to be carried by a flow of impulses. They should find their roots in the organic actions and reactions of the

> individual. Thus the breath is not manipulated as is often the case with a classical mantra. There are no positions applied, but flows of impulses and intentions running through the body, and sustained by these impulses, the process related to the song develops. (Biagini 2000).

Once the actor has gone through all the vowel sounds, she would then gradually develop rhythmic patterns alternating, for example, *separate* legato and staccato vowels, thus keeping each sound separate on each new breath, with *attached* vowel-sounds, sliding and merging them to make up 'vowel-compositions', always attempting to have an initial image of the sound composition, a thought-impulse of it as it were, so as not to get lost in a random improvisation.

**Image 62: Vowel-sounds improvisation and vowel-compositions (Video 62)**


**Image 62b: Vowels improvisation – unedited (Video 62b)**

It was very useful, throughout this process, to exercise matching free vocal impulses with free physical movements, using the possibilities previously explored with the Plastics isolations and the Corporal exercises, thus also alternating between vocal actions triggering physical ones, and psychical actions/gestures triggering specific vocal actions.

After the vowel sounds, the actor would explore all the consonant sounds, from vibratory and legato, such as 'M' or 'V', to plosive like 'B' or 'D', to unvoiced like 'P' or 'T' and so on, along with all their possible psychophysical associations, which would differ considerably from those trigged by the experience of vowels, 'creating moods and effects more than emotions' (Linklater 2010:19). The justification is that, being articulated 'more externally through the body', namely through the tongue, lips, and palate, 'the vibrations of consonants travel through skin and muscle and bone to the senses, while vowels have direct access to the solar plexus, making them more immediately emotional' (ibid.).

**Image 63: Consonants (Video 63)**

Eventually vowels and consonants will be combined, in quite the same manner, until new words would be invented, and old words deconstructed. When new words are invented, the actor still needs to develop clear rhythmic patterns, to avoid indulging in random gibberish, thus trying to think the pattern first, and then respond to that composite thought-impulse of sound, which is yet free from semantic meaning (e.g. 'OO-ZZZ-T-A'). Once the actor finally arrives at existing words, however, everything gets even more complex. Firstly, it is important that the sonic quality *of speech* is retained and that, therefore, the excessive elongation of sounds is avoided, in order not to turn speech into song. Secondly, since the initial thought-impulse is an actual word, with a recognisable intrinsic meaning, the actor should allow that to come into play as well. Each word is in fact both its sound-image and all the concepts that define it. Therefore, not only the inwardly repeated thought-image of sound (i.e. the mental signifier), but also the though-image/s *associated to the word* (i.e. its defining concept/s, signified/s) will be 'dropped in with the breath', producing a more complex thought-impulse affecting speech in the releasing outbreath. Linklater calls 'word-idea' the latter, and states that 'awareness of the sensory nature of words must come before that of their informational purpose if we are to restore words to the body' (Linklater 2006:328), thus allowing 'paratextual influences' to colour 'textual sense' (ibid. 342). Only later on meaning is to be restored: in approaching meaningful texts for performance, the intellect 'must mould all that emerges from the creative source into shapes that have sense and meaning' as 'a conduit, not a controller' (ibid. 357). Elsewhere she adds:

> The discrete character and autonomous function of each word must come to life in the imagination and be experienced in the sensory and emotional nerve centres and nerve-endings. The *experienced meaning* of the word must then be channelled out through the vowel and consonant paths of vibration and appetite articulators. The word on the page ***becomes*** its meaning-in-the-imagination, the meaning ***becomes*** imagination-experienced-in-the-body (sensorily and/or emotionally), and that experienced-meaning ***becomes*** the spoken word (Linklater 2010:31-32, italics mine, bold in the original).

A call for supple bodies *and* imaginations. The potential of this approach to voice, speech and ultimately text is clearly quite fascinating. Our explorations in the studio could not however, reach this far, but stopped sometime after the first consonants were introduced. It is therefore still left to prove to what extent this systematic approach to voice and language could be effective in the ways I have envisaged.

Many years of intensive research into traditional and ancient song structures, melodies and rhythms have been conducted, quite confidentially, by companies such as the Workcenter, as we have seen, among other, in order to explore the vibratory power of voice in singing, and its potential impact on the singer. My future research shall lean in a similar direction, although by means of a systematic exploration of speech rather than song, which could be applied to spoken drama as well as to music-drama. The main difference – and challenge – seems to lay in the fact that speech, unlike song, does not provide much opportunity for elongation; as associations are more likely produced when an actor can rest on a sound long enough to feel its vibratory power affecting her body-mind, such opportunities are scarcer in speech than in singing.

# Conclusion

The study encourages a shift of perspective in contemporary theatre studies and practice, proposing repetition as a new principle underlying theatrical performance alternative to representation. This shift implies the development of a new methodology of scenic composition, and consequently, of actor training: to approach performance as an instance of 'creative repetition' requires a process of 'spontaneity training' aimed at fostering quasi-simultaneous mental and physical reactions to given physical and mental stimulations. This process encompasses a wide range of exercises and performative tasks, both old and new, which have been thoroughly described mainly to provide concrete examples of application of some guiding principles (namely immanence, spontaneity and repetition), and of their correlated, more workable sub-principles, in turn identified through practical research (such as continuity of action, attention to detail, 'body-memory', coordination, resistance, opposition, scoring, editing and montage). Ultimately the particular exercises selected for actor training do not matter as much as the correct implementation of the appropriate principles through them.

Another aspect of the research's contribution to both the industry and the academia lies in the fact that it intervenes in the particular context of text-based performance. From a practical point of view, the proposed methodology is applicable to all texts, as it does not depend on, nor imply, a specific performance style. From a theoretical point of view, the study explains how immanence operates in this context, advancing the investigation into a previously uncharted area of performance philosophy, namely that of text-based theatres of immanence (Cull 2012).

The main finding of the research can be summarised as follows: what can facilitate spontaneity in the performance of a pre-written text, what, in other words, helps to avoid predetermined representations of it, is primarily a certain approach to acting based on 'creative repetition' – a process capable of producing difference spontaneously from repetition, by means of 'contemplation' – described in theory in subchapter 1.3 (see Diagram 1 at the end of section 1.3.1), and demonstrated through the practice described in subchapter 3.2 and documented in the Appendix. Secondarily, the research defined certain characteristics of a written text (possibly extendable to compositions in general), which I found can stimulate spontaneity in performance, namely 'openness',

'theatricality' and 'performativity'; these are described in subchapter 2.3, and applied specifically to the experimental text in section 3.1.2. Finally, section 3.1.1 describes my application of the principle of spontaneity to the process of writing the text – a process aimed at infusing my writing with said characteristics, making sure it acts as a stimulus, a creative and 'muddled problem' for the actor's body to solve.

The research produced the following outcomes: a system of training for actors (outlined in section 3.2.3), a method of composition and performance based on repetition (outlined in subchapter 1.3 and throughout Chapter 3), a *Practical Manifesto for a Theatre or Repetition* (Appendix 1), a playtext titled *Love and Repetition* (Appendix 4), and an audio-visual documentation of all of the above, titled Acting Research Documentation (also available in Appendix).

Several avenues for further research have also been disclosed: a method for testing the effect of a text, or different texts, on the spontaneity of their performance (resulting from the necessary shift, in the practice of the current study, from writing to performance, motivated in 2.2 and further commented on later on); the production of a Practical Manifesto for a Theatre of Repetition, collating the various findings and outcomes of the research into a practical guide to acting the text according to the principle of spontaneity (to be published as a sort of 'handbook' for actors and directors); further research on voice, speech and vocal composition for actors.

As already noted in the final paragraphs of section 3.2.3, further studies on voice would be an extensive new field of research, which deserves particular attention. It implies the recognition of the role that voice and speech play in text-based performance, and involves the exploration of the performative power of speech in relation to the performativity of a text. How can actors play dramatic texts as 'phonetic scores', as if they were singers and dancers who do not necessarily sing nor dance, but 'simply' speak and act? How can the speaking of a text directly and concretely affect the performer at a psychophysical level? The findings and outcomes of such research would expand on those of the current one, towards the definition of a concrete method of vocal training and composition for actors, whereby body and mind are directly affected by the vibratory power of speech. In addition, such research may reveal a link between the musical/performative qualities embedded in a written text, and its affective power, conveyed through speech, on both speaker and listener, thus perhaps challenging the assumption of no generalised direct

link between stimulus and reaction (and that therefore certain stimuli may be crafted in ways that trigger similar reactions on different subjects).

Both current and further research may raise some questions with regards to the implications of the practice on less abled performers. As the clips show, a good part of the training involved quite demanding physical tasks, some of which may not be feasible, or may discourage potential participants. The solution to this issue, which had already emerged during the early phases of recruitment, relies on the personal responsibility and motivation of each participant: this 'style-free method' implies that its aesthetics does not require specific physical virtuosities (such as that required of dancers and acrobats, for example), but simply an attitude, a wilfulness to improve dexterity within one's capabilities, to acquire challenging but achievable skills, for the sake of expanding one's possibilities of spontaneous expression (see also the discussion around the 'aesthetics of spontaneity' in subchapter 2.3, and the further remarks on 'empty forms' later on). In other words, the limits to one's spontaneity are strictly personal, and as such they are necessarily individually and distinctly faced. Nevertheless, there may be instances whereby certain limitations require specific training and experience on the part of the principal investigator, in order to ensure the designing of effective and yet accessible research activities; these instances would have to be dealt with ethically and practically on a case-by-case basis.

Finally, looking back at the extensive recordings of the workshop sessions, there are specific aspects that I wish to further reflect on: criticisms and accomplishments that may inform further research on the subject. The first critique refers to a certain tendency I manifested, of overloading the sessions, and the participants, with a great deal of material, namely tasks, whilst at the same time insisting on each quite persistently, until adequate outcomes were achieved: a certain ability to move or speak with continuity, for example, and to produce sensible actions spontaneously out of technical tasks; to move at ease, in other words, from exercise to improvisation. Therefore, to recognise and maintain an adequate tension between the challenge of the task and the skills required to accomplish it, which implies an adequate designing of both research and training activities, is what I believe I could be improving.

As I mentioned already in the previous chapter, the introduction of training alongside research activities was a major shift, and complication, in the practice. Such complication,

however, imparted the investigation with both depth and scope. Training became the bridge actually allowing my crossing of the gap between theory and practice, the mind and the body of the research, as it were. Training plays in the tension, or difference, between challenge and skill; it explains why spontaneity is not spontaneous, at least not in the sense of that 'creative-spontaneity' Moreno theorised, and Grotowski and Barba – among others – crafted through their art. The *crafting* of spontaneity is the paradox that parallels the paradoxical solution to the research problem, namely that it is through a certain attitude towards the inevitable repetitions of life and performance, through a certain 'contemplative mode' in Deleuze's words, or 'openness of feeling' in Stein's, that one experiences spontaneous, therefore stimulating differences, without willfully seeking them. This is the alternative to what could be called 'conventional spontaneity', that automatism made of clichés and habits, sneaky representations. Training is what allows one to get in the way of oneself, to set up complications, resistances, the essence of drama. Training, in a sense, could be considered the essence of performance research.

Another problem that would need addressing in the future is planning, more specifically, my ability to set-up specific and achievable goals against a timeline. If on the one hand the ongoing nature of the workshops allowed the exploration of emerging, unpremeditated patterns of research, it also led me to indulge perhaps too much on details, to yield to my perfectionism, losing sight at times of the general purpose, of what could be reasonably achieved under the given circumstances. Moreover, better and clearer planning would have eased participation, allowing for a more efficient management of resources (time and participants). The scheduling of additional public performance-demonstrations, for example, would have provided more focus to the ARL phase of the research; however, it is also true that overall, it was the progression in the training that dictated the progression of the research, and it was through this indulging, or 'steady pounding', that I could glimpse at the underlying concrete possibilities of the method, which came to constitute a solid base for the next phase of the research. Still, a better balancing of these opposing tendencies, between loosening and tightening the research plan, may be beneficial in terms of its efficiency.

Reflecting on the progression of the work in the studio, a substantial change is also noticeable in the degree of my concrete engagement in the activities, both at a physical and verbal level: I gradually moved away from a constant and often excessive prompting

of the participants, to a more detached approach, a sort of 'reactive spectatorship', which is evidenced, quite simply, by my diminishing appearances on screen. In theoretical terms, it could be said that I moved away from the transcendental mode of direction and external stimulation, to a more immanent mode of reaction, whereby I was involved in setting up the parameters of an activity, the field of immanence, to then intervene in it if and when the parameters were not adhered to, or at the end for feedback (it was not only I, in fact, who could potentially transgress the field of immanence with my interventions, but the performers as well, by means of unilateral inconsistent shifts, for example, or representations). If, during the first two phases, I seemed to enjoy constantly prompting the participants, with the result of often distracting or overloading them, my different approach later on was surely an improvement. This change of attitude was partly the result of a growing connection with some of the long-term participants, which facilitated the development of a shared language in the room, and with it, of a tacit understanding; but it was also due to my own critical reflection on the practice, made possible by an ongoing analysis of the documentation (the video recordings of the workshop sessions). This analysis was, in fact, not only addressed at the work of the performers, but also my own, as if the technological tool – the external, impartial eye of a digital camera – allowed me to maintain the necessary level of 'self-objectivity' and self-awareness. The camera, in other words, acted as a sort of 'autoethnographic device' whose function was equivalent to my own presence in the room with respect to the participants.

With regards to writing for performance – the other practical element of the study, discussed in Chapter 3 – a final observation could be made about its share of the overall research. As already noted both in theory (subchapters 2.2 and 2.3) and in practice (subchapter 3.1), a shift of focus took place in the research, from an exploration of the nature of the stimulus, epitomised by the written text, to an exploration of the response to it, that is, to an exploration of different approaches to acting the text. This shift was justified by the fact that spontaneity lies in the personal response to a stimulus, rather than in the stimulus itself, and by the fact that no direct causal link can really be established between a stimulus and one's response to it (at least in an aesthetics of spontaneity, and also as suggested by Merleau-Ponty). Moreover, 'text' came to be regarded as a synonym for any fixed sequence of stimuli, namely as a 'score', or 'composition'. Therefore, in a Theatre of Repetition, what is ultimately repeated is not necessarily (only) the written text, but also what grows out of the myriad personal reactions to it, developed during, and

affected by, the collective creative process, and context, of making, eventually fixed in a 'scenic composition' (or 'performance text', or 'acting score' and so on). As required by the subjectivity of these reactions, and the diversity in form, style and genre, of the written texts actually explored during the workshops, the acting methods developed are like 'empty forms' – to paraphrase Barba's use of this analogy with reference to training exercises (Barba 1997) – that is, 'style-free'. It was, in other words, deemed more important to develop a new method of approaching text in general first, which could thus be used with any text, from classics to post-dramatic, even potentially used to test different texts' 'contributions to spontaneity', including the experimental one, but as part of another, separate research. The only reasonable way, in fact, to test a text's capacity to trigger spontaneous performance, would be in performance, and furthermore, such test would have to be repeated a sufficient number of times, under varying circumstances (varying audiences and performers, for example, even comparing it with other texts, and so on), for the results to acquire, if at all possible, at least some degree of objective significance – all of which eventually fell outside the remits of this research. Nevertheless, a partial test was still carried out in the second phase leading up to the work demonstrations, with ambivalent results, as already discussed in the last two sub-sections within 3.2.2.

As spontaneity is linked to the creative process more than to its result (see previous discussion on Moreno, particularly in section 1.2.2), it seems reasonable that the study also focused on the processes of making, of text and performance, rather than on their outcomes. Although the process of making performance turned out to be more elaborate to explore than writing the text (perhaps for obvious reasons, being a collective practice), it was found that in general, the creative processes of the 'spontaneous writer' and the 'spontaneous actor' are equivalent: both consist of a montage of spontaneous reactions to internal/external stimuli, manifesting in either written or physical and verbal form. There is a fundamental difference, however, between the two, in that the actor's process of composition is never really completed, never fully fixed in an external medium. Even the ultimate moment of repetition, the live performance, remains the actor's recurring confrontation with her personal reactions to the writer's words: each performance is a new reaction to former reactions, a repeating reacting, a further digging and unleashing.

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# List of Appendices:

# Appendix 1:

## *Practical Manifesto for a Theatre of Repetition*

## Premise:

With this 'manifesto' I wish to propose a system of principles and methods for actor training and scenic composition able to reconcile spontaneity and repetition in the context of text-based performance. The system is based on a dual approach to 'improvisation':

1. improvisation generating new scenic material;
2. improvisation generating spontaneous reactions to pre-existing material, by means of 'creative repetition'.

Spontaneity is hereby defined as the capacity to react adequately to an event in the moment of its occurrence, that is, without premeditation. When the event is known in advance, such as when the structure of the performance, or parts of it, are fixed, a certain ability to 'repeat creatively' needs to be trained. This ability is not related with the effective expression, or representation, of predetermined intentions, but with the spontaneity of the reactions released in the repetition of predetermined acts; in order to be adequate, such reactions need to possess a dramaturgical logic. The premise is that the predetermination of intentions, leading to their representation, may hinder spontaneity. Repetition differs from representation in that it carries no intention, besides that of reproducing the form of the object repeated. Full signification, including affect, must therefore happen as a reaction to repetition, which thus becomes 'creative'.

