

UNIVERSIDADE DE LISBOA
FACULDADE DE LETRAS



MOVING ACROSS PAGE, STAGE, CANVAS:
THEATRICAL DANCE AS A FORM OF INTERMEDIAL TRANSLATION

Vanessa Montesi

Orientadoras: Professora Doutora Claudia J. Fischer
Professora Doutora Barbara Ivančić

Tese especialmente elaborada para obtenção do grau de Doutor no ramo de Literatura e Cultura na especialidade de Estudos Comparatistas, com a atribuição do Título de Doutoramento Europeu

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Abstract

This thesis examines two works of contemporary dance, Marie Chouinard's *Jérôme Bosch: Le Jardin des Délices* (2016) and Mathieu Geffré's choreography for the ESD company *Froth on the Daydream* (2018), as examples of intermedial translations into dance. In doing so, it proposes a conceptualization of translation through the lens of theatrical dance. In the last decade, the concepts of multimodality and intermediality have prompted a revision of inherited notions of text, language, and translation. This has led translation scholars to stretch their definition of translation so as to include text produced in and through other media, including dance. A number of articles and book chapters from the fields of Dance, Literary, Intermedial and Translation Studies have been published that make the case for the usefulness of the concept of translation for interpreting dance performances. Building on these works, this thesis reverses the question and asks how theatrical dance can help us understand intermedial translation. It does so by mapping the "implicative complex" (Tyulenev, 2010: 241-242) of dance, such as creativity, ephemerality, and the dramaturgy of bodies, onto the realm of translation. The theoretical framework is tested on two very different case studies: Chouinard's choreography is based on Hieronymus Bosch's painting *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, while Geffré's on Boris Vian's novel *L'Écume de Jours*. The methodology combines live attendance at the performances with footage analysis and ethnographic methods such as semi-structured interviews and participant observations. The first case-study focuses on issues of agency in translation, while the second looks at the way in which intermedial translations constitute "performative acts of memory" (Plate and Smelik, 2013: 2), comparing Geffré's choreography with previous intermedial translations of Vian's novel into film, opera, and graphic novel. Translation emerges as a creative and corporeal (and therefore political) practice deeply intertwined with issues of memory and struggles for representation. The analysis of the case-studies, together with the theoretical work that precedes it, contributes towards a redefinition of translation within the field of Translation Studies.

Key Words

Theatrical Dance; Intermedial Translation; Corporeality; Compagnie Marie Chouinard; Eliot Smith Dance; The Garden of Earthly Delights; Froth on the Daydream

Resumo

Esta tese analisa duas obras de dança contemporânea como exemplos de traduções intermediais: *Jérôme Bosch: Le Jardin des Délices* (2016) de Marie Chouinard e a coreografia *Froth on the Daydream* (2018) de Mathieu Geffré para a companhia ESD. Propõe-se aqui uma conceptualização da tradução através das lentes da dança teatral. Na última década, os conceitos de multimodalidade e intermedialidade levaram a uma revisão das noções herdadas de texto, linguagem e tradução. Como consequência, várias investigadoras da área de tradução ampliaram a própria definição de “tradução”, incluindo textos produzidos por outros meios, como, por exemplo, a dança. Ao mesmo tempo, numerosos trabalhos foram publicados nas áreas dos Estudos de Dança, de Literatura, de Intermedialidade e de Tradução, apontando para a utilidade do conceito de tradução na interpretação de apresentações de dança. Baseando-se neste *corpus* teórico, a tese inverte a questão e pergunta como é que a dança teatral nos pode ajudar a entender a tradução intermedial. Isto é feito mapeando o “implicative complex” (Tyulenev, 2010: 241-242) da dança, como a criatividade, a efemeridade e a dramaturgia dos corpos, no domínio da tradução. O quadro teórico assim construído é testado em dois casos de estudo muito diferentes: a coreografia de Chouinard, baseada na pintura *O Jardim das Delícias* de Hieronymus Bosch e a coreografia de Geffré, criada a partir do romance de Boris Vian, *A Espuma dos Dias*. A metodologia combina a visão ao vivo das performances e a análise de filmagens com métodos etnográficos, entre os quais entrevistas semiestruturadas e observação de participantes. Se, por um lado, o primeiro caso de estudo se concentra em questões de agenciamento na tradução, por outro, o segundo examina como as traduções intermediais constituem “atos performativos de memória” (Plate e Smelik, 2013: 2, tradução minha), comparando a coreografia de Geffré com outras traduções intermediais do livro de Vian para cinema, ópera e romance gráfico. A tradução surge como uma prática criativa e corporal (e, portanto, política) profundamente entrelaçada com questões de memória e a luta pela representação. A análise dos casos de estudo, juntamente com o enquadramento teórico, contribui para uma redefinição da tradução no âmbito dos Estudos de Tradução.

Palavras-chave

Dança Teatral; Tradução Intermedial; Corporalidade; Compagnie Marie Chouinard; Eliot Smith Dance; O Jardim das Delícias; A Espuma dos Dias

Resumo Longo

Esta tese analisa duas obras de dança contemporânea como exemplos de traduções intermediais: *Jérôme Bosch: Le Jardin des Délices* (2016) de Marie Chouinard e a coreografia *Froth on the Daydream* (2018) de Mathieu Geffré para a companhia ESD. Propõe-se aqui uma conceptualização da tradução através das lentes da dança teatral. Na última década, os conceitos de multimodalidade e intermedialidade levaram a uma revisão das noções herdadas de texto, linguagem e tradução. Como consequência, várias investigadoras da área de tradução ampliaram a própria definição de “tradução”, incluindo textos produzidos por outros meios, como, por exemplo, a dança. Ao mesmo tempo, numerosos trabalhos foram publicados nas áreas dos Estudos de Dança, de Literatura, de Intermedialidade e de Tradução, apontando para a utilidade do conceito de tradução na interpretação de apresentações de dança. Baseando-se neste *corpus* teórico, a tese inverte a questão e pergunta como é que a dança teatral nos pode ajudar a entender a tradução intermedial. Isto é feito mapeando o “implicative complex” (Tyulenev, 2010: 241-242) da dança, como a criatividade, a efemeridade e a dramaturgia dos corpos, no domínio da tradução. O quadro teórico assim construído é testado em dois casos de estudo muito diferentes: a coreografia de Chouinard, baseada na pintura *O Jardim das Delícias* de Hieronymus Bosch e a coreografia de Geffré, criada a partir do romance de Boris Vian, *A Espuma dos Dias*. A metodologia combina a visão ao vivo das performances e a análise de filmagens com métodos etnográficos, entre os quais entrevistas semiestruturadas e observação participante. Se, por um lado, o primeiro caso de estudo se concentra em questões de agenciamento na tradução, por outro, o segundo examina como as traduções intermediais constituem “atos performativos de memória” (Plate e Smelik, 2013: 2, tradução minha), comparando a coreografia de Geffré com outras traduções intermediais do livro de Vian para cinema, ópera e romance gráfico. A tradução surge como uma prática criativa e corporal (e, portanto, política) profundamente entrelaçada com questões de memória e a luta pela representação. A análise dos casos de estudo, juntamente com o enquadramento teórico, contribui para uma redefinição da tradução no âmbito dos Estudos de Tradução.

A tese estrutura-se em três partes, cada uma formada por vários capítulos. O capítulo 1, *Alongar*, oferece uma visão geral das maneiras pelas quais o campo dos estudos de tradução tem refletido sobre si mesmo e a sua relação com as outras disciplinas desde a virada cultural iniciada nas décadas de 1980 e 1990, expandindo a própria definição de “texto”, “linguagem” e “tradução” à

luz de novas metáforas e conceitos. O capítulo 2, *Ensaier*, considera o trabalho já realizado nas áreas de dança, literatura, intermedialidade e tradução para forjar e estabelecer a metáfora da dança como tradução. Divergindo da maioria das estudiosas citados que usam essa metáfora para interpretar a dança por meio das ferramentas dos estudos de tradução, eu adoto o ângulo contrário e pergunto como é que a dança teatral pode-nos ajudar a entender a tradução intermedial. Para Black, parafraseado por Tyulenev (2010: 241-242), cada domínio de uma metáfora vem com o seu próprio "implicative complex", ou seja, uma série de implicações que estão ligadas a ela. A questão então é: como as implicações associadas ao domínio de origem (dança teatral) são mapeadas para o domínio de destino (tradução intermedial)?

Respondo a esta pergunta na parte II, *Trois Coups*. Esta parte é dividida internamente em três capítulos, ecoando o som das tradicionais pancadas de Molière que anunciam o aproximar-se do início do espetáculo. A primeira implicação associada à dança em oposição à tradução é que a dança pertence ao reino da produção criativa, enquanto a tradução seria um ato de reprodução. No capítulo 3 abordo esta questão concentrando-me na terminologia, tentando trazer clareza às várias maneiras pelas quais o fenômeno da tradução intermedial foi definido por estudiosas que operam em campos potencialmente dialogantes (adaptação, transposição, ekphrasis, remediação, transmediação entre outros) e olhando para as implicações ideológicas que ficam atrás da necessidade de compartimentar estes campos. O capítulo 4 reflete sobre a implicação da dança ser efêmera e ligada ao corpo da performer, em oposição à tradução para um texto escrito, que é percebido como fixo. Há muito tempo a efemeridade da dança é interpretada como um obstáculo pelos filósofos que repetidamente tentaram abstrair a dança do dançarino, separar o trabalho da performance, como se um fosse o conteúdo e o outro o recipiente. Segundo Pouillaude, esta leitura influi na forma como estes filósofos falaram da dança: quando Paul Valéry ou Richard Strauss se referiam à dança, esta era uma categoria abstrata, que alcançava “a seriedade do objeto à custa de sua realidade empírica” (2017: 16, tradução minha). Pelo contrário, no capítulo 4 construo a minha tese por meio de trabalhos de dança que refletem sobre as questões de efemeridade e performatividade na dança e no texto. A última implicação sobre a dança a ser considerada no capítulo 5 é que o seu suporte material é, pelo menos parcialmente, um ser vivo. O problema da transmissão do movimento do coreógrafo para a bailarina foi tradicionalmente resolvido considerando a bailarina como uma tela neutra, um veículo transparente da intenção do coreógrafo. Essa concepção da bailarina é surpreendentemente semelhante às concepções tradicionais das

tradutoras, pelo menos no entendimento popular. No entanto, ambos os campos recentemente viram um afastamento dessas visões e estão a abraçar o envolvimento de subjetividades de bailarinas e tradutoras nos seus trabalhos; é com isso em mente que proponho "propagar" (Bal, 2002) o conceito emergente da dramaturgia encarnada do performer (Baird et al, 2021) para a tradução, concebendo a dramaturgia encarnada das tradutoras.

Uma vez feito o trabalho nos bastidores para a construção de uma base teórica para a metáfora da dança teatral como uma forma de tradução intermediária, em *Interlúdio* faço uma pausa para relembrar a metodologia empregada nesta tese e os seus componentes etnográficos, antes de subir ao palco e atuar a análise dos meus casos de estudo. Essas análises são concebidas como possíveis caminhos pelos quais um subcampo especulativo dos Estudos de Tradução, Tradução em Dança, poderia mover-se. Para fazer isso, escolhi as obras de duas companhias de dança contemporânea que diferem em muitos aspetos: *Jérôme Bosch: Le Jardin des Délices* (2016) de Marie Chouinard e a coreografia de Mathieu Geffré para a companhia de dança ESD *Froth on the Daydream* (2018). Considerando as diferenças entre elas e o convite de Brigg para tratar as traduções de acordo com o princípio do tato, “ajustando a forma de manuseio, a forma de [...] cuidado, em resposta ao que está a ser realizado” (2017: 330, tradução minha), também adoto duas perspectivas diferentes em relação às performances. A primeira é sincrónica e concentra-se em todos os aspetos de uma tradução: produto, processo e evento situado (Capítulos 6 e 7). A segunda é diacrónica e relaciona o texto de destino às outras traduções intermediais, traçando uma biografia da tradução do romance *L'Écume des Jours* de Vian e destacando como a materialidade de cada meio participa da transformação da memória textual do romance (Capítulos 8 e 9). As diferentes perspectivas e os trabalhos em questão revelam como a tradução esta intimamente ligada a questões de agenciamento e memória. Concluo com uma reflexão sobre um evento recente que ganhou ampla atenção popular: a tradução dos poemas de Amanda Gorman e os debates subsequentes sobre tradução e identidade. Como o conceito de tradução aqui desenvolvido, com a sua atenção às modalidades, corpos, mediação, agenciamentos e memórias envolvidos no ato da tradução, pode-nos ajudar a entender quais são as metáforas da tradução que estão por de trás das posições divergentes neste debate? Como a teoria oferecida nesta tese encontra o seu lugar na prática de hoje e como pode ser informada por ela? Novamente, devido à sua dependência dos corpos e da representação, a dança parece oferecer possíveis respostas.

Prelude: Setting Words in Motion

Three Anecdotes...

Montréal, 11 March 2020

The Nederlands Dans Theater is in Montreal performing three pieces by Hofesh Shechter, Crystal Pite and Sól Leon and Paul Lightfoot. It is the last performance to be shown before Canada enters lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but I do not know that yet. Pite's piece, titled *The Statement*, features four dancers, two men and two women, situated centre stage around an oval table. They wear suites and from their words we gather that they might be governmental officers who plotted a war, somewhere far, from which their country would profit. Things get out of hand, their plot is about to be uncovered, and they must decide who will be offered as a scapegoat. There is a script, you hear the dancers' voices as you watch them dance, words being literally translated into movement and gesture, or maybe the reverse. It is incredible how well it works. Absolute equivalence is achieved. Then the text stops being pronounced, and it is only expressed bodily. Or is it not? Deprived of the spoken text, you are left to wonder whether the dancers are still translating an invisible, silent script, or if they have departed from it. From time to time, they let out a word, matching the movement. A multiplicity of meanings opens up. The few words sound like an interference on the radio, something you are not expected to hear. Are you hearing more than you are supposed to? And how does this reflect the relation between politics and citizens? Do we only get the silent version, the tacit dance, with a word here and there whenever a scandal opens a breach in the collective lie and a legible truth slips out of the room?

Montpellier, 1992.

When the founder of the Dominique Bagouet dance company (1951-1992) died, the company dancers were faced with a dilemma: how to preserve and transmit his choreographic oeuvre? After founding the association *Les Carnets Bagouet* they started restaging his works, relying on archival material and their embodied memories. But how to keep them the same? How to avoid idiosyncrasies to creep in and alter the work, especially when improvisation was an important part of the choreographic process? The dancers agreed to a set of rules. The works would be reset by at least two people, a man and a woman, to avoid appropriations and signature effects; they would involve as many original dancers, documents, and video sources as

possible. This, they thought, would ensure faithfulness: the work would “efface the re-stager, as if the revival is a transparent process whereby interpretation becomes simply a neutral medium for actualization and presentation” (Pouillaude, 2017: 230). As they experimented with their method, the dancers realised that translation (what they were doing) is nothing other than a repetition that reveals the impossibility of sameness: “something new, in the name of againness” (Briggs, 2017, 230). They split. In 2000, Fabrice Ramalingom restaged *Meublé Sommairelement* without following any of the rules: no two dancers, no original dancers, no video material. “From this point on, the re-stager ceased to be a mere memorial deposit [...] and became the real artistic co-signatory of the interpretation” (Pouillaude, 2017: 230). Extracts and choreographic principles belonging to the source text were used, reworked, and reassembled into other works. Subjectivity and the opaqueness of the medium were accepted in place of the illusions of neutrality and transparency.

Sheffield, 2016.

On September 2016 I moved to Sheffield, UK, to begin a master's degree in Translation Studies. In November, I went to watch a dance performance staged by the Northern Ballet: an intermedial translation of George Orwell's *1984*. I was transfixed, mesmerised, but not surprised: I knew, as a dancer, that many pieces of repertoire as well as many new creations originate in someone else's works. Ballet, for example, has been adapting literature since its very inception—examples of this include *Don Quixote*, staged for the first time in 1743 or Dauberval's *La Fille Mal Gardée* (1789). But ballet is not alone in doing that: from Saburo Teshigawara's and Rihoko Sato's *The Idiot* (2016) to Marie Chouinard's *L'Après-midi d'un faune* (1993), to Sharon Eyal's and Gai Behar's *OCD Love* (2015) based on a slang poem, or Smith's *Pitman* (2016), choreographers from very different contexts and geographies have been probing, propagating, and subverting already existing works of art, presenting them through the lens of different interpretations and media. As part of my programme in translation studies, I could choose a module called “Film Adaptation of Literary Classics”. I asked myself, if I can study how novels are translated or adapted into movies, why can't I do the same with dance?

...and an Introduction

The title of this thesis is predicated upon the conjunction *as*. It divides two terms: (theatrical) dance and (intermedial) translation. It also brings them together by establishing a simile between them.

A simile is the explication of a metaphor. Therefore, this work is based on a metaphor, suggesting that theatrical dance can be understood as a form of intermedial translation. My use of a metaphor is not a matter of embellishment or chance; I use it knowingly and intentionally as a conceptual tool, drawing on a post-Nietzschean sense of what a metaphor is and what it does, flown into the works of Bloomberg (1960/2009), Black (1979), Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999), Johnson (2007), Kövecses (1986, 2000, 2005), Cameron (2010, 2011), Müller and Kappelhoff (2018). Common to all these scholars is the belief that metaphors are not quirky representations of things already in the world, but conceptual tools that help us understand one thing (often more abstract) in terms of another (often more concrete). They do not simply describe reality but participate in its creation by “unlocking realms of experience” (Müller and Kappelhoff, 2018: 45), making them available to the senses. They are “indispensable for perceiving connections that, once perceived, are then truly present” (Black, 1993: 37). Metaphors, and especially metaphors based on embodied experience (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 1999, Johnson, 2007) are necessary to build abstract concepts (Nietzsche, 1873/1999) and structure our way of thinking, oftentimes without us being aware (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999). As Nietzsche explains in his essay “On Truth and Lie in a Nonmoral Sense”, metaphorical expression is not a way of referring to truth: “metaphorical expression is the very material with which proper truth is constructed” (1873/1999: 37). They arise when a breach in understanding opens and they manifest a will to overcome it by building a shared ground of understanding, but as they do so they also denote “a breach with an unquestionably given reality” (Müller and Kappelhoff, 2018: 74) and it is in this sense that they must be understood as simultaneously descriptive and creative, proper heuristic tools. Tyulenev (2010) sums this up by saying that metaphors help us “understand the target domain in terms of the source by discovering new facets of meaning in the concept involved” (2010: 241). It is in this sense that

they operate in the construction of new theoretical models (Khun, 1979; Black 1979; Boyd, 1979), and it in this sense that I will use the metaphor of theatrical dance as a form of intermedial translation in this thesis. In discussing the relevance of turns over paradigms in furthering knowledge in disciplines concerned with culture, Doris Bachmann-Medick (2016) posits three steps in the formation of turns: the first has to do with the enlargement of the field of studies and a re-examination of analytic categories; the second sees the emergence of metaphors, the third and last step consists in methodological improvement and trans-disciplinary application, a proper investigation of the metaphor.

Considering the topic of my research, theatrical dance as intermedial translation, it can be said that while the first two steps have already been accomplished or are under way, an exploration of the different ways in which dance translations intersect with and shed light on a variety of emerging lines of research in translation studies¹ is still missing, and, in my view, necessary. Hence, following Bachmann-Medick's insights (2016), Chapter 1, *Stretching*, offers an overview of the ways in which the field of TS has outgrown its linguistic roots and has been reflecting upon itself and its relation to other disciplines ever since the cultural turn initiated in the 1980s and 1990s, expanding its definition of "text", "language", and "translation" in light of novel metaphors and renewed understandings.

Chapter 2, *Rehearsing*, considers the work already done in and between the fields of dance studies, literary studies, intermedial studies and translation studies in forging and establishing the metaphor of dance as translation. While the majority of the scholars cited use this metaphor to interpret dances through the tools of TS, I adopt a reverse angle and ask how can theatrical dance (in general

¹From now on, I will use the abbreviation TS to refer to the field of Translation Studies. Although I am aware that more and more scholars prefer using the acronym TIS, in so doing including Interpreting Studies, my use of TS in this paper is due to the fact that the literature I discuss and appraise mainly focuses on translation theory.

or as intermedial translation) offer a fruitful metaphor for the theorization of translation. For Black, paraphrased by Tyulenev (2010: 241-242), each domain of a metaphor comes with its own ‘implicative complex’, that is, a series of implications that are linked to it. This means that “the implicative complex of the source domain is projected onto the target domain, thereby inciting the hearer to select some of the properties of the source domain, apply them to the target domain, and construct a (re)new(ed) implication complex of the target domain” (2010: 242). The question then is: how do implications associated to the source domain (theatrical dance) map onto the target domain (intermedial translation)?

This is the question I answer in part II, *Trois Coups*. This part is internally divided into three chapters, echoing the sound of the traditional *trois coups* announcing the imminent start of the show. The first implication associated to dance as opposed to translation is that dance belongs to the realm of creative production while translation would be a matter of reproduction. I tackle this issue by focusing on terminology in Chapter 3, trying to bring clarity to the various ways in which the phenomenon of intermedial translation has been defined by scholars operating in potentially intersecting fields (adaptation, transposition, ekphrasis, remediation, transmediation among others) and looking at the ideological implications that underscore the perceived need to compartmentalize them.

Chapter 4 considers the implication that dance is ephemeral and tied to the body of the performer, as opposed to translation into written text, which is perceived as static and fixed. The ephemerality of dance has long been perceived as a hindrance by philosophers who repeatedly tried to abstract the dance from the dancer, to separate work from performance, as if one was the content and the other the container. According to Pouillaude, the philosophical discourse around dance is predicated upon a “transcendental absenting” (2017: 53): when philosophers like Paul Valéry or

Richard Strauss addressed dance, they did it as an abstract category, attaining “the object’s seriousness at the expense of its empirical reality” (2017: 16). For example, Valéry publishes three essays on dance (*Dance and Soul*, 1921; *Philosophy of Dance*, 1936; *The Dance*, 1936) and yet fails to mention even once the title of a work or the name of a dance; the very question “what is dance” treats dance in the singular, as if it had a timeless essence situated beyond its manifestations as ballet, social dance, flamenco and so on (Pouillade, 2017). Absenting, a tendency of discourse about dance, turns into absence (ephemerality) as its definition. Moving against transcendental absenting, in chapter 4 I introduce dance works into discourse, building my argument through performances that reflect on the issues of ephemerality and performativity in dance and text alike, and on their dependence on bodies. The artworks I think through and with are: Luca Guadagnino’s remake of *Suspiria* (2018); William Forsythe’s *One Flat Thing Reproduced* (2008) and *Human Writes* (2005); Carly Lave’s *GOLEM* (2019); Emma Waltraud Howes *Scores for Daily Living Act II* (2019) and Rabbya Naseer’s *The Live Letter* (2014) and *The One-Off Letters* (2019).

The last implication of dance considered in chapter 5 is that the material support of dance, at least partially, is a living being. The problem of movement transmission from choreographer to dancer has been traditionally solved by considering the dancer as a neutral canvas, a transparent vehicle of the choreographer’s intention. This conception of the dancer is strikingly similar to traditional conceptions of translators, at least in popular understandings. However, both fields have recently seen a move away from these views and are embracing the involvement of dancers’ and translators’ subjectivities in their work. It is with this in mind that I propose to “propagate” (Bal, 2002) the emergent concept of the performer’s embodied dramaturgy (Baird et al, 2021) to translation by conceiving of a translator’s embodied dramaturgy.

Having done the offstage work of building the theoretical grounding of the metaphor of theatrical dance as a form of intermedial translation, I take a pause to look back at the methodology employed in this thesis and its ethnographic components in *Interlude*, before getting on stage and performing the analysis of my case-studies. These analyses are conceived as some of the paths along which a speculative subfield of TS, Dance Translation, could move. To do so, I have chosen the works of two contemporary dance companies that differ in many ways: Marie Chouinard's *Jérôme Bosch: Le Jardin des Délices* (2016), and Mathieu Geffré's choreography for ESD company *Froth on the Daydream* (2018). The two companies differ both in terms of their personal style (Chouinard has a distinctive technique, taught to other companies by her rehearsal directors and teachers, while ESD is based on Graham's technique) and their establishment (Marie Chouinard is a world-famous choreographer active since 1978, while Eliot Smith Dance just celebrated ten years of existence and their work is grounded in the North-East of the UK). Furthermore, the sources of the two intermedial translations come from different timeframes (1510-15 the first, 1947 the second) and media (painting versus literature). Following their inherent differences and Brigg's invitation to treat translations according to the principle of tact, "adjust(ing) the manner of handling, the form of [...] care, in response to what is being held" (2017: 330), I also adopted two different perspectives towards them.

One is synchronic and focuses on one translation in all its aspects: product, process, and situated event (Chapters 6 and 7). The other is diachronic and relates the target text to other intermedial translations, tracing a translation biography of Vian's novel *L'écume des Jours* that highlights how the materiality of each medium participated in reframing the textual memory of the novel (Chapters 8 and 9). The different perspectives and the works in question reveal various aspects of translation which speak to agency and memory, growing lines of investigation in TS. Chapter 7, based on

Chouinard's *Le Jardin des Délices*, foregrounds and problematises the translator's agency by placing it in the web of agencies at work in the staging of a choreography: the binomial author's and translator's agencies are complemented by the agencies of composer, public, commissioners, theatre managers, dancers, and non-human agents. Chapter 9, based on Geffre's choreography *Froth on the Daydream* (2018) made with ESD's members brings theatrical dance in conversation with film, graphic novel, and opera, in light of Littau's call for a comparative media study (2015). By connecting dance translation with other intermedial translations across time and space, this chapter shows how the source text navigated through different translation zones, value systems, mutual influences, and material affordances of the media instantiating it.

I will conclude with a reflection on a recent event that gained widespread popular attention and was striking in its reversal of Venuti's claim about the translator's invisibility (1995), that is, the translation of Amanda Gorman's poems and the ensuing debate on translation and identity. How can the concept of translation here developed, with its attention to the modalities, bodies, mediation, agency, and memory involved in the translational act, help us understand what metaphor of translation lies behind the differing positions on this thorny case? How does the theory offered in this thesis find its place in today's practice, and how can it be informed by it? Again, due to its reliance on bodies and representation, dance seems to offer provisional answers.

Before concluding this introduction, a note on its writing. It occurred to me that as I was writing this thesis, I have been for the most part engaged in the immensely valuable practice of walking with ideas, that is, of mentally formulating the content of a chapter while going for lone, long walks. This is certainly nothing new or unique, but it is fascinating to notice that thinking about movement—of bodies or of languages—is best done while moving; and to ask if and how, and

what of the dynamism and rhythm of a walking body can be translated to a piece of paper². I tried to do this by alternating a narrative voice drawing on embodied memories with the more detached and analytical one of academic writing at the beginning of each chapter and by letting concepts enter the discussion as it unfolded rather than charting out and explaining them all at the beginning. This is complemented by the use of videos, images, and words as epigraphs—“conceptual-theoretical-poetic precipices” in the words of Lepecki (2016)—leaving to them the task of creating “points of entry, vortexes or rents in the fabric of discourse, invitations for unanticipated variations of their supposedly original meaning, challenges, riddles, black holes” (Lepecki, 2016: 31).

² Rebecca Solnit devotes one chapter of her marvellous *Wonderlust: A History of Walking* (2000), which I read in Gabriella Agrati’s and Maria Letizia Magini’s translation, to philosophical, physiological, and historical connections between walking and thinking.

OFFSTAGE

Stretching



Extrait de la chorégraphie "The statement" (Crystal Pite) - Bing video

There is always someone who comes first. The morning light enters through the window and warms the wooden floor. Slowly, we take our place in the centre, facing the same old mirror as we start stretching. Slowly, we bend our neck, then extend the circular movement to include the shoulders, the waist, and down to the floor, one leg bent and the other extended, waiting for that little jolt behind the knee to tell us that our legs are now loose. Touching the flexed knee with the point of the nose is never the difficult part. What is hard is to remain there. We wait for the end of the music before relaxing our limbs. Stretching is never a quick process. It is a test of patience and endurance. It is the necessary work before any other movement can come. Stretching makes space for all the other movements.

Ways of Stretching

In *This Little Art* (2017), a fragmentary essay written in a language that delicately holds wisdom, Kate Briggs repeatedly attempts to define translation by looking at her own practice and the experiential knowledge gained in translating Roland Barthes' lecture notes. Translation becomes respectively a way of "put[ting] new pressure on [a] language" (2017: 30), a "producer of relations" (45), collaboration (117), slow reading (66), "perpetual amateurishness" (91), a way of "actively adding yourself to an existing work" (118) an embodiment of the text (171), "a chance of learning" (207), "doing something new in the name of againness" (230), "a response to an invitation" (257), and a way of "going beyond the self" (253). Briggs' impossible search for a singular definition of her complex and multifaceted task is echoed in the multiplying voices of translation scholars who, once again, ask themselves what is "the name and nature of translation studies" (Holmes, 1988)³. If, as Gambier and Van Doorslaer rightfully point out (2016), interdisciplinarity has been a key feature of TS from its beginnings, it is also true that the last few decades have witnessed a growing questioning of the meaning of language, text, and, consequently, of translation. Thus, in what is intended as a constructive provocation, Federico Italiano states:

the complexity of today's use of translation reflects that of the medieval term *translatio* [...] Following the decline of a purely linguistic and positivistic perspective, and given the impact of post-structuralism, the current terminological debate within the field of translation studies is partly experiencing those inner tensions which Gianfranco Folena, in his too often forgotten essay *Volgarizzare e tradurre*, attributed to the medieval, Romance notion of translation (2016: 96).

The multiple shifts of perspectives and approaches in the field have been discussed under the term "turn" by Mary Shell-Hornby (2006) and Michaela Wolf (2010, 2017a), and Gambier and Van

³ "The name and nature of translation studies" is a seminal paper presented by James Holmes at the Third International Congress of Applied Linguistics in 1974 and considered to have laid the foundations of descriptive TS, marking a shift from source- to target-oriented approaches.

Doorlaer describe them as offering new angles and paths, neither successive nor involving the whole discipline, but coexistent and distributed across an “eclectic theoretical landscape” (2016: 3). Indeed, despite the repeated calls for intradisciplinary consistency, it is precisely its location in the ‘contact zones’ between cultures and disciplines that characterises the field and fuels its vitality and heterogeneity (Wolf, 2015). Rather than a sign of weakness, the current expansion of TS—prompted by redefinitions of language and translation among other things—testifies to a process of growing institutionalisation of the field as much as it reflects a broader trend of compartmentalization in academia (D’hulst and Gambier, 2018).

In this chapter I will briefly introduce recent work that, although coming from different angles and employing different discursive structures, converges in the call for and proposal of new definitions of language and translation. My aim is neither to trace the turns of TS, nor to explain their origins, and my selection will be limited to works that look towards stretched definitions of text and away from traditional understandings of language as a verbal system of communication or of translation as an interlingual, verbal-based activity. Moving between debates about creativity, spatiality, eurocentrism, memory, fiction, materiality, and modality in and of translation, I show that the ongoing stretching of the fundamental categories of language, text, and translation *makes space* for other forms of movement—such as the one combining dance and translation presented in this thesis.

Creativity in Translation

In a recent text published in 2020, Kirsten Malmkjaer undertakes the task of pushing further previous investigations on creativity in translation (see Loffredo and Perteghella, 2006) and argues that translation produces “originals while embodying aspects of copy” (Malmkjaer, 2020: 4). To do so, she applies Kant’s and current notions of creativity to translation. While her use of the term

‘aesthetic attitude’ seems somewhat unclear, what is of interest is her deployment of Davidson’s philosophy of language (1984, 1986). Davidson’s view of communication replaces a focus on the language system with one on users, who are described as holding prior and passing theories whenever they find themselves in a communicative situation. While their prior theories are informed by a variety of elements (knowledge of the other, of the context, presuppositions on the other based on clothing, sex, relation etc), as soon as communication occurs, they will have to adjust them to the new information, formulating passing theories. As Davidson states: “what two people need, if they are to understand each other through speech, is the ability to converge on passing theories from utterance to utterance” (in Malmakajaer, 2020: 56). For Malmakajaer, this means that translation will never attain sameness of meaning: what can be attained is the “coincidence, more or less close, of passing theories in any instance of linguistic interaction” (2020: 56). Translators, in this view, do not strive to reproduce the original: they craft an original text by engineering coincidences and non-coincidences between the writer’s, the reader’s and their passing theories. Malmakajaer’s point about the unattainability of sameness and the subjective understanding of texts is reflected in what Kasia Szymanska (2019) calls ‘translation multiples’, collections of translated texts that feature renditions by various translators which end up telling a story of their own. Scott (2012) brings the notion of creativity and subjectivity in translation even further in *Translating the Perception of Text: Literary Translation and Phenomenology*, where he states: “the task of the translator is that of translating not an interpreted text, but the phenomenology of reading, that is to say the kinaesthetic, psychophysiological responses of reading, the dynamic of readerly perception” (2012: 1). Basing his arguments on Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology and a view of language as “an existential experience [...] skins within which we extend our perceptual capacities and our perceptual diversity” (35), Scott proposes an understanding of translation as a

generator of “textual futures” (50). The “source text is translated into the translator’s mode of seeing”—with all their idiosyncratic sensitivities and biographies leading them to different passing theories—“in order to itself become a mode of seeing” (57). This is also supported by Douglas Robinson, who figures literary translation as a reperformative genre, where transformationality must be accepted *a priori* as part of translationality, since every reading of a text is a reconstruction and reperformance of it that entails change (Robinson, 2017). What this means is that the source text becomes a fluid, malleable score for future performances of it, performances which will have as their goal that of conveying idiosyncratic readerly experiences. Returning to Malmakajer (2020), in what is almost an aside to her book, she offers the example of a Samoan dance. Its dancers are free to create their individual styles as long as they do not introduce new steps or change the order of the positions. In such a dance, “creativity occurs [in minute changes] on the surface level because the culture [allows or rewards it on that level]” (Lubart, 1999, in Malmakajer, 2020: 29). For Malmakajer (2020), this point can be used to explain the general tendency of translators to exercise their creativity *within* the structure provided by the source text and the value placed on keeping translated texts as close as possible to their source. However, this also means that translation practice is intertwined with what Bourdieu would call the field and the habitus of the agents involved (Paolucci, 2011). As shown in the examples above and below, changes in the habitus of translators and translation scholars (influenced, for example, by the training received in translation or comparative studies degrees) as well as in the discipline itself (whose growing institutionalization results in a broadened array of objects of study, methodologies, and perspectives), are already reshaping the notion of creativity in translation.

Fictionalised Translators and The Translation Novel

If the abovementioned works looked at translation as a creative activity, those I present in this paragraph turn to the creators' words for their definitions of language and translation. They do so by focusing either on representations of translators and translation in fiction, or by close reading translators' biographical accounts of their own experiences. The interest in 'transfiction', defined by Kaindl as "the aestheticized imagination of translatorial actions" (2018: 51), has resulted in a wealth of academic literature reflecting on the one hand the "increase of fictional materials that have explicitly multilingual or multicultural settings and that involve translation scenes" (Delabastita and Grutman, 2005: 28) and on the other the shifting positionality of scholars and the questioning of the boundaries that separate theory from fiction⁴. While Delabastita and Grutman (2005) are interested in the ways in which transfiction comments on sociocultural values and can be approached from a narratological perspective, others see transfiction not only as a literary genre, but as "experiential material giving us information about events in translators' lives" (Maier, 2007: 7). The value of transfiction lies not only in the way it stages intercultural encounters or even shatters the illusion of compartmentalised languages and cultures, but in the fact that it can be harnessed to elaborate "new and unorthodox approaches" (Kaindl, 2018: 53) and identify previously overlooked aspects, such as the affective impact of translation (Wakabayashi, 2011). In all these cases, writers are seen as more able to offer innovative views precisely because they are free from the influence of pre-existing theories and internalised beliefs governing what their role as translators is or should be—as writers, they speak from a position of authorship and authority. And what happens when it is the translator who does the talking? How do they represent themselves and their work?

⁴ Consider Rosemary Arrojo's paper "The Power of Fiction as Theory" (2014).

The example of *This Little Art* offered at the beginning of this chapter shows that the self-representation of translators is equally fascinating, nuanced, and multifaceted. As Chesterman notices, the growing tendency of research to focus on translators (and not only translated texts) warrants the term “Translator Studies” (2009). Barbara Ivančić (2016) interprets this novel visibility of the translator as a sign of the translator’s corporeality, highlighting the existence of a literary microgenre, hovering between fiction and account, that can be called translator’s novel or autobiography (Lavieri, 2007; Baselica, 2015). By performing a series of close readings of translators’ biographies and accounts, Ivančić brings to surface the corporeal dimension of translation, involving the senses of sight, hearing, touch, and breath. Like Scott, she departs from a phenomenological and embodied view of language, understood not as a system but as lived, embodied experience, to reformulate the text as a physical space to be entered, probed, explored. Accordingly, translation becomes

un’attività e un’esperienza che coinvolge l’essere umano nella sua totalità e che dunque tocca anche altre dimensioni oltre a quella razionale: la sfera percettivo-sensoriale, quella affettiva, e, in qualche misura, anche quella motoria. Di questa dimensione, che possiamo definire corporea, sono molto consapevoli i traduttori: se si presta ascolto a quello che loro ci dicono sul tradurre e sulla traduzione, colpisce la frequenza dei riferimenti al corpo (Ivančić, 2016: 12, 13)⁵.

Going well beyond the idea of language as a system, Ivančić’s definition of translation opens the door to embodied approaches that consider it as an affective encounter and existential experience.

Non-Eurocentric Perspectives

In *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators* (2007), Maria Tymoczko denounces the supremacy of western ideas in TS and makes a strong argument for the inclusion of translation

⁵ “An activity and an experience that involves the human being in its totality and which, therefore, touches other dimensions besides the rational one: the sensorial, perceptual, affective and, to some extent, the motor sphere. Translators are aware of this corporeal dimension: if we listen to what they tell us about translating and translation, we will be struck by the frequency with which they refer to the body” (2016: 12, 13, my translation).

theories coming from other cultural areas. After retracing the history of western TS and enumerating the various turns underwent by the discipline, she names the international turn as a re-appraisal of western TS from an international perspective. Following the influential study on conceptual metaphors carried out by Lakoff and Johnson, who unravel the system of “metaphors we live by” (1980, 1999), Tymoczko argues that the metaphors we use to picture translation have a sway on how we conceive it and pinpoints the metaphor of transfer as the most widespread. However, Kathleen Davis states that “the metaphor of transfer is only one among others—very different concepts might have gathered had the word been different” (2001: 18, quoted in Hermans, 2013) and names other metaphors such as imitation, assimilation, transformation, replication, reproduction, and recasting. Similarly, Tymoczko (2006, 2007) and Gentzler (2013) present definitions developed in India, Arab countries, Nigeria, China and Polynesia, with all the disparate nuances and chains of associations elicited by their names.

The international turn deriving from these efforts elicited a lively debate and an edited volume (van Doorslayer and Flynn, 2013) about the definition of eurocentrism, the continentalization of TS and the fear that discarding what are considered as Eurocentric views may only lead to the assertion of North American perspectives and be simply a symptom of academic struggles for dominance (2013). The accusations of eurocentrism have been also criticised by Gambier (2018), who highlights that it would be odd for a discipline that deals with intercultural communication and conceives of culture as formed through acts of translation and exchange (and therefore inherently hybrid) to associate theories with countries. As a matter of fact, the usage of translation within Europe was never homogeneous, nor did it remain the same throughout history. The problem, as he sees it, is not the provenance of theories, but the current dominance of some over

others⁶. This seems to be more aligned with Wakabayashi's view that eurocentrism is to be understood as a mental construct rather than a geographical indicator (in Van Doorslaer, 2013). What is to be retained of the debate on eurocentrism, then, is not the discarding of theories originated in Europe, but rather an openness to conceptualisations other than the dominant ones and an appreciation of how they have been used and interpreted in different cultures and historical moments. To make space for such openness, Tymoczko (2007) and Hermans (2013) conclude that no single definition of translation is possible and advocate for a cluster concept that allows for the inclusion of different notions⁷. Reconceptualising translation in its “cross-linguistic, cross-cultural, and cross-temporal” dimensions would then be a way to escape linear histories of TS and empower translators.

Spatial Perspectives

While the controversy sparked by the accusations of eurocentrism had to do with the geography of translation theories, the works I introduce below deal with the ways in which translation emerges from, intersects with, and represents geographical imaginaries. Spatial, historical, and cultural contexts have been central in the study of translation at least since post-structuralism and post-colonial studies brought them to attention in the 1980s (Simon, 2018) and with the advent of the

⁶ An example of this is represented by rigid linguistic views understanding translation as being limited to carrying written artefacts across linguistic boundaries with the aim of faithfully representing the original. This was the case in the initial stages of translation theory, which focused on equivalence (Nida, 1964, Newmark, 1981) and translations shifts (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1958; Catford, 1965), elaborating definitions of translation as “the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)” (Catford, 1965: 20). Although the academic field of studies has moved in different directions, they still hold sway in popular understanding and even in specialised websites, such as *TranslationJournal.net* (<https://translationjournal.net/October-2017/definition-of-translation.html>), *Globalization and Localization Association* (<https://www.gala-global.org/industry/intro-language-industry/what-translation>), *National Network of Translation* (<http://www.nationalnetworkfortranslation.ac.uk/resources/what-translating>).

⁷ Sandra Halverson thinks along similar lines in her proposal of a prototype concept (2010). However, while the prototype concept still implies centrality and periphery and presents us with a static image, seeing translation as a constellation made by a network of similarity allows us to understand connections, relations of proximity and distance as well as maintain a dynamic view of its multiple historical trajectories.

cultural turn in TS (Bassnett and Lefevere, 1990). However, recent publications such as Apter's *The Translation Zone* (2006), Simon's *Cities in Translation* (2012), and Italiano's *Translation and Geography* (2016) go a step further in that they look at translation as a trope, theme, and medium of "subject re-formation and political change" (Apter, 2006: 6) in sites that are themselves in translation. All these views are somehow indebted to Homi Bhabha's concept of cultural translation (1994). Apter, for example, concentrates on the way language and translation are used as tropes and themes for representing power relations and collapse national and linguistic boundaries in writing produced in translation zones, psychogeographical territories "belong[ing] to no single, discrete language or single medium of communication" (Apter, 2006: 6). The value of such writing (and of comparative studies as the discipline approaching texts in such a way) is that they "break the isomorphic fit between the name of a nation and the name of a language" (2006: 243). In *Cities in Translation* (2012), Sherry Simon performs a similar operation, focusing on cities as "sites of language exchange, a place of heightened language awareness, where language traffic and interchange are accelerated or contested" (Simon, 2018: 331), and where relations between languages and cultures are in a state of continuous negotiation and redefinition. Such spaces, and the translational cultures they give rise to, offer a way to "put pressure on the traditional vocabulary of transfer and its concepts of source and destination" (Simon, 2012: 7). What arises in such zones are not only translations proper, but complex forms of 'translational writing', where creative writing and translation become entangled. With Naoki Sakai (2018), we could describe both works as complicating metaphors of translation as a vehicle or bridge (images that imply pre-existent borders and separation) and moving towards heterolingual address by working in the in-betweens of national contexts.

Building on this literature, Italiano takes geography not only as the context of translations and translational cultures, but also as the content of writing. Looking at how “literary texts translate [...] imaginative geographies” (2016: 3), he investigates translations proper, translations across media, and translation as a fictional and mimetic device to foreground how translation (in all three senses) had a pivotal role in negotiating geographies, identities, and eastern-western relationships, eventually giving form to a literary subgenre that he defines as “cartographic writing” (2016: 9). By placing the concept of translation in space, such works open it up to multiple figurations that question the stability and discreteness of languages and extract translation from the national straitjacket.

Translation as a Relay of History

Another way of approaching translation that opens to diverse forms of language—language as a semiotic system—is that of relating it to history, by focusing on the dialogic relations between texts (Bakhtin, 1981; Eco, 1967) and their survival, from which translations emerge (Benjamin, 1923). By referring to Eco, Bakhtin, and Benjamin, Plaza presents a theory of intersemiotic translation as “poética sincrónica”, a way of capturing history as a reinvention of the past. Acting as a creator of relations, translation participates in a vision of history as a

constelação na qual cada presente ilumina os outros num relacionamento dialético e descentralizado à maneira de uma rede eletrônica em contraposição à montagem da historiografia [...] a tradução considera a história em sincronia, como possibilidade, como monada, como forma plástica, permeável e viva” (1987: 6-9)⁸.

Moreover, by stressing the inherent multi-modal character of our senses, he shows that translation is always intermedial because it involves our bodies and senses, as Ivančić (2016) also argued.

⁸ “A constellation in which each present moment illuminates the others in a dialectic and decentralised relationship, in the way of an electric network and in contraposition to the montage of historiography [...] Translation considers history in synchrony, as a possibility, as a singularity, as plastic, permeable and alive form” (my translation).

Such understanding of language, text, and translation opens the possibility of engaging with texts in their multi-sensorial and multimodal aspects while also justifying parodic, discordant, heterogeneous translations as possible afterlives of the translated texts, insofar as they are part of a critical, creative, and situated activity (Plaza, 1987).

A similar stance is taken by Gentzler in *Translation and Re-Writing in the Age of Post-Translation Studies* (2016), which starts by asserting the need for a redefinition of what counts as original and for an expansion of what we mean by translation. Like Plaza, he considers translation as an activity carried out “on the cutting edge of time” (2016: 230), reformulating relationships between past, present, and future while creating and perpetuating images (and memories) of previous texts. Because such rewritings do not only happen in the written verbal form, and in fact prove to be even more decisive in vehiculating and shaping a text’s “literary fame” (Lefevere, 1992) in other media, then intermedial, expanded, or abridged versions count as translations and must be studied alongside them. Such a post-translation turn is seen as necessary “to keep up not just with the changing nature of translation, but with the changing definition of texts themselves and the media through which they travel” (Gentzler, 2016: 64).

The Materialities and Modalities of Translation

In a position paper titled “Translation and the Materialities of Communication” (2015), Karin Littau calls for a paradigm shift from the constructivist, cultural turn undergone by TS in the 1980s and 1990s to one that foregrounds its materiality and mediality. According to Littau, an “overly anthropocentric emphasis on mind, consciousness, language, meaning, discourse, critique etc” prevents us from seeing that material technologies are the “conditions of possibility for humanization” (2015: 4). The indiscernibility of form and meaning means that material and media carriers affect meaning insofar as they come with different constraints and affordances, and

therefore redefine the translator as “part of a material, medial, and technologized ecology that shapes every aspect of mind” (7). The embeddedness of translation in material objects calls for an investigation into the material history of translation that could complement the emphasis placed on human agents in TS, in the framework of a comparative media studies that considers media in their interrelation, rather than as isolated. Such a material turn would therefore focus on “translation’s relations to media landscapes of the past, present and future” (22), and produce a media history exposing how translation between media is at the basis of cultural production.

Adami and Ramos Pinto (2020), whose scholarly interest is in multimodal communication and screen translation, expand on the call to study how materiality and media participate in meaning-making. Drawing on multimodality and social semiotics, they see the denotative quality of written and spoken language as “the exception to a world of untranslated signs” (2020: 77). This points to a huge gap in research, which they propose to address by way of a joint interdisciplinary effort which would entail something like Littau’s comparative media studies: investigating specific modes, their cultural histories, codifications, and transnational circulation; analysing how meaning is remade in and across media and genres as well as the discourses attached to them; examining practices of reinterpretation and resignification (2020). Attention to the materiality of translation is also present in Gambier’s (2003) introduction to a special issue on screen transadaptation. He asks what the modal nature of audio-visual translation is, as this genre blurs the boundaries between written and oral, translation and interpreting. Indeed, while appearing as written text, audio-visual translation is in constant conversation with the images on screen and shares time and information constraints with interpreting. Unlike written translation, “screen texts” are defined by their volatility, appearing on screen only for brief moments, and are influenced by choices on the level of distributions, programming, and digitization. If on the one hand this means that screen texts and

audiovisual translations can be considered as a discrete genre of translation, on the other hand they carry important implications for TS in general, “question[ing] concepts like ‘text’, ‘original’, ‘meaning’, ‘norms’, ‘equivalence’, ‘manipulation’ and ‘acceptability’” (Gambier, 2003: 183). Indeed, the contribution made by audio-visual translation studies to the decentring of monomodal understandings of texts and the integration of ‘plurisemiotic practices’ as object of study of TS is underlined by Francis Mus in his brief history of translation and plurisemiotic practices (2021). He identifies two discursive strategies adopted by scholars to justify the study of such phenomena within the field of TS, these being either the inclusion of new elements in the discipline, or the discipline’s expansion. On one side we find the narrative of turns, including the globalization turn (Shell-Hornby, 2006), the iconic turn, and the audio-visual turn (Remael, 2010); on the other, the debates on whether TS should be considered a discipline, an inter-discipline, a poly-discipline, or post-discipline (Mus, 2021). What is certain is that TS has always relied on interdisciplinary approaches and that the development of new technologies unsettled concepts such as language, text, and translation. These terms, as well as ‘authorship’, ‘sense’, and ‘translation unit’, are all questioned by plurisemiotic practices, whose value lies, then, in the possibility to expose and re-discuss central categories that underpin research in TS (Mus, 2021). Moreover, as Sarah Neelsen (2021) notices, research undertaken in this area is presented with a whole different set of methodological issues deriving from their disparate materialities.

Judging from the growing number of edited issues and volumes that tackle translation across media and semiotic systems, such reflections and fascinations can be said to have attracted growing attention. Besides Mus’ and Neelsen’s introductory articles to the edited issue *Translation and Plurisemiotic Practices* (2021) related above, one finds the special issues *Translating Multimodalities* (O’Sullivan and Jeffcote, 2013) *Methods for the Study of Multimodality in*

Translation, edited by Jiménez Hurtado, Tuominen, and Ketola (2018), *Intersemiotic Translation and Multimodality* (Bennett, 2019), *Retranslation and Multimodality* (Özlem and Şehnaz, 2020), the volume *Translation and Multimodality* (Boria et al., 2020) and the monograph *Translating the Visual: a Multimodal Perspective* by Weissbrot and Khon (2019)⁹. Most of the modes, media, and genres studied within this framework include subtitling, audio-description, graphic novels, websites, theatre play, medical translation, but there are also papers focusing on board and video games, graffiti, and an essay by Helen Julia Minors on music and dance (2020), which I address in the following chapter.

What about Dance?

So far, I have shown how recent work in the field of TS turned towards its central categories to question them, thus shaking its own foundations to make space for new movements and trajectories. One of these, which I intend to traverse, is the one linking theatrical dance with translation, looking at how dance performances translate other texts—be they visual or written—and in so doing offer insight into the very nature of translation, its functions, and potential. But what kind of dance am I talking about? And what is western theatrical dance?

Just as the concept of translation has been stretched in the past years, so theatrical dance has started to question its own ontology and has proposed expanded notions of what counts as dance, moving away from modernist conceptions that pin it down to “movement shaped in time and space” (Fraleigh, 1987: xv; Butterworth, 2012: 1). Such definition can be linked to modernity in two ways.

On the one hand, by attempting to extrapolate the essential materials of dance as a separate,

⁹ A focus on the materialities of translation has also resulted in research in ‘genetic translation studies’, a process-oriented approach that looks at drafts, manuscripts, and objects used and produced by translators to better understand the complexities of their work. Publications dealing with genetic TS have appeared in an issue edited by Cordingley and Montini (2015), and in the edited volume *Genetic Translation Studies: Conflict and Collaboration in Liminal Spaces* (Nunes, Moura, and Pacheco Pinto, 2020).

autonomous artwork, it participated in modernism's drive towards abstraction, its rejection of narrative, and its focus on the basic matter and tools of each art. On the other hand, by eschewing signification, dance foregrounded movement for movement's sake, removing it from representation but also from its contextual, historical, semiotic, and political environment, as beautifully argued by choreographer Miguel Gutierrez in his provocatively titled article "Does Abstraction Belong to White People?" (2018). In it, Gutierrez asks: whose bodies can be perceived as neutral, whose bodies "can be signifiers for a universal experience" (2018: 5), and whose bodies are always-already read, interpreted, perceived as carrying difference? A similar criticism against representing dance solely as unhindered human movement in space and time is articulated by André Lepecki in *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (2006). Lepecki understands modernity not as strictly coinciding with 19th and 20th century experimentations with the raw materials of each art form, but as a

long durational project, metaphysically and historically producing and reproducing a "psycho-philosophical frame" (Phelan 1993: 5) where the privileged subject of discourse is always gendered as the heteronormative male, raced as white, and experiencing his truth as (and within) a ceaseless drive for autonomous, self-motivated, endless, spectacular movement (Lepecki, 2006: 13).

This understanding sees the modern subject emerge from Descartes's separation of mind and body, individual and world; a being-toward-movement, in Sloterdijk's words (2000: 36). Lepecki dates the birth of choreography in 1589, when the first attempt to notate dance, Thoinot Arbeau's treatise *Orchesographie*, inscribed dance in modernity's kinetic project. The hyperkinetic body proposed by modernity is one that moves on an abstract and even ground, which in fact covers the "colonised, flattened, bulldozed terrain" (Lepecki, 2006:14) supporting the fulfilment of such self-sufficient mobility. It is not a case that the first steps taken by theatrical dance to establish itself as an autonomous art form are the flattening of the ground and the abstraction from context. They appear

in both Feuillet's description of the dance floor as a blank page (*Choreographie*, 1700), and the solitary chamber (later the studio) where Arbeau's disciple is to read and perform the steps created by his master as a way of "accessing absent presences" (Lepecki, 2006: 26)¹⁰.

Why is this important? According to Lepecki, it is only by acknowledging western theatrical dance's self-portrayal as being-toward-movement and its entanglements with modernity's project of colonization that one can read "the eruption of kinaesthetic stuttering" (2006: 1) on stage in the 1990s as an ontological questioning that led to a reformulation of what counts as dance. If dance is ontologically imbricated with movement, then choreographing stillness, stuttering, and disruptions becomes a way to question the very foundations of western theatrical dance and propose new ontologies for it. So are the movements outside disciplinary boundaries, and the approximation to other art forms and areas. As it is the case with translation, this resulted in the proliferation of terminology to define what is considered outside the definition of dance as human movement in space and time (performance, choreographic installation, live art, conceptual dance, body art, urban intervention and so on) (Müller, 2012). Such self-interrogation has only become more pressing and evident as Covid-19 swept the dancing world into a state of disembodied virtuality¹¹ (or using Lepecki's words, of absent presences) and a worldwide examination of systemic racism across all practices was made urgent by the murder of Tanisha Anderson, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Gabriella Nevarez, Akay Gurley, Michelle Cusseaux, Eric Garner, Janisha Fonville, Freddy Gray, Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, Botham Jean, Stephon Clark, Aura

¹⁰ Arbeau was a Jesuit priest and a dancer credited with the first attempt to notate dance in his manual *Orchesographie*, written in 1589. He was prompted to undertake the project by his disciple Cabriol, a lawyer and dance student who wished to be with his master even when geographically distant (Lepecki, 2006).

¹¹ Surely dance is still embodied and even watching a dance online is an embodied activity. What I highlight with this term is the forced mediation of presence for dancers and members of the public imposed by Covid-19 safety measures.

Rosser, Atatiana Jefferson, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd at the hands of members of the police force in the US (Chugthai, ongoing)¹².

Considering these reflections, it would not be wrong to affirm that theatrical dance as a field “has been thrust into a global existential crisis” (Baird et al., 2021), prompting a reassessment of its ground and foundational categories. While this thesis does not attempt to redefine dance or perform such a reassessment, it shares Lepecki’s view of dance as extending beyond the abstracted definition of human movement in space and time and embraces “putative outsides of choreography” (2006: 47) such as the dancers’ bodies, language, costumes, props, music, lighting, stage arrangement, performing space, and historical unfoldings as constitutive of theatrical dance just as movement and gestures are.

This thesis, then, sits in the breach opened by the felt need to reformulate central concepts such as language, text, and translation expressed in the works mentioned above. It takes the call for paying attention to the materialities and modalities of texts seriously, by exploring the notion of ephemerality in writing and theatrical dance (Ch. 4), by looking at the bodies of the dancers as translated/translating supports (Ch. 5), by applying an intermedial framework to the analysis of the dance performances (Ch. 6 to 8), and finally, by contrasting translation into the medium of dance with other forms of intermedial translation, such as film, opera, and graphic novel (Ch. 9). However, it also benefits from the emphasis placed on embodiment by Plaza (1987), Scott (2012), and Ivančić (2016), from whom I also derive the inclusion of translators’ own voices (here the

¹² Here I refer to systemic racism and police brutality in the U.S. as the protests led by the Black Lives Matter movement were particularly related to those deaths and initiated there. However, one should not think that these phenomena are endemic to the U.S. alone. I write these words in Italy a week after 23-year-old Moussa Balde took his life in a detention centre for repatriation in Turin, where he was detained after having been beaten up by strangers. He was not registered at the centre with his own name, which prevented his lawyers from finding him in time. The brutality and indifference with which these deaths are received makes our silence complicit and justifies the presence of their names even in a thesis that deals with another topic.

voices are those of dancers, choreographers and composers involved in the intermedial translation process). Spatial and temporal consideration are also given due attention: in Chapter 7, I devote a section to analysing how the frame created around Chouinard's performance by the Centro Cultural de Belém brought it (or not) into dialogue with its setting at the heart of one of Portugal's most visible memory sites, whereas Chapter 9 follows the journey of Vian's novel across media, cultures, and history, asking how different media and materialities influenced its renditions but also how the various translations conveyed and reframed its memory, actively shaping its afterlives. One only lifts a leg if the other is firmly planted on the ground: and so, in the following section, I will briefly outline the multimodal and intermedial theoretical frameworks grounding my understanding of language, text, and translation.

Theoretical Grounding: Multimodal Social Semiotics and Intermediality

In his 2010 book *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Theory of Contemporary Communication*, Gunther Kress challenges mainstream theories of communication by arguing that the focus on verbal language does not fully explain how communication is achieved, and, importantly, prevents us from understanding recent changes in communication and society brought about by the design of new media¹³. A focus on verbal language alone does not account for the fact that “multimodality [is] the normal state of human communication” (2010: 1). This “satellite view of language” (15) enables him to take a materialistic approach to semiosis that assesses semiotic resources on the ground of the material affordances of the modes in which they are instantiated. An epistemological shift that reflects an ontological one, insofar as focusing on modes brings attention to “the material,

¹³ Kress' theory of multimodality and social semiosis is first presented in *Social Semiotics* (Hodge and Kress, 1988) and developed in the later publications *Multimodal Discourse* (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001), *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Theory of Contemporary Communication* (2010). In *Transposing Meaning: Translation in a Multimodal Semiotic Landscape* (2020), a chapter published in the edited volume *Translation and Multimodality*, Kress summarises it and relates its meaning and potential for the field of TS.

the specific, the making of signs now [...] from the mentalistic to the bodily” (13). Thus, to think embodiment is to think multimodality and the reverse: multimodality indeed arises from the body’s capacity to perceive through various senses. Communication is multimodal because it is embodied.

As Kress highlights,

In the engagement with any sign, the materiality of modes [...] interacts with the physiology of bodies. All signs [...] are always embodied for maker and remaker alike. [...] No sign remains, as it were, simply or merely a ‘mental’, ‘conceptual’, a ‘cognitive’ resource. At this point the processes named as affect and cognition coincide absolutely as one bodily effect. [...] The sign which the sign maker has made gives us an insight into their stance in the world. [...] The sensory, affective, and aesthetic dimension is too often ignored and treated as ancillary. In reality, it is indissolubly part of semiosis. (2010: 77-78).

It follows that “a multi-modal social semiotic approach to representation puts the emphasis on the material, the physical, the sensory, the bodily, the ‘stuffness’ of stuff, away from abstraction towards the specific” (2010: 105). The lines quoted above remit to the embodiment of communication and to ancillary concepts such as agency and what Meschonnic (2011) would call the concept-affect continuum. Kress’ theory sits well with the theoretical perspectives deployed in the following chapters on several other issues, such as the continuum of meaning and sense spelled out by Meschonnic and worded by Kress as “signs are motivated conjunctions of form and meaning where the conjunction is based on the interest of the sign maker using culturally available resources” (10)¹⁴. Signs are fixed and framed by modes, the materialization of meaning, themselves coming with specific affordances and epistemological commitments. Meaning, therefore, does not exist outside materialization and outside frames. At the same time, the different materiality of modes results in different affordances and reaches, meaning that they can do

¹⁴ In fact, Kress criticises Saussure’s postulation of signified and signifier for representing the relation between the two as an arbitrary one, defined by convention. While this has been a prevailing interpretation in linguistics, in chapter 5 I mention Meschonnic’s reading of Saussure as positing a continuum of form-sense (this view is also supported by Rabourdin, 2020). Therefore, I do not see it as incongruous to bridge Meschonnic’s and Kress’ views on meaning.

different semiotic work and cover different areas of signification. For example, the mode of image representation offers semiotic resources such as distance, size, colour, positioning within frames, thickness, whereas the mode of gestural movement offers speed, proximity, direction, degrees of stiffness or relaxation, force—“infinitely gradable signifiers” (2010: 83). Moreover, the reach of visual image and gestural movement will be different inside a single culture as well as vary across cultures. Indeed, an important feature of semiotic resources is that they are socially and continuously made, so various groups and communities of practice can make distinct uses of modes as signifiers. A good example of this is offered by the translator Ros Schwartz, who remembers translating the switch from *vous* to *tu* in French by having one of the characters put her hand on the other’s arm in the English version (Bassnett and Bush, 2006). The semiotic work of signalling intimacy or closeness, accomplished in French by pronouns in the mode of verbal language, is achieved in English through touch and proximity in the mode of gesture. This example highlights the importance of the concepts of *semiotic work* and *reach of modes* even in what I call intramedial translation. The modes of writing and speech represent an exception in the way they have been codified and standardised along national boundaries, and we should not assume the same correspondence between nation and semiotic knowledge for other modes. This could be better accounted for by thinking in terms of “communities of practice” (Wenger, 1998), “affinity spaces” (Gee, 2005) and personal experience (Adami and Ramos Pinto, 2020).

Ultimately, multimodality helps us understand that “all modes of representation are, in principle, of equal significance in representation and communication, as all modes have potential for meaning” (Kress, 2010:104). Another proposition we can derive from this example, and which I have argued originates in our embodiment, is the fact that modes are generally used simultaneously, in modal ensembles: if it is possible for Schwartz to translate *tu* with the touch of

a hand it is because in a conversation semiotic work is done simultaneously via speech, facial expression, gesture, gaze, proxemics, tone of voice and to a less extent clothing¹⁵. If we return to Crystal Pite's choreography *The Statement*, with which I opened this thesis, and we look at it through Kress' theory, we will see how the choreographer is using multimodality to explore the reach of speech and movement. Speech, being a more explicit mode than movement is in western contemporary dance, is used to ratify what is expressed bodily by the dancers. When speech stops and movement goes on, we perceive that the conversation is continuing, but because movement is not as denotative as speech, meaning becomes opaque. However, if the same choreographic structure was applied to classic Indian dance, where hand movements convey a more explicit meaning, we would still be able to follow the dialogue between the dancers without feeling challenged. Pite's choreography thus reveals the different semiotic work and reach of the modes of speech and movement in western society but also their parallel capacity to signify.

Two main points stem from this. First, 'text' must be redefined as "a multimodal semiotic entity seen as having completeness by those who engage with it" (2010: 148). Second, translation becomes the process of "moving meaning and of relating meanings across modes [...] genres, cultures, and any combination of these" (124). It must be noted that the embedded, embodied, and situated view of meaning proposed by Kress means that the process of moving and relating meaning always entails transformation: change is understood as the inevitable condition of translation (rather than the by-product of an activity striving for sameness) and translationality is understood with Robinson as "moving through changes" (2017: xvii). Thus, a literary classic like Charlotte Brönte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) can be translated from English into Italian: this is a case of

¹⁵ The focus on the materiality of modes leads Kress to make an important distinction between speech and writing, which he sees as altogether different modes. Indeed, while speech relies on sound, writing is instantiated graphically, meaning that the two modes come with very specific affordances.

intramodal and intercultural translation. If it is instantiated as a radio play the translation will be intermodal, as the modes of writing and speech are considered to be distinct. If instead it is translated into a children's book the translation will be inter-genre; finally, a change in discourse can be accomplished by adopting the point of view of the antagonist, as Jean Rhys did in *The Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) responding to Brönte's novel by adopting the perspective of Mr. Rochester's supposedly mad wife, Mrs. Cosway.

Kress' approach proves useful in several ways, and many of his concepts will inform my analysis of the case-studies. However, two criticisms can be made to his theory. First, Kress is categorical in rejecting Charles Peirce's category of symbols¹⁶ on the grounds that meaning is always motivated, even when it seems to be arbitrary: to demonstrate his point he recovers the history of the red cross sign as related to the flag of Switzerland, a neutral country, and to Christianity. I argue that while those relations might have been present in the mind of the initial sign-makers, who therefore drew on iconicity, it is questionable whether these references are intended by a contemporary sign-maker who, for example, uses the red cross sign to indicate the arrival of an ambulance in a theatre play. When the motivation is forgotten or unknown, can we still project it as intentionality onto a speaker who is unaware of that? Take the letters of the alphabet: as Abram asserts (1996: 64), the early Semitic alphabet from which we inherited our letters still retained a pictographic quality, visible for example in the following letters: aleph (𐤀, meaning ox, A in Greek), mem (𐤂, water) and O (eye). However, everyone who is reading this chapter will not interpret its letters through their iconic relation to external elements, but through their symbolic function as phonemes. Maybe we can see this as a difference of perspective: if we adopt the

¹⁶ Pierce understands the relationship of signifier and signified as based on icons (any form of resemblance, as a circle to indicate a wheel) indexes (based on contiguity, like smoke to indicate fire, or a fingerprint standing for the finger) and symbols, which are established as a convention.

perspective of the sign, we would try to uncover its history and motivation; if we adopt the perspective of the user, we would concede that the sign is used as a symbol in that its usage is based on habituation and accrued meaning—as it would be with a red circle containing a white rectangle to signify “no access”. While the iconic dimension still exists, it is not foregrounded or readily accessible, and most users will pay attention to its accrued meaning rather than its iconic motivation. This focus on the user leads me to the second criticism. While it is fundamental to consider the materiality and affordances of each mode within a modal ensemble as Kress does, I believe that in his theory little space is given to accrued socio-cultural attributes of multimodal ensembles—or, as I will call them, media. For this, I draw on Elleström’s intermediality theory.

Elleström’s work is developed within the field of intermediality, which itself evolved from intertextuality, semiotics, and interarts studies, replacing the focus on high art of the latter with the more inclusive notion of medium, thus opening its investigation to a broader set of aesthetic and technological practices and overcoming the divide between high and low culture (Bruhn, 2016; Petersson et al., 2018). The term intermediality (*Intermedialität*) was introduced in 1983 by Hansen-Löve and picked up only recently as an umbrella term for all kinds of phenomena taking place among media (Rajewsky, 2010)¹⁷. Rajewsky divides them into three categories: intramedial, where the borders between media are not crossed, intermedial, which involves a crossing of the borders, and transmedial, that is, those characteristics that stand above media borders and can be found in several media products. The intermedial level is in turn divided into media combination, where different media are combined to form a new one (comics, ballet), media transposition, which concerns the coming into being of a new media product (adaptation, novelization), and intermedial

¹⁷ In 1996 Wagner claims to be introducing the English term intermediality (Wagner, 1996).

reference, which happens when a medium imitates or evokes techniques that are normally associated with another medium but without trespassing its own borders (Rajewsky, 2010)¹⁸.

The proliferation of schematizations and terminology reflects the fact that media boundaries are fuzzy and a-posteriori constructions (Mitchell, 2005; Elleström, 2010, 2018). Elleström offers a useful model for the analysis of media products. He highlights four modalities shared by all media: material, sensorial, spatiotemporal, and semiotic. They exist prior to the label ‘music’, ‘image’, ‘dance’ and so on, since these categorizations are the product of a later stage that according to contextual and operational aspects turns them into qualified media. Hence, “intermediality is the result of *constructed* media borders being trespassed” (Elleström, 2010: 27, italics mine). These borders are defined by modal differences and divergences in qualifying aspects (2010). Elleström’s theorization does not shun recent debates, like that around a-priori or a-posteriori intermediality but tackles them head-on by providing a system that acknowledges the fact that they might share modal configurations while at the same time be perceived as separate because of contextual and operational aspects that conventionally define what forms and characteristics they may take. These aspects are bound to change across time and cultures.

The relevance of these discussions when it comes to the actual study of communication lies in the fact that the materiality of media can no longer be overlooked, as was the case with studies focusing

¹⁸ Wolf proposes a typology that closely resembles Rajewsky’s. If Rajewsky posits the division between intermedial and transmedial phenomena at a higher level, Wolf brings them together in the macro-group called extracompositional (which includes transmediality and intermedial transposition) which is set against the intracompositional macro-group that includes plurimediality and intermedial reference. His typology is picked up by, among others, Marcsek-Fuchs in her article “Literature and Dance: Intermedial Encounters” (2015a). As we can see, the different subdivision of these phenomena into groups does not radically alter what is meant by each of the categories or the way they function. It is, rather, based on specific angles of vision: Rajewsky adopts the perspective of the receiver of media product whereas Wolf adopts the perspective of the producer.

only on the semiotic side of signs. Take for example the general neglect of typography or layout in verbal-based theories of translation that only look at the meaning of words but not at the socio-cultural meanings of their material supports, a tendency criticised by Hayles (2003). In dance, this would equate with reading a choreography only in terms of signs without paying attention to the actual bodies of the performers and the sociocultural inscriptions they carry with(in) them. Adopting an intermedial approach means paying attention to the material, sensorial, and spatiotemporal modalities besides the semiotic one, as all of them affect the formation of meaning in its travels from one medium to another (Elleström, 2010).

In keeping with these discussions, I replace Jakobson's famous and influential tripartition of translation into intralingual, interlingual and intersemiotic¹⁹ translation with Kaindl's subdivision into intramodal, intermodal, intramedial and intermedial (2013: 261-262; 2020), all of them realisable intra- and interculturally. Following this model, the translation of a novel from Russian to English is a case of intramedial, intramodal and intercultural translation. Schwartz's translation of the shift from *vous* to *tu* with a touch on the arm (Bassnett and Busch, 2006) could be seen as an intramedial, intermodal and intercultural translation, even when the technical medium is still writing. If the same Russian novel is translated into a dance performance staged for a Canadian audience, then the translation will be an intermedial, intermodal and intercultural. And, most of all, there is no reason at all why the source text should be fixed in the mode of writing...

¹⁹ Jakobson defines the latter as "the interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems" (Jakobson, 1959 in Venuti, 2012: 127). Jakobson's contribution was fundamental in enlarging the concept of translation to include different semiotic systems. However, his definition has come under scrutiny in recent years. For example, Regina Schober pointed out the primacy granted to the verbal sign-system as the only one allowed to constitute the source text (2010), while Kaindl criticised the consideration of sign systems in isolation—musical, verbal, pictorial and so on (2013). Finally, Kress reminds the modal distinction between writing and speech, which cannot be considered as a singular sign system, or mode (2010).

Rehearsing

*“Translation comes to entail a recognition of a distinctiveness of each medium,
And then a series of tactical decisions that draw the moved and the written
into interdisciplinary parlance” (Foster, 1996: xvi)*

Back in the dance classroom, to the setting of the choreographic piece. The necessary stretching has just been executed, warming up our muscles and leaving our body more relaxed and flexible, ready to plunge into new movements without damage or hesitations. It is now time for us to tap into its stored movement memory in order to retrace and remember—remember through and with the body—what has already been done in order to build on it. Thus, we rehearse the various movements and ideas previously performed and look at what was created, what of it can be used, and what must be added.

This is the purpose of this chapter, which, by retracing the work already done in and between the fields of literary, dance, intermediality, and translation studies concerning the relationship between visual arts, dance, and literature bears witness to the establishment of the metaphor *dance as translation*. The chapter is divided thematically into four sections: *dance and the visual arts*, *dance and language*, *dance and literature*, and *dance and translation*. The object of study of this chapter will not be the relation between literature, dance, and the visual arts per se, as this in itself would amount to several doctoral dissertations, but how this relationship was approached and theorised in the scholarly arena, leading to a growing understanding of theatrical dance as a form of translation. The division into themes certainly risks creating separations where there was continuity and may present an imbalance between the various sections, partly accounted for by the fact that research in translation has developed, at least in western academies, out of linguistic departments and (away?) from a focus on written language (Vinay and Dalbeneit, 1958; Catford, 1965; Munday, 2012). Besides, the majority of the dance performances observed here are narrative-based, and such was the narrative ballet developed between the 18th and 19th century in

Europe (Foster, 1996). Narrative ballet opened the door to the choreographic studio for writers like Theophile Gautier (Foster, 1996) and fostered a still ongoing dialogue between literature and choreography. However, before being linked to literature, and even before the connection with language was established, dance was equated with the visual arts and understood as “painting the soul using gestures only” (1996: 13). Both stage and body were seen as bi-dimensional canvases on which to stage human action in a representation of Nature. This proximity between dance and the visual arts is reiterated by Cipriani, for whom romantic ballet fused together the properties of painting, music, and drama (2004). It is not a coincidence that Foster (1996) places the origin of narrative ballet in Marie Sallé’s *Pygmalion* (1734), a dance based on Ovid’s myth of a sculptor who falls in love with his own artwork, Galatea. Based on a written story and at the same time staging the relationship between dance and visual art in the embodiment and animation of a still sculpture, this work elaborates on different layers of translation and offers a site where visual, written, and danced media meet and bloom (Foster, 1996). It is from this moment in the history of western theatrical dance that I take the lead for the next section, where I will be looking at the academic output dealing with the translational dialogue between painters, choreographers, dancers, and the public.

Dance and the Visual Arts

“The concord or discord of various elements of a picture, the handling of groups, the combination of veiled or openly expressed appeals, the use of rhythmical or unrhythmical, of geometrical or non-geometrical forms, of continuity or separation—all this constitutes material for counterpoint”.
(Kandinskij, 1914: 65)

If Susan Foster (1996) stresses how dance and painting were seen as kin activities by 18th century spectators, with dance being equated to bas-reliefs, Gabriele Brandstetter points to paintings as the place of encounter of dance and the visual arts and consequently sets off to unearth the visual

“patterns that form the deep underlying structure that shapes the foundation of dance at the turn of the century” (2015b: 13). She maintains that “the modern dancer explored the museum as a storehouse of images” (41) and goes on to show that dancers such as Isadora Duncan, Maud Allen, Ruth St. Denis, Alexander Sakharoff, Mata Hari, and Vladislav Nijinsky drew inspiration for their innovative dances from ancient artworks displayed in the museums of London, Berlin, and Paris. This process of quoting ancient and recent pasts introduced “historicism as an active, interpretative act of referring art history on the one hand and as a reflective recourse to the traditions of dance history on the other” (41), foregrounding a translational aesthetic²⁰ that kept alive, re-contextualised, and repurposed images and imaginaries long engraved in European minds. Applying Aby Warburg’s theory of pathos formulas as developed in his Mnemosyne project, Brandstetter (2015b) recovers the influence of Hellenic statues and paintings behind modern dance fashioning of bodies. She demonstrates how patterns of femininity were informed by the undulating tunics of Greek statues or by exotic representations associated to eastern dances. And indeed, the exchange between dance and painting, dance and photography and even dance and cinema is a fascinating and enduring one and takes oftentimes the form of an intermedial translation or a reflection on the other medium. It follows that dance and the visual arts influenced each other in the creation of visually complex aesthetic and body images.