## Acts, actions, reactions:

In the theatre, each object is a sign[1], and the focus of the Theatre of Repetition are those signs directly produced by the actor, which shall be called 'acts'. The actor's acts are 'dynamic' signs, as they unfold in time, other than in space; they are either physical (i.e. gesture and movement), or vocal (i.e. vocalisation and speech). An act becomes 'action' when it manifests an intention, or rather an 'association', infusing the act with an internal dramaturgical logic (i.e. a specific content, be it real or imaginary). Such 'association' is a compound of meaning, emotion and physical sensation, which ought to be spontaneous: this means that each act must become action spontaneously in performance. At the same time, in order to be 'dramatic', an act/ion must face a resistance, or obstacle, involving tension, some form of effort and release on the part of the actor. In this theatrical model,

[1] Or a 'sign of a sign' (Fischer-Lichte 1995a).

it is the structure of the performance itself – namely the fixed details of the actors' actions, otherwise called 'score' – that provides such resistance. Ultimately, to be 'creative', the repetition of the 'score' must produce spontaneous reactions that do not so much alter its form, but affect the way it is performed (and witnessed), with each unit of action embedding the relevant reaction.

Research has shown that spontaneous reactions are triggered by a certain precision and continuity of action: the actor's ability to pay continuous attention to the precise repetition of a fixed sequence of acts, and to the reactions produced in/by the process. This presupposes a deep knowledge of the material, namely an embodied knowledge, a recording of it in the actor's 'body memory'. This type of knowledge allows immediate retrieval: it involves no active reflection on the part of the actor, but rather a 'conscious abandonment' to repetition, leaving the mind free to notice (or 'contemplate') the effects, rather than plan or remember their causes. Embracing this challenge means that the actor engages fully, with both body and mind, in a sort of 'contemplation-in-action', conducive of spontaneity. Within this system, the training elements are therefore aimed at facilitating such reactions, which are functional to the method of scenic composition proposed.

## Outline of the activities:

The integrated training and performance-making process of a Theatre of Repetition comprises a wide range of activities, including exercises, improvisations and compositions, which can be further classified according to their purpose:

- Physical training: exercises for physical responsiveness and expressivity
- Vocal training: exercises for vocal responsiveness and expressivity
- Coordination of body and voice: exercises for the synchronisation of physical and vocal acts
- Structured improvisations: involving the development of scenic material based on spontaneous reactions to 'technical' tasks (they can be physical and/or vocal)
- Themed improvisations: involving the development of scenic material based on spontaneous reactions to mental images, including concepts/words (they can be physical and/or vocal)
- Compositions and repetitions: exercises for the development of repeatable sequences (often resulting from improvisation 'type 1', and leading to

improvisation ‘type 2’) – they are ‘études’, or ‘studies’ in composition, aimed at training the ability to fix short sections of physical and/or vocal acts and to repeat them creatively

- Performance composition: involving the development of scenic material eventually constituting the ‘performance score’.

Most of these activities involve each actor working both independently and in relation with the others, that is, individually, in pairs or in group/s, as in a monologue, dialogue or ensemble piece respectively.

Activities could also be distinguished between those starting with a physical or vocal task triggering the imagination, and those starting with a mental image/idea triggering the external expression of it (through physical and vocal acts). It is in this mutual triggering between mental and physical impulses that the so-called ‘bi-directional’ quality of the system is manifest. This is important because some actors may need to improve the ability to act upon a technical task, and with it the expressive clarity of their outer acts, also called ‘plasticity’, even if they are already able to act upon an idea, that is, to improvise around a given theme (and vice-versa). This dual ability reduces the ‘spontaneity gap’ between act and intention.

Finally, it is worth noting that all activities are interlinked: each exercise should eventually develop in an improvisation, just as each improvisation should display a clear ‘plastic’ quality, so that it could potentially turn into a repeatable composition. As already mentioned, in a Theatre of Repetition performance is to be considered an instance of ‘creative repetition’ of the scenic composition (i.e. the ‘performance score’).

## Sample 10-point plan:

What follows is an abridged version of the method, aimed at the production of a 5 to 10 minutes long performance piece based on a shared unit of text (e.g. a scene). Activities are described in the form of 'verbal instructions', to be supplemented by practical demonstrations, mostly available in video format. Should the method be applied in a pedagogical setting, such as a specialist drama module in HE, each session should include a theoretical introduction, up to one hour long, discussing the principles and aims of the activities to be later explored practically in a two to three-hour workshop. The 'lectures' would be supplemented with reading and viewing assignments of the referenced theory and practice, involving the analysis of selected articles, book chapters, and live or recorded demonstrations and performances. As each practical session focuses on different and quite specific elements of the method, which are however interlinked, and whose learning is incremental and requires continuous practice, it is recommended that each activity learned in class be maintained by the students also outside the timetabled taught hours, through independent work, assigned either individually or in groups (rooms and times may be allocated weekly in advance for this purpose, to small groups). The final assessment may involve, besides the performative element, a group discursive presentation, or an individual written essay, contextualizing the practice in theory.

*Preparation:* a shared unit of text to be distributed in advance to the participants, in order to be memorized without inflection.

1. Physical training and associations
2. Vocal training and associations
3. Coordination of physical and vocal act/ions
4. Structured and themed improvisations
5. Improvisation and the text – the 'creative repetition' of the text
6. Composition and 'creative repetition'
7. Performance composition: scoring of physical actions
8. Performance composition: scoring of physical and vocal actions
9. Performance composition: 'montage' of the individual scores
10. Performance

## | Session 1: Physical training and associations |

**Warm up sequence with associations:** these exercises are aimed at warming up not only the body, but also the body-mind connection; they involve the contextualisation of the exercise in the imagination through spontaneous associative work (facilitated by a continuous 'paying attention' to what one is doing with her body and voice).

- ***Individual stretches***
- ***Posture and Breathing***: stand in the space with parallel feet hip-distance apart; relax shoulders and arms (imagine they may fall to the floor should they not be attached to the torso); place the neck at a right angle with the spine (imagine a string or a bend pulling you up gently through the spine, or the crown of the head, towards the ceiling); keep the fingers active (imagine they may sweep the floor should you walk); sense the legs strong and flexible, bending them gently to check the knees are soft (imagine that you are rooted to the floor, yet ready to move); pay attention to the natural rhythm of the breath, follow it as it goes in and out of the body (imagine that you are riding on the top of the wave of your breath). **Video 2**
- ***Scan and Release***: move in the space mentally scanning the body for tensions; move those parts that feel most tense, maintaining attention to the breath; release unconventional movements, and sounds on the outbreath, without forcing them (e.g. stretch your whole body sideways, up and down, take large steps in every direction, roll on the floor, walk with bent knees, etc.); aim at continuous, controlled and coordinated movements (i.e. move without pauses, paying attention to the shapes you are making whilst challenging your balance). For repeating movement sections (e.g. walking with bent knees), sense/notice the associations that may arise (i.e. who/what are you? What are you doing? Where are you? etc.). **Videos 2, 13 and 26**
- ***Rhythmical Walks*** (maintaining ***Posture and Breathing***): walk in the space with continuity (no pauses), at a constant, confident and relaxed pace; gradually pay attention to each other and the space (e.g. by filling the gaps in the room); be precise in keeping the same walking speed (the individual confident speed can be labelled 'speed No. 5'); now walk at speed No. 9 (then 5, 7, 3, etc.); explore the appropriate gait for each walking speed. What is the association? (i.e. where are you, what are you doing? E.g. are you chasing something? Are you being chased? By whom? etc.). **Video 34 and 37 (from min. 6'40'')**

- ***Contact Work*** and ***Soft Focus*** (maintaining both ***Rhythmical Walks*** and ***Posture and Breathing***): 'open up' to each other, welcoming eye contact, never looking down; after a while say your name, or the other person's name, at each moment of contact (e.g. at each eye contact) – notice that names may be uttered differently at each new 'encounter', and that the paired voices may, or rather should, overlap when contact is truly felt by both sides. Gradually find a shared walking rhythm; then stop and jump together as a group; resume the same walking rhythm together as a group; speed up/slow down together; 'follow' one person without being noticed (i.e. keep him/her always in your field of vision), whilst maintaining the shared walking rhythm; then add another person to follow, and so on: e.g. keep always two meters apart from one, and stay as far as possible from the other; etc. **Videos 2, 4 and 27**

***Ball-passing exercise***: form a circle around a person, who stands in the centre holding a ball (the size of a tennis ball); the central person passes the ball to anyone in the circle and receives it back; once a passing quality/rhythm is established between the circle and the centre, the rhythm may be changed (hastened, slowed down, hardened, softened etc.); the receiver should react to the quality of the passage, absorbing and channelling it into his/her own ensuing throw. In time, when one person in the circle says 'go', he/she swaps places with the person at the centre, whilst the ball is in the air (i.e. attempting not to disrupt the ongoing rhythm of the passages). **Video 5**

***Poking exercise***: find a partner to work with in pairs; partner A is the 'receiver', B is the 'prompter'; both maintain the initial 'Posture and Breathing' task, with B standing a step or two behind A. The exercise consists of B 'poking' A by touching different points of A's body, for A to respond with spontaneous reactive movements. The exercise should start with B simply directing the movement of A's limbs with gentle touches with the palm of one hand (e.g. through gentle pushes on the shoulders, arms etc.), whilst A attempts to notice and react to the sensations caused by the touch, allowing the reactive movements to follow the quality and direction of B's prompts; as confidence and rapport grows between the pair, B may 'poke' A in various ways, by also using other parts of the body, hence not just the hands, according to A's reactions, eventually developing a spontaneous 'physical dialogue' (i.e. B no longer leads A's movements, but only provides the initial physical impulse, whilst A embodies and reacts to it through movement/gesture). The 'receiver' may wish to start the exercise with eyes closed. Both

'receiver' and 'prompter' should eventually work with their associations (e.g. A may imagine to be 'a flower' touched by B, who is 'the wind', or a 'black bird' etc.). Eventually A and B swap roles. At a later stage in the training, vocalisations and/or continuous speech may be included in the receiver's reactions (as spontaneous vocalisations, or changes in the tone of the speech, triggered by movement). **Videos 33 (min. 11'48''), 30, and 37 (min. 0'50'')**

**Work with opposition and resistance:**

- ***Unbalancing acts***: find ways to unbalance yourself as you stand or walk; test the limits of your balance by leaning to the front, back or sideways; then 'compose your body' by holding a precarious posture for a few seconds, and search for the right placement of your arms, hands, head etc. until you find a whole body shape that accords to it, working with the associations that the precarious balance may have triggered (e.g. tilting the torso backward may trigger the mental image of 'looking at the stars', or 'dodging a slap', etc.); repeat this process for several shapes, then select the three that produced the clearest associations, and place them in a sequence; repeat the sequence introducing direct transitions between each image, noticing new associations and possible narratives. At a later stage, vocalisations may also be included in the search for the appropriate body-shape (thus also involving a search for the appropriate 'voice of the shape').
- ***Oppositional movements***: perform an action with its opposite. For example: 'if you intend to walk forward, start with a micro step back'; 'explore walking forward imagining a backward pull'; 'move to the right as you look to the left (and vice-versa)', etc.
- ***Oppositional Shapes***: search, through movement, for fixed body shapes that manifest at least two opposing forces (e.g. head and eyes tilted downward, with a raised arm and fist); hold the shape for a few seconds and notice associations that may clarify its outline; move gradually in and out of each shape, adopting different tempos (always noticing the opposing forces at play, and your associations). Shapes can also be inspired by figures taken from pictures or sculptures. **Video 49**
- ***Puppeteers***: imagine a rope (or a stick) tied around your right wrist, handled by a 'tricky puppeteer', and move in the space accordingly (i.e. imagine that a 'puppeteer' is pulling/pushing you around the space); gradually add another rope to the left wrist,

then to each knee, to the crown of the head, to the hip, to the feet, etc. Imagine that these 'puppeteers' may agree or disagree with each other, or that you may yield or resist, etc. As in the 'Scan and Release' exercise, aim at continuous, controlled and coordinated movements. Work with the additional associations that may arise. You may introduce moments of stillness, as in the 'Unbalancing Acts', also in order to check that the parameters of the exercise are being adhered to; these moments are not to be considered as pauses away from the action, but as instances in which the action continues in stillness (e.g. because the force of your resistance offsets the force of the imagined pulls/pushes). **Videos 29 and 37 (from min. 7'20'')**

- ***Push and Pull in pairs***: find a partner to explore actual pushes and pulls in pairs, using different body parts for contact, not just the hands; fix a sequence of 3x pulls and 3x pushes, creating a clear tableau for each instance of push or pull; get rid of anything redundant, which does not contribute to the action of either pushing or pulling; then craft your own part of the sequence individually, working with your own associations; parted sequences can then be paired again, within the same or a different pair. Each push or pull section can also be edited in scale (i.e. reduced or amplified), tempo (i.e. made faster or slower), intensity (i.e. made stronger or softer) and direction (i.e. the same act can be directed at different points in space). Finally, text can be added on top of the physical sequence, to let the relative section of speech (or dialogue) adapt/adjust to it both rhythmically and tonally.
- ***30-second moves***: perform the following movement sequence making sure that each section lasts exactly 30 seconds: 3x steps forward (i.e. make each step last 30 seconds, without pauses or changes of speed), 3x steps backwards, 1x step to the right, 1x step to the left, 1x sit down on the floor without using the hands, 1x stand up without using the hands. As in previous exercises, aim at continuous movement, without interruptions or jolts, and work with any emerging association. **Video 28**

***Movement Vocabulary:*** as you walk with continuity and awareness of each other and the space, perform the following movement tasks incrementally, that is, 'record' each of them as you progress in the exercise, so they may be repeated upon request: walk at different tempos (i.e. walk at speed No. 5, 7, 1, 9 etc.), stop and start, stop and turn 180 degrees, turn 180 degrees and stop, walk in straight lines, walk in curves, lie on the floor, reach out, kneel etc. Notice the associations that each of these movements may trigger in you, and use them to colour/add details to your actions. To make sure you trigger associations:

pay continuous attention to what you are doing, engage the whole body in the action (even if it involves only one limb), and move with continuity and precision (e.g. use only one way to 'reach out', without changing the form of the action). Once you have crafted a number of these movements/actions, improvise with them; work towards a coordinated and unbroken flow of actions, improvising only with the movements you already have in store. You may work independently or use each other as stimulus; either way, you must attempt to relinquish choice and react without premeditating the next move, working off each other and your personal impulses: each movement you make is inspired by what happens outside of you and the impulses you sense inside of you. Select five of the actions possessing the clearest associations, and string them together in a sequence, in whichever order you prefer. Learn the resulting sequence so that you may repeat it accurately, as if it were a choreography. Again, work with the associations and narratives that arise to add further details and colour to it, without however altering its outline. Make sure that each movement belongs to an action, namely, that it is part of a segment producing a specific association in you (i.e. an intention), otherwise remove it from your sequence. For the purposes of this exercise, it is also important that the association emerges *from* the physical action – providing it with an internal, spontaneous logic or justification – and not the other way around. **Videos 7 and 34**

***Plastics (or Body Isolations):*** explore the movement possibilities of each of these body parts in isolation from the rest (i.e. the whole body remains engaged and adapts to a movement involving only one part at the time): neck, eyes, shoulders, elbows, wrists and hands, fingers, spine and chest, hip, knees, ankles and feet. You may start standing in place, but you are also free to move in space should the particular isolation lead you to do so. The first part of the exercise is a rather technical physical exploration, which may then lead to an improvisation, and finally to a short composition; for example: explore the movement possibilities of the neck, with continuity, attention and precision (i.e. the neck may move to the front and back, to the sides, upwards and downwards, at different tempos, smoothly or sharply); as you define a number of these possibilities, improvise with them freely and notice the associations that arise, contextualising the movements in your imagination, thus turning them into actions (e.g. you may ask yourself: what is happening? What am I doing? Who/what am I? Where am I?); select those actions with the clearest associations and string them together in a sequence, which you then repeat as a short choreography, working with your associations as described in the previous

exercise. Once each movement isolation is explored, a whole-body improvisation shall ensue: by this point you are free to move in space led by a flow of impulses originating anywhere in the body, still 'minding' what you are doing, and maintaining continuity, coordination and precision, in order to trigger associations and thus turn as many as possible of your movements into concrete actions, which can either be real (e.g. pointing at a colleague) or imaginary (e.g. combing the hair of a cloud). Beware that a strong association may 'lure' you to represent the development of the action you find yourself in, mentally predetermining the next moves; should that occur, in order not to get lost in your imagination, go back to the basic parameter of the exercise, that is to mindfully explore the concrete movement possibilities of your body first, and thence your associations. This exercise starts as an individual exploration of inner impulses, which must then be placed in relation with outer stimulations as well: one or more partners in the room, the audience, the space (its shape, lighting, soundscape etc.). At a later training stage, vocalisations and speech may also be included, as described in the previous 'Poking' exercise; these operate as a vocal reactive layer placed 'over' the physical one, contributing to the creation of dynamic and spontaneous 'sound-images'.

- Plastics: **Videos 39 to 45 and 46b**
- Plastics with voice: **Video 47 and 48**

***Corporals:*** explore a series of coordinated movements of the whole body in space (i.e. jump raising your knees as high as possible, landing softly in the same place; roll on the floor on your spine, forwards and backwards; walk with bent knees; perform a 'bridge'; bend your back, either standing or on your knees; perform 'cartwheels', 'headstands', 'handstands' etc.); as before, once practiced separately, these acts need then to be stringed together and performed in a continuous sequence. All other principles previously outlined also apply here, including the work with associations, external contact and voice; Plastics and Corporals ought in fact to be combined in later improvisations and études. **Videos 43 (min. 2'20''), 45 and 46a**

## | Session 2: Vocal training and associations |

**Vocal training sequence:**

- ***Natural breath (Linklater 2006):*** starting from a standing or supine position, simply notice your natural breathing pattern: consider that the in-breath happens

automatically if you wait (i.e. yield to the natural need to breathe, rather than holding or drawing-in air), and that the outbreath is a release, a natural letting go that needs no pushing; picture the air coming in through your nostrils, going all the way down into your solar plexus, and then out through your mouth – let it run out and yield to the next in-breath (i.e. do not actively breathe-in or out, but sense the difference when you manage to leave your breath alone). Eventually, the coordination of 'natural breath' with voice and movement can also be explored (**Video 48c**).

- ***Breathing exercise:*** starting from the 'Posture and Breathing' position, let the breath in as you raise the hands above the head, hold position and breath there for a moment, then let the breath out as you lower the hands to the sides, matching movement and breath throughout; do this a few times then decide a timing in numbers/seconds for the three breathing steps, and count them mentally as you breathe in, hold, and breathe out (e.g. 6, 2, 6 seconds respectively). Try different durations, aiming at a continuous flow for both inbreaths and outbreaths, especially try not to push the outbreath; to check the flow's continuity, sound a vowel on the outbreath. Different movements can be linked to the in/outbreaths, including walking in space; beware that it should always be breath leading the duration of movement. Eventually, lines from the text can be used for sounding the outbreaths; in this case the difference between thinking and not thinking the words in advance should be explored (e.g. you may imagine the words to say and notice how that affects your breathing pattern, or you may experiment leaving it to your natural outbreath and its drive to determine how many words from your text you manage to say). For this exploration the text needs to be imprinted very well in memory. **Videos 19 and 48c**
- ***Jaw, mouth and tongue stretches:*** equivalent to the 'Scan and Release' exercise, but for the articulators of the voice.
- ***Mono-tone and mono-rhythmic speech:*** speak the text with continuity, at a confident but constant pace, avoiding pauses and changes of tone and tempo (breathing gaps are of course an exception). Mind articulation: be precise, clearly distinguishing the composite sound of each word, marking the first and last syllables (i.e. clearly 'play' each word, particularly at its 'edges'). Project your voice clearly in space (i.e. rather than in your mouth or head, check if you can hear your voice back from the room). **Video 19 (from min. 1'30'')**

- ***Resonators:*** perform elongated vowel-sounds imagining them resonating from different parts of your body.
  - *Mouth*: sound the vowel AAA and imagine placing the sound in the mouth (i.e. imagine that the sound is emitted by the mouth, that a 'speaker' is in your mouth); as you sense your voice sounding and vibrating there, add the other vowels to the AAA-sound, always keeping the sounds in the mouth area (i.e. AAAOOO, AAAEEE, AAAUUU).
  - *Chest*: sound the vowel HOOO (of 'hot', but elongated) and imagine placing the sound in the chest – repeat process above.
  - *Upper*: sound the vowel EEE and imagine the sound coming out from the top of your head towards the ceiling – repeat process above.
  - *Lower*: sound the vowel OOO (of 'moon') and imagine the sound coming out from the bottom of the belly directed to the floor – repeat process above.
  - *Forehead/cheekbones*: sound the vowels EEE (of 'everlasting', but elongated) and/or EY (of 'fate') and imagine the sound roaming between your forehead and cheekbones – repeat process above.
  - *Solar plexus*: sound the vowel AW (of 'wall') and imagine it in the solar plexus – repeat process above.
- ***Conducted vocalisations (resonators and volume):*** form a circle or semicircle around a 'conductor', and follow his/her hands with your voice through the different resonators, using the different vowel-sounds; explore volume as well, identifying a gesture for the resonators, and another for 'volume' (e.g. as one hand directs the sound placement, the other directs the volume levels). Beware to feel distinctively the different sounds in your body, and to hear your voice in the space, also clearly distinguished from the others. **Video 31 (also first part of videos 18 and 19)**
- ***Vocal overlap:*** this is a variant of the above, in which each performer is a potential soloist who picks up on impulse the sound quality at play, overlaps it for a moment, and then takes over, eventually changing it, playing with resonators and volume only (i.e. as performer A voices a sound, performer B joins in the same sound, sharing it for a moment with A; when A stops, either by cutting sharply or gradually fading the voice out, B is left to continue alone, until performer C overlaps with B, and so on; whoever takes over chooses to enter either sharply, or to fade in the ongoing sound).

— As you sense where the sound is placed you can also activate those areas that 'vibrate': imagine the sound shifting your weight and balance with its drive (e.g. pulling you down a little, or up, to the front or back etc.); let the body adapt to the sound, eventually settling into a definite shape.

- ***Mono-tone and mono-rhythmic speech:*** as previously described, the group goes back to speaking, each speech performed simultaneously at a constant tone, tempo and volume (i.e. individual speeches are performed together, but each speech should maintain a specific quality, clearly distinguishable from the rest; this quality forms the starting point for the next phase of the exercise). **Video 19 (from min. 1'30'')**
- ***Conducted speech (resonators, volume and tempo)***: this exercise follows the same principle of the 'Conducted vocalisations' variant, but replaces the elongated vowel-sounds with speech; it also explores tempo alongside resonation and volume. Its aim is to train the capacity to consciously apply different paralinguistic vocal qualities to the same speech, manipulating tempo, volume and resonation. From this point onwards, performers should also notice associations emerging out of these rather technical explorations, and find a possible dramaturgical logic for them (e.g. by increasingly paying attention to the relative meaning of the words). **Videos 18 (from min. 0'34'') and 19 (from min. 2'47)**
- ***Speech overlap***: this exercise follows the same principle of the 'Vocal overlap', only replacing vocalisations with speech.
- ***Speech takeover (on hesitation):*** this exercise is also similar to the 'Vocal overlap', with two differences: it uses articulated speech rather than elongated vowel-sounds, and the takeovers are always sharp, as they happen whenever the ongoing speech is perceived as tentative. Ideally, the quality of the speech that is taking over should be the same as the one overtaken, only then changes in volume, tempo and/or resonation can be made, to be maintained until the next hesitation. Should two or more performers happen to take over simultaneously, the more assertive between them shall eventually continue alone.
- ***Self-orchestrated speeches:*** using 'soft vocal focus', work off each other to let overlaps, takeovers and vocal changes to your own speeches to be triggered by spontaneous reactions to the emerging soundscape, and your own vocal impulses (speeches can overlap, and there can also be moments of silence). **Video 32 (from min. 1'34'')**

- ***Group vocal improvisation:*** following up on the previous exercise, improvise freely together with your own individual speeches, paying gradually more attention to what you are saying (i.e. alongside their sound quality, also mind the meaning of the words you are saying and listening to in the emerging context); the spontaneous vocal impulses should then reconcile with the emerging associations to provide a dramaturgical logic to the improvisation (regardless of whether the individual speeches are actually related to one another, as in a dialogue, or not, as in speeches taken from different scenes or texts). **Videos 37 (from min. 16') and 38**

## | Session 3: Coordination of physical and vocal act/ions |

***Speaker and Mover exercise:*** choose one person to be the Mover (M) and form a circle or arc around him/her; then choose a person from the circle to be the speaker (S). S must react with her speech to M's movements: as M moves freely in space, attempting to create 'intangible contact' with S, S speaks her memorised text from a standing position in the circle, letting her vocal choices to be determined by spontaneous reactions to M's movements (as if manoeuvred by invisible ribbons attached to her voice). Then let them switch status, with M reacting to S, who should therefore intentionally lead M's movements with her voice (acting as a sort of 'vocal puppeteer'): as S speaks, playing freely with projection, volume, tempo and resonation, M's movements should be determined by spontaneous physical reactions to S. Both S and M should avoid set characterisations, and let their speech and movement flow continuously, influenced by the felt dynamic changes coming from the leading part. Once a good level of 'contact' is established between the pair, S and M can tacitly switch leading and reacting status, according to the spontaneous dynamics of their 'contact'. The same exercise is then repeated switching roles: S steps onstage to move and M joins the circle to speak. An advanced version of the exercise might envisage several speakers and even several movers at once. **Video 22 and 23 (also Video 37 from min. 20'40'')**

***Coordination of movement and speech:*** move in space with continuity, speaking your text monotone, and matching its tempo with the tempo of your walk, always making sure you can hear your voice in the space. Once you have mastered this, let impulsive changes in you walk/movements affect the quality of your speech, playing with speed, direction, stops/starts, skips, jumps etc. Then experiment the other way around, letting improvised

changes in the quality of your speech to determine the dynamics of your movements in space, playing with projection, resonation, tempo and volume. Although there is no set convention for the coordination of the vocal and physical layers, a direct link must always be perceivable: you may start by matching their qualities (e.g. same tempos between speech and movement), and then experiment with counterpoints (e.g. an impulse to stop moving might trigger speech, or the other way around). The coordination of movement and speech can also be restricted to specific body parts, depending on the needs; for example, an effective variant is the 'Coordination of *eyes* movement and speech'. These tasks should eventually be performed by two or more performers together, who will take over or overlap each other according to predetermined rules at first (e.g. only one performer moving at all times), and then react freely on impulse (thus turning the exercise into a group improvisation whereby each performer works off each other and the text). **Videos 50, 50b and 24**

Most of the physical training exercises outlined in Session 1 might be complemented with the use of voice to practice the coordination of the two layers (i.e. Work with oppositions and resistances, Poking, Plastics, and Corporals). Also, once the technicality of each exercise is mastered, the associative work should always be implemented, in order to allow a natural progression from exercise to improvisation (the parameters of the exercise thus becoming the structure of an improvisation, namely an initial set of stimuli).

## | Session 4: Structured and themed improvisations |

***Structured improvisations:*** the starting point is a physical or vocal stimulus; perform any of the exercises previously described and notice the associations that may spontaneously arise to justify what you are doing in your imagination. In other words, feed the exercise back with your associations to provide it with a fictional/dramaturgical context. In order to trigger associations, pay continuous attention to what you are doing whilst engaging the whole body in the precise execution of the task (so that its details may work as physical stimuli for an improvisation). For example:

- *Sample physical improvisation*: choose from your 'Movement Vocabulary' a set of movements to improvise with (e.g. move in the space at different speeds, finding the appropriate gait for each speed, include stop/starts and changes of direction); as you explore these movement possibilities, gradually contextualise what you are doing in

your imagination. A more advanced and comprehensive (and challenging) alternative is to improvise off the 'Plastics' and 'Corporal' exercises (as previously described). Like most activities, also these improvisations should be practiced both individually and in pairs or groups (ensemble improvisation).

  - Improvisations structured around the 'Movement Vocabulary exercise': **Video 34b and 35 (see also Videos 8 and 9 for earlier attempts)**
  - Improvisations structured around 'Plastics' and 'Corporals': **Video 40, 44 and 45 (more examples also in Video 41)**

- *Vocal improvisation (using text as initial stimulus):* improvise with projection, tempo, volume and resonation, reacting to the vocal stimuli embedded in the text (the words' musicality and their arrangement/syntax). Consider the text as a 'phonetic score' that you play with your voice: you may start by forcing the changes, to then gradually let these be led by your spontaneous vocal impulses, and the resulting chain of associations (i.e. make sense of the text by exploring different ways of speaking it, gradually 'minding' the meaning of the sounds/words you utter). **Video 24 (from min. 2'30'') and 58**
- *Sample physical and vocal improvisation (using text as initial stimulus):* continue the previous improvisation, allowing also movement to happen as a spontaneous reaction to speech (this is facilitated by the 'Coordination of movement and speech' exercise). An improvisation may also follow the 'Poking' exercise, once speech is included in the reactions and the performer has entered an autonomous flow of impulses.
  - Speech affecting movement: **Video 58**
  - Speech affecting/affected by movement: **Video 33**

***Themed improvisations (or 'studies image-action'):*** the starting point is a mental stimulus – e.g. an image, theme, narrative, idea or concept (such as a word), or group of concepts (such as a line or a sentence).

- ***'Imitations':*** perform a series of short silent sketches inspired by French mime and pantomime – i.e. imagine pulling a rope; play 'invisible tennis'; climb an imaginary wall; improvise different ways of throwing, pointing, calling, stopping; hold/handle different imaginary objects (you are the 'negative mould' of the object). These exercises are aimed at improving physical precision and expressivity. **Video 51**
- ***Impulsive reactions:*** respond immediately to a mental stimulation (i.e. a given 'image') using your body or voice:

— ***Physical:*** respond impulsively with gesture, movement or by striking a shape (i.e. a still image) to a given stimulation; this may be a word that is either heard (i.e. someone speaks the word and you react), spoken (i.e. you speak the given word and immediately react), or thought (i.e. you think the word and react). These words can be active verbs (e.g. 'to protect') or nouns (e.g. 'fire'), which may be taken directly from your text. As in previous instances, you may weave these responses into a repeatable physical sequence, which you then may edit. **Video 14, 52, 52b; for images extrapolated from a text, see Video 54**

  - *Paired and group version:* performer A goes onstage and strikes a shape reacting to an image as described above (creating not an imitation but an 'ideogram' – see thesis p.136); performer B watches it from offstage and immediately joins the image adding her own body-shape in relation to A; A and B stay still for a moment (forming a 'tableau vivant'); then A leaves the stage; as B is left alone onstage, performer C joins with a new image, and so on. Several variants may be introduced – i.e. performers may not need to leave the stage, thus there may be instances when A B C etc. are all present onstage, or performers may leave only when they feel redundant within the shared image, or they may change their shape to fit the evolving composition; small movements may also be introduced, as well as speech. When joined onstage performers should adapt to the new paired or group image whilst retaining the core of their initial association: to what extent does adapting require a change of shape, or an emotional/energetic/imaginative adjustment?
  - *Physical dialogue:* same as above only now the performers react with a gesture or movement to the initial image and each other. **Video 57**

— ***Vocal:*** respond impulsively with voice/speech to a given stimulation; for example: 'speak your text imagining you are an eagle hovering above its prey', 'your words are raindrops falling on a tin roof', 'drill the ceiling with your voice', 'paint the room with your text' etc. In all these instances the body should not be 'stiff', but follow the voice: posture and movements should adapt to the vocal impulse in order to be conducive to it (not hinder it), without however representing the association (i.e. potential body movements should not be illustrative but only serve the vocal expression – for example, if the performer is requested to paint a

large thick circle on the ceiling with her text, she may imagine her body to be a 'long brush' allowing full rounded sounds directed upwards, rather than indicating a large circle with a hand gesture). Paired and group versions of the exercise are also possible, equivalent to the physical ones described above: the reactive chain may use vocalisations at first, and then switch to speech. **Video 15 and 53; for the 'Vocal Painter' version see Videos 20 and 21**

  - ***Vocal and physical in pairs:*** performer A responds impulsively with movement and voice to an initial stimulation (a given image, word etc.); performer B reacts to A also through voice and movement; then C reacts to B, and so on. All performers should have a go at starting the 'reactive chain' in turn, taking as their initial stimulation a word or line from the text, or an image/theme inspired by it. Speech should gradually replace vocalisation in these mutual reactions, until these become actual dialogue (i.e. using selected lines from the text to replace the spontaneous vocalisations).

- ***Improvisations (proper):*** perform an individual physical improvisation starting from an initial theme or idea, and develop it following your own chain of associations. Over time performers should also train to retain the parts of these improvisations producing the strongest associations, so as to be able to repeat them (and thus work towards a composition). Improvisations may involve the use of voice and speech when required by the association; their length should be left at the improviser's discretion. **Video 55 and 56**

## | Session 5: Improvisation and the text – the 'creative repetition' of the text |

'Creative repetition' of the text essentially means 'improvisation' based on a certain use of the text as a 'phonetic score', or series of phonetic stimuli, rather than as a blueprint for representation. The following activities are therefore connected to some of the improvisations based on text already practiced in Session 4; they are hereby repeated and incremented in view of the creation of scenic material for performance.

***Creative repetition of the text – vocal:*** perform a vocal improvisation using the text as a 'phonetic score', namely a fixed sequence of phonetic sounds, to be complemented with other musical elements such as timbre/resonation, volume, tempo, duration etc.; as you

'play' the score, notice the choices you make and their associative effects (in terms of new images or ideas, physical sensations, and emotions). **Videos 36, 58 and 54**

— Alternative instruction 1: repeat a manageable unit to yourself, to the walls, to an imaginary partner, to an association; concentrate in what you are saying, looking for a personal connection with the text, and for the corresponding resonation, projection, volume, pitch, tempo-rhythm. Notice what the repetition does to you and react to that until speech finds its proper physicalisation.
— Alternative instruction 2: repeat the text like a 'mantra', searching for the correct vibrations (resonations, volume, pitch, etc.) and for the correct tempo-rhythm (breathing pattern). This is a vocal work, but the flow of vocal impulses is still carried by the body: the body is the vehicle for the voice, hence your speech should eventually 'find its roots in the physical actions and reactions' (Biagini 2008:165). Both these vocal and physical choices might then be fixed into a repeatable sequence.

***Creative repetition of the text – physical:*** react through movement and gesture to the text as it is being spoken by one or more performers offstage, or as it is played as a recorded voiceover. If the text is being played live, the speakers' vocal actions should be in relation with the physical actions of the performers onstage (in a correlated dynamic of actions and reactions already described for the 'Speaker and Mover' exercise). The onstage performers might work either separately or in group, according to the number of characters present in the scene (and their allocated roles). In the case of a paired or group scene, the performers onstage should of course not only react to the text (as it is being listened to), but also each other, exploiting their practice of ensemble improvisations (both those structured around physical tasks, such as 'Movement Vocabulary', 'Plastics' and 'Corporals', and those based on themes, such as 'Impulsive Reactions' and 'Improvisations proper'). **Videos 10 (from min. 12') and 11**

***Creative repetition of the text – physical and vocal:*** speak your text allowing free movement in space; you may start by matching the tempo-rhythms of your speech and walk, to then gradually introduce changes in speech and coordinate movement accordingly (e.g. as you speak faster you walk faster, as you fall silent to breathe you also stop walking, etc.); or you may work the other way around, letting movement changes produce changes in speech (e.g. let impulsive changes of direction, skips, jumps etc. affect

the way you speak your text). As you gain confidence in the 'Coordination of movement and speech', pay gradually more attention to the words you say and the acts you perform, working with the associations that may arise out of this mental, vocal and physical encounter with the text, to ultimately discover the internal logic of your reactions. As with all activities so far, once these improvisations are mastered at an individual level, they should be performed in pairs or group, at first by coordinating speech and movement collectively according to set rules (e.g. 'only one performer speaking, or moving, at all times), and then by reacting freely to each other and the text. **Video 25, 36 and 58**

Note: these three approaches to text are only theoretically distinct; the ultimate aim, whichever way you wish to start, is to gain the ability to react spontaneously whilst the words are being 'mentally retrieved', spoken, or listened to. In other words, to distinguish whether it is speech affecting movement, or the other way around, or whether a mental image is the cause or the effect of either movement or speech, is only useful for training purposes; in the initial stages of scenic creation, as well as in performance, such distinctions shall vanish, as you will either abandon yourself to improvisation, or to the 'creative repetition' of the scenic composition.