Nowhere is the interest of a painter in dance more explicit than in Edgar Degas’ paintings and drawings, of which about 1500 are dedicated to ballet. His paintings mostly depict the ballerinas’ lives behind the scenes. They position painter and viewer in the backstage rather than within the public, thus adopting the viewpoints of the many *abonnés*, wealthy men who could attend the

²⁰ In *Cities in Translation*, Simon repeatedly uses the term ‘translational writing’ to describe works and sites where “creative writing and translation mesh” (2012: 8). Here I use the term translational aesthetic so as to include different media.

rehearsals in the *foyer de la danse* by paying a fee. Here, they had a chance to flirt with the dancers, reduced to the condition of public women by recent changes in the administration and economy of theatres, as painstakingly documented by Foster (1996). The figure of the *abonné* as a dark man wearing a top hat is recurrent in Degas' paintings (Wolkoff, 2018). The harsh reality of the ballerinas' lives, and especially of the so-called *petit rats*, girls coming from poor families and trying to emancipate themselves through a career in the ranks of ballet (Foster, 1996; Coons, 2014), can be seen in paintings like *The Rehearsal of the Ballet on Stage* (Degas, 1874) and in the famous sculpture *Little Dancer Aged 14* (Degas, 1878-1881) (Fig. 1). The exhibition of this sculpture provoked a scandal and, most probably, the end of the dance career of Marie van Goatham, the represented ballet dancer who managed to rise from the condition of *petit rat* to the *corps de ballet* before being dismissed by the Paris Opera de Ballet for having arrived late to a rehearsal (Wolkoff, 2018).



Figure 1: *Little Dancer Aged 14*, Edgar Degas (1879-881)

Her story, presented as a prequel to the sculpture, was choreographed by Patrice Bart and premiered at the Palais Garnier in 2003 as *La Petite Danseuse de Degas*²¹. Based on research undertaken by the company's cultural director Martine Kahane in the 1990s, the ballet starts with the little dancer encased in a glass box and closely observed by museum goers, whose examining eyes call to mind the voyeuristic gaze of the *abonnés* in the rehearsals room. This ballet in two acts recounts in one hour and fifteen minutes the same reality painted by Degas. As the story unfolds, aided by surtitles that read as chapter titles and set the story in a specific place and time, we see her rise from the ranks of *petit rat* to become a member of the *corps de ballet* and her admiration for the first dancer—a role whose importance grew exponentially with the rise of romantic ballet and the introduction of the pointe shoe. At the same time, we witness the sexually predatorial ambience of artists' studios and dance classrooms. If the first act ends with a *grand ensemble* scene portraying the Grand Ball at the opera, the second act abandons the prestigious stage of the opera and delves into the less shiny part of the ballerina's life, drawing from both the life of Marie van Goetham and her sister, who was sent to prison for robbing her lover. We follow Marie in the Cabaret, where her mother pushes her into the *abonné's* arms, and into prison, where her pose, a standing position with stretched legs and arms behind the back as if handcuffed, is reminiscent of Degas' wax statue. Finally, an ensemble scene at the laundress closes the ballet, signalling her death and standing for the *act blanc* (Trachtman, 2003), a typical ballet scene where the prima ballerina and the female *corps de ballet* all wear white²². Besides taking inspiration from Degas' oeuvre and historical facts, Patrice Bart translates the tension between two stylistic currents

²¹ Available online at: <https://www.medici.tv/en/ballets/la-petite-danseuse-de-degas-patrice-bart-world-premiere-opera-garnier/>.

²² An emblematic example of this is act 2 and 4 of *Swan Lake*.

that characterise the painter's work, realism and impressionism, by combining traditional ballet vocabulary with scenes where modern dance dominates, combining tradition with innovation.

This example shows not only the interconnectedness of the visual art and the dance worlds, but also the mutual influences between the two as we see dance practice being the subject of several paintings and statues which in turn become the subject of a ballet. A similar case, which has sparked remarkable scholarly interest, is Vasilij Kandinskij's appraisal, theorization, and translation of modern dance. Funkenstein (2007) takes Kandinskij's essay *Dance Curves*, published in 1926 and comprising four drawings based on photographs of Gret Palucca's²³ dances (Fig. 2), as a case in point against Greenberg's view of modernism as an aesthetic uniquely concentrated on each medium's properties. Indeed, the series of photographs taken by Charlotte Rudolph and later rendered as drawings by Kandinskij, not only show the kind of modernism promoted by the Bauhaus in the late 1920s, but also the daily crossing of disciplinary boundaries and the translational approach characterising Kandinskij's work in this and other instances. According to Funkenstein (2007), this work signals a shift in style from that expressed in *The Spiritual in Art* (also translated as *The Art of Spiritual Harmony*) towards a more linear one²⁴.

²³ Palucca was a disciple and later a colleague of the expressionist dancer Mary Wigman.

²⁴ Available online at: http://ghdi.ghi-dc.org/sub_image.cfm?image_id=4335.

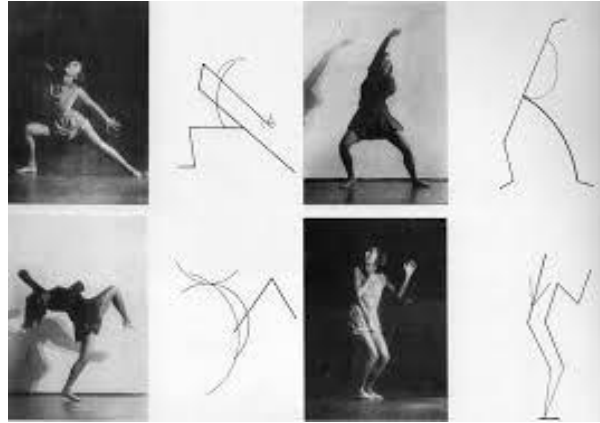


Figure 2: *Dance Curves: On the Dances of Palucca*, Kandinskij (1926)

A look at the photographs and the drawings also shows us that the drawings bear little resemblance to a dancer's moving body: without the help of the photographs, we could hardly say that they are representations of bodies, and they look more like the abstract lines of his paintings. We can see them as indirect translations of Palucca's dance, where the photographs work as relay translations, intermediaries between the dance and the drawing, simultaneously translating and translated. Funkenstein herself maintains that Palucca's "dances put his [Kandinskij's] theories into physical practice" (Funkenstein, 2007: 394) and in her later remarks about how he slightly altered the right angle formed by the bent knee—which becomes acute in his drawing as for Kandinskij an acute angle was warmer than the right one—we can see the workings of a translator who in rewriting the source material into the target text takes liberties and "corrects" the source. This translation is not devoid of ideological implications, as aptly noted by Funkenstein, who highlights that the rendering of photographs and dance into pure lines "recast[ed] the feminine into an abstracted, masculinised androgyny" (404). This could be associated either with a will to erase the feminine from modern art, as Funkenstein believes, (403) or with a desire to associate the linear and abstract style of modernity with the emancipated woman (a hypothesis suggested by the fact that the

drawings are placed in the uppermost part of the page, the area Kandinskij associated with liberation and emancipation).

Either way, this collaboration shows how a translational approach underlined Kandinskij's experimentations, as well as another case offered by Huxley (2017). His article *The Dance of the Future: Wassily's Kandinskij's Vision 1908-1928* painstakingly recounts Kandinskij's involvement in modern dance and his attempts at theorizing a new form of dance, of which he saw the seeds in Graham's performances. Without recognising them as such, Huxley describes Kandinskij's experimentations with intermedial translations carried out in collaboration with the composer Thomas de Hartmann and the dancer Alexander Sacharoff in Munich, at the time an important centre for modern dance and art.



Figure 3: *Portrait of the Dancer Alexander Sacharoff*, Alexej von Jawlensky (1909)

De Hartmann would choose one of Kandinskij's watercolours and set it to music. Sacharoff (Fig. 3) would then dance to this music. After that, Sacharoff would be asked to guess which of the

watercolours he had just danced (Huxley, 2017). These experimentations reveal simultaneously a deep awareness of the limits of each medium, but also an exploration of the semiotics of each art form and a sort of translation training. By having to indicate which watercolour spurred his dance, Sacharoff was asked to look closely for affinities between the qualities of his movement, the music and the images to find a common thread, all the while being made aware of the mediated nature of meaning and emotion in their movement across the three different media. This understanding of art process as translation is reflected in Kandinskij's words about *The Dance Curves* essay, quoted by Huxley: "it is essential to establish a link between the movement of lines and the movement of the human bodies (of the whole or of the individual parts) to translate line into the movement of the body and the movement of the body into line" (Kandinskij, 1920, quoted in Huxley, 2017: 274). He even described *Dance Curves* as a translation of the four instantaneous photographs into diagrammatic form (Huxley, 2017). It becomes clear that *Dance Curves* was a continuation of a translational aesthetic formed during his artistic experimentations with de Hartmann and Sacharoff. Only this time, music was replaced by photography as a relay translation and the process was reversed.

Kandinskij's own ideas about dance as coloured figures moving in synchrony or asynchrony, which Huxley parallels to the abstract style developed by Merce Cunningham from the 1950s onwards, resonate in fact even more with Loïe Fuller's dances, filmed in 1896 by the Lumière brothers and which she describes as an encounter between coloured light and movement. As much as Kandinskij was interested in expressing the spiritual²⁵ through the composition of colours and

²⁵ 'Spiritual' for Kandinskij is not associated to religion but with intellect and inner life: as Kandinsky states: "the spiritual life, to which art belongs and of which she is one of the mightiest elements, is a complicated but definite and easily definable movement forewards and upwards. This movement is the movement of experience", and "when religion, science, and morality are shaken...and when the other supports threaten to fall, man turn his gaze from externals in on to himself. Literature, music, and art are the first sensitive spheres in which this spiritual evolution makes itself felt (Kandinskij, 1946: 13-14, 26).

lines, Fuller was interested in exploring movement itself as engendering thoughts and feelings rather than using it to represent mental states. As she affirms

our knowledge of motion is nearly as primitive as our knowledge of colour. We say ‘prostrated by grief’ but in reality, we pay attention only to the grief; ‘transported with joy’ but we observe only the joy; ‘weighted down by chagrin’ but we consider only the chagrin. Throughout we place no value on the movement that expresses the thought (Fuller, 1913: 72).

And indeed, in “Inventing Abstraction? Modernist Dance in Europe” (2015), Bellow and Andrew suggest that Fuller’s experimentations with light and movement preceded Picasso’s cubist paintings of the 1910s and could be seen as a first approach to modernist art, inspiring artists like Henry de Toulouse-Lautrec and Auguste Rodin and writers like Mallarmé and Yeats, as also maintained by Jones (2013). After enumerating several choreographers and companies who embodied an abstract aesthetic—like Nijinsky, Wigman, Fortunato Depero with his *Balli Plastici*—and stressing how Dada considered performance as a primary means for their political art, they conclude that dance “served as a model of and vehicle for the modernist quest to bring art directly into the sphere of life” (Bellow and Andrew, 2015: 337).

Fuller’s engagement with silent cinema reflects a more general trend that sees a collaboration between pioneers in the new arts like photography, modern dance, and early silent cinema whose emblem could be considered Alice Guy Bleché’s short film of one of Fuller’s imitators performing the famous *Serpentine Dance*. Alice Guy Bleché’s incredible story as a pioneer of cinema if not the first narrative filmmaker, recounted by the newly released documentary film *Be Natural: The Untold Story of Alice Guy-Bleché* (Green, 2018), parallels Fuller’s story as a pioneer in modern dance and the first to reject the ballet aesthetic, planting the first seed of a revolution in the dance world. That Fuller and Guy-Bleché somehow met on film is not at all surprising when we consider that the first film on which a woman appears is about dance and that many dancers, from

Carmencita (1894) to Carolina Otero (1895) and Karsavina (1902), were the protagonists of the cinematic medium in its first years (Brotons, 2019). The first of Fuller's dances to be filmed, *Serpentine Dance*, was filmed in 1896 by the Lumière brothers, although in this footage, as well as in Guy-Bleché's, the dancer was not Fuller herself (Bardet, 2015). This translation into cinematic form of her dance is particularly interesting for the way in which it shows cinema reflecting upon itself through this dance, which, by defining itself as a play with light and movement, mirrors and comments on the medium which is supposed to capture it.

Modern dancers had understood the potentiality of photography and knew how to use it to their advantage. Alter (1996) stresses how photography benefited dance by recording it, by making dancers famous, and by fostering productive collaboration. While modern dancers used it in their essays and manuals to sell their way of living and dancing, pictorialist photographers were attracted by dance for it allowed them to introduce revolutionary visual characteristics and emphasise motion. The interest dance raised in photographers can be glimpsed by flipping the pages of William Ewing's photographic books *Dance and Photography* (1987) and *The Fugitive Gesture* (1994). Choreographies based on photographic series are not missing either. For example, McCartney (2019) explicitly casts movement as translation by analysing a choreography based on Michael Jackson's photographs. The dancers pass from the embodiment of one pose to the other, first moving slowly, giving the idea that the photograph is becoming alive, then speeding up until they found themselves in another pose. As the dancers are women, an interesting tension is established between the photographic and the moving image, in that the meaning of each pose is altered with the change of gender. A similar experience is related by Altinay in chapter 8 of *Feminist Translation Studies* (Castro and Ergun, 2017). She recounts an experiment in creative translation of the vagina monologue, where several female translators were asked to voice their

desires. The translations were later exchanged and read aloud, so that issues of voice and embodiment came to the fore, the meaning of the written texts changing with the voice that read them. For Altinay, this experiment in “embodied translational dance” (2017: 126) shows how a new voice and body can unsettle the fixed text and resonate with McCartney’s description of the dance translation of similarly fixed photographs. As a matter of fact, the passage from a static pose to a live performance relies on a tradition that stretches back to Sallé’s enlivening of Galatea’s statue, passing through Patrice Bart’s *La Petite Danseuse de Degas* discussed above and Contin Arlecchino’s translation of Egon Schiele’s sketches into dance, of which Vittori (2018) offers an analysis.

The *Tragedia dell’Arte* performed by Contin Arlecchino is an attempt at complementing Schiele’s sketches with “tragic imagery, embodied affection, and choreographic recreation” (2018: 214), and translates his sketches into movement, documented through photographs. Vittori recounts the reconstruction of seventeen of Schiele’s works and explains how their method substitutes the idea of relying on a psychological narration for acting with that of embodying and enacting the form, which functions as a third term between the actor and the identity they perform. The paintings become a bodily map, a score for the unfurling of tragic acts. She concludes by saying:

with its figural dance, its use of intermediality its fluid approach to identity and its twisted sense of movement and extreme feelings, as well as its radical move away from western aesthetic canons of beauty, *tragedia dell’arte* gives the actors tools to embody a tragic stance regarding being human in our contemporary time (2018: 237).

Despite often using the term translation and defining their embodiment as such, Vittori never resorts to any translation theory or technique to explain their work, nor does she explore how the metaphor of translation can be considered as more than just a verbal referent. Using more accurately terms employed in translation and adaptation study, although never directly naming

translation, Henia Rottemberg (2008) presents a choreography based on Schiele's sketches and drawings, *The featherstonehaugh's Drawn of the Sketchbook of Egon Schiele* (1998) by Lea Anderson. Rottemberg (2008) adopts an intertextual approach to the analysis of the performance in explaining how Schiele's style shifted from Viennese expressionism to British Postmodernism in the choreography. Rottemberg concludes that the choreography, however faithful to the historical context of the drawings, ends up talking more about the receiving culture than the source one.

Over and again, we have seen the use of the term translation in discussing different intermedial processes, without this term being defined or its potential for analysis explored. The modal implications of considering the passage from painting, photographs, and video to dance and the reverse have likewise been overlooked. And yet, the experimentations in intermedial translation of Kandinskij, McCartney, Lea Anderson and Contin Arlecchino, the collaborations between modern dancers and pioneers in cinema, the deployment of photography as third term or relay translation between different actualizations, all reveal a deep awareness of the (re)mediated nature of art and of its recycling of a shared imagery and cultural repertoire. Moreover, these examples point to the gaps between source and target texts as the necessary creative space for engendering new forms and narratives and for conveying the artist-translator's viewpoint, enabling them to inscribe themselves in someone else's work while redirecting it towards a variety of new meanings in an acknowledgement of their agency.

Dance and Language

“Perché balliamo?
Se ci pensi l’ottanta per cento della comunicazione
è non verbale e il venti verbale,
per cui la domanda è: perché parliamo”
(Wayne McGregor, 2019, *Perché Balliamo*, SkyArte)²⁶

With the rise of action ballet, the former view of dance as the articulation of music and of the visual properties of painting was replaced by a new understanding based on vocabulary, syntax, ends and beginnings, turning it into a “moment-to-moment enunciation of a plot” (Foster, 1996: 115). Movement’s function was to communicate an idea, and choreographers and theatre practitioners debated whether dance should be choreographed so as to translate metaphors literally or enunciate the plot through its own specific technique, and if one could invent a story anew or should limit oneself to the rendering of well-known narratives. At the base of this controversy was a desire translators know well: to attain perfect equivalence between source text and translated dance. Traces of this discussion can be found in Johann Jakob Engel’s 1788 treatise *Idée sur le Geste et l’Action Théâtrale*, where he stresses how dance shares some of the rhetorical devices of poetry, such as metonymy, irony, and synecdoche. Still, he only endowed it with a paralinguistic role, meaning that any choreography needs to be based on well-known stories and events, as movement itself cannot replace words (Foster, 1996). However, he suggested that ballet must be evaluated according to the level of achieved faithfulness to the original text, something that reveals his understanding of it as a form of translation or retelling.

The questions asked by 18th century’s dance masters and theatre directors did not lose their relevance with time: they reverberate in today’s literature. In 1997, Judith Mackrell, renowned

²⁶ “Why do we dance? If you think about it, 80% of communication is non-verbal and 20% is verbal, so the question is: why do we speak?” (my translation).

dance critic, states in her book *Reading Dance*: “the question of how dance functions as a language is one of the most complex bits of philosophical baggage carried by the art form” (1997: 131). She tries to answer this question by identifying the narrative of some of the most canonical ballets and choreographies, in so doing analysing how different elements of a dance performance function semiotically. Examples of this are the employment of a specific movement quality for the same duet performed by Odette and Odile in *Swan Lake*, the use of space in Teshigawara, and the use of closed positions in Antony Tudor’s *Pillars of Fire* (1942). Elements of proxemics and gaze are also used by Tudor in *Jardin aux Lilas* (1936), whereas the role of repetition and variation is exponential in *The Sleeping Beauty* (1890), where the fast paced and light movements characterising Aurora in her youth are replaced by a more cautious rhythm signalling her growth. Mackrell’s method for reading theatrical dance is followed and expanded by Susan Jones in *Literature, Modernism and Dance* (2013), where she offers compelling and insightful analyses of choreographies based on—or leading to—modernist literature, engaging in a much needed and fascinating investigation of the relationship between dance and modernism.

The prevalence of ballet and modern dance in the two books mentioned above should not make us think that the exploration of dance’s narrative potential is limited to those forms: in his essay “The Black Beat Made Visible: Hip Hop Dance and Body Power”, Defrantz (2004) describes hip-hop as a genre “constructed as verbal games of rhetoric, such as toasting and signifying, which simultaneously celebrate and criticise” (2004: 65). Austin’s theory of speech acts (1975) and Scott’s notion of hidden and public transcripts (1990) shine through his appreciation of black social dances as being based on a “dual transcript of public and personal meaning” (Defrantz, 2004: 64). This enables hip hop to address two different audiences at the same time, using dance steps as performative utterances. The dancers perform the action they mean (*j’accuse*, I apologise, I dare

you) and black social dance becomes “the site of a performative body talk inhabited by several audiences simultaneously” (79) and “hip-hop dance continues this construction of actionable physical expression which belongs to the realm of art as life” (79).

Indian dances and Katakali’s²⁷ reliance on mudras to tell a story is underlined by Smith (2003) and Hannah (2001), who compares dance and language by underlining that both have a vocabulary, a grammar, and meaning. Hannah identifies shared properties of language and dance as being the arbitrariness of signified and signifier, discreteness (the steps follow each other as words do), displacement (the possibility of talking about something not immediately present), productivity, duality of patterning, cultural transcription, ambiguity, affectivity, and the possibility of various actors to engage in communication. Some of these elements are also picked up by Bannermann (2014) in “Is Dance a Language? Movement, Meaning and Communication”. Here she postulates that although language and dance cannot be said to equal each other, they do resemble each other in their structure, based on vocabulary and syntax. As Hannah, she underlines the ability of dance to refer to objects and situations not present, for example by using flashbacks and flash-forwards. She also mentions the importance of tone in both media, the possibility to present speech-acts, something already underlined by Defrantz (2004), and the ability to reflect on itself, being metakinetic as much as language is metalingual. To be sure, the example she gives for this point is more related to intertextuality, although performances reflecting on dance’s ontology and modes of signification are not lacking.

While dance’s ability to communicate is shown by the examples above, equating dance and language presents various problems. First of all, as Kress discusses (2010, 2018), language is too

²⁷ From the Sanskrit kata, story, or katakar, storyteller.

vague a term and refers to two different modes of actualization, namely speech and writing. Second, forcing categories related to writing, such as vocabulary, grammar, and syntax onto the medium of dance reveals a logocentric attitude towards texts that flattens out their specific affordances. Third, their conclusions cannot be generalised to all forms of dance, and it is noteworthy that some choreographers, among which Merce Cunningham and Yvonne Reiner, refused to equate their dance with language and eschewed narrative. Instead of equating dance and language *tout court*, it could be more productive to talk about dance's potential to carry out narrative as a transmedial element, a "basic semiotic macro mode" (Wolf, 2017b: 257). Given human's propensity to narrativize and following Wolf's model of narremes (prototypical features of narrative), we can argue that theatrical dance - through the body's movements and gestures, spatial setting, lighting, props, integration of words, music and costumes - can display core-narremes (i.e., representationality, experienxiality, meaningfulness) as well as content and syntactic narremes (i.e., anthropomorphic characters, spatial and temporal setting, actions and events, causality and chronology) (Wolf, 2017b). Whether and to what extent one wants to tap onto this potential is a choice of choreographers and dancers. Still, the similarities and difference existing between the two media suggest the possibility to translate from one to the other, and not necessarily to translate a story: as acclaimed choreographer Wayne McGregor (2019) says in the Sky Arte TV series *Perché Balliamo* about his work *Tree of Codes* (2015), when translating a book (or, to use his words, a "paperly choreographic object") one can take a word and represent the images this evokes in their mind, or think about its sounds and transform them into acoustic images.

The process of translation from text to choreography, overlooked by the above literature of dance as language, is advocated for by Bennett (2008a), who looks at the semiotic codes that could be used by choreographers when setting a story into dance performance. According to her, "the fact

that dance events have been so frequently conceived on the back of literary works in western culture indicates that some level of semanticization of movement is not only possible but also widely recognised” (2008: 57). Basing her inquiry mostly on the choreographer Doris Humphrey’s theorisations, she analyses the importance of space, design, direction of movements, rhythm, patterns of tension and release, conventional gestures and pantomime, costumes, lighting, set, and finally movement quality, whose factors she derives from Laban. Besides, she rightfully spots how the repetition of a choreography makes room for its subversion, furthering or elaboration, throwing the original into an endless movement of possible rewritings, all interpreted against the grid provided by its genre and cultural context. Her conclusion is that choreographies are “hubs of semiotic activity, inter and extratextual ramifications stretching in all directions” (66). Dance communicates because humans are meaning-seeking, meaning-making animals. Be it a story, some emotions, a societal organization, or a programmatic discourse as in postmodern dance; even when it refuses to communicate, theatrical dance communicates this refusal. And sometimes, the way to do so is through literature and therefore it comes across and along the verbal text. The different types of intermedial encounters between the two are the focus of the next section.

Dance and Literature

*“L’art devient alors pure instance relationnelle,
un pas de deux où, du vertige à la folie, du soi à l’autre que soi,
on interroge l’intime et on cherche la sortie”
(Munzilli, 2017 loc. 2068)²⁸.*

In their introduction to a special issue dedicated to dance and literature, Brooks and Meglin try to trace the various ways in which these media have intersected throughout history, starting from two assumption: a) both are placed in time and communicate a sense of temporality and b) both imagine

²⁸ Art becomes, then, a pure relational instance, a duet where, from vertigo to madness, from the self to the other, one interrogates the intimate and looks for a way out (my translation).

“being a body oriented and moving in space” (2016: 1). According to them, “seeing text and choreography as deeply illuminative of each other holds profound implications for widening the circles of disciplinary fields” (2). They list as examples the use of literature in western concert dance and in Kathakali, the employment of lyrics in tango, and the compilation of treatises on dance such as Thoinot Arbeau’s *Orchesiographie* (1589) and Fabritio Caroso’s *Il Ballarino* (1581) and *Nobiltà di Dama* (1600), which reveal how dance was preserved through written texts. They also mention a number of poets working as dance critics, among which Théophile Gautier, Stéphane Mallarmé, T. S. Eliot, Gertrude Stein, Jack Anderson, and authors who did not write about dance but alluded to it in their writings, such as Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and others who used the choreographic structures of social dance as narrative techniques for their novels (2016). One cannot forget how pioneering female choreographers turned to literature at the turn of the century, probably as a way to accrue symbolic power from the male-dominated field of literature and gain the respect they would have otherwise been denied. Dance scholars too, in their effort to make dance practice, theory, and history the subjects of a respected academic field, have considered dance as a text revealing of the ideological conventions determining what bodies could signify and have resorted to terms derived from literary criticism to describe dances. Brooks and Meglin conclude that “if we accept meanings, ambiguity, multiplicity and indeterminacy equally in writing and dancing, then we can believe in the capacity of texts to poetically encrypt dance and further, in dance’s embodiment of a poetic language of its own” (2016: 7), naming these two processes respectively *textual choreography*²⁹ and *embodied text*.

A similar undertaking is carried out by Marcsek-Fuchs (2015b) in a chapter that examines the relationship between dance and literature through intermedial lens. She proposes the terms

²⁹ This term is borrowed from Sarah Davies Cordova, 1999.

literalised dance (corresponding to Brooks' and Meglin's *textual choreography*), intermedial transposition (*embodied text*) and plurimediality. The first, falling in Wolf's and Rajewsky's category of intermedial reference, is exemplified by Edith Sitwell's poem *Fox Trot*, where the steps of fox-trot are evoked by the disposition of words. The second is represented by Limon's *Le Moor's Pavane* (1949), a transposition of Shakespeare's *Othello*. The third instance, plurimediality, is defined as "whenever two or more media are overtly present in a given semiotic entity at least in one instance" (Wolf, 2005: 254). She illustrates this by providing an analysis of Oscar Wilde's dance of Salomé as the intermedial gap in a play that draws on intermedial sources, evokes dance in the form of text by incessantly naming and alluding to it, and eventually presents it as the missing text, the erased voice of Salomé, speaking through a solo that is not described (2015b).

The term text, employed by both scholars, is not specific enough, especially if we take as our point of departure Kress' social semiotic theory of language, for whom equating text with writing would be a mistake. Therefore, I propose to rename such categories: *plurimedial dance*, *choreographed writing*, and *dancing writing*.

Plurimedial dance

In 1995, Ellen Goellner and Jacqueline Murphy trace a history of the emergence of the body in academia and link the belated interest in the relationship between dance and literature to a logocentric stance which has long casted dance into the realm of the non-intellectual, despite it being related to a plethora of emerging concepts like "gender, bodies, fluidity, performance, sexuality, popular culture and multiculturalism" (1995: ix). Their edited book seeks to cover this gap by collecting essays dealing with dance *as* text, reading choreographies for their political and theoretical issues, dance *in* texts (representations of dance in literature) and even dance as a vehicle

for theorising writing. Following this first intermedial plunge is an article by Laurence Louppe that looks at the development of pace in 20th century literature in connection with the use of breath in dance, considering how Trisha Brown used breath to translate pace and simultaneously how spoken and written languages erupted into dance performance, where they substituted music, in fact stretching its definition. Such meetings of media create for the dance scholar

Un « champ élargi » du soi et de l'autre [...] Ainsi, en ce (bref) parcours binaire où nous avons suivi les rapports entre danse et texte, est apparu un troisième terme, fait de leur intervalle, un corps interstitiel sans territoire précis, une géographie du transitoire, une simple zone d'échange qui s'active, se consume, et se transforme sans cesse (1998: 99)³⁰.

It is exactly this interval that Jones explores in “Diaghilev and British Writing” (2009). She focuses on the influence of the Russian dance company *Les Ballets Russes* on English modernism and on their role as cultural mediators. Jones highlights how some features of modernism—primitivism, movement, speed, and the unsayable—are also present in the style of the dance company, which might have inspired modernist writers. Besides, the company *Les Ballets Russes* worked as cultural mediators as it offered a space of encounter, promoting the collaboration of influential writers, visual artists, musicians, and choreographers—at the same time contributing to the formation of the idea of Russianness in England³¹. Drawing on Apter (2006), one could talk about *Le Ballets Russes* as a ‘mobile translation zone’ where new ideas and aesthetic proposals were tested and circulated in different media, leading to the various innovations characterising modernist art. A translation zone is also at the very base of tango, whose literary components are analysed by Manuel Guerrero Cabrera (2012). He contends that in its early years, the lyrics of tango belonged

³⁰ “An ‘extended field’ of the self and the other. Thus, in this short return journey where we followed the relationship between dance and text, a third term appeared, made of their interval, an interstitial body without a specific territory, a geography of transmission, a simple area of exchange that activates, consumes, and constantly transforms itself” (my translation).

³¹ See also: Beasley, Rebecca and Bullock Philip Ross, 2013, *Russia in Britain, 1880-1940: from Melodrama to Modernism*, and especially Ramsey Burt’s essay “Modernism, Russianness and the British Reception of the *Sacre*” (2013).

to popular rather than intellectual poetry and rescues the various parodies of poets like Greco and Flores, rewritten in the form of “burlesque travesty” (Genette, 1997b). This allows Cabrera to demonstrate the relationship between tango and literature as well as the way tango used poems to resist and mock highbrow culture (2012).

The last collection of essays to be analysed here was published in 2017 in Paris and departs from the realisation that contemporary dance is more and more reliant on philosophical, personal, pedagogical, dramatic, autobiographical, and lyrical texts as its point of departure, questioning, in so doing, the very definition of literature and participating in the rethinking of an aesthetic of text in which visual and performing arts take pride of place. In the belief that “le corps parle, le corps a ses histoires, ses poèmes, ses obscurités” (Nachtergaele, 2017, loc. 103) ³², Nachtergaele and the authors in the collection try to answer two questions: how to understand contemporary dance on the basis of written texts? And secondly, is it possible to understand literature starting from dance? Although none of the articles address translation as a useful concept to do so, interesting issues and proposals are raised. For example, Lucille Toth (2017) distinguishes three categories of speech-delivery in dance. The first is the speaking dancer, who foregrounds breath and the body’s musicality. The second is represented by the moving dancer set against the speaking narrator, as in Angelin Preljočaj *Ce Que J’Appelle Oubli*, which departs from a book by Mauvignier (2009) recounting an episode of police violence to develop a monologue that is simultaneously read and danced on scene. Lastly the absence of text, whereby a text is translated for the stage, as in Chouinard’s *Mouvements*, based on Henri Michaux’s book, of which she says “j’ai voulu que le livre soit fidèlement incarné sur scène, dans tout ses aspect formels, de la page de couverture jusqu’a

³² “The body speaks, the body has got its histories, its poems, its shadows” (my translation).

le dernière page” (2017, loc. 212) ³³. There follows a discussion of Linyekula’s postcolonial adaptations of western classics that re-contextualise and appropriates European literature (Maccotta, 2017)³⁴, which implies a change of discourse and recalls the anthropophagic movement in translation led by Oswald de Andrade and Haroldo de Campos (de Campos, 1992; Gentzler, 2016).

All the articles and essays described so far situate themselves at the meeting point of literary and performative worlds and offer different perspectives on how text and performance work together, mirroring, countering, and at times borrowing from each other. The next section will spotlight a particular type of this relationship, that is, when the written text looks to dance for its structure, translating stage to page.

Choreographed Writing

After Goellener’s and Murphy’s book (1995), one of the first accounts of choreographed writing is provided by Neumann and Dizengremel in 1998. In an article appearing in the edition “La Littérature et la Danse” of the journal *Littérature*, they look at dance as a metaphor and structural trope of *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (Goethe, 1779). If Roland Barthes recovers the corporeal dimension of writing and the presence of the body in literary discourse, according to the authors this cultural history of the body cannot but start with Goethe, who structures his novel around Waltz. In line with Foster (1996), they highlight how dance in the 18th century was a corporeal code and model for behaviour: a ritual that made possible cohabitation and the domestication of one’s body, providing the tools for developing a system of mutual recognition, which will be

³³ I wanted the book to be faithfully embodied on stage, in all its formal aspects, from the cover page to the very last page” (my translation). This is an example of what I later call intermedial translation.

³⁴ A similarly illuminating essay on Linyekula’s *La Création du Monde* as a critical pastiche can be found in Kōpping, Klaus-Peter, *Performing “Africa”* (2017).

borrowed and exposed by writers like Mallarmé, Valéry, Austen, and Franz Kafka. In Goethe, for example, the clash between the highly codified genre of Waltz and traditional social dances marks the point of conflict in a culture that has renounced the body: dance comes to symbolise an utopic social order and simultaneously its anarchic subversion (Neumann and Diezengreme, 1998). In Austin's *Pride and Prejudice*, read by the penetrating eye of Azar Nafisi (2003), social dance provides the pattern to a novel that moves in parallel, contrapuntal directions, apposing settings, characters, and events. All the main characters are introduced during the first dance, after which Darcy and Elisabeth move towards and away from each other in backward and forward movements that mirror the rhythm of dance, causing them to reassess continuously their position and adapt it to the partner's, in a give and take that is at the basis of democratic and equal relationships (2003).

These singular case studies are inserted into a wider panorama by Sarah Davies Cordova in her *Textual Choreographies in the 19th Century Novel* (1999), a monograph exploring how novels show the choreographic impulses of their times and how the movements of the dancing bodies seem to scaffold the novels' structures. Of particular insight are her analyses of women's writing, like Germaine de Stael's *Dalphine* (1802) and *Corinne* (1807), where dance stands for the female first person voice. However, the dances are reported and therefore filtered by men, in a pattern that mirrors the female-dancer/male-critic roles of the time. The contribution of women writers is further highlighted by demonstrating that the characters and narrative structures of these novels anticipate those of romantic ballet, as Corinne's traits can be glimpsed in *La Sylphide* (1832).

Applying an intermedial methodology, Maria Marcsek-Fuchs investigates similar issues in her book *Dance and British Literature: an Intermedial Encounter*, asking "what happens, when dance and literature meet; when movement is integrated into the literary world or even replaces verbal communication?" (2015b, back cover). The answers come from writings spanning from

Shakespeare to Yeats, dance manuals, periodicals, writers' personal notes, accounts of exotic dances and dance histories. She aims to show that a dance perspective can help place written texts in their social and cultural milieu and that dancing bodies of the 19th century continued to live in texts. Stage and social dances are investigated alike, as we know that their boundaries were porous and often overlapped (2015b). Her conclusion, and the conclusion of this section, is that dance can and has been used to choreograph writing, enrich it with historical context, and formulate a commentary on social and cultural issues through a medium able to represent personal stances and worldviews because of its simultaneous ambiguity and rootedness in concrete, corporeal reality.

Dancing Writing

As writers have looked to dance for the structure of their works, choreographers have long looked to literature for inspiration, producing what Brooks and Meglin call *embodied texts* and Macsek-Fuchs *intermedial transposition*. These are only some of the names—the variety and characteristics of which I will address in the next chapter—associated to the phenomenon I would rather call intermedial translation. In this section, I discuss the literature that deals with it without recurring to the term translation or adaptation. Indeed, departing from different disciplinary areas, scholars of dance studies and literature have presented these pieces as instances of literary criticism, intertextuality, or narrative dance.

One of the first to provide a theoretical framework to the study of dance in its relation to literature and the other arts is Lansdale, who adopts an intertextual perspective in *Decentering Dancing Texts* (2008). Grounding their work in poststructuralism, the contributors of her edited volume follow Barthes in seeing text as discourse rather than object and insist on opening it to multiple perspectives and situating it in its context, recovering the various intertextual and hypertextual relations in the performances they analyse. While not all the essays focus on intermedial

translations into dance, Gianandrea Poesio (2008) offers an insightful analysis of the use of literature in Mats Ek's revisionist ballets, a term first used in 1982 to indicate rewritings of canonical ballet that question this form of dance and its underlying values. Starting in the 1960s and becoming popular in the 1970s, these ballets stay close to the libretto but insert some humour or offer personal readings. Ek, for example, offers interpretations of fairy tales, looking at issues of motherhood and class in *Giselle*, presenting a Freudian reading of *Swan Lake* or a drug addict Aurora whose 100 years sleep is induced by heroin. According to Poesio, this first incursion and revolution of canonical ballet narrative by Ek is followed by Maguy Marin's *Cinderella* (1985) and *Coppelia* (1993), Morris' *The Hard Nut* (1991), and Bourne's *Nutcracker!* (1993). I would add to this list Bourne's *Swan Lake* (2012), Preljocaj's *Snow White* (2008) and *Romeo and Juliet* (2015), and we must not forget *Les Ballet Trokadero de Monte Carlo*, with their rewriting and parody of male and female roles in ballet. At the basis of all these efforts is a need to reconsider cultural dogmas, reappraise cultural heritage and explore powerful archetypes which can be paralleled in the visual arts by Banksy's revisionist works of Vincent Van Gogh, Leonardo da Vinci, or Claude Monet (Poesio, 2008) and in literature by Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2005), Miller's *The Song of Achilles* (2011) or Barker's *The Silence of the Girls* (2018). The rediscovery of Perrault's fairy tales and their employment in ballet is to be credited to Jean Dauberval with *La Fille Mal Gardée* (1789). Marinella Cipriani (2004) associates fairy tales with the fantastic, backbone of the romantic ballet. Deriving from the *Merveilleux* and popularised in the 1820s, this genre is based on the introduction of an unexplainable event in the fabric of the real that "introduce una falla nella coerenza del mondo conosciuto" (2004: 164)³⁵.

³⁵ "Causes a breach in the coherence of the known world" (my translation).

When not focusing on fairy tales or genre dance, the attention of scholars has gone to intermedial translations of classics of world literature, with Shakespeare occupying pride of place among them. As explorations of the Shakespearean world went deeper and wider, they opened the door to analyses of film adaptations and rewritings in all kinds of media, dance being among them. In a literature review on Shakespeare and dance published by McCulloch in 2016, the author only mentions Brissenden's 1982 book *Shakespeare and the Dance* and the manual *The Dances of Shakespeare: A Manual for Practitioners* (2005) as forerunners of the *Oxford Handbook of Shakespeare and Dance* (McCulloch and Shaw, 2019). She points towards two lines of research in the area, namely, *Shakespeare in Dance*, dealing with the reconstruction of dances in Shakespeare's plays and *Shakespeare as Dance*, referring to dance translations of Shakespearean plays. She suggests that the former line be inquired through literary and historical approaches and that the latter be framed within performance and dance studies, while both areas should welcome translation and adaptation studies perspectives. Indeed, she goes on to claim that an understanding of "how choreographers translate text into dance is sorely needed" (McCulloch, 2016: 75). However, her inconsistent use of the terms 'adaptation', 'reinterpretation' and 'translation' throughout the article points to a need for clarifying one's position and contextualising it.

A list of dance translations of *Hamlet* (1600-1601), *Twelfth Night* (1601-1602) and *The Tempest* (1611) is offered by Susan Jones (2019) in a chapter of McCulloch's abovementioned volume. Jones focuses on *Hamlet* by Helpman Robert (1942), Limon's *The Moor's Pavane* (1949) and Limon's and Kooner's *The Barren Sceptre* (1960) (all based on *Macbeth*) to explore the psychoanalytic turn in modernism. Finally, an overlooked article by Brissenden, "Shakespeare and Dance: Dissolving Boundaries" (2011), provides a detailed overview of dance works based on

Shakespeare, mentioning the existence of more than 130 danced versions, several *pas de deux* of *Romeo and Juliet* and five versions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1605).

The sheer amount of visual and literary artworks that have been presented through choreographic lens makes even more striking the contrast with its scarce theorization and its late entry in academic discussion. It is an invitation to examine individual case-studies as well as to devise a theoretical and analytical framework to better approach them. In the belief that this framework could be found in (intermedial) translation studies, I would like to delve into the existing literature on translation and dance in order to delineate a state of the arts and trace some of the possible ramifications of the area that I would like to call 'dance translation'.

Dance and Translation

*“When the gym is so full of bodies I can't see the instructor,
I copy the woman in front of me, and the woman behind me copies me in turn.
In this way we share the movements around.
We get to dance them—the pleasure of actually getting to dance them!
Someone else's moves, only this time made with my own body—
Falling in and out of synch with each other, with the music, with hip-hop, tango ballet.”
(Briggs, 2017: 212)*

Dance as Cultural Translation

While most of the literature on dance and translation has been published in the last ten years, it is possible to trace a line that reaches as far back as 1987, when Joan Erdman published an article entitled *Performance as Translation*. The article focuses on the Indian choreographer Uday Shankar, who in the 1930s “translated Indian dance into productions that were on the one hand authentic and on the other hand accessible to western audiences” (1987: 64). Although some choreographers, like Ruth St. Denis, Anna Pavlova (Erdman, 1987) and Mata Hari (Brandstetter, 2015b), had already employed oriental themes in their dances, the technique, rhythm, and

movements of Indian classical dance were not yet accessible to the western public. Assuming that performance production is a form of language, Erdman poses a wealth of questions that are haunting both scholars' and choreographers' minds to this day:

Is it possible to translate a whole performance and leave pieces intact, as a literary translator uses key indigenous terms with glosses to enlighten the reader? Can certain terms of movement which have already entered the second language be used to convey ideas in the first? If movement is the primary language of dancers, and sound in time the primary language of musicians, can these be translated only for other dancers and musicians or is it possible to translate for wider audiences in another culture? [...] How can performance be translated? The first question is: what is the text being translated? Is it a single original text—one version of many? Is it a combination of all available texts? Must an oral text be written down before it can be translated? Is the translation based on a particular selection of texts, chosen because of their authenticity, availability, or appropriateness to the intended audience? What is the difference between an interpretation, a transliteration, and a translation? Is it merely a question of selecting the performers and program in its indigenous setting and transporting these to the west to be put on stage? If a performance is an oral/visual text, how can its kinaesthetic qualities be translated? Are gestures understood across arts traditions or cultures? Do duration and tempo and timing keep the same conventions and significances in different cultural contexts? Is the narrative sense—the path of a story or melody or movement—identical from culture to culture? How can an audience, unfamiliar with the culture from which a performance comes, understand and appreciate its production? To what extent is a performance planned for a particular kind of audience? What determinations to include or exclude parts of the program can be made on the basis of the potential viewers? What must be translated in a glossary, a program note, a footnote? (67).

The major issues for Shankar, formed in the West, were fulfilling the audience expectations of Indian authenticity (based on people's constructed imaginary of India) and discovering for himself what Indian dance was. The negotiation between the two languages and cultures was made more difficult by the different understanding of narrative sense (linear and developing into a climax in the west; cyclical in the east), temporality, and the different meanings attached to colour and line, male and female, symmetry and opposition, motion and stillness. Shankar solved these issues by offering short thematic dances with a universal theme that could be explained by the title, and by appealing to the public's romanticised idea of the East by fulfilling their expectations of spirituality and exoticism, blending these with Indian costumes, movements, and music. The result was an in-between language that fused elements of Indian dances with those of western production.

This line of enquiry might be termed ‘dance as cultural translation’. It has found resonance in the work of Gabriele Klein and Ramsey Burt, who approach the subject of postcolonial dance as a form of cultural translation. For Klein (2019), cultural translation is always simultaneously situational (that is, performatively generated and ephemeral) and situated (embedded in a certain context and framed). She considers the work of Robin Orlin as embodying translation in many ways: the negotiation of topics from South Africa for a European public; the translation happening offstage between the company members; the onstage translation generated by the co-presence of several media, and finally the translation of audience perception into data in what she calls academic translation. Klein argues for the importance of audience perception in the analysis of performance and uses interviews and logs written by the spectators to decipher the dance piece according to recurring themes in their writing. It must be noted, however, that this does not seem to be sufficient as it requires the additional knowledge of the scholar (here Klein) who alerts us of the relevance of music in shaping a critique of coloniality, and who appears to complement and correct the questionnaires, thus starting from and ultimately confirming her own reading of the performance. Ramsay Burt instead (2019), looks at Katherine Dunham’s and Berto Pasuka’s dance pieces from the 1930s and 40s as examples of cultural translation. Like Erdmann, he notices that their production was bound by the norms and habits of western theatrical dance, and that as they negotiated between different conventions for the use of stage, costumes, time, and lighting, they also had to consider the audience’s idea of ‘authentic’ Africa (as ‘authentic’ was the India portrayed by Shankar). This time though, not only the choreographers are aware of it, but Pasuka implicitly critiques it, ironically showing its spectators that he knows what they think. Moreover, rather than only accommodating western taste, they cannibalise western imports “to celebrate the beauty and

power of African diasporic form” (Burt, 2019: 188) and turn them against the colonizer, in an effort reminiscent of Brazilian translators’ *manifesto antropófago* (de Andrade, 1928).

Intramedial Translation from Dance to Dance

Socio-political situations are also reflected in the three works analysed by Bennett in her penetrating article “Words into Movement: Ballet as Intersemiotic Translation” (2007). She studies three different ballet versions of *Romeo and Juliet*: one choreographed by Lavroksy in 1940 for the Kirov Company, one by MacMillan for the Royal Ballet in 1965 and one by Nureyev, made in 1977 for the London Festival Ballet and later modified for the Paris Opera in 1984. Through the analysis of ideology, poetics, universe of discourse, code, and relation to the original (Lefevere, 1985), she shows the co-dependence of choreography, text, and music score as well as the impact of the socio-political situation on the kind of narrative developed by the ballets. Thus, Lavroksy’s version adheres to the norms of Social Realism, dividing the characters into two clearly distinguished groups representing the forces of good and evil. On the contrary, Macmillan’s version is more dictated by economic forces and purports to attract crowds by putting on stage ballet stars like Rudolf Nureyev and Margot Fonteyn, while confirming social norms and fulfilling the public’s expectations of ballet as a form of diversion. The social norms sustained by Macmillan are instead questioned by Nureyev in his own version, which foregrounds a homosexual reading and hints at the spread of HIV as a societal problem. Despite her insightful application of Lefevere’s framework to the reading of the ballets, Bennett leaves the reader with little information about the actual code of ballet used in the three representations of *Romeo and Juliet*, and only draws on Jakobson (1959) to justify considering ballet as an example of intersemiotic translation.

Another foundational article for my PhD thesis is Tsiakalou’s “Dancing Through the Waves of Feminism” (2018). The author combines feminist translation studies with dance study in an

exploration of feminist rewritings of *Le Sacre Du Printemps* (Nijinsky, 1915) by Martha Graham and Marie Chouinard. Demonstrating how the choreographer's interpretations are a site of ideological intervention, she places Graham's version within the second wave of feminism, equating it to a *réécriture au féminine* that, taking inspiration from Canadian feminist translators, writes the story from the point of view of women. Chouinard's version is instead more in keeping with the precepts of third wave feminism as it embraces a fluid conceptualization of sexuality and gender, inverting this phallogentric myth by dissolving the narrative, using dildos on stage, and replacing the single victim with a crowd dance where men and women share movement vocabulary regardless of their gender.

These two articles show the relevance of TS' analytical framework and theory for dances that rewrite previous artworks. While Lefevere's system of constraints can be used to compare translations in terms of their ideological and socioeconomic embeddedness, their adherence or not to the prevalent contemporary aesthetic, their relation to other works and realities through intertextual references and their distinct codes, the feminist approaches used by Tsiakalou open the door for activist intervention, offering an array of translation techniques that might be used in feminist translation, be it written or danced. At the same time, they both focus on a comparison of what we could call the target texts, intramedial translations of dance into dance that leave out the first passage, the intermedial translation from one medium to another (i.e., the translation of Stravinsky's score into dance by Nijinsky, addressed in the following sub-section).

Dance as Intermedial Translation

Whether this intermedial transposition is possible or not is asked by Smith (2003), who dismisses the possibility of dance signifying in the same way as words. Indeed, she repeatedly stresses how ballet can only take inspiration from a text and adds: "In *Romeo and Juliet* for example, the lovers

meet, woo, wed and die, but there is no scene in which Juliet dances 'Gallop apace ye fiery footed steeds...', nor does Romeo defy the stars with a *ronde de jambe*." (2003: 34). Surely, we must keep in mind that semiotic, spatiotemporal, sensorial, and material differences between media account for the fact that each of them will have a specific way of communicating. In any case, Smith's sentence is actually proved wrong by Jones (2013), who shows how certain phrases of ballet vocabulary have been successfully used to signify the actual words of the source text. An example is Massine's use of "literal movement suggested figuratively by image schema metaphors" (Jones, 2013: 196), which in *Usher* (1955) makes the dancer represent 'fall back' 'reined to' or 'gazed down' through the physical embodiment of these metaphoric verbs, reproducing the exact same chain of words. In this respect, it is interesting to quote Lakoff's and Johnson's *Philosophy in the Flesh* (1999) and Johnson's *The Meaning of the Body* (2007), which show through the use of convincing examples that many of our abstract concepts and the way language refers to them is based on metaphors stemming from physical experience based on movement and space. We then unconsciously use these primary metaphors to conceptualize and describe abstract concepts. What Massine does therefore is to go back to this first physical stage of knowledge (Jones, 2013) and use movements instead of words to express it.

However, it must be noted that at the time of Smith's article (2003), research in dance as the translation of written text was minimal, as it still was in 2013 when Schmid wrote "Proust at the Ballet: Literature and Dance in Dialogue". The author tries to fill this gap in contemporary scholarship by discussing Petit's *Proust ou les Intermittences du Coeur* (1974) as an adaptation or translation of *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* that

by lifting the novel out of its original, verbal medium [...] throws into sharp relief aspects of *À la Recherche* that transcend the purely verbal—the attention to gestures and body language, the kinaesthetic vision, the role of the body as a channel for emotions and memory—while at the same

time giving form to Proust's aspiration to create a total work of art where different artistic forms mutually enrich one another (2013: 185).

Her conclusion is that the ballet works as a kind of literary criticism by allowing the choreographer to focus on issues of desire and affect and highlight aspects of the novel otherwise overlooked like homosexual and gender relations.

Vaguer in terms of how the intermedial translation is carried out is Ledbetter's "Translation into Dance: Adaptation and Translational Hellenism in Balanchine Apollo" (2019). The co-presence of the terms 'translation' and 'adaptation' in the title reflects the arbitrary use of the words 'translation', 'adaptation', 'remediation' and 'translational Hellenism' in her paper, which indeed does not address any specific translation theory or technique employed by Balanchine—with the exception of some quotations from Hutcheon's seminal work *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006). Ledbetter re-evaluates the role of the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* among the many sources of the ballet already identified. These are paintings, sculptures, literary sources, modernism, and ancient Greek sources that make us think that the ballet, more than only adapting the *Hymn to Apollo*, adopts a translational aesthetic that aims to combine various inputs. What is interesting in this article is the author's suggestion that the meaning and associations elicited by the ballet change with the location where it is performed, alerting the reader to the role of paratext³⁶ in deciphering dances.

Helen Julia Minors (2020) instead opens the door to the study of intermedial translations which do not depart from the written text. Coming from the field of choreomusicology, she asks how the concept of translation might be helpful to understand how meaning is transferred across these

³⁶ My understanding of paratext follows from Genette's definition as "every type of introductory (preludial or postludial) text, authorial or allographic, consisting of a discourse produced on the subject of the text that follows or precedes it" (1997: 161) and includes the setting of the performance as a framing mechanism that influences our understanding of it by functioning "as precondition for interpretation" (Wolf, 2006: 5).

media, “to question the choices of the creative collaborators, to chart the development of the field, and to find ways to analyse audiovisual works” (2020: 165). She charts three lines of choreo-musical translation, namely sensory, language, and cultural. While her case-studies are interesting, the typology of sensory, language, and cultural translation (presented as autonomous from each other, as she does) does not seem to best represent the translations occurring between music and dance. This is because language is too vague a category, and when understood in its multimodal nature it becomes difficult to disentangle it from its sensorial and cultural components.

The last two texts addressed in this state of the arts are the only two book-length investigations of intermedial translation into dance or verbatim theatre. The first is Daniella de Aguiar’s doctoral theses, defended in 2013. Using as a theoretical basis the concepts of intersemiotic translation and transcreation proposed respectively by Jakobson (1959) and Haroldo de Campos (1992), as well as Pierce’s semiotic triangle, she analyses four dance renditions of Gertrude Stein’s oeuvre, two of which produced in Brazil (*5 sobre o mesmo* and *[dez episódios sobre a prosa topovisual de Gertude Stein]*) and two in Europe (*Shutters Shut* by the Netherlands Dance Theatre and *Always Now Slowly* by Lars Dahl Pedersen). Through a detailed analysis of movements, music, scenic space, lighting, and graphic material functioning as paratext, she shows that in the case of creative translation the choreographer/translator is more interested in working with fragments than with a complete text, producing intensive rather than extensive translations. This kind of critical and creative reading can then represent a “laboratório de experimentação envolvendo novo tratamento de materiais e métodos conhecidos” (2013: 182)³⁷. This calls to mind the abovementioned experimentations with music and dance translation of watercolours carried out by Kandinskij, Sacharoff, and de Hartmann as well as the collaboration between Kandinskij and Gret Palucca.

³⁷ “Laboratory of experimentation, involving new treatment of known materials and methods” (my translation).

Focusing as it does on formal aspects, Aguiar's thesis does not look into the relevance of the context of production of the translations, something that could be done by considering Lefevere's constraints of translations.

The second text, published by McCormack in 2018, is a well-exposed study of the relation of verbatim theatre to choreography in the production of the British company DV8, approached through the lens of TS. The main theoretical bases are Tymoczko's call for the adoption of a cluster concept of translation that would broaden the set of practices considered within its disciplinary boundaries (2007) and Bakhtin's dialogism, a perspective that has influenced much of the work done in Adaptation Studies (Hutcheon, 2006; Stam, 1989, 2005a, 2005b) as much as Lansdale's approach to dance (2008). According to McCormack, adopting this perspective may help practitioners and scholars alike to experiment with the choreographic and challenge the illusion of objectivity and fidelity typically associated with verbatim theatre. In approaching the contribution of dance to verbatim theatre, she highlights how the former can stand in a relation of subversion, enhancement, or parody to the spoken text, thus dispelling any illusion of neutrality and objectivity. The co-presence of media generates a bilingual text that demands the viewer to enter into an active semantic process and shows multiple perspectives being simultaneously present, making evident the instability of translation, and demonstrating the usefulness of TS to understand choreographic processes.

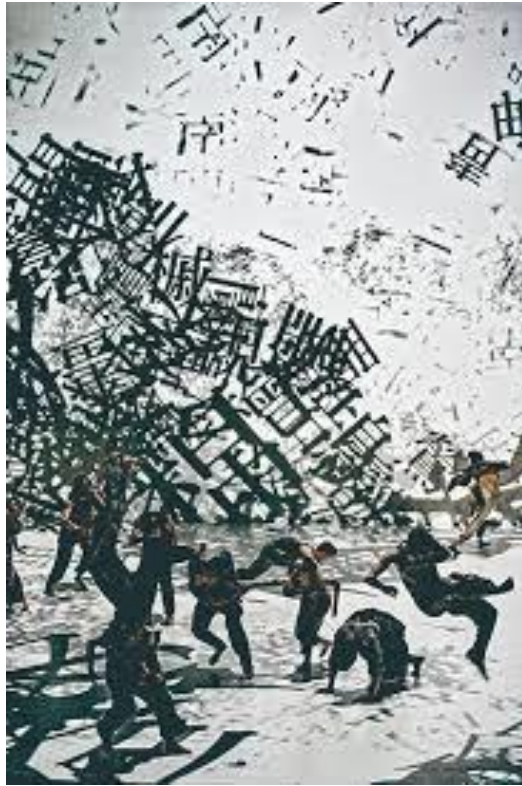
Transition

This chapter looked at scholarly interest in different manifestations of intermedial parlance between dance, writing, and the visual arts. Various lines of enquiry were indicated, and several terms emerged, among which translational aesthetic, cultural, intersemiotic, intramedial, and intermedial translation, adaptation, transposition, and literary criticism. The dialogue here created

between these texts shows an increasing concern with dance translation and simultaneously a lack of consensus around definitions and methodologies, as well as little knowledge of each other's works across linguistic or disciplinary boundaries. However, all these scholars agree on a number of observations: that the interplay of dance, literature, and the visual arts can lead to innovations and redefinitions of media boundaries; that translating into dance foregrounds subjective engagement with the source artwork and fosters creativity and critical intervention; that the study of this interplay is still moving its first steps and needs further theorization. Taking the contributions presented in this literature review on dance as translation as demonstrating the value of applying a translational framework to the understanding of derivative dances and their choreographic processes, I turn the question upside down, and alongside asking how is translation (as a series of strategies but also as a concept) present in choreographies based on other artworks, I ask: how can the metaphor of dance help us theorise translation? Can translation be conceptualised through the implicative complex of dance, that is, through the notions of creativity, ephemerality, and embodiment? If we posited the existence of a scholarly field called dance translation, on what ground could it stand, and along which directions could it move?

TROIS COUPS

What's in a Name?



FORMOSA from Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan - YouTube

“Only this time in my own language, only this time myself”. We watched and waited. In the park, in the office, at the airport, in the dance studio, in our bedroom, on the street. Practicing sustained watching, reading, listening, imagining. We watched and waited, and now we start moving. Only this time, with our own body. Only this time, ourselves.

*O', Be Some Other Name!*³⁸

Translation? Adaptation? Appropriation? Version? Transformation? Supplement? Paraphrase? Parody? Allusion? Intertextuality? [...] Repositioning (1999) reinventing (Taylor, 1990) reimagining (Mardsen, 1995), making fit (Clark, 2000), permutation, reappraisal, rejuvenation, reverberation, transfiguration, transplantation (2003) (Minier, in Krebs, 2013: 15).

Crib, adaptation, paraphrase, version, rewording, rendering, transliteration, bilingual edition, interpretation, dubbing, subtitling, re-texting, localization, pastiche, quotation, edition (Delabastita, 2008: 237).

...And the list could go on, even when limiting oneself to English language examples as is the case here. While some of the abovementioned terms are agreed upon as hyponyms of translation (dubbing, subtitling, localization), others (translation, adaptation, transformation, permutation) may be synonymous and no clear-cut distinction between them is available. As soon as one steps into the terminological field of what I call here translation, it becomes clear that what looked like relatively firm ground from afar is instead quicksand. The mushrooming of terms and definitions accounts for the fact that translation is no easily defined phenomenon. Moreover, it reflects the rather recent impulses to investigate, question, and stretch what feels today like a limiting definition of text and consequently of translation, while the simultaneous invocation and discard of deep-rooted ideas of fidelity and equivalence in the face of ever-changing practices makes it more and more difficult to hold onto steadfast and crystallized definitions. Therefore, the proliferation of names. As Genette puts it, “if there is nothing easier than to introduce a neologism into common practice, there is nothing more difficult than to extirpate from it a set term or acceptance, an ingrown habit” (1997b: 26). However, while every new definition seeks to tell itself apart from the others and reach a degree of autonomy, what seems to change in most cases is only the name. Take for example, the following statement on adaptation by Robert Stam:

The source novel is a situated utterance, produced in one medium and in one historical and social context, and later transformed into another, equally situated utterance, produced in a different context

³⁸Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet*, Act 2, Scene 2.

and relayed through in a different medium. The source text forms a dense informational network, a series of verbal cues, which the adapting text can selectively take up, amplify, subvert or transform (2005: 46).

While implicitly admitting only the written (and within it, only the novel) as a source text in what seems to be a media bias typical of adaptation studies³⁹, Stam's definition could be applied in full to translation. Conversely, Cattrysse contends "we may define translation in the largest sense as migration-through-transformation of discursive elements (signs), a process during which they are interpreted (re-contextualised) according to different norms, codes and models" (1992: 77), which similarly applies to adaptation. Far from selecting, or even reformulating yet another definition of translation or adaptation, my aim here is to stress the difficulty—despite the many attempts—to tell the one from the other, which leads us to wonder whether their dissimilarity does not indeed come from our own positioning and perspective rather than from any inherent difference. Should we answer affirmatively to the question "Intersemiotic Translation, Adaptation, Transposition: Saying Almost the Same Thing?" asked by the title of a conference held in Nicosia in November 2017? Katja Krebs (2012, 2013) and Lawrence Raw (2012) would probably say, yes. While the latter argues in favour of an ecological way of thinking that privileges working together over confrontational and rivalry-driven attitudes among translation and adaptation scholars, the former wishes to combine the two on the grounds that both are creative processes, both are "interdisciplinary by their very nature, both discuss phenomena of constructing cultures through

³⁹ As Leitch puts it "ever since its inception half a century ago, Adaptation Studies has been haunted by concepts and premises it has repudiated in principle but contrived to rely on in practice" (2008: 63). These are for him, literature as the only admitted source text, the page-screen direction as the only viable route and the trope of faithfulness to a superior literary text. Similar criticisms on the page-screen bias of adaptation have been raised, among others, by Minier (2008: 17) and Elleström (2017). While reinstated and defended by some scholars (Cartmell and Weelhan, 1999, Cattrysse, 2014) this bias is challenged by others who wish to open up the discipline to include various media and directions (Hutcheon, 2006; Sanders, 2005; Leitch, 2017).

acts of rewriting and both are concerned with the collaborative nature of such acts and the subsequent critique of notions of authorship” (Krebs, 2013: 3).

In “Status, Origin and Features” (2008), Dirk Delabastita tries to develop a scheme that accounts for various types of translation while still accommodating its western prototype as a transfer from language A to language B that aspires to equivalence. He divides it into three levels: the level of system, that is, what translation *can* be, its theoretical possibilities; the level of norms, concerned with what translation *should* be, which is of course always dependent on culture and history; and the level of performance, accounting for what happens in practice, therefore what translation is in a given moment, what is done with it. The aim of this thesis is to start from the level of performance—the fact that choreographers and dancers usually translate other works as part of their practice—to say something on the level of system—what does this tell us about translation and what can we imagine translation to be if we look at it from this standpoint. However, the level of norms cannot be skipped altogether, since not only do norms usually guide our practice, but they also result in the organization of academic departments and fields of studies and in the boundaries that may separate them. Therefore, in the next paragraphs I will first discuss some key terms that were proposed alongside or in place of translation and their relation to it, in order to delve into an exploration of the ideologies underpinning such distinctions and possibly undo them.

*‘Tis but thy Name that is my Enemy!*⁴⁰

Delabastita’s aim in his paper is to prove that current norms are based on culturally and historically shifting conceptualizations and to show how practice diverges from norms: take for example

⁴⁰ Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet*, Act 2, Scene 2.

pseudotranslations⁴¹, or translations that combine different sources, or even the possibility of leaving out the source text from analysis (Sanders, 2005; Bennett, 2007b). As a consequence, one should be able to focus on the object of study without having to go through ontological definitions or “territorial disputes” (Delabastita, 2008: 245); one could simply do away with such questions as “does this belong to the domain of translation?” Indeed, one could argue that the proliferation of terminology is not only due to the difficulty of finding an inclusive and precise definition, but also to the fact that scholars from different fields have been working on similar issues without always realising they were performing similar tasks. It is only in recent years that this realization has come to the fore, thanks to conferences and publications like the ones mentioned above. For this reason, in this section I will discuss terms indicating (almost) the same thing but developed within different academic traditions. They are adaptation, remediation, ekphrasis, transposition, and transmediation.

Adaptation

In the introduction to the 40 essays composing the *Oxford Handbook of Adaptation Studies* (2017), Leitch sketches a brief history of the field. Its prehistory begins before the invention of cinema in 1895 and goes up to the publication of what is considered the first book on adaptation studies, George Bluestone’s *Novels into Films* (1957)⁴². It comprises critical works by Vachel Lindsay (1915), Virginia Woolf (1927), Sergey Eisenstein (1942, 1949), the Kino debate in Germany in the 1910s and the French *Film d’Art Mouvement* (1925). It intersects with the history of cinema and the vivid discussion on film as a transparent medium and universal language (North, 2005), a

⁴¹ A pseudotranslation is a text that portrays itself as a translation while being a piece of original writing. An example of this is Boris Vian’s *J’irai Cracher sur vos Tombes* (1946), written under the pseudonym of Vernon Sullivan and discussed in chapter 6.

⁴² It must be noted that a thesis called *From Book to Film* had already been submitted at the University of Chicago in 1949 by Lester Asheim.

view that prevailed until the first sound movie, *The Jazz Singer*, came out in 1927. Different media blended and came together in cinema. While photography, understood as “words of light” (Talbot, 1839 in Slater, 1995: 223), is at its basis, it must be noticed that dance precedes it. This is expressed by poets like Valéry and Mallarmé in their equating dance with spatial writing, and even more so by Loïe Fuller’s experiments with light and colour, or by Charlie Chaplin, whose trademark gait incorporates the first position of ballet. Hence it is not surprising that the passage from silent cinema (which communicates through movements, facial expressions and few words projected on the screen) to sound movie happened under the benison of music, invoked by the very title of the first sound movie, *The Jazz Singer*. Yet, the first books and articles on adaptation dealt with the screening of novels and focused on narrative, arriving at the conclusion that media-specific properties of cinema and literature make it impossible to faithfully adapt literature to cinematic images. It seems then that Asheim’s and Bluestone’s works feature adaptation in a twofold manner: it is the content of their discourse, but also the way in which this unfolds, as they adapt methodologies developed in TS where comparison between source and target texts—with an implicit bias towards the authority of the source text—was predominant. Consider the following quotation in Asheim’s article

What happens to novels when they are translated to the screen? What kind of things are lost and gained by those who see the film as a substitute for reading the book? Do the changes fall into discernible patterns which may provide insight into their effect upon audiences? Do the changes affect the material so vitally that our “popular culture” is of a different order of things from the traditional heritage of the “intellectual”? Or are the changes merely form changes which reflect the influence of the medium but do not alter the ultimate message conveyed, the problems presented, or the insights provided? (1951: 289).

Besides the telling use of the word *translation* to describe this phenomenon, Asheim asks the same questions that translation scholars were asking and even uses pivotal concepts in TS such as gain and loss (Bassnett, 1980: 38), norms (Toury, 1995) and equivalence.

An attempt to break free from the accusations of unfaithfulness and its subordination to literature was made by what Leitch calls the ‘Adaptation 2.0 phase’. This phase sees adaptation scholars such as Stam and Raengo (2004, 2005) and Cartmell and Wheelan (1999) adopting the framework of intertextuality and grounding their theory on Bakhtin’s, Genette’s, and Kristieva’s works⁴³. In this phase, popular culture is admitted as a source alongside canonical novels and adaptation is studied in both its directions, including the novelization of films. This opening to a wider range of source and text material as well as the abandonment of prescriptive attitudes in favour of descriptive ones is mirrored in the field of TS by what is called the cultural turn (Hermans, 1985, Bassnett and Lefevere, 1990, 1992) and polysystem theory (Even-Zohar, 1978; Shell-Hornby, 1987). Again, adaptation studies and translation studies seem to proceed hand in hand, and this is true also for the 3.0 phase, marked by the revolution brought about by digital technologies, which according to Lawrence Lessing leads to a *read-write* literacy rather than a *read-only* one (2008). Interaction becomes the catchword and the questioning of what constitutes a text spurs a debate on the ontology of adaptation and on the autonomy of adaptation studies as a discipline (Leitch, 2017).

Unsurprisingly, similar concerns appear in the realm of TS, as recounted in Chapter 1. Once the verbal mode is placed on the same level as other media, the following questions come to the fore: why should translation be limited to the verbal dimension, and “What is (not) Translation?” (Hermans, 2013). As both fields are expanding the range of accepted studies and investigations,

⁴³ In *Descriptive Adaptation Studies*, Cattrysse rightfully criticises this complete reliance upon Kristeva and Bakhtin in Anglo-Saxon studies at the expenses of other Russian formalists like Viktor Shklovsky, Boris Ejxenbaun or Joeri Tinianov, who had formulated similar concepts well before them and asks: “in a field as politicised as the study of arts, should one expect political agendas?” (2014: 151). This comment goes along with the current thorny issue of English as the predominant language in academia, an imposed monolingualism that discriminates against knowledges produced in less spoken and read languages. While this thesis participates in it, as it is written in English in line with many of the sources it cites, I, at least, keep quotations in the original languages and do not transliterate Russian into the Latin alphabet, providing a translation in footnotes.

they come to clash and intersect at the recognition that all along they were dealing with similar practices, as this brief and roughly sketched comparative history of disciplines demonstrated. And why should they not, when the similarities are enough to encourage the application of methods developed under the name Descriptive Translation Studies to the study of adaptations? Indeed, Catrysse (2014) gives the following reasons to justify this move:

- 1) Both deal with end products that are strongly influenced by their context and makers and by the way receivers understood and used them.
- 2) Both processes are irreversible: a back translation is rarely identical to the source.
- 3) In both cases, the reason for their making lies in the target context.
- 4) The problematic notion of equivalence applies to both (if only in popular discourse or because of historical reasons).
- 5) Both can be seen as determined not only by the source text but also by an array of elements that can be either hypo-context or hyper-context based.

On the basis of his defence of the similarities of translation and adaptation one would expect him to take down the disciplinary wall that divides them. However, he raises yet another, insisting on “(film) adaptation studies” and on cinema as the sole focus of it. Despite recognising the different reaches and affordances of each media, this thesis is based on the strong belief that dance intermedial translations could be studied with the same seriousness and on the same ground as those into films. The fact that historically scholars have focused on film (adaptation studies) or written text (translation studies) is not reason enough to exclude other media from being studied; on the contrary, it makes such investigations even more pressing, as they can help us confirm or challenge the validity of claims based on one medium.

Transposition

Another term related to translation and used by a number of intermedial scholars is *transposition*. Used by both Julia Kristeva (1980) and Gérard Genette (1997b) in relation to intertextuality, this term reappears in Hansen Löve (1983), who proposes to create a field of intermedial studies. With slight alterations we find it in Clüver (1989), who talks about intersemiotic transposition, Rajewsky (2005, 2010), who calls it medial transposition, and Wolf (2008, 2015), who uses the term intermedial transposition.

Going back to Genette, in *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (1997b), he individuates five types of textual relationships. These are ‘intertextuality’, which he confines to the co-presence of two texts by way of quotation, allusion or plagiarism, ‘paratextuality’, meaning everything surrounding and materialising the text (acknowledgments, cover page, cover images), ‘metatextuality’, that is, a set of texts commenting on another, ‘architextuality’, or the genre guiding the reader’s expectations, and finally, ‘hypertextuality’: the relation of a text X to Y upon which X is grafted not only as a commentary but as its imitation or transformation. He assumes that every hypertext is also a metatext and that every text is a hypertext of another, following Kristeva’s insight that every writing is a rewriting of other texts (1991). What distinguishes intertextuality and hypertextuality is the fact that in intertextuality the earlier text appears as a simple quotation or allusion, whereas the latter bases itself on it, although it can also include other textual inputs. He then goes on to show the different types of textual ‘transformation’ (parody, travesty) and ‘imitation’ (pastiche, caricature) and arrives to the category of ‘transposition’, described as an example of serious transformation. Within the box of transposition, he places a number of practices: ‘translation’, ‘versification’, ‘prosification’, ‘transfiguration’, ‘transmetrification’, ‘transtylization’, ‘reduction’ (by way of amputation, concision, expurgation,

digest, pseudosummary), ‘augmentation’ (by way of extension, contamination, expansion, amplification), ‘transmotivation’, and ‘transmodalization’ (1997b). While he plumbs the depths of textual relationship with acumen, labelling and distinguishing an impressive number of phenomena, it could be argued that his view of translation seems to be limited to literal, word-for-word translation, a method as recurrent in theory as difficult to be found in practice. Indeed, while the other categories (versification, transmetrification, reduction) do not involve a shift in language or medium (and therefore they do not involve translation), it can be said that translation may include them all. Indeed, translations have oftentimes involved transmetrification, versification or prosification. Reduction can be present because of censorship or simply because the text must fit different discursive conventions; augmentation can happen by way of explicitation; transmotivation is inherent, in that the source text is translated to fill a gap or a need of the target context, which may attribute to it political, documentary, aesthetic or entertaining functions absent in the source context; and transmodalization derives from the change of medium. Transposition will then correspond to translation, at least when one understands the latter in all its intralingual, interlingual and intersemiotic possibilities (Jakobson, 1959). As in the case of adaptation, no clear-cut distinction can be made between translation and transposition and the relation is more one of synonymy than of hyponymy.

Ekphrasis

A term that has recently been proposed to account for processes such as those described above has its roots in antiquity, where it designated the verbal description of paintings. For Simonide de Ceos, poetry is painting that speaks out while painting is silent poetry. This relation between the two forms of art is described by Leonardo da Vinci as *paragone*, whereby the impulse of ekphrastic practice comes from rivalry between media (Clüver, 2017). This view is also followed by Mitchell,

who sees media in a dialectic of ekphrastic indifference, ekphrastic hope and ekphrastic fear in his seminal work *Picture Theory* (1995). Wagner backs this view when he says: “ekphrasis, then, has a Janus face: as a form of mimesis, it stages a paradoxical performance, promising to give voice to the allegedly silent image even while attempting to overcome the power of the image by transforming and inscribing it” (1996: 6). As explains Clüver (2017), the term ekphrasis reappeared in academia in 1955 with Leo Spitzer. Slowly, its meaning started to be expanded so that it included the verbalization not only of paintings but also of sculptures, architecture (Clüver, 1995) and other forms of visual representation.