## | Session 6: Composition and 'creative repetition' |

This session is aimed at training the actor's ability to compose, that is, to retain, edit and arrange scenic material generated through improvisation; it is also aimed at training the actor's ability to react spontaneously to the repetition of a known composition.

***Physical 'études':*** select a limited number of the physical actions previously explored during the Movement Vocabulary, Plastics or Corporal exercises and improvisations (e.g. choose five among those that produced the clearest associations, or the most challenging ones, etc.); learn them precisely through repetition, making sure you have a clear beginning, middle and end for each section (i.e. a precise initial and final positioning of your body, and a clear transition between them); craft each section rather technically at first, aiming at its precise repetition, and not at illustrating what it might mean. Once each action is mastered, continue the repetition allowing new associations to 'animate' them, without however changing their form by either adding, cutting or modifying their details. Weave the units together into a sequence, according to your associations, or in any order

you prefer, and repeat the process above. Once you have mastered the sequence technically, confident that you can perform it with continuity and precision, that is, without having to actively think/remember its details, 'abandon yourself' to its repetition, and let your 'body memory' lead your actions, still 'minding' or 'noticing' the details of what you are doing (i.e. pay continuous but rather passive attention to it, as a sort of checking in with what you are doing): this shall produce in you the necessary associations that will feed back into the sequence, and eventually provide it with an internal logic, narrative or 'life' that a spectator may perceive. The process is similar to learning a dance or a choreography, making sure however, that its parts are never purely 'cosmetics', but possess a specific dramaturgical reason to be there (and that this reason is not illustrated, but is allowed to emerge spontaneously out of the repetition).

Also, once the sequence is mastered in all its parts, it can be modified according to other dramaturgical needs (i.e. those of the director, the narrative, the scenery etc.): sections might thus be scaled up or down, cut or reordered, played at different tempos, in different directions, seated or standing etc. This editing process will add nuances to the original score, and produce new associations, but it is only possible once all segments are well individuated, so they can be worked on, or rearranged, as units (like words in a text).

Finally, vocalisations too, and even speech, can be laid over these physical etudes, in order to train the actors' ability to allow voice to be driven by movement; this will be useful when 'scoring' physical and vocal actions in the process of performance composition. **Videos 16, 46a and 46b**

***Physical compositions (or 'scores'):*** select some of the *physical* material you have created through the improvisations in Session 4 and 5, in which you variously used your text as a stimulus (e.g. Impulsive reactions and Creative repetition), or as an element of a Structured Improvisation. Master the material through repetition following the process described above, letting the text aside throughout (i.e. temporarily forget about the text). Since it is likely that some of the improvisatory material may already have the form of an uninterrupted sequence, and be of a certain length, you may wish to 'segment' it by parting the sections that identify single significant units of action (by 'parting' I mean introducing 'empty spaces' between them, quite like Brecht's 'quotable gestures', as described by Walter Benjamin in *Understanding Brecht*). Of course, the greater the

segmentation, the more detailed will be your physical composition; segmentation will also allow more editing choices. Finally, once you have crafted your physical 'score', you may place the section of text that variously inspired it in the first place back over it, and perform the two layers together, 'orchestrating' speech and movement according to rhythmic, semantic and circumstantial links (this way you may produce useful synchronicities, and discover hidden meanings for both the text and your physical sequence); but you may also use the physical composition alone, or experiment combining it with another text. **Videos 25, 54 and 35**

***Vocal compositions (or 'scores'):*** select some of the *vocal* material you have created through the improvisations in Session 4 and 5 and fix it into a repeatable sequence. This time the sequence will be dictated by the text, however, you may still wish to compose your speech: select the inflections that produced the strongest associations and learn them through repetition, by identifying their underlying vocal qualities so that you may 'embody' them more consciously (focus on resonation, tempo and volume). Of course, the level of precision of the vocal composition does not need to reach the levels of musical annotation, however, the more the details the better. The processes of vocal composition and creative repetition are equivalent to the above, only they are applied to voice and speech rather than movement (including the fundamental work with associations); in particular, the repetition will engender a sort of 'body memory' also valid for the voice. **Video 59**

— Once you have crafted and mastered your 'vocal score', you can explore how its repetition may not only produce spontaneous associations in you, but also impulsive movements and gestures; allow them to be led by your speech, stimulated by its rhythmic, semantic and syntactic qualities (including its imagery, allusions, assonances, rhymes, etc.). Note the similarity between this task and the 'Creative repetition of the text – vocal' previously described; the only difference here is that you will start by repeating not only the text, but also a fixed vocal pattern for your speech. As before, this will be useful when 'scoring' physical and vocal actions in the process of performance composition.

***Physical and vocal compositions:*** place the text over your physical score, allowing speech to adapt to it, according to rhythmic, semantic and circumstantial links

(capitalising on your practice of 'Physical compositions', 'Creative repetition of the text – physical and vocal' and 'Coordination of movement and speech'); alternatively, you may start from your vocal score to find the related physicalisations.

— You can picture your physical score to be your 'river' or your 'canoe': if you fix the physical score and allow speech to flow over it, then the former would be your 'river' and the text (or rather speech) would be your 'canoe'; but you can also fix the vocal score and allow movement to respond to it, without fixing all its details, though this might prove quite ineffective without an adequate connection between your vocal and physical impulses (see the last section on voice in the thesis' paragraph 3.2.3). Finally, you may choose to fix both scores, finding the appropriate reactions through either of the two methods, in the process of improvisation and composition (and not in performance).

  Examples of speech placed over the physical score: **Videos 25 (from min. 5'15'') and 16 (from min. 3'33'')**

***Line of physical actions:*** define a sequence of physical actions for the scene, picturing them in your mind as you think, read or speak your text; alternatively, you may also extrapolate them through an analysis of the dynamics of the scene, or directly from the given stage directions – you may write or draw the sequence down before trying it onstage. Finally, craft it precisely through repetition, following the process already described (the same principles apply also when overlaying speech). As long as you master the physical score quite technically first, without illustrating what its actions might mean, and leaving the text aside in the meantime, you may still trigger the necessary associations to feed your actions with a renewed logic, or 'life', regardless of them being predetermined. In short: learn your given line of physical actions like a choreography, whilst still aiming at spontaneous associative reactions.

As a general rule, once a composition is mastered technically, the process of 'creative repetition' may start, which involves the abandonment to a sort of 'mindful repetition', which is in turn facilitated by the development of trust towards your 'body-memory', as previously described with the 'Physical études'.

## | Session 7: Performance composition: scoring of physical actions |

This process is equivalent to that of a 'Physical composition', only more orientated towards the final performance; it involves the associative work of an external eye, that of the director or dramaturg, who may intervene in the process more significantly than before, through specific, dramaturgically driven instructions, in response to the material generated by the performers, and the stimuli provided by the text. One risk at this point is the 'over abstraction' of the physical scores, which is normally the result of a lack of accuracy, and/or a weak associative work; it is ultimately the responsibility of the director or dramaturg to check these aspects, and ensure that the performance 'makes sense' to an external eye, that it may, in other words, stimulate the imagination and the senses of the spectators. Eventually, this compositional work becomes a much more collective endeavour, as it must take into account how the individually created physical scores may fit together as a cohesive whole.

## | Session 8: Performance composition: scoring of physical and vocal actions |

The material generated this far by the performers needs to be coordinated not only at a movement/physical level, but also at a vocal level. This work is therefore orientated at a general 'orchestration' of the visual and aural layers of the performance, which may involve quite a considerable editing of the material individually created: the individual performance scores may in fact need reworking, as a result of the external feedback, to ensure that the physical and vocal layers match effectively, both rhythmically and dramaturgically. Furthermore, this work is required to ensure that each score is adequate not only on its own, but also in coordination with others, should it be used in dialogic or group scenes. **Videos 16 (from min. 3'33'') and 25 (from min. 5'15'')**

Of course, some of the scenic material may already be 'collective', that is, it may already involve all performers in the scene (for example because the overall structure had already been created through a process of collective improvisation and fixing, or by 'blocking' the individual lines of physical actions); in this case the requirements might be opposite: each performer should relearn its physical (and possibly also vocal) part, apart from that of the partners in the scene, through a process of 'deconstruction'.

***Deconstruction of a collective physical and vocal score:***

1. The first phase is in group: perform the score (or scene) together only physically, without using words; do not aim at telling the story of the scene through movement,

but at repeating exactly the physical actions you have already created and fixed together (this will require quite a deep level of physical responsiveness and continuity, as you still need to react to each other's actions when they happen, and yet not wait for them to happen). Repeat the process until you gain a good sense of your own individual flow of actions in relation to the whole.

2. The second phase is individual: to embody your part well, repeat it again on your own only physically, until you master it independently from your partners (this will take you back to the process of 'Physical compositions'). Note that you may develop new and independent associations, different 'points of contact', or stimuli to react to, replacing those generated by your partners' actions. Should there be gaps, that may mean that you do not have an action for that unit in the scene, which in other words means that you do not know what you are doing at that point.
3. The third and last phase is in group: the aim of this process is to provide you with a 'partiture for your part', that is, a certain level of autonomy in terms of crafting and connotations, that will allow you to perform the sequence again in relation to others, but with improved continuity and flexibility; in particular, you shall train to remain engaged in an ongoing action without anticipating or waiting for a cue from your scene partner to carry out the next (or paraphrasing Sanford Meisner, for you not to pick up cues, but impulses). Depending on how the majority of the material has been created, this process may require more than a session to be completed effectively, and may therefore be initiated earlier.

The risk with this method lays in a possible 'over mechanisation' of the acting process, producing affectation in performance; in order to avoid this risk, and facilitate the growth of the confidence necessary for the appropriate 'abandonment' to repetition, it is crucial that the material – be it physical or vocal – be learned 'by the body', quite like a dance or a song, through a process of relentless repetition; only then the complex and multi-layered performance score can be used as an organic set of stimuli, and as a channel through which to convey spontaneous reactions.

## | Session 9: Performance composition: 'montage' of the individual scores |

The final stage of performance composition is the 'montage', or combination of all individual scores into a cohesive 'performance score'. The process of 'montage' is the

opposite of ‘deconstruction’, as it refers to a method of joining and juxtaposing the individually created physical and vocal elements of the performance. It involves the final interviewing of all the scenic materials after their latest editing, and the repetition of the resulting scenic composition; at this point the already described processes of ‘technical’ and ‘creative’ repetition are resumed, but at a collective level, involving all performers simultaneously. This is the point at which repetition becomes performance, the point at which you play your individual yet orchestrated scores like musicians of an orchestra, and dancers of a group choreography. **Video 16 (from min. 12’30’’)**

## | Session 10: Performance |

According to this model, performance is an instance of ‘creative repetition’ of the final scenic composition; by this time therefore, performers should abandon any expressive aim and simply repeat/play their scores precisely whilst remaining open and reactive to its stimulations.

# Appendix 2: Acting Research Documentation

## List of links to online portfolio

## Tester Workshops

Video 1 Group warm-up:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4PQau9da8Y&t=18s

Video 2 Warm up sequence: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRQp6-bhl48&t=15s

Video 4 Soft Focus: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4TkVbZvCu9Q&t=2s

Video 5 Ball passing exercise: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpFBZP-4OVs

Video 6 Soft focus extended:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2cmi4tNhXXg&t=14s

Video 7 Movement Vocabulary:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8KgcNrqTqk

Video 8 Early movement improvisation text extract by M Crimp:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kHSSTIKharU

Video 9 Improvisations: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMWmJytrR5c

Video 10 Early text work: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGuOPmuzNZE

Video 11 Scenic work on text:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdQdohMIjnU&t=1s

Video 12 An improvised reading:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPfW3CriM1c

Video 13 Physical warm up and associations:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XCDT6i3utdE&t=42s

Video 14 Building a physical sequence from given images:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zwZD1K5J3-4&t=150s

Video 15 Early vocal associative work:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_SpSy7a-_o&t=6s

Video 16 Early scoring of physical actions and montage:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8bhD1eULQA

Video 17 Group vocal training resonators:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7B__He4SM4&t=1s

Video 18 Group vocal training speech:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k27Vx0zkVGE

Video 19 Breathing and vocal training:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pi72QSz_OOU

Video 20 'Vocal painter' exercise explained: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-IngjOoVpmo&t=77s

Video 21 'Vocal painter' exercise and comments:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7CCN8P5ISHI

Video 22 Speaker and Mover exercise:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRhb1IvxjtQ

Video 23 S&M exercise with notes:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYFG_pHbRO8

Video 24 Early coordination of movement and speech – stages:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9VOISeM7V4&t=28s

Video 25 Process of scoring physical actions:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SANyJ2iEp3M&t=15s

## Ensemble Workshops

Video 26 Continuity and Scan and Release exercises:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XYsFaeuqr0

Video 27 Open Up exercise: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4uAhqOm25TE

Video 28 '30 seconds moves': https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBpmEcr91vQ

Video 29 'Puppeteers': https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImVP-c30te8

Video 30 'Poking' exercise: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USxKJc7LCH4

Video 31 Vocal training vowels and resonation:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=boXsCBeY_DM

Video 32 Vocal training and Group 'speech improvisation':
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ai4gTOEc7fA&t=1s

Video 33 From vocal training to improvisation:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkFgkoLaP3o&t=48s

Video 34 Developing a movement vocabulary:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UaGQT43r9mc&t=43s

Video 35 Crafting the physical score:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VipnZa01vnE&t=45s

Video 36 Discovering Scene Two:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8neb_IP8HM&t=255s

Video 37 Work demonstration 1:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RjNqsCYBGGg&t=25s

Video 38 Work demonstration 2 Scene Two Voice Project:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrA2Je0Cwhs&t=11s

## Acting Research Lab (ARL)

Video 34b Continuity training improvising with given details:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ef1_4awMj2o&t=189s

Video 39 Early body isolations neck, shoulders, hip, knees:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z89bwwXfHiM

Video 40 Eyes isolations and improvisation:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sw0x_N7q2HI&t=11s

Video 41 Eyes to neck spine and space:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRtnEi87mTA

Video 42 Face masks: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-nHZDwkWTss&t=6s

Video 43 Early 'plastics' and 'corporals':
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QccZO02RqEY&t=2s

Video 44 'Plastics' improvisation attempts:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wf4yaWjLGB8&t=2s

Video 45 Plastics and Corporeals:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Q1jPRNG6-Y

Video 46a Sample 'corporeal etude':
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fP99QfgMO_M&t=2s

Video 46b Sample 'plastics etude':
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ePek3IEVnZQ&t=3s

Video 47 Voice resonance and movement:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AAc3Iv41jEA

Video 48 Voice and movement improvisation:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JMKJU3GDZI&t=3s

Video 48b Breath Voice and Movement actor's reflections:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kYEoGA0ZDLQ

Video 48c Natural breath as natural intention – Breath voice movement and speech: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kC07JuriRV4&t=189s

Video 49 Work with 'oppositions' and 'unbalancing acts':
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SvZn-zHIBDw

Video 50 Coordination of movement and speech:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6N6_lCwXO40&t=44s

Video 50b Coordination of movement and speech:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-D2uWJ463xU

Video 51 Imitation exercises: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TplBhuPF1bw

Video 52 Impulsive reactions action verbs: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0pEWTfCxIE

Video 52b Imaginary walks: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mzgsps5ycXw

Video 53 Impulsive reactions in speech:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFrJ4qzYyCY

Video 54 Crafting physical reactions to the text and scoring:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s5JX2EuVs8I&t=1s

Video 55 Themed improvisation:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQdPRx2d7AM&t=1s

Video 56 Fire: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Amek9QgJPE&t=60s

Video 57 Working individually together:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bJ2dlWLaJ4

Video 58 Creative Repetition of the text:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Caj2LJH35i0&t=2s

Video 59 Actor's vocal composition:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q9f_FjzxWlg

Video 60 Vowel sounds: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8QkguyxMTnM&t=1s

Video 61 AW sound: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GdcPeMvq35w

Video 62 Separate vowels and compositions:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8wQT7IU0JI

Video 62b Vowels improvisation unedited:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wa_YCtDbMXc&t=115s

Video 63 Consonants: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ak-b-jjovIA&t=2s

# Appendix 3: Participants' feedback (Participant Questionnaires)

# Participant Questionnaire

☐ *I have read the information sheet provided and I am happy to participate. I understand that by completing and returning this questionnaire I am consenting to be part of the research study and for my data to be used as described.*

1. Did you find the text provided during the ensemble work engaging? If yes, in what way? If not, can you think of a reason?

Yes. It contained good dramatic tension and I could get a feeling for what the character needed and what the obstacles were for the character. I could relate to the conflict in the text to conflicts in my own life, for me that basic empathy is crucial in terms of creating work that matters.

The rythme and the form of it was a fantastic platform to play from.

2. To what extent did you need to make sense of it before performing?

Because I understood the laboratory nature of the process and that you were testing certain things I tried to leave my own methods alone and follow your lead hoping that this would aid your test/experiment. So I think I was trying to tap into what your sense was, not necessarily the texts.

3. Did the text inspire [or require] you to improvise and/or make creative interventions in performance? If so, in what way? If not, can you think of a reason?

text or no text, this text or another - my job is precisely to improvise and create interventions in performance but as I said I think the conflict and rythme aids this in particular. Also the fact that you are not a designated character encourages a more complete engagement with the text.