This expansion led scholars like Laura Mareike Sager and Siglind Bruhn describe ekphrasis as either “the verbalisation, quotation or dramatization of real or fictitious texts composed in another sign system” (Sager, 2006: 15), or “the representation in one medium of a real or fictitious text composed in another medium” (Bruhn, 2000: 8, 2010). For them, ekphrasis would then cover the entire field of media relationships. Coming from the field of dance studies, Tanya Jayani Fernando uses it in a similar way as she describes McGregor’s choreography *Woolf Works* (2015). Based on Virginia Woolf’s novels *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *Orlando* (1928) and *The Waves* (1931), the choreography is presented by Fernando as an example of ekphrasis, which she quite paradoxically defines as a “*translation* of a work of art from one aesthetic medium to another” (2019: 143, italics mine). While her analysis of the dance work is lively and precise, the arguments presented in favour of the terminological choice are fuzzier, as they could have been employed to justify terms such as translation, adaptation, or transposition as well. Indeed, besides the abovementioned quotation, she defines ekphrasis as a “reinterpretation of a text that tells us much about our own time as it does about the previous one. Its rhetorical tradition highlights that texts are not dead; they are malleable and take on the concerns of a new age” (2019: 149). This is certainly true:

however, the same thing could be said about translation, and Benjamin's definition of translation as the "survival of a text" comes to mind when reading "texts are not dead" (149). Even Avelar (2006), who limits ekphrasis to the interaction between poetry and visual arts, offers a description that could similarly apply to translation. He states that in the ekphrastic exercise the poet simulates other identities, which enables her to deepen her perception of reality and of herself: a recurrent observation among translators and performers (Briggs, 2017; Maier, 1985; Willkie, 2016).

Far from criticising these attempts to come to an effective definition, my aim is to stress that once again, the dams that should divide all these terms make in fact for navigable waters. A last example is Clüver, who starts from a rather narrow definition of ekphrasis as "the verbal representation of real or fictive configurations composed in a non-kinetic visual medium [...] a descriptive, monomedial mode of intermedial reference" (2017: 459) and then finds himself at pains to make a distinction between ekphrasis, adaptation, translation, and remediation. For example, he defines John Hollander's sonnet *Edward Hopper's Seven AM* (1948) an intermedial translation instead of an ekphrasis because "the voice we hear might have been the painter's" (2017: 466). He places the difference between translation and ekphrasis on the first's fidelity to the source and the second's will to surpass its source, something that is not necessarily the case in practice. Once again, when we start untangling the various terms, issues become knotty.

Remediation

Another term that entered common parlance is remediation. Coined by Bolter and Grusin (2000) within the realm of media studies, it has been taken up by a number of scholars of intermediality and contrasted to adaptation and transmediality (Rajewsky, 2005; Straumann, 2015). However, a closer look at this concept will show it to be partially overlapping with translation. Bolter and Grusin (2000) claim that digital media do not introduce completely new ways of representing the

world and interacting with it; rather, they remediate earlier media, adopting and adapting their characteristics to fit the new mode. Rather than causing a rupture, they can be seen as part of an ongoing process that goes from visual perspective and realistic lighting to digital media and virtual reality. New media honour, rival, and revise linear perspective paintings, photography, film, television, and print, and no single medium works in isolation. Bolter and Grusin attribute the multiplication of media to the desire to erase traces of mediation and attain immediacy: each new medium will present itself as more immersive than the precedent, therefore giving the sensation of an authentic, real, and unmediated experience. Paradoxically “immediacy depends on hypermediacy” (2000: 9). At the same time, this same process of remediation is what makes us aware of the pervasiveness of media presence in our culture, highlighting the impossibility of immediacy. But what do immediacy, hypermediacy and remediation mean? As is clear from the above description, immediacy coincides with transparency of medium, the illusion that we are in front of naked reality rather than of its mediated representation. Pictorial perspective is the best example of this, as it manifests itself as a “seeing through” rather than “seeing at”: it opens a window onto the world without saying that what we are looking at is still the window. Nobody showed this better than Magritte. In his two paintings, *The Door to Freedom* (1933), and *The Human Condition* (1933), he shows first our impulse to break free from mediation and achieve immediacy and then the tricks with which we delude ourselves of having done so (Fig. 4 and 5).

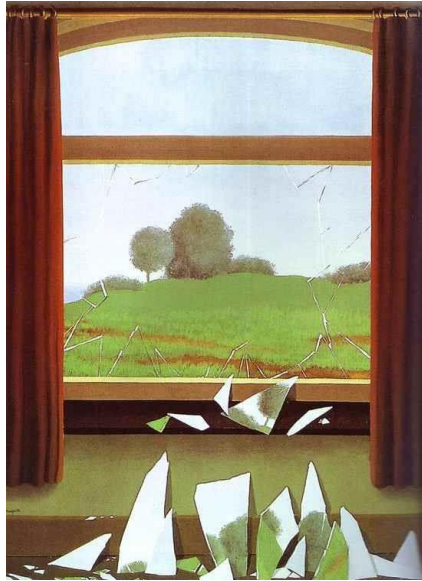


Figure 4: *La Clé des Champs*, René Magritte (1933) Museum Reina Sofia, Madrid



Figure 5: *La Condition Humaine*, René Magritte (1933), National Gallery of Art, Washington

Bolter and Grusin warn that even this playful attitude, which simultaneously acknowledges and undercuts our desire for immediacy by making visible the proliferation of media, could be mistaken for its substitute, and taken for a new form of immediacy. Indeed, “both transparent media and hypermediacy are one manifestation of the same desire: to get past the limits of representation and achieve the real” (2000: 53). They are right in spotting that remediation does not limit itself to the relation between different media but occurs intramedially as well: indeed, while their contribution in applying this concept to media in general is fundamental, the source of their reflections can be found in intertextual theory (Kristeva, 1980; Barthes, 1981; Michael Riffaterre, 1984; Linda Hutcheon, 2006), while their statement that “all mediation is remediation” (55), sounds deliberately similar to the postmodern adage ‘all writing is rewriting’. Their categories of transparency and hypermediacy could be compared to what has been termed domesticating/foreignizing translations by Venuti (1995): while the first reads like an original, erasing all traces of mediation (by the translator) and giving the impression that one is hearing the author’s voice, the second foregrounds its derivative nature and makes the reader aware of her distance from the original text, and with it from its culture. Moreover, the attribution of the same desire to achieve the real to both immediacy and hypermediacy can be applied to foreignising translations, as in making the reader aware of the mediated text, they also strive to present the reader with an ‘authentic’ text. Finally, Bolter and Grusin define remediation as

that which appropriates techniques, forms, and social significance of other media and attempts to rival or refashion them in the name of the real. A medium in our culture can never operate in isolation because it must enter into relationships of *respect* and *rivalry* with other media (2000:65, italics mine).

This view is refracted in Mitchell’s (1995) and Wagner’s (1996) discussions on ekphrasis, as well as in Aaltonen’s description of (theatre) translation as guided by relationships of either reverence or rebellion/disregard to the source text (2000). Replace remediation and medium with translation and text, and the definition still works. Replace remediation with ekphrasis and

it still applies. Replace it with adaptation: it applies. And doesn't the whole discussion of texts not existing in isolation but immersed in a rewriting culture that can approach them playfully or seriously come from the intertextual basis of Genette's theory in *Palimpsests* (1997b) and which grounds his idea of transposition?

Transmediation

In "Adaptation and Intermediality" (2017), Elleström contends that adaptation should be considered as a part of the wider field of intermediality and considered as a media phenomenon. He also proposes to change its name into transmediation, as this name inscribes it better in the proposed field and marks a shift from the way adaptation studies have been carried out so far, which he finds too specific and limited to text-to-screen studies. He lists a number of blurry areas of adaptation studies, and in particular, the disagreement over the media involved in it. He asks, should adaptation include qualified media only⁴⁴? Parts or wholes? What about intermediate media like libretti, scripts, and score? What about non-artistic media and casual media, like speech, gestures, e-mails, and other unplanned media? Is it a one-directional or bidirectional relationship? Between one medium to the other or from several to one?

It must be recognised that some of these questions have been already discussed by adaptation studies theorist: for example, Linda Hutcheon (2006) considers adaptation as a bidirectional relationship, as the target text will influence the way the source is experienced, and Cattrysse (2014) raises the issue of adaptations relying on more than one text. Other questions echo

⁴⁴ Elleström distinguishes *basic media* from *qualified media*. For example, a still image can be described as a basic medium. The moment it is described as a children's drawing as opposed to a painting we are in front of a qualified medium. Qualified media come with background knowledge about what they are and how they function, and the way users relate to them involves historical, cultural, geographical coordinates: they are a mental construct and transcend physical characteristics. Let us take the medium of theatrical dance: Yvonne Reiner's inclusion of pedestrian movement in a choreography asks us what makes a basic medium (movement in space and time) into a qualified one (dance). When we watch Reiner's choreography, we do not do it with the same eyes as we do when we watch a neighbour walking down the street, and this is what makes Reiner's dance a dance. At the same time, as choreographers reflect on and challenge established practices, so the affordances and reach of the medium of dance change, as we can see in the inclusion of pedestrian movement or text in today's dance performances.

discussions that have been carried out in TS: already in 1990, Toury stated that translation of fragments should be considered alongside that of entire texts and the term relay translation was coined to account for cases of indirect translation, while the question of what constitutes a text and whether non-verbal media should be included is part of the ongoing debate in which this thesis sits. Elleström's category of 'transmediation' is to be understood against the one he calls 'media representation' (2017). Their difference stems from the fact that while the former represents media characteristics of the source in another medium without referring to it (in a sort of attempt at transparency), the second limits itself to a description, like a review of a ballet. Adaptation can be merged with transmediation; ekphrasis with media representation (2017). However, if from a bird eye's perspective this can appear straightforward, a closer look will reveal overlapping areas and porous walls, as the above discussion on ekphrasis revealed. Does not translation also represent the adapted text? In Tymoczko's view (2007), for example, representation is one of the key concepts associated to translation, together with transmission and transculturation. And what about the cases where reference to the source is kept by the title and/or paratextual references like "adapted from", "inspired by", or "translated from"? Does keeping these practices in watertight boxes help their study? Or does it blind us to the composite processes that make up such practices? Where does translation come in, and what category does it belong to? Although Elleström's criticism of the general limitations of a film-centred strand of adaptation studies are correct and his suggestion to include this field within a broader study of intermedial relations suggestive, his proposal of yet another indefinite term that "remediates" former equally partial distinctions does not appear as the best solution.

What's in a Name?

As the above section tried to show, disentangling the net of terminology around the concept of translation, adaptation, and all its other names is a complicated task that ends up weaving the strands together even more tightly. Yet, many theorists tried their hands at it and everyday

discourse perpetuates these divisions, confirming Katja Kreb's assertion that, to this day, "popular, and some academic, western discourse tends to view adaptation as a creative version of, rewriting of, or commentary on a source text, as opposed to translation, which, it is assumed, offers sameness and strives for equivalence" (2013: 3). According to her, translation and adaptation are the "two sides of an ideological coin" (2012) that works on a binary structure of creation versus linguistic confinement, piracy versus trustworthiness.

It is easy to see how these ideologies have influenced, or even shaped, translation and adaptation histories. When the translators are put in a subaltern position, they will be required to keep faith to the author's words and expurgate the text from their traces: not complying with this demand will be a betrayal. From the other perspective, the translator's work of reproducing the source text amounts to a mere automatic application of acquired knowledge and is devalued on the basis that creativity only springs from individual originality and authorship (Malmkjaer, 2020). Krebs (2012) is right in spotting the ideological undercurrent of the terminological battle. This is not just "much ado about nothing": the implications accumulated by adaptation and translation and their polarization into creativity and betrayal against faithfulness and reproduction urge us to explore, in Shakespearean fashion, "what's in a name". For in the discourse around translation, "what proclaims itself to be an aesthetic problem, is represented in terms of sex, family and state, and what is consistently at issue is power" (Chamberlain, 1988: 465). I will now resort to Chamberlain's acute and illuminating analysis of the gender bias in the 'metaphorics' of translation to argue that the endless terminological debates and especially the separation of adaptation and translation as opposite activities reveals an anxiety of paternity and an opposition between productive and reproductive work that carries deep patriarchal implications. According to Chamberlain, this division assigns originality and creativity to the realm of paternity, authority, and productive work, separating them from reproduction, which is understood as a female and secondary activity. Highlighted

by the French saying, '*les belles infidèles*', this anxiety of paternity permeates the lexicon about translation, at times mixing it with colonial undertones, as the example of the English translator Thomas Drant shows⁴⁵. The blend of patriarchal and colonial language, which at times amounts to literally encouraging a "taming of the shrewd" (where the shrewd is the feminised and colonised text), is highlighted by Lori Chamberlain in the following statement.

In the metaphors of translation, the struggle for authorial rights takes place both in the realms of the family [...] and in the state, for translation has also been figured as the literary equivalent of colonization, a means of enriching both the language and the literature appropriate to the political needs of expanding nations (459)⁴⁶.

Two major models underlined the conceptualization of translation, and can still be seen at work. The first is the pietistic one, whereby translators pledge fidelity to the text and take the votes of humility, poverty, and chastity, placing themselves in a position of submissiveness and subalternity. However, by taking on the missionary's mantle, the submissive translator acquires authority. The other model is based on the Oedipal triangle: here the author is the father, the translator the child and the text the object of desire. The translator is divided between the prohibition of incest, which will amount to eliminating the father's authority, and the desire to kill the father, expressed in cannibalistic translations which by appropriating the creator's words get rid of him. As Chamberlain stresses, both figurations are overtly gendered and the obsession with originality and unity, the moralising use of language, and the intolerance for duplicity come from unequal values attributed to production and reproduction: "I would argue that the reason translation is so overloaded, so overregulated, is that it threatens to erase the difference between production and reproduction which is essential to the establishment of power" (466).

⁴⁵ Here is how he referred to the translation of Horace: "first I have now done as the people of God were commanded to do with their captive women that were handsome and beautiful: I have shaved off his hair and pared off his nails, that it, I have wiped away all his vanity and superfluity of matter..." (Drant, in Chamberlain, 1988: 470).

⁴⁶ This, of course, is not to be intended as a statement on the ontology of translation, but rather on its possible (mis)uses.

Chamberlain is not alone in raising this point; in her article, she mentions theories of intertextuality, which work against this binary construct by finding sources of texts in literary history, and Derrida (1979), who argues for the interdependence of writing and translating. The relationship between author and translator is also reflected in fictional writing. Wakabayashi, who studied it, maintains that such texts

can problematise concepts such as creativity, original and translation by highlighting both the derivative aspects of original writing and the creative aspects of translation, and they can identify certain aspects that have not been fully explored in the theoretical literature, such as the affective impact of translator's work (2011: 84).

With this aim in mind, she studies twenty fictional texts published in English and portraying differing types of relationship between translator and writer. While Peter Manseau's *Songs for the Butcher's Daughter* (2008) is a perfect example of the oedipal relationship mentioned by Chamberlain, David Treuer's *The Translator of Dr. Apelles* (2006) is an exemplar of the missionary archetype. The example she gives of the female translator's non-identification with the male author and her resulting unease in translating scenes of sex and violence echoes feminist translators' concerns and the idea of translation as a double bind rather than double standard preached by Chamberlain⁴⁷. Wakabayashi's conclusion is that these texts are punctuated with anxiety in relation to the translator's power to represent the source texts in the target culture. When translators claim creativity they generate conflicts, because they threaten to undermine the control and prestige of the author.

The question of the author and their role and status was addressed by Foucault (1969) and picked up by translation scholar Aaltonen (2000), who again connects the myths of originality with a patriarchal system that celebrates individual creation at the cost of community and collaborative endeavour. Seemingly starting from Foucault's questions,

⁴⁷ Wakabayashi is therefore wrong in arguing that such investigations of the impossibility of identification with the author and the affective impact of the translator's work have not been theorised. They in fact constitute a central issue in feminist translation's theory.

Woodmansee (1984) examines the relation between the concepts of genius and copyright. She concludes that the current notion of authorship was developed during the 18th century by writers who wanted to emancipate themselves from patrons and booksellers and earn money through the sales of their writing. Indeed, if in the Renaissance the author was depicted either as a craftsman or as a vessel of Godly inspiration, from the 18th century writers started downgrading the importance of craftsmanship and attributing to themselves the source of inspiration. Rather than coming from outside, inspiration was the result of original genius. This reversal was motivated not so much by idealistic principles as by a need for economic recognition.

Kostylo (2010) proves this point by showing that the history of patents and copyright are interlaced and that they find their roots in the Italian Renaissance. Around the 13th century, Venice started offering privileges and monopoly rights to foreigners who would move there and import new expertise and techniques: one of the first patents was indeed released to Johannes de Speyer in 1469, a German who established his own press in Venice. It was not until 1549 that a guild for printers was founded and the first rights over a book were obtained by Aldus Manutius. However, they did not concern the content of the book: what was copyrighted was the italics character and the pocket-size format, the material components of the book. Likewise, the struggle for rights over the content of books came from the world of craftsmanship and technical inventions with artists like Filippo Brunelleschi, who rebelled against the strict system of guild monopolies and asserted individual property over technical innovations (2010). The argument for individual originality then developed from the level of practical inventions to the level of abstract ideas, and out of economic needs rather than ontological truth. At the end of the 18th century this allowed Fichte to contend that while ownership of the physical book and its content passes to the reader with its sale, its content is the imprint of the author's unique and individual intellect (Woodmansee,

1984)⁴⁸. Such a view is still present in many conceptions of translation and its historical development accounts for the complicated relationship between writer and translator, creation *ex nihilo* and imitation *ex materia*.

*Deny thy Father, and Refuse thy Name*⁴⁹

Why is this relevant? As spotted by both Altoneen and Wakabayashi, the Romantic idea of the author as individual genius emphasises an individualistic and hierarchical worldview at the expenses of community and collaboration and does not match reality. Indeed, if we agree with Johnson (2007) in seeing ourselves as embodied, relational beings, then the simple idea of a work being *ex nihilo* creation, carrying no traces of other people and artefacts, born in a vacuum, stops making sense.

A wealth of research, not limited to the world of letters, has proved the derivative and collaborative nature of art: even a time that portrayed itself as a complete rupture with tradition like the historical avant-garde has been shown to base its innovations on classical heritage and its repertoire of images, as well as on the exchange of ideas among various art forms. In the already cited *Poetics of Dance* (2015b), Brandstetter shows how ideas travelled from the realms of dance, literature, fashion, painting, music, sculpture and even cinema, led by a synchronic and diachronic borrowing of themes and motifs. Zooming in to well-known artistic couples, Chadwick and Courtrivon (1993) highlight the collaborative and/or competitive nature of artistic endeavours in famous couples as the necessary base for the completion of their works. The number of women typists assumed by history to have worked in reverent silence and without altering any word dictated by the writer is challenged by Michelle Leglise, Boris Vian's first wife and collaborator, who reclaims her role not only as typist, but as teacher, proof-reader,

⁴⁸ On the contrary, choreographic work had no recognised legal status up until 1957 (Pouillaude, 2017). It then gained such status through the same procedure, that is, by seeing the original work as a repository of possibilities and its actualizations as an impoverishment of the abstract idea of the work.

⁴⁹ Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet*, Act 2, Scene 2.

conversant and prompter of ideas and solutions (Monti, 2018). Among the texts analysed by Wakabayashi one adopts the perspective of the open book: in Annamarie Jagose's *In Translation* (1994), the Japanese writer likes the English translation so much that he wants it to be published before the original; he then undertakes the translation of the translated text into Japanese, and this text is eventually retranslated into English, resulting in an organic text made up of multiple voices. This openness is not confined to the realm of fiction but reflects ongoing translational practices. Take Chantal Wright's experimental translation of Yoko Tawada's *Portrait of a Tongue* (2013): the translator placed the translated text and her own reflections and comments side by side, allowing the reader to experience the multiplicity of voices in the text and to glance at the translator's diary. Who is the author of the resulting text? And what would happen to it if it were retranslated? Invited to speak about that and her oeuvre, Tawada demonstrated an unusual openness to creative appropriations of her writings and gave other examples of translation as collaboration and dialogue. Even the translators, whose work is by definition derivative, do not have the final say on the translation as this is passed on to proof-readers and editors who will discuss and negotiate each and every part of it as they would do with the writer. Besides, the graphics and the bookbinders are those who will give the final touch to the book as an object—and we know, thanks to Genette (1997a) and Batchelor (2018), how important paratexts and peritexts are to the reading of originals and translations. This interweaving of hands and minds points toward a notion of translation as a collaborative practice resulting from distributed agency (Enfield and Kockelman, 2017), a term I will explore in relation to Marie Chouinard's *Hieronymus Bosch: Le Jardin des Délices* (2016), in Chapter 7.

For now, I will limit myself to say that this critique of notions of *ex nihilo* creativity undermines the foundation of the ideological divide between production and reproduction that structures the dichotomous view of translation and adaptation as non-creative and faithful versus creative

and betraying. Once we recognise them as kin activities whose difference is of *degree*, not of *kind*, we can start focusing on how to apply the methodologies and theoretical insights developed by these disciplines to the study of what I am calling intermedial translation. But then, am I not falling into the same trap of naming, and do all these terms really mean the same thing? As research in linguistic relativism has shown, specific languages and words “volunteer” different categories of experience (Lucy, 1997: 296), so that a linguistic term can inflect the way we think about something (inflect, not entirely produce or construct). If we take this to be true, then choosing to use the word ‘translation’, ‘adaptation’, ‘ekphrasis’, ‘transposition’, ‘transmediation’ or ‘remediation’ may—at a minimal level - attune us to certain characteristics that we perceive as pertaining to that concept, sensitising us to certain nuances and shades where other terms would have volunteered slightly different perceptions. This understanding prevents us from simply conflating into an all-purpose category the diversity of textual engagements embraced by the abovementioned terms. At the same time, it reminds us to keep in sight the important similarities between them, so that we do not conceive of them as separate entities within watertight boxes but as fluid, porous, interrelated practices, and having got past ontological and territorial disputes, can study them and the way they contribute to theories of translation as admittedly *ex materia creation*.

Words Written in the Air: Dance as Ephemeral Writing

“How can we know the dancer from the dance?”
Yeats, *Among School Children*, 1926⁵⁰

At the beginning of a choreography there is a latent movement. Like poems can unravel out of an emotionally charged word or sentence, expanding it and charting various paths and directions, similarly, a choreography can develop out of a movement problem that is explored by the body along different paths, seeking its resolution. This movement phrase is likely to become a motif, punctuating the choreography with its turns and returns, each of them being a reformulation of the question and an indication of a possible way through it.

Similarly, this section moves its steps along a question, a conceptual refrain borrowed from Yeats: “how can we know the dancer from the dance?”. Can we? How to, and why, disentangle the dance work from the dance performer, the text from the medium instantiating it? How to, and why, subtract the dance performance from the paws of time so as to bring it to the level of the fixed, eternal, immutable written text? In this section I bring together artistic and academic reflections around the concept of ephemerality and its attachment to dance as opposed to the assumed fixity and stability of the written text. By doing so I want to highlight how prevalent ideas of textuality⁵¹ are based on our habituation to an economy of writing and printing whose modality differs from those of orality and digital texts. The latter are in fact actualised in a way that resembles more dance performance and that forces us to return to the question of disembodied textuality and contrast it with a view of the written text as nothing more than a recording of and a score for performance.

How Can We Know the Dancer from the Dance?

In Luca Guadagnino’s widely acclaimed remake of *Suspiria* (2018), dance takes on a powerful, mystical quality as the dancers’ expressive movements and breath hypnotise the

⁵⁰ Available on: [Among School Children by William Butler Yeats | Poetry Foundation](#).

⁵¹ I derive my definition of textuality from Albrecht Neubert and Gregory Shreve, who write in *Translation as Text*: “the complex set of features that texts must have to be considered texts. Textuality is a property that a complex linguistic object assumes when it reflects certain social and communicative constraints” (1992: 70).

spectator. Upon returning to the classroom that hosts one of the most enticing scenes, where Olga literally dances herself to death, we hear a conversation between Susie and Madam Blanc.

M.B: Dance is never mute. It is a language. It is a sequence of energetic shapes written in the air, like words forming sentences. Like Poems. Like Prayers.

S: Spells.

I stop for a moment on this passage as it provides a thorough definition of dance and one that cuts at the heart of a long-standing issue in dance studies. It highlights dance's power to communicate, which leads many to equate it to a language; its relation to space, as the dancers mould it with their bodies; its affective, performative and even spiritual qualities, highlighted by the words 'prayer' and 'spell'; and, finally its ephemerality: dance is *written in the air*, therefore, like air, it is mutable, subject to change and doomed to disappear. Now consider this definition next to the choreographer William Forsythe's statement: "writing is always also movement. I consider my work practice to be spatial writing. The dancers' movement should leave traces" (2006, in Brandstetter, 2011: 127).

Again, space, writing and the importance of overcoming ephemerality and leaving traces are the central issues considered to define dance. That Guadagnino's movie manages to give us such an effective definition of dance is not surprising once we know that its screenwriter, David Kajganich, delved into dance history while writing the play and actually drew on some iconic choreographers, like Martha Graham, Mary Wigman, and Pina Bausch. What may be surprising, instead, is that despite the fact that dance has been equated with a mode of communication and expression by dance practitioners and that even poets commented on the proximity of dance and poetry⁵², far too rarely is dance analysed as a form of translation and a

⁵² Consider the following quotations by Paul Valéry and Stéphane Mallarmé: "What is a metaphor if not a kind of pirouette performed by an idea, enabling us to assemble its diverse names or images?" (Valéry, 1976), or "Une écriture corporelle ce qu'il faudrait des paragraphes en prose dialoguée autant que descriptive, pour exprimer, dans la rédaction: poème dégagé de tout appareil du scribe" (Mallarmé, 1887: 304); "a bodily writing, what would take in the composition several paragraphs of dialogue or descriptive prose to express: a poem freed from any instrument of the writer (translated by Mary Ann Caws, *Mallarmé in Prose*, 2001:109).

text, and far too often it becomes “the object of a rhetoric of the ephemeral” that formulated “an ontology of impermanence and disappearance” (Pontremoli, 2018: 57, translation mine) and which “condemns dance to a prohibition on remembering” (Louppe, 2010: 241).

The case for dance as the art of ephemerality has a long tradition, sustained, as it is, by the same symbolist poets who praised its communicative qualities. Based on a partial view of dance, focused on the improvised solos of Lœie Fuller and the new tradition of female soloists, they equated the dance with the dancer and with the fleeting moment of her apparition and therefore with the inability to withstand erasure in time. This is clear in Valéry’s description of dance as “merely a form of time” [...] “a time that she [the ballerina] engenders, a time consisting entirely of immediate energy, of nothing that can last” (1976: 69).

This view followed a shift that, according to dance theorist Susan Foster, occurred around 1820 (1996). Ballet, previously compared to painting and writing, became more and more associated with ephemerality and loss, its transient quality becoming its defining feature. Foster spots how “with a burgeoning capitalist economy through which all the arts circulated, and with the intensifying masculinisation of public space, dance took on a new role in relation to other arts [as it] lacked the capability to inscribe itself” (1996: 197). Soon enough, it became conceived of as a female activity, with the ballerina and the female *corps de ballet* as the (sexualised) centre of attention. This went together with a differentiation of labour and vocabulary that did not exist before and that reflected strict gendered roles in bourgeois society (Foster, 1996). During this time, dance also lost much of its social and political power, as it became equated with entertainment and a star system that did not tell the (female, sexualised) dancer from the dance.

In dance theory, the trope of ephemerality is invoked by Susanne Langer in *Feeling and Form* (1953) and summarised in *The Dynamic Image: Some Philosophical Reflections on Dance*

(1957). Abstracting dance from the bodies that perform it, she defines it as an *appearance* or *apparition*, a virtual image, like a reflection in the mirror or a rainbow. Divorced from the medium instantiating it, dance becomes something fleeting that turns a subjective experience into an objective symbol. Nelson Goodman builds on Langer's theory for his own reflections on dance and the need for a notation system. In *I Linguaggi dell'Arte* (1968) he argues, indeed, that a notation system is required for dance in that only the move from autographic art (whose existence is bound to its materiality) to allographic art (whose existence transcends materiality) will make it possible to identify *the work* as something separate from the performer, a step necessary in order to elevate it to an *object of study*. In order to be recognised, the work must be abstracted from its medium (the body) and its maker: it must be a fixed and concrete entity, an object. Hence,

We Need to Know the Dancer from the Dance

Although published in 1968, the ideas expressed in this volume still resonate and find echoes in contemporary thinking about dance among theoreticians and choreographers: a good example of this is Forsythe's *Synchronous Objects* website (Fig. 6) where he recreates the choreography *One Flat Thing Reproduced* in virtual form, allowing the user to see the ephemeral writing of the dancers as spatial traces of movement, lines or patterns made visible on the screen. In this experiment, dance is translated into data sets that are in turn translated into visual form. Asked about the meaning of this work he replied with another question: "how can one have information about a choreography without having a body?" For him, it is the lack of objects that makes for the marginalization of dancing culture in comparison to other arts. However, the possibility, granted by technology, to control time, hold it still, speed it up or slow it down, enables us to fix choreography and analyse it as we would do with an object. It must be remembered that attempts to fix dance have a long history. Several notational systems have been proposed throughout time and some of them, such as Labanotation, have gained a

certain popularity. However, the lack of a universally agreed system, like alphabet and written language are to oral speech, leaves the question of performance and documentation open. Even Forsythe's fascinating effort, with the possibility of editing and changing the viewing mode, generates more questions than answers. Indeed, rather than fixing the dance into a finished object, it multiplies the ways of engagement with the choreographic work and the spectator's ensuing experiences. Moreover, by requiring at least minimal physical interaction with the viewers, who are encouraged to make choices and edit the footage, it ends up reiterating the necessity of a body—even if it is just that of the spectator. The result is the confirmation that we cannot have information about a choreography without having a body. Rather than sealing off the work and abstracting it from bodies, *Choreographic Objects*, just like the e-poems analysed by Carrie Noland in *Agency and Embodiment* (2009), foregrounds reading as “physical play while writing becomes interaction between pre-existing text and moving body” (2009: 126).



Figure 6: Still from *Synchronous Objects*, William Forsythe, Youtube video

A similar interest in exploring ephemerality is to be found in the work of Carly Lave, who premiered in August 2019 *Golem*, a pioneering experiment blending live dance with its recreation on screen as virtual reality (Fig. 7). During the performance, one of the dancers was wearing an all-body suit that tracked her movements, sending them to the computers in the

form of data and recreating them on screen through an avatar. The public could see at the same time the physical live dance, the virtual dance on screen and, by wearing specific glasses, the real dancer as moving dots. Thus, at the same time the performance made visible *traces of the dance* and *dance as traces*.

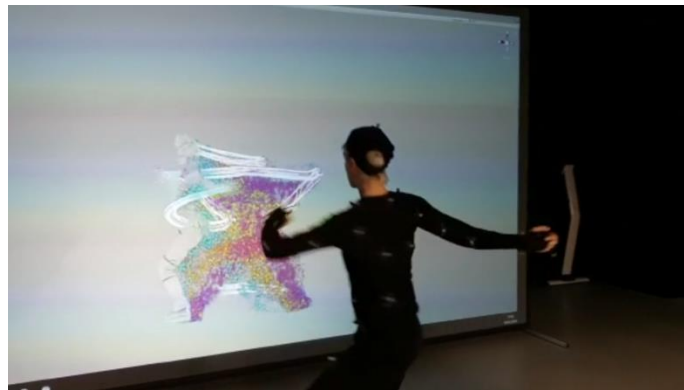


Figure 7: Still from Motion Capture Workshop at Gamelab, Berlin

On the same line of reflection travels *Scores for Daily Living: Act II*, presented in Moscow in 2019 by the Canadian choreographer Emma Waltraud Howes: she used chalks to notate her dance on the floor while performing it, thus simultaneously drawing and deleting the score with her movements, leaving only an incomplete recording of it on the performing space (Fig. 8).



Figure 8: *Scores for Daily Living Act II*, Emma Waltraud Howes (2019), ZIL Moscow

A member of the audience, Alex Sokolov, described it this way: “She is tracing the specified space with her movements while she writes down (or even composes) the score (everyone knows how the music score looks like but the choreographic is another pair of shoes) for potential subsequent interpretations by other performers” (personal conversation, 2019). The audience members are invited to follow the performer’s steps or create their own score but, having no clue on how to read the score she is drawing on the ground, they are made to realise that each actualisation will differ from the “original” work, if ever there was one. The question all these works seem to ask is:

Can We Know the Dancer from the Dance?

Similarly, when comparing diverse texts produced by media such as literature, painting, and dance, one might ask: how to compare source and target text when the first is stable and fixed and the latter is unstable and ephemeral? How to equate the unmediated written text (Genette, 1997b) with the mediated dance performance? In this section, I am going to argue that confining ephemeral and performative qualities to the realm of dance could blind us to the possibility that written texts can be equally evanescent, performative, dependent on the medium that actualises them, inseparable from the site of utterance, and subject to change.

In a work that echoes Waltraud Howes’ choreography, the artist and curator Rabbya Naseer subjected the audience to a performance of intimacy, reading aloud a letter she had written for a past lover. The letter, projected on the screen, only showed some words, scattered across the page, thus making it impossible to understand the content without this being activated by the artist’s voice. Performance of the text was indispensable for its existence and at the same time it was ephemeral: indeed, while the whole conference was recorded and can be found on the YouTube channel of the cultural centre Culturgest⁵³, she asked not to record that part so as to

⁵³ Link to the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u7xT1VCktz4>.

leave no record behind. All that was left were its traces, the few words projected on the screen, and which constituted, like the chalk drawings in Emma's performance, an incomplete score for possible re-actualizations. With the incompleteness comes the possibility to alter, adapt, and amend the text according to their specific contexts and intentions, as well as its precarious quality and its inseparability from the writer/performer. Writing was in both cases presented as a process, not a product. Besides, by widening the gap between the written and the performed, Emma Waltraud Howes and Rabbya Naseer pointed to the inherent incompleteness of the document, which cannot but lack the paralinguistic and rhythmic cues that are only accessible through its performance. Thus, both performances are acts of unsettling the source text, which is demoted to the level of a to-be-completed score, thus shifting accepted hierarchical relation between source and target, authentic⁵⁴ and mediated. They make the case for the existence of different forms of textuality and ask us to reconsider them.

From the field of literary criticism, similar concerns are being raised. Reflecting on Sabatini's classification of texts according to how binding they are (1999), Alessandro Manco advocates for a typology and a metalanguage which consider those texts in need of definition and whose support is precarious, like text on social media, tattoos, writings on the sand or artistic-performative inscriptions. He states

Una possibile definizione di precarietà [...] si deve riferire a scritture caratterizzate per diverse ragioni da *instabilità, caducità o temporaneità* che possono al tempo stesso mostrare una tenacia testuale più saliente di altre solitamente considerate non precarie e che possono richiedere una marcata contestualizzazione (2017: 82, italics mine)⁵⁵.

⁵⁴ The notion of authenticity in dance, as much as in translation, is interwoven with the idea of direct access to the original (and somehow fixed) intentions of the creator of a work. In "Authentic as Opposed to What?" (2016), Angélique Willkie asks what makes a performance authentic and introduces the concept of negotiated authenticities, born out of the multiplicity of intentions of all the people who participate in the making and receiving of a dance performance. She therefore dispels the notion of authentic meaning and replaces it with "impermanent meaning", co-composed and immanent. Willkie's reflections about the authenticity of a dance performance evoke similar stances in relation to written texts, their authentic meaning, and the imperative to offer direct access to it to the readers in a foreign language.

⁵⁵ A possible definition of precariousness must refer to texts characterised by an *unstable, ephemeral and temporal nature*, which could, at the same time, demonstrate a textual tenacity more salient than those considered non-precarious, and which need to be contextualised" (my translation).

These texts could have a high level of performativity and therefore, be more binding than others. Isn't Marina Abramovich's 1974 performance, where she scattered objects as different as a feather and a gun on the table and asked the public to use them on her more binding than a textbook? Certainly, it demonstrated a certain textual tenacity. What about Mary Wigman's expressionist dance performances stating that dance would not be associated anymore with beauty and grace but rather with truth and ugliness? Furthermore, with the advent of internet and social media, things previously doomed to fade with time, like graffiti or performative inscriptions like those made by Raul Zurita⁵⁶ on the sand can go viral, reaching a wide audience and prompting re-enactments (Fig. 9).



Figure 9: *Ni Pena Ni Miedo*, Zurita (1993) [Inscription on the sand]

While Manco restricts his definition of textual precariousness to written texts, I propose to include those texts that are written not only on the body, as tattoos, but with the body, and that comply with the characteristics of being ephemeral, temporary, and unstable. Following this, not only do these examples call for a category of their own, which Manco calls “ephemeral textuality”, but they highlight the need to understand what we mean by text and what do we

⁵⁶ The Chilean artist and member of the *Colectivo de Acciones de Arte*, a group marked by its opposition to Pinochet's regime, is famous for his performative inscriptions. For example, in 1982 he wrote poems in the sky of New York using five planes and white smog; in 1993 he had the sentence “Ni Pena Ni Miedo” (Neither pity nor fear) carved in the sand of the Atacama Desert as a mile long geoglyph (Montero, 2016).

ascribe to it as its function, as well as the “difficoltà che possono manifestarsi sul piano traduttologico” (2017: 90)⁵⁷.

An exploration of our understanding of textuality cannot overlook how the notion that texts are static and unalterable is afforded by the technology of writing and print (Grigar, 2016). Grigar quotes Hayles, who argues that “notions of textuality are shot through with assumptions specific to print, although they have not been recognised as such” (2003: 263). The reproducibility of a work not by a body but by a machine created the idea of text as an abstract identity that could be instantiated in different media and contexts without changing: a content independent of the container, an abstract, formless entity suspended in space and time, immutable. We can see interesting similarities with our conceptions of soul or self as a singular entity contained in the body rather than a bodily self (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999). In both cases, the metaphor of content and container is at work. If with the advent of mechanization, the here-and-now that Walter Benjamin (1935) attributes to the aura of artworks is indeed detached from the work as a physical entity, it is only so insofar as it is transferred to the realm of abstract ideas and to the notion of authentic and original text supported by editors and critics. This marks the passage from the open to the closed text, from writing as utterance to writing as object (Bruns, 1980). Kathrine Hayles puts it this way: “the desire to suppress unruliness and multiplicity in search of an ideal work is deeply embedded in textual criticism” (2003: 268). We can testify to a similar attitude in TS, as shown by the previous discussion about the anxieties of paternity infusing the language of translation in terms of fidelity and betrayal. This desire can blind us to the unavoidable changes that happen when remediating a text: for Hayles, the decision of what to include—verbal text over bibliographic details—when remediating a text on a digital support echoes the transposition of spoken word into print, which leaves out

⁵⁷ “The difficulties that could manifest from a translational point of view” (my translation).

paralinguistic features (2003). And indeed, if we see language as an existential experience, a skin or prosthesis, then we will be able to recognize the scale of perceptual change introduced by the shift from oral to written language (McLuhan, 1964; Abram, 1997; Kress, 2020). The former is simultaneous, synesthetic, inhabited and felt, the second is discreet, linear and replaces hearing with sight: it therefore implies a whole series of perceptual changes involving the valorisation of sight over hearing, the separateness of individuals, space as continuity, and linear time (McLuhan, 1964/1994).

The impact of both press and map, two devices which were able to separate the walking and writing body from the static and read text, was so far-reaching that their effects are still present and investigated. The subjectivity of measuring space according to the time employed to go from a point A to B is replaced by the objectivity of the metrical measure of the line drawn between two points on a map (Farinelli, 2007, 2009). De Certeau analyses how modernity is characterised by a shift from an experience of space as tour to its experience as map, which occurred from the 15th to the 17th century (1988)⁵⁸. While the former is defined by organised movements and the act of going, the latter is represented as a fixed tableau that can be seen. The first shows the trajectory and actions performed to arrive to a point, the second erases them and presents them as geographical knowledge. Understanding writing and reading as the space produced by the practiced place of the written text, De Certeau shows how written texts are more and more like maps, “proper place[s] in which to *exhibit the products* of knowledge” (1988: 121), obscuring the operations that allowed it. This scriptural apparatus was only made possible by reproduction through printing and went hand in hand with a growing isolation from bodies and voices. Thus, writing as “a modern mythical practice” (133) is based on a Cartesian distinction of subject and object, utterance and message, which is afforded by the blank page

⁵⁸ For many scholars active in the fields of cultural geography, decoloniality, feminist studies, and performance studies, the project of modernity begins in the 15th century with the advent of Cartesian perspective, maps, and print (Farinelli, 2007, 2009; Federici, 2015, Lepecky, 2006).

constructed, like science, as a proper, delimited space, isolated from the body and the senses. Orality becomes the repository of everything that does not contribute to progress, while the written text exerts its power towards an exteriority from which it has been previously isolated. The blank page is the frontier established by western culture between the two. We can follow De Certeau's reading of *Robinson Crusoe* as the "romance of writing" (136) of western modernity, where the subject constitutes itself on the blank page of the desert island, which he must master through the tools of reason in order to transform the natural world. However, the fiction of the blank page is broken by the footsteps left by the indigenous Friday, who marks a crack in the scriptural empire whereby the voice of the excluded and the suppressed voice of the bourgeois re-enter the text. Moreover, he testifies to the impossibility of the blank page, to the ephemeral orality that precedes writing and from which it can never be entirely divorced, needing—as it does—a reading body in order to be activated. With Lepecki's analysis of the modern apparatus of choreography, also predicated upon a man following the instructions of a text in the solitude of his studio (tellingly represented as a white square) (2006), we can bring together the blank page, the map, and the choreographic studio as the tools of a modern subjectivity. Moreover, if dance is celebrated as the art of loss due to its over-emphasised ephemerality, we can consider writing as the practice of the loss of speech, a speech that finds its meaning in a different place, that of the reader. Both dance and writing start from bodies and travel through them. If the meaning of the text is constructed in tandem with the reader, it means that rather than being fixed and stable it changes with them and with the set of perceptual codes available to them, as bodies situated in space and time.

This is what Borges suggests in his *Pierre Menard, Autor del Quijote* (1941). This short text describes a word-for-word retelling of Don Quixote in a different context, whose aim is to alert us to the inevitable changes that occur in the repetition as we come to the text with different

expectations and knowledge⁵⁹. Not only is it filtered by the bodies of the reader and their contexts: the text is itself dependent on a physical support, meaning that physical characteristics of a text such as page-size and fonts are bibliographic codes whose importance should be recognised (Hayles, 2003). The importance of paratext in translation is underlined by Batchelor (2018) and Baker (2007). The latter analyses its political uses in a case of Israeli translators claiming neutrality on the basis of their faithful verbal translation (as opposed to Palestinian ones using more explication) while in fact a change of the photographs and videos included on the website gave a completely different impression compared to the faithfully translated text. As the two were received simultaneously and therefore created meaning in conjunction, the translators were able to manipulate information without altering the text (2007). There is, therefore, the need for a notion of textuality that discards the inherited notion that “work and text are immaterial construction independent of the substratum on which they are instantiated” (Hayles, 2003: 270).

Hayles’ redefinition of textuality based on digital media as “instantiated rather than dematerialised, dispersed rather than unitary, processual rather than object-like, flickering rather than durably instantiated” (2003: 276) brings us back to the idea of texts as a score for performance that we individuated in the works by Rabbya Naseer and Emma Waltraud Howes, and to the way in which dance as an ephemeral artwork is defined. It also finds a counterpart in Boaventura de Sousa Santos’s description of how both oral and digital texts are dependent not on a static product but on continuous processes and how they mirror the way we think by processing along pathways rather than working on the fixed, delimited space of the page (2018). However, if digital writing is still capable of concealing bodies, dance isn’t. With its insistence on the corporeal, dance makes positionality inescapable. Before looking at the

⁵⁹ For a discussion on how meaning is not simply stored in the text but constructed in tandem with the reader, see for example Roland Barthes’ *Death of the Author* (1967), Stanley Fish’s concept of interpretative communities (1980) and Hans Robert Jauss’ concept of horizon of expectation (1970).

consequences that this rethinking of textuality may have for translation and dance studies, I would like to invoke two works that similarly reflect on the issue of text as a (bodily) process and of text as produced by bodies and affecting bodies.

The first is another performance by Rabbya Naseer, conceived in 2014, called *The Live Letter*. As people were roaming in the exhibition space of the gallery, they could see her in her office writing a letter for the four hours of the performance. Sharing her screen, she enabled the public to experience the artwork not as a finished object but as a process, and to see all the discarding, correcting, decision making but also the bodily labour that went into the finished product.



Figure 10: *Human Writes*, Willian Forsythe (2011)

The other work is a performance installation by Forsythe, called *Human Writes* and premiered in 2005 (Fig. 10). Addressing the brutality of the Israeli State over Palestinians and the strangulating restrictions on movement imposed on them, he asked the dancers to write excerpts from the Declaration of Human Rights on papers scattered around tables using charcoal. Their bodies were tied in various ways, echoing the limitations of movement which prevent Palestinians from exercising their rights. By foregrounding bodies in such a way, the

performance was a reminder that the source of texts are always bodies and that texts physically affect bodies, defining what they can and cannot do, recognising their existence or not, limiting or freeing them. Like Friday's footsteps, it reintroduces bodies in the discourse and in the space of a self-moving and technocratic scriptural system which "transformed the subject that controlled it into operators of the writing machine that orders and uses them" (De Certeau, 1988: 136). In a time when drone bombings as well as access to medical care are decided by algorithms (Pilkington, 2019, Pasquinelli, 2019), reflecting on the conceptions we have formed around the technologies and media we use daily is of pivotal importance. What are the consequences of considering all written texts inalterable when the reality of the internet is that they can be altered endlessly with no visible trace to testify that? What are the consequences of seeing texts as abstract entities and of denying the writer's, translator's, and reader's bodies behind them? What senses and perceptual experiences are prioritised by each media? How can changes in the physical support alter meaning? What kind of epistemologies are produced by bodies and how can they counteract "the normalised discourse of modern science and its strong statistical component", which for Boaventura de Sousa Santos results in "the trivialization of human suffering" (2018: 92)? Can dance help us see knowledge as situated, a view from a body, and similarly texts as produced and received by bodies? Would this facilitate experiencing the "instinctive and affective reactions [bodies] can provoke, the intensity of which lies in their being beyond words, beyond reasonable argument or reflective evaluation"? (2018: 92).

Following this discussion, Yeats' "how can we know the dancer from the dance" becomes a rhetorical question, as it is evident that we cannot tell the dancer from the dance, nor can we imagine a work as being born out of itself, in the neutral space of abstraction and objectivity that separates it from the affects and effects it engenders in the physical world, over which, on account of its own materiality, it cannot soar. After all,

Why Should We Know the Dancer from the Dance?

This reflection leads us to rethink dance and literature's relation to document. Rather than seeing dance as incomplete without a notation system and therefore subsumed to literature, (which found a way to notate itself without perceived losses), we are led to rethink written text "as an inadequate transcription of any performance of it" (Scott, 2012: 32). As Barthes and Forsythe show, writing is nothing but "a gestural routine" (Noland, 2009: 130), traces left by a moving hand, by a body. In *Agency and Embodiment*, Noland devotes a chapter to Henry Micheaux's graphic explorations of handwriting as indexical signs, capable of inscribing "the tempo and quality of the body's movement" (131) on paper, while simultaneously inscribing that body with new gestural paths and patterns, experimenting with what it could do. A similar interest is shown by the attention paid by photographers to writer's and painters' hands, examples of this being Alfred Stieglitz's fascination with Georgia O'Keeffe's hands (Fig. 13) and Hanne Assouline's series *Mains d'Écrivaines* (Fig. 11 and 12).



Figure 11: *Mains d'Écrivaines*, Anne Hassouline



Figure 12: *Mains d'Écrivaines*, Anne Hassouline



Figure 13: *Georgia O'Keeffe (Hands)*, Alfred Stieglitz (1918-1919)

An approach to translation that considers not only the verbal meaning of words but their sensuous components, their physical support, the gestural sense inscribed in them becomes the first and fundamental step in what Boulanger calls “l’ erotique du traduire” (2005). Rather than trying to convey an immutable essence, the translator takes part in a dialogical relationship whereby the document left by the writer becomes a score for the translator’s performance of it (which is then transmitted to the readers for their own readerly performance).

Examples of approaches to translation that pay close attention to the body and its senses are offered by Barbara Ivančić (2016), Scott (2012), and Rabourdin (2020). In dance translations of literary and painterly works, the exercises suggested by Ivančić for feeling language with the body are taken to an extreme and move from the level of propaedeutic exercise to the centre of attention, as shown in the following chapters. Rhythm, central in Scott’s reflections (2012), also takes a central role in dance translation, as Aguiar (2013) demonstrated in her doctoral thesis on the translation of Gertrude Stein’s prose into dance. Accepting that material changes lead to shifts in meaning would make us more open to alterations, enrichments, inclusion of other voices as a way of liberating the text’s multiplicity. The bodies of both dancers and translators as a translated/translating site is the focus of the next chapter, the last bell to ring before letting the stage be occupied by them.

Translated/Translating Bodies and the Translator's Embodied Dramaturgy



Jérôme Bel - Shirtologie (1997) - YouTube

*By peeling off the dance from the dancer, the dancer
Can be inhabited by other nonpreformed steps;
And choreography reveals itself always diluted
By each body's tremors, involuntary acts, morphology,
Imbalances, and techniques.
(André Lepecki, 2006: 63)*

With the stretching and rehearsal over and new steps added and clarified, it is almost time to step on stage. Adrenaline fills the body, rushing down the spine in a shiver, giving shape to that little knot in the stomach, provoking that restlessness that always reins, silent and unseen, behind stage wings. It is almost time, it is almost time: the bell has rung twice; the public is falling silent, just a few people left to whisper; the air is dense, eyes on the stage. Just time enough to take a quick peep at the dancers' bodies, as they breathe in and out, waiting alert for the third bell to set the evening in motion.

This chapter is articulated around five parts, each of them taking a specific look at the dancer's bodies as carriers of (negotiated) meaning. The first part focuses on the dancer's embodied dramaturgy, a term I borrow from Angélique Willkie, to describe the way in which dancers participate in the creative process by actively creating meaning from and through their bodies. The second part zooms out and looks at these bodies as a first site of translation, a palimpsest in Gabriele Brandstetter's words (2015a), where various styles and techniques layer upon each other, expanding the individual's embodied dramaturgy while channelling and refining it. The third and fourth parts turn to the dramaturgical bodies nurtured by Compagnie Marie Chouinard and Eliot Smith Dance respectively, looking at the specific types of body they foster as communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), as well as the values and ideologies inherent in them. Lastly, I create a parallel between the dancer's embodied dramaturgy and what I call the translator's embodied dramaturgy drawing on Henri Meschonnic's understanding of the continuum between form-sense and living-writing. I seamlessly move between the realms of dance and translation, interweaving theoretical texts and interviews, eavesdropping on translators' voices, and stealing glimpses from the dance studio, to arrive at a final reflection on the ethics and politics inherent to an account of translation that eschews fluidity and transparency by considering translated/translating bodies as a stumbling block of productive hesitation and necessary distortion.

The Dancer's Embodied Dramaturgy

During the rehearsal of *Froth on the Daydream* (2018), the dancer Paloma had just hopped off a plane that took her from Madrid to Newcastle. Unlike other forms of art, dance and theatre practices are based on the physical movement of interpreters, meaning that the material medium of the work of art (the dancers' bodies, the music, the props, etc.) and the authors/performers (again the dancers) have to translate themselves to different locations, adapting themselves to always new publics and performing and non-performing spaces.

Moreover, working with different choreographers and techniques, they must adapt to the choreographers' requests and visions what Angélique Willkie calls the performers' embodied dramaturgy⁶⁰. With this she means the singularities of their bodies in terms of age, race, gender, but also movement qualities, training, experiences—everything that distances them from being a neutral canvas and charges them with political and creative valences. A similar stance is taken by Franko, who revises Derrida's treatment of dance as trace by adding that this trace requires physical embodiment, as the body inflects meaning and results in instantiations which are performance-specific and non-repeatable (Franko, 2008).

By focusing on the performers' bodies as the sites of a personal dramaturgy, Willkie draws attention to the material aspect of the dance medium and to the subjectivities of the dancers as participants in the creative process. They are not fixed but in perpetual development, as human bodies build a “cumulative subjectivity”, an “embodied history of the subject [made of] a list of I can's” (Noland, 2009: 4). Reflections echoed by Eliot Smith, who considers the way dancers “bring their world to the stage” (Appendix 5: 10) and how working with different choreographers translates to an enriched movement vocabulary, or by choreographer Mathieu Geffré, who specifies “I do work with human beings, not on my own with an idea, which is, you know, my own agenda” (Appendix 8: 1). During our interview, Geffré highlighted that it was important for him to start from the company's characteristics (their theatricality in this case) and to shape the choreography around the singular dancers, their look, their movement qualities, and their performing skills. This informed the repartition of roles, with Moscardo and Pini playing the naïve, younger characters and Martin and Smith interpreting the more mature roles, creating an opposition between innocence and maturity that echoes the many contrasts

⁶⁰ This interest is pursued through the two-year funded project *Dramaturgical Ecologies*, dedicated to the investigation of creative processes as a site of negotiation of agency and vision between performer, dramaturg, and choreographer, where dramaturgy is considered as a slippery role functioning as a medium for distributed agency. A first output of these reflections is the collaborative article “Ecologies of Dramaturgy: A Conversation” (Baird et al., 2021).

which can be found in Vian's novel *L'écume des Jours*. In the case of Compagnie Marie Chouinard, dancer Valeria Galluccio recalled the almost instinctual way in which Chouinard conducts casting, looking at the human and stylistic side of a dancer before the technical one, although this still plays an important role. All the dancers I interviewed from Compagnie Marie Chouinard, who had been working with her from nine to twenty-five years, agreed on the impossibility to disentangle their felt experiences from the way they move, and on the importance of their embodied histories in producing and interpreting dance material, an aspect that is acknowledged and encouraged by Marie Chouinard. Carol Prieur puts it as "she wants you to be there as the individual you are, with your interest, your experience, your perspective on life. Because that's your humanity, and she needs all those very different humanities to be present in her work" (Appendix 2: 4), while Valeria Galluccio emphasises the dynamic quality of her engagement with the pieces of repertoire, saying that:

Ti dà, comunque, una libertà in quanto interprete perché...sono diversa, una Valeria di oggi non può essere la Valeria di nove anni fa quando è entrata in compagnia, e danzo spesso gli stessi pezzi di repertorio, però c'è tutto un altro sentire perché ho vissuto altre cose nella mia vita, mi sono innamorata, mi sono lasciata...quindi comunque il mio corpo ha un'impronta, un'imprinting, e ha una memoria che io porto nella mia danza ogni giorno e ogni volta. (Appendix 3: 4)⁶¹.

Similarly, Isabelle Poirier, interviewed in April 2020, reflected on the effect of quarantine and lockdown on her embodied history, a question worth exploring in future research. What is referred to in this passage as the dancer's individual style can be best described, following Scialom and Machado de Almeida, as the dancer's dramaturgical state of the body (2019). Drawing on Laban's work, they discuss how elements such as respiration, dynamics of expansion and contraction, spatial directions, weight, tensions, and scope of movement compose a dancer's cinesphere, giving each performer a specific form, dynamism, and

⁶¹ "she gives you a freedom as a performer because...I am different, the Valeria of today cannot be the Valeria of nine years ago when she became part of the company, and I often dance the same pieces from the repertoire, but there is an altogether different way of feeling, because I lived different things in my life, because I fell in love, because I broke up...so my body has *un enprint*, an imprinting, and a memory that I bring to my dance every day and every time" (my translation).

presence (2019: 105). Dramaturgical states of the body are cultural as much as personal. Moreover, by engaging in different exercises and techniques, the dancers can generate a certain dramaturgical state, outfitted to the present choreography and to the choreographer's requirement. A dramaturgical state can belong to a performance—and I think of Chouinard's words on the beginning of a creation as “la recherche d'un état” (2000, company website)⁶² — but also more vaguely to the ‘tacit archewriting’ of a company, a term I borrow from Pouillaude (2017) and which I explain more in depth below. Dramaturgical states depend as much on the idiosyncrasy of the performer as on cultural preferences and training, cultivated “techniques of the body” (Mauss, 1935).

Hence, in introducing the idea of *translated bodies*, it must be stressed that these bodies are not a white canvas on which to superimpose layers of styles and techniques. They come with their own embodied dramaturgy that will be in a relationship of negotiation and dialogue with the choreographer's dramaturgy in the construction of the piece. In similar ways, we can think of translators not only as empty vessels of someone else's words but as having their own personal writing style and their own personal understanding of the world generated by their situated experience as embodied human beings. I will expand on this point in the last part of this chapter.

Translated Bodies

In *Unworking Choreography* (2017), Pouillaude reflects on what it means to say that dance does not possess works, insofar as it is an ephemeral art. In identifying dance as an oral art, transferred from person to person, he asks:

What does it mean to pass on or hand down a dance? What is it to wrench a dance from the body to which it first belonged? And what does it mean to see that dance revived on another body, appearing at once the same and different? And, finally, is there such a thing as a dance that is not idiosyncratic, that escapes the idiolect of the individual body? You show me a movement, I perform it. That already implies several processes of translation (2017: 215).

⁶² “The search for a state” (my translation).

To explain this paradox of similarity-in-difference and difference-in-similarity he resorts to what Gérard Genette calls ‘allographic reduction’, implying that all gestural transmission entails a reduction to singularity: “I raise my arm and you do the same but to what extent is it the same?” (2017: 216). What this means is that the elements of that gestures will be parsed into essential and contingent. Maybe we will consider it important that the raised hand be the left, and that it be raised at approximately 45, 90 or 180 degrees; we might focus on the approximate speed of movement and on the arm being stretched or relaxed, but might overlook the fact that a person does it with the chest slightly bent forward while another keeps it backward, that one keeps the hand still and flexed and the other lets it move a little, or we might miss the raised index finger in one dancer’s hand, a silent spy of their embodied history as a classic dancer. While in some cases, like western classic dance, there is an archewriting to instruct on and evaluate these gestures (ex. *Pliè*, *tendù*, *port-de-bràs* and so on), in the case of contemporary dance no such archewriting is readily available; moreover, the works do not depend on a previous text but rather on the process that brings them into being, which most often involves (structured) improvisations, where the dancers generate material to be reworked and assembled. To keep oral mutations as low as possible and an overall consistency to the piece, it is necessary that the dancers’ bodies be “immers(ed) and slowly impregnate(ed) with a choreographic idiom” (2017: 228), that they be moulded so as to incorporate a “collection of postural and motor principles” (2017: 228). This is the role of dance technique, which Pouillaude defines as “a systematic collection of gestures which are codified, repeatable and transmissible” (2017: 253). They are isolated from within the continuum of all possible movements and filled with meaning, intended to implicitly construct “a common body, a tacit postural and dynamic code signifying particular (shared) modes of action alongside repertoire” (ibid). A dancer transforms these gestural cues into bodily schemata that over time, training, and habituation become automatic.

Sally Ann Ness pushes this argument forward by considering not only how gestures inscribe themselves into the bodily schemata of dancers, but also on the very bodies and their bone structures, as made evident, for example, by the arched feet of ballerinas. She maintains that the claim for dance as an ephemeral art is “a spectatorial-based assumption” (2008: 22), forgetful of the fact that the dancer’s body is a “monument given to technical discourse” (ibid), whose perdurance is sustained by institutions of training. One could therefore be able to read the visible inscriptions left on the bodies of dancers from various styles and techniques as the articulation of a technical discourse which underpins specific concepts and worldviews. She performs such reading by comparing the concept of balance created by western classic dance (balance corresponds to momentary stillness; it must be aimed at and struck) and Balinese dance, where motion is instead essential to balance.

Similarly, Dana Mills talks of the translation of other bodies’ movement into one’s own as ‘inscription’, what “actively writ(es) upon another body and leav(es) its mark” (2017: 16). This process of inscribing bodies is also a locus of agency and intervention, the creation of a symbolic world of shared sensation and alternative ways of being together. Drawing on Foucault’s notion of biopolitics and performance theory’s stress on the effects of discourse on bodies, she argues that the practice of dance can reverse the paradigm by enabling “the performance of a discursive practice with and through the body” (Franko, 2011: 103). As much as the body is moulded by discursive practices, it can also shape and disseminate its own. Mills (2017) attributes this function to what she calls the ‘sic-sensuous’, the slippage of meaning occurring from a performance to the other as the result of aesthetic ruptures and interpretation. If Mills remains somewhat vague on the actual process of the sic-sensuous, Carrie Noland devotes a brilliantly written book to it, or better, to developing a theory of embodied agency as performativity starting from the body’s experience (2009). Frustrated as much as inspired by Butler’s own theory of performativity and its rootedness in language,

Noland asks how individual agency manifests itself at the level of the body “despite the enormous pressure of social conditioning” (2009: 1). She delves into the work of Marcel Mauss, André Leroy, Bill Viola, Herny Michaux, Judith Butler and Franz Fanon to articulate a view of subjects as constructed within but also enabled by regularized and constraining repetition of norms. If it is true that techniques shape the body and make routinized movement mechanic, their repetition is also what produces kinaesthetic awareness, while the “fragile period of instruction” (Noland, 2009: 31) requires one to see norms from outside and therefore open to the possibility of questioning them. This applies to the turn-out position of ballet as much as to the norms implicit in language, which are best felt by a language learner or a translator as they are required to pay greater attention to them. Noland’s proposition that sustained attention to kinaesthetic sensation brushes against received norms and opens a space of embodied agency is exemplified by Henry Michaux’s discovery of a new moving self through repeated gestural inscription in the fittingly entitled book of drawings *Mouvement* (1952). It is also confirmed by Chouinard’s reflections on her own movement research as she practiced ballet alone:

So, I do the *plié*, I do the *relevé*, the *port de bras*, and then suddenly, being alone, my hand, my body, my *plié*, started to deviate from what was supposed to be, and I would bring myself back, to the *plié*, the *relevé*, and the *tendu*, the *port de bras* [...] my body was shifting, undulating differently [...] and I suddenly realized that if I would let go to the impulse of my harm, my torso, to move differently, if I would follow that, I would somehow step into another dimension (2012, minutes 05:30-6:30).

It should not come as a surprise that Chouinard translated Michaux’s drawings—the result of a gestural routine—into a dance performance in 2005, as both artists share an interest in the leeway made possible by technique. In the inward look that is the exploration of one’s own body in space and time and the outward movement that is the communication and inscription of this body onto others, the body becomes “a space of inscription in and of itself, that in the process of inscribing upon itself in dance realises its open-endedness” (Mills, 2017: 26).

To talk of translated bodies means to acknowledge this movement that projects the material created by, in and for a body onto the body of others, inscribing them with its stylistic hallmark. These bodies already possess their own embodied dramaturgies and have been inscribed upon by the techniques and practices that informed their training. This does not necessarily imply a temporal order by which embodied dramaturgy comes before techniques or the reverse: it should be clear by now that they are co-constructed and develop in dynamic dialogue and interaction. As Brandstetter remarks: “the human body is its own particular arena of movements and sediments of ‘interweavings’. This body is (in itself) not one” (2015a: 416). She further argues that dancers’ bodies are:

A public place, where different cultures and practices of movement, body techniques and somatic experiences overlap—a polyrhythmic, stereophonic, multi-voiced, multilingual concurrency and non-simultaneity of layers, whose woven patterns keep generating differences and frictions. Against the background of the expectations and experiences today’s dancers are faced with in auditions, the body that comes to the fore is a scene of “interweavings” of various dance techniques and somatic practices (2015a: 416).

She calls this interweaving ‘transtylisation’ and equates the dancers’ bodies to corporeal palimpsests. This reflects the working practice of contemporary dancers, who usually work on several projects and with various choreographers at the same time, accumulating heterogeneous embodied histories that will inform their performances. For example, the dancers of Compagnie Marie Chouinard are guaranteed thirty weeks of work a year with her, weeks in which they must be completely available, but can devote the rest of the time to their own projects or work with others. Asked if these other experiences enter in dialogue or are kept apart from her main body of work with Chouinard, Carol Prieur answered:

It’s such a blurry line, because it’s me, it’s the same person and depending what I am living at the moment, or depending what I am going through or feeling, or thinking, researching, that is still me, it’s still my physicality, or how I am in movement that I am going to be carrying from one project...and then it really depends on the directions that I am given or the choices that the creators make to form or use my capacities [...] it’s a whole process and with time you are able to open other doorways into yourself, and that’s what I like of working with different people, because they are able to open different rooms in us, different colours and textures...(Appendix 2: 4).

Within the same company there might arise a need to better explore a particular movement technique and so intensive workshops will be organised to delve into new practices collectively. This is again the case with Compagnie Marie Chouinard where, depending on the creation, experts from different disciplines are called in. Isabelle Poirier mentioned in this respect the creation of *Body_Remix/Les_Variations_Goldberg* (2005) when they took classes of ballet, while Carol Prieur recalled the clown workshop undertaken for *Gymnopedie* (2013) and how going through it together allowed for a communicative memory (Assmann, 2010), to which they could later refer to in the creation process. Similarly, the dancers of ESD have a strong Graham technique component in their training, which acts as a foundation, “a very strong core to project out” (Smith, Appendix 5: 5). At the same time, they work as freelancers with other choreographers employing different styles, and occasionally with guest choreographers like Geffré, who trained in the Cunningham technique.

This gives us a perspective of the dancers’ bodies as non-neutral palimpsests where different idioms and techniques inscribe themselves while being inflected by them, of subjectivities constructed on the basis of heterogeneous embodied histories. When these histories are in long-standing immersion in a specific idiom, then the term tacit archewriting, introduced by Genette and employed by Pouillaude (2017), comes into play. Indeed, Pouillaude maintains that even in those cases where no technical dance vocabulary is given, like contemporary dance, a certain form of tacit archewriting is still operating inside each dance company, an idiom passed through daily classes and unconscious mimicry which, despite the dancers’ singularities, “transform them into some bodily clay, allowing them to develop similar habits of posture and movement” generating “a common body” (2017: 225). This is echoed in the dancers’ interviews as Valeria talked about Chouinard’s preference for bodies that are technical but could still be *moulded*, while Isabelle mentioned the need to go through the qualities of

Chouinard's body— "breath, the spine, the way you look, the way you use space and multiple directions" (Appendix 1: 7)—when remounting pieces outside the company. This tacit archewriting of the two companies, which I would assimilate to an underlining dramaturgical state of the body, is going to be the focus of the next section.

Compagnie Marie Chouinard: Listening, Abandonment and Metamorphosis

Marie Chouinard started her career as a soloist in 1978, choreographing her own performances and devising her own tacit archewriting. She created her company in 1990 and presented the first ensemble piece with seven dancers, *Les Trous du Ciel*, in 1991. As the company became more and more established, she went on choreographing solos and ensemble pieces that gained attentive and affectionate publics throughout the world, continuing her movement research. As briefly mentioned above, her first foray into choreography began when she was kicked out from her classic dance classes and went on practising ballet by herself, in so doing creating the conditions for attending more deeply to her kinaesthetic sensations and discovering new movement possibilities (2012b). This deep listening to the body's inner intelligence echoes Noland's act of situating embodied agency in cultivated kinaesthetic sensation, facilitated by training and repetition (2009). And indeed, listening and paying attention to the body and its surrounding environment are actions that repeatedly come up in Chouinard's and her dancers' words. She describes her creation process as beginning in silence and immobility, a listening that absorbs in depths, a state of openness which volunteers a movement, an image, a blurred intuition which later find their structure, time, and articulation (Chouinard, 2012b). Such attentive listening as a fundamental component of Chouinard's work is confirmed by the way her dancers talk about her creative process and the dramaturgical state required to perform it. Referring to the former, Carol talks of how Marie "allows herself to be in a lake or in a river and she allows for that stream of consciousness, that stream, to take her, and she allows for that, and then eventually she defines it" (Appendix 2: 6). Engaging with her work requires "an

abandonment, of having to let go, of being in a place of the unknown” (Appendix 2: 9). As for the latter, Valeria gives a specific description of Chouinard’s body as one that is “pronto, sensibile, all’ascolto” (Appendix 3: 11)⁶³. She talks of a hypersensitive listening to the body, a listening without judgement that allows for acceptance and transformation in the present moment and equates this state with the disposition of an interpreter. To make things clearer, she describes how her process of improvisation begins:

Se dovessi iniziare ad improvvisare, osservo: il verde degli alberi, ma allo stesso tempo il suono degli uccelli, e quindi questi sono già due input che vengono da fuori e che mi fanno connettere con il movimento, poi c’è il cane che passa, vedi, il mio sguardo si muove e naturalmente la mia mano si è mossa [she extends her left arm forward creating a 30 degrees angle at the level of her elbow and a 45 degrees angle with her left hand whose fingers point right]. Quindi c’è questa ipersensibilità di essere nel momento presente con tutto quello che accade, quindi c’è un’apertura dei sensi a 360 gradi, quindi questo è un po’ il danzatore di Marie, questo corpo pronto, c’è sempre un essere pronto, sensibile all’ascolto... (Appendix 3: 10-11)⁶⁴.

This heightened somatic attention⁶⁵ is also referred to by Isabelle Poirier, who says that on her first day at the studio with Chouinard she thought she had never danced before: “I had that feeling of stepping into something totally new, the awareness of my body, how I use my breath...” (Appendix 1: 1). A mode of somatic attention that in its openness realises its relationality with the entities surrounding it, which I associate to David Abram’s call for a perceptual disposition grounded in phenomenology as a way of regaining contact with the more-than-human. In his fascinating book *The Spell of the Sensuous*, Abram explores the “perceptual shift that made possible the reduction of the animal and earth to objects” (1997: 26). He describes how human subjectivity is formed in and through contact with the more-than-human and is therefore impossible to clearly separate from them—a position long

⁶³ “Ready, sensitive, listening” (my translation).

⁶⁴ If I had to start improvising, I observe: the green of the trees, but at the same time the chirping of birds, and so these are already two inputs that come from the outside and allow me to connect with the movement, then there is a passing dog, you see, my eyes are moving and naturally my hand moved [she extends her left arm forward creating a 30 degrees angle at the level of her elbow and a 45 degrees angle with her left hand whose fingers point right]. So, there is this hyper-sensitivity of being in the present moment with everything that happens, an opening of the senses to 365 degrees, this is the dancer of Marie, this body ready, sensitive, listening...” (my translation).

⁶⁵ Somatic attention is a term I borrow from Csordas who defines it as “culturally elaborated ways of attending to and with one’s own body in surroundings that include the embodied presence of others” (1993: 128).

sustained by indigenous communities and confirmed by recent research in cognitive studies and philosophy of the mind (Abrahamsson and Simpson, 2011; Gallagher and Zahari, 2012). I believe that the hypersensitive, listening body fostered by Chouinard is one that weaves an ongoing dialogue between the perceiving body and what is perceived, a silent conversation held with the more-than-human, an “improvised duet between my animal body and the fluid, breathing landscape it inhabits” (Abram, 1997: 41). Consider how Abram’s words resonate with Valeria’s:

When my body responds to the mute solicitations of another being, that being responds in turn, disclosing to my senses some new aspect or dimension that in turn invites further exploration. By this process, my sensing body gradually attunes itself to the style of the other presence—to the way this stone, or tree, or table, as the other seems to adjust itself to my own style and sensitivity. [...] Things disclose themselves to our immediate perception as vectors, as styles of unfolding—not as finished chunks of matter given once and for all, but as dynamic ways of engaging the senses and modulating the body. Each thing, each phenomenon, has the power to reach us and influence us. (1996: 41, 56).

It is in light of this understanding of a deeply attuned and relational body that Chouinard’s use of prostheses must be regarded. From *L’Amande et le Diamant* (1996), in which the dancers wear rings that send wireless semi-midi notes to trigger a sampler and create music as they dance, to *Body_Remix* (2005), where the movement possibilities offered by different types of tools (pointe shoe, crutches, horizontal bars, improbable prosthetic devices) are explored in full, Chouinard explores the space of relationality and agency between different bodies and objects. Voice, ever present in Chouinard’s oeuvre, is also to be understood as an extension of the body, generated by its dialogue with movement, facilitated by an extremely flexible spinal work that connects the movement of the arms with that of the spine, breath, and the legs (Poirier, Appendix 1). A body that is constantly engaged, present, in metamorphosis, as confirmed by Chouinard in the conference on *bOdY rEmIx* (2012). Discussing the origin of her idea for the piece, she referred to the experience of sleeping on the grass under the sun and how it made her feel her body in a different form. She explained that if she drew that body according to how she felt it, it would be a strange body, with bigger and smaller parts, united to the rest,

so it is not about transforming the body but about perceiving it: “Si on est vraiment dans la sensation, déjà le corps, il peut de tout. On n’a même pas besoin de le transformer, on a juste besoin de l’écouter” (Chouinard, 2012, partie 3, min: 10:00)⁶⁶.

To help the dancers be present to what surrounds them and to keep the singularity of improvisation even in performances that have been repeated many times, Chouinard has devised a system of movement, which means that the dancers lack a properly set choreography they repeated each time. What they have is precise instructions regarding spacing, timing, music, the lighting, the dancers’ positions in relation to it, and a deep understanding of the system of movement employed and how to use it. As Valeria explains,

Il sistema di movimento Marie l’ha creato perché vuole lasciare il danzatore anche libero di respirare. E allora, per esempio, il sistema di movimento può essere che, in un assolo che ho di 10 o 15 secondi, ho le braccia che devono muoversi in maniera *architecture*, si chiama. Quindi sono dei movimenti lunghi di braccia, angolari, quindi ho le braccia di una qualità di movimento, le gambe di un altro ritmo e devo seguire la musica in un certo modo. Cioè comunque é ben stabilito, però in tutto questo io posso fare dieci braccia e due gambe ed essere su un *cue* musicale, oppure posso fare due braccia, dieci gambe e prendere tre *cues* musicali... (Appendix 3: 3-4)⁶⁷.

She describes the beginning of the choreography *Le Sacre du Printemps*, accompanied by slow music whereby the dancers can decide to start moving their heads forward and up towards the end of the music or right from the beginning, although they know that they will have to keep the movement until the end. This means that even during the performance, they are constantly required to make choices and adapt to the choices of others, which they do not know in advance. This imbues the performance with the improvisational qualities that characterised its composition and allows the dancers to be in the moment, making choices and feeling what they

⁶⁶ “If one really stays with sensation, the body itself can already do everything. One doesn’t need to transform it, it’s unnecessary, one just needs to listen to it” (my translation).

⁶⁷ “Marie created the system of movement because she wants to let the dancer free to breathe. So, for example, the system of movement means that in a solo of 10 or 15 seconds I have to move my arm in a way we call *architecture*, so long, angular movement of the arms, the fingers must be linear, and at the same time my legs must move at a different rhythm, so I have my arms of a certain quality of movement, my legs following another rhythm and must follow the music in a particular way. So, it is well set, but in this I can decide to do ten arms and two legs and be on one musical cue or I can do two arm, ten legs and be on three musical cues...” (my translation).

felt initially. Different systems of movement, like the *système architecture* or the *système mon corps-ton corps*, come with different tasks and suggest different dramaturgical states of the body (Poirier, Appendix 1). According to Pouillaude, this method of working is characteristic of some contemporary choreographers. Addressing the perceived clash between fixed text and ephemeral performance, they open up writing, creating open structures that can be re-experienced by the dancers in each occurrence. By making use of the same kinaesthetic themes and rhythmical structures without fixing the form, the dancers can reactivate the core experience of improvisation, so that what is repeated in subsequent performances is the experience rather than the form (2017). This is highlighted by Prieur who states that each performance is about abandonment and finding the balance between knowing and not knowing (Appendix 2: 9).