4. In other words: what type of supplementing actions do you think the text called for in performance?

I don't understand what you mean by supplementary actions.

5. Was there any significant difference to the way you approached text previously?

see question 2

6. Was there any significant difference between the way you approached your own chosen texts in the sessions, and the way you approached the one provided?

see question 2

7. How would you define 'spontaneity'?

to do something in the moment a that is not preconceived - to be reactive in a free and playful way

8. Based on your experience of the workshops and previous, what do you think is its [spontanety's] relation to ‘improvisation’?

I don’t really understand the question. I guess you're asking how the workshops fostered spontaneity through improvisation?

The problem was that we were directly seeking spontaneity which is a contradiction in terms. Spontaneity must happen of its own accord, I believe we found moments of it through enjoyment.

9. Do you think that spontaneity is useful in life? And in performance? Why?

It is not just useful but essential, it is the basis of life itself. In performance it is the inefable ingredient that makes a piece live or die. It is to be truly alive on stage acting freely in the moment within the circumstances.

10. Do you feel like you have improved your spontaneity because of your participation to the workshops?

I do not think so, I think that the increasing pressure of the program reduced a sense of play and it became more about dispatching a performance rather than cultivating spontaneity. The tighter the grip on this idea of ‘spontaneity’ the further way from actualy having it, as I said before I think it is a contradiction in terms.

11. What do you think/feel mostly facilitated your spontaneity in performing a pre-written text [e.g. was it a particular method used to approach it, was it in the writing, was it a combination of these, or anything else]?

The embodied and ensemble approach certainly aided this.

In this case, the pressure of a limited timescale was useful in terms of how completely I needed to learn the text, it was a great challenge and pushed me to work harder on learning the text so I could then play more freely in rehearsal.

12. What do you think/feel mostly obstructed your spontaneity?

Repeating the same exercises too often in an attempt to the get to the idea of spontaneity felt counterproductive at times. Felt like we were chasing a moment that had passed.

The way we lead up to public performance and the pressure that came with it, there was an increasing sense of getting it right. Failure in this process felt quite scary and so I felt less inclined to take risks.

13. In what way – if any – did the provided text stimulate your spontaneity in performance?

the fact that there were no designated characters in combination with it’s use of repetition, its sense of flow and poetry meant I could really ride on that and flow with it. The conflict within the text was very fruitful and I think that we used enough of the text to enable a good journey and so I could live in the piece for a while, which is so important.

14. How would you describe the working atmosphere and environment?

The work ethic is fantastic, so often you encounter lazy directors and actors which creates a sense of apathy but here the standard was set high and that really pushed me to show up prepared and work hard. Unfortunately, later on I think the pressure stifled creativity and started to foster an unhealthy creative process where those high standards, although initially very creative, became punishing and uncreative.

15. Can you give feedback on your overall experience [e.g. what worked and did not work for you, what relevant skills you might have gained, suggestions, etc.]?

The process put me back in touch with a kind of rigour, particularly with text, that I want to keep in my practice. The act of learning text in a fully embodied way must be the foundation of my work and doing this has put me back in touch with that. Also it was great to continue to explore my voice and resonators, experimenting with the voice as much as with the body. The work I do tends to lean on physicality more than text and voice and so this was fantastic to cultivate that relationship again. Also, I really enjoy your writing, Ive always enjoyed performing it, as I said before I think its the sense of flow and rhythm within the repetition that I love.

Thank you!

# Participant Questionnaire

☐ *I have read the information sheet provided and I am happy to participate. I understand that by completing and returning this questionnaire I am consenting to be part of the research study and for my data to be used as described.*

*I AGREE – DARYL ROWLANDS*

1. Did you find the text provided during the ensemble work engaging? If yes, in what way? If not, can you think of a reason?

   […] Yes – the text was engaging. During the 'playing' of the text, it gave the actors the opportunity to create a tone and the ability to change it into a completely different piece each time it was rehearsed.

2. To what extent did you need to make sense of it before performing?

   […] I hadn't made sense of the piece until it started to unfold during each different rehearsal. I had a bit of an idea but most of it didn't make sense at first.

3. Did the text inspire [or require] you to improvise and/or make creative interventions in performance? If so, in what way? If not, can you think of a reason?

   […] Prior to the performance, the exploring of the text allows for improvisation. However, during the performances I did not feel that I was improvising any more than usual than I would with a less abstract text.

4. In other words: what type of supplementing actions do you think the text called for in performance?

   […] More concentration.

5. Was there any significant difference to the way you approached text previously?

   […] I had to make sense of the text but the piece felt metaphorical so I eventually didn't feel the need to understand until it unfolded during the rehearsing.

6. Was there any significant difference between the way you approached your own chosen texts in the sessions, and the way you approached the one provided?

   […] 'Characters' weren't created but entities. It didn't feel like it was a 'story' but more of an abstract performance.

7. How would you define 'spontaneity'?

   […] Non-premeditated actions/feelings that appear.

8. Based on your experience of the workshops and previous, what do you think is its [spontanety's] relation to 'improvisation'?

   […] Spontaneity is improvisation in that it is not predetermined.

9. Do you think that spontaneity is useful in life? And in performance? Why?

   […] Yes – so it doesn't become boring for the performer or the audition. Life is spontaneous.

10. Do you feel like you have improved your spontaneity because of your participation to the workshops?

    […] Yes – I feel more confident in my performing and feel I am more open to my surrondings.

11. What do you think/feel mostly facilitated your spontaneity in performing a pre-written text [e.g. was it a particular method used to approach it, was it in the writing, was it a combination of these, or anything else]?

    […] I feel the exercises made the spontaneity easier for me. The partner exercise, touching areas of the body to produce a reaction in the voice, helped with the spontaneity. Pre-written text gave some spontaneity but I feel the exercises brought more out from the text.

12. What do you think/feel mostly obstructed your spontaneity?

    […] Myself. I overthink and believe this may have prevented myself from being spontaneous. I think it would take me a while to fully understand the concept of the training and convey it through the performance. However, I did feel spontaneous during the exercises (painting etc.) but I feel I didn't know how to explore that in a performance (I like your English text). This, I believe, may be confidence, overthinking etc.

13. In what way – if any – did the provided text stimulate your spontaneity in performance?

    […] The text allowed for different 'stories'. The two performances had different 'feels' for me as a performer. For example – in the first piece I felt judgemental etc. and the second piece I felt guilty/apologetic. Most of my lines were the same through both pieces but the tones, to me, felt entirely different.

14. How would you describe the working atmosphere and environment?

    […] Fun, intense, stressful at times but all together good.

15. Can you give feedback on your overall experience [e.g. what worked and did not work for you, what relevant skills you might have gained, suggestions, etc.]?

    […] I still don't fully understand the training as I don't feel I was spontaneous in the text however I did feel spontaneous where the movement was not set I.e. the group vocal improvisation and the speaker-mover exercise. Due to the text's movement being predetermined and myself knowing the other actor's movement I didn't feel spontaneous. If however, I had not seen their score, I feel I may have been more open with reaction to their movement as I would not be anticipating their piece.

For example – during the text one of the actors went off on a tangent that wasn't set in movement or designated line and that is when I feel spontaneity as I was reacting to the 'unknown'.
Although I don't understand the training I really enjoyed myself and felt more confident towards the last few sessions. I would happily continue training should you wish to start the sessions again. I am willing to learn and understand so I can become a better performer.

Thank you!

# Participant Questionnaire

X *I have read the information sheet provided and I am happy to participate. I understand that by completing and returning this questionnaire I am consenting to be part of the research study and for my data to be used as described.*

1. Did you find the text provided during the ensemble work engaging? If yes, in what way? If not, can you think of a reason?

   I was struggling to relate to the text, for two reasons. One was that I was very much pushed for time with a heavy workload at the time. So, I couldn't become very deeply immersed in the reading. The second reason is that I found the style of the text difficult to penetrate and hard to relate to … mainly because of its seeming stream-of-consciousness style.

2. To what extent did you need to make sense of it before performing?

   I find that learning a text requires some making sense of it, or else it becomes very hard to remember. I aborted that process due to time constraints. Repetition is the key for embedding the lines on a level where all kind of emotional or context aids are left behind…

3. Did the text inspire [or require] you to improvise and/or make creative interventions in performance? If so, in what way? If not, can you think of a reason?

   Not applicable in my case…

4. In other words: what type of supplementing actions do you think the text called for in performance?

   From the brief moments in which I engaged with the text during rehearsal I found that the text gained in meaning through interaction with the other actors. I started to perceive other perspectives on the potential meaning of lines. This also happened as an observer in the rehearsal. Multiple meanings became transparent. There was a great fluidity of association early on in the rehearsal process.

5. Was there any significant difference to the way you approached text previously?

   Yes. I had previously connected action scores more tightly to text. Separating action from words was difficult – but the loosening of that connection also brought greater fluidity with some unexpected moments where I felt surprised by what was emerging … which was great!

6. Was there any significant difference between the way you approached your own chosen texts in the sessions, and the way you approached the one provided?

   No.

7. How would you define 'spontaneity'?

Action without deliberation. Best when grounded in present-moment awareness, allowing for emergence of material in relationship: between actors-actors, actors-text, actors-audience, actors-setting. Necessitates attenuation of critical/self-centred awareness: I can only be spontaneous if I am fully present with all that is here now without judgement. Otherwise I am caught up in evaluation/analysis or predetermined patterns of perception, behaviour and thought.

8. Based on your experience of the workshops and previous, what do you think is its [spontanety's] relation to 'improvisation'?

   Improvisation offers opportunities for spontaneity to emerge. It can facilitate spontaneity when one is able to surrender critical self-concern / self-consciousness, bursting the bubble of self-absorption.

9. Do you think that spontaneity is useful in life? And in performance? Why?

   To me spontaneity arises in states of flow (see the writings of Csickszentmihalyi) – and flow states lead to peak performance / peak states, which can engender growth processes in the body-mind, leading to fulfilment, happiness, greater wellbeing, etc. At the same time, for the audience it's exhilarating and engaging and inspiring to watch peak performance – in peak performance aesthetics become medicinal: great art uplifts!

10. Do you feel like you have improved your spontaneity because of your participation to the workshops?

    I feel the seeds were there. I believe regular practice is vital. There are techniques and exercises … but the ensemble work - what happens between us – is also important.

    Time was not on our side. The sessions felt very full, there was little breathing space and as the performance approached I felt a narrowing of focus on achieving an outcome, particularly in relation to the text given to us. I felt many different things throughout the sessions: sometimes freedom to play, sometimes immersion in relationship, sometimes following inner impulses, sometimes losing myself, sometimes becoming stuck in patterns, sometimes feeling engaged … then disengaged in observing action. The work certainly felt like meditation in action! My physical constraints (knee injury) were frustrating me, yet the injury also enabled a higher continuity of somatic observation/experiencing.

    I wonder where this could lead, if we worked over a longer period of time: six months … a year?! :-)

11. What do you think/feel mostly facilitated your spontaneity in performing a pre-written text [e.g. was it a particular method used to approach it, was it in the writing, was it a combination of these, or anything else]?

    - Knowing the text inside-out… so I could forget about remembering the words.

    - Having a range of entirely unrelated actions which would enable emergence of unpredictable associations.

- Working with the text in the ensemble, being moved, challenged, interrupted, complemented, modulated by the other actor, e.g. in the voice improvisations (when several texts were layered) and in physical improvisations (where new movement patterns and postures and gestures triggered emergence of new associations).

12. What do you think/feel mostly obstructed your spontaneity?

    - Too many instructions.
    - When there was a lack of connection with other actors (i.e. a lack of presence on either side).
    - Burst of critical self-consciousness – I felt that particularly in the showing, with so many old colleagues and even one of my old acting tutors present … it was hard not to think what they would think of what I was doing there and how they'd evaluate my performance…

13. In what way – if any – did the provided text stimulate your spontaneity in performance?

    I didn't much work with it … but in rehearsal (in the couple of times I joined in at the start) the unstructured/free-flowing style of the text created a kind of blank canvas. I didn't see this at first. At first the text felt confusing, nonsensical, even indulgent. Its lack of clear narrative, however, provided an opportunity for ensemble creativity: during the best moments, when the actors were able to stay present with each other, it felt like meaning was co-created there and then in performance. Later on, as the showing approached, the opportunities for that kind of co-creation felt less pronounced as there was a lot of blocking of movement … to achieve something more finished? The whole process clearly needs more time.

14. How would you describe the working atmosphere and environment?

    Serious and focused. :-) There was dedication, but also some struggling … to remain focused, to sustain energy, to sustain commitment. There was some frustration and straining to understand what was wanted. There was a lot of earnest effort but also many lapses of presence – the long hours made this quite hard work for a group that had not bonded and grown together in practice. Many (myself included) had other jobs, pulling our attention away from the rehearsal / training processes. That affected levels of energy & availability of course.

15. Can you give feedback on your overall experience [e.g. what worked and did not work for you, what relevant skills you might have gained, suggestions, etc.]?

    Continuity and regularity work for me, building relationships and skills. Presently shorter sessions work better for me – they are physically easier to sustain, allowing full engagement followed by rest, whilst I'm still in recovery.

    Repeating exercises of all kinds was enriching, building depth of skill.

Lastly, your honest feedback on what you observed in the room was really enriching also. It is hard to see oneself without a mirror! You provided a highly perceptive mirror, bringing awareness to blind spots. I really appreciated that.

Right, how about setting up regular continuous training? :-)

Thank you!

>> Thank you for your hard work Filippo!! – Happy to meet and talk further if you like. My busyness continues, as I mentioned in a recent email, I'm moving house. And we're moving our programme to Liverpool John Moores University. It's intense. But that said, a regular training session I would make time for. It's what I want.

Jessica

LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY

# Participant Questionnaire

*I have read the information sheet provided and I am happy to participate. I understand that by completing and returning this questionnaire I am consenting to be part of the research study and for my data to be used as described.*

YES.

1. Did you find the text provided during the ensemble work engaging? If yes, in what way? If not, can you think of a reason?

I found the text provided within the workshops incredibly interesting and stimulating. The text for me personally created endless possibilities of direction, style, aesthetics and meaning which meant it was always a great deal of fun to work on. I also found the subject point compelling and the text in general very engaging.

2. To what extent did you need to make sense of it before performing?

The vast majority of the text made complete sense on my first reading, there was the odd line here and there that I would read a few times to fully understand it, but as a whole I connected to the piece quite strongly. I didn't feel that I needed to "make sense" of the text, it was already clear in my own interpretation, but there were certain lines that took me a few reads to be able to fully grasp what the line was trying to do and say.

3. Did the text inspire [or require] you to improvise and/or make creative interventions in performance? If so, in what way? If not, can you think of a reason?

Yes it did, very much so. The language is so visual it's hard not to immediately become inspired when reading and performing it. Due to this I had very clear associations, which were hard not to act upon. Certain lines would create clear and powerful associations, one line in particular was, "The way she lays over the puddle, the red puddle, her white dress all soaked wet and quickly clotted..." Whilst saying this line I felt like I was in a room slowly filling with blood with a white dress on, struggling to keep clean and white. I think this had a clear impact on my physicality and voice; my own interpretation led me almost into a physical score that wasn't premeditated. I think it was definitely more a case of inspiring me not requiring me to intervene.

4. In other words: what type of supplementing actions do you think the text called for in performance?

In honesty, I don't feel that the text actually needed anything adding in regards to "actions". It would of worked with the text simply being read, perhaps the placement of the performers, lighting and the use of voice would have to have been meticulously thought about, but I don't think actions necessarily needed adding. On the other hand the scores created whilst adding actions into the performance

worked beautifully at times, and as a performer you do want to create movement within the piece. I think this is something that could be looked at in further workshops and experiment to see what suits the texts better.

5. Was there any significant difference to the way you approached text previously?

Yes, when learning a text I usually learn with emotion straight away, this is also because I look into the piece contextually before I begin to work with the text. This means I immediately become more emotionally involved with the text and character. So when I began to learn this text not only did I have pretty much no contextual information about the piece, I also learnt it in monotone. This was the first time I had ever leant a text this way, and will now be the only way I learn a text. I could immediately see the benefit when we first began to play with the text. Any slight thing that was added emotion or movement through pure improvisation felt like it needed to be there and wasn't over acted in anyway - it felt incredibly natural and not clichéd.

6. Was there any significant difference between the way you approached your own chosen texts in the sessions, and the way you approached the one provided?

Initially yes, in the first few workshops with my own texts I was still eager to find the emotion myself instead of allowing the emotion to come to me. I also felt quite rigid as a performer and felt unable to experiment with the piece and was conscious of just doing the same thing over and over again, but not very well. After working on my texts in the various exercises it felt like something unlocked, vocally and physically I felt free with the text and could begin to play. This is the feeling I had when we began to work with the text provided in the workshops a few weeks later, my freedom came straight away and impulses and associations came quicker and stronger.

7. How would you define 'spontaneity'?

When the gap between and idea and a reaction is virtually non-existent.

Based on your experience of the workshops and previous, what do you think is its [spontanety's] relation to 'improvisation'?

Well they go hand in hand you have to be spontaneous to allow yourself to improvise. If you're not spontaneous you will miss the moment by overthinking. It cannot be premeditated because it will become fake and meaningless. If you do premeditate especially in the work we have been doing within the workshops, you lose connection with what you are doing and lose the ability to react to the material.

8. Do you think that spontaneity is useful in life? And in performance? Why?

Yes of course it keeps things alive and fresh. It is difficult in performance to be completely spontaneous because you always have some form of guideline you need to stick to - you can't completely throw the piece of course. But I think you can and should be spontaneous on stage. A performance is always going to differ slightly from the last time you performed it. It's all down to when and how you choose to be spontaneous. I think the spontaneity should come from a natural reaction to something, something that forces you into being spontaneous on stage and reacting to that thing without premeditation in character. It comes down to the idea of flow; on

stage there is an energy flow, when you're utterly engaged and focused with what is happening on stage you are totally immersed within this flow. You therefore have to be spontaneous because you are reacting to everything that's happening within that moment not premeditating what's going to happen because you know the piece.