Therefore, it is very important that the tacit archewriting of the company be deeply understood and embodied by the dancers. This consists, as mentioned above, of a very fluid use of the spine; of a visceral voice coming from movement itself and from the way the breath is engaged; of the use of multiple directions at the same time, so that if the elbow and hips are pointing right, the ear and chest are pointing left; and of the approach to space along straight lines. To develop these qualities, the dancers attend voice coaching and periods of training upon joining the company, although mastering the archewriting and being able to abandon oneself to it requires a longer time, as Valeria reminds:

C'è qualcosa che ti porta, sempre. Perché il corpo ha una memoria muscolare...non all'inizio che tu ancora impari le cose...diciamo dopo un tre, quattro anni che lavori con Marie sai che ti puoi iniziare ad abbandonare, perché il tuo corpo sa i movimenti. E là inizia la parte, il *fun*, perché ti sorprende da sola in scena, cioè, io a volte in scena mi son ritrovata a emozionarmi, ad avere davvero dei momenti di grazia, impagabili. (Appendix 3: 5)⁶⁸.

⁶⁸ “There is something that leads you anyway...because the body has a muscular memory...not in the beginning when you are still learning but, say, after three or four years that you work with Marie, you can abandon yourself, because your body knows the movements. And that's when it becomes fun, because you surprise yourself on stage, I found myself being moved, I had invaluable moments of grace! (my translation).

Eliot Smith Dance (ESD) and Mathieu Geffré: Archewritings in Dialogue

The idea of inscription as inward-outward movement came to the fore in the language used by Mathieu Geffré. In our interview he referred to the movements as *coming from his body* and to the dancers' *writing* as opposed to his *writing*, but also to the necessity of navigating between the two. In the specific case of this performance, the bodies inscribed upon by and responding to Geffré's choreographies are bodies highly shaped by the Graham technique. Founded in 2011, ESD describes itself as a company whose work is built on strength, physical speed, and rich emotional narratives. It performs works by Eliot Smith (artistic director of ESD) and by invited choreographers, often in non-traditional venues like museums and memorial halls, in an attempt to bring dance to smaller locations. Its repertoire is tightly interwoven with English North-Eastern themes and culture and its training includes one to one classes of the Graham technique twice a week, complemented by DVD and YouTube material to be analysed on one's own. A normal Graham class begins on the floor with bounces. One contraction is followed by sixteen bounces and releases, all of this sustained by the breath which, as in yoga practice, plays a fundamental role (Redfern and Smith, 2017). In the setting of new pieces, and especially in those that pivot around English North-Eastern figures, like *Pitman* (2016), *Portraits of Courage* (2017), and *On Red Kites* (2018), the dancers are required to delve into the history of their subjects, visit museums and archives, as well as interview people. But what is the Graham technique?

Martha Graham is one of the most celebrated artists of the twentieth century, a pioneer of western modern dance and a revolutionary in many ways. Following the steps of Isadora Duncan, who liberated herself from pointe shoes and corset to dance her own choreographies barefoot, Martha Graham created her own style, her own technique, her own voice as both a political and an artistic subject. Her dance technique is based on contraction and release, using the solar plexus as the focal point in a daring move away from ballet's focus on the limbs. Hers

is a style highly influenced by the female body that shaped it: the contraction of the pelvic muscles that causes the lumbar spine to flex, the pelvis to tilt, and the diaphragm to relax starts indeed from the vagina (Mills, 2017). It thus turns what was conceived as vulnerable into the seat of women's power (Heil, 2016). Accordingly, it is the torso that guides the movements, as they all begin in the centre of the body to move out, while the eyes (related to the head and seeing) are replaced by the hips (linked to the core and sexuality) in marking the turns. The female abdomen is in this way designated as the space devoted to the constitution of the self (Heil, 2016). A very accurate and somatic description of a contraction is provided by Yamit Salazar, rehearsal director of the company as well as one of its dancers and guest choreographer:

Imagine your body is being pushed by a heavy mass, like pressure against your stomach when walking through water or the moment when you are about to go inside a cold swimming pool and your whole body reacts. Mainly your upper body is lifted, and you create tension through your lower abs (Salazar, in Redfern and Smith, 2017: 106).

Other characteristics of Graham's style are the continuity and swiftness of movement, the demand that the body be alert, almost instinctual, and the emphasis placed on breath. As Heil beautifully puts it: "in ballet you hide that you are a breathing, imperfect human, whereas in Graham's not only you show that you are breathing but use your breath to support your movement or to initiate it" (2016: 142). A similar remark can be made with regards to the use and embrace of the floor as a space of support as opposed to the rejection of it that characterises ballet's verticality. The Graham's body is a body that is allowed to breathe, fall, sense and express its own drives. It is recognised as a physical, emotional, and spiritual body. Principal ESD dancer Gemma Paganelli describes her sensations of performing contractions and releases as "the physical body is awakened through the muscular fibres of the deepest core muscles; the emotional body is called to be expressed through the guts; the spiritual body is released and expanded through the spine" (Redfern and Smith, 2017: 108).

The company's grounding in Graham is visible in *Poppy*, the third piece performed in the 2018 premiere of a triple bill comprising *Froth on the Daydream* and *Artemis Clowns*. Dancing bare chest to the live music played by trumpeter Jason Holcomb, the dancers display a strong physicality as they perform strong, bound, and direct movements, often in canons or facing different sides of the stage. The choreography is a play on movement and static poses that emphasises angular shapes and breath, perfectly audible from the *parterre*. In the duets, the dancers partner each other regardless of gender, while the ending is slow and solemn. This stands in contrast with the vitality and quirky movements that characterise the first part of *Froth*, and with Geffré's style, who, as mentioned above, was trained in the Cunningham technique. Cunningham, a former student of Graham and her principal dancer from 1939 to 1945, went on proposing a radically different body and aesthetic in his own dance company, founded in 1953. According to José Gil, fundamental traces of Cunningham's choreography are the rejection of expressive forms, the decentralization of space, the introduction of chance methods, and the disarticulation of body parts, choreographic sequences, and movement from music (2001, 2002). Rather than starting from emotions as the motor of movement, Cunningham's dancers focus their awareness on their energy, articulations, and movement, letting the latter elicit emotions, and not the reverse. Stage and body are emptied of representational referents, which allows for the construction of a plane of immanence in which all kind of virtual movements co-exist as possibility. This generates a multiplicity of virtual bodies in the dancers' body: Cunningham simply rejects the idea that the body is one and whole, and therefore his choreographies present "no organic image of the body as a finished whole" (Gil, 2002: 118).

While his approach has been generally regarded as purely formal and his aesthetic has been even defined as one of "indifference" (Roth, 1977), Copeland argues that Cunningham's massive departure from Graham's expressionist aesthetic is in fact linked to a "politics of

perception” (2004: 13) grounded in city life and in contemporary socio-cultural changes. While modern dancers believed in a return to the body and nature, Cunningham is highly sceptical of this approach and instead embraces the city, offering in his choreography the “dense spatial and rhythmic texture of urban life embodied in simultaneous occurrences, dissociation of what we see from what we hear, sudden reversals of direction, unpredictable entrances and exits” which do not represent the “photographic surface” of urban life, but rather embody its “deep structures” (Copeland, 2004: 11). Copeland explains Cunningham’s suspicion of personal taste and of the body as the locus of truth by situating him in his context, one of information surplus and of subtle manipulation of people’s desires conducted by advertising agencies through the use of depth psychology. Aware of the many ways in which bodies are socially and culturally conditioned, Cunningham devised chance methods as a way to circumvent such conditioning and open a fissure where new movement could emerge, thus bridging modern and postmodern dance, or probably better said, anticipating the latter movement. To do this, he devised a tacit archewriting which combined ballet’s upright posture and fast footwork with modern dance’s flexible and curved waist, while emphasizing the disarticulation of body parts and movements, which could simultaneously work along different rhythmic and directional axes (2004).

While Geffré trained in the Cunningham technique, immersing his body in this archewriting, he himself considerably departed from Cunningham’s aesthetic and compositional preferences. Indeed, he declared himself uninterested in what he calls ‘architectural dance’— “the actual body in movement as a structure within the space” (Appendix 8: 9). His aim is to make choreographies that pivot around “the human on stage” (9) in a way readable and relatable for an ample public. Therefore, the idea of translating and revisiting already existing artworks as a way to make his pieces more accessible. The works he choreographs for his company *Rendezvous*, started in 2012 after a career as a dancer, mainly focus on concepts and stories related to the LGBTQ+ communities, although he also explores other narratives when working

as a guest choreographer. Music and cinema act as main sources of inspiration for him, helping him unravel narratives that make use of gestures and theatricality and engaging the audience's emotions. It is in the strong emphasis on narrative, theatricality, and politically driven works that Geffré and Smith's sensibilities meet, even before setting foot in the studio.

The Translator's Embodied Dramaturgy

The previous paragraphs explored the dancers' bodies in terms of their embodied dramaturgies and the tacit archewriting in which these are immersed, underlining the impossibility to detach the two, since they are in a relationship of entanglement and continuous dialogue. The way a body performs a certain technique inflects it. At the same time, learning or practising a technique influences the way a singular body can move. As Noland shows (2009), bodies are shaped by social and cultural conditioning, but it is the sustained attention to kinaesthetic sensation needed to learn and perform it that might brush up against received norms and open a space of embodied agency. This is reflected in Valeria's reflections about her ability to find moments of grace and agency on stage while performing Chouinard's work as coming from years of sustained somatic attention to the company's tacit archewriting (Appendix 3). What the concept of embodied dramaturgy does is to liberate the performer from the task of being neutral vehicles who must reproduce without distortion or noise and transform them into sources of movement, experiential agents of their own mobility. The question posed in this section is, therefore, whether a similar concept could be applied to translators, and what such a concept could do.

Discussions on translation and agency are not new to the field of TS: from feminist and postcolonial translators questioning the authority of the source text and problematising their conflictual relationship to it (Lotbinière-Harwood, 1991; Simon, 1996; von Flotow, 1997; Niranjana, 1992; Robinson, 1997; Bassnett and Trivedi, 1999; Castro and Ergun, 2017), to

texts dealing with ideology (Hermans, 1985; Venuti, 1992; Calzada Pérez, 2003), power (Alvarez and Vidal, 1996; Tymoczko and Gentzler, 2002; Tymoczko, 2007), and activism in translation (Baker, 2006; Tymoczko, 2010; Tahmasebian and Gould, 2020), the field of TS has been concerned with dismantling the notion of the translated text as unmediated since the cultural turn initiated in the 1980s and 90s. However, few publications have considered translators in their embodiment, “the process whereby collective behaviours and beliefs, acquired through acculturation, are rendered individual and “lived” at the level of the body” (Noland, 2009: 9)⁶⁹.

An attempt at doing so is Brian Mossop’s essay “Translator’s Intervention through Voice Selection” (2007), in which he purports to overcome the ‘foreignising’ versus ‘domesticating’ categories proposed by Venuti (1995) by positing the translator’s active selection of voice as an alternative. Acknowledging that a translator can shift between different voices in the same text, he proposes the choice of a “neutralizing” voice, whereby the translator uses their own style, a “ventriloquising” voice, through which the translator chooses the assumed style of the reader, and a “distancing” voice, when the translator tries to replicate the writer’s voice (Mossop, 2007). In so doing, Mossop rightfully asserts that translators have their own styles and voices which can and will show in the translated text; however, there are some problems with his model. First of all, it is not very clear how the ventriloquizing and distancing voice actually differ from domestication and foreignization: it is true that by positing voice selection he shifts the focus from the text to the translator’s intention, but equally true is that the translator’s intention is still to be inferred *a posteriori* from the text. Moreover, and more problematic, by calling the translator’s voice “neutralising”, Mossop runs the risk of reasserting

⁶⁹ Recent texts that overcome the Cartesian divide in their approach to translators are *Becoming a Translator* (1997, revised edition 2020) and *Translationality* (2017) by Douglas Robinson, *Re-embedding Translation Process Research* (Muñoz, 2016), *Manuale del Traduttore* (Ivančić, 2016), *Corps et Traduction, Traduction en Corps* (Hibs et al., 2018), *Translation and Affect* (Koskinen, 2020), and *Sense in Translation: Essays on the Bilingual Body* (Rabourdin, 2020).

the translator as a neutral canvas, a risk heightened by his attempt to separate the “neutralising voice” of the translator from their individual style. And what about the adoption of a ventriloquising or distancing voice? If translators’ voices coincide with their embodied dramaturgies as shown below, how is it possible to cancel it altogether when using another voice? Wouldn’t it be more accurate to consider it as always-already present?

My question is then, what can we gain by “propagating” (Bal, 2002) the concept of embodied dramaturgy to talk about the translator’s engagement with texts and worlds, not as a blank canvas, but as individuals possessing their own sensory profiles, writing preferences and socio-political beliefs. In *Travelling Concepts* (2002), Bal proposes a concept-based methodology as a way to navigate the wavy waters of interdisciplinary research. For Bal, concepts are suited to do this work as they represent “miniature theories”, and as such are flexible vehicles of understanding, interpretation, and verification, capable of travelling between disciplines, reorganising phenomena in new ways and, in so doing, generating meaning. However, she warns about simple “diffusion”, whereby a concept is simply used as a label and might therefore lose its conceptualising force. It is with this warning in mind that I use the term “propagation”—the phenomenon by which travelling concepts, if treated carefully, can become originating agents in other disciplines (Bal, 2002). This requires that the concept be checked before and after the travel, which is what I do in the next paragraphs with the help of Ana Pais (2016) and Henri Meschonnic (1970, 2011).

In *O Discurso da Cumplicidade* (2016), Ana Pais traces the origins of the concept-word ‘dramaturgy’ in Aristotle’s formulation as ‘dramatic composition’. She then follows its journeys and changing meanings, moving from Lessing, who introduces a form of institutional dramaturgy consisting in the selection of a theatre’s repertoire and the promotion of a theatrical image, to Brecht, who approaches it as the selection, composition, and montage of fragments

leading to multiple perspectives—what Pais calls a dramaturgy of reading. Next stages in the concept’s journey are post-dramatic theatre and performance. They acknowledge an expressivity inherent in the materials themselves and forge dramaturgies of space and spectator, seeing the dramaturge as a participant in “the construction of a new dramaturgical architecture of the senses” (2016: 56). Among the first choreographers to engage the dancers in the creation process by drawing on their own embodied dramaturgy and input is Pina Bausch, one of the most celebrated European choreographers and a pioneer in introducing the figure of the dramaturge to the dance field (Lepecki, 2010). From there, starting in the 1980s and 90s in Belgium and Holland, dramaturgy as a concept takes another leap and lands in the field of dance, where it becomes a mode of looking (Bleeker, 2003), a way of establishing relations between materials, or a process-oriented method of working that considers actors and dancers as active sources and contributors (Van Kerkhoven in Cools, 2005). This is a proper revolution, a shift from considering dancers and actors as passive media to acknowledging them as collaborators. It needs to be understood in the context of dramaturgy’s many travels: it is in post-dramatic theatre that for the first time the materials of a performance are considered as expressive in themselves; from this to regarding dancers as bearers and generators of meaning there are only a few steps. A few more, and dramaturgy finds itself “in an expanded field” (Sánchez, 2010), entering the realms of sociology, psychology, politics, and philosophy, becoming a corporeal, embodied way of looking and acting in the world, of making conceptual and aesthetic choices. In light of the concept’s flexibility, Pais goes as far as to call it a “hydra-concept” (2016: 29), whose core is given by the function of structuring and giving meaning and whose heads are as many as the fields in which it travels and generates new articulations, “new emphasis and ordering of phenomena” (Bal, 2002). What characterises dramaturgy, according to Pais (2016), is its invisibility: dramaturgy is the other side of staging. Where staging reveals theatrical choices, dramaturgy underpins them. Every performance then, “has

a double existence: a visible texture, constituted and underpinned by invisible folds” (2016: 86).

The travel through which I would like to escort dramaturgy is one that takes it to the field of translation, with a necessary passage through Meschonnic’s understanding of language, writing, and translation. Henri Meschonnic was a poet and translator whose interest in rhythm makes him probably the first scholar to approach language and translation as embodied practices. He derived his theory from Émile Benveniste’s stress on language as functional to living (in opposition to theories of languages that considered it as a formal system) and on writing as the place of enunciation of an I-thou relationship, as well as on the continuum *langue-language* posited by Ferdinand de Saussure. According to her English translator Pier-Pascal Boulanger, Meschonnic is the first to underline the indissociable nature of *langue* (the language system) and *language* (the ability to speak) and to oppose the split of form and meaning effected by structural linguists. Against what he saw as schizophrenic splits and binary views he posited the continuums of *form-sens*, *vivre-lire-dire*, and body-in-language. Living and expressing are homogeneous, while writing is a synthesis of subject and object-text and of object-text and reader. Rhythm, so central in all his reflections, is a continuous flow, what gives illocutionary force to a language and expresses the vital flow between living, writing, and reading. The body-in-language sets forth to bridge the gap formed between body and mind, *vivre et dire*. It is embodied in the poem, defined by Meschonnic as “the transformation of a form of life by a form of language and the transformation of a form of language by a form of life” (Boulanger, 2011). What counts then, is not only what a text says, but what it does: Meschonnic’s theory of writing and translating implies a theory of rhythm and affect and places the body before its expression through thought. The continuum *vivre-lire-dire* foregrounds an embodied dramaturgy by specifying that “the subject organises the value of a text on the basis of her subjectivity acquired through life” (2011: 24), where *lire-dire* is necessarily a part of

vivre. Subjects and texts are firmly situated in contexts (a text expresses a *je-ici-maintenant*) by the act of utterance, “through which the signifiers of a text are actualised by a subject whose activity is historically, culturally and ideologically situated” (2011: 24). Writing puts into dialogue the individual with the social, expressing in a single text varied and contrasting ideologies. Therefore, the text is in constant becoming, it is a place of interaction made of conflicts and contradictions producing indefinite repetitions of reading (1970: 71). It is this firmly embodied view of language and expression that makes Meschonnic state “il y a du cri, une contrainte, dans l’écriture: on écrit avec son corps entier” (1970: 183)⁷⁰ and “no flesh, sheer meat, no neurons in a poem” (2011: 95).

How is this embodied dramaturgy of the translator present in the text? Returning to Pais’ articulation of dramaturgy as the invisible choices underpinning the visible side of staging, we can similarly think of poetics as the study of the visible thematic, stylistic, and formal features of a text (Meschonnic, 2011), and of a translation’s dramaturgy as the invisible but nonetheless present choices made by translators as they rewrite the text in another language or media, choices that are often recoverable from translator’s diaries. These choices are motivated by research and reasoning as much as by the translator’s embodied dramaturgy and manifest in tiny details, like the usage of “begin” instead of “start” that prompts the question “where does one language come from?” for Schwartz and de Lange (Schwartz and de Lange, 2006:19).

To talk of translators as having their own embodied dramaturgy is to recognise them as situated subjectivities, stumbling blocks in the flow of apparently unmediated meaning, sources as well as vehicles of form-sense. Translation can then be understood as an “énonciation spécifique d’un sujet historique, interaction de deux poétiques, décentrement⁷¹, le dedans-dehors d’une

⁷⁰ “There is a cry, a constraint in writing: one writes with their whole body” (my translation).

⁷¹ Meschonnic’s notion of *decentration* versus *annexion* predates Venuti’s famous “foreignising” and “domesticating” techniques (1995). *Ethics and Politics of Translation* is the first of Meschonnic’s texts to be

langue et de textualisation de cette langue” (Meschonnic, 1970: 307-309)⁷². If “dire que l’écrivain va du réel au livre et le traducteur d’un livre à un livre, s’est de méconnaître ce qu’on sait aujourd’hui, qu’il y a toujours déjà eu des livres entre l’expérience et le livre” (1970 : 360)⁷³, then translation is, once again, *ex-materia creation*, the “écriture d’une lecture-écriture, aventure personnelle et non-transparence, constitution d’un langage-système dans la langue-système tout comme ce qu’on appelle ouvre-original” (1970: 354)⁷⁴.

Returning to the issue of voice mentioned earlier, performer, dramaturge and scholar Angélique Willkie reflects on her career in light of the French word *interprète*—simultaneously meaning interpreter and performer—as an ability to take on different voices and masks, of embodying others in ways that are considered authentic. She asks, authentic as opposed to what? According to which factors is a performance (or a translation) considered authentic? While a performance (or a translation) involves many subjectivities—performer, dramaturg, choreographer, stage director, technicians, publics (or, translator, writer, proof-reader, graphics, editors, readers)—its authenticity is still tightly linked to the author’s intention. At the same time, the performer (or the translator) needs to generate and give away material for the choreography and appropriate what is proposed to them, maintaining a dialogic relationship. As this relationship is not represented by contemporary rhetoric around authentic meaning and authenticity, she proposes replacing these terms and their attending beliefs with “impermanent meaning” and “negotiated authenticity” (Willkie, 2016: 5). By doing so she stresses that form-sense is not fixed or permanent but rather *constructed* by the *interprètes* on the basis of a dialogue created

translated into English, unarguably the hegemonic language of knowledge production for the past decades, and as such has received far less attention than it deserved.

⁷² “A specific enunciation of a historical subject, an interaction of two poetics, *decentrement*, the inside-outside of a language system and its textualization” (my translation).

⁷³ “To say that the writer goes from the real to the book and the translator goes from a book to a book is to disregard what we know today that there have been always already some books between one’s experience and one’s book” (my translation).

⁷⁴ “Writing a reading-writing, personal adventure and non-transparency, the building of a personal speaking system (*language-système*) within the language system (*langue-système*), just like the so-called original work” (my translation).

between the work, its culture, and their personal embodied dramaturgy. A *je-ici-maintenant*, as Meschonnic would put it. Hence the *interprète*, in Willkie's opinion, partakes of "a long process of appropriations—of languages, of cultures, of values, of aesthetics" through acts of "creative possessions and dispossessions" (2016: 10) which ultimately feed their subjectivities.

Interestingly enough, Willkie's words on performers echo those of translators like Susan Bassnett, who in "Writing and Translating" talks about the process by which translating Alejandra Pizarnik's poems affected her writing style, which started mirroring that of Pizarnik. At the same time, she was giving away "part of [her] personal poetic lexicon" to the translations (Bassnett, 2006: 182). Another translator who wrote extensively about her own bodily engagement with translated texts is Carol Maier, who also stressed the image of the *interprète* as both translator and performer: "the image of the translator as actor appealed to me because it called to mind movement and sound" (1984: 5). She reflects on her physical movement while translating and on the act of taking on another voice while simultaneously being there with her own:

As I look at the words in front of my eyes, I must train myself to listen carefully to two voices, one that accompanies the printed text and another that speaks, albeit faintly, in my own tongue. My hand must become accustomed to following the sound of the second voice, although it is never unaware of the first, nor of the configuration of the page, against which its own inscriptions will be measured [...]. Sometimes I wish I could write with both hands, for at the same time I could take dictation from the second voice and scribble responses in my journal, jotting down thoughts for further reference (Maier, 1984: 7).

In "Translating as a Body: Meditations on Meditations" she begins by saying that "the body constitutes a text in the passive way of 'constitutes' and in the active way of 'elaborates' (2006: 138). Remembering Willkie's words on the performers constituting themselves in the appropriation of others, we could reverse this sentence and argue that similarly, texts constitute and elaborate bodies: they come from and give rise to dramaturgical states of the body. Again, Meschonnic: "a poem is what a body does to language" (2011: 54). Maier's and Bassnett's reflections on the way in which translating and living intermingle bring substance to

Meschonnic's continuum of *vivre-lire-écrire* in invaluable ways. In "The Translator as an Intervient Being" (2007), Maier cites several translators who talk about the effects of translating on their minds and bodies, describing the effect of punctuation on her own organism, and calling for neurological studies on the effects of texts on the body. Her call is answered by Douglas Robinson, who in *Translationality* (2017) dives indeed in what he calls the neurocultural and neurophenomenological aspects of literary translation and shares "the feeling that translating is mostly performed by the body: kinaesthetic re-enactments of past experiences do the remembering; the fingers do the translating, and man, look at those fingers go!" (2017: 178). Again, in "Translating as a Body" Maier approaches a more intimate sphere and recounts the process of translating a female author, whose approaching menopause is described in the text and shared by Maier: "we both respond as bodies to bodies: my body verbalises [as it embodies] the female symptoms nearly silenced in Labarca's words: her body reasserts itself as a rememb(er)ance" (2006: 142). The Italian translator Susanna Basso spoke in similar terms of her second translation of Jane Austen, asking what she could give this twenty-year-old girl as an older woman and discussing how her changed lived experience makes her notice different things in Austen's text now than when she first translated it, resulting in slightly different versions⁷⁵.

Bringing together the voices of performers, translators, and theorists allowed me to point towards a shared embodied dramaturgy, always-already engaged with the material to be appropriated and translated, never neutral or "neutralising", constantly immersed in dialogical negotiation with the human and more-than-human world surrounding it. The body, translated

⁷⁵ I heard Susanna Basso at the conference "Translation as key competence in the European dialogue: The body as a resource for Sprachgefühl and Empathy" organised by Barbara Ivančić and Alexandra Zepter at the German-Italian Centre for European Excellence in November 2020.

and translating, becomes a model of translation, as figured by Maier, a stumbling block of productive hesitation and necessary distortion:

The body, not comprehensible or trustworthy, offers an organic somatic model: like a difficult text, it provides not a reliable, fixed source but a double dare to anyone, who dares to engage its energy, its life: the risk of silence implicit in the decoding of every system, and, simultaneously, the struggle to convey the force of words” (2006: 141).

To conclude, I will briefly introduce another dramaturge and scholar to reflect on what the concept of embodied dramaturgy does. In *Singularities: Dance in the Age of Performance* (2016), André Lepecki devotes a chapter to the emergence and spreading of the concept of flow between the 1840s and 1930s⁷⁶. This concept was linked to progress and democracy and opposed to tyranny, metaphorized in the image of blocks. By engaging in an original reading of Von Kleist’s *On the Marionette Theatre* (1810), Lepecki shows that while the text seems to praise animals and puppets over people on account of their graceful movement, unhindered by thought, Kleist’s is in fact an ironic critique of a system that is already implementing “constant motion in previously established and monitored systems of networking” (2018: 298). Flow governed by logistics becomes a different form of tyranny and discipline, one that impedes movements that don’t conform to flow, such as hesitations, persistence, exhaustion—human movements, according to Von Kleist. For Lepecki, the same kind of unhindered flow is promoted by western dance, as this conceives of dancers not as sources but as vehicles of movement, asking them to be able to “absorb and introject movement coming from an exterior force and replicate it upon demand”, exercising a “memory impervious to history” and “introjecting obedience as free will” (301). Immune to the effects of historicity, that is of social, historical, cultural, racial and economic forces, the dancers become a medium through which, “even if time passes, history leaves no mark. The

⁷⁶ The chapter was reprinted in *The Sentient Archive*, edited by Bissel and Haviland in 2018. I cite from this text.

dancers must be absolute servants of the authorial memory they store without distortion” (302).

“Semiotic obedience”, “ahistoric memory”, and “noiseless performance” are the three axes upon which “angelology as logisticality” is built and under which the dancers (or the translators) become angels, that is, perfect messengers: “the ideal transmitter, noiseless medium, absolute servants” (302). While these characteristics are perfectly exemplified by dancers (or translators), in neoliberal contemporaneity they belong to society at large, where “the perfect angel becomes the delivery person under the anti-historical impetus of a physics that propels the logistics of permanently dispatched subjects as cargo of their messages” (303)⁷⁷. Lepecki goes on to stress that:

angelology as logisticality founds an affective-disciplinary choreographic regime under which the dancer (the subject in motion) must be content to be a metaphor, pure transportation, a translator-translation endowed with the inhuman task of never disremembering, of never displacing the memory of a movement demand, of never losing a stored sign or mark (305).

Against this inhuman choreographic regime, Lepecki calls for dancers to act less as angels and more as agents. He contrasts the angels of logisticality with Benjamin’s “angels of history”, who, like humans, are subject to a historical flow hurling them towards a progress they can’t see, but in which they must navigate and forge paths and deviations. The dancer (or translator) as angel of history, is one “whose body is a fibrillating membrane of historical experience, border and articulation of past-present-future” (Lepecki, 2018: 310), an “intervenient being” (Maier, 2007), “interfer[ing] in and constantly reactivat[ing] the material’s ephemerality” of a performance or a text (Lepecki, 2018: 312).

⁷⁷ I suggest reading Lepecki’s article in conjunction with the splendid, enraging, heart-wrenching movie *Sorry, we Missed You* by Ken Loach (2019) on gig economy and the life of a delivery man in Northern England to fully comprehend its scope and feel its argument.

Interlude: Methodological Steps

*“If our approach to knowledge is patriarchal then everything
we know, and everything we do as a result
of what we know, will be patriarchal”
(Minna Salami, 2020: 110-111)*

To write these paragraphs I have come to my favourite spot in Lisbon, the home of my reflections and recollections. It is called Biblioteca Gulbenkian, a library and museum hosted in the middle of a green, airy park enclosed by stone walls and traversed by water, sitting right in the middle of Lisbon. From inside the library one can see the trees, silently waving their foliage as if to greet you. The walls are made of glass and there is nothing more beautiful than to look out when the rain pours down angrily, splashing on the fallen leaves, pools of yellow and dark red navigating the ground. If I have a knowledge practice, this space and the rituals associated to it are a thread in its weft. Wake up at seven, make coffee, walk to the library. As I walk my thoughts start whirling around, moved by my legs just like my body. I make a mental list of the things I would like to do today, then I start thinking about this paragraph, sentences form in my head following their own path, unravelling and composing. Lost in my thoughts I still perceive images of the unfurling landscape and they prompt different reflections: I open a mental bracket. At some point this new reflection forms a parallel line close to the former. Can I bridge them? I am at the park entrance. The mallards walking around the garden interrupt my thoughts. In April and May, they will be there with their ducklings, and I will spend my lunch breaks looking at them learning to swim. Today I sit down outside, and I start answering these questions: what is my knowledge practice and what was the methodology guiding this research?

As much as scholars in the field of TS are calling for a stretching of its disciplinary boundaries, dance artists from around the world have been blurring and questioning perceived boundaries of their art forms and have launched into what Kennedy (2009) calls interdisciplinary dance performance. These new creations challenge what we mean by dance, performance, and theatre to the same extent as the two performances analysed in this third part challenge our received notion of translation. As artworks are in constant change, so too must be the methodologies that engage with them. In *Research Methodologies in Translation Studies*, Saldanha and O'Brien distinguish between methods and methodology. While methods are specific techniques and tools, methodology is the “general approach to studying a phenomenon” (2013:

13). It carries philosophical and political commitments and generally derives from a model chosen to represent the reality of the research topic and a theory that organises and explains the concepts related to it. In the case of this research one can say that the underlining model is embodiment and embodied views of meaning; the theory of meaning and communication that seems to best incorporate the model, as well as define and explain them in embodied terms, is Multimodal Social Semiotics (Kress, 2010), best understood in relation to the field of intermediality. The ensuing methodology is articulated around case-studies using sensory and embodied ethnographic approaches. Still, this does not account for the why and how of each of these choices and helps understand only partially how the research was conducted. Hence, the need for an interlude to introduce and discuss the methodological positions from which I approach the two case-studies that help me think through translation and its accompanying concepts. Having introduced the theory of meaning and communication endorsed by this thesis at the end of the first chapter, I can turn to the general methodological orientation and to the actual methods used for each of the case-studies.

Methodology and Methods

The theories of meaning and communication exposed in the first chapter position the analysis of the two case-studies within a specific framework, introduce the terminology that will be employed and, most of all, entail a commitment to consider the materiality of all aspects of a dance performance. These include stage props, performing space, lighting, costumes, music, theatre location, pre -and post-performance conventions, and potentially activated cultural memories. The very choice of using case-studies derives from such ontological positioning. Indeed, Saldanha and O'Brien describe case-studies as "a holistic philosophy according to which human behaviour is best understood as lived and experienced in social context" (2013: 223). While the intermodal and intermedial approach introduced in the first chapter will guide my interpretation of the dance performances, this will be reinforced by the ethnographic

research and fieldwork carried out during the six months spent in the two cities where the dance companies are based, Newcastle (UK) and Montreal (CA). When the starting point of a journey is “the multisensoriality of experience, perception, knowledge and practice” (Pink, 2009: 1), a sensory and embodied methodology seems to be the right companion. A sensory methodology “recognises the emplaced ethnographer as herself part of a social, sensory, and material environment and acknowledges the political and ideological agendas and power relations integral to the contexts and circumstances of ethnography” (2009: 23). Hence doing sensory and embodied research means to immerse oneself in the researched culture and to probe one’s own and the participants’ experiences (Thanem and Knights, 2019). The next paragraphs will use Pink’s (2009) and Thanem’s and Knights’s (2019) formulations of sensory and embodied methodologies to reflect on my own research methods and on the challenges faced in using sensory and embodied methods during a pandemic and effective house confinement.

In *Sensory Ethnography*, Pink draws on theories of embodiment and emplacement—“the sensuous interrelationship of mind-body-environment” (Howes, 2005: 7 in Pink, 2009)—to develop a methodology that sees the ethnographer as building an “ethnographic place”. Place is constituted by and constitutive of interrelationships: it is therefore an event, constantly changing and endowed with a “gathering power”, that is, the capacity to evoke experiences, histories, languages, thoughts. Such a view implies that “knowledge transmission happens through emplaced encounters with persons and things” (Pink, 2009: 35) and involves embodied memory and imagination as integral parts of how the researcher understands “the meaning of memory that research participants recount, enact, define” (38). As Pink states:

By attending to the sensoriality and materiality of other people’s ways of being in the world, we cannot directly access or share their personal, individual, biographical, shared or collective memories or imagination. However, we can, by aligning our bodies, rhythm, tastes, ways of seeing and more with them, begin to become involved in making places that are similar to theirs and thus feel that we are similarly emplaced” (2009: 40).

Being geographically and humanly close to the dance companies that granted me access to their work, as well as sharing with them the experience of stillness during lockdown and being able to access my embodied memory as a dancer—whether I was able to practice or not at the moment of ethnographic research—was of pivotal importance for understanding their work in context. Pink also refers to interviews as moments where interviewer and interviewee create together a shared place as embodied persons: far from simply being an act of knowledge gathering, interviews are “social, sensorial, and emotive encounters” (2009: 83) and as such must be approached and recorded. This means paying attention to non-verbal communication, the setting, power dynamics, and I add, to the language being used. Moreover, for Thanem and Knights, embodied research starts even earlier, since securing access to participants is considered

a wholly embodied process, since it is through the embodied engagement of the researcher that the gatekeepers will warm and help facilitate the research. [Accesses] tends to be continuously negotiated throughout the period when you are generating empirical material. This is particularly true if you are seeking to study other people’s body, bodily interaction and sense of embodiment, which is such an intimate part of who we are” (2019: 15)

In studying contemporary dance performances this aspect comes to the fore and involves a series of problematics that must be acknowledged. First, there is the issue of availability of primary sources. Because of its situatedness in space and time, dance requires the researcher to attend the live performance. One cannot walk to the nearby theatre at any point of the day and watch the dancers perform. This of course limits the choice to what is available in a certain time and space, which is furthermore complicated by the necessity to follow-up and analyse the works more in-depth, going beyond the first impression and its memory. Hence a dual access—to the live performance and to recorded material, the people involved and the archive—is necessary. This resulted in the choice to analyse performances that I had attended live and with whose choreographers and company directors I managed to establish contact so that I could have access to recordings of the performance for detailed analysis. The choice was

certainly influenced by my personal life: the fact that one of the works under study was produced by a company working in the UK is due to the fact that I was living and studying in Sheffield when I first started to think about the relationships between dance and performance and to the friendships and networks I still had there, while I watched Compagnie Marie Chouinard's performance in Lisbon during the first year of PhD, when I was actively looking for possible case-studies.

This leads to the second issue, that is, the difference between working with objects and with people. Although one might argue that a dance performance is a work, in asking for access to its recording I establish a relationship with its makers, a relationship based on mutual trust and respect. To perform one's ideas and aesthetic in front of an audience is an act of courage, a reaching out to the other that by establishing a relationship exposes oneself to vulnerability. As the reflexive turn in anthropology has shown, and postmodern practices of interviewing acknowledge (Fontana and Frey, 1994), unequal positions can derive from a subject-object relationship between 'researcher' and 'researched' that must be problematised and counterbalanced. For this reason, and because I believed that I could attain a more comprehensive understanding through dialogue, I decided to include the voices of choreographers and dancers whenever possible. This had practical consequences on the organisation of my work and the timing of analyses and interviews, which had to be adjusted around other people's availability. Similarly, I did not have equal access to the two performances: while I could follow *Froth on the Daydream* (2018) from its Kickstarter campaign to the première and later its recording, I only came to *Jérôme Bosch: Le Jardin des Délices* as a finished project and my subsequent emplaced analysis of it was severely hampered by the lockdown introduced as a response to Covid-19 by the Canadian government two weeks after my arrival in Montreal. Therefore, in the following paragraphs I will discuss each process individually.

Compagnie Marie Chouinard

I first came across the work *Jérôme Bosch: Le Jardin des Délices* on 18 May 2018, having attended the performance at the Centro Cultural de Belém, in Lisbon. At the time I was considering which performances to include in my thesis as case-studies and, being particularly impressed by it, I decided to write to the company few weeks later. By mid-June I knew that I could only have access to footage and archive material by going to Montreal and access it in-situ. Thus, I contacted the company once again in January 2019 and arranged a four-month stay in Montreal, during which I would have access to the recording and would be able to interview the choreographer, Marie Chouinard. I also contacted Angélique Willkie, assistant professor of Contemporary Dance at Concordia University, and I was invited as a research intern for the length of my stay in Montreal. On 2 March 2020, I arrived in Montreal to conduct fieldwork at the dance company's studio.

Unfortunately, by March 13 the University had issued a stay-at-home order following the Canadian government's decision to start a two-week quarantine to contain the spread of Covid-19, and any kind of research involving contact with people was banned until May. I therefore asked for a one-month funding extension to be able to remain in Canada until the end of July and conduct some fieldwork; however, as the extension was not granted and the restrictions lasted until the end of June, I had to change the initial plan to visit the studio and review my research methods. With the advice and help of Angélique Willkie, who happened to be a friend of Isabelle Poirier, former dancer and rehearsal director of the company, I decided to interview the dancers instead, a decision which proved extremely enriching, both personally and academically. On April 13, I conducted the first interview with Isabelle Poirier. The interview was carried out on videoconference and recorded, which proved very useful when transcribing as I had access to both an auditory and visual record. We both spoke English, although now and then Isabelle would switch to French, reflecting an ingrained habit among bilingual

speakers in Montreal. The second online interview, with dancer Carol Prieur, took place on June 17. The interview was conducted in English, Carol's first language, and recorded. On June 19, I interviewed dancer Valeria Galluccio. This interview happened in person at Parc La Fontaine: after months of house confinement, we both arrived on our bicycles and sat on the grass, which gave an informal and joyful atmosphere to the interview, carried out in Italian, our first language. It was Valeria who put me in contact with Luis Dufort, a composer and long-time collaborator of Marie Chouinard, whom I was able to interview on June 29. The interview took place in person in my back garden, where I introduced my research interests and we both spoke English. I realised that when interviewing the dancers, I was able to use my embodied memory to draw parallels with my experiences and understand at once what was being explained, which also helped in achieving an informal atmosphere. Having no formal music education, I was not able to do the same in my interview with Dufort, who was nonetheless extremely kind and willing to describe in more details those technical terms relating to musical composition. Finally, on July 9, three days prior to my departure, I was able to access the video recording of the *avant-premiere* of *Jérôme Bosch: Le Jardin des Délices* at Marie Chouinard dance studio. Knowing that I would have limited time to analyse the footage, I printed an A3 version of the painting so that I could sketch and make comments directly on it, thus speeding up the process. I watched the footage twice, taking note of the order of appearance of the various groups of people represented, their position in space, the directions, their movements, the changing points in music, the stage props, the movement of the video dramaturgy in the second and third acts, and in many cases I decided to make drawings portraying the dancers' positions and the shapes taken by their bodies, so I could access my memory through different senses and modalities at the moment of writing (Fig. 14).

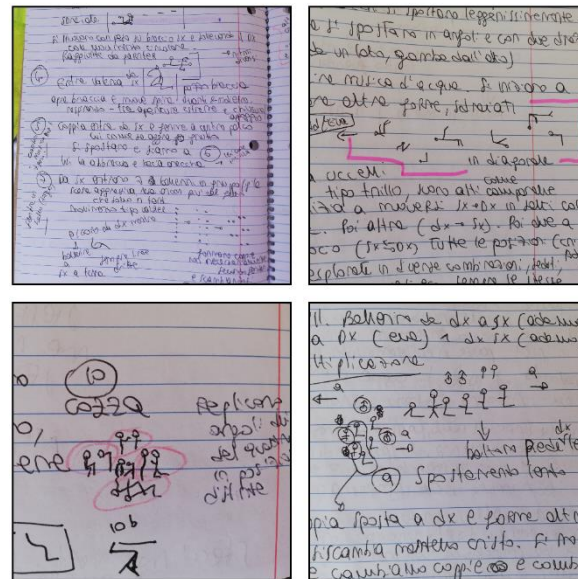


Figure 14: written and drawn notes

Drawing made me more attentive to visual information such as the angle at which the bodies were bent, or the fact that they often replicated the same shape along different axes—vertical, horizontal, oblique; standing up, seated, or lying down—an awareness facilitated by the epistemological commitment of the chosen mode of representation (Kress, 2010). This suggests that, far from being optional, the very mode in which one gathers and transcribes material determines, at least partially, their findings, and prompts us to wonder whether it is the written form of interview transcripts and data collection that imposes a temporal and therefore narrative shape on the information gathered via ethnographic fieldwork.

Eliot Smith Dance Company

The type of approach adopted for the analysis of *Froth on the Daydream* may be defined as triangulation, as it involved participant observation, semi-structured individual interviews, and semi-structured group interviews, alongside the actual analysis of the live performance and its footage. I first came to know about *Froth* in February 2018 via a Kickstarter campaign initiated by Eliot Smith Dance Company (ESD) and supported by a friend of mine who works as a

dancer in London. Intrigued by the idea of seeing the surreal and excessive world of Boris Vian come alive on stage as a dance performance—the first to be carried out after his novel *L'Écume des Jours*—I backed the campaign and contacted Eliot Smith, director of the company, to express my interest. At this early stage, I knew that the company would have had a first research and development phase with the French choreographer Mathieu Geffré in March and that the work would premiere in autumn 2018. I asked one of the dancers, Giacomo Pini, to keep a journal during rehearsal time (Appendix 7) that he would share with me later. In September 2018, I got back in touch with Eliot and decided to go to Newcastle in November to attend the premiere of the dance piece. Thus, on November 24, I arrived in Newcastle, where I was invited to attend the company rehearsals, during which I had a chance to take notes and videos. I introduced myself and the nature of my research and sat by the mirror next to the rehearsal director, Yamit Salazar, facing the dancers. Both the dancers and the rehearsal director were welcoming and seemed at ease with my presence there, and I was asked for my opinion on a couple of details. While Giacomo Pini and Paloma Moscardo were working on their duets, Eliot agreed to be interviewed outside the studio for about an hour. I opted for a semi-structured interview that would let us discuss freely and which aimed at mutual enrichment. After rehearsals I had the chance to interview the dancers Paloma and Giacomo, who embodied Chloé and Colin in the dance performance. This was a shorter and more informal interview over lunch, and my presentation was simultaneously as a researcher and a peer. On November 27, I attended the premiere of the performance, inserted in a programme that featured three new pieces by different choreographers: following Geffré's *Froth on the Daydream* there was a solo by dancer Gemma Paganelli choreographed by Rosie Kay and entitled *Artemis Clown*, and a group performance set by Eliot Smith and called *Poppies*. My initial idea was to submit a questionnaire to the members of the audience to gain a more direct understanding of their reception of the piece; however, this was not possible as ESD had their own audience response

forms. The subsequent steps involved transcribing the interviews and sharing the transcriptions with the company, while simultaneously investigating the reception of Vian and his works in the UK from 1940 to 2000 and tracing back the numerous intramedial and intermedial translations of his 1947 novel. As the footage was only accessible in-situ, in February 2019 I received an invitation by Eliot Smith to go and analyse it at the company's office in Newcastle. After having secured an invitation as Guest-Associate by the University of Newcastle, I moved there in 2020 for a two-month research stay.

On January 15 I had a first meeting with Eliot, followed by three-hour analysis of the footage of *Froth*. I was also given the book *Martha and Me*, published by Eliot Smith and Helen Redfern in 2017, which gave me additional insight into the organisation and functioning of the company and its contextualization in the British dance world and its dance training techniques. The first meeting was followed by a second one on January 22, in which I continued the analysis of *Froth*, and by my attendance to the performances *Pitman* and *Portraits of Courage*, the latter held at Woodhorn Museum in Ashington. This was the location where *Pitman* had its premiere, and I spent the rest of the day visiting the permanent exhibition dedicated to the miners' lives and their paintings. Meanwhile, I was informed that Mathieu Geffré, the choreographer of *Froth on the Daydream*, was temporarily in Newcastle and we arranged an interview to discuss the choreography. The semi-structured interview took place at the café of the dance school and theatre where he was working at the time, Dance City, on February 10. My last in-person contact with Eliot was on February 25, when I returned for the last time to the office to analyse footage of the performance *Pitman*.

Embodied Ethnography and Embodied Writing

Having detailed the process of data collection and the methods employed, I would like to reflect on some of the issues that arise when adopting a sensory and embodied look at methodological

approach. Following Pink, (2009) I considered fieldwork and interviews as emplaced, affective encounters generating shared ethnographic place. This led me to generate transcripts that situate the various encounters and to reflect on the different positionalities assumed in each context with respect to the participants. Conducting interviews in person has the advantage of facilitating proximity by physically sharing space and being able to communicate through modes such as proxemics and gestures. It creates a temporal window of informal communication before the start of the interview, something which is denied by virtual meetings. Online interviews also frame people differently and make it more difficult for the interviewee to use their whole body to demonstrate certain movements, something particularly valuable in dance. At the same time, because they enable audio-visual recording, it is easier for the researcher to produce a transcript that considers modes of communication such as gaze, movement, orientation in space. Moreover, in considering the role of affect in interviews, I would like to stress an element which is not mentioned by either Pink (2009) or Thanem and Knights (2019), that is the affective ability of language to facilitate proximity or distance and modulate power and hierarchy. The dynamics and affects circulating when I was interviewing (in English) somebody for whom English is their first language were different to those in which English was the second language for both interviewer and interviewee, which generated a degree of language solidarity; in the interview with Valeria, the fact that we both spoke Italian and were in an informal setting resulted in a longer and less structured interview, initiated in Italian and that soon swerved towards our respective dialects. This suggests that the choice of language to be used in an interview is something that should be considered and reflected upon when conducting fieldwork.

Besides language, what receives scarce attention in Pink's work (2009) is the idea of writing as a similarly emplaced phenomenon. If, as Meschonnic (2011) argues, living, reading, and writing constitute a continuum, then the place which we inhabit and the activities and rituals

associated to writing are not to be considered as separate from it, but rather as constitutive of it. This is what I tried to express at the beginning of this chapter by retracing the physical and mental wanderings preceding and accompanying its writing. Similarly, in working on this thesis, I experienced very different ways of collecting data and writing about them, which leads me to propose the notions of *emplaced* and *displaced writing* and of *languagescape*—the linguistic landscape surrounding people. I wrote most of the chapter about Eliot Smith Dance and *l'Écume des Jours* in Newcastle, at the same time as I was conducting fieldwork and immersing myself in the culture and language of the company. All along I was taking classes of Pilates, barre and contemporary dance and my day would usually begin with a walk to the library and end at the gym, thus activating and generating embodied memories and experiences of dance. The language surrounding me was the same spoken by the members of the dance company among themselves and the same in which I am writing this thesis. This form of emplaced writing was replaced by the displaced writing characterising the chapters on Compagnie Marie Chouinard, whose work was first seen in Portugal, its ethnographic material partly produced through (displaced) virtual interviews, and its writing process started some months later in Portugal, in a languagescape dominated by Portuguese and under physical restrictions that prevented an active engagement with dance. The practice of dance was replaced during this time with the translation of poems from Portuguese into Italian, a side-activity that offered me an alternative pathway to embodied research. If writing the chapter on ESD felt like inhabiting an ethnographic place, writing about Compagnie Marie Chouinard was more like bringing together and arranging a variety of ethnographic places.

The notion of languagescape lends itself to an exploration of the writing within other chapters as well: they include Italian and French for Chapters 2, 3, 4; Portuguese and English for Chapters 5, 7, 8; English and Italian for Chapters 1 and 8. This is of interest because while cross-linguistic interference is a widely studied phenomenon, its written correlate,

heterolingualism, defined by Mary Louise Pratt as the possibility of “one language to host (or to invade, or occupy) another” (2011: 290) has not been extensively studied in its potential for academic writing as a form of resistance to what has been defined “linguicide” and “epistemicide” in academic contexts dominated by the use of English (Bennett, 2007a). How languagescapes affect thinking, writing, and translating, but also thinking, sensing, remembering, and how cross-linguistic interferences can be mobilised in fictional and academic literature alike are questions that I will not be able to answer here, however interesting they are. I will return instead to the notion of displaced writing to offer writing-in-lockdown as an extreme case of displaced writing: displaced because it separates us from our object of study, from the activities associated to it, from the people that would populate such writing by crossing our paths and discussing it with us, from chance encounters—sometimes fundamental in research—and from a general sense of being-with, of the *vivre-lire-écrire* continuum. Writing-in-lockdown, or writing from the ecological catastrophe, sharpens our sensitivity to those elements that are prominent in this thesis and that we can no longer take for granted: the proximity of bodies, the underlining rhythm of breath, the shared space of the theatre, and emplaced research. Life events enter the research and a choreography addressing respiratory illness takes on a new relevance, while the exacerbation of racism and police brutality, and the urgency of counter movements like Black Lives Matter prompt a different set of questions in relation to the performance *Le Jardin des Délices* and its geography.

Writing this chapter was a moment of pause, a looking back and around, a sitting with; it aimed to give the reader a cartography of the thesis’ formation and slow down the pace by altering the register, just like the lowering of lights in a theatre prepares us to immerse ourselves in what is coming, eyes fixed and breath held.

PERFORMING

Translation and Agency in *Jérôme Bosch: Le Jardin des Délices*

We have stretched; we have rehearsed; we have built; at each of the trois coups we have taken a deep breath, in the dark backstage where mess reigns absolute before the show. Somebody misses a piece of costume, another is late, one cannot remember a sequence. Yet the stage waits still and silent. Now the curtain is raised. The light goes on. You step in.

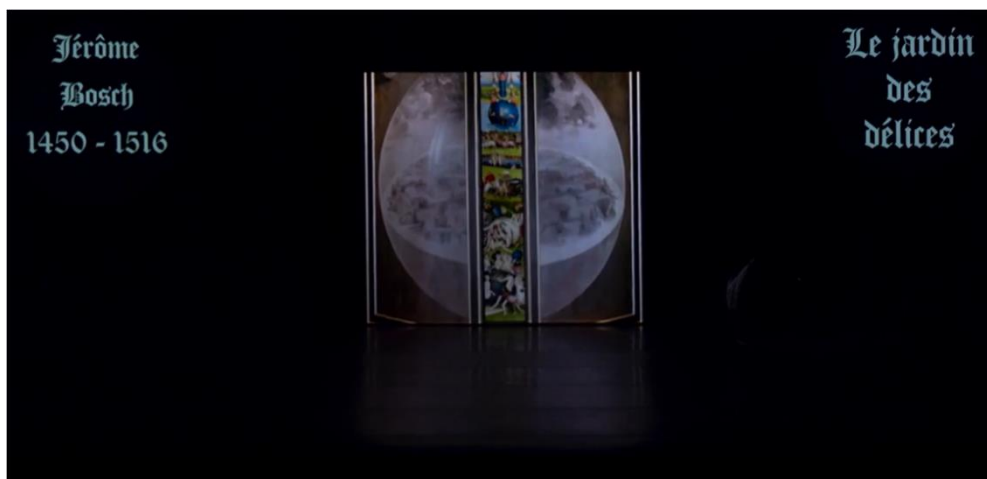
The following chapters about the choreography *Jérôme Bosch: Le Jardin des Délices* are articulated according to a shot/reverse shot logic whereby the dance performance forms the stable axis enabling a movement that shows different facets of it and its surroundings. The chapters reflect on various levels of agency in dance translation and combine an intermedial approach with ethnographical fieldwork, moving between the spectator's and the performer's perspectives, addressing translation first as a product, then as a process and lastly, as situated event. In the first chapter, I will draw on my own attendance to the live performance and on notes taken while analysing its footage at the company studio in Montreal. My own reading of it as an example of what Démont calls a *queering translation* (2018) will shed light on Chouinard's awareness of her translational agency and on how dance and translation enter the political. Chouinard's treatment of the painting, far from reiterating an image of the translator as the vessel of someone else's meaning, offers a model of translation as an embodied and situated practice whereby the translator overcomes binomial and gendered depictions as either faithful or betraying and enters a dialogue with the author, addressing identarian and political issues. By doing so, she carves a space of translational agency, a space from which one can use the source text to confront inherited norms and narratives and elaborate counter-discourses, something she does particularly well in relation to sexuality and gender.

This view of the performance as a product will be complemented by a deeper plunge into the performers' sensations, something that will shine a light on the way Chouinard used Hieronymus Bosch's painting not only as a source text but as a method of composition, an operation made possible by a shared fascination with the human in all its shapes and

metamorphoses. The performers and the composer's voices will also inform my discussion of distributed agency, making it clear that neither translators nor choreographers work in a vacuum, in that they must negotiate their choices and the way their translation will be presented with other agents—be them copy-editors and publishers or dancers, commissioners, and theatre managers—so that the final product will often be the result of collective labour. Moreover, recent insights into extended (Clark and Chalmers, 1998) and distributed cognition (Hutchins, 2000) reveal that cognition and agency are not limited to the brain but are distributed among brain, body, material technology, groups of people, time, and social contexts (Enfield, 2013, Enfield and Kockelman, 2017). Thus, “while it is easy to think that an agent should coincide exactly with an individual [...] this is seldom, if ever, the case” (2017: 9). A renewed understanding of agent as “whatever alters the content (what and how), contexts (where and when), and consequences (why and to what effect) of one's comportment—even if only retroactively” (2017: 32) forces us to reframe the translator's agency as negotiated not only with the author's and with other humans', but also with more-than-human agents.

While the dancers' agency has been introduced by the concept of embodied dramaturgy in the previous chapter, in what follows I further explore the negotiation of agency between choreographer, dancers, composer, objects, commissioners, theatre managers, geographical location, time, and materiality. I do so by looking at how different scholarly interpretations of the painting were elicited by different spatial framings and how the Centro Cultural the Belém, where I attended the performance in May 2018, hindered or elicited certain readings by embedding *Jérôme Bosch Le Jardin des Délices* in a thematic cycle entitled *Tirei os Pecados do Mundo*, which comprised cinema, concerts, and conferences dedicated to the Dutch painter.

Translation and Agency in *Jérôme Bosch: Le Jardin des Délices* (Shot)



EL JARDIN DE LAS DELICIAS - MARIE CHOUINARD - EL BOSCO - YouTube

Jérôme Bosch: *Le Jardin des Délices* (2016)

In 2016, Marie Chouinard, director and choreographer of the company bearing her name, was invited by the Hieronymus Bosch 500 Foundation to create a choreography based on the painter's oeuvre. Based in 's-Hertogenbosch, the city where Bosch spent his life, the foundation aimed to celebrate the five-hundredth anniversary of the artist's death through a programme comprising three main areas, a format inspired by Bosch's own triptych (Marques, 2013). Refusing the foundation's request to cover several paintings, she decided instead to base her work on the famous triptych *The Garden of Earthly Delights* and offer her own reading of it, translating it for the stage (Frota, 2018). Chouinard's independent choice of the painting to be translated was certainly facilitated by her world-wide recognition as an acclaimed choreographer and can already be described with Paloposki (2009) as an instance of

extratextual agency⁷⁸. The piece was premièred at the Theaterfestival Boulevard in the Netherlands and performed across Europe and the Americas⁷⁹. Before that, she had intermedially translated another visual artwork, Henry Michaux's book of drawings *Mouvements* (1951). Interestingly enough, this book is described by Noland as an attempt "to produce a new body through [...] gesture" (2009: 154), a way to inscribe a new gestural routine onto Michaux's own body that could produce fresh sensations and unexpected spaces of embodied agency. Chouinard aims to provoke the same sensation in her dancers through her intermedial translation, which keeps incredibly close to the source text: the pages are translated from left to right and projected on the background wall, giving the possibility to compare them with the performance. Her reliance on visual arts as source texts is paralleled by her working method. As explained in an interview by former dancer and rehearsal director of the company Isabelle Poirier, Chouinard has a deep visual sensitivity and often makes drawings during the creation process, hangs them on a rope as a way to assemble the sequences together, and occasionally re-orders them. During the creation of *Mouvements*, each dancer was given the book so that they could constantly compare the position of their bodies to the drawings and recreate them as faithfully as possible, making them alive, making them "move and shake and feel what's in it, that shape" (Poirier, Appendix 1: 4).

The creation of *Les Jardin des Délices* followed a similar path, with a big canvas in the studio that would magnify the characters' dimensions and photographic captures of the characters chosen to be embodied in a dance sequence, thus using the canvas as a map for the bodies. It is striking how the prosthetic and hybrid bodies depicted by Bosch resonate with Chouinard's representation of "prosthetic body members, a denaturalized mode of movement, [and]

⁷⁸ Paloposki defines extratextual agency as the agency related to the choice of what is translated, the use of intermediary translations, the decision to publicise the translation; paratextual agency involves the insertion of notes and prefaces, while textual agency has to do with the voice of the translator in the text (2009).

⁷⁹ I watched this performance at the Centro Cultural de Belém, in Lisbon, in 2018. The analysis here presented is based on the live performance and the company footage of their avant-premiere in Montreal.

inarticulate sounds” (Tsiakalou, 2018: 30). Inserting herself in the modernist endeavour to recover “all the weak, ridiculous, mad bodies that history and the world had removed from our perception and even sometimes thrown into the scrap-heap of existence” (Louppe, 2010: 42), Chouinard expands the range of what is commonly accepted in the realm of the visible by exploring posthuman bodies in her choreographies and by questioning the binary division of sex and gender⁸⁰. In doing so, she concurs with modernist and contemporary dance works such as Oskar Schlemmer’s *Das Triadisches Ballett* (1922), Dimitris Papaioannou’s *The Great Tamer* (2017), Sasha Waltz’s *Kreatur* (2017), or pioneering experiments like Huang Yi’s duet with an industrial robot *Huang Yi and Kuka* (2015). At the same time, she comments on translation as a site of negotiation of meaning that leaves open the possibility for subversion. As I explain below, she does so by exploiting feminist translation strategies, the “sic-sensuous” (Mills, 2017), and the modal gaps between painting and choreography.

To analytically describe the number of differences between the forms of presentation of triptych and performance we can adopt Elleström’s division into four modalities (2010). As for the material modality, we have on the one hand a flat surface, the front of the oak panels, which is further divided into three panels so that two of them can be folded to cover the inside and show another picture painted on their back (Fig. 15), achieving in so doing a three-dimensional quality. The materials involved are the panels and the oil colours. On the other hand, we have a three-dimensional stage populated by the moving bodies of the dancers, three screens, props, light, and music. The position of the audience in relation to both artworks is similar, as the performance maintains the arrangement of a seated audience in front of the performing space

⁸⁰ Here I refer to Haraway’s concept of posthuman and her figuration of the cyborg (1995). For Haraway, the cyborg offers a potential for new forms and images of thought, rewritings that offset dualisms and original myths. The bodies presented on stage by Chouinard precisely show this ambiguity, fuse animal and machine, confuse real and fictional, and complicate not only the definition of man and woman but also of human and more-than-human, offering new figurations of being.

typical of a proscenium theatre, which recalls the way one looks at paintings in a museum. As a matter of fact, Belting highlights the theatrical function of the painting, with its dark and simple outer panels, which represent “a world unopen” (2018: 23), standing in contrast to the brightness and abundance of the inner panels. Such contrast is reinforced by Chouinard’s decision to cover the dancers’ body with white paint and place them in front of the colourful background constituted by Bosch’s painting. The principal sense involved in the reception of the tryptic is the visual, while the dance performance also appeals to hearing and touch via proprioception. Both manifest in actual space, but while time in the former is only virtual, the latter has an actual duration and develops in time that which is only a latent possibility in the painting. As for the semiotic modality, both make use of symbols, icons, and indexes, though icons predominate, at least for the modern spectator. From this first description it becomes clear that we are not simply moving from one medium to another. Rather, we are navigating through intersecting, deviating, and overlapping modalities that are only perceived as two separate and distinct media as the result of convention and habituation (Rajewsky, 2010). This is further emphasised as the choreographer contrasts painting and dance by having the former projected on the background for a large part of the performance while the dancers actualise it on stage.



Figure 15: *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, outer panels, Hieronymus Bosch, Museo del Prado



Figure 16: *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, inner panels, Hieronymus Bosch, Museo del Prado

As the audience swarms into the theatre, an empty stage with raised curtains welcomes it. The raising of curtains is indeed replaced by the unfolding of the lateral panels of the triptych as projected on the background video, to the sound of chirping birds. The grey image of the Earth on the third day of creation opens onto the overwhelming frenzy of saturated colours and hybrid creatures of the central panel (Fig. 16), thus retaining the element of theatricality and awe that characterized the first exhibitions of the triptych (Belting, 2018). The stage is silent and empty, and the video zooms in on the central panel, taking us into it as if it were a magnifying glass. With this movement, the spatial division into three parts of the triptych is translated into a temporal division of the performance into three acts.

In *Time-Sharing on Stage*, Aaltonen (2000) defines theatre translation as an egotistical act that departs from some needs of the target system and uses the foreign work as a mirror, giving it the task to speak for the former by endowing it with perlocutory functions or using it to assert one's own identity. In discussing authorship, copyrights, and the presupposition of faithful representation they imply, she compares theatre translation to what de Certeau called "la

perruque” (1988: 25), the practice of disguising one’s work as that of the employer while subverting it to one’s ends. According to her, theatrical systems have “turned their rebellion into a tacit search for cracks which would give enough room for the practice of theatre” (Aaltonen, 2000: 106). Here it is exactly in the cracks between the two artwork’s modalities of actualisation and signification that one must look to find the translator/choreographer’s voice and interpretant, and especially in the spatiotemporal one. While we could take in at once the three parts of Bosch’s painting or follow a subjective order, Chouinard forces us to follow her own sequencing, showing us first the panel *Humankind Before the Flood* (central panel), then *Hell* (right panel) and lastly *Paradise and the Creation of Eve* (left panel). While it is true that texts do not possess an inherent fixed reading and the construction of meaning develops from the relation among signifiers and between signifiers and reader, it must be recognised that “dominant readings may arise over the years and become fixed and solidified, at least for some time and some cultures” (30). In this unfolding of the triptych, Chouinard subverts the common reading held by Bosch critics, which goes from left to right, ending with *Hell*, as in several other of his paintings (Baldass, 1960; Calas, 1969; Warner, 2001; Manson, 2015; Fischer, 2016; Salami, 2020).

According to this reading, the peace and stability of the left panel leads to the disorder of the central one, where the depiction of men and women engaging in sensual and sexual activities points to its natural result, *Hell*, depicted on the right panel. For example, Tolnay sees Adam’s lascivious glance towards Eve in paradise as “the first step towards sin” (1965: 31-32), and Stefan Fischer (2016) insists on seeing Bosch’s painting as partaking of the regime of the ethical. Instead of taking us to a downward journey, Chouinard seems to follow the traditional path of fairy tales, starting from a situation of order and joy, passing through a phase of chaos and horror, and coming back to light and to a restored order of things. Not only: in an extremely self-reflective turn, in each of the acts she shows us different positions that could be taken by

the translator *vis-à-vis* the painting and moves across preponderant and binomial images of translators as either faithful or betraying in order to propose her own stance.

The Faithful Translator

A dichotomy between order and disorder is introduced by altering the order of reading. Such dichotomy is emphasised in the way the temporal discrepancy between painting and choreography is addressed. Indeed, to give the painting a temporal dimension, Chouinard places two circular screens at opposite ends of the stage. For the first part of the choreography, the screens zoom in on those sections of the painting that are embodied in motion by the naked dancers, who start from the positions of the depicted figures and explore them with their bodies, moving into and out of them and granting them physical dynamism. The painting becomes a surface where we travel led by Chouinard's gaze and the dancers' bodies, unfolding in time. Twenty-one groups of humans are singled out by the choreographer, and they enter the stage in succession, thus replacing the simultaneity afforded by the mode of images with the narrativity developed out of temporal sequences.

To reinforce this, the figures on the screens reflect those on the stage. Like in a facing-page translation, the spectator is invited to compare the two texts for similarities and even aided by the circular screens that function as magnifying glasses: as Poirier (Appendix 1) says, the desired effect is that of taking the spectator by the hand and leading them through Bosch's "dangerous territory [where] many a brave seeker has lost the path and disappeared" (Warner, 2001: 44). The use of stage props helps maintain the disproportion of scale that characterizes the central panel of *The Garden*, which abounds in giant fruits, and the dancers naively and joyfully partake of the painting's "orgy of eating, tasting, picking, sucking, munching, as well as hiding in, mounting on, playing up, dressing up" (2001: 57). The moving body, object of representation (among others) in the painting, becomes also subject of representation, one of its material supports. As spectators, we feel drawn into the dance and feel comforted by the

correspondence of painting and choreography: we develop a sense of trust in what Chouinard chooses to show us and come to rely on the circular screens for our interpretation. I see this as an allegory of literal translation, which, striving to stay as faithful as possible to the source text, conveys an impression of the target text as unmediated. The translator of this central panel effaces herself to become a mere vessel of the author's meaning and frames translation as an orderly activity of substituting one sign for another of equivalent meaning.

At the same time, a closer look reveals something bubbling beneath the surface of an apparently quiet world. The mediated nature of translation is somehow kept in mind by having the images in the circular screens appear a few second later than the corresponding dance on stage, causing a time lapse in the spectator's apprehension of it. The movement of the magnifying glass through the painting undermines the temporal narrative suggested by the sequential order of the choreography, in that it does not follow any linear path, but rather zigzags through it, moving from the bottom right to the upper quasi-central in a way that looks random. Even the apparent focus on human figures alone is destabilized in the very beginning, as the first group to appear is made of a woman and a bird.



Figure 17: Central panel, first sequence

Indeed, upon the opening of the panels, a stage empty except for a transparent ball upstage right is approached from left to right by a female dancer, who replicates the position of the woman in the painting but standing up, so that her right bent leg supports her while the left is raised and stretched and her arms reach towards it, causing her back to curve slightly. To the solemn sound of Renaissance instrumental music, she walks across the stage maintaining the position, alternating the supporting leg by going on *relevé* before planting the other foot on the ground. Once she gets to the right end of the stage, she lies on the ground and assumes the depicted position (Fig. 17). From the other side comes a male dancer, the jerky movement of his arms and hands and the fluid spine reminding us of the jerky movement of birds. He leans his chest on her flexed foot and from there they move in unison back and forward.

The exploration of sameness of movement in difference of positions introduced by this sequence is one of the main choreographic principles of the piece, coming straight from God's imperative to multiply and faithfully reflected in Bosch's central panels, where the abundance of bodies seems to know neither end nor death. Multiplication is according to Valeria Galluccio a central compositional method in Chouinard's work:

Marie lavora per accumulazione, nel senso che se ci sono due personaggi, poi magari li fa diventare dieci, venti, con la stessa immagine [...] lei dice "ok, prendete delle immagini del tableau che vi piacciono, che vi interessano, e createmi una frase da otto conteggi. E poi lei ha scelto tipo due o tre frasi e le ha messe insieme, le ha lavorate, per creare comunque un'organicità nel vederlo. E poi, giustamente, era una sola persona, poi siamo stati tutti a farla nello stesso modo, quindi è come se si duplica⁸¹ (Appendix 3: 1-2).

This multiplication of bodies is exploited throughout the first act along six lines: repositioning (performing the same movements along different positions, as in standing up and lying down), realignment (performing the same movements along vertical, horizontal, diagonal axes),

⁸¹ "Marie works by accumulation, in the sense that if there are two characters, she makes them become ten, twenty, with the same image [...] she says: "ok, take some images that you like, that interest you from the tableau and create a phrase of eight counts with it", and then she chose two or three of them, put them together, worked them as bit, so that there is an organicity when you watch them. Initially it was only one person, and then it was all of us doing it in the same way, so it's as if it duplicates itself" (my translation).

reorientation (performing the same movements facing the public, the background, the stage curtain), gathering (having the same movements performed by more bodies), remixing (having the same movements performed by different combinations of bodies) and scattering (having the same movements performed by the dancers as they split into smaller groups). An example of gathering is offered by the third sequence (Fig. 18), which represents a woman lying prone on the floor with her left arm bent to hold the reclined head, creating a counterpoint to the right leg, also bent. In Bosch's painting, two bodies are joined into one: in Chouinard's choreography it is the opposite, as the two female dancers crawl from left to right, propping themselves on the left arm until they are reached by two male dancers who are in the same position, duplicating the initial image but also, as they exchange careful glances, conveying an image of shared effort and friendship.



Figure 18: Central panel, third sequence



Figure 19: Central panel, seventh sequence

Totally different is the sensation solicited by the gathering of the seventh sequence (Fig. 19). Here, the outstretched arm and forward bent chest of the male dancer is met by the female reclined back, as if to distance herself. Three couples and a lone dancer enact this picture: they move front and back on a straight line as if engaged in a social dance that slips into a confrontation of strength, highlighted by the serious look on the male's faces, directed towards the public, which colours the scene with an aggressive tone. The multiplication leitmotif is reinforced as they first stand in a column, then break it into two rows, then into scattered groups

(scattering). At the same time, a couple seated on the floor performs the same alternated movement not back and forth but up and down, shifting the verticality of the dance to a horizontal plane of perception (realignment). This underlines another line of multiplication, remixing, visible in the second sequence, which represent a trio composed by a man lying on his back, a woman sitting on her knees and bent forward, and another woman standing on her knees (Fig. 20).



Figure 20: Central panel, second sequence

Like the dancers in the first sequence, they move into and out of their position in unison, then one breaks the group and continues his movements in a solo, before he joins back one of the female dancers and the other is left on her own, so that they all dance in solos and unison, probing all combinations and their effects on meaning—two women and a man, two women together and the man on his own, man and woman together and a woman alone—before coming back together. In other cases, a slight change in the position of the dancing couple reveals the multiplication present in the source text, as happens in the fifth and sixth sequences.



Figure 21: Central panel, fifth sequence



Figure 22: Central panel, sixth sequence

In the fifth sequence, a woman sits in front of a man who mimics feeding her berries (Fig. 21); suddenly she turns to one side, he turns his head towards her (reorientation), and the image on the circular screen changes to that of the sixth scene, highlighting the similarity of the two women in these different parts of the painting as well as the similar position of the men, who both have their arms forming a circular shape in front of their bodies (Fig. 22).



Figure 23: Central panel, eighth sequence

The music speeds up as the first group from the upper part of the painting is embodied by the dancers, who approach a big transparent ball, left until now to wander around the stage (Fig. 23). Gathering to its right, they start jumping up and down, performing the same sequence in ensemble, a rarity in Chouinard's work, generally portraying solos. Their audible breath

becomes stronger as they repeat the same movements at a faster pace, splitting into two groups moving at different rhythms. The sensation of anxiety and not keeping up with time is reinforced when a man holding flowers and a woman joyfully generating them from her buttock break their duet and launch themselves on a frenzied run in *demi-plié*, obsessively tapping their index finger on their wrists as if to indicate the time. This, together with the mimicking of bunny ears in the earlier sequence suggests a connection with the subsequent panel, *Hell*, where we see a rabbit seated on a throne-toilet, simultaneously eating and defecating men. It also calls to mind the bunny in *Alice in Wonderland*, another work of unleashed imagination where, just like in Bosch's painting, the protagonist and the reader are thrown into an upside-down world, regulated by entirely different physical and social rules, from which they will re-emerge transformed.



Figure 24: *Jérôme Bosch Le Jardin des Délices*, Marie Chouinard (2016), first act

The sense of acceleration introduced by these sequences is emphasised by the simultaneous enactment of two pictorial groups in the sequences that go from 10 to 18. During these, the lateral screens represent parallel images from the painting, combined out of some similarity: in sequence 10 (Fig. 25 and 26), it is the angle at which the man is bent and the incorporation of a woman inside a natural element; in sequence 11 the presence of berries (Fig. 27); in sequence 12 the partial covering of the characters (Fig. 28 and 29). Starting from sequence 13, the focus shifts towards the central part of the painting, where a group of men rides various beasts, circling a pond populated by placid women wearing symbols of beauty (Fig. 30).



Figure 25: Central panel, tenth sequence



Figure 26: Central panel, tenth sequence



Figure 27: Central panel, eleventh sequence



Figure 28: Central panel, twelfth sequence



Figure 29: Central panel, twelfth sequence



Figure 30: Central panel, manège

Like in the previous sequences, the dancers repeat the same movements and positions from all angles. They then surround the transparent ball and, piggybacking each other on shoulders, back and chest, trot around it. The images in the circles start changing faster and keeping up with them becomes more and more difficult. Slowly, they enter the transparent ball, linked by the circular screens to a white egg. This is the last sequence, and, in ensemble, they repeat the choreographic phrase introduced with the speeding up of the music in sequence eight, bouncing up and down. The music reduces itself to the sound of water as the visual eye-egg-globe rhyme encompassing the whole painting (Warner, 2001) is replicated by the projected egg on the screen, the plastic globe hosting the dancers and their eyes fixed on the spectators. This description makes clear that Chouinard uses the painting as a “cognitive artefact with heuristic

potential” (Queiroz and Aguiar, 2016), an enabling constraint that imposes a structure within which she is free to move and encouraged to create. In “Dancing Outside the Box” (2016), Aguiar and Queiroz look at the agency of perspectival stage, pointe shoe, and ballet technique in fostering a certain way of moving or approaching the stage. They conclude that creativity results from the introduction and manipulation of cognitive artefacts, which create conceptual spaces, modify the environment, and intensify abilities (2016). In the first act of *Le Jardin de Délices* as much as in the following two, Chouinard uses the painting as a cognitive artefact imposing its own constraints, as she selects certain structural aspects (multiplication, sameness in difference, visual rhymes) and recreates them in choreographic form. At the same time, as I show later, she spins the narrative aspects and uses prevailing figurations of translators as an additional conceptual artefact providing her with lines of engagement. If the first act suggested the faithful translator with the juxtaposition of source and target texts, the second figuration turns to the betraying translator.

Translator Traitor!

The pretence of order of the first act comes to a halt in the second part of the performance, *Hell*. If the former had given a narrative thread to the panel by breaking it into sequences, *Hell* restores the affordances of the mode of image in its simultaneous presentation of disparate activities that force the spectators to choose on what to focus. At the same time, the narrative way of apprehending images is not completely lost but entrusted to the circular lateral screens, which indicate a path for the eye as they zoom in on the gambler’s pierced hand at the bottom left of the painting (Fig. 31) and draw a sinuous route through the suffering bodies.



Figure 31: *Hell*, detail



Figure 32: *Hell*, detail



Figure 33: *Hell*, details

The painting disappears from the background and the mismatch between what occurs on stage and the details from the painting reproduced on the circular screens creates a sense of disorder and loss. The suffering of the figures expressed visually by the painting is complemented by auditory suffering as a woman climbs up a trash can and howls in a grotesque way (this woman is performed by Valeria Galluccio). The quality of this sound is visceral and comes from the movement of her upper body. Galluccio (Appendix 3) described it as a duet with the sound designer and manager, in that her voice is distorted by a software that changes her pitch so that she does not sounds human. Meanwhile, the other dancers populate the stage with objects: a white umbrella, various buckets, a ladder, a huge voice instrument resembling the one in the

painting, spears and fencings, various feathers, a room divider, crutches...objects taken from past performances and from the choreographic studio. Once the movement of the zoom-in camera projected on the circular screens is completed, the howling dancer steps down from the trash can and exists, while other dancers approach the stage from the left side. They all traverse the stage while a dancer wearing the horns used in *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune* (1987) circles around them propelled by a rolling chair. Other dancers enter from the right carrying acuminated objects, and the one who had climbed the stairs lets out a cry that arrests all the others. The interaction between their naked bodies and the acuminated objects generates an affective response of discomfort in the spectator's body and brings into stark relief the spears, swords and weapons populating the panel. The intensity of the music clashes with the atmosphere of the first panel, whose music was composed using acoustic instruments from the Renaissance. These instruments were chosen "as a way to connect, to put people in the vibe of that [the historical period]; [...] a vibe that's going towards that relaxing, mystical, spiritual kind of thing" and that comes back in the third panel (Dufort, Appendix 4: 5). The composer deliberately juxtaposed the ceremonial vibe of that music with the one in *Hell*, which he describes as "very complex and very intense...very contemporary, very written also, serious" (Appendix 4: 4). Against his natural tendency to counterpoint the intensity of the dance with a simpler music, in this performance he felt the need to follow that intensity and even add to it because "if I would not go that way, so intense, then the third movement would not be so releasing [...] the contrast in the music was also important, I think, because there is a contrast in the painting" (Appendix 4: 4). Contrast is both in time—between Renaissance and contemporary music—and in atmosphere, building a movement that goes from the ceremonial to the hair-raising, to releasing.

As the dancers rub their nails and bodies onto various surfaces producing piercing sounds, inflict pain to themselves or others, simulate sexual intercourses and cannibalism, the circular

screens take us through an exploration of the animal figures depicted in the painting, thus indexically alluding to the dancers' bestiality, while breaking up any illusion of order and understanding created by the first part. This results in a choreography of the spectators, who find themselves literally pulled in by the first part and then pushed back by the cacophony of aggressive sounds and visual inputs. The bodily sensation of being pulled in and back is echoed by a sense of mistrust in what one sees: are the dancers still performing the painting or have they moved onto something else? Without a clear bridge between source and target text, the spectator is left in the dark. And indeed, this part of the choreography does not try to faithfully represent the painting; rather it wants to convey the performers' sensations of the pictures, mixing their sensibilities and histories with those of the painting. For the creation process of this sequence, Chouinard extracted various objects from previous solos and ensembles in order to generate a chaotic remixing of the company's personal journey of creation (Poirier, Appendix 1)⁸². The principle of recycling expressed by Bosch via the images of devouring, regurgitating, and defecating is then recreated in this section of the performance by having sections of former choreographies and props recycled and reembodyed by the performers⁸³. The result is a perceptual response to the images of Bosch and the objects of the company's life, purposely set in stark contrast so as to generate chaos.

Another recurrent feature of Chouinard's oeuvre that is thematized and recycled in *Hell* is the peculiar use of prosthetic devices, which reached its maximum in *body_remix/Les_Variations_Goldberg* (2010). As both Valeria Galluccio and Carol Poirier confirm, Chouinard usually works with extensions as prostheses of the body, ways of moving from a place to another. In *Le Jardin des Délices* the dancers themselves become "extensions

⁸² Note the presence of horns and microphones, a constant in Chouinard's works, the peculiar rolling chair appearing in *body_remix/Les_Variations_Goldberg* (2005), the claws from *Le Sacre du Printemps* (1993), the horns from *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* (1987) or the three-headed mask from *Le Nombre D'Or* (2010).

⁸³ This imagery of bodily recycling appears as well in Dante's *La Divina Commedia*, where in the last circle of Hell the wretched are repeatedly eaten and defecated by Lucifer.

of the painting into space” (Poirier, Appendix 1). The dancers are an extension of the painting, and the objects are extensions of the dancers, facilitating unexpected movements: this is visible in the way Valeria plays the ladder as if it were a musical instrument, while Carol wears two long horns on her arms and, supported by other two dancers, moves to the front and back of the stage, turning into a wickedly laughing and elongated figure. Towards the end, Valeria steps back on the trash can and resumes her initial howls, moving her torso in a counter-clockwise circular movement. The others assemble and move in a circle, following the direction of Valeria’s upper body movements, each of them absorbed by their own instruments, their own world. They exit. Accompanying their exit is the image of the egg-shaped man looking at the viewer, projected on the lateral screens, a remainder of the visual rhyme introduced in the first act. Thus, if the first act used as a cognitive artefact the figure of the faithful translator, *Hell* exacerbates the idea of the infamous ‘*traduttore traditore*’ (translator traitor) and asks the spectators to reconsider their trust in what was earlier presented as an unmediated and neutral transfer of meaning. This is done by mismatching action on stage from action on the screens and by populating the stage with direct references to the translator’s biography, such as the company’s objects and choreographies.

The Intervenient Translator

The last part, *Paradise*, uses the temporal modality of the choreography to convey a sense of stasis. From the dark stage, two eyes, one green and one blue, stare at the spectators from the circular lateral screens. The eyes belong to Lucie Mongrain, a former dancer of the company. As spectators, we see the pupils moving in circles, then the eyes open and close suddenly. They open again and stare at us. In the blink of an eye the painting appears in the background and zooms in on the trio God, Eve, and Adam. One figure enters and positions itself in the centre, representing God. Crossing the stage from right to left, a female dancer takes the place of Adam, while from the other side a male dancer enters and takes the place of Eve. The dancer

occupying the position of God is Carol Prieur; however, the lightening casts a shadow on her chin, thus giving the impression of a beard and complicating any attempt to define her gender, in so doing pointing to the androgenicity of God in Bosch's painting. For a while, everything stays still. Then, other dancers enter the stage and position themselves next to Adam and Eve, multiplying their bodies, thus highlighting the binary division of sex and gender. While the Evas tap their feet on the floor, the Adams turn their head towards the public and look straight at the spectators. The music is very delicate, almost still, the movements are very slow. The eyes on the screens move very slightly. The dancers' movements form angles and orient the body along different directions, so if the chest points right, the legs look left. Then we hear a music of water and slowly they start to swap positions so as to group themselves regardless of gender, hence blurring any distinction. In heterogeneous formations, they explore the same movements in different directions, positions, combinations: standing, sitting, laying down, in solos, couples or ensembles, facing the public, the side, the background—an exploration of multiplicity in sameness that connects the third act with the first, where the same principle was employed. As the dancer Poirier put it: "it's just the shift in space, a shift for the dancer, it's still the same [...]. And all, woman, man, everything could be everything. A row, or one person, multiple, yeah, multiple Jesuses" (Appendix 1: 6). The music changes: on the sound of chirping birds and trilling bells, the dancers start moving from left to right, jumping in a folly, while other dancers join from the opposite side. The joyful stance of the beginning is resumed, and with it the ceremonial music that accompanied it. The dancers perform undulating and fast-paced movements with their torsos. As the light dims out, they move upstage left so that their traits are no more in sight: all that is visible are their genderless shadows as they all stand in God's position. The eyes in the circles rotate frenetically; the spectators' eyes are equally strained as they try to see through the darkness. The roles are reversed, for now it is the spectators who are being observed, while the dancers occupy the spectators' position in the

theatre, comfortably protected by the shadow. As the dancers exit from the fifth left, the eyes staring at the public from the painting are coupled with God's look, projected on the background.

In light of the choreographer's oeuvre, it is impossible not to interpret this as a feminist stance. Chouinard exploits movement and the temporal dimension of the choreography to subvert the gender roles of the painting. She uses the perlocutory mode—"aimed at producing certain reactions in the consciousness of the audience by transforming the presuppositions of the original text and manipulating its point of view" (Aaltonen, 2000: 61)—to make a comment on contemporary and past societies while voicing a critique of the source text. In her analysis of a previous work by Chouinard, itself a translation of *Le Sacre du Printemps*, Tsiakalou (2018) places it in the context of feminist translation and the theories and techniques proposed by Louise von Flotow (1991), Burton (2010), and herself for appropriating and queering a text (Tsiakalou, 2018). In this third part, Chouinard actively employs some of these techniques to present her queer version of the *Paradise*: the inversion of a phallocentric and heteronormative myth, where Eve is literally handed over to Adam, is disrupted first by reversing the roles and secondly by blurring them as we have different dancers play them regardless of gender. By *supplementing*⁸⁴ (von Flotow, 1991: 74) the images of Adam and Eve with other male and female dancers, Chouinard over-translates (translates too much, makes clearer than in the source) the binary view of gender presented in *Paradise* and the attribution of different roles according to one's gender. Multiplied to infinity, Adam and Eve represent humanity and its division into a dual conception of gender, something that is only implicit in Bosch's painting although being quite unambiguous in its source, the Book of Genesis, and in critics' appreciations of it. Soon after, this representation is appropriated and corrected, adopting the

⁸⁴ Supplementing is defined by Von Flotow as "a voluntaristic action on the text" (1988: 75) that makes more explicit what is meant, as in translating "Ce soir j'entre dans l'histoire sans relever ma jupe" (literally: without pulling up my skirt") with "tonight I enter history without opening my legs" (1988: 70).

technique of *hijacking*⁸⁵ (von Flotow, 1991: 74), which consists in producing a target text that is more feminist than its source. This is done by swapping Adam and Eve's positions. The new tableau sees Eve looking up at Adam, returning his gaze and affirming her desire, while it is Adam who is objectified and looks down. However, this portrayal can only be temporary, and it is soon shaken by the dancers, who start to mingle and position themselves regardless of gender, in what can be considered a form of queering the source text through the "inversion" technique proposed by Burton (2010). Burton's inversion technique consists in deploying feminist techniques to target homophobic and heterosexists texts in a "turning of the text against itself" that "destabilise(s) and denaturalise(s) gender and sex norms, historicising them" (2010: 57).

Moreover, the use of stasis and movement in the representation of gender, and the eventual untenability of these positions, which are constantly shaken and forced back into motion, reminds us of Brian Massumi's (2002) reflections on the body's being caught in a process of constant motion and becoming, a flow of undisclosed potential that can only gesture towards momentary actualizations, uncontained and uncontainable. As one of the performance reviewers suggested, this last act reverses history by taking us back to a different beginning, one that "eschews strict gender categories and expectations, inviting us to embrace a new Earth and imagine something else after the horror and chaos of Hell" (Dallis, 2019).

⁸⁵ An example of hijacking is de Lotbinière-Harwood's translation of Lise Gauvin's *Lettres d'une Autre*, where she avoids male generic terms in English and replaces them with female ones whenever possible in an attempt "to make the feminine visible in language" (de Lotbinière-Harwood in von Flotow, 1991: 79).



Figure 34: *The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things*, Hieronymus Bosch, Museo del Prado

All the while, two eyes look at the public from above the painting. Warner links the closed shutters of the tryptic to Bosch's painting *The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things* (Fig. 34), of which the globe in *The Garden of Earthly Delights* "reverses the angle of view" (2001: 49). In this third part of Chouinard's choreography, the two circular screens displaying moving eyes also seem to allude to *The Seven Deadly Sins* and come to replace God's eyes in it (Manson, 2015). According to Ann Albright (1997), the choreography of gaze in traditional ballet replicates the male gaze produced by Hollywood cinema, famously criticized by Laura Mulvey (1999). Indeed, the ballerina is displayed by her male partner, whose gaze follows that of the (usually) male choreographer, which, in turn, guides the gaze of the audience. This kind of gaze is evoked in the first part of the third act, when Adam's gaze towards Eve also works to guide the public's gaze to her, standing naked as in Bosch's painting. Not only does Chouinard reverse the roles, so that it is Eve who looks at Adam, but she also disrupts this gendered view by looking back at the spectators through the eyes on the screens. By acknowledging their presence, she turns viewers into witnesses and makes them accountable for their positions as co-producers of meaning. After all, what is being gazed at is not a static

image but a live one, one which is inscribed upon by cultural norms only insofar as it can disrupt them.

Moreover, the fact that God's eyes are replaced by a woman's eyes stands in contrast to the image of a male God in the painting and further complicates a binary view of gender. Or are those eyes symbolising the choreographer, who, in the spirit of *la réécriture au féminin*, decides to translate texts displaying patriarchal inclinations to challenge them and reclaim her own voice? In weaving her voice with that of the male author while literally facing his painting, Chouinard recognizes herself as part of a tradition of women translators set against men creators (Chamberlain, 1988; Simon, 1996). This tradition is inscribed in a patriarchal structure whereby issues of authorship, originality, and paternity are tightly intertwined, and women are relegated to the task of reproduction, for which they are afforded no authority (Chamberlain, 1988). Even texts that try to recover and validate the translator's agency, like Aaltonen's *Time-Sharing on Stage* (2000), often end up replicating a binary stance where no middle term between faithful and betraying, or "reverent" and "subversive", as she puts it, is granted. Aaltonen brilliantly unties the terms faithful and betraying from the text itself and links them to the translator's stance towards the perceived superiority or inferiority of one culture over the other. For her, reverence is dictated by the high cultural value attributed to the source texts, which are seen as increasing the target system's cultural capital. These texts come from perceived superior cultures or from canonised authors and texts. Through translation, the "positive qualities of the Other are introjected into the Self in order for the indigenous system to experience a oneness with it" (Aaltonen, 2000: 64-65). In these cases, alterity is not concealed, and the source text is translated in its entirety. On the other hand, when the target system does not need the Other anymore, this is made to speak for the receiving end, "whose expectations outweigh the constraints of the source text" (73). The translation in this case will rebel against the original by deconstructing, parodying, re-actualising, and subverting it. In

instances of intermedial translation these stances can also be seen as applying to the relationship between source and target media and their perceived position in culture, with literature and painting generally occupying more central positions than dance or performance.

However, to simply divide translations into reverent and subversive would blind us to the manifold ways in which these approaches can be combined to generate a richer commentary and accomplish diverse functions. The intermedial translation carried out by Marie Chouinard shows indeed both tendencies, reconciling a perceived tension between reverence and subversion. The task of translating one of the most famous works by a canonical and world-famous painter is a way of accumulating symbolic power and cultural capital for Chouinard's company. This is reflected in the full translation of the painting as well as in the decision to show parts of it during the performance. On the other hand, Chouinard distances herself from institutionalised and fixed models of interpretation by adopting a feminist and queer perspective and by altering the order of the reading, so that what was a warning against the sin of lust—Adam's lascivious glance towards Eve developing into the pleasure-seeking activities of the central panel and ending up with punishment in Hell—turns into a celebration of life in all its pleasure and pain, as it all leads to the quietness of the finale, where men and women move and interact freely and equally, overcoming the culturally constructed boundaries of gender.

The emergence of Chouinard's point of view is made possible by the choreographer's treatment of the cracks between the modalities employed by the two qualified media of dance and painting. While the choreographer strives to keep them as close as possible on the material and semiotic levels and uses the sensorial modality to amplify the atmosphere of the source text, the subversive stance is mainly entrusted to the spatiotemporal modality. This enables the choreography to display at the same time reverence and rebellion to the canonical artwork and

its institutionalised interpretation while showing her presence in the translation, attaining Maier's call for women translators to "get under the skin of both antagonistic and sympathetic works" and to "become independent, 'resisting' interpreters who not only let antagonistic works speak [...] but also speak with them and place them in a larger context by discussing them and the process of their translation" (Maier, 1985: 4).

Refusing the binary depiction of faithful versus betraying translators, Chouinard moves through these positions to exploit their affective potential and elaborate a third model, that of the intervenient translator who lets the text speak but also speaks with it. She gives visibility to the translating process itself and to the bodies that perform it. Moreover, the first act of the performance, with the juxtaposition of source and target texts as if in a facing-page translation, is a reflection on the process of translating that unveils the translator's agency. While we follow the order chosen by Chouinard, we are made alert to the various possible renditions and to the translator's manipulation of the text. In showing the "friction between the prescriptively singular and potentially plural" (Szymanska, 2019: 142), Chouinard's work can be considered a meta-translation⁸⁶. Like the 'translation multiples' studied by Szymanska, the various combinations of male and female dancers in the first and third acts generate a narrative of their own: a narrative about the multiplicity of possible translations but also about the multiplicity of the translators' voices, a narrative about the tension created between 'original' and translation. Translation is foregrounded as a collective and co-operative work against the assumed individuality of original writing. This discourse surrounding and contesting individual authorship finds echoes in feminist translation (Chamberlain, 1988; Simon, 1996) and inscribes itself in a more general re-examination of the figure of the author in literature (Barthes, 1967; Foucault, 1969) and in the art environment (McCartney, 2018). The questioning of individual

⁸⁶ Here I use the term in a slightly different way than Szymanska's multiples, which she defines as the "practice of multiplying different translation variants and putting them next to each other as part of one artistic work" (Szymanska, 2019: 140).

authorship that translation multiples bring about is paralleled in dance by the inevitably collaborative nature of choreography, which works on and with human bodies, each with their own specificity and subjectivity that cannot but be reflected in the final performance. As the stability of those bodies is questioned by contrasting stasis with motion, so is the stability of meaning itself, whose reiteration and reperformance across time and cultures is foregrounded, and the stability of the author-translator relationship, whose model grounded on patriarchal values of fidelity and betrayal is replaced with one that recognizes both subjectivities and puts them in dialogue.

The redistribution of what is visible and invisible, the exploitation of slippages of meaning arising from the reiteration of discourse across media, and the emphasis on the body's open-endedness coincide with the three axes along with dance enters the political according to Dana Mills (2017). Recent years have seen a growing concern with the redistribution of the sensible on the choreographic stage. Performances that question the perceived boundaries between human, animal, post-human, able and disabled bodies, and works that stage and explore the gendered, aged, post-colonial, precarious, or remembered body (as in archival practices) are multiplying and attracting the attention of scholars (Albright, 1997; Midgelow, 2007; Lepecki, 2016; Brandstetter and Hartung, 2017; Croft, 2017; Brandstetter et al., 2019). At the same time, a similar redistribution of the sensible in the hierarchical imbalance of author-translator relationships (whose conceptualization are full of gendered metaphors) and in relation to gender binaries and heteronormative assumptions has taken place in TS (Godard, 1994; von Flotow, 1991; Venuti, 1995; Simon, 1996; Burton, 2010; Wakabayashi, 2011; Baer et al., 2016; Woodsworth, 2017; Baer and Kaindl, 2018). As a contemporary dance that intermedially translates Hieronymus Bosch's tryptic *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (1490-1510), Marie Chouinard's choreography *Jérôme Bosch: le Jardin des Délices* (2016) offers a vantage point for investigating how both translation and contemporary dance participate in the construction

and negotiation of gendered identities and in the redistribution of the sensible on page and stage. Having presented *Les Jardin des Délices* as a dance translation that offers a model for the intervenient translator and elaborates counter discourses in relation to sexuality and gender, in what follows I will draw on Rancière's concept of the distribution of the sensible (2004) to explore how dance and translation can be conceived as powerful tools for political intervention and identity negotiation, especially in combination with feminist and queer struggles.

Political Agency in Dance and Translation

In "On Three Modes of Translating Queer Literary Texts" Marc Démont (2018) enlists three stances that a translator can adopt towards the source text when dealing with the translation of queer bodies and discourses. These are: ignore its queerness (misrecognizing translation), flatten the text's ambiguity (minoritizing translation), and preserve the thickness of the source text and its potential for disruption (queering translation). In Chouinard's choreography, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* is neither represented as a normative tale of human conduct, as many commentators did by reading it from left to right, nor flattened as an ideological statement (as much as Chouinard's choreography cannot be flattened to that). What is achieved is a thorough exploration of the tryptic in its complexities, ambiguities, richness in figurations and irreducible structure: what Démont calls a queering translation (2018), one that keeps discussion and wonder alive.

As introduced above, many commentators have understood Bosch's painting as partaking of the regime of the ethical, whereby the painter lays out the laws of good conduct and warns against the results of dissolute behaviour and deviation from pre-constituted norms (Fischer, 2016). Far from reinstating the status quo, I would suggest that Bosch's oeuvre participates in what Rancière calls the regime of the aesthetic by creating ruptures in the ways of looking at the world and by subverting artistic and perceptive norms. Rancière's remarks on the aesthetic

regime are particularly insightful in explaining how the arts participate in the political. He draws a distinction between *la politique*, that is, the system of coordinates that regulates the degree of visibility of beings and groups and their participation in social life, and *le politique* as acts and forms that disturb and suspend the distribution of the sensible. The system of the sensible coincides with what can be seen and talked about but also with who can talk. It is linked to the distribution of time, spaces, and activities in unequal ways, so that certain parts of it will remain invisible (or partially visible) and will be granted less participation in the governing of what is common. This causes a disparity between what is within the distribution of the sensible and what is left outside, which can find a way to reclaim visibility through the aesthetic regime of artworks. By reorganizing the sensible in new and unexpected ways, by creating frictions between form and content, by casting a fresh glance on accepted paradigms or by putting centre stage subjects and objects that are usually kept behind stage wings, aesthetic practices actively insert *le politique* into *la politique* and participate in the redistribution of the sensible.

Chouinard's queering translation of *Le Jardin des Délices* can then be seen as an attempt to recuperate *le politique* from Bosch's painting. As Fischer recognizes: "Bosch encourages a discerning way of seeing, in so far as he deploys several types of images, each different in its origin, relationship to reality, and valence" (2016: 115). He populates the painting with grotesque figures, initially considered monsters and chimeras, and some early commentators defined him as an avant-gardist. His style is commonly described in terms of grotesque and drollery and as based on the integration of low-brow art forms, which could be found in the fantastic and satirical genres in literature but had never been absorbed by the pictorial tradition before him (Fischer, 2016; Belting, 2018). The grotesque, as explained by Bakhtin, consists in exaggerating aspects of the body that test its confines and open it to the outer world: organs in which the beginning and end of life are interwoven, such as the nose, the mouth, the bowels,

all kinds of orifices and everything that protrudes. This unfinished and porous body is replaced in the 16th century by its figuration as “an impenetrable façade”, producing the individual as separate from the world and from others (Bakhtin, 2005: 70; Benthien, 2002). Likewise, the use of drollery began in the late sixteenth century in France and involved some of the trademark characteristics of Bosch’s style, among which the portrayal of human bodies in uninhibited poses and gestures, the representation of members of society in situations of vice, and the literal translation of proverbs (Fischer, 2016). One could go even further and recover traces of drollery in fables that blend humans and animals, and in the use of inversion, where what is considered good is made small and evil big. These are all traits of Bosch’s style. As Fischer remarks:

In Bosch’s painting figures, plants and objects that are to be understood as lying geographically, spiritually, or ethically ‘on the border of Christianity’ are frequently represented in larger-than-life proportions, in the same way that unnatural size was a feature of exotic tales of ‘heavenly’ lands. Bosch employed the inversion of size relationships as the sign of a world turned upside-down (2016: 90).

It is interesting, and perhaps enlightening, to notice that most of these features coincide with those enumerated by Scott in his account of ‘hidden transcripts’ (1990). In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, Scott posits the opposition of two competing discourses: the public transcript, “self-portrait of the dominant elite” (1990: 18), and the hidden transcript, “privileged site for non-hegemonic, contrapuntal, dissident, subversive discourse” (25). Scott believes the competition over the boundaries delimiting hidden and public transcripts to be “perhaps the most vital arena for ordinary conflict” (14). Although his bipartition may be criticized for being too clear-cut, Scott’s remarks over the struggle for visibility recalls Rancière’s concept of the distribution of the sensible and may cast a revealing light on Bosch’s paintings. With their flying fishes, upside-down worlds, mixtures of human and animal and their heavy use of the grotesque, these paintings open a space of ambiguity and rupture that can lead to rearrangement of perception. In the central panel, Bosch insists on a model of the body that was being suppressed and stages a carnival in the most Bakhtinian sense (1965).

What Chouinard does then is to recover *le politique* of Bosch's painting, bringing to surface the frictions, contradictions, and disruptions of the regime of the sensible that the painting hosts and that had been lost in its institutionalized reception as a moral tale about the human fall from Paradise. Her exploration of the limits between body and world in the use of prosthetic devices, of a guttural voice that exposes the body's inside, of the emphasis of the body's orifices (such as the pelvis, the buttock, the mouth, the ears) recuperates the grotesque body and stages its becoming in the endless metamorphoses it offers to the senses. This redistribution of visibility and invisibility (which here extends to the visibility of the translator) is one of the axes along which Rancière's notion of dissensus can be explored to formulate an account of dance as political (Mills, 2017). For Mills, dance realises radical equality by allowing bodies to present themselves as equally speaking subjects, disrupting the regime of the sensible that privileges verbal over bodily communication. It does so by inscribing bodies upon others by transferring movement from choreographer to dancer and from dancer to dancer. This method of inscription portends a slippage of meaning, which can occur through interpretation and aesthetic rupture (Mills calls this the "sic-sensuous"). As the body is in continuous change, the process of inscription emphasises the body's open-endedness and the impossibility to fix it in stable categories.

It is tempting to apply Mill's insights to the act of translation, and I will contend that as a method of communication and intervention, translation holds a similar potential for redistributing the sensible. For a long time, translation has been distributing the sensible along hierarchical relationships between author and translator that were not devoid of gender implications, as brilliantly demonstrated by Lori Chamberlain (1988). In their popular depiction as mere vessels of meaning, translators have long been kept invisible, silent workers dedicated to the transmission of the author's intended meaning, rather than equal beings engaged in a dialogical process of meaning recreation and negotiation. In the field of TS this

realization came strongly to the fore during the 1970s and 1980s as Canadian women like Barbara Godard, Nicole Brossard, Daphne Marlatt, Luise von Flotow, Lori Chamberlain, and Sherry Simon started translating texts in such a way as to recover women's voices and spotlight their distortion through translation. At the same time, they started to translate texts displaying patriarchal attitudes in a way that challenged and problematized them. Moreover, the attention they paid to the workings of ideology in literary texts and their translations, which contributed to the cultural turn in TS, converged into more recent projects and theories. Some of them exploit the possibility of a slippage of meaning from a language to another to recover (queer) bodies and desires within the source text and put them center stage, affirming and highlighting their senses and sensations (Larkosh, 2011; Baer and Kaindl, 2018). They set the importance of the senses in the translation process against an "ideology of transparency" (Boulanger 2005: 2) that wants the body in the closet, out of sight. Within this framework, translation is considered a precarious space of expression and identity negotiation, situated at the intersection of productivity and creativity: a performative, affective, relational act (Bermann, 2014; Wolf, 2017a; Baldo, 2018; Basile, 2018).

Like dances, translations are carried out by bodies situated in specific historic and cultural contexts. Moreover, in mediating between languages and cultures they reveal the inherent equality allowing meaning to be translated as well as the differences—linguistic, cultural, political, stylistic, epistemological—making translation necessary. If the medium of dance, the body, refutes fixity, so does translation as it always simultaneously relates the past to the future by putting in circulation and centrifugal movement an (apparently) fixed text, figuring new futures for it (Plaza, 1987; Hilgert, 2015). As such, translation can open the door for subversion just like dancing bodies' reiteration and citation of social norms and repertoires can populate the body with heterogeneous and discordant meanings. Dance and translation meet in the political sphere as they both potentially contribute to the redistribution of the sensible,

reclaiming a space and a voice in an act of political subjectification and giving visibility to subjects usually kept behind stage wings. They are both capable of disrupting homogenized and standardized forms by injecting newness either in literary language or in the visual and kinaesthetic fields. Each in their own way, they engage in performativity⁸⁷, and therefore are subject to a slippage of meaning created by the frictions and gaps in and between languages and bodies, which can lead to subversive and richer readings.

⁸⁷ For more on the concept of performativity, see Hall (1999). For the difference between performativity and performance see Lloyd (2019).

Translation and Agency in Jérôme Bosch: *Le Jardin des Délices* (Reverse Shot)



Figure 35: *Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un Faune*, Compagnie Marie Chouinard (1994)

Translating the Painting into Somatic Sensations

The body unfinished is a fundamental trait of the grotesque body and becomes for Chouinard a generating principle not only in *Le Jardin des Délices*; a similar fascination and re-evaluation of the body in perpetual transformation and metamorphosis, outpouring traditional binomial gender categorizations, can be seen in Chouinard's first solos (1978-1996). In them, she counteracts cultural representations of body and identity with her own somatic experience, “reframe[ing] traditional dynamics of desire, confusing categories of sexuality and gender” (Albright 1997: xxv). This approach is evident, for example, in *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* (Fig. 35), a solo about male desire created by Nijinsky in 1912 and restaged by Chouinard in 1987⁸⁸.

Albright observes that in appropriating Nijinsky's body, Chouinard asks “what it means to be a man by refusing to stay in the role of a woman”, what it means to write oneself through

⁸⁸ This solo was subsequently recreated for other performers in 1994 under the title *Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un Faune*.

movement and performative acts (1997: xxv). Moreover, by eliminating the nymphs from the choreography, she eliminates the object of desire, foregrounding desiring as such, while also occupying—as a woman—that which is desired. In this way, she shifts back and forth between self and other in a way that debunks stable identities and highlights movement and metamorphosis as the basic ground of bodily experience. Besides affirming Chouinard as a feminist *auteure*, whose staging of female desire for self-authorship embodies an activist stance (Tembeck, 2000), this performance sets the ground for a concept of the body as always in transformation. As a matter of fact, the ideas of ongoing dialogue, metamorphosis, and freedom returned time and again in the interviews I carried out with Chouinard's dancers, showing how the triptych's structural principles are not only represented in the performance but also permeate its making, becoming part of a methodology. Moving from the position of the spectator to that of the performer, the next section will use the interviews with Carol Prieur, Isabelle Poirier, and Valeria Galluccio to uncover their lived experiences of the performance. This shows how the painting is translated not only in terms of narrative and structure, but, on a deeper level, how its main features are translated into somatic sensations for and by the dancers, and how agency is distributed in the choreographic process.

Considering the history preceding and still enveloping the context in which *The Garden of Earthly Delights* was composed, de Certeau (1992) arrives at a fascinating interpretation of the painting. He highlights how a gradual demystification of God had been going on since the thirteenth century, marking a period of transition, questioning, and unsurmountable breaches between, for example, urban clerics and rural masses, catholic and protestant church, old and new world. Demonstrations, peasants' uprisings, and older systems of knowledge and production were brutally repressed in the quest to replace the latter with a capitalist system, as Silvia Federici brilliantly shows in her *Calibano e La Strega: le Donne, il Corpo e l'Accumulazione Straordinaria* (2015). Prophetic faith and mystic literature became the refuge

of those disfavoured by progress, who performed a gesture of retreat as their only countermove to state-imposed docility. Hence, in this context of competing narratives, Bosch's painting stages a loss of meaning by refusing to use the already popular visual perspective (de Certeau, 1992; Belting, 2018), offering instead a multiplicity of paths for the eye, simultaneously encouraging and frustrating interpretation. This aspect is picked by Chouinard and employed in the first act, where the sequential appearance of singular groups on stage combined with the zooming in of the lateral screens projects a temporal order, and therefore a narrative (Elleström, 2018). She draws a path for the spectators and takes us by the hand. However, this invitation soon frustrates our eagerness to read and give a linear arrangement to the events, as the route through the painting zigzags and sometimes presents us with plural possibilities. This frustration of reading, this charting of paths to nowhere, alerts the onlookers to the multiplicity of meaning and being.

This sense is reinforced by the way Bosch proposes a “combinatory mechanism that multiplies the possibilities of relations between the elements and that, in so doing, deconstruct and reconstruct forms” (de Certeau, 1992: 60). Among those forms, circles and angles prevails. As seen above, the circles create a visual rhyme linking eye, globe, and eggs. Their repeated appearance modulates a certain affect and gives the viewers the sensation of “a look emerg[ing] from the depths of these gardens” (54), so that the eye seen by the onlooker “begins to look back at them” (ibid). Chouinard emphasizes this architectural cue by ending each of the acts with the image of globes, eggs, and eyes and by reversing the angle of the looking—looking at/being looked from the circular screens on the sides. The circles are juxtaposed to the architectural bodies whose bent joints form “angles of stoppage” (sitting, kneeling, lying) whose function is to “show the possible series of a few beautiful movements in their formality” (1992: 70). The metamorphic process that in Bosch “creates an undefined becoming of the beings placed within a fixed framework” (63), is not only visually translated by Chouinard but

gains a deeper, somatic resonance in her habitual way of working with systems of movements whereby the dancers negotiate freedom and choice within a very clear and crystallized structure. The concept of metamorphosis, so central in Bosch's painting, is reiterated throughout Chouinard's performances and voiced in a conference about the choreography *bODY_rEMIX/les_vARIATIONS_gOLDBERG*, where she states that if one focuses on perception, they will notice that the body is always in transformation (Chouinard, 2012). Poirier voices the same idea, highlighting how dancing with Chouinard opened up "the possibility of metamorphosis, as a dancer, to say, wow, I could become a dragon, I could become anything I want, as a dancer, I could go old, I could go young, I could change! I could change in any shape" (Appendix 1: 10). This fluid idea of the body and the phenomenological observation of its metamorphoses underpins all of Chouinard's choreographies and is made possible by the fluid, wavy use of the spine to which all parts of the body connects, the use of multiple directions and a visceral voice engendered by movement and breath, a voice that "hangs in the space between being fully embodied and being completely disembodied" (Albright 1997: 111) and cannot be described as either feminine or masculine.

This was an important factor in Valeria's voice performance in *Hell*. The composer, Luis Dufort, recalls how the aim was to "have something organic, that comes from the voice of a female but doesn't sound as a female, it can be a male, an animal...if you close your eyes, I'm not sure what it is. [...] I put a lot of effects so that she'd sound pretty much like...something that is not totally human" (Dufort, Appendix 4: 5). Valeria talks of an internal change of her dramaturgical state, of leaving the "ludico, naïve, bello, gioioso, puro, pulito" side of the first act to "entrare nella parte oscura anche di me, senza avere paura e senza giudizio. Una parte che può fare paura e che mi ha fatto paura quando l'ho trovata, l'ho portata fuori" (Galluccio,

Appendix 3: 6)⁸⁹. The same difficulty in accessing this guttural voice that comes from movement and breath and can be the motor of transformation is mentioned by Poirier, who showed me on camera how this change is operated. She said: “With *Le Faune*, the way I would just transform myself, this was for me almost falling in love, when I found *The Faune* in my life, how to become, I am so tiny and gentle faced and to become that other, other creation, and it was really that, the breath was helping” (Appendix 1: 8).

As Poirier was talking, I could not help remembering similar sensations I had lived in my body as a dancer, and the sense of freedom engendered by the possibility of becoming something else, the discovery of a multiplicity within a single body. This sense of freedom and abandonment is highlighted by Prieur as a feature that recurs in Chouinard’s work but is even more emphasized in this specific choreography:

the first scene starts in an abandonment, and sheer sort of innocence, you know, just of not knowing. In every performance there is an abandonment, of having to let go, of being in a place of the unknown, but especially in Bosch because I feel is very much part of that world. [...] It’s about that, that abandonment, when we allow ourselves to go into an imagination beyond this physical world, then we are just free. It’s freedom. (Prieur, Appendix 2: 9).

This attained freedom is not the product of representation alone, but rather comes from materiality and a very specific relation to the animal, the beastly, and the divine in the human, one that projects the body not onto other pre-given possibilities of being but towards a beyond that cannot be defined, where essence is replaced by relation (Lepecki, 2016). Again, quoting Prieur: “C’est le corps, la physicalité qui ouvre la voie de l’imagination, et après l’un nourrit l’autre: l’imaginaire me pousse à aller plus loin dans le corps, et en plongeant, mon imaginaire continue à explorer. C’est une conversation que je cherche à avoir” (Prieur, in Lalonde, 2011)⁹⁰.

The somatic sensations of openness, hypersensitivity, metamorphosis, and co-production of

⁸⁹ “Ludic, naïve, beautiful, joyful, pure, clean” to “enter to my darkest side, without fear of judgement. A part that can be scary and then scared me when I found it, when I brought it up” (my translation).

⁹⁰ “It is the body, the physicality that opens the door to imagination; afterwards, one feeds the other. Imagination doesn’t stray from the body, and as I dive in it, my imagination keeps exploring. It’s like a conversation I try to have” (my translation).

material and imaginary bodies related by three long-time company dancers can be described using Deleuze's concept of *becoming*, whereby

in undermining stable identities, becomings do not substitute other stable identities or fixed terms for the unstable ones [...] Rather, they return us to process itself, to the temporal unfolding of difference itself, that difference which is always betrayed when it is, as it is inevitably, frozen into new identities. Becoming, in short, are moments of becomings (May, 2003: 151).

The dancers do not represent, but seriously inhabit nonhuman animals', monsters', and divine modes of being, bringing into stark relief what Lepecki indicates as a central concern of contemporary dance, that is to say, the testing of limits between human, beast, puppet, and God (2016). A preoccupation likely to have infused Bosch's painting at a time when the limits between the human, the animal, the object, and the divine were being redrawn by church, state, and colonial enterprises alike (de Certeau, 1992; Federici, 2015).

The overcoming of humanism and the opening to the post-human in contemporary dance—something visible in Chouinard's use of prostheses as a way to generate new figurations of being—is defined by Rudy Laermans as “dance in general” (2008). This term, adapted from postmodern dance talk of “body in general” to mean that everyone could dance, indicates the treatment of performative qualities of humans and more-than-humans on a par, the understanding of both as active agents co-creating the dance piece. We see this feature in Chouinard's use of objects “come estensione, o come maniera intelligente. Marie ha bisogno che l'oggetto abbia un uso. [...] Però devono sempre essere utilizzati in maniera intelligente. Non viene mai gettato un oggetto in scena, viene depositato, trascinato, spinto...c'è l'azione...l'intenzione, il rispetto di quelle cose” (Valeria, Appendix 3: 19-20)⁹¹. Laermans calls this form of choreography “the making and modulation of assemblages” (Laermans, 2008: 11). The concept of assemblage helps us understand the use of prostheses and more-than-human

⁹¹ “As an extension, as intelligent manner of relating. [...] They must be used in an intelligent manner. They are never tossed on the stage, they are deposited, dragged, pushed...there is action, intention, respect” (my translation).

agents in Chouinard's work, as much as it will help delineate a more complex description of agency in dance and translation, one that does not conflate agent with individual and avoids replacing the image of the translator/dancer as a mere vessel of meaning with an oppositional one that simply turns the author-translator hierarchical position upside-down. Thus, in the following section I will look at how agency is distributed among various human and more-than-human agents via mechanisms of fissure and fusion (Enfield and Kockelman, 2017) that can be accounted for by using Deleuze and Guattari's concept of assemblage (1987)⁹².

Distributed Agency

In *Mapping Memory in Translation* (2016), Shioban Brownlie introduces the concept of distributed memory, defining translation as "the product of distributed memory across author, translator, other actors such as editors, people consulted, institutions (publishing houses), social group (readers), various texts and material and electronic agents" (2016: 31). Following Brownlie, in this section I will look at how agency is exercised by the choreographer and distributed among a host of human and more-than-human agents, and how the tension and/or accord between these agencies hinders or emphasizes choreographic statements.

In their work on distributed agency, Enfield and Kockelman (2017) define as agent "whatever alters the content (what and how), contexts (where and when), and consequences (why and to what effect) of one's comportment—even if only retroactively" (2017: 32). They warn against equating the agent with the individual in that oftentimes agency derives from mechanisms of fissure and fusion including human and more-than-human forces, where relationship enacted in interaction precedes units, and cognition is distributed across brain, body, material technology, individuals, time, and the elements of a process. In order to give a richer account

⁹² Here I use Deleuze and Guattari's theory in the translation carried out by Brian Massumi (1987), who translates *agencement* with assemblage, following the choice made by their first translator, Paul Patton in 1981. While there have been several criticisms levelled at this translation choice (for which I remit to Phillips, 2006), many translators and commentators have agreed to maintain it.

of agency, they propose a segmentation into flexibility and accountability. The first is defined as who or what influences an action by physically carrying it out, designing, planning, placing in context and anticipating its effects, the latter as who or what is subject to evaluation, has entitlements and obligations toward a certain action or behaviour.

Adopting this framework, one can assess the various agencies partaking of the creation and performance of *Jérôme Bosch: Le Jardin des Délices*. The previous chapter showed the choreography to be aware of itself as a translation and able to move between different conceptualizations of agency in translation, from the stereotyped images of the faithful versus traitor translators to a more nuanced version of the translator as an intervenient being, who restores the queerness of the source texts and opens the text towards new futures by altering the order of reading. As Prieur put it:

It's kind of futuristic in some way, we are moving...you know, there is the creation of the world, and the destruction, but where are we going to the future? So, I think that she took all those symbols and then played, with the gendering, the symbols themselves, to invite us to something that is not so dogmatic, something that we don't even know what it is (Prieur, Appendix 2: 10).

Following Enfield and Kockelman (2017), it can be said that Chouinard is the one who carries the vision of the overall production and the one who carries the greatest degree of flexibility and accountability—even more so as she is also the designer of set, video, light and props, and the screenwriter and director of Lucy Mongrain's eye performance for the video used in the third act. However, flexibility and accountability are shared with other agents: easy to identify are those appearing in the credits, such as the responsible for make-up Jacques-Lee Pelletier, the assistant filmmaker Miguel Raymond, the rehearsal director Isabelle Poirier, the responsible for costumes Zdravka Tchakaloff, the assistant and consultant of the video Sylvain Robert and Jimmy Lakatos, the makers Isabelle Gauthier and Cédric Lord, who all exercise different degrees of textual and paratextual agency (Paloposki, 2009). Going beyond, one can identify the commissioner of the dance performance as having extratextual agency, by prompting the

translation and setting its process in motion. Indeed, Chouinard, quoted in a Portuguese magazine, admitted that “nunca em toda a vida me tinha ocorrido criar inspirada pela sua pintura, mas assim que o convite me chegou tornou-se muito óbvio que era exatamente aquilo que queria fazer” (Frota, 2018)⁹³. A higher degree of both flexibility and accountability is placed on the dancers, who are not only responsible for physically carrying out the performance but also contribute to its creation with improvisations and suggestions. As all three dancers said, the creation process of a new performance with Marie Chouinard is generally composed of three phases:

The initial phase [...] she'll maybe put in a suggestion, or she'll lead us in a direction, and she'll let us go in that sort of abandonment, freedom [...] and then she starts maybe carving things in a certain direction and then it becomes more and more and more and more structured, until it's incredibly structured [...] when we understand what that structure is, and it's clear that we are honouring it, that we are not going to represent blue and it should be green, then that's when she allows for people to... with the experience we go deeper in it and maybe start shifting it this way and that way [...] we are able to play with it, because we can then, we know that it is crystallised like this, but maybe we can show this facet and that facet” (Prieur, Appendix 2: 5).

Besides the agency coming from their individual dramaturgy and their fluency in the company tacit archewriting, Chouinard dancers exercise agency in the making of the choreography by contributing their own material in the first phase and by actively making choices while performing. This is possible thanks to the use of a movement system that allows them to experience a certain freedom within the performance structure and to always be in the present moment, as seen in chapter 5. For this specific creation, Poirier mentions that for the first act Chouinard would ask the dancers to take inspiration from a character or a group of characters and create a sequence of eight counts based on it. Later, she would select some of these suggestions, combine them together, and modify them. As for *Hell*, this was an improvisation in which the dancers started to engage with the objects around them in the studio until Chouinard sensed in it a referencing of past works being prompted by the objects themselves

⁹³ “Never in my life it occurred to me to create under the inspiration of his painting, but as soon as I received the invitation, it became obvious to me that it was what I wanted to do” (my translation).

and decided to integrate them in the performance. The objects acted as carriers of memory, imbued as they are with the company's story of creation. Therefore, mixing them together created not only a visual, but also a temporal chaos.

All the dancers agreed that theirs was a form of collaboration and at the same time pointed out that there is a difference when they create starting from scratch and when they use already existing artworks such in *Le Faune*, *Mouvements* and *Le Jardin des Délices*. Prieur described it as having a score, a reference, an imprint as opposed to the searching and “clawing through many different lands” (Appendix 2: 7) of performances like *Le Nombre D'Or* (2010) or *Soft Virtuosity*, *Still Humid*, *On the Edge* (2015). Starting from a previous work brings the challenge to re-think them in your context: “how your gaze will interpret that book, that image [...] it's pure perception of that, in your life, in your time, in your frame” (Appendix 1: 13).

Similarly, the composer Luis Dufort reported a difference in their workflow when the performance is an intermedial translation of another artwork:

Normally how we work is that she is in the studio and she is filming the dancers, and then, when she sees something nice happening, she calls me [...] But in this case [...] it's different. In most of the cases [...] she just talks to me and then I make music with the video that I see a bit there. And most times I present music that I am composing for myself, actually. [...] I make music, she dances on it, then we adapt, maybe something is too long, “change this or that” and then we construct work like that. But for Bosch it was different because we had the same reference, which was the painting. So, I was as advanced as her, because we had the same score (Dufort, appendix 4: 3-4).

Dufort's account not only highlights the agency of the source text as a cognitive artefact, but also the agency of material supports like the video used by him and Chouinard, which offer the possibility to replay a sequence many times. Video recordings are central to the way Chouinard works, as Valeria stresses: “Lei filma, torna a casa...lavora molto con il video, Marie [...] se li rivede e si ricorda di che cosa ha sentito e rivede quella cosa con quella fisicalità, con

quell'angolo (Appendix 3: 16)⁹⁴. Videos and visual materials like the zoomed-in sections of the paintings and the drawings made by Chouinard become agents in the creation process, elements that help her give concreteness to the images she has in mind and clarify her vision. Another interesting point made by Dufort has to do with his own degree of agency in the creation process, which is not only relegated to the composition of the music but also gives him a possibility to put in choreographic suggestions, acting as outside eye.

The cool thing of working with videos during the process is that when I receive the video, and when I make music for the video, it's fun for a composer because...[...] when I have the chance to put the music on the video it's good for me, because sometimes I can tell there are some accidents that I can see with the music, or there's something that I see on the video that was just improvised but was super beautiful. And then I just put the music on that specific movement and it's a way for the composer to say to the choreographer "you see, this timing, I did it on purpose and you have to keep it" (Appendix 4:11).

Besides, Dufort stresses a certain agency proper to creation and the work itself⁹⁵, arising from structural principles that emerge as one moves on:

You have to be open-minded when you do creation, so that you have this space where chaos and auto-organisation, auto-regulation inside a work...because it's a complex thing, a complex structure. And you must be humble enough to accept that you are not in total control of that work. That in itself a work has to grow, by itself, by its own structure (Appendix 4: 3).

Chouinard herself, as reported in Frota's article, talks of the creation process of *Jérôme Bosch*:

Le Jardin des Délices as

o prazer matemático da criação, de desenvolver estruturas e ressonâncias, ligações entre os vários elementos. Era o gozo lúdico de organizar uma arquitetura para tudo, de estarmos no meio da criação e seguirmos o fluxo. É isso que adoro no processo criativo: há um ponto a partir do qual é como se não tomássemos decisões; tudo se vai desenrolando como se tivéssemos acertado no código genético (Frota, 2018)⁹⁶.

⁹⁴ "She records, comes back home, she works a lot with video [...] she watches it over and over and remembers what she felt, and she want that same thing, with the same physicality, the same angle..."

⁹⁵ One could wonder at this point how would this understanding of agents compare with Lefevre's constraints of translation, which I discuss at length on page 313. In my view, a deep ontological shift underlies these two models: while Lefevre describes constraints as pre-existent, static conditions delimiting writers or translators' conditions of possibility, agents are dynamic entities that enter a process and co-concur in defining what might eventuate by interposing not only constraints but also affordances, channellings, and affective charges – thus the emphasis on "enabling constraints".

⁹⁶ "The mathematical pleasure of creation, of developing structures and resonances, links between various elements. It was the ludic enjoyment of organizing an architecture for everything, of being in the middle of creation and follow its flux. This is what I love in the creative process: there is a point beyond which it is as if we do not take decisions: everything unravels as if we had got right its genetic code" (my translation).

These descriptions remit to Laermans's definition of dance in general as "a multimedial performance machine consisting of interacting forces or movements of a various nature that affect each other within a governed plane of consistency" (2008: 13). His Deleuzian understanding of dance in general fits with an account of agency in performance and translation based on assemblage theory (Deleuze and Guarrati, 1980). For Nail (2017), who dives into what Deleuze and Guattari's concept of assemblage is and does, an assemblage is based on an understanding of relations as coming before units and offers an alternative to the logic of essence, something advocated for by Enfield and Kockelman too (2013, 2017). In replacing essences with relations, assemblage theory places a stress on immanence and does not ask, for example, "what is translation", but rather "when is it translation", "where is it translation", "how is it translation", and "for whom is it translation". A question of essence becomes a question of event, since "we do not know what [translation] can possibly become or what relations it might enter into, so we do not yet know its universal or essential features" (Nail, 2017: 24). I believe this holds true for the general category of translation as much as for the particular intermedial translation under study. In saying this, I recognise that the overall meaning and experience of Chouinard's performance is not based on the separate agencies of composer, dancers, choreographer, rehearsal director and the material technologies facilitating their work, but springs from the relations between them and the relationships between the performance and the contexts in which it is performed, with their respective framings. On the former claim I will quote Poirier and Prieur, who, asked about the kind of collaborative work going on in the company, said the following: "it's togetherness, [...] it's exchanging and being there and being in the same project together, every day" (Poirier, Appendix 1: 4) and "it's a meeting of people, of minds, of energy. It's a meeting of those energies in that room that day, you know, in another day, in a meeting...it

will be different, even, if you have the same people in a different day, it would just be different” (Prieur, Appendix 2: 6).

The same interdependence was noticed about the relation between dancers and public, and how the theatrical apparatus can influence it in defining proximity. Even the very electricity and air current of a certain theatre can affect the performance in that it can cause the plastic bubble they use in Bosch to deflate (Galluccio, Appendix 3). Thinking of this process in terms of assemblage means recognising how the shift of one element reflects back on all the others and changes or inflects the overall assemblage while refraining from individuating one essential feature that needs to be maintained for the assemblage to still be on the same plane of consistency (Nail, 2017). Assemblages are made of three parts occurring in “mutual presupposition” (27). The first of these is the abstract machine, that is, a net of relational lines holding the elements together and functioning as “local condition of possibility” (25) and which “changes as the elements change in a reciprocal feedback loop” (26). This can be equated with Dufort’s description of the agency of the work itself. The concrete elements are “existing embodiment of the abstract machine” (i.e., the performance’s instantiations). Finally, the agents are also part of the assemblage and do not control or origin it on their own but exist in co-dependence, enacting different roles.

To show how changes in elements or agents that might be perceived as secondary might modify the overall performance/translation and how more-than-human agencies can play an important role, the following section focuses on how the different spatial framings given to Bosch’s painting elicited different readings of it. After that, I will look at how the spatial framing provided by the district of Belém and the cultural one created by the Centro Cultural de Belém, where I first saw the performance, reflected those framings and evoked different sets of memories standing in a relationship of friction, dissonance, and even antagonism.

Spatial and Discursive Framings: The Garden of Earthly Delights at the Gallery of Nassau

While the exact date of composition of *The Garden of Earthly Delights* is unknown, art historians agree on its function and its beneficiary: the painting is supposed to have been in the hands of Henry the III of Nassau-Brera, from whom it was commissioned as a nuptial mirror (Fischer, 2016; Belting, 2018). But here is where different views about its location start to appear, and the alleged spatial surroundings of the painting affect its interpretations. Indeed, Fischer (2016) places the painting in a chamber hosting other two paintings, one displaying the nude figures of Hercules and Deianira and the other portraying Paris with the three goddesses. All three portraits posit women as the cause of men's fall: Hercules dies because of Deianira's jealousy, Paris causes the Trojan war out of his love for Helen, and Adam is expelled from Paradise because he listens to Eve. Thus, Fischer concludes that the painting acts as a warning against the dangers of lust and temptation. He develops an interpretation of the painting as a moral (and sexist) tale of sin and fall, supposed to educate the viewers and encourage them to embrace a virtuous code of conduct. On the other hand, Belting (2018) focuses on the location of the painting one year after Bosch's death in 1516, in the town palace of the Counts of Nassau in Brussels. Here, it belonged to a collection of *wundering* (marvels) comprising artefacts and minerals. According to Belting, because of this peculiar location, the painting did not work as an altarpiece despite its shape, and it did not represent the biblical moral tale; rather, it was its theatrical function that prevailed. Moreover, by distancing itself from the concept of mimesis in portraying fantastical creatures, the painting "broke entirely new ground" (77) and proposed a concept of visual art based on aesthetics. Belting asks us to imagine being the guests at the Nassau palace:

Let us imagine that the host has held one of his many banquets. After the first glass of wine, he leads his guests to the work, which is closed. Although they have heard many wonderful things about it, they are disappointed at the sombre, empty exterior which is not even coloured. Seeing their faces, the count instructs a servant to open these huge, gloomy doors. When the wings open, there is a cry of surprise from the assembled party. In an explosion of colours, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* appears as a sensation—something never seen before in painting (2018: 77-78).

Focusing on the position of the painting among the *wunderings* that were just starting to be brought back from the so-called New World, Belting concurs with Marina Warner's interpretation of the painting as owing much to the "translation zone" (Apter, 2006) created by the discovery and colonization of the Americas (Warner, 2001). Painted during the very first years of the colonial enterprise, the exotic plants, animals, and humans appearing in *The Garden of Earthly Delights* "pandered to a yearning for distant places that was still easy to satisfy, given the dearth of reliable information from the new colonies" (Belting, 2018: 78). Analysing the left panel alongside Bosch's other tryptic *The Last Judgement*, Belting arrives at the conclusion that, by choosing not to represent the original sin, Bosch reverts the traditional post-historic message of universal judgement to introduce a new subject that did not have a visual form yet: life in Paradise if the fall had not occurred. He exploited a gap in the bible, a gap between what happened—the original sin and the fall from Paradise—and what could have happened if there had been no sin. In this way, he made room for a figment of imagination that allowed him to reject the mimetic regime and opened the doors to an imaginary world of perpetual becoming, a world that knew no death and came with endless possibilities of being and metamorphosis. Because this world is contained in the question "what if there had been no original sin", it is necessarily placed outside time and history: it is a U-Chronia. Curiously enough, Bosch was not alone in posing the "what if" question; his contemporary writers Thomas More and Erasmus from Rotterdam were busy developing a similar literary concept known as Utopia, the invention of perfect imaginary worlds acting as social critiques to the one they lived in. If they were using illustrations and ekphrasis to lend realism to their fictional works, Bosch was doing the exact opposite thing by relying on literature to forge a space of imagination and speculation. At the same time, just like More's *Utopia*, the central panel of *The Garden of Earthly Delights* worked as a social commentary by pointing to everything contemporary society *was not* (Belting, 2018).

Belting's interpretation is interesting because it links the painting to its historical and social context. Like Warner (2001), he refers to the exotic figures populating the painting as being the result of the encounter with new forms of life in Africa and the Americas and to the central panel as reiterating the nostalgic narrative of the Golden Age, a long-lost paradise. This notion of a lost paradise on Earth must have been particularly attractive and resonant at a time when "imaginary space was devoured by empirical space" (Belting, 2018: 99) and the colonial enterprise meant the discovery, colonization, and destruction of distant lands, lands that had been fervently believed to host a terrestrial paradise. The feeling of loss highlighted by De Certeau (1992) in relation to the loss of traditional systems of religious belief and ways of life was then reinforced by the loss of terrestrial paradise and the shattering of hopes that one need only travel to reach it. As a result, these imaginary spaces and times reappear in literature and in Bosch's painting as fictitious spaces of memory and forge a new concept of art based on aesthetics rather than on mimesis.

Spatial and Discursive Framings: Jérôme Bosch: Le Jardin des Délices at the CCB

When Chouinard's *Jérôme Bosch: Le Jardin des De Délices* was performed at the Centro Cultural de Belém (CCB) in May 2018, the painting's past context and its birth during the first years of colonisation were brought to the present and activated by the geographical location of the CCB. Built in 1998, the CCB is one of Portugal's leading cultural institutions, hosting a theatre, a conference hall, a museum of contemporary art, a library, and various shops and restaurants. It successfully manages to attract acclaimed orchestras and dance companies, showcasing in its programme some of the most prestigious names of the dance landscape, thus confirming the CCB as holding large amounts of cultural capital and as functioning as a seal of quality. At the same time, the CCB's very location at the heart of Belém, described by Jorge Freitas Branco as "uma plateia publica de acesso permanente ao quadro das referências

sacralizadas da nação” (1995: 163)⁹⁷, inscribes it in a very specific narrative celebrating Portugal’s colonial past. Indeed, the references mentioned by Freitas Branco coincide with the Mosteiro dos Jerónimos, the Torre de Belém, the Praça do Imperio and its gardens, which hosted the Exposição do Mundo Português in 1940, and the Padrão dos Descobrimentos, a monument erected to glorify Portuguese seafarers and colonizers. All these architectural elements are strongly associated to Portugal’s colonial past. Elsa Peralta (2013) explains how, layer by layer, the neighbourhood was constructed as the symbolic city of Portuguese history, following the same procedures adopted by museums, that is to say, selecting fragments of historical information and putting them together with the aim of composing a representational totality. She concludes by saying that Belém represents the most paradigmatic case of inscription and condensation in Portuguese public space of a memory linked to the Portuguese colonial empire. While these monuments remit to a nostalgic time of sailors and discoveries, the CCB location in Belém bridges such memories with an image of a cosmopolitan and European present. If in the past Belém represented the link with the foreign in the outbound movement of the colonizers and the inbound movement of riches, nowadays this link is represented by the creation of a ‘neutral’ and international space of contemporary art, and economic capital is replaced with cultural capital (2013).

In commissioning this choreography and weaving around it a thematic cycle on Bosch, the CCB had a precious opportunity to probe and problematise the colonial memories embedded in its geographical surroundings, bringing them in relation to Bosch’s own contexts and those interpretations of *The Garden of Earthly Delights* that interrogate it. However, the choice made by the CCB about how to frame the performance drew on the painting’s other possible interpretation as a moral tale of sin and punishment. According to Lefevere (1992), every

⁹⁷ “A public parterre of permanent access to the frame of sacralised references of the nation” (my translation).

translation and every translation's introduction into a new context contribute not only to the survival of its text but also to the fabrication of an image of such text, its author, and its culture. A social imaginary is created around a text even before this comes into contact with the new public. In the case of *Jérôme Bosch: Le Jardin des Délices*, this social imaginary was carefully produced by the Centro Cultural de Belém, which functioned as an active paratextual agent by grafting the performance into a cycle dedicated to the Dutch painter.

Confronted with the task of framing painting and choreography, the CCB decided not to engage with its geographical location and to follow the traditional narrative that sees Bosch's painting as containing a moral warning. Indeed, they used the *Seven Deadly Sins*, also the title of another painting by Bosch, to thematically structure the spring season, choosing movies and concerts that would represent every sin⁹⁸. The screening of the movies was interrupted in the middle by the documentary *El Bosco: El Jardín de los Sueños* (López-Linares, 2016), and a conference delivered by Joaquim Oliveria Caetano and Pilar Silvia Maroto. The movies had in common their belonging to an entirely western repertoire of consecrated references and filmmakers. Indeed, each of the movies has won or has been nominated to an Oscar, and they end up symbolising a summary of western cinematic history. Therefore, the fact that all directors are men and come from north European and American countries suggests the reinstatement of a canon that fails to equally represent all parts of the population, and which follows the Eurocentric and patriarchal paradigm that guided the colonization rather than challenge it. This remark also applies to the choice of the musical works selected to be played by the orchestra during the course of three evenings, from April 27 to April 29, 2018. Taking the lead from the four panels of the triptych *The Temptations of Saint Anthony*, held in Lisbon, they follow an

⁹⁸ The movies were: *Babette's Feast* (1987) by Gabriel Axel for gluttony; *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999) by Stanley Kubrick for lust; *La Haine* (1995) by Kassovitz for hatred, *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane* (1962) by Robert Aldrich for envy, *Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot* (1953) by Jacques Tati for laziness; *The Magnificent Amberson* (1944) by Orson Welles for pride and *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013) by Martin Scorsese for greed.

upward journey, from Hell to Paradise, in a movement that complements and counteracts the descent to Hell that *The Garden of Earthly Delights* is taken to symbolise⁹⁹. These musical compositions were complemented by many others played during the day, for a total of about 20 concerts in the space of four days. Once again, the composers were all men and part of an established canon. So, while the documentary *El Bosco* presents a multitude of views and stances towards the meaning of *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, the weft of concerts and movies selected by the CCB concurred to frame the painting that is the protagonist of Chouinard's performance in terms of morality and Christian values. The same path was followed by reviewers (Borga, 2016; Berman, 2017; Dallis, 2019; Frota, 2018; Grassetto, 2016). An interesting friction arises then between the institutional framing given by the CCB to the painting and the memories whispered by its geographical location at the heart of Portugal's monument to colonization, a friction that retraces the one between the different interpretations elicited by the initial spatial framings of the painting.

But what, in Chouinard's choreography could speak to the historical subject of colonization? While various reviewers of the performance commented the focus on human bodies (Frota, 2018), one could add that the focus is on *white* human bodies. As designer of the costumes, Chouinard decided to use a white paint to render the dancers' fair complexion unnaturally white, in this way over-translating the almost exclusive focus on white bodies and the treatment of black bodies in the painting—just as she did with gendered bodies. While a first glance at Bosch's triptic fills our eyes with a multitude of mingling white bodies that populate its foreground, a closer look will reveal two black men standing at opposite ends (left and right), a black woman (middle left) and some black women bathing in the centre, one of them holding a peacock and a cherry, symbols of beauty and sensuality (Salami, 2020). Commentators of the

⁹⁹ The works are Haydn's *The Creation* (external panel), Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust* (left panel); Gianni Schicchi by Giacomo Puccini (central panel) and, finally, Liszt's *Sinfonia Dante*.

painting have traditionally read these figures as representing danger, carnal temptation, sin, or even pointing to an “exotic and untamed counter-world” (Vanderbroeck, in Fischer 2016: 162). Hence, if Bosch—or, better, his institutionalised reception—relegates the black bodies to the role of savages and sinners, Chouinard takes this line of thought to its extreme and simply erases them from among humankind, at the same time pointing to this act of erasure through the striking view of the unnaturally white bodies standing out starkly against the colourful background provided by the painting (Fig. 36). The implicit critique emerges not from the choreography alone but from a comparison of the differences between source and target texts.

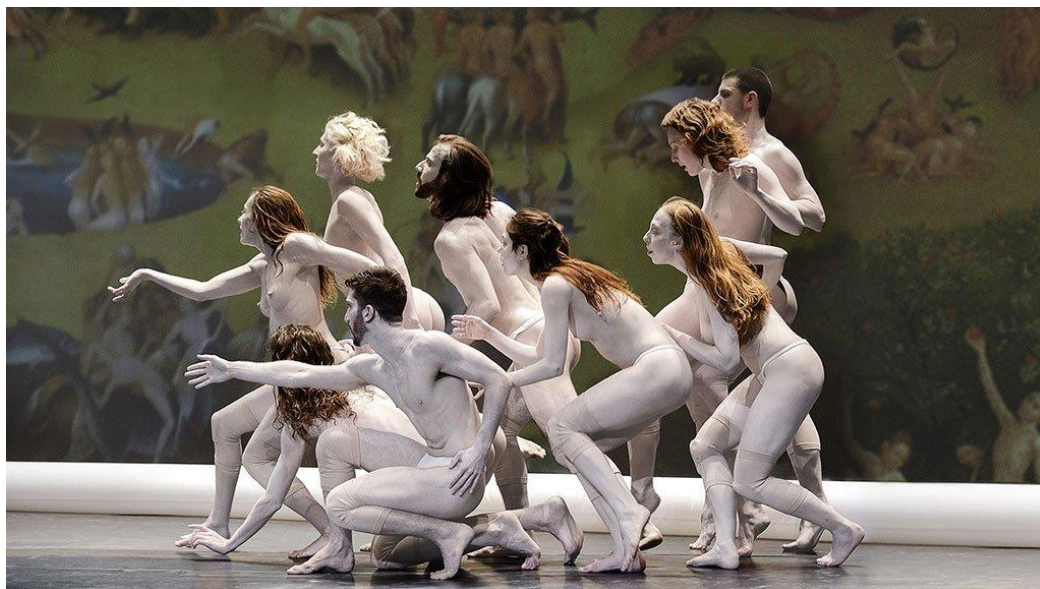


Figure 36: White painted dancers in *Jérôme Bosch: le Jardin des Délices*

The choice to have an all-white cast for a choreography dealing with a universally known cultural text such as the Genesis—theoretically representing the whole of humankind and other species at the time of creation—was also conditioned by the fact that all company dancers were white when the performance was set in 2016. This remits us once more to the affordances of materiality, in this case epitomised by the dancers’ embodied dramaturgies as a place of agency, in that social, cultural, and political meanings are always-already inscribed on their bodies. They can enter in relationships of friction or mutual enhancement with the other

agencies involved in the translating process in ways that might be not so readily available to, for example, written translation. It also highlights the agency of time and cultural context, especially if we consider that from 2016 to 2020 the cast changed and that two new dancers of diverse background, Michael Baboolal and Jossua Collin Dofour, entered the company. Meanwhile, the Black Lives Matter movement, founded in 2013, managed to bring important discussion about systemic racism to the limelight, shifting the terms in which such discourses are addressed on a global level and inspiring worldwide protests against police brutality.

Different interpretations of the black bodies depicted in Bosch's painting appeared as well, with Minna Salami (2020) pointing to the fact that one of the black women sitting by the pond wears a peacock, a symbol of beauty, and holds a giant cherry, symbol of sensuality. Salami links the central image of the women quietly bathing in the circular lake with a Yoruba's creation myth involving the goddess Oshun. According to the mythology around the Oshun River, located in South-western Nigeria, seventeen Orishas (deities) were sent to the Earth by the supreme God. Only one of them, Oshun, was a female god. Bullied by the other deities, she left and found refuge in the forest. Everything started to deteriorate, and the male deities were forced to look for her. When they finally found her, she was bathing in a still river and they begged her to forgive them and come back, which she did on condition of been given a child and been involved in social and political life (Salami, 2020). Salami's link between the Yoruba deity Oshun and *The Garden of Earthly Delights* is based on the stark resemblance between the two black female figures bathing as well as their shared symbols (Fig. 37). This resonates with Warner's interpretation of the painting as the mixing of European, African, and American myths resulting from the translation zone imposed by European colonising countries (2001).



Figure 37: *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, central panel, details

While the shifting grounds of cultural discourse and concrete historic fact inescapably frame present and future interpretations of this performance, the inclusion of Michael Baboolal and Jossua Collin Dofour in the company could lead to actual modifications of the first act of the choreography, where the twenty-one groups of humans represented are all white. The choreographer could opt for simply swapping some of the sequences with others where black bodies appear in similar positions (i.e., the white couple in sequence five sitting in a similar position to the one seated next to a giant bird on the very left of the painting). However, I believe that a simple rewriting that would efface the source text and its commentators' treatment of black bodies under a more politically correct version would reduce the translation's potential to generate productive debate and a richer dialogue about coloniality. The co-constructive approach adopted by Chouinard with regard to gender and consisting in generating meaning from a comparison between source and target text (Brownlie, 2016) could hold more potential for cultural critique, especially if complemented by institutional framing.

Summing up, this section on *Jérôme Bosch: Le Jardin des Délices* as a process and situated event brought to the surface attending agencies in the translation process. Geographical, temporal, institutional, and discursive framings as well as modal affordances were highlighted as contributing to the choreography's reception and interpretation. They are identified as agents insofar as they "alter the content (what and how), contexts (where and when) and consequences

(why and to what effect) of one's comportment—*even if only retroactively*” (Enfield and Kockelman, 2017: 32, italics mine). Looking at how Chouinard perceptively engaged with various interpretations of the painting as well as different figurations of the translator's role in order to propose her own interpretation of both proved fundamental in understanding translators as principal agents in the reframing of (cultural) texts and memory. However, this is true only inasmuch as they are immersed in and reframed by a host of human and more-than-human agencies from which they cannot completely disentangle. Thus, a more nuanced view of agency in translation emerges: one that does not focus on the individual but rather on relations (both human and more-than-human), one that accounts for the fact that any shift in abstract machine, concrete elements and agents results in a change of the assemblage. Moving between shot and reverse shot, I showed translation as an exercise in immanence, as a sustained dialogue with similar as well as different viewpoints, an examination of history and a negotiation of analogous, complementary, dissonant, antagonist, human and more-than-human agencies. Having analysed how all these agencies came into play in a singular dance translation of Bosch's painting *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, the following chapter will follow the ramified translation history of Boris Vian's novel *L'Écume des Jours* and the entanglements between (intermedial) translation and memory.

Translation and memory in *Froth on the Daydream* (2018)

And suddenly you are on the other side. The spectator's side. Seated on the third row of the stalls, pressed into strangers' bodies, your evening programme carefully balanced on your crossed legs. You reserved this seat because you want to watch the performance up close tonight, although normally you would be higher up on the balcony. And you know that from there, if you were to look down, you would see mobile phones flashing on and off across the room, like the fireflies you used to chase on the summer nights of your childhood. This simple thought melts time and now you are simultaneously in two places: the Italian countryside on a June evening, the Newcastle Sage Theatre on a January night. Something moves on stage. It is time, it is time: the bell has rung three times; the public has fallen silent; the air is dense, eyes on the stage. The curtain is raised. The light goes on. They step in.

In November 2018, Eliot Smith Dance Company premiered three new pieces at the Sage Gateshead Theatre in Newcastle. Among the three works there was an intermedial translation of a novel written by the French artist Boris Vian in 1947, *L'Écume des Jours*. It was the first time that the novel was translated into dance in the UK, and I wondered how many people in the auditorium had previous knowledge of the novel. I myself had come across it by way of translation: first, when I helped kickstart the dance performance I was now watching, then when I read the text in Gianni Turchetta's Italian translation and lastly, when I watched Michael Gondry's film *Mood Indigo* (2013). As I watched the performance, memories stemming from reading the book and watching the film were being reactivated, put in circulation, and affected by this new actualization in dance form. I asked myself: how would other people receive and perceive the performance? Would they also rely on previous knowledge of the novel, the film, or any mediated form of the book? Do they know that this is an adaptation, or would they receive it as an original? And how would this in turn influence their reading of the book? How does the perception of a text change with time and media carriers?

In *Translation and Rewriting in the Age of Post-Translation Studies*, Edwin Gentzler (2016) posits translation studies along comparative studies and world literature and looks at how texts

travel and how they affect and are affected by the layers of meanings and interpretations that go with the travelling. In a chapter titled “Hamlet in China” he reaches the conclusion that adaptations proved more effective than interlingual translations in creating and influencing the image of the Shakespearean text in China. In similar fashion, Angela Kershaw (2019) maintains that literary history is informed by transcultural and prosthetic memory¹⁰⁰. She therefore suggests focusing on how translation reorients texts for different publics and how these are received as a way to better understand the formation of travelling memory, defined by Astrid Erll as “incessant wandering of carriers, media, content, forms and practices of memory, their continual travels and ongoing transformations through time and space, across social, linguistic and political borders” (2011b: 11).

Following these recent insights, in the following two chapters I will focus on the intersection of (intermedial) translation studies and memory studies, using Boris Vian’s novel *L’Écume des Jours* and its intermedial translations (including the abovementioned dance performance *Froth on the Daydream*) as my case-study. I emphasise the importance of intermedial translations because I believe them to be the perfect locus for studying the surviving strategies of memory, its afterlives, and the various ways in which the memory stored in texts is used and reframed by translators and target cultures. While all translations are imbricated in such processes, intermedial translations seem to hold a different symbolic capital deriving from their alleged more ambiguous and loose relation to the source text, which enables them to mediate effectively even within the same culture and language, attracting broad audiences in view of the mixture of familiarity and novelty they promise (Hutcheon, 2006). In this way, they maintain the text alive in the memory of its audience while simultaneously addressing other

¹⁰⁰ The concept of prosthetic memory is introduced by Alison Landsberg in 1995 in an article titled “Total Recall and Blade Runner” and developed in her book *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (2004). In it, she defines it as the mechanism by which mass culture makes it possible to absorb, as if they were one’s own, memories of historical events not directly experienced, generating “privately felt public memories” (2004: 19).

groups via different media. If the previous chapters adopted a shot/reverse shot logic, the following two are thought of as a closeup and a long shot. The first deals with the intersections between translation and memory studies, looking at how the intermedial translation into dance performed by Mathieu Geffré and ESD members situated itself in a net of interlingual and intermedial translations, and how it recreated a medium-specific memory of Vian's novel. The second chapter draws on Littau's call for a comparative media studies using translation as its glue (2015) in order to situate the dance translation of the novel alongside other intermedial translations into film, opera, and *bande dessinée* by French, Russian and Japanese artists. By following how the textual memory of Vian's novel travelled across time and space, I also show how the material affordances of media exercised agency, posing (enabling) constraints and inscribing themselves on the translated text.