9. Do you feel like you have improved your spontaneity because of your participation to the workshops?

Defiantly, I think it has mainly come from being so engaged with the work we have been doing; being as focused as possible allows me to feel that I can be spontaneous. In addition to this, the ongoing practice and training of the voice and body has helped massively with my ability to be spontaneous, being more free vocally and physically meant there were far more ways in which I could react and perform spontaneously.

10. What do you think/feel mostly facilitated your spontaneity in performing a pre-written text [e.g. was it a particular method used to approach it, was it in the writing, was it a combination of these, or anything else]?

It's an accumulation of methods and exercises we have used in the workshops. But the mover speaker exercise is the one that benefited me the most in terms of spontaneity. It allowed me to see firsthand how someone's voice or physicality can affect the way you respond spontaneously. Also, I've always known how important it is to fully know and understand the text you are performing but the workshops have made me realise how crucial it is to know the text backwards, forwards and upside-down. If you don't know the text fully you will never be truly spontaneous on stage because you will never be fully in the moment, some part of you will be recalling the next line. Also due to the style of the text and the quick back and forth lines I think this really encourages you to be spontaneous with your reaction, you're going straight of the back of the person who has said the previous line so you don't always have time to respond how you wanted to in your head. It's a natural reaction to the line previous and the way in which your colleague fed you that line.

11. What do you think/feel mostly obstructed your spontaneity?

My ability to massively overthink EVERYTHING. This has always been an issue with me and improvisation, I get a spark of an idea and instead of going with it, I challenge it. Try and think of something better, which never comes. Luckily throughout this process I have learnt to go with my instincts, sometimes it's not right but at least I have stayed on track with the idea instead of going on a tangent.

12. In what way – if any – did the provided text stimulate your spontaneity in performance?

I vaguely answered this in questions 3 and 11. The text being so visual was detrimental in being spontaneous in performance, because your mind would immediately get an impulse to go somewhere that you don't have total control over. The words would create imagery and impulses you couldn't ignore. Also not being set to a certain character led to more possibilities of how you could and would perform certain lines. Alongside this knowing the entire script and having the freedom to choose what lines you would and wouldn't say obviously massively impacted spontaneity within your performance.

13. How would you describe the working atmosphere and environment?

I would describe it as an ideal work environment. We came into the space and we worked. I liked the fact that this was acknowledged before we started work with the ensemble, we knew to be respectful of our colleagues in the room and to focus on the work we were doing. When we had a break then we could relax and chat but there was no time for that whilst working which I really appreciated. This meant I could get straight back into work after breaks with a level of attention and concentration that enabled me to work to the best of my abilities. Of course this was not achieved in every rehearsal and sometimes it was difficult to focus because the ensemble as a whole were not present, but having previously experienced what it is like to be fully focused and present meant we were able to return to that state.

14. Can you give feedback on your overall experience [e.g. what worked and did not work for you, what relevant skills you might have gained, suggestions, etc.]?

I cannot thank you enough for the experience and skills I have gained throughout this process. Before the workshops I had always struggled with my voice, I knew I kept a lot of tension in my throat and didn't know how to stop that from happening. I had worked with resonators previously but never been able to pair them with a text and speech as well as I can after the workshops. Fully understanding the placement of my voice and being able to move it whilst speaking a text has helped me endlessly. The work has given me such a clear understanding of how I can use my voice and the impact it has when used correctly. I feel throughout the workshops I have gained more and more freedom as a performer, with the ability to have more range not only vocally and physically but also within my imagination with the use of associations influencing my performance. I think the use of your imagination is a real key to an honest performance, and this is something I have only come to fully understand throughout the workshops. The work we have done has also made me realise instantly when I am overreacting and not being truthful within my performance. I cannot wait to continue work and develop even further as a performer, and more importantly to simply continue to work on a subject area I find so incredibly fascinating.

Thank you!

# Participant Questionnaire

☐ *I have read the information sheet provided and I am happy to participate. I understand that by completing and returning this questionnaire I am consenting to be part of the research study and for my data to be used as described.*

1. Did you find the text provided during the ensemble work engaging? If yes, in what way? If not, can you think of a reason?

   […] Yes very engaging and very rhythmic

2. To what extent did you need to make sense of it before performing?

   […] Ididn't feel any need to make sense of it, sense came through intuition anyway but I tried to leave making sense alone and then when it came to performing it, just watching it create its own story.

3. Did the text inspire [or require] you to improvise and/or make creative interventions in performance? If so, in what way? If not, can you think of a reason?

   […] It required me to be completely spontaneous and open to all possibilities in the moment. It was a text that was perfect for not pre-empting what the other person would say after you because you had to be so focused on what you were saying and to listen carefully to the other person so to fully hear them.

4. In other words: what type of supplementing actions do you think the text called for in performance?

   […]

5. Was there any significant difference to the way you approached text previously?

   […] I learned it in a very monotonous, rhythmic way.

6. Was there any significant difference between the way you approached your own chosen texts in the sessions, and the way you approached the one provided?

   […] Just a heightened focus in both because of the score added on to both.

7. How would you define 'spontaneity'?

   […] Completely in the moment whilst open to an impulsive possibility.

8. Based on your experience of the workshops and previous, what do you think is its [spontanety's] relation to 'improvisation'?

[…] Spontaneity is different because I feel it is more strongly connected to impulse than improvisation. Improvisation is the calm and spontaneity is the storm.

9. Do you think that spontaneity is useful in life? And in performance? Why?

   […] Yes, otherwise you behave in a mechanical, pre-determined way.

10. Do you feel like you have improved your spontaneity because of your participation to the workshops?

    […] I feel like it's always been a huge part of my personality, it just gets richer.

11. What do you think/feel mostly facilitated your spontaneity in performing a pre-written text [e.g. was it a particular method used to approach it, was it in the writing, was it a combination of these, or anything else]?

    […] It was the training prior to it I feel, that training becomes like muscle memory.

12. What do you think/feel mostly obstructed your spontaneity?

    […] My pre-frontal cortex.

13. In what way – if any – did the provided text stimulate your spontaneity in performance?

    […] It's difficulty to predict what comes next.

14. How would you describe the working atmosphere and environment?

    […] A little too intense at times and too serious, although always professional, I feel that life can be so serious anyway, we can still work vigorously and intensely with a light/hearted and fun quality at the same time. I understand it's a difficult balance to strike when you want to push to get the most/best out of people but I believe it's possible.

15. Can you give feedback on your overall experience [e.g. what worked and did not work for you, what relevant skills you might have gained, suggestions, etc.]?

    […] What didn't work for me at all was intensive negative feedback and sometimes bullying of other performers, that just puts me in a very negative space were I don't wish to be in, I'd rather not be there. I feel that observations and notes can be given with vigorous care which can be a positive experience rather than negative.

Thank you!

# Appendix 4: *Love and Repetition*

# *Love and Repetition*

*a play by*

*Filippo Romanello*

The lines of speech are not allocated. The choice of who should speak which line can be fixed in rehearsal, or left undetermined before each performance; either way, actors may need to memorise the whole text.

Dashes (–) ahead of each paragraph indicate the individual lines and therefore a change of speaker; when placed within a line, they indicate rhythmical discontinuities, or phonetic stresses. Forward slashes (/) indicate the point of overlap with the following line/s of speech. Anything in *italics* is a quotation, either real or imaginary, which may be amplified. Anything within [square brackets] is either a whisper, or an option.

In places, the syntax is broken, and the punctuation lacking, erratic or ambiguous: this is to be considered intentional. The dramaturgical interpretation and staging of the text are left at the user's artistic discretion, or intuition.

Special apologies to Bob Dylan, Jim Morrison, Robby Krieger, Soren Kierkegaard, Bob Marley and Pavement.

*A mental setting*

*Three speakers: a male and two females*

## 1. Thinking sets in

- I can speak
- I can hear
- I can see
- What am I doing here.
- What else
- I can smell taste touch/
- So I am here
- It’s good to ask yourself some fundamental questions sometimes:
- I guess I’d like to express something
- I don’t mean it rhetorically
- But it’s a bit embarrassing
- I am a restless young man
-
- The trouble is, I wish to speak for myself
- And I am missing the point of course
- Within this whole- rumination
- These- articulated sounds and signs already meaningful
- I mean you just get to be here
- You don’t get to choose
- You grow a habit of it
- Until choices come out of the slumber enough to make you uncomfortable.
- Anyway
- The way I see this
- Let’s say- claim to see this
- What’s not my sight
- Alright
- Or think
- What’s not my thought
- Not my fault
- Suppose I can think too. Although that’s not... that’s not… Thanks god. An authentic thought: I wouldn’t know what that is. But then I know. Then I can express. There’s nothing new about it. Obviously.

- All I can do is signify
- But still it’s me doing it: the speaking the hearing the touching etcetera etcetera
-
- The way she
- The way she presses her hands gently against her body as if to sense her shape
- The way she comes to mind
- To this restless young mind
- What
- Nice shape
- But that comment’s gratuitous you see ultimately I don’t know I cannot distinguish I need to compare
- I’m not aware-
- I think I know what is nice what is good for me
- Retrospectively
- But I cannot describe it
-
- *“It is betokened only in the passion of possibility”* and…
  *“Possibility wonders about in its own possibility… discovering now one possibility, now another”…*
- What does that mean what does that mean
-
- Is there a past to deal with
- I don’t think that’s a question. I would ask... myself
- Well, I’ve asked it
- True
-
- We’re in a theatre. Me and her
- Yes sure the world the stage the world is at stage
- Or at my flat

  Her flat

  Our flat

  Not flattering

  Okay

  Why not in space. Or any abstract place.

- This is English right this is likely to be in England okay or Europe alright which is different or Britain which is Great! again or America which is: awesome. Or anywhere really
- There's a table, a counter, a country road, perhaps a few chairs… or carriage seats… or a bench or a bike or a bed. And other objects… perhaps. I don't know.
-
- So I'm not sure
- All this anticipation
- I'm getting mixed up
-
- Perhaps she could speak perhaps I could /but
- There's other figures.
  So what
- She could be the other figures too
- Coming out of the haze in turn
- Then plunging back into it with the rest
-
- With those blurred shapes that don't speak
- Those murmuring shapes
- That can listen
- That can laugh
- That can sneeze cough cry yawn touch /themselves
- That can hold opinions or change them
- That can classify define confine
- But that cannot speak.
-
- That stare
- What was I thinking what was I thinking
  About now
- They can see me obviously. In some shape or form.
- This cannot be what I was thinking what I was thinking about now well now it must have been
- I can see them of course can't I, conventionally speaking

- That reminds me of those warnings at the back of the trucks
-
You know ‘if you cannot see my mirrors I cannot see you’ kind of thing
It’s like you don’t exist
Can you see me alright
-
- But they don’t speak.
- Anyway to perceive wants to acknowledge matter. And that shouldn’t matter. I should matter. What I want.
- What do you want
-
- I wish I didn’t want to want. to... want. to… dot dot dot
- What matters you can never pin down
- To look at her for example
- Coming out of the blue
- And to see her looking at me
- Which reminds me of that song you know that song:
- *“I looked at you*
*You looked at me*
*I smiled at you*
*You smiled at me*
*And we're on our way*
*No we can't turn back, babe*
*Yeah, we're on our way*
*And we can't turn back*
*'Cause it's too late*
*Too late, too late*
*Too late, too late”*
-
- Me and her. A love attempt. Picking up? Are you picking up now? It’s quite a straight-
- It’s just a relationship an encounter quite casual something happens it’s nice it seems new me and her I do this she says that and so on. I am just myself or the

way I wish to be or to be seen I'm not quite sure. She is- well what I hope she could be. No offence meant.

- Right.
- My ideal
- Not really
- I don't have an ideal really
- French would be nice
- It's more like a wish. She's more like a constant wish.
- It's very easy for me to spot one
- A wish come true perhaps
- But I've never got one
- That's right: perhaps.
- So elegant
- Except that
- What
-
- I and you are not on a page out of context
- The looks speak for I and you
- The behaviour too.
- I should never have started in first person...
-
- Him…call me him
- He, if I'm the subject
- So who's the subject
- The restless young man
- And a woman
-
- Dressed like this
- Dressed like this yes

With exactly these features that you can see

Why not

I mean maybe I can get changed

Whatever he thinks

I mean

Within reason

What if he lies

Can thoughts lie

Or make a mistake

-

- Then perhaps there is a mistake.
- I am sorry?
- A misconception
- A delusion
- Right
- Perhaps there is another woman
- Already
- Perhaps there's always another woman
- Always/
- Already/
- There

Here

-

- Why another woman
- What you mean why
- That's just the way it is That's why
- That's right. That's just the way it is. No point questioning. That's the scheme of things… the scheme he's in that's all.
- Scheme what scheme
- Some scheme… some scheme he's in that that that keeps repeating
- Keeps repeating that's right.
- But he doesn't know that he's repeating
- He doesn't?
- He does and he doesn't that's right it's like it's like/
- Playing games without ends without goals without

-

- No no no. Yes and no. Not really you know It's more like… kind of you know like something you know but you forgot that you know you

Forgot to remember

Or recognise

- In the heat of things
- That’s right: in the heat of things… a scheme… does not recognise
- And it repeats. Again and again.

As if… he’d learnt it by heart

- Only he’s forgotten he’s learnt it
- So he cannot unlearn it
- /It’s inherited it’s
- A habit
- Like… breathing
- Like speaking
- Like loving
-
- It may feel new but it’s always the same
-
- This language, is specific
- It’s a given
- You’ve got to take sides
- I’m telling you you don’t get to choose the choices you’ve got!

**2. Pleasure and pain (brighten the corners)**

- *I like your English*
- That’s the kind of phrase she’d use
- What kind of phrase
- That’s the kind of phrase that woman would use. Doesn’t matter that or another.

But those crackling eyes – and that smile – for example

- Pretty innocent- pretty, innocent, example
- That’s how to conceive an option

That’s how it sneaks in sneaks in and/

- And a stream of light lights a corner of his mind and a knife is there
- A knife is there
- Lurking
- Brightening the corners

- The corners. That’s right.
-
- To go and seize it, the knife, to pick it up. To hold it: to feel very attractive. To have a lot of blood already spreading on the scene and to sense to foresee he could have been more /precautious…
- The way she lays down over the puddle the red puddle her white dress all soaked wet quickly clotted And the taint of this angst this hollow angst will not dissolve from the pit of his gut
- To look at her dress in distress: the way she attempts to undress but, underneath her white dress, reveals many a same dress, increasingly stained red… and a silence that screams
-
- I couldn’t I couldn’t mark the act
- He can never mark the act as it happens
- Nor can he prevent it
- Then he tries to ignore it doesn’t he tries to forget
- Looks the other way
- But how can you forget what you don’t want to remember how can you forget what you don’t want to remember how can you forget what you don’t want to remember
- *“It’s easily done*
  *You just pick anyone*
  *And pretend that you never have met”*
-
- But forsaking is never that easy. Or forgetting. Forgiving? What does he mean to say. He feels helpless. Never quite accepting the reasons for his actions while suffering the consequences of their necessity.
- I do not know how to love you yet the will to love is stronger than the will I have to live
-
- That’s what he thinks. Sometimes
- That’s what he thinks every time he tries
- Every time he fails
- *I love you but I am not in love with you*

-
- And he doesn’t understand that really in English as said by a girl he liked who eventually left him
- Terrible terrible incomprehension
- Was little more than a boy then
  Still is, or silly.
- Not many girls have left him though
  Since then.
- Not many no
- How many
- One or two…
- One or two?
- Out of
- How many
- How many has he had
- How many?
- How did he feel about that
- Is it better to leave or to be left
- He doesn’t know does he
- Depends doesn’t it
- On what though
- [Go away go away from me!]
-
- [Me?]
- Now look at this face at this countenance… so handsome so unsure… how come he doesn’t find someone… such unexpressed potential such unexpressed enthusiasm cannot even be said even be said to want to come to my place… her initiative… deep down this is what he’d like isn’t it… he’d like to talk a bit first doesn’t he needs to let himself go… cannot be tedious can he now that she… she who could she be she who likes his English who smells of kindness and disenchantment and takes his hand yes takes his hand and presses it gently presses it against her… her… as if to sense- her shape her shape through his hand and so he – takes off her shirt… that’s it… unpoetic… lips rambling her neck… fingers picking the back of her bra but- but he cannot unfasten it… no he

cannot unfasten it… so she says she says Make love to me she says… bellowing… Sweep death away… she says… to the void… to the void that he fears… as he feels his feelings failing, fears his feelings failing him…

- It's in the intimacy of love
  In the immersive intimacy of love
  That a seed of pain is planted
  Inadvertently planted
  Lovers thrust their love against their loved ones
  And take turns
  Yes they take turns
  With pleasure
  And pain
  Pleasure
  And pain
  Pleasure
  And pain
  -
- The way she clenches the knife
  The knife that he dropped
  The knife that inadvertently that inadvertently was tossed was and ended up must have ended up inadvertently ended up underneath their bed
  She steps back
  The way she stares at them.
  How would that make you feel
-
- *I do not know how to love you and and:* the will to love is stronger than the will I have to live
- But it's more…
- Complicated
- It's more complicated
- Than
- That.

  The end

  There's nowhere to dump it.

- Unless they pretended…
- He smells the end at every beginning
- Unless he pretends
- Leave unless alone
- Unless alone
  Always alone
  Always already alone
-
- And it's not really regret is it
  Feels more like
  Disappointment really
  Constant disappointment
- There is a bit of regret.
  A sparkle of it.
  A bit of regret for something unknown.
  [Some alternative]
  [That single choice]
  [The other choice]
  [Not chosen or]
  [Not even given]
-
- That's the impossibility he feels the intimacy the intimacy is the prospect is the prospect the impossibility of the prospect of both but not just both just wanting just both but choice just will to have choice must be impossible choice won't overcome overcome choice…
  To get dressed to light a cigarette…
  As she drifts away:
- As she does: *I'm innocent really I am a blonde innocent intelligent beautiful pretty little girl my scent is fresh I am a little white rose with fair little drops of fair little dew what has become what has of you* yet I sweat...
- What was it. what was it that he felt. that he felt when he was younger and smelled while unaware:
- Might be less romantic than taking stock on a rocking chair on a squeaking porch of a summer night in a cotton dress with a flower in her hair and that

sweat down her neck and he wants that feeling back and a cigarette to sketch with fading smoke drawn in the air what he fails to feel what lures him there…

- Plus he prefers dark hair.
-
- Shapes come out of a void of a of a…
- Past of a now that's been that's always been now and never quite now
- Some kind of background noise
- Harmonious sounds like silent sounds and everything's still yet restless
- Then it's a shock and a shudder and you suddenly think one way or the other but it's just a question of will no more chance.
- Then you kind of warm up again… don't you… you kind of get used... grow habits… as if your will was up to you
- But it's hard as you get to be here as you get to be aware of the void the void that you don't know that these lights these lights have swallowed up digested and excreted in /you:
- He remembers long walks
- Hand in hand
- Days were never long enough
- Evenings never too cold never too cold for
- Lengthy farewells
- Mum calling him home
- *You'll catch something*
- He'd catch the flu
- And she would pay him a visit and she would not restrain her kiss
- And a lady saying that lady seeing them coming and going that lady saying
- *You're a nice couple you*
- How could you
- How could he

**3. Wishful sinful**

- *Don't tell me please don't tell me you've put your cock inside this woman*

  -

  She wouldn't say that… nobody would say that

- Unpoetic
- Sometimes
- Did he
- Maybe.
- Maybe he did maybe he didn't. Maybe it's just a line from a movie he saw. He can be provocative. You know. To reveal a fear an unspeakable fear perhaps but only a fear
- Yes only a fear a fear a fear crossing his mind like a scar like an idyllic vision tainted by the experience of life seeping through his eyes into her eyes… now reflected in her eyes lie his doubts… so eager… with his hands and his mouth and his- with this woman with this- who's this woman… she must have asked herself some question mustn't she must have- suspected something suspected something was wrong
-
- To guess what she might be thinking
- To seemingly nod seemingly nod
- At that question at that unspeakable unspeakable question
-
- He's been seeing some her
  Some other her
  Ok?
  Or he wished to
  Which of the two.
  What difference does it make
  If he just wanted her or if he actually went with her or he just wished there were a her whatever
  It's already happened: like a doubt: dormant.
  In his mind
  Isn't it
  It doesn't mean that he don't love you
  It doesn't mean that he don't want to love you rather
  I really want to love you
- *Do you still love me?*

- Yes I want to love you he says: I don't want to let anything come in the way of us loving each other with infinite passion complete relinquishment till death do us part
- The knife again is produced, in a whisper, ignored:
  *"Wishful sinful*
  *Our love is beautiful to see*
  *I know where I would like to be*
  *Right back where I came"*
- Unconvincing unconvincing of course
- Would she hold on to anything anything at all that could be grasped
- He does that doesn't he, does that too
- He provides the grasp
- A word a gesture
- Of hope
- Often unintended…/hope
- /But she's not- silly she's not just not just anyone who she has faith
- Faith?
- Yes and he… well he as well as- no… he just wants… he wishes… he just wishes them both them both to be to want to be…/ faithful

**4. Dragging repeats**

- She's invited him over for dinner, alright, no they've agreed they've agreed to have a date, to go out for dinner, despite them being together having been for a while, you know, it's nice to have a date, to walk across the bridge hand in hand, to look at the lights the river… no she didn't plan that far, she waited at the bar alright but *I've asked you not to be late, I don't like to wait!*
- He came early but it was too late already
- Too late not to acknowledge
- But they ate anyway they sat there at the pub they ate did they eat and they talked did they not and he wasn't listening oh but he tried please please believe me please he was not no he was not interested oh but he tried only he- distracted by those- was- attracted by those- those…
- Always something else elsewhere

- Ah it’s terrible
- If this other woman if this was his girlfriend if she was with him would he- would he have noticed- her instead would he
- Oh please not jealousy: impossibility the impossibility he has-
- We don’t need to be here if you wank at us.
-
- I mean… This is not a monologue…
- It is not. It’s not just his… gaze. A male’s gaze whatever it’s not, okay? come on
- *My friends told me.*
- What.

  He asked… yet he knew
- No he didn’t. He had a feeling. A funny feeling. Running up his spine you know. A premonition. For want of a better word.
- They were there somewhere in the pub or restaurant whatever alright and then *they came to me they came to me* out of nowhere *to advise me to tell me not to trust you, they came to me to tell me that they saw* from some corner undercover of a grin I don’t know *they saw* what I could not see
- Was he looking at some legs someone else’s legs perhaps… like these
- *While… being… with me*
- Yes. Or something else. Could be anything like- any other… well any other situation anything really anyway it’s a shame in principle. Good friends you have. Brightening the corners. Dusting off and sneezing. With their opinions. Bloody busybodies.
- *I’ve come to tell you*
- She went up to him to tell him didn’t she. Later on, at home. Or few days later. Doesn’t matter.
- Yes you have…

  His mortified look feels mitigated in her eyes...

  She went up to tell him, that’s now he knows that she knows And he he denies doesn’t he didn’t know himself or didn’t want to know malice no they mischievous knew malice not I Oh I really wanted to love you so much. You’d deserve it. Oh but said it like this like this sounds pretentious. Bloody busybodies they were right but he wasn’t there he wasn’t really there: they

wanted to see what they saw and there it was there it came there the reality there in her stockings! Oh I've been carried away now…

- Who says…
- *Have a drink*
- *Thanks*
- *Oh I'm so thirsty*
- Yes yes yes. Anything to pass away the time.
- *I was not born to be a waitress but hey. I need money don't I. Acting doesn't pay.*
- That's what they say… not all of them are bad actors.
- *So you're a waitress*
- *And an actress*
- *Aren't we all*
- Now imagine that. She sits by the counter and waits. He's late again.
- *Have a drink*
- Who knows. Perhaps she would like another drink.
- *Have a drink*
- *Oh I'm drunk ih ih ih I'm pissed hammered I'm wasted ih ih ih had a few pints last night, well more than a few ih ih ih what a scene ih ih ih can't remember how I got home ih ih ih got up this morning smile with the risin' sun three little birds still with my shoes on ih ih ih embarrassing ih ih ih thanks god it's Friday ih ih ih*
- *Why do you do do you do this to you, how do you do*
- *I'm alright and you*
- *I'm good thanks and you*
- *I'm very good thank you – how about you*
- *I'm good thanks very thank you and you*
- *I'm awrights merci and vous*
- *"I was doing time in the universal mind*
  *I was feeling fine*
  *I was turning keys,*
  *I was setting people free*
  *I was doing all right"*
-

- *I've been waiting and waiting and waiting, waiting for him to love me, that's what I have to say, him to love me! What about me! Hey. What about me loving him!* Has he ever considered that? Of course he has. I just said it. Ok now? Nothing is granted. No. Good. He's her boyfriend, okay or wants to be where is he where are we
- Perhaps he hasn't met her yet.
- *Anyway I don't like drinking per se. I just drink to get drunk*.
  Oh But what an idea of English he has.
  -
- Let's not hustle about like merry people pretending not to know what they are doing. Let's pretend we know. Remember the first time they met like the first time they meet
- Is that a question
- Remember the first time they meet?
- "*Recollection has the great advantage that it begins with the loss the reason it is safe and secure is that it has nothing to lose"*
-
- So say that he was that he moved to England didn't he for the first time, that's it! or the second, anyway and really he got this job what job was it? the first was a charity job then he got another job then he was kind of alone most of the day say, it was a sales job on the road job, yes t'was a good job you know, he had his freedom his independence his good money and occasional girls he met randomly well not randomly but I mean, just like that, sex you know, but also company - DVD was a pretext of course, DVD… a film! a good prelude you may say so yes or epilogue sometimes too alcohol too yes maybe you know to ease things but to laugh at things too but primarily it was sex deferred sex yes you may say so sometimes strange isn't it to put off what you strive for in the end that's what you strive for unless unless you know what comes next unless you feared those remnants of pleasure leftover yourself and I am not sure 'is it the same for you' of once sex was done it was either sleep than some other way to be alone again
- Sex helped
- Alone again but only until the next time. But some friends here and there. But not really. Not one real companion you know. In this sail of life. So long until the next time. Like gaps of pleasure. It was kind of physiologic. Like food.

- No reason to be outraged in my opinion. It's not mine anyway
- No no no in fact you were lonesome really I'm not saying you were kidding yourself
-
- But time passed you know the rat race, shop and go, chip and pin, tube work tube all those underground movements those great ideas dumped on Facebook… not really zapping any more like scrolling… anyway one way or another… all good to pass away the time… but to put yourself on the line
- Some ways are better than others
- Who says that
- Say he says this: So really I want to fall in love after all.
  Once and for all. Not that he didn't want before. Or that he didn't try. But you know how novelty is inebriating isn't it and attraction is chemistry isn't it and it's not premeditated really is it, is it, not like this
- Carry on
  -
- That wasn't just lazy writing really as they say and take the prompt

**5. Love or will**

- *"It takes youthfulness to hope, youthfulness to recollect, but it takes courage to will repetition"*
-
- So this is what it is: he wanted to fall in love and stay in love and there she was
- He wanted okay but why now rather than when now anyway
- Always now any now so much now that after so much now there comes a doubt.
  -
  A desire to spare a share of his unrest spare a share really I guess that's why he started to/ write but that doesn't you know it's like the invisible friend it's good for a while but then…
- Hey!
- Ok ok so what about this girl he fell in love with, you:
- She didn't notice him at first
- He did
- It took her a while

- It’s always like this with him
- But then but then

  *It’s very easy to fall in love with you*
- It takes time to get around him. Perhaps some wit too. Some intuition.
- *I like your English*
- He seems to be aware of that:
- It’s very easy to fall in love with me

  But it takes time

  And sometimes

  After some time

  I don’t want any more time
- *You you just don’t make enough time*
-
- So there they were at a first reading of many plays one of which was his play
- Which is not this is not about that
- No. of course not.
- *Whatever it is please be honest*
- I only hope she’s never going to be in the audience
-
- Carry on
-
- He thought it went a disaster: the reading: it was a drag like a like a dog… scraping for food!
- Scraping for… food for… thought?
- He just wanted to dig a hole and disappear.
- That’s right
-
- From all those people… the actors the directors
- There wasn’t one real actor in the room, but she and another maybe
- That’s just what he thought to alleviate his shame
- Yeah maybe
- But she laughed. While his play was read out. She was listening. And you know how it is when girls laugh

  Well how is it??

Anyway

- So then she acted in his play, such an emotional play, *I still have it in me you know. So kind so gentle. So crazy! And the language... I think I liked him right away, but I was going through a divorce*
- Now He didn't know that
- Nor did she, or not yet, he's not sure, can't remember
-
- It wasn't till much later on anyway that anything happened. And it shouldn't have happened because he was already seeing another girl at the time he thought he wanted to love, I mean really love, another attempt, not a revival no… he was giving it another go, just after another whom he thought he could have loved but had his doubts primarily because of her hands and anyway she disappeared so that was easy in the end, not that he wasn't disappointed, that wouldn't be true, 'cause maybe it was a question of pride and anyway what a childish way to behave! Not to answer his texts, and just like that! all of a sudden! And they kissed twice! At least. And at night. And during the day too. And then what happened! What happened?! Puff nix not available not found. What you up to? No answer. How are you? You there? Enjoying the sun? Or whatever T'was already summer you know He wasn't pushing at all! They even went to the cinema! To the cinema! In the afternoon! In Brixton! Didn't know what to do and outside it was cold! Cold. Can you believe. London. Sunday afternoon. Dull. And he thinks: there's your place there isn't there… not a mention! Trust me he couldn't be himself! He'd knew what to do! He'd been through this so many so many people don't know how to be themselves! They are all scared! They act up! They dress up they put on layers you know so many layers it all gets too heavy! You drag along! I'm telling you! You sweat! And it's always winter and it's breathless! He should have known something was wrong. Trust me it's sad when you find people like these.
- *"I can't understand*
  *She let go of my hand*
  *An' left me here facing the wall*
  *I'd sure like t'know*
  *Why she did go*
  *But I can't get close t'her at all*

*Though we kissed through the wild blazing nighttime*
*She said she would never forget*
*But now mornin's clear*
*It's like I ain't here*
*She just acts like we never have met"*

-
- *"Repetition and recollection are the same movement except in opposite directions for what is recollected has been is repeated backward whereas genuine repetition is recollected forward"*
  Recollected forward
  Recollected forward
  -
- Anyway he got through all that once he met her
- Who liked his language
- Who liked his play
- Who at some point said, she said:
- *I like you you know*
- And he replied…
- Right at the edge of the steps the steps down to the station the London underground that was closed apparently cause none of them knew that yet cause… it was night right? with the flickering lights of the kebab shop when he replied:
- I like you too
  Of course
- How polite
- What you mean polite
- I mean… he didn't think of her in those terms… not really… she was only an actress at the time who liked his play… a character in his play… they were friends… yeah blah blah maybe but then but then she slipped out of character and into his bed didn't she… almost by magic… all of a sudden… a swift move… he was already walking… walking alone back home… they had already parted… everything safe… then the phone rings… like it's late like it's dark and the last train is gone and so on and who knows maybe it's true etcetera etcetera and can I stay over basically and he didn't want anything to happen… he even

said that to her… politely of course… he didn't need to mention the other girl… there was no reason was there no need to give a reason it was just a moral sensation that was matching the facts… for once… apparently… and nothing happened in fact… that's why she wanted to disappear… the next day… of course… when she told him stupid… or was it in the night… and that hurt… and she was dressing up quickly… and all seemed miserable… and not quite because in the meantime something had changed… because he didn't know that not right away… the morning still didn't know that something had happened… in the night… that something had happened mysteriously in sleep… didn't it… they only slept but something had happened… between those folded arms… some seed was planted… wasn't it… sexlessly planted… in comfortable sleep… in the perfect dovetail of resting shapes… some kind of spell… a chemical spell… a sweet osmosis… that bound his heart

- It was stronger than anything else I'd experienced in years
-
- What
- They fought a lot
- Jealousy
- Of course.
- Same old fears
- Even sex wasn't good at first
- No.

  Yet he wanted to try
- It needed to work
- It got better and better
- It did didn't it
- We wanted it more and more
- That demonstrates demonstrates? Shows… that shows how chemistry works in unpredictable ways
- Love is chemistry
- *I was kind of keen to only have sex with you*. I mean/ I had no other-
- Me too!

  There was just that little thing…
-

- What happened
  What little thing

## 6. The exhausting temptations of novelty

- They always end up watching a DVD
- Most times it's real fun
- Being in each other's arms
- [It's not like the DVD from previously]
-
- But sometimes lately sometimes it's like it's like/
- What
- It's like a sunset-
- That's alright
- Over a pit
  A… gulf
-
- A swamp
- A swamp? No no no. That's not how it's like. Not at all. It's more like more like… I don't know okay
- A red swamp Engulfing them, engulfing them that's right I've said it: where is he hey where is his mind floating adrift outside the window beyond the clouds gone and there yet still there beside her beside her the remains the low tide remains the low tide receding like an animated corpse an an imprint of his absence just an imprint that's right on the shore of their bed
- Her hopeless arm still stretching and there's nothing left to reach out for perhaps or perhaps she's the one who's disappeared disappeared from his thoughts yet she's here…
- And it's like that sometimes it's like that sometimes you win sometimes you lose. But you never win or lose really it's more like sometimes you think you are the strongest sometimes you think you are the weakest. It's all just part of the same illusion. And what are you thinking and what should I do: carry on asking opinions getting opinions doubting opinions as if that matters what matters what's the matter with you. Go hell damp them! Spit them out of your ears! No-one's listening! Nobody cares! Take this moment now, what are they doing

here? They… trying to sleep? conning yourselves into thinking into… not noticing… it's a widening gap… don't you notice? The slump: it's here! does it hurt? Yet why why does it hurt yes why why didn't he notice what caused the split the slit the fissure… just like when you cut yourself when you cut yourself sometimes you don't even know do you and you've cut yourself and the blade the blade you can't even notice when it cuts You hardly notice when it wounds you but then but then you notice don't you notice the wound when it opens when it widens! When it pours out. You notice! when it bleeds! Here! Notice! till it's fresh!

There's only one thing left to do… besides fading away… in the distance… in the difference… between me and you and even in the dark one can sense what's happening!

-

His hand active on his groin.

-

Venting his conscience. Guilty and afraid. To hurt to get hurt. Pretending pretending to be here stuck here out of fear! And so the wound they're in the wound they're covering deepens and widens… gets sore… wait till it smells! Oh and if he finds the strength to tell her or if he or she or finds the strength to finally feel to finally share what is… finally… without folds… without stifling it all like sticky bandage… that's stained anyway…

Just like disclosing the wound

Just like cleansing the pus the infection of-

Shallow discourse

Now shut up.

-

Just get to the point

-

Guess that's easier if you think if you think you're handling it

Instead of- seeing it pointed at you

But we're both holding it

Holding it… away from us

Yet holding on to it

Careful not to slip that's right slip

Cause when you do… and sooner or later you do you inevitably do…

One side is sharp and the other blunt

- *So better drop it*
- I thought you were crying.

I mean sleeping.

-

Are you crying

- *It's nothing*
-
- And then they fall asleep. And then it's nothing, it's morning. Another working day waking up. Cut to the bathroom the shower… but before that before all that… she was awake. Surely. She was listening, to his breathing.
- She looks at him breathing asleep. The alarm rings. He wakes up, or pretends to… turns towards her, holds her tight against himself.