Translation and Memory in Froth on the Daydream (2018)
(Close-Up)

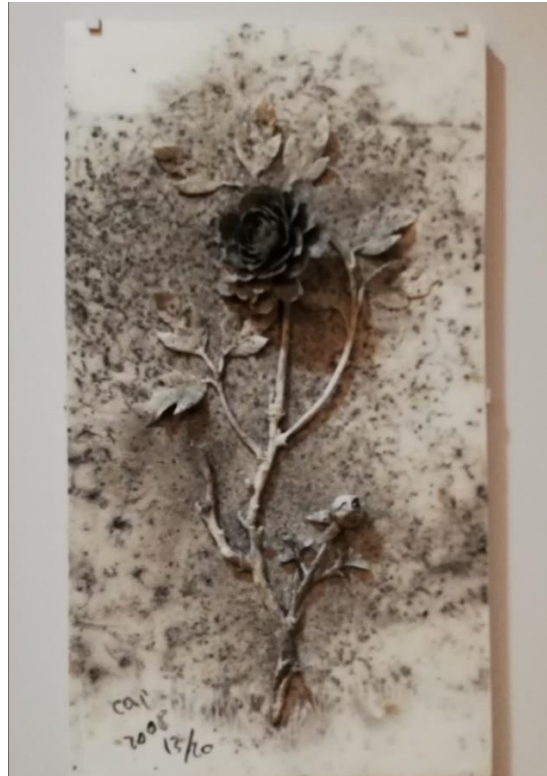


Figure 38: *Black Peony*, Cai Guo-Qiang, (2008), Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

Translation and Memory Studies

Surprisingly, in her overview of the theory and history of memory studies Astrid Erll contends that “the field of research into such complex intermedial processes of memory has only just opened” (2011a: 143), and it is only in recent years that the potential of an interdisciplinary dialogue between translation and memory studies was brought to the surface in the field of TS (Brodzki, 2007; Deane-Cox, 2013; Brownlie, 2016; Kershaw, 2019). This chapter shows that in fact, the presumed new interest with “the travel of representation across time, space and cultures—and thus with transmedial and transcultural memory” (Erll, 2011b:143) has been the focus of a long-standing tradition of research within TS ever since Benjamin famously

suggested the relation between translation and the survival of a text in 1923 (Benjamin in Venuti, 2012; Berman 2018) and even more after the cultural turn of the 1980s and 1990s.

While in a previous co-edited book Erll connects memory and media studies (Erll and Rigney, 2009), drawing interesting connections with Bolter's and Grusin's *Remediation* (2000), she never mentions TS as a possible framework for the study of intercultural and intermedial memory. However, she makes it clear that cultural memory¹⁰¹ becomes so only with the aid of material objects that mediate between time, space, and individual people, making it a dynamic entity that endlessly reconfigures its relation to the past (Erll and Rigney, 2009)¹⁰². As media of cultural memory, arts and artefacts move memory in different directions: across time, by storing it; across space, by putting it in circulation; and from the individual to the collective, by prompting cultural memory. They participate in what Huyssen defines 'the culture of memory', which in view of his statement could also be redefined as the culture of translation: "the voraciousness of media and their appetite for recycling seems to be the *conditio sine qua non* of local memory discourses crossing borders, entering into a network of cross-cultural comparisons and creating what we may call a culture of memory" (2003: 95). The ensuing conclusion is that there is a need to address "the process—the way that 'memory' has lived across time in many different forms" (Hoskins, 2001: 335, cited in Erll, 2011a: 139). I argue that a partial answer to this question may come from the field of TS, as translation is the *par excellence* practice of storing, putting in circulation and tapping into and expanding individual and communicative memories. Like translation, memory is not directed towards the past, but rather indicates the "needs and interests of the person and group who are doing the

¹⁰¹ I base my understanding of cultural, communicative, and individual memory on the definition provided by Jan Assmann (1995), according to whom cultural memory differs from individual and communicative memory in its reliance on artefacts. While communicative memory is transmitted orally and lives in the present and near past, cultural memory is made out of a "body of reusable objects, images and rituals specific to every society in each epoch, whose 'cultivation' serves to stabilise and convey that society's self-image" (Assmann 1995: 130).

¹⁰² Erll concentrates her study on literate cultures; for an account on how memory operates in oral cultures, where it is inextricably linked to space and landscape rather than to human-made objects, see Abram, 1997.

remembering in the present” (Errl, 2011: 8): in ‘translational’ words, memory is created to fit the needs of the target culture (Aaltonen, 2000).

Another meeting point between translation and memory studies is given by the discussion about the different natures and functions of the archive and the repertoire. Aleida Assmann makes an insightful distinction between the archive and the canon. While the archive is a repository of passive memory portraying the present perfect as past, the canon is active memory which portrays the past as present (2008). This description echoes Diana Taylor’s differentiation of archive and repertoire, the latter involving embodied memory enacted through performance (2003). De Kosnick seems to sum up the two views by saying that “a culture’s canon is determined by a culture’s repertoire. When a work drops out of a repertoire and fails to be performed for a generation or longer, it is a forgotten work” (2016: 66).

How does the archive meet translation? A translation is always the representation of a past text (a memory, even if a recent one) done by somebody in a specific cultural context and performed to fulfil a perceived need of the target audience: it is a creative iteration and a citation of a previous text that sets it in motion and gives it new life. It is, after all, embodied memory enacted through (translatorial) performance. In *This Little Art* (2017), Kate Briggs enounces a series of possible metaphors for translation, among which translation a way of embodying the text. She writes of translation as:

Writing the other’s work with your own hands, in your own setting, your own time and your own language with all the attention, thinking and searching, the testing and invention that the task requires [...] practicing an extant work at the level of the sentence, working it out: a workout on the basis of the desired work whose energy source is the inclusion of the new and different vitality that comes with and from me (2017: 119).

In the intermedial translation analysed in this chapter, a novel that acts as a site of cultural memory is pushed from past to present as the dancers embody and enact it in their setting, their time, their language, practicing it at the level of the movement phrase, drawing new

connections, and enabling collective remembering. Memory, and I argue, translation, is enabled (mediated by material artefacts), embedded (in a culture), and embodied (De Laet, 2013). Thus, translation engage with the archive, moving text out of it and into the repertoire by performing them, in so doing keeping their memory alive across time and space.

Similar argumentations are offered by Siobhan Brownlie in her comprehensive study of the intersections between translation and memory studies. She defines translation as “simultaneous memorialization and bodily renewal” (2016: 8), and identifies, through carefully selected case-studies, the large number of memory types at work in translation. Besides personal and cultural memory, they include: prosthetic memory (Landsberg, 2004); cosmopolitan memory, or memory that has a potential to be globally known (Levy and Sznaider, 2006), connective memory, facilitated by technological devices that allow for easy and immediate connection among people around the globe (Hoskins, 2011); communicative memory pertaining to “communities of practice” (Wenger, 1998); and multidirectional memory (Rothberg, 2009), the capacity and/or tendency to connect memories belonging to very different time periods and geographical areas, bringing them to bear on specific events while revisiting them in light of the new connection.

ESD’s performance of *Froth on the Daydream* falls exactly at the centre of this discussions around translation, memory, and performance. In staging their intermedial translation of the work of an artist who made it to the canon in France but did not have much success in the UK, Geffré makes the bold attempt of retrieving memory from the archive to give it an afterlife in his body, the body of the dancers who perform it, and of the audience who attends—perhaps we can talk of an engagement with prosthetic memory. In studying the travelling of this memory up to the dance performance, I wish to give an (albeit partial) answer to Plate’s and Smelik’s question: how do “art and popular culture constitute performative acts of memory

generating an experience of the past in the present?” (2013: 2). To do so, I will rely mainly on Gentzler’s approach in *Translation and Rewriting in the Age of Post-Translation Studies* (2016), where he concentrates on how literary texts circulate, moving internationally and intermedially, and on the cultures that give rise to them. However, while he concentrates on hyper-canonical texts (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Faust*, *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu* and *Hamlet*), I believe that not only highly canonised literature can be read in relation to cultural memory, but also less globally known texts such as Vian’s. But who is Boris Vian? And what is so interesting about *L’Écume des Jours*? These questions will be answered in the following section.

Boris Vian: Living and Writing in the Translation Zone

Vian lived and wrote in a translational culture, defined by Gentzler as “the socio-political and linguistic conditions that create an environment where highly innovative, original writing can flourish” (2017: 4). Boris Vian was born in 1920 in Paris from a wealthy family and died at the age of 39, having developed a heart problem when he was twelve. In his brief life, he produced an astonishing number of novels, poems, short-stories, theatre plays, and songs. He was also a translator, having learnt English from his first wife and collaborator Michelle L  glise, wrote for jazz journals, and was a member of the Oulipo (Ouvroir de Litt  rature Potentielle). Giangilberto Monti writes about him:

Non c’   artista del Novecento che sia riuscito a contaminare cos   tanti generi in una sola volta, come fece il principe di Saint Germain, e ad avere cos   tante pubblicazioni postume, anche perch   critici ed editori faticavano a riconoscergli potenzialit   commerciali, nonostante gli attestati di fiducia e le proverbiali pacche sulla spalla (2018, position 842-843)¹⁰³.

¹⁰³ “No artist of the 20th century managed to contaminate so many genres all at once as the prince of saint Germain, or to have so many posthumous publications. This was because critics and publishers struggled to recognise commercial potential in him, however warm their oaths of faith and their proverbial pats in the back” (my translation).

As a translator he introduced the genres of science fiction and noir to Europe by translating North American authors. As a music critic he promoted jazz musicians like Duke Ellington, whose song *Chloé* gives the name to the female protagonist of Vian's novel *L'Écume des Jours*. Not only did Vian produce translations but also pseudo-translations: he indeed published his own noir novels under the guise of translations, pretending to be translating an African American named Vernon Sullivan. While the works published under his name did not enjoy success in France during his lifetime (they only became famous in the 1960s), his pseudo-translations from the American English sold exceptionally well from the beginning, pointing to an interest in translations, and specifically, translations of North American cultural products. This is confirmed by Celine Angus (2009), who stresses that the German occupation and censorship during the war resulted in an Anglo-Saxon craze in the 1940s, and Jean-Marc Gouanvic (2005), who talks about a growing field of American literature in Paris in the interwar period. Indeed, many writers, including Henry Miller, Ernest Hemingway, and John Dos Passos, emigrated to France to avoid censorship at home. Again, the book market corroborates this interest in translations, as series dedicated to foreign literature appear in the twentieth century and the pioneering *Bibliothèque des meilleurs noms étrangers* by Hachette was rapidly followed by *Prosateurs étrangers modernes* (1925), *Du monde entier* (1931) and the *Série noire* by the publisher Gallimard in 1945 (Gouanvic, 2005; Schoolcraft, 2010). Thus, interwar and post-war France could be described as a translation zone, a space of ambiguity and resistance as well as of welcome in which people, institutions, material and cultural objects created a network of circulation and transformation of texts and meanings (Apter, 2006). The translation zone lived by Vian was quite specific and did not limit itself to literature. As a jazz player and promoter, Vian was part of what Rashida Braggs calls jazz diasporas, “a geographically and historically situated cultural spaces that support and spur flexibility, negotiation, and shifting of racial and national identities for migrating African American jazz

musicians and communities of jazzophiles with whom they collaborate” (2016: 146). Jazz was introduced in France in the 1920s, and its popularity remained steady during the 1930s and World War II. Despite being officially prohibited during the German occupation, it was unofficially performed as a symbol of survival and freedom. Vian’s love for jazz is visible in all of his works and Braggs talks of *L’écume des Jours* as a novel that “runs on the beats of jazz” (147), inscribing it in what she defines blues literature, “texts that employ blues music, whether in lyrical imitation, metaphor, or key thematic devices” (126).

In fact, this overview of Vian’s work should consider Michelle L  glise’s role and would be better formulated as their common output. Indeed, it was her who introduced him to Anglo-Saxon literature and who typed his novels, not without correcting them and suggesting ideas, as she states in an interview reported by Monti (2018). Vian wrote his best novels during the time they were together, from 1941 to 1953, although his most famous plays only came later. A poetess and translator herself, after divorcing him Michelle began working as a typist for Jean-Paul Sartre. Hence, any discussion about Vian’s early work cannot and should not be disentangled from the love relationship that fuelled and enriched it, and from Michelle L  glise’s fundamental contribution. Recognising this would also be a step forward towards the undoing of deep-seated and still powerful conceptualisations of artistic creation as the result of one singular’s (and often white and male) genius and would mean reframing creative output as something springing from mutual influences and relations. It is under this light that all subsequent references to Vian’s novel must be understood.

Returning to *L’  cume des Jours*, if by the time of Vian’s death only 1200 copies of the novel had been sold, its 1963 re-edition featuring a cover illustration by Pr  vert sold well, and another re-edition came out soon with a photograph from Belmont’s film on its dust jacket. It is then during the 1960s and 1970s that Vian becomes a popular author in France and that translations

of his novel will start appearing abroad. Today, *L'écume des Jours*¹⁰⁴ has been translated into 30 languages, but Vian continues to be relatively known in the Anglophone world, where he “remains almost unknown outside academic circles” (Rolls et al., 2014:1). Fiercely ironic and desecrating, Vian’s lyrics and theatre plays often dealt with sensitive political and social issues and relentlessly returned to the subject of war and oppression (Lepre, 2020). Given the entirety of his oeuvre, it should not be surprising that Vian would smuggle caustic comments on the exploitation of people by an all-consuming work system, on the parasitic nature of intellectual star systems, and on the hollowing out of people’s bodies caused by warfare in a deceptively simple story of love and death. Shervashidze assimilates the novel to the many stories of a virgin dying in the arms of a grieving lover, turned by Vian into one of the most poignant modern love books (Shervashidze, 2014). What seems quite simple and linear in a summary devoid of Vian’s surrealist devices and literary games becomes twisted thanks to the use of his language and the

Сюрреалистическая образность, создавая ошеломляющий эффект, [которая] разрушает законы здравомыслия, открывая «чудесное» в повседневном, возвращая свежесть восприятия, поработанного стереотипами (Shervashidze, 2014: 53)¹⁰⁵.

With its endless puns, paradoxes, parodies, humour noir, metaphors that are literalised and clichés that are activated, Vian’s world is revealed in language, and “смысл порождается не в мимезисе, а в семиозисе, представляя свободную игру значений текстов культуры” (2014: 56)¹⁰⁶. This use of language and contradictions makes for a particularly ambiguous plot, on whose background a variety of contradictory and coexisting interpretations move into and out of focus, depending on the genre one chooses to follow. Indeed, what Vian does is to weave

¹⁰⁴ According to the information I was given by the Fund’Action Boris Vian, the book has been translated into Albanian, Armenian, German, English, Bulgarian, Castilian, Catalan, Korean, Croatian, Danish, Georgian, Jewish, Greek, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Czech, Serbian, Slovakian, Swedish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, and Japanese.

¹⁰⁵ “Surreal imagery that creates a stunning effect [which] destroys the laws of sanity, opens the wonderful in the everyday, brings freshness to a perception enslaved by stereotypes” (my translation).

¹⁰⁶ “Meaning is generated not in mimesis but in semiosis, representing the free play of meaning with cultural texts” (my translation).

together a range of texts, genres, and cues that give rise to a number of contradictory yet equally valid and coexisting interpretations. Chloé's name, the short timeline, the characters' removal from social context, and the tone of the beginning point towards the genre of idyll. On the other hand, the helplessness of the protagonists as well as the unity of space, time, and action throughout the chapters of the book associate it with classic tragedy. Their removal from any social contexts is only ever challenged by the jazz songs that punctuate it, which aurally place "himself and his white French literary protagonists in the blues and jazz community" (Braggs, 2016: 148), crafting a jazz diaspora on the page. Here and there we find elements of science fiction, the fairy tale, Disney movies (the mouse living in the house), thrillers, surrealism¹⁰⁷ and Hollywood cinema. The latter is particularly evident in the presentation of Colin and Alise, him being associated with the protagonist of *Hollywood Canteen* and her being the embodiment of the seductive blonde populating Hollywood films (Shervashidze, 2014). Each of the genres is associated with different codes of reading: by evoking them all, the novel becomes a map for the readers, who can choose to follow different paths through it and generate a variety of readings.

Translation History of L'Écume des Jours

A brief look at the translation history of *L'Écume des Jours* into English¹⁰⁸ and other media will show interlingual and intermedial translations to be closely correlated, with the latter generally prompting the former, causing the movement of the verbal text from archive to repertoire. Indeed, we find three translations into English, two of which produced in the States, and a sustained number of intermedial translations, mostly produced in France but not limited to it, as shown in the following table.

¹⁰⁷ Just think of how the funeral scene, with the protagonists running after Chloé's coffin, bears resemblance to the last scene of René Claire's surrealist film *Entr'Acte* (1924).

¹⁰⁸ I focus on interlingual translation into English alone as the focus of this chapter is the dance performance premiered and staged in the UK.

Table 1: Interlingual and Intermedial translations of *L'Écume des Jours*

Year	Interlingual Translation	Intermedial Translation
1967	<i>Froth on the Daydream</i> (trans. Stanley Chapman), UK	
1968	<i>Mood Indigo</i> (trans. John Sturrock), USA	Film <i>L'Écume des Jours</i> by Charles Belmont (trans. into English as <i>Spray of the Days</i>), France
1979		Rock Music, France
1981		Opera by Edison Denisov, performed in France. Reperformed in Russia (<i>пена дней</i> , 1989) and Germany (<i>Der Schaum der Tage</i> , 2012)
1994		Theatre play by Philippe Faure, France
1999		Music, France
2001		Film <i>Kuroe</i> (Chloé) by Gô Rijû, Japan
2003	<i>Foam of the Daze</i> (trans. Brian Harper), USA	Manga, Japan
2005		Graphic Novel by Benoit Prataiselle, France
2009		Theatre play by Béatrice de la Boulaye and Judith Davies, France
2010		Theatre Play, by Charles et Stones, France
2012		Graphic Novel by Jean-David Morvan and Frédérique Voulyze, France
2013		Film <i>Mood Indigo</i> , by Michel Gondry, France
2014	<i>Froth on the daydream</i> re-issued as <i>Mood Indigo</i> (UK, USA)	
2015		Music, France Optical Theatre by Akhe, Russia
2016		Illustrations (Czech Republic) Solo art exhibition by Yuko Mohri, (USA, Jane Lombard Gallery)
2018		Dance Performance <i>Froth on the Daydream</i> by Mathieu Geffré and Eliot Smith Dance, UK Erotic manga <i>Chloé - Trop plein d'écumes</i> by Riverstone, France

The first translation into English, which appears twenty years after the publication of the book in France, is carried out by Henry Chapman for the small publishing house Rapp & Carrol. This translation is rapidly followed by a film adaptation in France in 1968, which appears together with a translation into American English published by Groove Press, a publishing house founded in 1947 and specialised in alternative literature, especially French avant-garde literature and theatre plays. The adaptation into a film, besides being linked to the May '68 revolution and the peak in book sales in France (150 000 copies are sold in 1968, while from 1970 the rate is of 110 000 annual sales) may also attest to the possible consecration of Vian through translation. In 1979 the book is turned into a rock album by the progressive rock band Memoriance, attesting to its steady popularity in France, while in 1981 the Russian composer Edison Denisov decides to adapt the book into opera. Another mention of it appears in the musical album *L'Écume des Jours* by Nicolas Barrot, in 1999, and in various theatre plays staged in the 1990s. The popularity enjoyed by Vian in Japan is shown by the film *Kuroe*, directed by Riju in Japan in 2001, followed by a manga published in 2003. A second translation into American English is carried out by Brian Harper in 2003, with the new title *Foam of the Daze*. The story of this third translation is quite peculiar. Indeed, it was commissioned and published by TamTam Book, a small publishing house specialised in twentieth-century international literature and specifically in the works of Boris Vian. As the owner explains on his blog (2014), he decided to create the publishing house after discovering a book by Vian when he was in Japan, as he grew fond of the French writer and wanted his oeuvre to reach a wider audience. In 2005, a graphic novel under the book's title comes out in France, released by an independent publishing house co-founded by the author of the graphic novel, Benoît Preteseille, and in 2012 another graphic novel is published by the section Mirage of Edition Delcourt, an important publishing house specialised in comics, manga, and graphic novels. The authors are David Morvan and Marion Mousse. The film *Mood Indigo* by Michael Gondry, the

acclaimed director of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, is released a year later, leading to the reissue of the 1967 translation, whose title is now changed into *Mood Indigo* so as to anchor it to the widely known film. This strategy is reflected in the paratext; indeed, the cover of this version features an image taken from Gondry's film. It is interesting to notice that the same strategy was used by the first translator into American English, John Sturrock, who used the title of the probably better-known song by Duke Ellington. In 2016, after watching Gondry's film, the Prague-based artist Tatiana Karpova made some illustrations based on Vian's novel, which were exhibited at Lostr Illustration Festival in Prague in 2016. In a personal email exchange, she explained that she was inspired by the novel's richness in metaphors and that she came to know the novel through the film *Mood Indigo*. A solo exhibition named *Foam of the Daze* (the title of the 2003 translation published by TamTam Books) is held in New York at Jane Lombard Gallery in the same year. As for the dance performance by Eliot Smith Dance Company, premiered in Newcastle in November 2018, it was the French choreographer Mathieu Geffré, commissioned to choreograph a piece for the company, who proposed to adapt *L'Écume des Jours*, previously unknown by the company director and by the dancers (Appendix 5 and 6). These examples clearly show the importance of intermedial translations as agents of dissemination.

As the text was reformed in various context, different interpretants were used to unravel it, while certain meanings were felt to be more poignant and relevant to the respective target cultures. At the same time, the material aspect of media influenced the choice over what aspects to foreground (Kress, 2010, 2020). All of this influenced the paths taken by the various translators, which can be seen in the particular focuses and forms taken by the novel, its numerous afterlives. To study how memories in and of the novel were embodied and enacted through translatorial performance, I will follow the journey of *L'Écume* along its more relevant intermedial translations: Belmont's film, Denisov's opera, Rijû's film *Kuroe*, Preteseille's

graphic novel, Gondry's film, and the dance performance *Froth on the Daydream* premiered at SAGE Gateshead in 2018. I see them as nodes in a timeline, pivotal moments in the work's biography, which performed it and reconfigured it either in a new medium or in a new geography, repurposing it for different audiences. Belmont's movie coincided with increased sales and the first translation into American English. Denisov's opera, premiered in Paris, stressed its importance in France and 'exported' it to Russia and Germany, while Rijû's movie presented it to a new audience in Japan and was quickly followed by a manga, attesting to its success. This graphic format had an impact back home, spurring the production of two graphic novels in France, of which I analyse the first. The graphic novels were followed by Gondry's movie which enjoyed worldwide screening and prompted the re-issuing of the first English translation in the UK. However, as we will see later, the novel did not stay in the English repertoire for long, and on the eve of the dance premiere it was still almost impossible to find a copy of any of the translations in English bookstores and libraries, which brings us to ESD's desire to maintain this story in the repertoire rather than having it collect dust in the cultural archive. It is exactly from the dance performance that I will start my journey through the novel's intermedial translations.

Froth on the Daydream (2018): Offstage

Despite the success of Gondry's movie, *L'Écume des Jours* remained relatively unknown in the UK. As I argued elsewhere (Montesi, 2019), Vian's reception in the UK was rather cold despite the country's openness to French literature after WWII and Vian's own activity as multilingual writer, cultural mediator, and translator. He enjoyed less success than his contemporary existentialist writers and friends, and the few articles mentioning him¹⁰⁹ focus on his plays *The Empire Builders* and *The Generals' Tea Party* rather than on his novels. When

¹⁰⁹ For this study I consulted articles hosted in the British Newspapers Archive and dating from 1940 to 1990.

the project to choreograph *Froth* arose in 2017, neither the dancers nor the company director had previous knowledge of it and few copies of the English translation were to be found in England¹¹⁰. In fact, while the dancers read parts of Sturrock's translation *Froth on the Daydream* with the choreographer, they each read different translations of the entire book. Elliot Smith (interpreting Chick and the doctor) and April Martin (Alise) read Sturrock's translation, Paloma Galiano Moscardo (Chloé) read Sastre Cid's translation into Spanish, and Giacomo Pini (Colin) read Turchetta's translation into Italian. They also watched Gondry's movie *Mood Indigo* to take inspiration for their characters, their attire and gait. Again, they watched the movie in different languages: Paloma, Martin and Smith watched it in English, Giacomo Pini in French. During rehearsals they spoke English, at times expressing the quality and feeling of movement through onomatopoeic sounds (swisssh for sliding, ta-ta-ta-tà for staccato phrases) in a manner typical of dancers. Hence, translation, in various levels and forms, permeated their work from the very beginning.

The creation process of *Froth* started in 2017, when Geffré and Smith had a first conversation. ESD launched a kickstarting campaign to finance the collaboration, and in March 2018 they gathered for a 4-day research development. The dancers were asked to read the book and watch *Mood Indigo*, but also to go to clubs and observe how people danced, studying how the “body naturally moves rather than a formal dance [...], how do you dance in a party? How do you actually have fun with dance in your character as well” (Pini, Appendix 7: 4). This study was to inform a section of the dance called the squint (*bigle moi* in French), painstakingly portrayed in both Vian's book and Gondry's movie. Due to the limited time of rehearsals, much of the movement came from Geffré's body, who came with set material for the ensemble and canon parts. This was mixed with task-based work in which the dancers would individually develop

¹¹⁰ During my two-month stay in England in 2020 I visited some of the biggest libraries in Newcastle, Durham, and Oxford without finding any copies and I was told that the book was out of stock. When interviewed, the choreographer Mathieu Geffré related the same difficulty in finding any of the English translations.

short passages about their character and show them to Geffré, who would decide what to retain and what to alter. Examples of this are Chick's¹¹¹ solo with the books, for which he was instructed to use twenty books and look for the professor, or Colin's solos. As Giacomo noted down the instructions in his artistic diary, it is possible to see how some of the gestures are literal translations of verbal expression, while other are more metaphorical:

Beginning Solo: [...] Use of gestures to convey the actions of preparing himself to go out.
Use of gestures to represent the conversation with the mouse ('there's going to be love in the air', meeting a pretty girl and kissing her. [...]).
Job 1: creating guns by lying on top of them naked.
Job 2: following straight lines on the floor (physical interpretation not from the book).
Job 3: Telling people bad news → delivering envelopes to audience members containing bad news from the 'minister of bad news'.
Example: when: tomorrow; who: Your mother; what: fall down the stairs (Pini, Appendix 7).

This excerpt from Pini's journal shows how full sentences were embodied and how agency was distributed among choreographer and dancers. 'Love is in the air' is translated into Colin's chest bouncing forward as he shapes his hands in the form of a heart after having checked the wind by raising his right finger in the air. The French kiss is translated by his right hand tracing a spiral as it moves away from his mouth, while he bends the left knee and looks up, his chest and head reclined on one side. In other cases, he had to break down action into its components (when, who, how), while the monotony and imprisonment of tedious daywork is expressed metaphorically by applying physical constriction (straight lines) to his body, blocking any possibility of creative engagement with physical or intellectual movement. The actions of Colin were used to generate movement tasks which in turn acted as cognitive artefacts, limiting the kind of movement that could be performed and creating conceptual spaces (Aguar and Queiroz, 2016). Although the constraints on time meant that most of the material (movements and props) came from the choreographer, the creative process developed along the axis of collaboration and dialogue and out of the choreographer's desire to work with particular dancers whose

¹¹¹ To avoid confusion, from now on I will refer to the dancers with the names of the characters they embody on stage rather than with their own names.

movement quality inspired him (Appendix 8). Another role that must be accounted for in this collaborative process is that of the rehearsal director, Yamit Salazar. His contribution became evident during the rehearsal session before the premiere. He had a notebook with a list of sequences that needed polishing, among which gaze directions and Pini's head movements. While the dancers were performing the ensemble scenes, he would give directions, corrections, but also spot some unintentional movements that he liked and wanted to keep in the final performance. This further emphasises the creative arena as a site of negotiation of agency between performers, rehearsal director and choreographer, as already noted in the previous chapter.

Froth on the Daydream (2018): *Performing*

Returning to the translated story, when Geffré was asked to propose a work for ESD, he chose to translate into dance a book he had read when he was eleven and that he had been re-reading since, *L'écume de Jours*. What drew him to it was the manifold ways in which it can be read and the challenge to reduce it to a twenty-minutes piece, bringing out its "essence" (Geffré, Appendix 8: 3). As Geffré acknowledges, moving the imaginary world inhabited by Vian's characters to the concrete, physical space of the theatre involved some editing. Here I will refer to Elleström's analytical apparatus to explain the differences in media actualizations of book and dance performance and the way they were dealt with and possibly bridged (2010, 2017).

On the level of material modality, we have on the one end a static object made of paper and ink, featuring only one image on the cover, and read by the dancers in different languages. As the words are printed on paper, we have the impression of their meaning as fixed and static. However, as we have seen in Chapter 3, an object of art is never static in that its meaning is created in tandem with the reader, and it is therefore subject to its context and to the subjectivity of the recipient. On the other hand, the dance performance presents us with an array of

signifying tools and agents, which can illustrate, contradict, or supplement each other (Kaindl, 2013). These are the dancers' bodies, the costumes, the performing space and its use, lighting, props, music. If words stay two-dimensionally anchored to the page, bodies surge out of it and transport the story to a three-dimensional stage facing the spectators. On a sensorial level, the book is mainly reliant on the visual sense for its reading (although it can also be read aloud and as such appeal to hearing), while only evoking images, music, taste, smell, and touch in the reader's imagination, thereby involving these senses in a highly individualised way. On the contrary, dance relies on directly appealing to the senses, especially sight, hearing, and touch via proprioception. Although it is true that each member of the public will have a personal interaction with what they see, hear, and feel, it must be recognised that this will be highly influenced by what the choreographer chooses to present. The spatiotemporal level is a point of both contact and departure: while both novel and dance develop in actual time and along a pre-established order, the time of reading of the former is highly individual, as it can be paused, resumed, interrupted, rewound, repeated; dance instead, happens in a set time decided by the company, with a clear beginning and end that demand the spectator's total attention. Indeed, as Pouillaude argues, the eventfulness of a performance relies on the spectators' capacity to put themselves in a state of vacancy (aided by theatrical conventions such as waiting time and the limited space for movement before the start of the performance), so that the spectacle can arise from the encounter between the full time lived by the performers and the empty time of the spectators (Pouillaude, 2017)¹¹². In addition to that, the choreographer works within a limited time (in this case about 20 minutes), which might require a considerable work of editing and caesura. The space evoked by the novel opens in the mind of the reader and possibly extends to infinity; what is more, in the case of Vian's novel, space is alive, it expands and contracts

¹¹² In light of the pandemic-induced digital state of performative arts, it would be interesting to investigate how and if this empty time is recreated by the spectators watching performances online and how their experience changes.

like a living, breathing being, participating in the protagonists' actions. When choreographed, the space of the story becomes the actual space of the stage, reduced and non-modifiable, subject, above all, to economic constraints. This is acknowledged by Geffré, who remarks that, had he possessed the budget and capacity, he would have orchestrated a full evening and explored lighting much more:

the book starts in a very colourful way and gets greyer and greyer. So, there is a change, and the shift of colours is also something that I was very interested in and I was trying to do it with the lighting, and the space compressing slowly. The more the main character is getting ill, the more the space is closing down onto her. That was extremely interesting. So, what I felt the most interesting were not all the little crazy little ideas, with are just embellishing the story for me, it's the relation to the principles of dance which are time, space and weight (Appendix 8: 5).

Time, space, and weight seem to act as Geffré's interpretant, a prism through which he reads and interprets the novel, and this is visible in the dance performance, as shown below. On the level of semiotic modality, the prevalent use of symbols in the book is complemented by the use of icons and indexes in the dance. Gesture, movements, breath, and facial expression exploit icons. Lighting, gaze, and costumes carry at times symbolic value, and the incomplete movements of Colin's last solo indexically refer to Chloé's body dancing beside him in a previous tableau. As the story moves from the realm of the imaginary to that of the real, symbols turn into icons, ink into flesh, and music, colours and movement fill our senses. Our individual experience of reading on one's own is replaced by the collective experience of sitting beside other bodies in the limited space and time of the theatrical event, collectively sinking in the suspension of disbelief.

As mentioned above, Geffré's interpretation of the novel follows the elements of time, space and weight, whose combination in dance was first analysed by Rudolf Laban and is examined in depth by Vera Maletic (1987)¹¹³. Therefore, to analyse the quality of the performers'

¹¹³ According to Laban, "there is no movement which does not evolve in space, as well as in time, bringing the weight of the body into the flow of change" (in Maletic, 1987: 101)

movements, I will rely on the methodology provided in Laban's *Choreutics* (1966/2011) and *Effort: Economy in Body Movement* (1947). Laban developed his theory of movement¹¹⁴ out of disparate sources. His choreology is based on the combination of 'choreutics', which studies the "interrelationship of bodily structure and the structure of movement in space", and 'effort theory', which is a theory of expression based on the various ways bodies can incorporate spatial, time, weight and flow preferences, resulting in distinctive moods and drives. Hence, in analysing spatial relation one should pay attention to the extension and size of movements, their orientation and shape, and how they change over time and are affected by the movement intensity, studied in effort theory. In it, Laban individuates four factors: force (strong/light), time (sudden/sustained), space (direct/indirect) and flow (bound/free). The combinations of these will give rise to different moods (earth, remote, alert, dreamlike, mobile, stable) and drives (action, passion, spellbound, vision-like). Effort qualities can change over time signalling the development of a character or of a relationship, they can take different compositional patters, such as repetition, contrast, variation, rebounding, development, and can encompass the whole body or parts of it, creating internal contrasts (Maletic, 2011). The principles and terminology here described will inform my analysis and interpretation of the movement quality of the performance, which will be complemented by a survey of the material, sensorial, semiotic, and spatiotemporal components, starting with the latter.

The stage curtain opens on an empty and dark stage, where the figure of Colin, standing downstage centre is illuminated by a dim light. The *cha cha cha* rhythm of *Perhaps Perhaps Perhaps* by Enoch Light brings the audience to the historical time of the novel (first released in England in 1948, this song is a translation of the original Spanish *Quizas, Quizas, Quizas*)

¹¹⁴ As Maletic stresses (1987), Laban did no work alone in the formulation of his theories, but had many collaborators, among whom Mary Wigman, Suzanne Perrottet, Dusia Bereska, Kurt Joss and Gertrude Smell. In the spirit of acknowledging the importance of collaborative labour and women's contributions to history and the arts it seemed relevant to point out their names.

and the playful and quirky atmosphere that characterises Colin's buoyant world. This is matched by a highly gestural choreography, retracing Colin's preparation in his bathroom: we see him nailing his shirt down with an imaginary hammer, brushing his hair back, cutting his eyelids with his fingers, putting on an imaginary scarf, gloves, and hat, but also gesturing towards more complex expressions such as the French kiss and "there is love in the air" related above. The gestures have the role of making the dance easily interpretable and offering an immediate entry point to the public. As Geffré points out:

you may not understand when a dancer makes a massive spiral with the whole body around the space what it means but what you will understand as an audience member who has never been in the theatre, is if a dancer is offering a handshake to another dancer, and that's very clear. It's a hello, or it's an agreement, or it's a contract, but there is immediately an accessibility to the work and to what the storyline is trying to say on stage, that is very much relatable. (Appendix 8: 10).

While the gestures introduce the setting and actions, Colin's quick and direct movement, slightly jerky and clumsy, gives us a portrayal of his character. The clumsiness of his movements conveys the idea of an insecure, possibly shy character. At the same time, the movement does not start from the centre of the body but originates in the limbs, which guide it as if animated by their own intention, throwing him off-centre. The resulting image is that of a childish, insecure, and impulsive character, who runs after his ungovernable desires, who is unsettled by them and periodically thrown off centre by the directions they take. These desires appear on stage towards the end of his solo, embodied by Chick and Chloé, rapidly moving from left to right, and Alise, who wears a red scarf and is followed by Colin's eyes as she traverses the stage in the opposite direction. Costumes work symbolically: Chloé's flowery dress, not present in the novel, predicts her fatal relationship to flowers, while the fact that Alise's scarf is the same colour as Chloé's belt might suggest their interchangeability and Colin's attraction to her, which is hinted at in the novel by the matching colours of his napkin and her dress. Right from the start, the intermedial translation raises the question: what if the romance between Colin and Chloé is doomed to end tragically because of Colin's choosing the

wrong woman, as the pun “Al onesima” (On aime Alise) seems to reveal? (Pastorello Scarpari, 1987). According to this interpretation, Chloé isn’t but a fetish, “a record played after a representation of Alise’s legs” (Rolls, 2011), a character born “da vacuidade do Eco e da sua conotação musical e [que] terá a mesma existência efêmera da espuma” (Pastorello Scarpari, 1987).

The second tableau also starts on the last part of *Perhaps, Perhaps, Perhaps*. The words of the song, pronounced as Colin gets ready to meet the others, suggest his desire for something to happen. Moreover, using the same music for both tableaux gives rise to temporal continuation, strengthening the impression the Colin is also projecting himself towards his desires, which clearly involve his friends. It also unites the two sequences in the same block, marking them as a temporal unit of light, innocent and playful affect. As dancer Pini reported in his journal, this ensemble scene has the role of introducing the spectators to the surreal world of the characters. In keeping with the music, the movements performed are free and light, space is approached indirectly and explored through its diagonals, described by Laban as projecting the impression of mobility and instability (Maletic, 1987). The dancers perform the same steps in different directions and exchange positions, while their quick, polylinear movements¹¹⁵ oscillate between expansive and twisted, alternating open and closed position that give the impression of an undulating space. For example, they intersect their trajectories in a short run with bent knees and curved spine, compressing the space of their body only to unfold it again with a movement that, by freely lashing their limbs as if they were dolls, places them back to an erect and open position. The doll-like quality of movements renders Vian’s description of the characters as free of a textual past and later on gives the impression of “неожиданно

¹¹⁵ Polylinear movements are described by Maletic movements of several limbs activated at the same time with the same emphasis (Maletic, 2011).

разрыдавшейся куклы”¹¹⁶ as a result of the incursion of “big, real life into their small idyll” (Shervashidze, 2014: 55).

The quirky use of shoulders and hips, highlighted throughout the dance, is set in contrast with more classical steps: this mirrors the opposition between the novel’s structure of a classic Greek tragedy (characterised by unity of time, space, and action) and the quirkiness of Vian’s language in its resistance to traditional syntaxis (Smith, Appendix 5). Like the objects and words taking the initiative on their own in the book, parts of the body that would not usually lead the movement, like shoulders and hips, gain the upper hand in the performance and move the dancers as if they were puppets. This play with contrasts is also highlighted by Geffré, who talks about putting “the very operatic emotions of the characters in contrast with the swing and the groove of the period [...] almost towards the jazz style of dance” (Appendix 8: 5).

Moreover, this section functions to introduce the characters and their personalities via their movement qualities and the direction of their gaze. Using Laban’s terminology, we can already describe Alise’s movements as defined by weight and time elements that give a rhythmical and earthy mood, and Chick’s mood as anchored in space and weight, giving him a stable and concentrated attitude, which is constantly directed towards the book he holds in his hands. On the other hand, Chloé’s movements are exceptionally free and light, giving her character a dreamlike quality and transmitting the idea of someone who fluctuates in space, whereas Colin’s relation to space and flow elements characterises a remote, abstract mood, complemented by his characteristic clumsiness. Therefore, if Alise and Chick come out as heart-bound in their movements, Chloé and Colin emerge as aerial creatures, their lightness and remoteness visible from the very beginning. Their relationship is established by the regular exchange of glances, as if they were catching up with each other. The only character who avoids

¹¹⁶ “Dolls suddenly bursting into tears” (my translation).

eye-contact is Chick, who remains concentrated on the book for the whole time of the performance, thus setting the ground for a possible triangle between the other three dancers.

The new tableau is indicated by the entrance of a projector screen showing the profile of people's shadows and the background noise of indefinite chatters which introduce the spectators to the party where Colin and Chloé meet and talk for the first time. The music for this dance is *Chloé* by Duke Ellington, mentioned in the book and kept in Gondry's movie, which was also part of the source material studied for the dance performance. For this part of the performance, the dancers were instructed to look for inspiration in clubs and study people's movement in a non-professional dance setting. The resulting dance is defined by a "wavy use of the spine, use of chest and pelvis, very close [contact] to the other person but without touch. Quite sexual, but not explicit" (Pini, Appendix 7). This is in keeping with the book, where a detailed description of the *biglemoi* is offered:

Le principe du biglemoi, dit Nicolas, que Monsieur connaît sans doute, repose sur la production d'interférences par deux sources animées d'un mouvement oscillatoire rigoureusement synchrone. [...] En l'espèce, le danseur et la danseuse se tiennent à une distance assez petite l'un de l'autre et mettent leur corps entier en ondulation suivant le rythme de la musique [...]. Il se produit alors, dit Nicolas, un système d'ondes statiques présentant, comme en acoustique, de nœuds et des ventres, ce qui ne contribue pas peu à créer l'atmosphère dans la salle de danse. [...] Le professionnels du biglemoi, poursuit Nicolas, réussites parfois à installer des foyers d'ondes parasites en mettant, séparément, en vibration synchrone certains de leur membres" (Vian, 1963: 24-25)¹¹⁷.

Backstage left, the dancers stand close and, facing each other, move back and forth in an undulating movement that starts from the pelvis and is followed by the chest. They move in synchrony and their moving body parts perfectly match one another, building a collective body.

¹¹⁷ "The principle of the Squint, said Nicholas, as Mr. Colin no doubt knows, sir, relies on the simultaneous setting up of interferences obtained via the rigorously synchronised oscillatory movements of two loosely connected centres of animation' [...] 'In this case', said Nicholas, 'the dancer and his partner should attempt to maintain the minimum perceptible distance between themselves. Then, their entire bodies begin to vibrate following the rhythm of the music' [...] 'A series of static undulations is then set up', said Nicholas, 'presenting, as in the laws of acoustics, various diaphragmatic vibrations and frictions which make a large contribution to the creation of the right atmosphere on a dance floor' [...] 'Experts in the Squint', pursued Nicholas, 'sometimes succeed in producing subsidiary layers of subordinate waves by setting certain selected limbs and members of their anatomies into separately synchronised vibration.'" (Translated by Stanley Chapman, 2013: 25-26).

The movement is slow and extremely fluid. It is Alice who initiates the dance, quickly joined by Colin, whose body pulls towards her as if moved by its own will, while Chick partners Chloé. After a moment, they form a line, facing upstage right and giving their back to the audience. In this formation, they perform circular and then jerky movements with their pelvis, the attention constantly kept on the reproductive organs. Chloé and Colin end up facing each other but Alise inserts herself between them, so that Colin dances between her and Chloé, giving his back to the latter. The gaze of both Chick and Colin is directed towards Alise, who throws herself into their arms in a horizontal lift, whereas Chloé remains behind, at the margin of the illuminated space, literally shadowed by the others. She comes to the fore only towards the end of the dance, when Alise arranges hers and Colin's body together in a kiss as if they were puppets, in a manner that calls to mind Pina Bausch's famous pair scene in *Café Müller*¹¹⁸. Hence the second and third tableaux of the performance do two things: on the one hand, they set the ground for an interpretation of Colin and Alise as would-be lovers, setting her apart as a strong and leading figure and stressing his attraction for her, underlined by the direction of his gaze and the way his body compels him to join her in the *bigle moi*. On the other hand, it creates a sense of surprise when Chloé finally comes to the fore at the end of the *bigle moi* as the chosen partner. The reference to Pina Bausch's *Café Müller* evokes the imposition of societal norms on the way a couple is allowed to perform love (and in this case, with whom), Paired with Colin, Chloé is dragged to the centre of attention, suggesting her changing role in the incoming narrative turn. As Geffré explains,

She is the main reason why this book is happening; she is the cause of everything. [...] She had to be quite poignant, and she had to lead the storyline [...]. And then she is the last one to enter somehow. So, she enters quite late within the work, but the work had to happen because of her. [She is] tilting the world (Appendix 8: 7).

¹¹⁸ The scene can be accessed on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VCQ29EUwvrl>.

As soon as the love story between Colin and Chloé is hinted at, a *pas-de-deux* between Chick and Alise comes to interrupt it. The duet is set to the sound of whispering voices coming from the shadow projected on the screen. A dim light reveals only their legs as they keep moving in front of each other, as if fighting to get a better view. As the circle of light downstage right expands, it reveals their entire bodies engaged in a sequence of lifts that exploits parallel and perpendicular lines. Their interlacing bodies form angles of 90 degrees, playing with vertical and horizontal positions. They pivot around each other, never looking eye to eye but rather staring at a distant point towards the public. The space is approached two-dimensionally, and diagonals are avoided. They remain enclosed in their interlacing bodies, closely held together while exploring a series of combinations as if they were parts of a Rubik's cube.

This duet is set in opposition to Colin's and Chloé's duet, quickly following. As the notes of *La Vie en Rose* by Louis Armstrong hit the air, Colin enters running from upstage left. Clearly nervous, he stops, rubs his hands on his pants as if they were sweating, rehearses kissing and hand-shakings with hands and feet. Again, parts of his body take the lead. He rotates his pelvis sensually, calling to mind the atmosphere of crackling sensuality evoked in the novel by the shutting of doors with "le bruit d'une main nue sur une fesse nue" (Vian, 1963: 29) or "un bruit de baiser sur une épaule nue" (Vian, 1963: 29)¹¹⁹. Finally, Chloé comes to the scene and initiates the movement, rapidly followed by him. The couple travels across the stage, exploring and exploiting diagonals and verticality in a series of reciprocal lifts. Their movements are expansive and complementary as they, standing in *plié à la seconde* while facing each other, form circles with their bodies and alternate between drawing near and moving away. Unlike Chick and Alise, who always keep a point of contact between their bodies while drawing away, looking for escape routes, they freely move towards each other, explore their bodies and the

¹¹⁹ "A noise like a naked hand slapping a bare bottom", "a sound that was like a kiss on an uncovered shoulder" (translated by Stanley Chapman. Vian, 2013: 37).

variety of movements that can be composed by uniting them, support each other in the lifts, pursuing elevation, expansion, a space bigger than the one encircling their bodies.

At one moment, we see him lifting her above his right shoulder, where she stays floating as if in the air, alluding to the novel's description of them being carried away by a passing cloud. This is followed by a fish dive, a lift typical of ballet whereby one partner supports the other in *retiré* position with her upper body held low towards the ground. This lift requires the bodies of the dancers to stay as close as possible, almost pushing against each other, and a considerable amount of trust and shared labour. It is normally used to symbolise a moment of surrendering to the other, and in this piece, it is followed by a series of lifts and steps with which Chloé both challenges Colin to be there to catch her and exposes herself as vulnerable, ready to fall in case he be not there to support her. With an anti-balletic twist, Colin similarly urges her to catch him and expresses his need to be supported and encircled by her arms, defying the stereotypical representation of couples handed down by classic ballet, whereby the male dancer initiates the movement and holds the (otherwise unstable) woman. Their duet reveals instead mutual vulnerability and assistance, and a profound equality of roles. For the whole time they look at each other, never diverting their gaze, their attention totally captured by one another. The audience, unacknowledged, is left out of their little idyll. The dancers' movement flows freely and lightly as they traverse the stage from right to left in a series of playful lifts that illustrate (Kaindl, 2013) the words of the song.

If the dance illustrates the lyrics, the music complements the dance by placing it in space, time, and discourse. Armstrong's song is the rewriting of Edith Piaf's passionate song of a remembered love. In his English translation, Armstrong transforms the memory of a lost love into the vision of a future one, a romance with Paris itself. Armstrong's version became the most popular and a symbol of France. It exemplified, especially among African American

artists who migrated there, a partial, if not illusory, image of France as the colour-blind heaven where they could access such *vie en rose* (Braggs, 2016). Hence, the choice of this music for the performance is important not only because it provides a contextual background to the narrative, but also because it makes aurally present a community of African American musicians populating Paris in interwar and post-war Paris and whom Vian also inscribes in his literary jazz diaspora by letting their notes emerge from the page.

The rewriting of gender roles is further pursued as Chloé suddenly kneels on the floor, proposing to Colin. In the blink of an eye, and in keeping with the book's treatment of time, they are getting married, sheltered by the projector screen and aided by two shadows that we recognise as being those of Alise and Chick (he is still holding his book). Seen through a screen, this scene closes with another allusion to the medium of film by quoting a film technique developed by early cinema and known as *real vignette* (Goodman, 2016). In a vignette, the image gradually darkens along the edges of the frame, zooming in so that only part of the wider picture remains visible. Different types of vignettes have been used with specific purposes, and in this case, the Irish shot is used in a playful and romantic manner while also sharing the traits of voyeurism and anticipation of doom. Indeed, we soon witness Chloé's coughing fit, which shakes her body and reverberates in those of the others. Seen as through a zoom in, space suddenly closes on them, engulfing their lives.

This tableau has a clear narrative quality, as it brings the story forward by moving through the young couple's first date, their wedding and Chloé's illness. At the same time, it offers an interesting contrast to Chick's and Alise's duet that functions as a powerful meditation on relationships and a rewriting of gender roles. This contrast is ingeniously highlighted by the use of space, directions, and shapes. If Alise and Chick pivot around themselves, compressed in the claustrophobic space of their entangled bodies spiralling down, Colin and Chloé travel

across the stage and almost escape from it. Alise and Chick approach space through straight lines, giving form to angular shapes that suggest a tension of bodies caught between stillness and rupture. On the other hand, Chloé and Colin approach the stage through diagonals and verticality, forming curves and circles with their bodies, suggesting harmony, mobility, and vulnerability in their open positions. Taken together, the two duets trace all the directions that can be approached on stage: up-down, left-right, backward-forward, and diagonals. They intersect at the core of their difference and complement each other. The use of gaze further differentiates them: while Colin and Chloé are enclosed in their own world by their interlocking gazes, Alise and Chick either look into the distance or keep their eyes on the book. That the book is the focus of their desire is further stressed by the fact that, while their lifts have the function of displacing the other, the only object that it truly supported in their duet is the book itself. Thus, verbal metaphors such as ‘uplifting’, ‘supportive’, ‘swelling’, but also ‘grinding down’, ‘stepping all over someone’ and ‘push someone around’ are fleshed out in a powerful and evocative fashion that brings one back to the often-forgotten role of the body in the constitution of abstract concepts and its participation in acts of cognition and knowledge-building¹²⁰. This becomes even more clear in Geffré’s word choices:

Every time we meet Colin and Chloé, they meet in outer spaces [...]. I wanted to work with the very specific areas, you know, in order to create an environment and a space... their love is bigger than life. And that it’s translated through the use of the space. It’s bigger than any space, it just covers the space. If that could have happened in the audience, it would have happened in the audience as well. When it comes to Alise and Chick, it’s a completely different relationship, they are separating, and so compressing them within one space while they try to separate, it was for me something quite interesting. How they can’t get away from each other, but they are getting away from each other. [...] Their relationship is much more material. [...] With Colin and Chloé we are at the level that goes farther than the real world, with the others, we are very much in the real world and dealing with the real world (Appendix 8: 10).

This word-choice returns in discussing the treatment of space in the real vignette scene and the following tableau, representing Chloé’s illness: “The more the main character is getting ill, the

¹²⁰ For more on role of embodiment in language, life, and cognition see Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999), Johnson (2007), Varela, Thomson, and Rosch (1991), and Gallagher and Zahavi (2012).

more the space is closing down onto her” (Geffré, Appendix 8: 5). The study of conceptual metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), and especially its application to emotional language is a fascinating field which can offer insights into the way dance communicates to the audience by relying on embodied cultural prototypes of how the body behaves in different emotional states.

In *Metaphor and Emotion* (2000), Zoltan Kövecses highlights how emotion concepts rely on metaphorical and metonymical components based on embodied experience. He individuates several western conceptual metaphors used to refer to happiness, sadness, love which are reflected in Geffré’s choreography: for example, he enacts the metaphors “happiness is up”, “happiness is being off the ground”, “happiness is light”, “love is a journey”, and “love is the unity of parts” in Colin’s and Chloé’s duet, opposing the way they travel across the stage to Chick’s and Alise’s stillness (a visual rendering of the conceptual metaphor “the relationship is not going anywhere”, Lakoff and Johnson, 1990). As Müller and Kappelhoff explain, audiovisual metaphors are not static representations of an image: an image of a person lying down does not necessarily mean they are sad. Rather, they are temporal gestalts out of which the spectators build meaning procedurally, out of affective temporal parcours and in relation their cultural-historical context (2018). Time is central in their unfolding, as meaning is constructed out of the repetitions and variations of temporal gestalts. In the previous sequences, this can be seen in the way the two relationships are articulated in opposition to one another: the repetition of a duet with a variation in gaze, proxemics, axes, directions, closed versus open positions, alongside the music, is what ultimately allows the difference between the two couples and their respective characterizations to emerge. Müller and Kappelhoff illustrate cinematic metaphors as “emergent, dynamic, temporally structured and grounded in rhythms, intensities and other affective qualities of cinematic expressivity” (2018: 179). At the same time, they highlight the role of the spectator as an embodied agent in the meaning-making

process, since “metaphorical mapping is a ‘doing’ that happens in the process of film-viewing” (2018: 60). In the second part of the performance, conceptual metaphors for sadness, such as “sadness is low”, “sadness is a burden” and “sadness is dark” are embodied in Colin’s use of the floor, curved spine and in the dim lighting.

Indeed, right after Chloé’s coughing fit, the yellowish light of the first part is replaced by a cold blue light that illuminates an empty stage, symbolically marking the shift of mood. The slow, synthetized music *Cellador*, by the Kilimanjaro Darkjazz Ensemble, is in contrast with the initial cha-cha-cha and reinforces the atmosphere of tension, suspense and unease established in the sudden passage from levity to gravity, from the suspension of the consecutive lifts to the stillness of Chloé’s body lying motionless upstage left. After the entrance of several characters there follows a heart-rendering duet. Together, Colin and Chloé perform round, slow movements, moving in diagonal from left to right. As he tries to replicate the series of lifts of their previous *pas-de-deux*, the weight of Chloé’s body pushing toward the ground nullifies his efforts. She performs the whole piece in *plié relevé*, incapable of flexing her legs. The quality of her movement is slow and free, uncontrolled like that of a lifeless doll. The dabbing and thrusting movements characterising their first encounters are replaced by gliding and swinging in decreasing stability. Breathing is emphasised throughout the whole duet, reminding the spectators of the physicality, vulnerability, and perishability not only of the fictional characters’ bodies, but also of the performers’ and, by extension, of the spectators’ bodies. No more completing each other movements, they dance the same steps, from time to time checking in on each other. However, they are no longer enclosed in their own private world by their interlocking gazes: they now look around and at the public. In another reference to Pina Bausch’s *Café Müller*, they perform a series of three kisses: each of the time Chloé’s chest falls to the right and Colin fails to hold her. Walking in a circle, he leads her back to her starting point, but she rises up and forces him to another attempt. Giving their back to the audience,

they open in a *plié à la seconde*, their elbows bent at 90 degrees, with hands held up and outward, then close their position in a *développé devant* with arms following the working leg and finish the phrase with a tilt *à la seconde* that terminates in fourth position. Thus, their bodies alternate between closed and open, stable and off-centre positions, highlighting their intrinsic vulnerability. This sense of vulnerability is further stressed in the subsequent series of jumps, which Chloé performs with little strength and control, literally falling on Colin's supporting arms, in a hopeless attempt to escape gravity. The relation of their bodies to gravity is totally changed as it is clear from these examples: if in the earlier tableau the floor was used as a springboard for their flights, with their feet actively pressing on it, now it is their upper body which is attracted to it and keeps returning there.

As Pini highlighted in our interview, this *pas-de-deux* is a study of how illness affects the body. The fact that of all the intermedial translations it is the one into dance that focuses on this aspect of the novel depends on the specific material affordances of each medium. In this case, dance, which among other things relies on the weight of the body moving in space and time (Gil, 2006), is particularly apt for exploring and bringing into sharp relief the vulnerability and deterioration of bodies and their limits. Itself ephemeral, dance is a reminder of the body's finitude in time, of its transitory nature; by creating space through movement, it reminds us of the permeability of the body to its surroundings, its relationship of reversibility with the inhabited world, which traverses it in every intake of air so necessary for its functioning and so powerfully foregrounded in contemporary dance. In the assemblage of bodies into *ensembles* and *pas-de-deux* it explores the bodies limits and reveals them as illusory, showing how one body can become the prosthesis for another, its support, its propeller, but also its burden. As Chloé's illness progresses, she gradually loses strength and needs Colin's body to keep performing; on the other hand, he becomes "very consummated by this burden that he has to carry" (Smith, Appendix 5: 3), as he literally carries her on his back. Hence, this tableau attains

the double goal of showing the deterioration of a couple's relationship under the weight of illness and the more general condition of temporal, spatial, and human finitude that we all share.

A sharp change in mood characterises the following tableau. Music is replaced by the overlap of two recorded voices, which bring us to chapter 54, in which Chick listens simultaneously to two of Partre's records. And indeed, downstage right Chick sits on the floor surrounded by 20 books, as the bluish light illuminates him perpendicularly. Alise comes from behind him and starts to interfere with his solo, trying to catch his attention. During this whole piece, her eyes are set on him while he stares at the book. Him seated and her standing, they perform the same movements with little regard for one another, breaking up the *pas-de-deux* into two simultaneous solos. As he keeps going through his books, she moves to the left. An interesting difference between live and recorded performance arises here: while in the theatrical event Alise started her solo in full sight and even centre stage, in the footage she remains for a while out of focus: only parts of her body are visible, moving into and out of sight on the left side. This gives rise to two possible readings. The first, related to the live performance, sees her as the main character while keeping Chick in the background, translating her reflections before killing Partre in chapter 56. The second, related to the recorded performance and having Chick as main character, would translate instead chapter 59, in which he finds a photograph of Alise under one record and starts thinking about her. It is not clear whether the shift of focus in the footage was intentional or not; however, it is interesting to notice how a detail like this was able to change the entire meaning of the passage. Such plays with focalization in the passage from stage to film are not to be downplayed or dismissed as a mistake. Indeed, they can be purposely used to generate a reflection on mediation as always foregrounding one perspective at the cost of another, and on the mediated and therefore partial nature of everything in our lives.

To this extent, for example, shifts in focus and visibility were used in Christiane Jatahy's play *E se elas fossem para Moscou?* In this fascinating intermedial translation of Chekov's play *Three Sisters*, Jatahi sets the play in contemporary Brazil and mixes theatre and cinema. As the description on the website reads

Happening simultaneously in two distinct spaces, the cinematographic images are captured in the theatre by three cameras that are integrated to the scene. The film is assembled live and sent to another space, a movie theatre, the instant the audio is being mixed. Theatre and cinema are happening in the present time but seen in different spaces and viewpoints. The challenge is to build two works that exist fully in their territories, but which complement each other when viewed by the same viewer as a unique work.

Upon arrival to the theatre, the audience is divided into two groups. The first is sent to take seats in the theatre, the second in the cinema. They watch the same piece at the same time, but one group watches the theatrical performance and the other the live movie. When the play is over, they switch places and watch it all over, only to discover that, when watched via different media and focalizations, the story changes significantly!¹²¹ As the camera zooms into certain sections of the stage and offers close-up, unforeseeable relationships between the characters emerge, while the participatory quality of the theatrical performance, where the spectators were asked to interact with the characters and dance together, is suppressed. If the role of the spectator or the reader in creating meaning is such that no two readings of the same work will be the same, in this specific performance Jatahy accentuates this by providing simultaneous yet contrasting experiences of the same work and by making the spectator aware of this, in a spectacular metareflective turn. At the same time, one wonders whether the cinematic performance is to be considered itself as a translation of the theatrical one, as issues of interpretation, agency and rewriting are clearly involved in it. Indeed, the whole trick is based upon the material affordances of different media, and the same argument could be applied to the slippage of meaning happening in the footage of *Froth*. This footage, initially intended for

¹²¹ I attended this play in Lisbon on May 12th, 2018. As I was part of the first group, I saw first the theatrical and then the cinematic version and my description of the play is affected by the order in which I saw the two parts.

internal documentation only, was shared with the wider audience as part of ESD Digital, a programme of online classes, performances and Q&A sessions devised by the dance company as a response to the impossibility of performing live due to the Covid-19 pandemic¹²².

In any case, after this first moment of ambiguity, the camera focuses on Alice (while on stage Chick remains visible and keeps performing his floorwork routine with the books). The projector screen, placed between Alise and Chick, shows the shadow of a man, Partre, with whom Alise interacts. Her solo blends pantomime with more abstract movement, and like Colin in the opening tableau, she is led by the movement of her limbs, and particularly her right hand, which holds an imaginary gun. Loss of balance and control are evoked by having her movement start from the limbs rather than the centre: as the right hand guides her solo and open and closed positions alternate with sudden bursts and changes of directions, a metaphorical scenario of inner struggle emerges, translating the mental process of repressing or unleashing her will. Conceptual metaphors such as “anger is an opponent in a struggle”, and “anger is a captive animal” (Kövecses, 2000) are orchestrated and linked to Colin’s movements at the beginning of the choreography, similarly portraying desire. As Alise hits Partre’s shadow on the head and Chick crouches down next to his burning books, Partre’s voice, now reduced to one audible track, reveals the key problem of their relationship, the trigger of Alise’s rage, and in fact, the motor of the whole novel: “il faut choisir”¹²³.

The last tableau blends three different temporalities and spaces on stage: as Chick’s body lies lifeless downstage right and Chloé’s is situated upstage left, Colin dances a solo centre stage to the sound of piano. Again, it is his hands that guide the movement while he performs a series of steps representing his hopeless search for a job. A floorwork routine in which, lying prone, he arches his back and lifts his pelvis translates chapter 51, in which he is forced to lie on the

¹²² The performance was broadcasted for free from April the 4th to April the 10th 2020.

¹²³ “One needs to choose” (my translation).

sown soil in order to grow guns. This is followed by a more abstract routine that sees him traverse the stage along straight lines, following the impulse of his hands. Eventually, he walks away from the stage and into the stalls area, approaching members of the public. For the whole time, he is weighted down by the atmosphere of sadness that surrounds him, his body is in constant fall, time after time thrown off-centre. He repeats the steps of the previous *pas-de-deux* with Chloé: *plié à la seconde, développé devant, tilt à la seconde*. However, his quality of movement has changed, it has become slower, bound, lifeless, and his limbs are disconnected and move unharmoniously. Set in contrast to the movement quality characterising the previous *pas-de-deux*, the solo orchestrates the emergence of the conceptual metaphors “sadness is lack of vitality” and “sadness is illness” (Kövecses, 2000). The series of bounces terminating in him catching Chloé is truncated by his fall. For the whole time, his gaze is directed towards her. As in Alice’s solo, the combination of off-centre positions and movement intention springing from the arms translates the idea that things are ‘getting out of hand’ and that the characters’ world ‘has been tilted’ to the side. This was discussed in the interview with Geffré, reported below:

V: In the beginning the movements really start from the centre of the body and then when things run amok [...] they can’t control it anymore, it’s the limbs that are leading the movement, so I found that very interesting...

M: I don’t think there was a clear choice to make the second part of the piece start from the limbs, do you think that has to do with the performance or the writing?

V: Well, I thought it matched very well this idea of, like...when I read the novel, in the end it’s like, every chapter starts in a different place, which a different character doing something else, it’s like Vian is following them and doesn’t know where they are going, and then you have Alise in her solo, who is like, guided by her hands, mostly...

M: I think that the despair of the characters makes them move from their limbs, they almost drag behind their limbs. There is a sense of control when you move from the centre, there is a sense of running after something when you dance from the limbs, and all those four characters are running after their own lives, their own ambitions, really (Appendix 8: 5-6).

Prompted by my question, Geffré wondered whether that sensation was the result of his engagement with the novel (“it has to do with the performance”) or came from the performers’ own dramaturgy, given their background in Graham technique (the “writing”). As seen in chapter 5, Graham’s technique originates movement from the solar plexus to give the idea of

stability and grounding. In light of this, one could also read the fact that the dancers' movement initiates from their centre in the initial ensemble scenes and moves to the limbs as they lose control over their world as a meta-commentary on the technique itself.

Observing the opposition between a movement that starts from the centre and one that is led from the limbs, one cannot but think about Heinrich von Kleist's essay *On the Marionette Theater* (1810/1993). In it, the narrator recounts his encounter with a dancer and puppeteer, leading to a discussion about graceful movement and self-consciousness. The dancer describes the differences between human and non-human movement as residing in the puppet's inability to move its limbs independently: soul and centre of gravity coincide in the puppet, while the limbs follow the movement of its line of gravity. Moreover, and unlike humans, puppets are free from the force of gravity. Kleist's ideas on dance witnessed a resurgence in modern dance and can be seen in Isadora Duncan's call for a return to nature (Lepecki, 2018) as much as in Graham's opposition to the elevation and verticality characterising ballet and her embracement of the floor. The development of the characters' movement intention therefore recreates the impression of "dolls suddenly bursting into tears" produced by the novel (Shervashidze, 2014: 55). At the same time, it asserts the humanity of the characters by denying them a perfectly graceful movement, crafting instead a dance of "anxious flesh" (Lepecki, 2016: 94). Moreover, Geffré's initial surprise at my question and his subsequent detailed explanation reveal the active role of the reader/spectator in generating meaning by actively mapping metaphorical domains and activating perceptual constellations, thus highlighting the inherent dialogical relationship of artistic processes and products (Müller and Kappelhof, 2018).

This dialogical relationship was a central aspect of the performance analysis as well, which can be described as a weft of voices and positionalities emerging in the different contexts of the semi-structured interviews, ethnographic observation, and theatrical and recorded

performance. Teasing out the most significant threads of the weft is the aim of this concluding paragraph, which will sum up the some of the most cogent findings. To begin with, the significant weight of the economic and temporal aspects on the resulting performance, elements not often considered in critical analyses of performances or translation, and which tend to reproduce the illusion that creative labour is carried out in ideal conditions rather than considering it as a process of constant negotiation and adaptation to unideal situations. Neither creative nor scholarly works occur in a lab, and they are affected by outside elements that end up functioning as (enabling) constraints. In this case the elevated cost of props and spatial elements Geffré intended to use and the limited rehearsal time meant the simplification of the setting and the elision of characters and chapters. The parts that were perceived to be better translatable into dance are, unsurprisingly, the more physical and emotional ones: the *bigle moi* dance, the study of relationships in duets, the exploration of the body's vulnerability in illness, and the physical effects of desperation on the body. However, one should not consider the dance as merely bringing out the physical and emotional qualities of the novel: as shown in the previous analysis, the choreography creates moments of ambiguity which lead towards a possible contrapuntal reading of the novel, closer to the one proposed by Rolls (2004a, 2004b, 2011), and promotes stronger and go-getter female characters, introducing a statement on gender roles.

Moreover, the performance conveys a phenomenological perception of time and space present in the novel, whose oscillatory movement of compression and decompression are translated into the various *pas de deux*. It invites us to read the novel as a phenomenological exploration of how our psychological life filters our factual life, showing how time and space can be inhabited differently according to our disposition. Indeed, it is not only space to be compressed towards the end of the novel, but time as well, as the story seems to accelerate after chapter 47 (the last to offer any sign of hope). Flung on a helter-skelter run against time, the characters

are in a different location in each chapter, simultaneously developing centrifugal stories. The ensuing series of reverse shots gives the impression that the narrator is struggling to keep up with an accelerated world whose characters are running amok, each of them led by contrasting desires or maybe looking for a way out of the strangulating story. In the performance this is rendered by shifting the movement intention from centre to periphery and by activating different foci of attention, letting Colin's, Chloé's, and Chick's stories develop simultaneously on stage towards the end of the performance.

Moreover, Geffré used economic constraints as enabling rather than limiting, focusing on the media affordances of bodies and their relationship to time, space, and weight. He suppressed the book's socio-political commentary on exploitation, addiction, religion, and devaluation of lives, and centred the narration on issues of relationships, vulnerability, and illness. Dance as a medium proved extremely suited to flesh out corporeal metaphors contained in language and give them concreteness on stage; with Müller and Koppelhof (2018) we were able to identify some of them as cinematic metaphors and test their medium-specific framework against the medium of narrative dance. Cinematic metaphors and metaphorical scenarios were orchestrated by exploiting the spatial principles of round versus angular movement, centre versus periphery, and balance and off-balance in their temporal development and in connection with different movement intensities, enabling the choreographer to develop a narrative with clarity and poignancy.

To this end, he did not treat the dancers as vessels for his ideas but instead recognised and employed their individual corporeal dramaturgy and the company's own dramaturgy. Indeed, central elements such as the focus on the pelvic floor as the motor of movement, the audibility of breath, and the accentuated theatricality typical of Graham's style were used as signifying elements in the performance and can even be seen as a metacommentary on the technique. This

goes hand in hand with the re-evaluation of female characters as strong, leading figures and the levelling out of gender relationship, a cipher of this performance as much as of Graham's revolutionary oeuvre. Another reference pertaining to the universe of discourse (Lefevere, 1985) of the dance performance is the twice-repeated allusion to Bausch's *Café Müller*, itself one of the most powerful, confronting, and remembered explorations of relationships in western choreographic form.

Metacommentary on the mediated form of experience and representation is generated by both Colin's breaking of the fourth wall at the end of the performance and by the bifurcation of reading paths caused by the shifting focus of the camera during Alise's and Chick's simultaneous solos. Lastly, it must be noticed that while sound (music and breath) and movement have been used to illustrate or supplement each other (Kaindl, 2013), the second and third tableaux used proxemics, gaze, and costumes to contradict (Kaindl, 2013) the interpretation resulting from the temporal development of the story and suggest a contrapuntal reading. This alternative storyline sees Colin attracted not to Chloé but to Alise, whom he cannot help following with his gaze and body. Accordingly, and via the reference to *Café Müller*, his and Chloé's love story does not emerge spontaneously but is the product of the way society channels their desire, as expressed by Alice's hands assembling their bodies together. Translation emerges as an exercise in unsettling the alleged fixity of the source text, highlighting its immanence and putting it in motion towards new "textual futures" (Scott, 2012: 50).

It can be concluded that the dance performance—understood as *ex-materia* creation, embodied memory enacted through translatorial performance—is situated on many levels. As all translations, it bears the traces of the sociocultural and political context in which it arises and which filter the reading of the source text, resulting in a different configuration of gender

relationships. It further situates itself in the context of western dance, musical and cinematic tradition to which it refers via citation (Café Müller, Gondry's movie, ballet), intermedial reference (viennette, jazz music and Armstrong's version of *La Vie en Rose*), and techniques of the body (i.e., Graham's technique). Moreover, it is situated in an economic context, which strongly affects what can and cannot be done, and in the geographical area of its reception, the North-East of England, where the source text was neither popular nor available in bookstores. It is situated in the material affordances of the medium carrying it, which imposes (enabling) constraints and inscribes itself in the translation (i.e., by highlighting breath). It is situated in the sense that the very bodies of the dancers are situated and carry with them their individual corporeal dramaturgies which will relate in specific ways to those of the spectators, foregrounding meaning and memory as negotiated and dynamic. Insofar as memory is dynamic in that it travels through time, space, and media carriers, it is also situated in each of them, requiring a material support for its actualization. The following chapter looks exactly at this dependence: it compares other intermedial translations with the source novel and the dance performance, analysing how media and cultural specificities shaped alternative textual memories of Vian's novel and elaborated its new textual futures.

Translations and Memories of L'Écume des Jours

(Long Shot)



Figure 39: *Summer*, Cai Guo-Qiang, 2014, Power Station of Art, Shanghai

The previous chapter analysed the dance performance *Froth on the Daydream* (2018) as an intermedial translation of Vian's novel. It identified translation as the production of (textual) memory that works by unsettling the apparent fixity of the source text and moving it towards new futures. In doing so, the translation carries not only the text but also elements of the medium in which it is produced and the memory of previous translations, necessary iterations transforming the archive into repertoire, embodied memory enacted through (translational) performance. Having acknowledged that the dance translation *Froth on the Daydream* is situated in a net of intra- and intermedial translations of *L'Écume des Jours*, this chapter studies the more relevant intermedial translations and answers the question, posed at the beginning of the previous chapter, "how do art and popular culture constitute performative acts of memory generating an experience of the past in the present?" (Plate and Smelik, 2013: 2).

Echoes of War and Youth Discontent: Belmont's L'Écume des Jours (1967)

Notwithstanding its engagement with a novel whose spirit, societal critics and portrayal of youth was being embraced by a large portion of the population and would mark the 1960s and 1970s in France, *L'Écume des Jours* by Belmont, premiered at the Festival of Venice in 1968, was met with a tepid reception, just like its source text (Desbuissons, 2019). Although the film could count on good promotion¹²⁴, it “tombera vite dans l'oubli, comme son auteur, l'un des réalisateurs les plus attachants et les plus méconnus du cinéma français”¹²⁵ (Couston, 2015). Unobtainable for years, the film resurfaced in 1994 when Carole Roussopoulos included it in the retrospective *Morale et Passion* dedicated to Belmont. When Gondry's *Mood Indigo* (2013) was released, the film production company Studiocanal organised a re-edition of Belmont's film integrating a documentary on its making, released in July 2020 (Desbuissons, 2019). This point is an example of how translations act as vectors of memory not only for their source texts, but also for previous translations, pushing them back into the repertoire. Despite its quick disappearance, the film makes an interesting use of the novel to present some of the main political controversies of the period, it touches on taboo issues and even introduces some formal and thematic elements that will be developed by 1970s filmmakers (Smith, 2005).

¹²⁴ Its release coincided with the reissuing of the novel whose front page showed an image from the movie, the production of a record with the movie's soundtrack, a second record featuring interviews with actors and supporters of the film, a black and white dossier with photos and text, and a selection of the eight best photographs from the movie.

¹²⁵ It “will soon sink into oblivion, just like its author, one of the most captivating and unsung directors of French cinema”.



Figure 40: An Italian poster of Belmont's movie

The film opens with André Hodeir's music, a choir of children linking Chloé's and Colin's encounter with her funeral procession. The absence of jazz music reflects a major change in societal context between Vian's novel and the film. If Vian crafts an inclusive jazz diaspora on the page via intermedial reference to African American jazz musicians living in France, the movie questions Paris self-description as a colour-blind heaven. It does so by foregrounding the presence of francophone African immigrants, whose treatment was very different from African American ones (Braggs, 2016). Paris as a site on tension rather than idyll is evident from the first shots, which follow Alise's and Chick's movements as a pretext for lingering on the city's buildings and walls, favoured sites of social and political contestation at the time in which the film was shot (Besançon, 2007). They also anchor the story in the urban domain (Fig. 41), anticipating its juxtaposition with the traditional and countryside values represented by Chloé, another change from the source text.



Figure 41: *L'écume des Jours*, Belmont (1967) encounter between Alise and Chick

As for the characters, Alise and Chick are in a relation of simultaneous attraction and competition; Colin is over-infantilised, and Chloé is the emblem of innocence. The contrast between Alise and Chloé could not be sharper. Alise is a city girl, independent, strong willed, who does not hesitate to slap Chick. On the opposite side, Chloé inhabits the countryside and probably works in a religious orphanage; she is submissive, innocent, passive to the point of letting Colin undress her and take her away with him, like a doll, on their first encounter. This can be read as a first hint at a thematic line later developed by new naturalist filmmakers, who explored the opposite sets of value systems to be found in urban and rural France and the tensions generated as internal migration and urbanization became wider phenomena (Smith, 2005).