[The alarm goes off]

So the alarm rings again. He tries to get up but she holds him, forcing him back against her. He feels her. Her bare breasts against his back. Her whole shape doubling his own… while her hands… they don't move. They don't venture. As perhaps he'd like them to. Thus they lay. Half asleep half aware…

- 'Till a smell reminds him, that the sheets are not so fresh. That he never quite liked that. Then the alarm again the third alarm yeah like the cock's crow he kisses her, drags himself off the bed, out of the bedroom, into the bathroom. He shuts the door inside the bathroom.

[The alarm goes off]

Hot water comfortably pouring over his head his neck his shoulders. A coat of vapour quickly blinding the shower glass.

-

Wait. A rash of fresh air draws out a brush of mist. The bathroom door is pushed ajar. She reappears… a fuzzy sight… stark naked… joins him in the shower.

-

- Sweet.

And it is in all these little unexpected actions of hers that he wishes to lose himself again, find his love again, find the beat that beat that his heart had skipped, after Audiard, and dance with her through life then slip below her

change over, breathing heavy through clasping jaws… rubbing and gliding sweat against sweat… respectfully grasping and folding and gasping and… well, that's clear enough.

- Here's a loud wet swashing sound. His mind's filled with vapour. Emerging from the fumes to get ready to go to work, to walk to the station, to get to his head dry enough to face the cold
- Meanwhile she makes some coffee unwillingly: burns it actually then dries her hair perhaps touches herself a bit or combs her hair or does the washing or pees… prepares some food perhaps… peers out at him… through the window… till he's hidden away by the brickwork till he's gone past the corner of the alley
-
- *"But to want to serve the idea is in fact a strenuous service for no beautiful woman can be as exacting as the idea and no girl's disapproval can be as distressing as the wrath of the idea which above all is impossible to forget"*
  It's not really an idea is it more like a wish more like a constant-
  A wish is an idea isn't it
- That shower washed away all his strength. That's a fact.
- Did he enjoy it
- I mean it was great but I'm shattered. Need to catch up sleep. He never gets enough sleep.
- It's going to be cold outside
  -
- It's cold and it's late and I'm still sweating. I'm gonna have a heart attack- thinks he hurriedly
- Does he like her legs
  Does he
  They're ok aren't they
  Are you sure
  Are you sure he likes her… um… her bum?
  You used to come more easily
  Oh: and look there is a beautiful…
  Oh Maybe you were just tired
  But what about last night. Was it not a bit regular, I mean dinner and all. Never an excess, hardly any drinking. You like getting a bit drunk when you have fun

don’t you… When was the last time you got drunk with your girlfriend? ah but she doesn’t drink anymore right… and it’s always too late to watch a movie isn’t it and you hardly bothered watching movies anyway… bit of a compromise wasn’t it… and it’s always late always already late… thinking about tomorrow… and today’s already tomorrow… everyday’s already tomorrow

-

- Is she looking at me, he wonders. Looks like it…
- She sits. Takes a book from her bag. It’s a French book.
- She’s beautiful… she’s… just unique. And elegant. I bet she’s French. She’s oh look not too tall not at all and yes, look, I knew it! No doubt about it! - glancing at the book on her lap. And those legs, ah those smooth shifty legs. A model! Might be, and that face, no… that’s too rude… visage, ce visage! Buried underneath those capricious stylish hair… shading that brow thou brow thou cheeks thou lips where shall I… there’s a seat there and there and there’s one here… not too brash… could have- sat there… but you know… still makes sense… I’m not looking for… yet if it comes…. not many seats available not so many anyway… I’m not desperate… I’m reading Racine…
  That’s when the corners of his eyes sense the corners of her eyes the gentle movement of her hand long thin fingers through her hair… disclose her profile... the sweet spike of her nose falling softly… the shaded groove the upper border of her lip... what would I do what would I to climb up there… I give up! Oh yet if I were a minuscule… an invisible… mouth… a spy... there’s a secret… I need to whisper… not to her ear no… oh I’m in pain! In short: her profile: a revel.
- Oh look it’s a play - glancing at the book on his lap
- It’s Racine
- But could be anything. Yet that has an effect.
- Talk to her! No! Come on! I’m shy! You’re a shame! She’ll just laugh at me! I don’t want to hear you complain anymore! loser! you deserve it! peeping tom! Shame on you!
- And she might be thinking perhaps she’s thinking:
- Lift up your head come on look at me.
- He could try with a smile.
- I smile
- She’s smiled

- *What are you reading?*
- He shows her what he's reading:
- Do you know it
- *Yes*
- Are you French?
- *Yes*

  *Are you an actor?*
- Oh no. I just I like…
- *Are you a man of the theatre? A writer?*
- Ehm Yes actually kind of
- *You look like one*
-
- Ehm I'm sorry… it's my stop
- He stands up

  Gets off

  Shakes his head

  Stands motionless

  Stares at the train that's leaving the platform

  -

  Then stares at another

  -

  And another

  -
- It wasn't even the thought of his girlfriend that stopped him.
- I'd be quite ashamed if I were him
-
- Maybe she was only curious. Racine. Who would read him. On the underground.
- He frequently thinks himself uncommon.
- What are the chances to see her again, in a big city like this
- She got on at his station.
- He cannot live off second chances
- He cannot stop thinking of her. He wishes this scene could be repeated. He started to believe in it. He will be better next time. He'll be prepared.

-
- *What are you reading?*
- He shows her what he's reading
- Do you know it
- *Yes*
- Are you French?
- *Yes*

  *Are you an actor?*
- Oh no. I just I like…
- *Are you a man of the theatre? A writer?*
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- *You look like one*
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- Ehm I'm sorry… it's my stop
- He stands up
- Gets off
- Shakes his head
- Stands motionless
- Stares at the train that's leaving the platform
- Then stares at another
- And another
- It wasn't even the thought of his girlfriend that stopped him.
- I'd be quite ashamed if I were him
-
- Maybe she was only curious. /He frequently thinks himself uncommon. Who would read him. She got on at his station.
- /Racine. On the underground. What are the chances to see her again, in a big city like this He wishes this scene could be repeated.
- He cannot live off second chances He cannot stop thinking of her He will be better next time He started to believe in it He'll be prepared. Please
-
- Things happen can't one just ignore them

  Can't things just not happen

  At least not when

They happen

-

- Or can't one just let them happen
- Only in the morning he thought he hoped he was settling with his girlfriend
- Obviously that wasn't repetition repetition doesn't hope that was...: *"of the wrong kind. My mind was sterile my troubled imagination constantly conjured up tantalisingly attractive recollections of how the ideas had presented themselves the last time and the tares of these recollections choked out every thought at birth"*
- Must be hard to decide who to lie to
- *"Hope is a beckoning fruit that does not satisfy"*
- Or betray
- Dull

**7. Stuck between one's own indecisions and someone else's decisions**

- It's night. There's a strange light. Alright. Words words and views and what is there to perceive dash down the street like countless particles in and out of his head mingling images and sounds images and sounds and what else what else… music from his headphones… and they must have changed the streetlights for example and other words words what words. Skip this song. Yeah thoughts thinking thoughts alright... can't catch them flooded in language. A dam? Time is a dam yeah portioning time into notions of time that's right letting me be letting me falter along like that fox that fox that's limping ahead of its shadow. Go ahead London fox we're all having a hard time… now slow down… this song's all right… there… why are we rushing anyway… once home everything's either over or ready to start all over again Stop now a flash. A flash from a camera... Namely, in the distance, a familiar shape, a familiar shape holds a camera… which perhaps captured the fox perhaps not… but that doesn't matter that streetlamp captures seemingly captures what matters… the full vision of her... an apparition... is it her is it His real second chance Is it of the right kind Is it really her…
- *'Cinderella, she seems so easy, "It takes one to know one," she smiles*
  *And puts her hands in her back pockets Bette Davis style'*

- Her unmistakable features, her lineaments, beautifully bent on the picture just taken, sweet contours… concerted… lit by the screen, like candlelight. An icon… encircled in dark hair and above her, a suburban lamplight pouring down on her… an air of reverie… an air, beckoning him…
- [Walks around her… making sure… doesn't seem to notice…]
  Hello
-
- *I knew I would see you again*
-
- I hoped to…
  -
  He doesn't know what to say next.
- Or doesn't remember
- The fox dodged the limelight and
  Disappears
- That is
  They exchange contacts
  -
- That is: take time think it over prepare fade
- They meet again
  One night after dinner she invited him over
- No hidden agenda transpiring unfortunately…
  Yet he sat there by the bed next to her looking at her at her pictures… and while she spoke while she spoke her words her youthfully gifted ideas weren't sounds weren't words they were…
  Moving lips
  He desperately desperately wanted to kiss
  Basically
- Did he kiss her did he? of course not!
- Does he allow grace to play out does he- get overwhelmed by a sense of fault does he fear this does he fear that. He only managed to befriend her on Facebook.
-
- To capture the possibility

- The potential
- The unexhausted potential
- Aesthetic… potential
- Of her
- Of love
- Yes love
- Undebased love
- Like a- benchmark
- A distraction. A constant distraction
-
- A virtual field: of possibilities: full of poppies… popping up… WhatsApp
- Swallowing you up: swallowing
  Anything concrete you can accomplish
- A virtual field wide enough wide enough and absorbing
- A lulling fantasy
  Where like a fool you seek but would there be anything there anything there to accomplish
- Or miss out
- Regret
- Not really regret more like disappointment constant disappointment
- A bit of regret A sparkle of it A bit of regret for something unknown Some alternative That single choice The other choice Not chosen Not even given
-
- Like this new entry in his life
  This last - last? incredible shake up of his heart
  That he met one day at the library and that soon became his friend
  Friend…
  Just when- this new philosophical stance allowed him to dispute- all those hopes
  Just when- these mournful recollections gave way to aesthetic expression
  Which is almost complete now almost worn out…
  Written off
  Just when he was ready to discard it all
  Here she comes
  Like a *"new garment stiff and starched"*

- Hope again
  Disguised in friendship
- So here we are again, add another scene, another round, cheers
- And you suddenly find yourself sharing- all your interests with her
  Your unexpressed potential your long-gone opinions your struggles
  All the passions that unsettle your soul
- Until all you're passioned about
  Is sharing passions
- Until all you're left with is
  Looping representations
- You were becoming such close confidants
  Sitting on a bench… having lunch…
  Sprinkling friendship
  With a- how was it? "tiny bit of magic"?
  Exchanging cards:
- -
  *it bre-*
  *it breaks me,*
  *but I will keep*
  *it in a safe*
  *place inside me*
  -
- So then all you want all you convince yourselves of wanting all both of you want or or hope for that's what she said too wasn't it was just to remain friends
  Protect this friendship: this friendship you've been so much cherishing so much that
  That it has grown into something else
  Something incompatible
  With her set
- Her baggage
- That rear bicycle seat
  For example
  -
  Yeah that's a child's seat, that's right

-

- The way she holds your hand the way she does to keep her balance
  To keep her from falling from falling for you
- -
  *I can't let you go*
- But then she did go didn't she.
  She let go of your hand
  -
  And rode away
  Balanced by motion
  Back to her household.
- Here's two more virtual friends down. Thinks he. Literally.
- Facebook friends, namely.
- That's her, and her partner. cause she's gonna tell him. cause he was your friend too and they're gonna unfriend you and that's what happens right that's how it settles. You can't even keep your friends on Facebook. they run out! friends. acquaintances. cause of all the connections: the mutual friends! cause of all the lovely cunning things you may publish: the news feed! cause she loves you but cannot be with you cannot even want to. you remind her of something. something silenced right. that's what you think. you're like some post-modern knight. carrying the banner of egoism slash freewill slash something. but you're fighting windmills. people make commitments. ties. To fasten themselves. you think so. you would fasten yourself too. wouldn't you. body and mind. and then let yourself go. like a slipknot. you trust honesty's enough. it's not enough! people bear it inside out. not to plunge in despair. to silence a scream. they won't let you flip them over! you shouldn't try. they get cold. you just shut the windows. shut the doors. shut off. of course you understand of course you do... it's all just so understandably painful. you feel alive just to be reminded of death.
- *'Was that some kind of joke'*
-
- And what does it mean to be yourself…
- *'I just get bored'*
- A restless young man

## 8. Dissolution [so long until next time]

- And where is all that independence anyway. Where. Say she's a modern woman. Say she's emancipated. Say: that doesn't mean she cannot fall in love Does it And if she's in love that doesn't mean dependence.
- Also: she just doesn't need to drink when she's with him. That surely is a good thing. He can drink. But that doesn't matter cause that's all made up…
- Do sit down
- She's not sitting down! She's always active. She she she and she and… she doesn't just watch movies in bed you know. For example. He puts them on… she'd rather- she'd rather keep with what she's got okay
  She may have forgotten him.
  And she: she may not even bother anymore. She may've figured something better! Surely, she's got plenty of other interests. A family. For example. Or plenty of likes. Plenty of things to do of things to say. Of things to save. Or move on! She's smarter! Plenty opinions. Achievements! And friends! Plenty of friends friends and admirers yes admires too... She's just as beautiful as she and she and her legs aren't smoother, all things considered, than… for example… another example!
  She just doesn't need this
  -
  She may sit down
- It's nice to be desired
  Isn't it
  Not feeling insecure, are you? You who?
  There's no reason right.
  One can never claim to know – I know – yet it's hard not to judge. Isn't it. Perhaps she's used to be the strongest, always, in the couple I mean. Even before right. One can tell. Always on the handling side of things… or perhaps not always. Perhaps she's had some bad experiences. Some painful- she doesn't need to experience again. who does. It's a bit like accepting it… the relationship… sometimes… isn't it, kind of wondering: is this the best you can get… what's the best… it's normal… it happens to everybody… it feels like, almost like: an act of kindness, isn't it… towards the other… your other half…

nice idea… so much in love with you… would do anything for you… sweet you… she's never really suffered has she… or perhaps she has and now… she can't make others suffer! right? anyway… some will suffer anyway… at some point… security first! that's how it should be… and trust… with reserves! and nice weddings kids barbecues: a nice picture overall… a comfortable rest… a Sunday roast!

- It may seem dull… looking at it from the outside… though peering in… through the windows… in passing… from the restless streets… ever changing… from your sliding along… through half choices… through no choices at all! gliding over surfaces, padded with differences… dozing differences… so much motion that you see no change anymore… you end up noticing what stays! the details! if you're lucky: you wake up! there you go: and you stop! maybe you've arrived. yet a belt's running under your feet, isn't it, over the pavement: a carousel! move along! but you hold on, for a moment for a moment maybe you you may like it or dislike it, whatever 'it' is you may… do something about it! goddammit! yeah or just belittle it for a bit… and move on… no hard feelings… back and forth… sideways at best…
- Unaware of the smells of the glances
- The bonds
- All the little things… that make up bigger things
- Dull things maybe but what do you know
-
- Not much
-
- The way you'd stand then bend then- struck by a sudden abdominal pain: if you… if only you marked the moment the unmarked moment…
- *When love fails*
- And a stream of light lights a corner of his mind and a knife is there
- A knife is there
- Lurking
- Brightening the corners
- The corners that's right
-
- All recollections stacked

- Hopes wrapped up
-
- To go and seize it, the knife, to pick it up. To hold it: to…
- Stab her. in all earnest. there. in all pity and her. with disappointment her. with… question marks. right her. and her with delusion and her… with doubts her. with… misgivings her and carelessly her aimlessly her and…
- To give up.
-
- To be already stabbed: at each stab: to have already stabbed. To outlive love is to perform love's death memorial is to…
- Revisit: a growing heap of recollections that cannot claim to die
-
- The layers of dust under the fleeting novel
- Under each fleeting novelty
- Not one of them carried forward… into the "*blissful security of the moment*". into a genuine acceptance. of each moment:
-
- A smiling face
- A visage
- A well-known feature
- A sideways look
- A ruffled fringe
- A suspended gesture of the hand
- Impressed in time and space
- What time and space
  Whatever time and space: not one shared anymore: someone else's time and space.
- And yet He can imagine that
  He can perfectly imagine where it came from and where it would go
- That hand
- After that click. After that impression was stolen
- That hand he held so often
- Kindly stolen.
- And not even one picture together

- And quickly posted
- And then he'd notice a difference
- With time and place and some unknown people tagged
- A little reminder
- Oh: around her ring finger
- For example
- And he'd suddenly sense the distance
- He'd suddenly sense all the time all the space
- Between his- ideas… his romantic ideas let's admit it
  And someone else's reality
- That's right
-
- They were all very beautiful woman
- And now look at you
  Browsing in your head
  The most beautiful names
  For the children
  You don't have
  -
  For example
-
- Better lonely alone. than with somebody else. that's what I'm thinking right
- Better lonely alone wonder alone… field of possibilities… picking now one possibility, now another… a bunch of them!
- Ideas
- Watering them won't help
- Wishes
- They die out
- Thoughts
- Yet you end up missing someone
- There's always more popping up
- Thoughts that cannot stop thinking
- But no one in particular
- One shouldn't think

- One can’t control everything
- But it’s impossible not to think
  -
  Isn’t it
- I don’t think-
- And this:
  Am I thinking or am I- being thought
- A memory or
- A new/ wish
- *Your lips…*
  *Oh my only wish is to kiss your lips*
  *Seek the depths of your gentle soul*
  *With my tongue*
  *Hear your voice in my mouth*
  *Your words soothing my thoughts*
  *Lulling them to death*
  *And then forever fail*
  *You, my discourse*
  *And me*
  *My body shrunk and shapeless*
  *Like speech dispersed in breath*
  *Meaningless*
  *And relieved*
  *By the perseverance of the breeze*

-

[voiceovers:]

- *I can no longer smell taste touch*
- *I can’t see*
- *I can’t hear*
- *I can’t ~~speak~~*

[blackout]