Another interesting relationship is that between Colin and Nicolas, more complex than in Vian's novel. Indeed, Nicolas, the only adult character, appears to stand for the father figure in a world of uprooted youths. His and Colin's arguments about the latter's lack of employment might represent a generational tension particularly felt on the eve of May 68. Colin's childishness is evident in his reaction to Chloé's illness. Completely absent from Chloé's room, he instead invites Nicolas to run away, "make the revolution", and "go to Ireland". Belmont probably refers with this sentence to the North-Irish conflict, a civil war between the United

Kingdom and Northern Ireland triggered by a 1968 ban on civil rights marches and police brutality against the protestors. The war dragged on until 1998 and saw the death of almost 3600 people and of several political prisoners who went on repeated hunger strikes (Bosi and De Fazio, 2017). These departures from the source text are not random but are entrusted with the specific function of bringing up political issues, opening “de fenêtres ouvertes sur d’autres dimensions temporelles” and realizing the political “à travers des détails eux aussi dénués de fonction narrative” (Desbuissons, 2019: 36)¹²⁶. As for the war, there are repeated references to the war in Algeria, a subject that was still tabooed in French cinema¹²⁷ and against which Vian wrote his last theatre play *Les Bâtisseurs d’Empire ou le Schmirz* (Montesi, 2019; Lepre, 2020). This explains the incursion of desert dunes in the scenes that portray Chick at war, and it is reinforced by the presence of francophone African immigrants, who cross the protagonists’ paths in three different moments. The first is a random and short encounter between Chick and a woman, who comments on his offer to hold her umbrella with the sentence “c’est si rare qu’on soit gentil avec nous”¹²⁸. The episode has no narrative function besides the introduction of the theme of migration and xenophobia, later evoked by Chloé’s statement “Ils ne sont pas d’ici” as she and Colin drive past a bidonville where Portuguese and Algerian immigrants live and work. The last episode, and the only to have narrative significance, is Chloé’s meeting with a young African immigrant on the day she leaves the house and kills herself by drinking two glasses of water. Sick of her condition, she wears a red dress and goes to a café, where a young worker offers her a drink and dances the *bigle moi* with her. This is the first and last time Chloé takes control of her life, and it is a moment of blissful encounter and joy, unaltered when she

¹²⁶ “Open windows giving onto other temporal dimensions”, “through details which are themselves devoid of any narrative function” (my translation).

¹²⁷ One can think about Panijel’s documentary *Octobre à Paris*, dealing with the massacre of Algerian protesters by the French police happened on 17th October 1961, and censored until 1973, or Marker’s and Lhomme’s *Le Joli Mai* (1963), dealing exactly with the widespread silence regarding the Algerian war, or Varda’s *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1962), where the war in Algeria also appears tangentially, however more clearly.

¹²⁸ “It’s so rare for people to be kind to us” (my translation).

meets Colin, as if love could only blossom outside societal institutions and traditional conceptions of married life that stifled them so far.

Other references to the war are introduced in a style that anticipates the *cinéma vérité*, shooting real-life filmic sequences such as a protest going on in the Rue du Prévos (Desbuissons, 2019). The periodic, if short return to the subject of the Algerian war and of the subsequent waves of migrations posits Belmont's *L'Écume des Jours* against the politics of concealment adopted by the French government and promoted via the control of official language (the word 'war' was not officially used until the 1990s) and widespread amnesty (Jansen, 2010). This politics was contested by various actors, including veterans, former colonial settlers, but also migrant communities and several intellectuals and filmmakers who sought to address the memory of the war despite the government's refusal to do so.

The method of dotting the narration with more or less perceptible comments on social and political issues was abandoned by Belmont in later works but is in perfect accord with Vian's novel, a real minefield of intertextual unexploded bombs. These are announced from the first page of the novel, as Colin compares himself to the protagonist *Hollywood Canteen* (1944). The movie tells the story of two young soldiers who, coming home from war on a temporary leave, find themselves in the fantastic world of the Hollywood Canteen, where members of the star-system serve supper to the lucky customers and dreams come true. The contrast between the protagonists' lives and the unmotivated and ungrieved deaths of unknown people in the novel bears resemblance to the contrast between life at home and at war in *Hollywood Canteen*, and the intertextual net weaved by the narrator includes a number of references to cultural products related to the war, among which the pacifist poet Jules Romain. Chick's reflections on war in chapter 54 prefigure Vian's song *Le Déserteur*, while allusions to World War II and the Occupation can be guessed by considering Rosbotton's *When Paris Went Dark* (2014). In

his history of Paris under German occupation he describes how “physical and psychological space seemed to progressively narrow” and how “the city seemed to be contracting, closing in on Parisian lives”, (Schwartz, 2014), possibly providing an inspiration for the gradually shrinking architectural world of Vian’s characters.

Both Geffré and Belmont maintained this aspect: Geffré by having the dancers occupy more or less space on stage, Belmont by having the house emptied out or filled up with flowers. Another commonality between film and dance is the representation of the characters as puppets moved by a script they cannot question or escape, here visible in Alise’s words and tone of voice as she murders Partre. The closure of Belmont’s film shares an affinity with Geffré’s choreography as well: after Chloé’s funeral and Chick’s death, Colin enters an hotel and meets a girl who looks like Alise (the girl is indeed played by Marie-France Pisier, who impersonates Alise in the film) and who admits being Nicholas’ niece. The open ending leaves us wondering whether a possible love story between Alise and Colin, hinted at during the course of the film, will eventually blossom in the renewed circumstances, and further stresses the open attitude towards sexuality characterising other parts of the film.

To sum up, Belmont’s *L’Écume des Jours* recontextualises Vian’s text in 1960s France, aligning it with the interests and ambitions of French revolutionary youths. He dots a simplified narrative with social and political innuendos, taking further its clash between young and adult age, its open attitude towards sexuality and its anti-war sentiment, in this way mobilising Vian’s pacifist views and bringing his social critique to bear upon 1960s France. At the same time, the film carries the germs of a new naturalist sensitivity (i.e., representing the experience of being young, questioning the institution of the couple from feminist perspectives, dealing with the relationship between centre and periphery, and striving for a *prise de parole*) while maintaining the ambitions and desires of “demanding the impossible”

expressed by the graffiti covering the façades of buildings and universities all over Paris and France (Fig. 42).



Figure 42: *Soyez réalistes, demandez l'impossible*, graffiti

Performing the Imaginative West in Late Soviet Russia: Denisov's Chloé (1981)

Denisov's opera *Colin et Chloé* is divided into three acts and features text taken from the novel, from Vian's songs, allusions to the music of Duke Ellington, jazz, and the French chanson. The libretto was published in 1981 by *Le Chante du Monde* in Paris. The opera premiered at the Opera Comique in Paris and was subsequently staged in Perm in 1989 and Stuttgart in 2012. Denisov's intermedial translation appeared before the interlingual translation into Russian, *Пена Днеи* (*Pena Dniei*), published in 1983 by Liliana Lungina. Denisov started working on the opera in 1968 and it took him thirteen years to finish it. Situating it in the lineage of some of western most popular love myths such as *Daphne and Chloé*, *Tristan and Isolde*, and above all *Romeo and Juliet*, Denisov followed the path of the Greek tragedy. The star-crossed lovers interpretant is referred to in the opera through intertextual allusions, for example by having Colin read the story of Tristan and Isolde to Chloé at the end of act two, an addition to the source text (Denisov, 1981).

By evoking the genre of tragedy, the opera emphasises the unity of time, space and action of the novel and the sense of fatality hovering on the protagonists: as the choreographer Geffré

said in our interview “there’s really nothing they can do because they are in a Greek tragedy...it’s fatality, it’s going to happen in the end. They can try to save it as much as they want, it’s going to happen. Darkness is happening” (Appendix 8: 7). This choice brings the novel closer to the traditional genre of opera by stripping it of the sci-fi and surreal elements, pulling it down to more realistic surroundings, at least on the level of theatrical action. As a matter of fact, the liminal zone between reality and dream that characterises Vian’s novel is not entirely discarded; rather, it is entrusted to music, as typical of Denisov’s style.

According to Kotlyarova (2009), Denisov’s music is characterised by symbolism, the use of language as a medium to reach God, and a telling use of silences. In *Colin and Chloé*, the contraposition between the cruel outer world and the innocence of the protagonists, as well as the fine line between real and unreal are symbolised by strange sounds that “звучит как переход в ирреальное, будто это видения совсем другого мира” (127)¹²⁹. Another element of Denisov’s vocabulary, silence, is at play in the physical absence of Partre, who is reduced to a mysterious name pronounced by the others, a ghost lingering on the theatrical space and alluding to the horrible world that surrounds the characters (Denisov, 1981). Focusing on the differences from the source text and the two intermedial translations seen above, we can notice a changed attitude towards religion in the opera: sceptical in Vian, absent in Geffré and Belmont, the religious sentiment returns in Denisov. We can see this in the opera’s finale, as a huge cross is raised to the sound of solemn music and Colin prays not to an indifferent and distracted Christ, but to a sympathetic but powerless one. As per the protagonists, Chloé first appears centre stage, surrounded by the others and catching Colin’s full attention. Like in Geffré’s choreography, her entrance is emphasised as a turning point by the fact that it closes the first act. However, she is later represented as a rather submissive and lifeless figure, to be

¹²⁹ “Sounds like crossing into the unreal, as if it were a vision of an altogether different world” (my translation).

protected and guided by Colin. Moreover, the fact that she is dressed as a ballet dancer only reinforces this point by associating her with the long tradition of objectified and ephemeral fairies produced by 19th century ballet. Alise, on the other hand, is portrayed as the blond femme fatale who will eventually try to seduce a faithful and reasonable Colin.

Another difference is the toning down of police brutality. In Denisov's opera, Chick is no more portrayed as the victim of a ridiculous and violent system but throws himself at the police and provokes his own death. The role of the representatives of the establishment in leading to the protagonists' death is therefore mitigated, as also visible in the removal of the confrontation between Alise and Partre, the intellectual promoted by the system and adored by the masses. At the same time, the daily tragic occurrences and the passages of social critique are highlighted in the opera by using silence or by having the social critiques spoken rather than sung. In this way Denisov sets them apart from the rest of the text and makes them rise to prominence, as evident in the harsh criticism of working conditions, maintained in full and spoken. Another addition is the initial reference to violent episodes in Paris and a war in Poland, setting the opera in a specific time and place. This is different from the novel, where the protagonists are removed from any societal context and live in a suspended space and time. This addition is particularly telling when we connect it to Denisov's socio-political context in the 1980s, years that saw the rise and success of *Solidarnosc*, a Polish anti-bureaucratic and anti-Soviet social movement leading to 'semi-free' elections in 1989.

Paying closer attention to the context in which Denisov's opera was born and performed, as well as to his relationship with what Schmelz calls 'unofficial Soviet music' (2009), one can uncover the existence of an unofficial translation zone (Apter, 2006), which, while keeping out of the limelight and far from openly dissident acts, pervaded the lives of Russian citizens during late socialism (Yurchak, 2006). The death of Stalin in 1953 and Khrushchev's relatively

relaxed politics with regard to censorship and repression opened a space where previously taboo topics such as the gulags and dissatisfaction with the Stalinist regime could be addressed (Lungina and Dorman, 2014). This relative loosening of control resulted in the general formation of, if not openly dissident, ‘unofficial’ areas, deterritorialised mileux (Yurchak, 2006). Functioning as an equivalent of the black and grey markets of Soviet economy, these third spaces spanned across different areas of life and culture and took advantage of gaps and loopholes in official structures and regulations. In his brilliant study of life during late socialism, Yurchak warns against misrepresenting Soviet society and its people as divided into collaborators and dissidents, and points to a wider in-between area, defined as ‘вне’ (vnye, outside, Yurchak, 2006). Being ‘vnye’ meant to be at the margin of soviet organizations, in a third space of internal emigration, where one could still agree with the general ideals of socialist life—equality, work, community—while disagreeing with the ways they were enacted and transgressing the official line in small everyday routines. As authoritative discourse had become so homogenised to be invisible to the citizens, its performative and constative dimensions split. This allowed people to participate in the reproduction of performative, ritualised discourse without engaging with its constative dimension, a practice that resembles the everyday strategy called by de Certeau’s “la perruque” (De Certeau, 1988). More than an exception, living vnye was a “a widespread principle of living in the system” (Schmelz, 2009: 15) from the mid-70s up to the Perestroika.

A similar attitude can be encountered in the unofficial concert subculture of which Denisov was a prominent member and which encompassed the whole of late socialism. Denisov and his fellow musicians did not openly resist or oppose the soviet system; rather, they withdrew the demands of (state imposed) social realism and largely drew on western avant-garde techniques, initially focusing on abstract music and later returning to a mimetic style. Their music, censored by official reports, provided the listeners with momentary escapes and alternatives to the

hegemonic social realism. Denisov's intense use of western forms and sources must be approached under this light, as well as his reference to Tristan and Isolde, a work considered dangerous by the Soviet establishment (Schmelz, 2009). As a matter of fact, Denisov had a prominent role in the musical *samizdat*' and *tamizdat*¹³⁰ that characterised the 1960s underground concert culture. From the mid-1950s, he was the leader of the student scientific society of the Moscow Conservatory, a society in which students could get access to banned scores and new techniques developed abroad, among which the French chanson, used in *Colin and Chloé*. The repression of the Prague Spring in 1968 strangled this climate of relative freedom and stricter times marked the end of vnye music.

This is about the time when Denisov started to work on Vian's novel. With its surreal world, its pacifist author and its subversive, anti-establishment tone, *L'Écume des Jours* looks as remote as possible from the requirements of social realism and confirms Kershaw's suggestion that translation can be a form of political militancy (2019), as also expressed by Lungina about her Russian translation of Vian's *l'Écume des Jours* (Lungina and Dorman, 2014). If direct criticism of the establishment is toned down in Denisov's opera, so is not the harsh criticism of the way people are exploited by a perverted work system, which is in fact emphasised by being pronounced in clear spoken language. This may sound rather oppositional in a cultural context where parasitism (тунеядство, *tuneyadstvo*) was a social offense oftentimes levelled against artists and used to punish dissidents. Moreover, the religious spirit of the opera finale, with its solemn music and not-so-sceptically-portrayed Christ, seems rather at odd with the anti-religion legislations in force in the USSR and its violent enforcement by Khrushchev

¹³⁰ The word *samizdat*' is a compound of *сам* (self, by oneself) and *издат* (to publish), whereas *tamizdat*' comes from *там* (there) and *издать* (to publish). Self-publications and publishing abroad were popular at a time when fierce censorship regulated what could be published and what not. A similar phenomenon, *magnitizdat*', regarded the distribution of banned music, such as western rock and roll, jazz, mambo. Denisov participated in the *magnitizdat*' and, after becoming popular among western musicians, started to act "as a pipeline to the outside world" (Schmeltz, 2009: 64).

(Westwood, 2002). Finally, the silent acceptance of violent incidents may acquire additional connotations when shifted to the context of late socialism and the sanguinary repression of protests—a practice resumed in recent years, as visible in the current imprisonment of Alexei Navalny and the protesters who march peacefully in his support (Harding and Roth, 2021; Roth, 2021; Рyzманова [Ruzmanova], 2021; Медуза [Meduza], 2021a; Медуза, 2021b).

Not only the elements of the plot mark the opera as residing in an outside space of moral ambiguity: the very fact of basing it on a western subject and interlacing it with echoes of Greek myths (Daphnis and Chloé) and Medieval and Renaissance western literature (Tristan and Isolde, Romeo and Juliet), makes it part of what Yurchak calls the construction of an “imaginary West” (2006). This includes a series of practices ranging from buying jeans to listening to western rock music that allowed Soviet citizen to experience the West “in its archetypal manifestation, produced locally and existing only at the time when the real West could not be encountered” (159). All these practices populated an over standardised Soviet discourse with a multiplicity of semiotic idioms and meanings that eroded its stability and laid bare its emptiness. This imaginary West had nothing to do with the real one, which proved rather dissatisfactory for many Soviet citizens when they finally met it. It was rather a temporally and spatially displaced elsewhere, filled with chosen contemporary and past cultural references and pointing towards a future whose realization would take place in the space rendered vacant by the Soviet homogenised and ritualised discourse. Denisov’s *Colin et Chloé* participated in the construction of the imaginary West by engaging with multidirectional memory (Rothberg, 2009), borrowing, cross-referencing, and negotiating a range of different (textual) memories that worked to productively and dialogically create an affective elsewhere populated of heterogeneous traditions and imaginaries.

The opera premiered in France in 1981, before the Perestroika ushered in a period of criticism and historical revision. Only in 1989 it was staged in Perm, Siberia, the home city of its composer. Its escape from power is to be found more in its form than in its content, in its refusal of a State-imposed aesthetic and its experimentation with new techniques developed outside the stagnant pool of social realist artistic tools. It has more to do with the search for alternative possibilities and artistic freedom than with overt contestation, with the general, daily shaping of a third space at the margins of, but still within, soviet institutions than with blunt opposition and brave gestures. However, it is within the larger frame of the daily practices of *vnys* that we have to situate Denisov's *Colin and Chloé* if we want to understand the unofficial translation zone of late socialism to which it belonged.

From Surrealism to Magic(al) Realism: Gô Rijû's Kuroe (2003)

In 2003, a new English translation of *L'Écume* comes out in the USA. As already mentioned, the translation was commissioned by Tosh Berman, the owner of the small publishing house TamTam Books, who happened to read the novel while he was in Japan, where he found a translation of the book. That a book which had such difficulty in crossing La Manche/The English Channel and landing on the neighbouring country had been translated and was popular in Japan may be of interest in itself, but more so is the fact that it went on to generate a movie. Considering the geographical, cultural, and temporal distance, I was eager to know how the director shaped the story for a new audience and made it relevant for contemporary Japanese people.

Released in 2001, the film is situated in a particularly interesting time in the history of Japanese cinema, coming soon after two major turning points. The first, whose start date is 1989, is called *kokusaika*, meaning internationalism. The opening of the cinematic industry of Japan to the rest of the world marks a moment of porosity of Japanese culture and especially of cinema

studios to foreign material and new themes (especially because studios started relying on French capital to support the realization of films). While this led to the so-called film Renaissance of the late 1990s, it also caused an identity crisis and fears of losing Japan's uniqueness in the process of internationalisation. These anxieties were reinforced by the ramified recession that hit the 1990s and the socio-economic impact it had on the population, and especially on the young generations (Bingham, 2015). In cinema, this is reflected in the *shomingaki*, a genre centred on middle-class people and the sense of emptiness and decay surrounding them, highlighted by the alienating urban environments of their daily commutes.

It would not be wrong to say that *Kuroe (Chloé)* can be placed within this current. Stripped of all the quirky details and inventions that make Colin's and Chloé's world so young, vibrant, and colourful, Rijû's film is recontextualised in contemporary urban Japan, as scenes of protests on the street and trains flashing by alert us to. The power of destiny that dominates Vian's novel is explored and coupled with a spiritual search for meaning that addresses the spectator from the very beginning. Indeed, the movie does not open with Colin in his bathroom, getting ready to have lunch with his friend, but to the voice of a woman describing a dream in which she turned into sand and dispersed, leaving no trace. As the camera recedes, in a medium shot, we realise that she is talking to Katar, the protagonist, who is an astronomer, and to whom she came believing that his knowledge of stars meant that he could tell the future. This theme, and the sole focus on metropolitan life (as opposed to Belmont's exploration of the clashes between urban and rural) is further emphasised during Kuroe and Katar's wedding ceremony. They meet in the sterile-white and hyper-formal space of a contemporary art exhibition held inside a shopping centre, where people's whispered chatter further underlines their loneliness. They know nobody there, and wander for a while before he finds the courage to approach her. Shortly after, they are surrounded by people as they get married by a Christian acquaintance. The party is striking in its absence of older figures and family members, presenting us with a

mass of youths with no past nor families, almost suspended in time. The gem of a lily growing in Kuroe's chest and eventually killing her remains as the only truly fantastic element of the movie. As she is confined home, the film explores the themes of solitude, depression, and alcoholism through her and Katar's friends. At the same time, Katar is sacked and starts the hopeless search for a job, which brings us to the crude reality of late capitalism in which a 29-year-old is repeatedly accused by the interviewers of being too old and not willing to work only because after having been fired he spent some time at home with his sick wife. The social and economic criticism is emphasized by Chick, who delivers a lengthy speech at the pub, questioning age-old institutions like society, religion, and currency. However, Chick lives by the same consumerist desires he criticises and is in debt, having spent all of Katar's money on fetishes. In this atmosphere of growing helplessness and disorientation we follow the different characters through their solitary paths: Alise and Chick split, he comes back to ask forgiveness to Kuroe and Katar and is subsequently killed, probably by a usurer; Katar finds a friend in the flower retailer who offers him a job; Kuroe suffers more and more from loneliness. When she eventually dies, the narrative voice comments that "she took with her everyone's troubles and sadness"¹³¹ (my translation), and indeed, instead of ending with a suicide, the film ends with Katar starting his new job at the flower factory.

Like Denisov before him, Rijû seems to filter his reading of *L'Écume* through the star-crossed lovers interpretant, as the protagonists' pure love is doomed to end tragically because of their fate and society. They are condemned because they choose to follow their love in a world where Katar can say, without irony, "I work all the time to be with you" (my translation). Cut off from the past and propelled towards an uncertain destiny that offers no answers, the protagonists live in a suspended state of uncertainty and solitude that cannot accommodate the dimension of

¹³¹ I watched the movie in Russian language, from which I translate.

dream evoked in the beginning. The sterility of this world is highlighted by the presence of the orphaned child wondering around Kuroe and Katar, a remainder of the couple's childlessness, and by the settings of the characters' lives in what can be described with Marc Augé (1995) as non-places: neither relational, nor historical or connected with identity, these spaces are themselves orphaned and create solitude as a mode of usage. Like other movies belonging to the genre of *shomingeki*, Kuroe "depicts a world thrown out of orbit, one populated by protagonists who remain in a state of transience and instability" (Bingham, 2015: 102). If Japanese movies of the 1990s focus on father-son relationships to problematise the recent past, the contrast between lost prosperity and enforced hardship (2015), Kuroe goes a step further and does away with the past altogether. At the same time, it provides a veiled criticism of contemporary society and values. This is visible in the attitude towards *gambary*, a Japanese word describing the strong focus on working all the time which is strongly valued by Japanese society but irreconcilable with the rising percentage of youth unemployment—which attained 10% in 2003 (Kingston, 2013).

This attitude, along with the accompanying organisation of the household that sees a career-driven man and full-time housewife, is furthered criticised by Kuroe, who frequently expresses her unhappiness about living a lonely life even after getting married. Thus, the themes of loneliness, perverted systems of work and unforgiving society, which are only touched upon in the novel, are amplified and made to resonate with what is called *rosu gene*, the lost generation. Growing up in a time of transformations and economic recession between 1991 and 2000, the lost generation is the name given to the youths who had to pay the prize of a receding economy and the unwillingness to cut the high salaries of core elder workers. This resulted in reduced job security among young people, who had to put up with precarious, long-hours, and badly paid jobs that resulted in a lack of status, income, and confidence about the future, which discouraged many from forming families (Kingston, 2013). The device used to expose the

appalling reality lying underneath the surface of this mundane metropolitan life is the only fantastical element, the fatal flower, which in this otherwise realist drama looks like a residue of Vian's surreal world.

In his study on contemporary Japanese cinema, Bingham (2015) dedicates a chapter to what he believes to be a new trend: magical realism. He is wary of using such a term, developed in Southern American and West African countries, in the context of capitalist Japan; yet he sees it as a useful concept for understanding the way contemporary Japanese films juxtapose plausible realities with anomalies that function as disruptions and call them into question. While Bingham's worries about appropriating a term are deserving, it must be noted that the term 'magic(al) realism' has a complex history of travelling and translations and more than one origin: its etymological biography is retraced by Maggie Ann Bowers (2004), who distinguishes between three terms. The first, of German origin, was coined in 1925 by Franz Roh and associated to paintings of the Weimar Republic, hinting at the underlying mystery palpating behind the represented world (*Magischer Realismus*) (Camayd-Freixas, 2014). The second, *lo real maravilloso*, was coined in Latin America in the 1940s and indicates a mixture of perfectly coexisting realist and magical views of life (Carpentier, 1949; Chiampi, 1980). The third, magical realism, marked the international application of *lo real maravilloso* to narrative fiction that accepts magical happenings in a matter-of-fact way and uses it to denaturalise the real. Acknowledging that the interweaving of terms and concepts over time makes it impossible to disentangle their histories and uses, she settles for the all-encompassing term 'magic(al) realism' and enumerates its characteristics as being the following: the acceptance by narrator and reader of both reality and fantasy; the absence of judgement about the credibility of what happens; the use of the magical to question systems and regimes by undermining the assumptions on which they rely. To further distinguish them from surrealism, the fantastic, science fiction, and new journalistic writing of the 1970s and 80s she posits that they must not

be presented as the result of the imagining of one's mind, the influence of drugs, the imagining of futures or the intention to make a moral point (Bowers, 2004)¹³².

Following these definitions, we can consider *Kuroe* as pertaining to the new current of Japanese magic(al) realist cinema. The incorporation of an extraordinary element in an otherwise ordinary world and its matter-of-fact acceptance by protagonists and doctors alike is what allows the director to bring up social and economic issues and present them as alienating and alienated, removed from the realm of basic human needs—love, health, sociability—and spiralling unchecked towards the sterile world of loneliness, depression and addiction ushered in by a capitalist and consumerist society.

Reading as performing: Preteseille's L'Écume d'Écume des Jours (2005)

In 2005, a new intermedial translation of *L'Écume des Jours* appeared in France in the form of [bande dessinée](#) created by Benoit Preteseille during “the second hype of graphic novels” (Hescher, 2016), when comics alone made up 6.5% of publishing turnover in France (Miller, 2007). If in the USA graphic novels emerged out of underground comix and share recognisable characteristics¹³³, in the Franco-Belgian tradition to which Preteseille belongs these boundaries are less strict: the literariness of the medium owes more to intermedial translations of literature and the experimentations carried out under the publishing houses *Futuropolis* (1970), *A Suivre*, and *L'Association* (1990) than to repackaging and academic attention (Baetens and Frey, 2015; Hescher, 2016).

¹³² As mentioned above, Vian's novel sits at the crossroad of many genres, among which sci-fi, fantastic, surreal, thriller, tragedy, Hollywood cinema and the fairy tale, and treats natural and the supernatural as similarly credible. However, I would refrain from considering it as an example of magical realism, in that the world he presents us is in no way anchored to reality, as shown for example by its setting in an unrecognisable place and time, and by the predominance of fantastic elements over real ones.

¹³³ They have the tendency to explore and twist the tenets of comics' visual layout by questioning sequential reading and grids and by emphasising or doing away with narrative; their narrator is more present, while the topics veer towards autobiography, reportage, historical narration; they are published in book format, avoid serialization, and rely on independent publishing houses (Baetens and Frey, 2015).

The author himself declares to draw in the style of the *école de Bruxelles*, the *ligne claire* made popular by Hergé in the 1940s and later used by Jacque Tardi and Yves Chaland (Preteville, in Brena and Gatti, 2015). As a matter of fact, he co-founded with Wandrille Leroy the publishing house *Warum* to promote experimental and innovative comics and frequently probed the avant-gardes both thematically and stylistically. Preteville's taste for experimentation and irony, visible throughout his oeuvre, is already present in *L'écume d'écume*. The title doubly works as a speech act¹³⁴, first by grafting the graphic novel onto its source text (whose title is visually highlighted via the *mise-en-page*) and second, by including the author of the source text in the title page in a way that plays with the different character sizes used for translator and original writer of more traditional intramedial translations (Fig. 43).



Figure 43: Front Page

The choice of the same font for text and peritext blurs from the very beginning diegetic and extradiegetic dimensions, thereby questioning any separation of reality and imagination, just

¹³⁴ The notion of speech-acts as defining translations is elaborated by Theo Hermans in *The Conference of the Tongues* (2007).

as Vian does with its introductory note that informs the reader that the story is true because he invented it. In *Comics and the Senses* (2014), Ian Hague invites to see comics not only as a medium of visual storytelling, but to pay attention to their materiality and to the ways they engage all the senses, either by tapping into auditory, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory imagination or by physically engaging them. *L'écume d'écume* is a good example of this model and of how graphic novelists can consciously play with Elleström's material, sensorial, spatio-temporal, and semiotic modalities of media (2010). Indeed, Preteseille keeps underlining the materiality of the graphic novel, exploiting its cultural connotations. He introduces several sensorial inputs, challenges spatiotemporal categories by subverting the linearity of reading, and makes ingenious use of "grammatextuality" (Baetens and Frey, 2015) to explore the iconicity of written language, blurring the boundaries between icons, indexes, and symbols. Moreover, with its digression of diegetic boundaries, the repeated display of the codes of its medium and the use of intertextual and intermedial references (Rajewsky, 2010), *L'écume d'écume* can be seen as engaging with postmodern concerns (Miller, 2007).

To start from its peritext, the book comes in the A4 format typical of *bande dessinée* albums. The author addresses the readers right away, on the flap of the cover, talking about how he first read Vian's novel in his childhood and how he fused the divergent rhythms of Vian, the dances of Francis Picabia, the flowers of Eduard Manet and his own sensitivity, thus laying bare the net of intertextuality that traverses the book and asserting his presence within it. The direct address in the second person and the handwritten form not only blur boundaries between diegetic and extradiegetic world, suggesting that what we read could spill out of the book at any moment, but also establish an aesthetic of craftsmanship that is reinforced by the A4 format and the use of matte pages and rough paper. The erosion of diegetic boundaries continues once we enter the text. The traditional *mise-en-page* of comic and graphic novels, contained by panels and internally divided into strips by the gutters, is abandoned in favour of a continuous

bleeding of the action across the pages, which potentially opens up the scene to our world. The text is similarly blended as speech balloons and markers of the *récitatif* (Miller, 2007) disappear entirely just as textual and peritextual boundaries. Irony and metacommentary are present from the first page, which recycles old comics' use of arrows to indicate the order of reading (Hague, 2014) but uses them in confusing ways or whenever they are not needed. The same is done through the use of dotted contour lines exposing the mechanism of drawing and through the invitation to colour the drawing of the Virgin Mary accompanied by a God in sunglasses, thus transferring Vian's desecrating take on religion to the visual realm (Fig. 44).

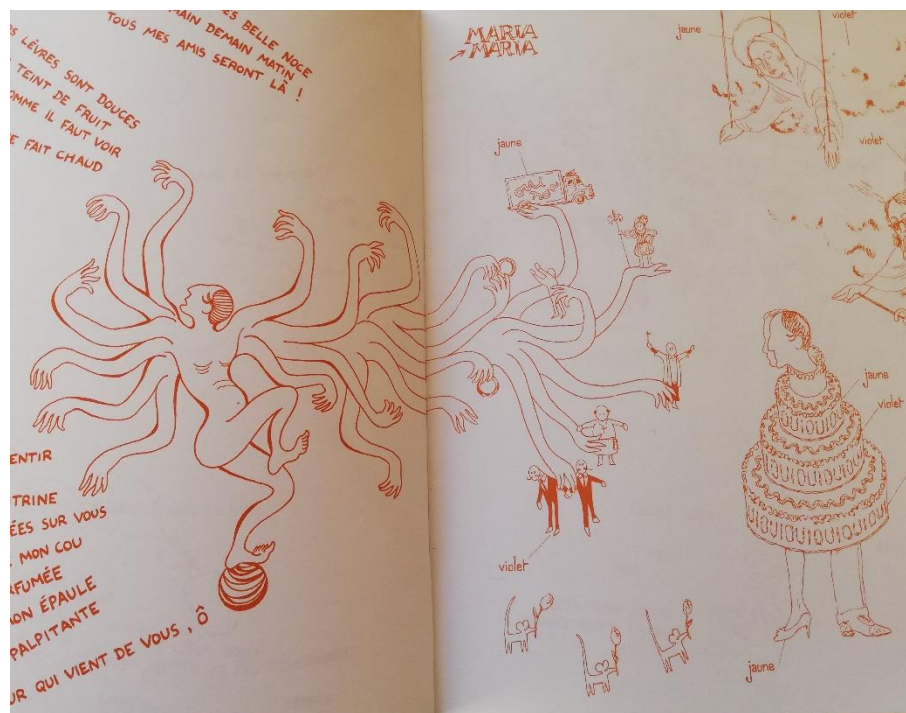


Figure 44: Interactive pages of the bande dessinée

By inviting interaction, Preteseille's appeals to the readers sense of touch and play, throwing them back to their childhood, highlighting the reading experience over the read content, and "linking the materiality of the line to the hand and mind producing it and that we reproduce in our reading" which helps us understand "which kind of narrator is doing the telling and how we are supposed to make meaning of the narrative act" (Baetens and Frey, 2015: 165). The

visual enunciation of the artist is called *graphiation* (2015), and Preteseille makes wide use of it both as a narrative tool and to undermine the reliability of the author-narrator. From the first moment, we are alerted to the intertextual presence of Picabia and Manet, which indeed appear in the quasi-cubist representation of the *biglemoi* dance (Fig. 45), and in the reproduction of Manet's *Flowers in a Vase* (1982).

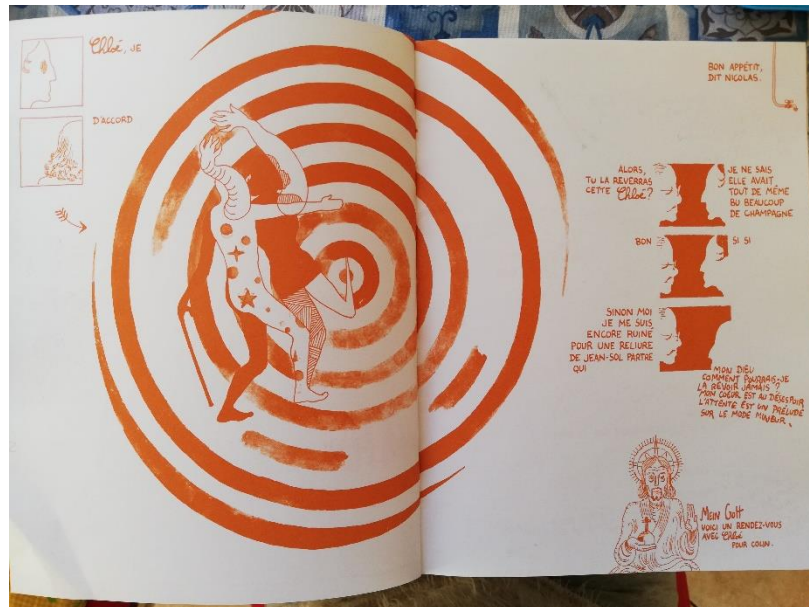


Figure 45: *Le Biglemoi*

However, these are not the only styles used within the graphic novel: grotesque, expressionism (via intermedial reference to Edvard Munch's *The Scream*, 1893), and realism (via a realist landscape painting) appear as well. The narratorial voice is therefore contradicted by the unfolding of the graphic novel, and we can see the reference to two of the various styles as useful but insufficient cues given to the reader in order to appreciate the work, just like Vian does in the novel by punctuating it with cues leading to different genres. At the same time, the use of different pictorial styles (cubist, impressionist, expressionist, primitivist, and realist), strengthens the felt presence of the narrator and thus remits to the extradiegetic world, while simultaneously slowing down the pace of reading.

Graphiation and braiding¹³⁵ slow down the pace even further. Preteseille punctuates the story with two slash pages illustrations of flowers in a vase accompanied by the words “Tiens, salut Chick”. In this way he manages to give a sense of time passing as well as of the growing distance between Colin and Chick, whose visits rarefy (it takes a bunch of flowers in a vase two to three weeks to wither). The sense of distance is further stressed by their monologic dialogues, highlighted by Chick’s repeated “sinon moi, je...”¹³⁶. The combined use of braiding and graphiation returns in the use of *ligne claire*, *style atome* and *ligne crade* to portray characters. Overall, Nicolas is always represented through the *ligne claire*, with defined outlines and colour filling (he is the only character whose body is coloured, in a dark orange that veers towards black), while Chick, Colin and Chloé owe more to the *école de Charleroi* and its impression of movement. However, towards the end of the book, Colin’s poverty is signalled by a shift towards the *ligne crade*, rougher and more imprecise, as if he had lost in graphic as well as economic value. Such portrayal is reinforced by the kind of clothes worn by the characters (jackets and fur coats in the beginning, work suits, square shirts, and undershirts in the end) and by Colin’s “bodily hexis”, defined by Bordieau as “the practical way that someone has of feeling and expressing his/her social value” (1979: 552, in Miller, 2007). Initially represented with his back straight while sitting or walking, Colin’s physical exhaustion and lost sense of value is indicated by his curved back or the closed positions of arms and legs (Fig. 46).

¹³⁵ Braiding is a term introduced by Groensteen (1999), according to whom, by employing formal, iconic or semantic correspondences, graphic novelists can encourage a reading neither tabular nor sequential, but that bridges spatially distant illustrations creating meaning out of their connection.

¹³⁶ “As for me, I...” (my translation).

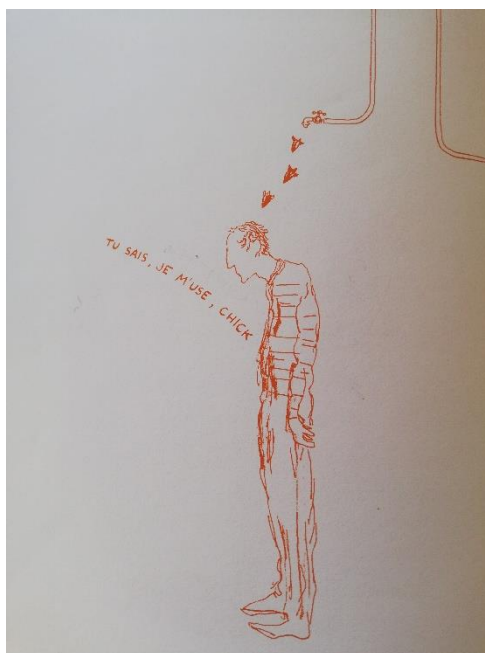


Figure 46: Colin's changed bodily hexis

As much as graphiation is used in all its potential, so is grammatextuality, defined as the foregrounding of “the graphic substance of letter, line and page” (Harpold, in Baetens and Frey, 2015: 153). According to Baetens and Frey, the general rule is to have all text categories (paratext, *récitatif*, speech bubbles, onomatopoeias...) functionally differentiated with respect to their positions on the page and their visual features. Contrary to these rules, in *L'écume d'écume*, paratext and the speech bubbles share the same style and speech bubbles are elided, as well as the *récitatif*, whose only appearance in the text is not demarcated in any way and simply states “Demain, *Chloé* sera morte”¹³⁷. Other instances of grammatextuality are the use of the copyright symbol next to the word *bigle moi*, the use of italics for the name of Chloé in order to associate it to the title of the song, the underlined cursive for Duke Ellington, iconically referring to a signature (Fig. 47), but also the hybridization of speech and onomatopoeias reflecting Colin’s breathlessness after dancing the *bigle moi* (tomber ah...moreux; ah. vec ma

¹³⁷ Tomorrow, Chloé will be dead.

chemise blue...), the rendering of orality in the written text (à ce niversaire; enchtrez donc) or the use of written conventions for oral speech (tu voudrais être amoureux, il voudrait idem), and even the use of bad spelling and corrections, traced with insecure lines as if by a child (je cherche un æmploua).

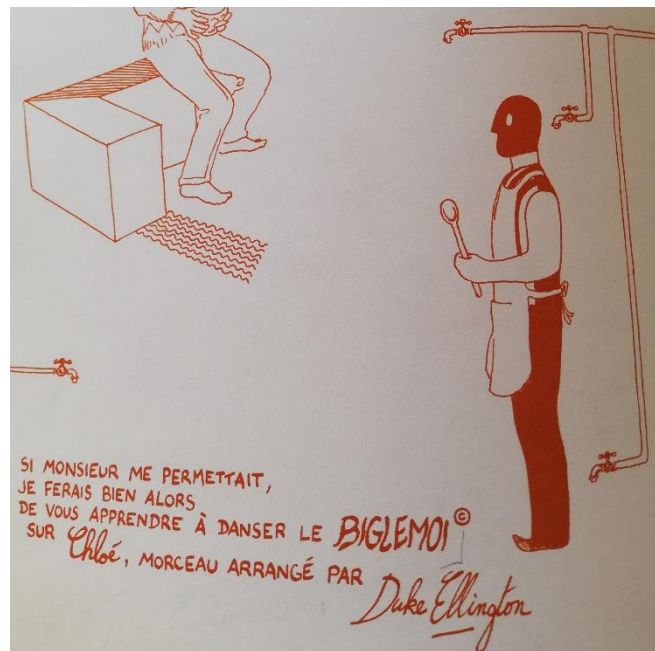


Figure 47: Grammatextuality

Graphic pauses dictated by full stops are also used in their rhythmic value, for example when the division of a word into four syllables translates the tempo of the dance, or when full stops after each letter of a sentence slow down its rhythm and render the idea of waiting for a long time. Parts of the peritext enter the diegetic world, labelling a drawing as a landscape or suggesting which colours must be used to fill the shapes. In fact, part of *L'écume d'écume's* irony springs from the juxtaposition of what are emotionally salient moments in the source text and metareferential representations which create a sense of distance from it. The last salient graphic characteristic that I focus on before moving to the level of the narrative is the use of braiding combined with intermedial reference. Just as he does with the vases of flowers,

Preteseille dots the pages with four dialogues represented via a filmic close-up which marks salient moments of the narrative (Fig. 48, 49 and 50). The dialogues happen within small squares showing the profiles of the characters and all end with some cinematic technique, such as voiceover, dissolve, and the shot of a closed door. This strategy is used to bind the narrative together while highlighting its main developments. Together with the other instance of braiding, used in the depiction of the vases of flowers, it creates moments of pause and scenes, interrupting a rhythmic pace otherwise dominated by ellipsis and summaries (Genette, 1983).

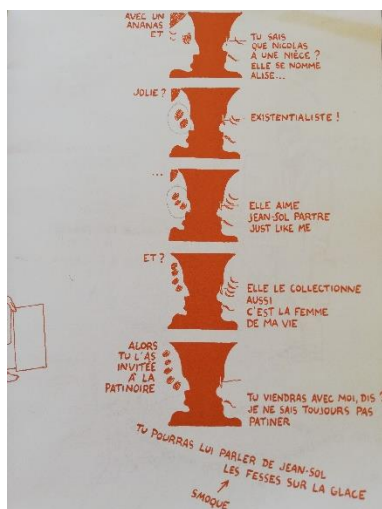


Figure 48: Braiding, dialogue 1

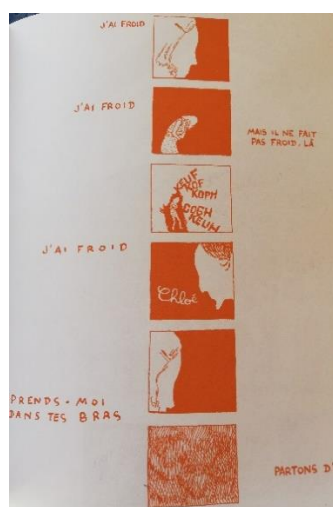


Figure 49: Braiding, dialogue 3

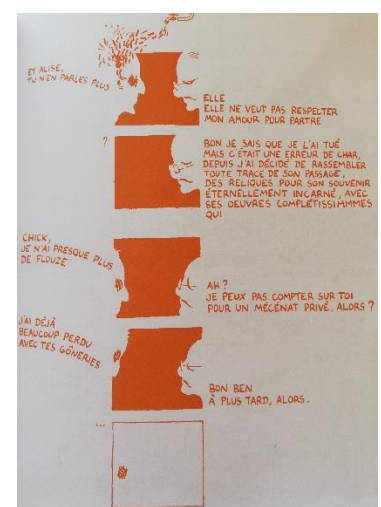


Figure 50: Braiding, dialogue 4

Besides the narratological use of scenes, pauses, summaries and ellipsis, the dimension of time enters the graphic novel in an unexpected way, that is, aurally. Preteseille choses never to depict Colin's house. To indicate this internal space, he instead resorts to the depiction of dripping faucets. Initially working as a conduit for the characters' movement, after Chloé starts coughing water comes out of them, first sparingly then copiously, gradually reducing the characters' space on the page. Like Geffré, he translates the protagonists' sense of claustrophobia not by reducing the physical space, but by restricting the area occupied by the characters.

In *Comics and the Senses*, Hague (2014) points to the way in which the sound of flipping pages and their gradual thinning as one moves through a book can be understood as a reminder of time passing and as such highlighted. In *L'écume d'écume*, this seems exactly to be the intended function of the dripping taps: not only do they evoke sound in the readers' minds, but they also follow and highlight the rises and falls of its rhythm, as well as create a last moment of suspension, where the knowledge that we have reached the end is countered by the auditory information of continuation provided by the dripping tap. Hence, spatiotemporal and sensorial modalities cross paths and do the narration together.

Looking at the characters, it is interesting to notice the sheer prevalence of male characters and particularly the ellipsis of all scenes regarding Alice. As a matter of fact, she appears only once in the whole book, at Dupont's birthday party where Colin and Chloé meet. Chloé's face, on the other hand, is never shown and she is always portrayed giving her back or in crouched positions that hide her face. Given the importance of faces in graphic novels (Baetens and Frey, 2015) and the fact that Chloé's name is always written in italics, referencing the title of the song, one starts to wonder whether Chloé is as immaterial as Duke Ellington's music, "a record played after a re-presentation of Alise's legs" (Rolls, 2011: 300). Or is it rather that Chloé and Alise are the same person? In the pages showing Chloé's and Colin's meeting, Chloé and Alise wear the same dress, seen from different angles (Fig. 51 and 52).

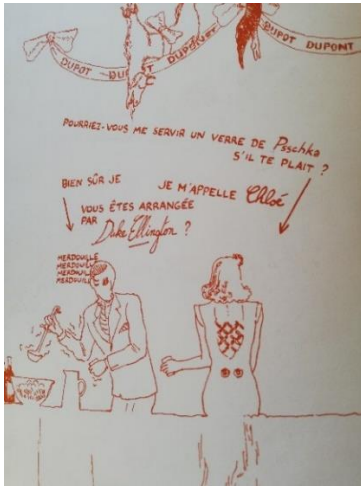


Figure 51: Chloé's dress



Figure 52: Alise's dress

This would explain Alise's altogether disappearance from the narrative, including the murder of Partre or the intimate scene between her and Colin. In fact, only ten pages out of sixty-two show female characters, thus centring the narrative around Colin, who appears to be also the focaliser of the story, although the ocularization¹³⁸ is external. Even Nicolas becomes a mysterious character, being the only one wearing a mask on his face for the whole time. The detail of the hidden faces of Chloé, Alise, and Nicolas plays on the ambiguousness of the source text and might even represent a space left open by Prataseille for a *slash* reading of his graphic novel¹³⁹. He also points, like Riju, at a possible reading of Chloé's illness as deriving from the fact that the couple is childless, explicitly associating the roundness of Colin's bedroom to Chloé's possible pregnancy.

More clearly political themes, such as the criticism of the Church, the system of work, and war are either dismissed or toned down, while criticism of the intellectual sphere and Partre is ingeniously entrusted to the use of language. Indeed, while the graphic novel is for the most part written in French, Chick occasionally smuggles in words in English, even when completely

¹³⁸ Ocularization is a term coined by André Gaudreault and Francist Jost to indicate a character's visual perspective as represented in comics and graphic novels (see Miller, 2007)

¹³⁹ Slash fiction is the terms used to indicate a type of fanfiction that re-reads relationships between the characters as homosexual even where they were not originally portrayed as such.

unnecessary. His use of token sentences such as “surprising”, “just like me” or “it’s a must”, combined with use of English to promote Partre’s conference (“seen on TV”, “sold out”, “tonight”), works as a critique of mass culture and English linguistic imperialism. When Pretaseille’s book was published in 2005, English had already achieved its status of European lingua franca and its dominance as second language has been the topic of academic, political, and popular discussions to these days (Weber, 1997; Jenkins and Seidlhofer, 2001; Truchot, 2005; House, 2012; Moss, 2016; Setter, 2019). Hence, the use of English as a sign of intellectual superiority by Chick and Partre works as a critique both within and without the diegetic world.

All in all, Vian’s novel served to Preteseille as a springboard for graphic and narrative experimentation. Closure and interpretations are made possible by the reader’s knowledge of the source text, which functions as an implied text carrying the narrative, while Preteseille is left free to probe the boundaries of the chosen medium and enrich the text with metareferential allusions, multiple reading paths, and ironic winks at the reader, thus foregrounding the embodied and temporally situated notion of reading as performing that Hague (2014) identified as being emergent in the medium of comics.

Inheriting French Surrealist Cinema: Michel Gondry’s Mood Indigo (2013)

When *Mood Indigo* was released in 2013, fans of Boris Vian and Michel Gondry must have celebrated together. Indeed, similarities in the work of writer and filmmaker had already been noticed, and Michel Gondry was called “the Boris Vian du septième art”. The grandson of an engineer and inventor (one of whose creations was the *clavioline*, an electronic keyboard instrument that preceded the analog synthesiser¹⁴⁰), and the son of a musical instrument retailer with a passion for Duke Ellington, Gondry seems indeed to have Vian in his genes. The

¹⁴⁰ The clavioline was invented in 1947 by Constant Martin.

similarities do not stop at the level of his family; like Vian, Gondry worked in the musical industry and is often described as an inheritor of Méliès, a magician and one of France's first filmmakers who introduced surrealist details and ingenious techniques to create the impression of magic in cinema. Some of those techniques, like stop-motion, are still used by Gondry, who himself pioneered *the bullet time*¹⁴¹ and whose works are characterised by a splendid use of animation, puppetry, and digital technologies. Other characteristics of Gondry's oeuvre that bring him close to Vian are the focus on eccentric and naïve characters, a vision of innocent love as the overcoming of solitude and an uninterrupted questioning of the boundaries between dream and reality. Like Vian, whose literary elements are textually transmitted from a novel to the other (Rolls, 2011), Gondry relies extensively on intratextuality and intertextuality, carrying over ideas and details he first introduced in the music videos to his films, or basing an entire movie on remakes of a personal canon, as happens in *Be Kind, Rewind* (2008).

His first big success, the *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004), combines all these traits and, according to Rolls (2011), can be read against the grain of Vian's novels *L'Herbe Rouge* (1950) and *L'Arrache Coeur* (1953). A sci-fi romantic story that follows a non-linear temporal order, *The Eternal Sunshine* tells the story of two lovers who after breaking up decide to erase any memory of each other by undergoing a procedure at a local clinic. For Rolls (2011), the Oedipian quality and interest in fetishism of *The Eternal Sunshine* come straight from *L'Herbe Rouge* and are "predicated on an Ur-text of women passing by that is both intra- and intertextually bound up with *L'Écume des Jours*" (2011: 298), and especially with Alise, Colin's fetishized object of love and the bearer of the phallic symbol (*l'arrache-coeur*). Of all the women, it is her who will reappear throughout Vian's novels and inform Clementine's character.

¹⁴¹ An example of this technique can be seen in the film *Matrix* by Lana and Lily Wachovski, 1999.

The exploration of the porosity of boundaries between dream and reality that is so prominent in *Eternal Sunshine* will come back as forcefully in subsequent movies, among which *Be Kind Rewind*, predicated upon the idea of cinema as “the essentially surreal experience” (Kirou, 1953, quoted in Richardson, 2006), and in *The Science of Sleep* (2006). The former is a comic remake of remakes formulating a view of memory as repertoire rather than archive reminiscent of Diana Taylor’s distinction between them (2003). The latter is a love story between two daydreamers that goes as far as showing the interior of the protagonist’s mind, populated by microscopic filmmakers screening their own films (the dreams) in his ‘televisual brain’. Authentic and fake, real and unreal turn out to be unstable categories that act upon each other. Given the extent of overlapping areas in Vian’s and Gondry’s oeuvres and their ability to create impressively original and vibrant worlds, it is particularly interesting to examine how, 66 years after its publication, the novel *L’Écume de Jours* was intermedially translated into a cinematic feat of imagination by Gondry. The relevance of this exploration is also confirmed by the wide reception of the film, both at home and abroad, which encouraged the re-issuing of the 1967 translation in the UK (whose new title and cover image were taken from the film) and deeply influenced people’s imagery, not least that of choreographer and dancers of *Froth on the Daydream* (2018).

While Belmont, Denisov, and Rijû stripped bare the settings and deleted all the playful, surprising details that animate *L’Écume*, focusing more on plot and social commentary, Gondry, like Preteseille, rescues and amplifies Vian’s images. He takes Vian’s metamorphic landscape of animated objects and outlandish details even further, populating it with a dinner table that move on skates, cockroachish doorbells, and barking shoes that run away. The surrealism of Buñuel is recalled early on as Colin cuts his eyelids and eels play hide and seek in the tubes, while the joyous atmosphere of the beginning is outweighed by the assembly line workers typing the manuscript of the book, which emphasises the idea of inescapable fate and

“gives a dystopian context to an otherwise innocent love story” (Schell, 2014). To reproduce this ever-surprising world, Gondry resorts to a massive use of visual effects, mixing techniques developed by Georges Méliès and Max Fleischer with others enabled by digital tools. Stop-motion, matte painting, puppetry, animation, rotoscoping, and CGI animation are the ingredients of this visually astounding film, once again enabling the director to linger on the threshold between dream and reality. In Vian’s novel, objects and places change their shapes and qualities according to the mood of the protagonists. As Chloé’s life slips away, the house shrinks. The music of Duke Ellington rounds the walls of the bedroom. We find the same elements in *Mood Indigo*, with some additions, like the black and white finale (life loses its colours) and the curious inventions exploring the power of emotions and music to affect bodies. An example of this is the biglemoi dancing scene: as soon as the music reaches the characters, their movements slow down, introducing a different temporality, and their limbs lengthen, as if music and feelings were outpouring from them, making them literally ‘go with the flow’¹⁴² (Fig. 53).



Figure 53: *Le Biglemoi*

¹⁴² The director of visual effects Romain Strabold explains in an interview that for these scenes they had the actors animate fake legs with rods linked through their feet, while the quickly shape-changing food served in the beginning are the result of stop-motioned photographs of tactile fabric models made by the artist Stephen Rozembaum (Schell, 2014).

While the storyline and the imagery stay as close as possible to the novel, certain details and themes come to the fore and the film is enriched by a new layer of intertextuality. For example, mechanization becomes even more inescapable and the mechanical and biological are even more intertwined, as visible in the presence of screens everywhere and in the merry-go-round replacing the cloud that engulfs Colin and Chloé on their first date (Fig. 54).



Figure 54: The mechanical cloud

Gondry does with Vian's language what Vian himself does with common language, that is, he takes it to its consequences. As a result, the addictive aspect of Partre's writings is fully shown in the film by having Chick consume it in the form of pills, *eau de toilet*, smoke and eye-drops that cause auditory and visual hallucinations. Vian's strategy of hiding cues among the novel is also followed by Gondry, who shows us a bedroom filled with flowers before the wedding ceremony and Chloé's illness or turns the detail of the rebellious tie that needs to be stitched to the shirt with hammer and nails into a preview of Colin's dead body filling a coffin (Fig. 55).



Figure 55: Chloé's bedroom filled with flowers

Another point of contact with the dance is to be found in the development of the protagonists: if initially they look like interchangeable puppets (to the point that at the wedding ceremony the priest will marry ‘Colchick and Chloise’), they acquire more personality as the story grows darker, with female characters standing out for their strength. Chick is even more selfish and addicted than he is in the novel; Colin is the portrait of a man in despair who’s lost all hope; Chloé surprises for the steely optimism with which she faces illness, stubbornly looking after Colin and fighting for his love, while Alise emerges as the true heroine, the one who dares take what she wants and challenge the fatality of the manuscript page by setting all libraries on fire after killing Partre. She and Nicolas are introduced by Gondry as the representatives of that African American jazz world that so fascinated Vian.

In contrast with the other two films, and in keeping with the dance performance, Gondry recovers the intermedial references to music present in Vian’s novel and auditorily transports the viewer to that jazz diaspora recreated on the page by Vian. Moreover, it pays a tribute to Duke Ellington and other Afro-American jazz musicians by “making space to spotlight African American talent” (Braggs, 2016: 147). As a matter of fact, in light of the filmmaker’s extensive use of intra- and extratextual references, we could even see Nicolas as Lee Anderson, the protagonist of *J’irai cracher sur vos tombes*, who nonchalantly steps out of it and enters

L'Écume, where he keeps seducing girls and enjoying social success. The intertextual net might extend to and comment on another contemporary French film that shares with *Mood Indigo* not only the starring actress, Audrey Tatou, but also the visual look, *Amélie* (Jeunet, 2001). Similarly showing young, eccentric, and orphaned protagonist who struggle to recreate the surrogate family (Austin, 2008), *Amélie* presents a nostalgia-driven and tourist-tailored image of Paris. *Mood Indigo* seems to mock this polished picture of a homely city. When Colin and Chloé have their first date, the workers whose task is to write the protagonists' world spin a needle to decide Colin's favourite place in Paris, with the ironic effect that all of the mentioned places are either too far or unsuitable; they finally settle for the shopping mall but upon arrival Colin discovers that the mall is still in construction. As a matter of fact, no beautiful or recognisable image of Paris is offered: notwithstanding the mentions of iconic Parisian landmarks, Chloé and Colin live in the suspended space of fiction, in the ongoing writing process that determines their fate and positions Gondry's characters, once again, in the fascinating in-between space where reality and dream coexist.

Coming after movies such as *The Eternal Sunshine*, *The Science of Sleep*, and *Be Kind, Rewind*, and anchoring itself on one of France's most celebrated surrealist writers while referencing contemporary popular cinema (*Amélie*), *Mood Indigo* seems to be making a statement about Gondry's oeuvre and its place within French and international cinema. Despite being glossed over by critical literature focusing on French surrealist cinema, not only does Michael Gondry evoke and employ Méliès' techniques, but also responds to most traits indicated by Richardson (2006) as characteristic of a surrealist sensibility applied to cinema. According to him and Austin (2008), French cinema evolved along two lines: the first, outlined by the Lumière brothers, would go on influencing documentary, neo-realist, and new wave cinema; the other would follow Méliès and give rise to the fantasy, literary adaptations, historical reconstructions, *la tradition de qualité* and *le cinema du look*. It is in this second line that surrealism in cinema

must be sought, and among its pivotal characteristics is the rejection of any division between reality and dream. Other characteristics that are associated with it are an interest in pop culture, animation and the tactility of images and objects, sympathy for outsiders, the representation of space and time as unstable, and of love as a short-lived transformative experience acting as the “revelation of two solitary beings who create their own world, a world that rejects society’s lies, abolishes time and work, and declares itself to be self-sufficient” (Paz, 1961: 198).

All these traits can be found in the majority of Gondry’s works, including the music videos. More than ever, they come to the fore in *Mood Indigo*, aided by its popular and surreal source text. While the intermedial translations into cinema and opera analysed above revealed translation zones in which a foreign text was made to respond to the necessities of the target cultures (be they the revolutionary spirit of 1968 France, the construction of an Imaginary West, or the exposure of late capitalism’s exploitation of youngsters through magical realism), the film made by Gondry (as much as Preteseille’s *bande dessinée* and Geffré’s choreography) can be seen more as the result of a deeply personal engagement with the writer’s world stemming from their affinities and the affirmation of his own cinema as the inheritor of surrealist sensitivities. Thus, while Austin (2008) is certainly right in spotting how French surrealist cinema found an outlet in the *bande dessinée* (and Preteseille’s graphic novel is a good example of that), it must be acknowledged that it did not completely vanish from cinema either, as directors like Gondry maintain it alive and explore its possibilities. Adapting *L’Écume des Jour* in this context can be read as a way of accruing cultural capital by relying on a widely known source text, while situating his own work within the French cinematic panorama. But I also see its motivation in what Briggs refers to as the untallyable something of translation: its consciously collaborative, deeply relational nature that escapes the logic of status and money to delve into the “comedy, sunshine and companionship, argument and failure, literature and love” that accompany the translation process (2017: 244).

After the tide has gone, what remains? Translation and/as Memory

A l'endroit où les fleuves se jettent dans la mer il se forme une barre difficile à franchir et de grands remous écumeux où dansent les épaves. Entre la nuit du dehors et la lumière de la lampe, le souvenir refluaient de l'obscurité, se heurtaient à la clarté et, tantôt immergés, tantôt apparents, montraient leurs ventres blancs et leur dos argentés (Vian, 1963: 87)¹⁴³.

In his graphic novel, Preteseille plays with the idea of memory embedded in the title of Vian's novel, *L'Écume des Jours*. As seen above, this title has received different translations into English, aimed at creating different entry points and highlighting different characteristics of the story. *Froth on the Daydream*, the title of the UK translation, refers to the blurring of boundaries between dream and reality that drove surrealist experimentations. *Mood Indigo*, published in the States, both suggests an emotional dimension of the book and links it to African American jazz culture via the title of a song played by the famous jazz musician Duke Ellington, thus recovering the importance of the aural dimension in this novel. But it is *Foam of the Daze*, the title chosen by Brian Harper, that better refers to the theme of memory implied by Vian's title, which is also kept in the more literal translations into romance languages (*A Espuma dos Dias* by Anibal Fernandes, *La Schiuma dei Giorni* by Gianni Turchetta; *La Espuma de los Dias* by Ceastre Cid). Indeed, if we link it to the passage quoted above, associating tidal currents with memories, *L'Écume des Jours* becomes a metaphor for memory itself. Anyone who observed the sea would have noticed the fascinating phenomenon whereby part of a wave's froth remains bubbling ashore as the tide rhythmically retreats. This indexically evokes the passage of water and its destiny to be modified by subsequent waves, but also iconically resembles memory in its indistinctness, fragility, and quiet activity. In its intermedial translations, Vian's novel proved to be just as indistinct, just as vulnerable, just as destined to be altered by subsequent translations, that is, its textual futures. The title *l'écume*

¹⁴³ "At the spot where the river joins the ocean there is a barrier that is very difficult to navigate. Wrecked ships dance helplessly in the great eddies of foam. Between the night outside and the light of the lamp, memories flowed back from the darkness of the past, banging against the light and, immersed in its glow, gleaming and transparent, flaunted their white fronts and their silver backs" (translated by Stanley Chapman, 1967:112).

d'écume des jours seems to point exactly at this by warning the reader that what they hold in their hands is the memory of the memory of something and on reading such title we tighten our grip on the book, fearing that it would flow away in between our fingers just as water does. What I want to highlight with this is a specific task of translation: to keep the froth bubbling ashore by returning to and modifying it. Whatever the main reason for carrying them out (whether political, aesthetical, personal, or all of them) intra- and intermedial translations are acts of “simultaneous memorialization and bodily renewal” (Brownlie, 2016: 8), generating embodied memory through (translatorial) performance, bridging archive and repertoire by setting them in motion.

In “Adaptation: A Writerly Strategy?” (2018), Baetens applies Szendy’s reflections on written and performed music to the adaptation of different artworks, arguing that adaptation is the materialisation of a reading and should therefore be considered not as secondary or as retrospectively revealing the work, but as constitutive of it. When we study intermedial translation we should therefore not oppose them to their source text, but rather consider them as a set of variations, not necessarily linear, on a theme, where a relationship is forged not only with the source text, but between authors, genres, styles—and I add, audiences, other texts, translations, and media (2018). Similarly, Catrysse calls for a multilateral approach that replaces the comparison between source and target texts and recognises the possibility of reciprocal influences in multiple intra- and intermedial translations (Catrysse, 2014). All the works seen above made use of new and inherited, intertextual and intermedial references. Some of them used third texts functioning as interpretant (Romeo and Juliet and the model of star-crossed lovers in Denisov and Go-Riju), while others, like Geffré’s choreography, even worked on the bases of the source text *and* another intermedial translation. Every rewriting was therefore an engagement with and an amplification of the source text’s poetics and universe of discourse (Lefevere, 1985). Thus, translation emerges as continuity and presentification

through performative acts of (textual) memory, which by “investing the text with the reader [...] multiply and re-activate the text to generate greater textual and linguistic play that the source text had imagined” (Scott, 2012: 50). And, like the foam bubbling and shapeshifting on the shore, the text becomes “indefinitely re-disposable, fluid, constantly readapting itself to its support” (47).

A comparative media analysis that holds translation as its glue such as the one carried out in this chapter is therefore useful because it allows us to see how several translators with specific embodied dramaturgies engaged with the text, but also, from an historical perspective, how translations registered cultural trends. In combining a long shot of the overall translation history with close-ups of its salient moments, it offers us the bigger picture without breaching the principle of touch, what Briggs identifies with Roland Barthes as “attentiveness to difference, an effort made not to treat all things in the same way” (2017: 312). Adjusting one’s “manner of handling, the form of her care, in response to what is being held” (330), seems a good principle for translating and researching alike. The principle of touch asks us to find the why and how of translation in a target culture’s commercial, cultural, political needs without losing sight of the “each time uniquely relational, lived out practice of it” (365). For example, we can see a gradual shift in the treatment of gender roles and portrayals of women, and especially of Chloé. If Vian portrays Chloé as passive and Alise as dependent on Chick, Belmont, shooting in 1967, uses these characters to represent a clash between city and countryside values and exacerbates their differences: Chloé is treated like a doll and her only active decision is to end her life, while Alise becomes the emblem of the femme fatale, resolute and independent, ready to kill Chick after he abandons her. Denison, staging his opera in 1981, resorts to a more conservative representation of women, dressing Chloé like a ballet dancer and portraying Alise as a sexual temptation. Twenty years later, all the novel’s intermedial translations adopt a different view on women and gender relations, with Preteseille even opening up for slash

readings of the novel that question its heteronormativity. Reading it in 2021, one cannot help noticing how women are dependent on men's economic and social protection, and men's failure to live up to societal expectations that want them as the breadwinners. In Rijû's film, these roles are challenged and inverted: Alise becomes a sort of mother-figure to Chick, whose spiralling addiction and drinking habit lead him to the margins of society, while Chloé, who works in a laundromat before falling ill, voices a critique of Japanese strict repartition of gender roles and its all-consuming working attitude. In Gondry, who employs a diverse cast, Alise is a strong-willed African American woman and Chloé provides continuous emotional support to Colin, even after witnessing his infidelity. Finally, in Geffré, it is Chloé who proposes to Colin and who leads their movements, while he performs a different type of masculinity by openly asking for her support. Similar to the treatment of gender roles, we can see a shift in societal attitudes towards sexuality and responsibility within couples. In both Vian's and Belmont's work, the scene of infidelity is passed without judgement or explanation, and Belmont's film is the only translation to present a free attitude towards sex. In Denisov, a seducing Alise is turned down by Colin, who remains faithful to Chloé. This scene is elided from Rijû's movie, Preteseille's graphic novel and Geffré's dance, while a sense of guilt and responsibility is introduced by Gondry, in whose film Chloé sees from her room the love-making scene between Alise and Colin, eliciting our sympathy. This seems to suggest that despite the introduction of various forms of officialising a couple beyond marriage and the growing societal and religious acceptance of divorce, present attitudes towards sexuality within the couple might be stricter than they used to be. Looking at the two cultures into which the novel was intermedially *and* interculturally translated by a non-French translator, late Soviet Russia, and turn-of-the-millennium Japan, revealed them as translation zones (Apter, 2006), whether openly or unofficially, which alongside the how and why, raises the question of the when of translations.

The wider trends here highlighted take distinct shapes and functions in each of the translations and relate differently to the target cultures in which they emerged and the translators' engagement with memory. For some of them, like Preteseille and Geffré, the practice of translating was a way of plunging into their own personal memories of reading the book ever since their childhood and project it outside, to other audiences or cultures, while relying on shared knowledge of the implied text to explore and experiment with their medium. For Belmont, it proved a way to seize the spirit of his time and inscribe, however tangentially, the collective memory of the Algerian war in a cultural artefact, thereby transforming it into cultural memory, despite the government's refusal to do so. For Rijû, it provided a way to address the formation of a cosmopolitan memory of youth's alienation, solitude, and uncertainty resonating with young generations inside and outside Japan. Finally, Denisov purposely engaged with multidirectional memory by combining disparate references to Greek myths, European canonised texts, and contemporary western references in order to forge outside spaces through translation.

If ideologies, poetics, and universes of discourse (Lefevere, 1985) were altered and complemented by the intermedial translations, so was the code. This is due to the translators' embodied dramaturgy as much as to the material affordances of each medium, the kinds of explorations they invited and the way they inscribed themselves upon the translations (think of the dancers' and actors' embodied dramaturgies, the salience of breath in Geffré's choreography, or the graphic representation of speech in Preteseille). Not only do different media present different affordances on the basis of their materiality, but they also influence the image of the text and the public's horizon of expectation on the basis of implicit understandings of what they are and of their function (what turns a basic medium into a qualified medium for Elleström, 2010). The result is that each translation fabricates a dual memory: a memory of the source text and a memory of the material support in which it is embedded. To conclude,

comparing the dance performance with other intermedial translations became a way to retrace the translation biography of the novel and pinpoint the different imaginaries solicited by its readings (readings that materialise a *je-ici-maintenant*) as well as by the material, spatiotemporal, sensorial, and semiotic affordances of each medium. Like waves on the seashore, always reaching a different point and coming with various directions and strength, these intermedial translations crafted afterlives for the novel by becoming its embodied memory through translatorial performance.

Postlude: Unwinding

Three Anecdotes...

Sheffield, 2016

Asked to produce an annotated bibliography for my master's dissertation I come across Bennett's article "Words into Movement: The Ballet as Intersemiotic Translation" (2007b). I read it in one breath, such is the enthusiasm of finding a first building block for what I have been dreaming of developing during my walks home from the library. Lone walks, slow walks, wet walks, walks with a view - whenever I leave the industrial buildings of the centre for the browns, yellows, and reds of the botanical garden I live next to. I read the article in one breath, but I stumble on the brevity of the section dedicated to the code: what about the steps themselves? How was meaning created through the movements of the body? And what about the actual source text—through which operations did a written story become a ballet?

Moscow, 2017

This Wednesday I don't teach, and I relish the opportunity to stay at home and at large from the beehive that is the metro in Moscow, with its improvised but efficient choreography of bodies that swerve, avoid, sidestep. The pace is given by the clock, and what I have learned on the first day is that if you walk fast and straight you will never bump into anyone. The magic of knowing where you want to go. This January I received my M.A. degree in Translation Studies, with a thesis that tried to answer the questions raised by my reading of Bennett's article. Yet, I feel that there is still much to be asked, and too many answers slipped through my fingers. I browse in search of another article by Bennett. Perhaps she too has felt the same, perhaps she published something else. What I find is the webpage of a doctoral programme in Comparative Studies, run by the University of Lisbon. I click on it.

Lisbon, 2021

And here I am. Trying to write the word conclusion on a journey that had many starting points and infinite stopovers. The words don't come easily, but why would they? They too want to linger on this threshold.

...And a Conclusion

Bennett's article on ballet as intersemiotic translation, which in many ways acted as a springboard for this thesis and is summarised in chapter 2, analyses three ballet renditions of

Romeo and Juliet in their relation to what Lefevere identified as the constraints under which written texts and their translations operate. The first constraint is their patronage, that is, the worldview of society at a certain time, the ideological elements affecting the choice of a subject and the shaping of a work, as well as the economic conditions under which this is carried out, and an element of status. Another constraint is the poetics, which involves the “inventory of literary devices, genres, motifs, symbols, prototypical characters and situations” available (1985: 229) and the idea of what literature (or dance) is or should be. The universe of discourse comprises the set of texts and knowledge belonging to a certain time with which the work dialogues and which affect its meaning and reception. Then there comes the code, the language in which the work is composed, which permits certain operations while foreclosing others. The original text is “the locus where ideology, poetics, universe of discourse and natural language come together, mingle and clash” (Lefevere, 1985: 233) and in the case of translation, the ideology, poetics, universe of discourse and code of the source text will be confronted with the ideology, poetics, universe of discourse and code of the target, acting as enabling constraints, cognitive artefacts, as Aguiar and Queiroz would put it (2016).

Lefevere’s framework can itself be considered a cognitive artefact, a series of indications simultaneously directing and limiting the gaze of the scholar to the categories he individuated. His seems to be a top-down approach: first, one situates an artwork in the patronage, poetics, universe of discourse and code operating in the space and time of its creation, and then observes how they influenced it. However, this move forgets that a multiplicity of ideologies, poetics, universes of discourse, and codes can coexist and be operative in the same context and even in the same artwork. When we couple this with ideology, poetics, universe of discourse and code of the reader, who co-produces meaning as shown in the works analysed before, things get even muddier. And to what extent is it possible to disentangle patronage from poetics or code, and poetics from universe of discourse? As shown in *Froth on the Daydream*, economic restraints

(patronage) affected the range of props to be used as well as the time available for creation, which in turn affected the selection of scenes to be translated, the time-space-weight prism through which the original text was interpreted and recreated (poetics) and the type of engagement of the dancers' embodied dramaturgies, leading to different steps (code) and evoking different universes of discourse. Or as demonstrated in *Jérôme Bosch: Le Jardin de Délices*, the different putative placement of Bosch's painting *The Garden of Earthly Delights* in its early years elicited different interpretations that associated it to different ideologies, poetics, and universes of discourse. Likewise, the presentation of Chouinard's performance at a significant site of Portugal's colonial memory and the recent changes in societal context offered the possibility to draw connections with a new set of intertextual references and ideologies, and the entrance of new company members might motivate a change in the code of the performance. If, as shown in chapter 7, dance performances and translations weave complex nets of distributed agencies whose dynamics can be best explained through Deleuze's concept of assemblage, what appears to hold true is Brigg's invitation to treat each translation in its singularity, replacing the top-down with a bottom-up approach.

This is what I tried to do by looking closely at the dance performances *Jérôme Bosch: Le Jardin de Délices* (2016) and *Froth on the Daydream* (2018), starting exactly from the constraint Bennett minimised, the code, and by complementing my interpretation with ethnographic observation and interviews. In doing so, I revealed the co-presence of different ideologies attributable to the patronage of Bosch's painting *The Garden of Earthly Delights* and their possible conversation with Chouinard's choreography. The first, assumed by the majority of commentators and deriving from the painting's location in a chamber where it functioned as an altarpiece, is an ideology highly indebted to Christian values seeing the painting as a moral and sexist tale of human conduct. The second, placing the painting in the Wunderkammer of the Palace of Nassau Brera, links it with a fascination for the so-called new world and with a

felt fracture with modes of perception and imagination at the cusp of modernity. The different ideologies attributed to the painting also influence its alleged poetics and universe of discourse: some commentators locate the painting within the regime of mimesis and allegoric meaning available to contemporary visual artists, while Belting (2018) puts Bosch in conversation with contemporary writers such as Thomas More and Erasmus from Rotterdam and projects it towards a new concept of visual arts based on aesthetics.

An in-depth analysis of the code employed by Chouinard for her intermedial translation of Bosch's painting based on its material, sensorial, semiotic, and spatiotemporal modalities (Elleström, 2010) revealed the use of feminist and queer translation techniques like supplementing, hijacking (Von Flotow, 1991), inversion (Burton, 2010) and of the sic-sensuous (Mills, 2017) to produce a queering translation that recovered the ambiguities and complexities of the source text in order to problematise binary treatments of gender and translational agency alike (as either faithful or subversive). Chouinard shows gender to be a cultural construction and highlights metamorphoses as the generative principle of a body in perpetual becoming. At the same time, she reflects on her role as a translator and, winking at the spectator, moves between dichotomous figurations in order to elaborate her own vision of the translator as an intervenient being who can effectively tap on the aesthetic regime of art to activate the source text's own subversive potential (Rancière, 2004). This view of the translator as agent rather than vessel of meaning is further complicated by an analysis of the translating process and its attending agencies, exposed in chapter 7. The processual perspective adopted here underlined the relevance of other human and more-than-human agencies, understood by Enfield and Kockelman as "whatever alters the content (what and how), contexts (where and when), and consequences (why and to what effect) of one's comportment—even if only retroactively" (2017: 32). In the translation process of *Jérôme Bosch: Le Jardin des Délices* (2016), these proved to include not only the agencies of author and translator, but also those of

commissioner, rehearsal director, composer, the dancer's embodied dramaturgy, the dramaturgical requests of the work itself and even performing spaces and history. This latter point is shown by highlighting how the geographical and discursive framing given to the choreography by its performance at the Centro Cultural de Belém in 2018 unwittingly brought it into dialogue with Belting's interpretation of the painting and the memories whispered by Portugal's colonial past. Moreover, Chouinard includes both Bosch and herself in the dance translation's universe of discourse by interspersing the performance with references to his works (i.e., the source text itself, projected on the background, and the painting *The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things*) or to herself. She does so by harnessing the memories embedded in objects, props, and even performers (Lucy Mongrain) employed in previous choreographies, or by reiterating the company's tacit archewriting, outlined in chapter 5.

Such a model of distributed agency is shown to be equally valid for *Froth on the Daydream* (2018). Unlike Bosch or Chouinard, ESD was not commissioned: the dance performance *Froth on the Daydream* was crowdfunded, something that shifts the terms of patronage. Likewise, the status attributed to Compagnie Marie Chouinard as a leading contemporary dance company translating a globally known artwork that deals with a cultural text such as the Genesis is unmatched by that of a young company mostly touring in the North-East of the UK and translating a novel which, despite being translated in 30 languages, is still hard to find in UK libraries and book shops. On the level of ideology and poetics, material constraints and the choreographer's interpretation of the novel through the prism of the moving body in its relation to time, space, and weight (an understanding derived from Laban's theorization of dance) meant the abandonment of the passages of social criticism and a focus on relationships, vulnerability, and illness. If Chouinard used the spatiotemporal modality of dance to subvert the order of reading of Bosch's triptych and craft an alternative narrative, Geffré used the body's different relationships to space and the temporal quality of this art form to orchestrate

metaphorical scenarios and cinematic metaphors (Müller and Kappelhoff, 2018). Repetition and variation were fundamental principles for both choreographies. In *Le Jardin des Délices*, the use of multiplication in its various kinds (repositioning, realignment, reorientation, gathering, remixing, and scattering) holds compositional value and points to metamorphosis as an underlying quality not only of source and target text, but also of bodies and translation. In *Froth on the Daydream*, repetition and variation do the work of carrying the narrative: for example, the repetition of the structure *pas-de-deux* with a different use of space and orientation by the dancers sets up fundamental differences between the two couples, whereas the repetition of the same movements with a different movement quality or without a partner alert us to Chloé's illness and subsequent death. The abovementioned principles of weight, time, and space in their relationship to the moving body not only acts as an interpretant but also inform the work's poetics, which englobes Martha Graham's archewriting as part of its universe of discourse and places it alongside Cunningham's technique, orchestrating a dialogue between different idioms of modern and contemporary dance. Such a dialogue is amplified by including references to Pina Bausch's acclaimed *Café Müller* (1985) and to musical genres and songs remitting to the time of the novel's composition such as jazz, cha-cha-cha, and Armstrong's *La Vie en Rose*, thus making aurally present the jazz diaspora inscribed on the page by Vian (Braggs, 2016). Moreover, the use of props and proxemics unsettles the source text and elaborates a contrapuntal narrative seeing Colin attracted to Alise on the basis of the novel's own ambiguity.

Such ambiguity, which opened the way to a variety of interpretations, led me to contrast Geffré's choreography and Vian's novel with a number of intermedial translations into film, opera, and graphic novel. These artworks transported the textual memory of Vian's novel to different media and geographies, introducing it to ever new publics. Looking at the ideologies, poetics, and universes of discourses engaged by such intermedial translations through their

code confirmed Aaltonen's suggestion that translations are usually made to fit the need of target contexts (2000). This is visible in Belmont's film, which amplifies the references to war and the generational tensions while presenting a clash between countryside and city life absent in the source text. Going even further, Riju does away with the older generation altogether, exacerbates working conditions and sets the film in non-places, addressing his film to the *rosu gene* (lost generation). Denisov instead interlaces Vian's text with a universe of discourse dominated by western canonical love myths while inserting scraps of the contemporary context (i.e. the reference to a war in Poland) in order to craft outside spaces of ambiguities in opposition to the poetics imposed by Social Realism. Others, like Preteseille and Gondry, engaged more with the levels of code and poetics, prioritising their own needs over those of source or target contexts and using the novel as a springboard for the creation of highly original and experimental poetics that pushed the material affordances of their media. As a matter of fact, media affordances are shown to act as (enabling) constraints for each of the intermedial translations studied, acting as further agents, and even inscribing themselves onto the intermedial translations and the memories they carry.

Bringing out the dimensions of impermanence, agency, and memory involved in the translational process, this thesis firmly situates translation in the materiality of media and bodies, figuring it as an exercise in immanence. Such immanence is what can be called, following Meschonnic, as the *je-ici-maintenant* and the continuum *form-sense* proper to all texts (although more visible in translations) and whose relevance can be best understood when we look at dance, the medium that built itself out of the impossibility to tell the dancer from the dance. I showed this by mapping the implicative complex of dance onto the field of translation, fleshing out the metaphor theatrical dance as a form of intermedial translation that gives the title to this thesis. The *trois coups* approximating us to the performance showed translation to be *ex materia* creation, not mere reproduction; written texts (and especially digital

texts) to be themselves impermanent and dependent on the bodies writing and reading them, not abstract entities; and translators to possess an embodied dramaturgy guiding them towards almost invisible yet existent choices and turning them into stumbling blocks in the flow of apparently unmediated meaning. Altogether, these chapters and the two case-studies conceptualised translators as sources as well as vehicles of form-sense, ‘angels of history’ whose work cannot be subsumed under the logic of “semiotic obedience”, “ahistoric memory”, and “noiseless performance” (Lepecki, 2018: 302). It derives from this that translation must be conceptualised as always assuming transformation. In a strict, text-related sense, we can define it, following Popovic and Robinson, as the “relation holding between the proto-[source] and meta-[target] text and having a transformative semiotic or modelling character” (2017: ix); but I would go further and propose translation as an epistemology and a way of looking: translation as a re-performative act carried out at the cutting edge of time, pushed by incompleteness, moving through change, and incessantly interrogating what it does.

An approach that refutes semiotic obedience, ahistoric memory and noiseless performance has also flown into the work of choreographers and dancers faced with the challenge of remounting older pieces or reckoning with the issue of trace, as the second anecdote on *Les Carnets Bagouet* with which I opened the introduction showed. For Pouillaude (2017), the focus on trace reflects a tension between analogue and digital states of an artwork: the analogue is understood to be so semantically and syntactically dense that even a slight difference becomes relevant; the digital is discontinuous and based on a notational system, so slight alterations may always happen. Faced with the problem of performing numerous times the same choreography, and therefore of being unable to attain identical performances, choreographers developed techniques that blend improvisation with composition, using open structures such as Chouinard’s system of movement, which strikes a balance between digital and analogue. Such digital-analogue opposition calls to mind the debate on equivalence in TS, where the source

text is seen as an analogue and every translation a distortion. What justifies the label ‘contemporary’ in dance is, according to Pouillaude, exactly the fact of addressing the contemporaneity of performance, and the works he describes, as well as those introduced in chapter IV of this thesis, all adopt a translational stance. They identify the work “with the collection of (multiple, heterogeneous, and partial) memories of its event” and accept the work’s “mortality, even while entrusting to other works its potential (though still temporary) continued existence” (2017: 305).

Contemporary dance thinks in terms of translation and translation could also benefit from thinking in terms of contemporary dance. If this thesis was an attempt to theorise the contemporaneity of translation with the help of dance, then what better way to conclude than to test how this theory might dialogue with contemporary translation practice and the debates it raises? I will do so by drawing on a recent controversy that turned upside-down the now classic refrain about the translator’s invisibility (Venuti, 1995). In January 2021, young poet laureate Amanda Gorman was invited to read a poem at the U.S. Presidential inauguration. Gorman’s poem, *The Hill We Climb*, is a poem of hope written in times of darkness: such darkness is acknowledged through the opposition set between day and dawn¹⁴⁴, light and shade but also via more explicit references to the storming of the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021 and to the delaying of democracy (“We’ve seen a force that would shatter our nation rather than share it, would destroy our country if it meant delaying democracy, and this effort very nearly succeeded”, Gorman, 2021). Gorman’s spoken poem accrues even more valence out of her willingness to acknowledge the *je-ici-maintenant* of its birth, the fact that “Biden’s choice of Gorman as reader of her own poem at his inauguration created a particular configuration of cultural value around precisely these qualities [being a young, black, female, spoken word

¹⁴⁴ In so doing alluding to Maya Angelou’s “On the Pulse of Morning”, read at the inaugural campaign of Bill Clinton in 1993.

artist]. Gorman's visibility, as a young black woman, matters: she is part of the message" (Kotze, 2021). This constellation of meaning was somehow belittled, or glossed over, by the Dutch publishing house Meulenhoff, who appointed Marieke Lucas Rijneveld, the first Dutch Booker Prize winner, as the translator of Gorman. This choice, and Janice Deul's criticism of it in an opinion piece published on February 25, ignited a lively international debate that pushed the translator into the spotlight in an unprecedented way. As Kotze (2021) explains, Deul was not as interested in whether Marieke Lucas Rijneveld was able or allowed to translate Gorman's poem as she was in pinpointing the missed opportunity to similarly give a platform to a black translator in consideration of the constellation of values embodied by that particular text read in that particular context by that particular author. An author who speaks from her position as "a skinny black girl descended from slaves and raised by a single mother" and who emphasises how "being American is more than a pride we inherit, is the past we step into and how we repair it" (Gorman, 2021). The poem firmly inscribes itself in the continuum *je-ici-maintenant*, being pronounced by a young black woman after four years of Trump's administration. During this time, the executive orders and the taskforce to move from a "warrior" to a "guardian" culture within U.S. police forces and the directive to stop using private prisons were both revoked (Laughland, 2021). Such private prisons are used to lock up a skyrocketing number of immigrants under new ICE directives, as shown in Christina Clusiau and Shaul Schwarz documentary series *Immigration Nation* (2020), erringly evocative of Arendt's *The Banality of Evil* (1963). This particular configuration is what gives grounds to Deul's critical view of the choice of Rijneveld as the sole Dutch translator of *The Hill We Climb*. But what is interesting is that the debate detached itself from the specific circumstances of this incident and abstracted Deul's questions, reframing them as whether Rijneveld should or could be Gorman's dream translator.

As Kotze illustrates, it did so by following the two lines of the “may” argument (who has permission to translate whom) and the “can” argument (who is able to translate whom) (Kotze, 2021). It must be said that these lines imply implicit metaphorical representations of translation: the may argument subtends the metaphor translation as representation (who can represent whom), whereas the can argument subtends the metaphor of translation as transparent flow of meaning (who has the ability to provide unmediated access to the poem in another language). When I first read of the debate in Alison Flood’s “Shocked by Uproar: Amanda Gorman’s White Translator Quits” (2021), which follows these lines, I felt troubled: although I’m deeply convinced of the need for more representativity and diversity at institutional levels and of the urgency of the fight against systemic racism, I was reticent to accept the general “may” and “can” arguments as they were outlined in newspapers pieces. Yet my thesis, with its insistence on embodied dramaturgies, might have been seen as siding with the “can” argument exposed, for example, in Susam-Saraeva’s provocation piece “Representing Experiential Knowledge: Who May Translate Whom” (2021).

Susam-Saraeva argues that shared lived experience might be necessary and required in the translation of texts that take the body as a starting point, as only in this way one can have full understanding of the other’s experience. She cites the case of doulas, who acquire the authority to respond to the needs of a woman in labour either by having already given birth or by having witnessed many other women successfully going through the same process (but the latter way is preferable)¹⁴⁵. This argument can be criticised from many angles. First of all, is the article suggesting that only mothers could have access to the job? Wouldn’t that be another form of discrimination and control of women’s bodies, whose reproductive rights (rights to reproduce or not) would be regulated by the job market? And in admitting that another form of authority

¹⁴⁵ Susam-Saraeva’s choice of the midwife example is particularly ironic in light of Chamberlain’s criticisms of the productive-reproductive dichotomy generally ascribed to authors and translators (1988).

can be gained by witnessing many childbirths, isn't Susam-Saraeva also suggesting that, for a translator, authority can be gained by reading and translating many books? But most of all, what is the rationale according to which one woman's experience of childbirth would be the same as another? Is it possible to claim that my experience of being a woman is the same as another? Even if we added as many categories as possible (white, young, educated, south-European, precarious, etc) would that ever give us full access to another's experience? This point is also raised by Inghilleri (2021) in a response to the piece, and I would like to articulate it through the concept of embodied dramaturgy. With its accent on bodily experiences, the translator's embodied dramaturgy could be seen as proposing a similar argument about the need of a (ap)proximate(d) life experience; and indeed, it does give importance to the embodied history of the subject, but only to arrive to the opposite conclusion: by accepting bodies as stumbling blocks in the flow of mediated meaning (mediated by their bodies and by the media in which the text is encoded), it recognises the incommensurability of each experience. It does not seek to remove differences in an illusion of transparent meaning, but it strives to put them in dialogue, so that it is not equivalence, but the momentary convergence of passing theories that is achieved. Authority is gained not by the ability to speak for another person but by relinquishing such aim.

The may argument, which equates translation with representation, depicts it as speaking for another. It asks who can speak for whom, who can represent whom? Again, assuming the incommensurability of each person's experience forecloses the possibility of fully speaking for someone else and asks us to reconsider such socio-cultural imaginary about translation. Exactly because every translator's experience is situated in their bodies, they cannot fully represent others or remove themselves from a text—and the calls for translators' visibility underline this tension. But then, if translation is a dialogic activity which does not "cater to the fantasy of having access to the foreignness of a language without the labour of the language lab" (Apter,

2006: 220), if that dialogue is built on shared acknowledgement of the translator's presence in the text through their embodied dramaturgy and their creative work, can't they enter a conversation with texts that hold difference? This is not to say that they should do it on the grounds of fake neutrality. Quite the opposite, the theory here crafted, with its insistence on bodies, mediation, agency, and memory is a prod asking translators to constantly position themselves in relation to the source text.

Perhaps, lines of engagement could come again from the field of dance. The last chapter of Lepecki's *Exhausting Dance* (2006) describes a performance created by Portuguese choreographer Vera Mantero in response to a call extended to her and two other choreographers by the director of cultural programming of the Caixa Geral de Depósitos in 1995, only twenty years after Portugal relinquished its African colonies. Mantero, Mark Tompkins, and Blondell Cummins were asked to produce a twenty-minute piece inspired by Josephine Baker, famous dancer and "a particularly iconic image that once filled the minds of the European imagination regarding Afroamericans, dance, and black femininity" (106). Lepecki considers how Mantero had to grapple with a series of ethical questions: how could she, as a white European woman coming from a colonialist country ever "portray, invoke, reclaim, and dance in the name, and the body, of an African American dead dancer?" (111). The answer is, by choosing not to "portray, invoke, reclaim, and dance in the name", not to perform what Manning called "metaphorical minstrelsy", that is, impersonate a black person in the body of a white one (2004). She chose instead to engage and foreground her own embodied dramaturgy so that a dialogue, rather than a representation, could ensue, which formulated a "choreographic reflection on current European racism and European forgetting of its quite recent colonial history" (Lepecki, 2006: 107). She did so through a series of dramaturgical decisions that ended up representing her body as starkly divided into a white mask (excessively made up to seduce) and a brown naked body (with hands left white) standing on goat's hooves. The goat's hooves

represented a sign of the bestiality often associated to women's bodies but also a "visual punch line" (2006: 114), given that she-goat in Portuguese can be used as a synonym for whore. This image was preceded by the sound of a ghostly knocking on the floor of the dark, empty stage. By piling up and layering all these different inscriptions, evocations, and memories on her body, she refused to be a vehicle for Baker and rather pointed to "a resonating absence as central to the collusion of dance, colonialism, race, and melancholia in the body of a woman" (117). Moreover, exactly because of her embodied dramaturgy as a white, Portuguese woman she was able to imbricate such an image "with Portuguese colonial history and with Portuguese current efforts of forgetting" (115). Vera Mantero's "translation" of Josephine Baker's figure is cognisant of her own embodied dramaturgy and clearly positions herself in relation to what she is asked to translate, as advocated for in this thesis. Such positioning does not prevent her from engaging with urgent cultural discourses and entering into a conversation with the figure of Josephine Baker but allows her to do it from her own perspective and to trampoline that conversation towards a powerful critique of her own country's history even when, and especially because, this is a history of forgetting.

Returning to the translation of Gorman's poem: it is undoubtable that this specific text, pronounced in this specific context by this specific author demands a similar reckoning with the translator's embodied dramaturgy, and that by appointing a black translator, as seems to be Deul's and Kotze's suggestion, the visibility given not only to the translator of Amanda Gorman but to the cause of antiracism can be reiterated in a powerful way. A suggestion understood by Marieke Lucas Rijneveld (2021), who responded to the controversy with a

poem¹⁴⁶ in which they reclaimed their agency and the possibility of inhabiting another person's words—even if only to discover a gap. In Michele Hutchison's translation they say:

Never lost that resistance and yet able to grasp when it
isn't your place, when you must kneel for a poem because
another person can make it more inhabitable; not out of
unwillingness, not out of dismay, but because you know
there is so much inequality, people still discriminated against.

But then, is translation ever carried out once only? And are all target contexts the same? Recognising the agency of translation to enter and foster cultural debates, to engender “sustained dialogues with similar as well as different viewpoints, an examination of history”, to quote myself, one could even envision an edition in which the multiplicity invoked by the repeated use of ‘we’ in Gorman’s poem and its commitment “to all cultures, colors, characters and conditions of man” (Gorman, 2021) is reflected in the multiple voices of translators from different backgrounds, who would be invited to render the poem in a way that engages their own embodied dramaturgy. This would bring the translated poem to bear on the specific relations to colonialism of the various target audiences, just like Vera Mantero was able to do by evoking Josephine Baker. This is, in my view, the strength of a theory of translation that starts from the body as the necessary stumbling block in the flow of mediated meaning, a body acting as co-agent, not vehicle, a body that remembers and renews, a body which takes immanence as its starting point.

¹⁴⁶ The choice of poem as a medium is significant in itself, as poems do not carry the presumption of having the final say, but make space for the personal, the ambiguous, the unresolved.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Interview with Isabelle Poirier (Compagnie Marie Chouinard)

It's April 13, 2020, when I meet Isabelle online. A month has passed since the start of a national lockdown in Canada and there is no clear information as to how long will it last. I informed Isabelle about my work via email, and I expressed my interest in the performance Le Jardin des Délices. The interview is carried out in English although Isabelle's first language is French and mine Italian. We both use a lot of non-verbal aids – movement and facial expression – to communicate. We chat for a few seconds before I start the audio-visual recording.

V: First of all, I wanted to start by asking if you want to tell me something about yourself, how did you start working as a dancer, a bit of your career and how did it intersect Marie Chouinard's, how did you start dancing in the company.

I: I will be fifty soon, and I started with Chouinard in 1988, so I danced with them for 8 years. Before that, I was working as an independent choreographer here in Montreal, creating my own pieces, teaching, and then I joined Marie. For sure, it was more something that I was drawn in, touring a lot, 6 months a year, so for 8 years it was really dedicated to the work of Marie. And then I decided to have a kid, and another, and I became for Chouinard more and more someone...I kept dancing with the first one, but I got involved more in the artistic direction when on tour, because she was not coming with us all the time, so I was more and more responsible for the pieces. When I had the second one [kid], same thing, so more and more I stepped out of dance. But I kept dancing here in Montreal with independent choreographers. So, I work with Marie since then to now, I am remounting a lot of pieces of Marie, I was there for *Bosch* and the creation, so...I was outside eyes with that, so If you have any questions...

V: Yeah, many... so, what I am also interested in is the sort of translation process that happens in the body as you are performing with different choreographers and in different styles. I wanted to know how working with Marie affected your movement quality, or the way that you would perform, or dance...

I: So, when I joined Marie, the first thing I thought when I entered the studio was that I had never danced before. I had really that feeling of stepping into something totally new, the awareness of my body, how I use my breath, how I use... and you saw, in *Bosch*, they are doing sounds too...

V: Yeah, yeah

I: So, I had to feel more and more free as a dancer to use the voice, the spine [she moves her hand in wavy motion], being really free with... often Marie would put us in some choreographic sequence, but we could modify that. So, we're working a lot with a system she is building and us as dancers, we have the "freedom" [she gestures quotation marks with her hands]. I always do this because we are in a frame. Marie is always saying, like, you are free, but not like that. In the sense that you have to understand the system of the piece, or the sequence, it is always multiple parameters that are different. It would be different from piece to piece, so you really have to understand what the system is about: *system architecture*, *system mon corps ton corps*. So, in different pieces you have different tasks. So, you could use it. So, I had to become a dancer. Marie loves that, that really it is in the moment, and making choices into the piece, so well, it was really...for me... and there's the voice and the use of the spine [she repeats the wavy gesture].

V: And how do you think that... because the use of the voice is quite a landmark and it's a very...visceral voice I would say, it's something that comes from the movement, so what do you think that it adds to the performance, and do you also have a specific training in that?

I: Yeah, Marie helped us a lot to find that, and for me, it made me click. I was not so much in my brain, thinking of how I was putting voice into it, but it was my body that it was almost creating [all the while she moves her hand and chest as if to indicate something that comes up from the guts and out of the mouth] the sound, the words that are...the letters I was using as....shuuuu. It was coming from movement, in a way, everything is coming from movement, in a way, with Marie. So, my voice was really a training with them, using multiple exercises so it becomes really fluent and not so [she raises her hand and freezes it in a stiff way]

V: And do you have a typical routine, like some training or style that you are expected to know, or is it always changing...

I: It's always changing. Yeah, it's really dependent on the piece, sometimes...*Body Remix* it was ballet, we are using pointe shoes in that, we used to have ballet classes, to really work on how to be more and more stable into that, and depending on the piece we have other trainings. It could be clamp, it could be...to just enforce authentic movement and Marie would bring... she asks the dancers what is your need right now? And, if you feel this would reinforce your connection to the piece, she will invite people that would help us develop it.

V: So, there is also collaboration with external choreographers, external dancers...

I: Yeah, it's always like that, back and forward and seeing what's lacking right now, what you feel that it's not here...

V: Always experimenting in a way, I'd say, it's a space for experimentation...and, do you feel a difference in changing your status, like, from being a performer to the rehearsal director? And how do you consider your role as such? As a performer you say that you also kind of create within certain limits, and as a rehearsal director, I would assume that you also have this shifting positioning, between keeping the work but also adding something...

I: Yeah... what I felt was really organic for me, as I really understood first in the heart, in my body, what it is to dance, to be embodying, moving the work of Marie. When I stepped out it was a lot of *aller-retour* at first. That might have helped that kind of change, but for sure the first thing I thought was, I was feeling really alone at first, because you are always surrounded by people, so it was more like being outside. At the same time, it was so beautiful to be someone that could help understand the work, and I have been teaching a lot, so I think this is why for me, that sharing, that giving keys to understand, to go deeper, to acknowledge maybe a link that was lacking, for me to be out was as challenging as it was beautiful. And I made my peace with it too, like, ok, now it's time to step out and it's fine. It's another beauty I was acknowledging, *oui*.

V: And so, would you consider it as a collaborative process?

I: Yeah, I know Marie since...now it's 21, 22 years. Marie is [she moves her heads back and forth on the sides of her head] a roller coaster, and I am there sustaining that and maybe sometimes really being there for her if she has a question, but especially being there for the dancers. 'Cos sometimes Marie... I would be really there for the rehearsals; she is not there. She is there for creation. She would come in and out in rehearsal but mostly I would be there for the dancers to rehearse and understand the work more deeply and follow where we want to go, so it would be my role to be the motor of that.

V: And I am thinking, to what extent is this role of rehearsal director different from being a dramaturg? Or do you think they are more or less...

I: Yeah, it's a hard question. I think everyone is dramaturge in a way, dancers would be one, everyone is part of a partition, I feel. It's like, we're naming things, we are putting structures to say this person is this and this is this, but at one point for me it's collaboration. It's

togetherness, it's what we are lacking so much right now [referring to the quarantine]. And exchanging and being there and being in the same...in the same project together, every day. Feeling that. For sure, Marie would be the voice of that, she would be the one that's starting, we're all there, like a dramaturg, to help this become a life.

V: When you start the creation process, do you normally start right away working with the body, on the body, or do you first have meetings, you discuss ideas...?

I: Marie, she's really into going into the body. So yeah, experimenting in the body. Yes there's some exchange, we'd talk, but...we'll sit sometime because we need to exchange maybe what we felt during that work, but Marie is really visual and she observes, often she would draw things, she would put it on a rope and...yeah, she is really visual in a way, she loves drawing. Sometimes it's in the space that she'd draw. So, she is putting that then and [moving her hands as if she is moving the order of the drawings on the rope]: "ok, this will go first, this there". she'll move things, so...It's more dynamic.

V: Another thing that I was thinking is, is there any difference when you start...for example, in Hieronymus Bosch, or in the other work, *Mouvements*, which are based on already existing artworks, does it change the creation process in that case, or is it the same? Or because you are working with something that's already existing it changes a bit?

I: Let's say, it's more the inspiration that's changing. It's like, it's still the same but, for Michaux, it was really that book that someone gave to Marie, and she said: "ok one day I want to choreograph those shapes, moving". It's moving that book, so it's from that that she got inspired and it started from something...again, like I said, she's really visual. So, from those drawings she wanted to make them alive and move and shake and feel what's in it, that shape. And that's the best for the rehearsal director, just taking the book [she forms the shape of the book with her hands] and say "ok, that is not the same, it's more this". Because it wants to be as exact—for sure it's an interpretation of it—but the starting point is the book. Because often we'd see little details...and Bosch it was really the tableau, its' like, ok, sometimes she was saying, "ok, those *deux personages*, we'll dance about them". And then, she really took it like the tryptic, so, where was coming *l'enfer*, hell, what's that, that chaos. Kind of crazy. So, she put all the objects of many different pieces in our lives. From our solos in the past, from now...and that was for her hell. All that mix of objects and ways of being and...so that's for her, that chaos was hell. It was really starting sometimes to just, we were doing a lot of captures

of the pictures and isolate little parts of the tableau, so we have, maybe we have the one with the apple, the one that was pregnant, there were different dances that were getting born because of the visual aspects.

V: Yeah, and when I was watching the performance, I was thinking, in the first part, when you have the central tableau, what is being performed is exactly what is being shown on the two circles, so as a spectator you are very, like, you can trust it, you are very drawn into it, it makes you feel comfortable. Like you see what's going on, you can see how it's been done. And, as you were talking about chaos in hell, when hell comes, what's in the circles doesn't match what's on stage anymore, so I was like, wait, you feel a bit tricked in a way, like, I can't trust this. And that was chaos. And that was voluntary, to have this mismatch.

I: Yeah. But at the same time, the image that you were seeing it was an interpretation of that. So, there are some people that were kind of inspired by those pictures but transformed them in another way in the body, so it was not so textual, like, "ok, it's placed like this, so we place it exactly the same", sometimes it's more like, [she tuns her wrist with her fist close, like a corkscrew] a sensation of this picture. And at the end, the other tableau, it's more like...it's really that state of just "pffff" [she rains down her hands on her face], understanding everything, and feel almost, there's almost nothing, there's space.

V: And I was also wondering about the order of the performance...It does not follow the order from left to right of the tryptic and I was wondering why, how come that choice?

I: Yeah, I think she...for her the first tableau, because it's really at the centre, there is something of "ok, I am getting the spectator with me, in that land, we are together". Then for her she couldn't... she wanted something more [she exhales moving her hands down], calming, like something that's opening, like a tryptic lets say. Something that is not so hard, like hell, but something that just [she moves her hands around one another, jointed at the wrists in an enveloping, twisting gesture], like "ok, that's together and now there's maybe hope or more, subtlety", do we say, subtle?

V: Yeah, being more subtle and having a message that's less dark, having different ways of understanding it.

V: Yeah and as it was getting into the third act, the creation of Eve in paradise, I felt that it was very interesting the play with positions, as she was having Adam and Eve and then she swaps

those positions, like questioning gender...and then replicated, but also then she just puts a lot of movement and she just has them moving. Like it doesn't have to be stable categories, it seems to be saying,

I: Yeah

V: But she comes back to this movement, which is in fact, generative

I: Yeah, and sometimes she was playing too with it, sometimes having the movement that was standing [she shows this with her hand], then the same but down. So, for us as a spectator we recognise a bit something but it's just the shift in space, a shift for the dancers, it's still the same, it's just shifted [moves her arm from vertical to horizontal]. And all, woman, man, everything could be everything. A row, or one person, multiple, yeah, multiple Jesuses

V: So, like the exploration of one movement in different directions, positions, combinations

I: Yeah, shifts of positions, in really the standing, or the sitting position or laying on the floor, right.

V: And how much collaboration was there in the creation of this piece between the dancers and Marie, were there some tasks that she was giving to the dancers to come up with movement or she already had her own idea?

I: Well, sometimes, even with... let's say, the first tableau, sometime she was leaving the dancers just like, "ok, be inspired with that, like, *personage*" and maybe see what could be moved from there and then she'd say, "ok that's alright", and then modify this, ta-ta-ta...as I said, for sure it is a conversation, back and forth and sometimes she was giving something like, "ok, it's hell and I want someone there to climb and fall, and this will be added this way". For sure the dancers in hell, it was "ok, let's try what to do with those objects", sometimes [raises her finger]: "Oh, that's great, we have to keep it!" We have to keep it, it's no more an improvisation and we never do that again, this is choreographed [she moves her hand as if to capture something] "tak, tak, tak, tak", and then adding up little elements, one by one to really achieve what will be part of hell.

V: Yeah, and in hell, the voice is very important, the voice of the dancer who's [I rotate my upper body]

I: Yeah, Valeria, *oui, oui*. It was really a lot of work, even with the sound man, how to do it, the letters in it, the quality of the sound (she shrinks her upper body, twisting it). It's really important the way we hear the sound of hell.

V: Yeah, because again for the spectator it was like "woo" [I move back from the screen], and the strident noises, really like, trying to get under the skin of people in the audience and provoke this reaction. Also, I was thinking if there was any difference in the creation process, so in the way that ideas emerge and are staged between dancers who've been working with Marie for a long time, I don't know, Carol, rather than

I: Yeah, there's a difference. For sure there's a difference, because sometimes it's really with the years, you kind of understand what's she's searching for, in a way. You kind of understand the, "ok, that's where we should aim for", and you understand it better in the body too [she moves her hand in a wavy way] how to do the movement, and there's so many fundamental qualities in Marie's work. Often when we are remounting pieces outside the company, it's really great to have time at first, when we arrive, to just go through those qualities, to rebuild up something that, "ok that's always at the base of everything". Even if I show the position, that's in there. The breath, the spine, the way you, you look, the way you use space and multiple directions, it's always there, so for sure, an older person, and she's fifty like me, Carole, let's say we've been together like those 8 years that I was there and then many years of observing her, but that's something I really adore on her, because she is always finding something else, in the work. It's not like she's found something and then she's just [she crosses her arms and rests her face on them] resting on that, she's [moves her hands], yeah, it's something that you...it's why, it's always challenging being into the work of Marie. It's always in transformation. For sure a younger dancer that arrives, doesn't have all those tools. There's some rare case though, where [snaps her fingers]...I remember there's some rare cases that, right away. Some people that had it, lucky, it's there, they are there, they understand, they go [moves her hand as if going deeper] and to really not be afraid of trying things, to be free in that land, especially with the voice, eh, that's the hardest one sometimes.

V: What would you identify as the basic qualities when you go and teach other companies, like "keep in mind this, it's fundamental"?

I: Especially, how she is working with the spine, we're never stiff, there's always something that's really starting from that [she makes a wavy movement of the hand], so often we'll take

time and do many exercises about that, connecting how my arms move [she displays the movement and her facial expression changes], connecting to the spine so I am not [she moves her arms in a stiff way], moving my arms outside of that, and my leg, my leg connecting to the spine too. To lift it. Especially you can see that clearly in *Sacre du Printemps* [she moves her fingers in a wavy way as if they were crawling on the floor], where they're going...did you see the entrance, prologue? It's like *skywriting*, this is how we call it [she moves her hand as if she was sketching something, rapidly and vocalising it] you see them passing and [the fingers, vertically moving, jerk back] it's it, the spine that's making us move through space. The spine, for sure, the way we carry the breath, Mary doesn't want us to be always [she exhales heavily] like this, but how we connect the breath. [She displays it, moving her spine and hands in sudden impulses while exhaling and performs, talking while moving and creating the typical visceral voice that results from breath and movement] and "if I wanna talk I could just be engage with my breeeath" and my breath would make me go, and the sounds are, pretty strange sometimes. With *Le Faune*, the way I would just transform myself [she displays it]. This for me was almost falling in love, when I found *The Faune* in my life, how to become...I am so tiny and gentle faced and to become that [she spirals her hand and spine inward], that other, other creation, and it was really that, the breath was really helping.

So, my breath, my spine, the use of multiple directions [again she displays moving her chest and face towards the right and arm and hips towards the left] at the same time. I am not using just one track but right away I am—there my elbow [elbow is pointing right], there my ear [the ear is pointing left] the hips... so it's something more and more articulate, the way I would embody on stage, there are many exercises. Marie would be [she beats her hands] into us to just *charge* the space. That too, as *une interprète*, to connect, yeah. That's many things that are there at all the time and that's interesting.

V: And, as this work, the Bosch work, was commissioned by a foundation, I was wondering if that had any impact in the work, if they asked you for anything specific...

I: No, I think it just had an impact on the choice of Marie to do that creation. She was always intrigued by that tableau. She will never do something that she does not desire, in a way, that does not challenge her. She is tempted to go in more depth, so there was that offer and she was loving the painting, it's something that was really, for her, mysterious and she wanted to dig more. So, it's just arrived at a good time for Marie.

V: Yeah, a good meeting also, it matches very well. And you didn't perform in *Le Jardin de Délices*

I: No, never.

V: But you know the whole work because you were there when creating and you teach it.

I: Yes, and I still... it's a very rare occasion, even last summer I went to replace a dancer, but it was because of...the last work, with all the different solos and duets, I don't know if you saw, the last piece,

V: Yeah, *Soft Virtuosity*, the few pieces assembled together,

I: Yeah, as I danced that a long time ago at the beginning when we were touring all the solo works of Marie and there was no one to do it at the time so I had to come back in the company and do it, I said "ok, but maybe with 2 kids I don't know how it will work". But It did work well, luckily, and I did another part of the dance and there were other things that I never danced and it was fun, like it was...me as outside eye, sometimes, even with the masks, you remember, all those masks of people [she bends her neck to the left and right], I thought "it's easy, why are they not together?" and putting on the mask, I am like "ah! we don't see anything!". I understand now, from inside, that's the thing, sometimes the whole pieces I feel like I understand them pretty deep because I danced them. The newer pieces it is a different understanding, it's depth too, but it's a different one, but I loved when I could step in to just "Ah, ok, now I understand, how understand more that it's demanding, how demanding". I was thinking it was easy but no! It's a good thing for me, I have to remember how it is from within, to find keys better.

V: Do you think there is any difference when you just go to another company and teach them the work of Marie, but it's you teaching it, so it's already kind of filtered through your body, and I wonder if it's Marie's work, or is it yours or is it yours together. 'Cos I would say from a translation point of view, as a translator, I would say this is more like when you do indirect translation, like I don't translate from the French, but I translate from the intermediate English and I transfer that, I was thinking if this could be the same case.

I: Well, I know Marie, I learnt so much beside her, I remember having my first kid and she really made me learn how she was looking at things, what was attracting her, and on stage, like,

with the light, the sound, so I try to really...I am not Marie, for sure, but I feel I understand, with the years, I understand a lot how it's working, and how I translate that, because I am a teacher, and that for me was pleasurable too. Because I found it was great as a teacher, an interpreter, to go to another company and make them understand. For sure, they will not do the work of Marie all the time but to make them taste it, and understand something that for me, for sure, it's my experience, but for me was truly...well, changing my life as a dancer. So, to make them understand that. And for me first of all I think it was the possibility of metamorphosis, as a dancer, to say, wow, I could become a dragon, I could become anything I want, as a dancer, I could go old, I could go young, I could change! I could change in any shape, I could get denser... so for me, that is what I want to exchange, when I am meeting other people, to make them passionate about the transformation. And not afraid.

V: Yeah that's something that's so beautiful in dance, you can be yourself when you are not being yourself

I: Yeah, that's it!

V: I always found that I could find my freedom in that, I am not myself, so I am being my truer self in this moment...

I: Yeah and when I went at ... I have been there two months making them learn Chopin, *Prelude de Chopin*, it's really, not easy but something that is more precise, like classic, there are a lot of shapes...but at the same time, there's one part I remember, and I remember Alfonso...Ahah! I made them learn every little row of the thing before casting it and we had to cry, we had to cry and be in that state for five minutes, that's the role. You are just there, and you are crying, and Alfonso made me laugh so much because he was saying "Ah, *mais un napolitaine ne pleure pas*" (Ah, but a Neapolitan doesn't cry), and I was "well, *un interprète* would cry". You are *un interprète*. And he said "ok, I just think something", so, for me it was a really beautiful exchange, because I mean, ok maybe it's not what we are used to but... to just go there as *un interprète* it's... Yeah, it was a beautiful moment. Funny, he made me laugh, Alfonso.

V: And do you work as a rehearsal director or performer with other companies at the same time?

I: At the beginning I was really with Marie, so, 8 years as a dancer then I had the kids, but I still was there, even pregnant like this [she forms a circle with her arms around her belly]. I was watching *Body Remix* beside Marie, I had the kid, and I came back as a dancer, but then I was mostly with Marie, and after that, when I had the second kid, touring was too much for me, so I was more someone who was coming in and out when it was possible. To be there, so I am always there...when she does work in Montreal in Place des Arts, I would come, just to help, to remount things, other pieces that we didn't remount with the new dancers, but I, for sure, I am mostly, right now, a *répétiteur* with a lot of different people in Montreal. I am working with a lot of different people, and I am dancing too, and I'm in two different projects, one with old people, right now we can't, cos we can't go in, it was with them... So, I am working with different people, other layers...

V: Yeah, because all those layers become then intricated and muddy in a way...you are learning from different sources and it all comes in your body.

I: Yeah, and as a rehearsal person it's always challenging to understand what's really important, what's really necessary, that is the good word, and for me I understand it well with Marie, I think, because I really lived it. But with others that I never danced for, it's really beautiful because I think: "ok, I didn't dance that but with my eyes, and as a dancer in my heart, I am trying to understand what's really necessary for them to be kept, to be pushed, to be challenged, to be clearer". So, it's like I am touching the creation process of many heads. It's fun, I appreciate that.

V: Yeah and this thing you are saying is so interesting, that you don't know where's the essence, the thing that is necessary, and even throughout time, I am wondering, if your understanding of a piece that you've done, for example with Marie, changes...You are remounting it over and over again so I imagine your experience now as opposed to your experience five years ago, does it change, do you see the performance differently?

I: For sure. It's a life and for sure I am thinking differently and with the time, now [referring to the quarantine], the time in the studio is even more precious, and the time away will make me think in different ways, it will change again my way of seeing life *choses* (things). Just right now, on video...it's changing all the time and I think it's not always better, maybe it's not always better but it's different, and I think that I have to be honest with that.

V: What was Marie's relation to the idea of the author with the Bosch piece? Mounting a piece that's based on something else, how was she dealing with the fact that she was embodying someone else's work, in a way, was she trying to stay very faithful to it, or was she feeling the freedom to do whatever she wanted with it?

I: For sure she wanted to respect, and she had the canvas, a really big canvas in the studio, so we were seeing it really big and we could see the little images that were maybe small like this bigger, and sometimes to capture one and project that on the wall so we had the details...So she really wanted to go in details...she is a woman of details, *c'est vraiment*...for sure there's respect but at the same time the impact of that on her. On her perception. On her dancers, *oui*.

V: And what was your understanding of the painting in itself, if you have to say what's going on there?

I: I think she captured it really well, in the sense that, for me that's it, when I watch that, I don't know for you, but I love that she starts from the middle. Like, it's calming my understanding first to see beautiful and then to go in the more dark part of it, more...and having that resolve, "resolve" [she question marks it] in a way that's spiritual...for me it is kind of what we go through in life, and it's always un *allér-retour*, it's not just one [she signals a linear ascension], I can be in paradise and then hell, and sometimes I feel serenity and I try to go somewhere else, I think it's really talking about life, and the way we

V: Navigate through...

I: Now it's hell [referring to the quarantine], it's a different time.

V: Yeah, it seems...the beginning it seems very naïve, innocent, I really appreciate. There are these sexual intercourses and things that might seem weird, but it is just naïve, innocent, a playful atmosphere.

I: And joy. There's joy in that, *oui*.

V: Also stages of age, probably...this playful innocence and the more...calmer reflection in paradise, rather than turbulence of...

I: of hell, yeah, you are right.

V: and also...’cos I am looking at these works as sort of translations, because also my understanding of translation is not just as a reproduction of something, but I think that there is an amount of creation in the translation process...and would you agree with this view of seeing this work as an intermedial translation and what kind of meanings would you associate with it?

I: Well, I think, maybe I am wrong, but one of the biggest challenges sometimes is to start from something that’s already known. We know something so much, could be *Le Sacre du Printemps*, that was a big challenge, to step on that, to do *Le Faune*, there’s many people around the world who created *La Faune*, but I think that’s it, those creations, from something that we know. That’s creation, how we re-think something, re-thinking a pen, that’s creation for me, in a beautiful and really challenging way, especially when you have something like *le triptych de Bosch* that’s so...the book of Michaux, André Michaux, there is something really solid. How your gaze will interpret that book, that image. That for me is really...not re-creating something but creating, it’s pure perception of that, in your life, in your time, in your frame, *oui*. Does it answer?

V: Yeah, yeah. And were you given the book of Michaux before stepping into the studio to perform, where you asked to watch the painting?

I: Yeah yeah, we had the book, for sure, we had the book in the studio and every of us who joined the company, we all had the print of that, so we know what’s the part of me and the page, I am doing that ta-ta-ta, so everyone had the first, the source let’s say, of that inspiration.

V: And did she use any other ideas from other artworks or things, reference to other things as well? Because, for example, I was interviewing a choreographer about translating *1984*, he made his dance performance based on *1984* by Orwell, but then, he was also telling me “yes, but then I was also thinking about this square in Beijing, and here I was thinking about a scene from a movie”, so it was the novel but it was also enriched by other entry points. And I was wondering if in *Le Jardin des Délices*, is there also this mixture of inspirations.

I: As I said, for *l’enfér*, it was her pieces through the years. So, her story of creation, mixed together, coming hell. So, it was many visual cues that create that, it was important for her to have that, but it was her creation, and she put that in space together with that. So that for her, for sure it was visual and a landscape, that she was putting in space to create that. *Oui*. Often it could be even an object, you know, when she did the solo *Gloires du Matin* :)-(:, all those boxes on the floor, the wood the same colour of the floor, sometimes it’s visual for her, as I said she—

and now I am not doing Marie's drawing [she draws a figure standing on the floor], sometimes she would say, "ok, that's my block, that's standing on it", she...she is a visual artist, she's with someone too that's a visual artist, so for sure...the mountains, the trees, the birds...all that connects with her, *oui*.

V: Do you have, as a company, do you keep books of the drawings as a sort of score for the performances?

I: Yeah, we keep everything, for sure, we call it *La Bible*, The Bible, almost, but we are doing...for every piece we try to keep everything together, somewhere, the costumes, we try at least, not losing any... but sometimes it's alright, but like, for older pieces we didn't have the thought right away, I remember, when I first joined the company it was less established, but right now Marie has that in her mind. That vision is important, *oui*.

Appendix 2: Interview with Carol Prieur (Compagnie Marie Chouinard)

I meet Carol on June 17, 2020, via Zoom. While meeting outside in small groups is by now possible, there are still concerns and a sense of lingering fear which makes the format of online interview seem more reasonable. We meet late in the afternoon, and I spend the time leading to the interview reading a book, the first I was able to buy at a bookshop since March just a few days earlier. It's Rebecca Solnit's "A Field Guide to Getting Lost", and it is balm for my soul. At 5pm the interview starts, a smiling Carol appears on the screen, and we start speaking English, her first language although she is bilingual.

V: I would like you to introduce yourself and tell me a bit about yourself, your career, your dance training, how did you join Marie Chouinard...and just very generally introduce your work

C: Well, my name is Carol, Carol Prieur and I grew up when I was quite young in Ireland and France, and then when I was eleven, I moved to Canada, and that's really when I started dancing. When I was young, when I was a teenager, I was part of a youth dance crew, where we would perform in schools and that sort of things. And that really activated my interest in dancing, and then when I went to university I chose Simon Fraser University, a university that at that time had a dance programme, but I was also interested in biology, kinesiology, so I was able to do both. But after my first year I decided that I really wanted to just concentrate on dance and the programme at that time in Simon Fraser was not as developed as other programmes were across other areas of Canada, so I moved, I moved to Winnipeg. At Winnipeg there's a school of contemporary dance, so I did a full-time programme there and after the three years I went right into...there was a company affiliated and I went right into, working with the company there. The company at that time was directed by a director who came from theatre actually, Tom Stroud, and he...it was a repertory company, so he created works but also he brought in a variety of choreographers from across Canada and so it was an opportunity to taste different types of work, from more traditional dancy lyrical to experimental theatre, and so that was very interesting. We were a small group, and it was intimate, and we were able to be very involved in the creative process, and the creative process was extremely central to all of the activities and so it was a very inspiring and creative time. And at the same time that I was there, there was a dance festival and the person that was running it at that time, Ted Robinson, he...one of

the companies that he had invited was Marie Chouinard, it was her very first creation, group creation, *Les Trous du Ciel*. So, I was just a young, you know, I was a student, just coming out of school when I first saw the company. Right away, when I saw the company, it was something that I instinctively related to, it was a very visceral experience for me, when I saw the work and I just understood it in a very subconscious sort of level, it was not at all cerebral, it was just an automatic connection. And it wasn't until years later, for a project I was doing...it was the 10th anniversary of Joe, Jean-Pierre Perreault, and I was here in Montreal doing that project and at the same time Marie was starting auditions, and so I went to the auditions, since I was in Montreal and we stayed in communication, because at the time she was not looking for a woman, she was looking for a man, and I also wasn't available, and it wasn't until maybe a year later that our timings worked out and she was expanding, also, her company. Originally there were only seven dancers in the company, and then she expanded, she was doing a new creation. The new creation was *The Almond and the Diamond*.

V: Oh, I love that!

C: And so that's when she wanted to have ten dancers, and so we were new people coming in together, it was a new beginning and that's how it all started with Marie, and now it's been 25 years.

V: Wow! And how did you melt what you were already doing, your experiences, your training and even, I think you did some theatre, right? I read in an interview that you had some theatre experience, so I did you use that in the work of Marie when you entered the company?

C: Yeah, because the company I was working with in Winnipeg beforehand, he was a theatre director, we did a lot of...we would take for example a classical piece, say, *Romeo and Juliet*, and it would be partly theatrical and partly dance. It was sort of dance theatre, and he worked...all his research and inspiration really came from theatrical method, physical movement theatre where we were producing material in research, he would lead us to more theatrical improvisation, or context, or structure, and out of that we would develop the material. So, I came from his knowledge, and his past and a lot of vocal work...

V: Yeah, which is also important in Marie's work, the use of voice

C: Exactly, and Marie's work is all...she always had, even when she was a soloist she worked really close with the voice as an extension of the body. Like the breath, like an arm or a leg, it's another part of the body, an extension...

V: Yeah...so as you were saying, you grew up in Ireland and France and then Canada, and also, the company being based in Montreal, makes me think of language...do you have a working language, do you speak English in studio, or French, or do you just navigate...

C: We speak in French, it's really something that Marie...it's very important for Marie that we have that common language of French and because for her it's her roots, it's the language of the land we are on as well and besides... ideally, we would be speaking also an autochthon language...but it's French. But the dancers are coming from very different...you know we have Italian, we have American, we have French, English that are really English... and so we work in French, the French language is our communication and then of course it just goes...hands up, especially when it's only us the dancers, but within the working environment we really try to stay in French but sometimes it's difficult for us...

V: Yeah, I can imagine, when there's a group of people coming from different places you just start coming up with some words in your language...

C: Yeah. Like there's two Italians, two, and so sometimes the two Italians go like [she mimes two people chatting quickly].

V: Ahah, yeah, it's something I know, ahah...and how did working with Marie affect your own experience of dance and your own sensations and perceptions while dancing?

C: Well, it really made me go...it's been a huge journey of research in fact, and trying to understand what my own dance is, and what is important for me in relationship to movement, because Marie herself is a person that is so...she's just a 150% all the time in whatever she does. It's her work, it's coming from her and so it's so clear when she does a movement, and she is always doing a movement that's coming from a very clear place and a very clear intention. She is like, connected to something, energy that is...sort of even beyond, like bigger than. And that's very clear when you see her. Even when she walks into a room, her presence, her clarity, is so connected to a vital charge of living energy. When you are in front of that, you are in front of like, a mirror, you are being asked questions, you have to then question, well, who am I in front of this great force, power, energy. And so, it was a real learning process and a real...at the beginning, quite a scary challenge to sort of go...I never took dance as necessarily something light, but with Marie is a whole other level of intensity. It was sort of an eye-opener and I felt that I was jumping into the unknown, you are diving...I thought I had understood, I thought I had lived and I had experienced but...nowhere near that. Marie is really inviting, and

she wants you to be there as the individual you are, with your history, with your experience, your knowledge, your perspective on life. Because that's your humanity and she needs all of those very different humanities to be present in her work, and so she really invites that. So, it's a whole process, it's a whole process, it's a lot of internal research.

V: And what is the role of friendship and of your relationship, as you have been working in the company for so long and you are also Marie's muse, so I'm thinking, in this sort of research that you do on yourself and this sense of becoming, what is the role of friendship?

C: Well, I think that's something that now, as both Marie and I are more mature in our lives, we are older women now, it's sort of as if we realise it now, we are able to see the journey that we've taken and the time that we've taken and we are now able to maybe come together in ways that probably were not necessarily...other people weren't able to fulfil those roles. Whereas now there is an innate trust, an innate...somebody that's just been there for 25 years, that you know that you can turn to and just be very frank with or...but that's something that I think we are just starting to enter now. Because I think of where we are in our own personal lives, that is something that we are both now open to have, whereas I think that before we were in the roles we had, you know.

V: Yeah. And you also work with other companies, right, and have other projects, how does that come in dialogue with the work you do with Marie, do you keep them as separate things or sometimes you realise that there are things that you bring from a collaboration, or out of the collaboration with Marie...

C: Yeah, you know, it's such a blurry line, because it's me, it's the same person and depending on what I am living at that movement, or depending on what I am going through or feeling, or thinking, researching, that is still me, it's still also my physicality, or my way of movement, how I am in movement that I am going to be carrying from one project...and then, it really depends on the directions that I am given or the choices that the creators make to form or to use my capacity in a way that they'll either remould it, they'll take and... that's a whole process, and sometimes it's with time that you are able to open other doorways into yourself, and that's what I like of working with different people, because they are able to open different rooms in us, different colours and textures...

V: Yeah. And is there a specific training that you do with Marie, that people of the company have to do, or a specific normal day that you...go in and have some sort of rituals or is it freer?

C: It's quite free...in the morning is when we train and people...Marie allows for us to choose, how we want to prepare for the work that we need to do, whether it's a new creative process, whether it's a repertory work or rehearsal for other works...so people train in all sorts of different ways. Some people do more of a gym and they go running, and they are physical in that way, other people do the ballet class, and it's a ritual to do the ballet class, and there's pilates, there's yoga, and some people train themselves and some people need to go and follow teachers. So it all varies and then, Marie, every now and then, depending on what work we are doing and especially if it's a new creation, she might decide that she would like for us to do more of a somatic work, or when we were doing the creative process for *Gymnopédie*, it was a clown workshop, and then...so, a variety..

V: How interesting! It's very inspiring, to do new things every day

C: Yeah, it would be for example, before the *Gymnopédie* we did a week, or two weeks, of a clown workshop, which was intensive, where everybody was there and Marie was there, so we would immerse ourselves in that type of work, of *Fendelkrais*¹⁴⁷, or whatever that is, and it's really inspirational because it's something that we all lived together, and then it's a knowledge, an experience that we shared and that we are then able to refer to in the creative process.

V: And in terms of the creative process, how much agency, how much freedom and really subjective investment do you have in the creation process as dancers?

C: It goes through different phases, and the initial phase usually...there's always a phase of complete freedom! She'll maybe put in a suggestion, or she'll lead us in a direction and then she'll let us go, and you know, in that sort of abandonment, freedom...and then slowly, she starts...and it's a very intuitive, she works very, very intuitively. And then she starts to maybe carve things in a certain direction and then it becomes more and more and more and more structured, until it's incredibly structured. And then when we go to performance and the structure is there, it's integrated, and we understand what is important to be delivered [phone rings] It's Marie! Ahahah that's so funny!

When we understand what that structure is and it's clear that we are honouring it, that we are not going to represent blue and it should be green, then that's when she allows for people to...with the experience we go deeper in that and maybe it starts shifting in this way and that way, it's really...it goes through these many different phases, where there's yes, a lot of

¹⁴⁷A somatic education method.

freedom, and we bring ourselves, and then where it gets very structured, and it's Marie, she is the one choosing and defining and carving and then putting it...you know, it's like a sculpture in a way. It becomes very clear in her mind, and then it's us understanding what that is for her, and then after that we are able to play with it, because we can then, we know that it's crystallised like this, but we can maybe show this facet and that facet, but it's within the crystal. I don't know, it's hard to explain!

V: No no, it's clear, I think it's clear, you explain very well. Would you then call it a collaboration, in a way, it's a collaborative work, I'd say.

C: I mean...I think so, I think it's a conversation

V: Yeah, I like this word.

C: It's a meeting of people, of minds, of energies. So, it's a meeting of those energies in that room in that day, you know, in another day, in a meeting...it will be different, even if you have the same people in a different way, it would just be different. So it's that sort...and those moments, you know, one day it's magic and one day it's hard...but exchange happens, whether it's a verbal conversation, sometimes it's verbally, sometimes it's just physically, sometimes it's energy...but that exchange, even if there's sharing of ideas, sharing of the energies, at the end, no matter what, it's Marie who makes those final decisions in terms of where the piece is going and what her vision is. So, the vision is there, but she clarifies it through the process, the creative process. And that's the intuition. She allows herself to be in a lake or in a river and she allows for that stream of consciousness, that stream, to take her, and she allows for that, and then eventually she defines it.

V: Oh, it's very interesting. I'm just reading a book that is about getting lost and this really makes me think of it.

C: And it's fascinating. I learn so much watching her in the studio because of how she, one of the things I admire the most of the creative process, of watching her, is that she risks. She takes risks. She is not scared to take a risk. She has an idea, and she does the idea, she sees what it looks like, she tries it, she doesn't sit in the fear of "maybe that's not going to be good". It doesn't matter. She really takes the risk, and that has been something that's been very inspiring, watching and being around that, yeah.

V: And, also in terms of the creative process, is there any difference when you work with...like in *Mouvements*, or in Bosch, when you start from something that is already an artwork, and when you start from scratch? Is there any difference in the creation process?

C: Ehm...I think that...yeah, there is! There is in a way that you kind of have a score there, you have reference, there's reference to something. Whereas when we went into a process like, *Le Nombre D'Or*, *The Golden Mean*, or even when we went into the research of *Soft Vitality*, we are searching with her, the beginning stages (she moves her arms and upper body as if walking in the dark and groping), clawing through many different lands and...you know. Whereas when you have something, like with *Mouvements*, she came with the book and right away, you have it, it's an imprint, it's a reference to go to, to be inspired by. Two worlds, two different types of feelers that, ways of connecting into something.

V: Yeah, and at the same time she stayed very close in a way, both in *Mouvements* and Bosch, by deciding to have them on the background. And, also, of course, adding her own intention and vision...so I was wondering how important it is for her to stay close but also how much freedom she affords herself.

C: Yeah, you know, I wonder, Marie is very visual and yes, she is a choreographer, and yes she works with movement as a primary mode of expression, but she writes, she doubles with drawings, I see her as a very multifaceted artist and I think she is really interested in the whole design and visual art. So, I think the projections, yes, they make reference and sort of ground her work in a way, it helps, it's like a doorway for the audience to understand, but also, I think it's an aesthetic for her. I think aesthetically there's something about having visuals that...she is researching as a visual artist. It's a curiosity. And especially if you look at where does she come from, as a performance artist herself. She was really a performance artist, she comes from that very raw time where, you paint yourself, so putting yourself on stage painted, with horns, it was a visual statement, artistic statement. And so, I think that that's a continuation of where she comes from as an artist, that's yes, dance, but there's more, it's a performance, it's visual...

V: And as for Bosch, *Le Jardin des Délices*, how long did you work on the creation process for the performance and where did the impetus for that come from?

C: Well, when we work with Marie it is never like, six weeks in a row, we work one week creation, then we go on tour, do other things and then we come back, so it is always extended through time, and so I don't know what the exact amount of weeks were for the actual creation,

but that was over a year, a year, we work within a year and usually, it's a little bit of week here and there. And Marie, she was commissioned, asked for the 500th anniversary, to do this project. And when she's asked to do things, sometimes she sits with it for a while and...so somebody had come to her and then she was like, oh...and she's always loved the work of Bosch, it's always been an inspiration and so there was a...serendipity, just how things come together, and you are like "ok, well then let's do it now, this is the time..". What she had done at the beginning of the creative process was that, she had enlarged huge drawings of the work, so that we could have with us in the studio the images from the triptych. So, we started like in *Mouvements*, imitating, we would try and insert, we became extensions of the painting into space. And then we were taking that into movement. And then we were playing with all sorts of different things, we had plastic bubbles and all...

V: Yeah, I loved this. I watched that in Lisbon, and I wanted to ask, because in Lisbon it was part of a cycle dedicated to Bosch with films, documentaries...and were you aware of that?

C: No!

V: It just came at the end of a whole cycle dedicated to Bosch, so there were movies that made reference in a way, concerts...

C: Wow..

V: And at the end there was the performance of Marie, so you came to it with a baggage of things that you'd been building up

C: Ah, wow..Nice!

V: Yeah, really lovely. And I also felt...one of the things that I liked was how she was playing with our understanding and with trust. Because I felt, as in the beginning you have these cycles that zoom into certain sections of the painting, you see that you are doing the same thing, and then when Hell starts, you have *l'Enfer*, it's different, so all of a sudden I was doing this (I move back with my upper body) I perceived my body doing this, so I was moving with you in a way, first coming close, I trust, I understand everything, and then pushing back

C: Wow...

V: And in the end all these ways of looking for alternatives...as you have this image which is always represented as THE image, the one image, and she was instead setting it in motion, and

she was showing different combinations that were possible and so endless possibilities of being... and I was thinking, how do you, as a dancer, experience and live the dance, like somatically. What are your feelings?

C: Within Bosch or just in general?

V: Within Bosch and if you want also in general, both

C: Ok, ah...Bosch for me...well, each work of Marie is a different world and a sort of different energy, different preparation, different state of being, different energy, imprint...even though there is a signature in, you know, the spinal work and the breath work and all of that. Still, the world itself, it is quite unique. Like, the *Sacre* is a whole other physical adventure. But, for me, Bosch is a real...They are all journeys but really within Bosch I try to put myself in a place of...especially because the first scenes start in an open, and sheer sort of innocence, you know, just of not knowing, of [expires while opening her arms in front of her face]. So, I find in Bosch, the amount...in any of the performances there is an abandonment, of having to let go, of being in a place of the unknown, but especially in Bosch because I feel it's very much a part of that world. So, it's that sort of abandonment, of innocence and non-judgment, simply entering into a very...especially, I mean, we are naked! But I feel...just imagining, that there's the garden and...it's a very specific, a bubble, it's a very...it's a universe that we cultivate in Bosch. And, compared to a lot of other pieces too, it's a very united work, where we are connected to the others. You know, a lot of Marie's works are solos, even within a group, we are separated, but Bosch has another type of sparkly energy. Even when we are in chaos, people for *Hell* sometimes can be just "ugh", but we are having the time of our lives, there's so much fun! A lot of times people are just like "Oh my god" but we have so much fun in that, and it's about that, that abandonment, when we allow ourselves to go into an imagination beyond this physical world, then we just are free. It's freedom. And I think that can be said to wanting to be in that freedom in general. You know, to attain that in all of the dance works is to be able to find that balance between knowing and not knowing.

V: Yeah. And as per performing it, how does the different context or location, time, influence the performance of a piece? Because I imagine, it's always unique but also it's informed by what's around you.

C: Yeah, yeah. Greatly so. We don't talk about it a lot, but just even the energy of the public, whether they are close, whether they are far, whether it's a bigger stage or a smaller stage, all

of that contributes to the energy that's moving around. We had the opportunity a couple of times to perform Bosch outside

V: Oh, wow!

C: And that was wonderful, that's magical, that's really magical.

V: Yeah, already as you are talking of it, I am imagining it and it must be incredible

C: Yeah, I think it's beautiful, it was really one of...some of the best moments because it excites us, you are in an element of...already, it's magic, and it was just beautiful to be in that.

V: Why did you choose, why did Marie choose to start from the central panel. Because normally, the critics who have approached Bosch read it from left to right, and it was something interesting for me that she started from there, then she went to hell and then paradise, which is the opposite of what Bosch does, or critics who read him do, by saying it ends with hell.

C: I think that...this was not necessarily a choice that she had thought about doing before, I think it came...you know, part of our process, at the end of our process, we go into a theatre and we actually finish, we do all the lighting and there she starts understanding more of the *scenographie*, the reading of the piece. And she played with that, the order, in different ways. And I think that for her, ending with the beginning allowed for...that there isn't a story, it's not a linear thing and...Marie always talks about how there isn't a story, there isn't one interpretation, how it's really open for the individual to see what it is that they need to be seeing at that time. And I think that the order of the tableaux, allows for that reading in a more, sort of, open way and it allows also for a positivity. It's kind of futuristic in some way, we are moving...you know, there is the creation of the world, and then the destruction, all the difficult times, but where are we going in the future? So, I think that she took all those symbols and then played, with the gendering, the symbols themselves, to make them invite us to something that is not so dogmatic, something that we don't even know what is.

V: Yeah, radical freedom, really

C: Yeah.

V: As I was talking to Isabelle, she said that in Hell Marie was playing with past performances, so you were using objects or scenes from past performances so I was wondering, do you remember what specific performances is she referencing and how did you come to do that.

C: Yeah, so that was an improvisation. *Hell*, it was an improv. And, because we rehearse in the same studio, all of those objects from past performances are there, in the studio. And so, we just pulled everything out, because she just wanted us to be free, whatever. And so, we pulled all of the objects around and other things. We had garbage cans...all that was possible around us. What she wanted us to do was to enter where we were not necessarily...the referencing of the past works was there because we used the objects that were there, but it wasn't her intention. She understood...it was one of those things, it was one of the beauties of that research, that improv, that moment of research that it came out...it was magical. And she saw...she's so good at that, she has an eye, she is able to [moves her hands as if to seize something in the hair], go "oh, something special just happened here". And she sees the referencing, the, exactly, reference, reverberation, the pebble that drops into the water and then it ripples out...She sees and understands all those ripples, and so when she sees something going on in the studio, it touches her, talks to her, and so that was just one of those moments in the studio, we were...part of the dancers who were there at that moment didn't know some of the referencing that was going on, because they hadn't done all the other work, you know

V: Yeah, right. So, it's also interesting to think in terms of how with time you understand better the work you do with her

C: Oh, for sure!

V: So also, I was thinking...because for me, when I think of what I'm doing, I'm studying translation and I'm studying dance and dance that starts from other artworks. And I try to understand translation in light of dance. So as something that is and can be creative, in which one can have a different kind of agency, where one works with memory, as when you take an object like Bosch's painting and you re-imagine new futures for it, in a way. And so, I treat this form of dance as translation, and translation as this form of dance. And I was wondering whether you would agree with this view of seeing this kind of work as a translation of Bosch, but also what is your idea about translation in general.

C: I think that...I see it as a conversation. I kind of see Marie having a conversation with Bosch through time with the work. If she were able to sit down and have coffee with him, you know...and be able to exchange. Because there's fundamental things within art that travel across time, the humanity, that travels through humanity. So, artists through time are approaching similar subject matters and they will interpret it through their lens, their perspectives. I think that's some of what's happening, they are using their language, as we see in the Bosch work, and

there is a conversation happening about something else, bigger than. And here is Bosch using that palette of colour, and...so I kind of see it like that.

V: Very interesting. A last question, we are in a specific moment and how are you living this moment? As a dancer, not being able to go and train, perform...how are you living it?

C: Yeah, it's particular because again it puts the question "who am I", "what is my identity", with movement, without movement...and especially at this time in my life when I am entering a whole other phase of...you know, I've had a long career, is that something that I want to continue doing? Because all of a sudden you are in front of the unknown, you don't know what the future is going to be. But at the same time, I've always used movement as a way to figure myself out, and I think that if I were without movement...there would be something missing in my life. So, even if I am not able to get into the studio, I go to the park. I still try and find that connection of being in some kind of movement. Because for me it's how I'm able to relate and express and have an identity or connection to this world that we are in.

Appendix 3: Interview with Valeria Galluccio (Compagnie Marie Chouinard)

I meet Valeria on June 19, 2020, at Parc la Fontaine, Montreal. She just called me to ask if we can postpone our interview by an hour, as she needs to consult the Italian embassy to know if she will be able to go to Italy and teach at the Biennale Dance College the following week. The stay-at-home order by the Canadian government has been loosened in stages—people have been allowed to meet in open spaces since May but restaurants, shopping centres and museums will only open the following week. Valeria is currently working on a dance film shot in the woods, Sur la Lame, and the Compagnie Marie Chouinard is having their first live performance online, in 10 days. There is a tender, tentative atmosphere of things beginning again, which is encouraged by the warm summery weather after the harsh winter inside. When Valeria arrives, she sits down next to me and shows a flyer of the performance she brought with herself “so that I leave you with something”. She asks me about myself and my research and seems interested in finding connections between her work and translation. Valeria speaks fast and with passion, in an Italian interpolated by English and French words that reveal her inhabiting of different languages. She points at the flyer and explains...

Valeria: Questa qui è *pellegrinage*...quando l’abbiamo creato in realtà...c’è in una delle immagini, fammi vedere, perché veramente noi abbiamo lavorato con un grande tableau. Lei ha fatto stampare il tableau grande che poi quando siamo andati al Prado a vederlo, l’originale è piccolo, non so se lo hai mai visto...

Interviewer: Sì sì

V: Cioè è veramente piccolo! Quindi, c’è una parte in cui ci dovrebbe essere un *pellegrinage*...perché, Marie come lavora: lavora per accumulazione, nel senso che ci sono due personaggi, poi magari li fa diventare dieci, venti, con la stessa immagine

I: Come nella parte finale del paradiso, in cui inizialmente ci sono due

V: Sì, due

I: Poi entrano in più

V: Sì, tutti entriamo...eh, lei lavora anche così, se c’è un’immagine poi la duplica. Ha lavorato molto così in questo...e infatti anche gli *unison*, li abbiamo creati..il modo in cui li abbiamo creati, lei dice “ok, prendete delle immagini del tableau che vi piacciono, che vi interessano, e createmi una frase da otto [conteggi]” e poi lei ha scelto tipo due o tre frasi e le ha messe

insieme, le ha un po' lavorate, per creare comunque un'organicità nel vederlo. E poi, giustamente, era una sola persona, poi siamo stati tutti a farla nello stesso modo. Quindi, è come se si duplica.

Questa moltiplicazione e anche il fatto che l'immagine è un po' l'estensione... cioè, lei lavora con le estensioni, molto, anche *Body Remix*, sono tutte estensioni del corpo. Lei non vede la punta, per esempio, sotto il profilo ballettistico, ma la utilizza come un modo per camminare, per portarsi da un punto all'altro, integrata nel corpo

I: Sì, come una sorta di protesi del corpo... e lo stesso dal quadro

V: Sì, lo stesso dal quadro, è come se fossimo un'estensione di quell'immagine. Spesso lei utilizza anche l'architettura nello spazio, è molto importante, perché giustamente lei dice, "se è un'estensione, il pubblico che vede, vede l'immagine ma deve avere la proiezione dell'immagine", quindi lo *spacing*, quando ci piazziamo nello spazio è particolare. A volte cambia, un piede a destra, un piede a sinistra di dieci centimetri, cambia la luce, cambia l'idea della visualizzazione. È molto visuale, Marie.

I: Quindi è una specie di architettura, in proiezione

V: Sì, sempre. E infatti nei suoi lavori spesso gli spostamenti sono delle linee, è raro che abbiamo delle curve, la curva è nel movimento, ma se tu ti sposti, vedi questa è proprio la sua filosofia, se tu ti sposti, tu lo fai da punto A a punto B, tu non fai zigzag... perché è sempre connessa all'idea dell'umano, in quanto umano tu non fai zig-zag per andare da qua all'albero, tu vai diretta all'albero

I: Esatto...è interessante. E poi però nel movimento che fate, vi muovete anche in maniera circolare. E mi piace molto...non so se son io che son diventata ossessionata dalla natura durante il *lockdown*, ma i movimenti delle mani e anche del corpo... a volte guardavo i passerotti dalla finestra e vedevo che era molto simile al tipo di movimento che fate con lei, un po' a scatti, anche l'accelerazione tutto d'un tratto, che è molto simile al movimento degli uccelli e della natura

V: Sì, sì, Marie si ispira molto. Naturalmente credo, non è che pensa l'uccello, però sempre nelle sue opere ci sono degli elementi di animali, di alberi, di connessione alla natura, sì. Infatti nel *Sacre du Printemps* c'è il fiore...che poi la sua visione è sempre comunque quasi picassiana, non so se si può dire, cioè lo trasforma, tu non è che fai il fiore, sei un fiore però ci

sono *multiple layers*...Tu non sei soltanto un fiore, sei un fiore ma sei anche un umano che sente allo stesso tempo, ma sei anche l'emozione di quello che stai sentendo, cioè ci sono tutte...quindi tu quando vedi quel fiore, che è dieci secondi in *Sacre*, tu vedi venti cose diverse in quei dieci secondi. E questo è un po' il suo talento, di riuscire a capire: "ok, quest'immagine funzione, qual è l'emozione dietro che più funzionare". Non è soltanto l'immagine ma anche il simbolo...ci sono tutti

I: Wow, interessante. Una concatenazione di livelli...

V: Sì e anche se c'è una sola scena tu puoi vedere tre o quattro scene.

I: E nel momento in cui lo create, voi passate per tutte queste scene?

V: Beh, in realtà quando lo creiamo, è molto...è molto aleatorio, lei non parla mai di emozioni, non ti impone mai nessuna emozione o sensazione, o pensiero. Anche perché ce ne sono così tanti che tu non puoi neanche... non esistono nemmeno le parole per tutte le emozioni. Però lei sente...lei è istintiva, sente che c'è qualcosa dietro, lo sente nel suo corpo, dice "ok a me piace questa immagine, riproducimela" e poi lì, con il tempo, dice: "ok, direi che a livello kinestetico, cioè fisico, voglio che le dita siano in questo modo, che ci sia questo movimento della colonna, che respiri". E lei sa che facendo questo ti porta direttamente a quello che hai vissuto la prima volta che lo hai creato. Perché lei l'ha sentito e si ricorda di quello che è. Eh no, è un talento, è un talento.

I: E quindi anche per voi quando lo replicate in scena, perché immagino, comunque lo fate tipo cinquanta volte, ogni volta è sempre una capacità di accedere a questa sensazione?

V: Sì...infatti noi lavoriamo con sistemi di movimento. Praticamente, noi non abbiamo veramente una coreografia. Sì, ci sono delle cose che sono ben piazzate, tipo lo *spacing*, tipo la luce, tipo il momento musicale, c'è un *timing* preciso perché i *timing* sono precisi, fanno parte della dinamica dello spettacolo. Però poi ci sono dei sistemi di movimento. Il sistema di movimento Marie l'ha creato perché vuole lasciare il danzatore anche libero di respirare. E allora per esempio, il sistema di movimento può essere, in un assolo che ho di 10 secondi o 15 secondi: ho la braccia che devono muoversi in maniera "*architecture*", così si chiama, quindi sono dei movimenti lunghi di braccia, angolari; le dita devono essere continue, e allo stesso tempo le gambe per esempio devono essere di un altro ritmo. Quindi io ho le braccia di una qualità di movimento, le gambe un altro ritmo e devo seguire in musica in un certo modo. Cioè, comunque è ben stabilito, però in tutto questo io posso fare dieci braccia e due gambe ed essere

su un *cue* musicale, oppure posso fare due braccia, dieci gambe e prendere tre *cues* musicali, capito?

I: e quindi è sempre leggermente diversa, ogni volta,

V: è sempre organica, live.

I: In base anche a quello che senti...

V: Quindi ti dà comunque una libertà in quanto interprete, perché comunque sei...la vivo, sono diversa, una Valeria di oggi non può essere la stessa di una Valeria di nove anni fa quando è entrata in compagnia. Danzo spesso gli stessi pezzi di repertorio, però c'è tutto un altro sentire perché ho vissuto altre cose nella mia vita, perché mi sono innamorata, perché mi sono lasciata. Quindi, comunque il mio corpo ha un'*enprint*, un *imprinting*, e ha una memoria che io porto nella mia danza nuova ogni giorno e ogni volta.

I: E a che punto entra la musica? Partite con la musica già dall'inizio, oppure a metà, o alla fine, prima di andare in scena...

V: Allora dipende dal lavoro. Le creazioni che ho fatto con Marie, tipo *Bosch*, la musica è arrivata a metà credo, perché all'inizio Marie si dà la possibilità di creare soltanto l'energia del movimento senza avere altre influenze. E poi invia alcuni video per far capire l'essenza. Lei ha un musicista con cui lavora, un compositore, da vent'anni, Luis Dufort, e lui...beh se tu potessi prendere un'intervista con lui sarebbe interessante, se vuoi ti do il contatto...visto che sei qui. Lui davvero è una persona speciale. Lui è un artista meraviglioso, io a volte ringrazio, perché a volte siamo stanchi, e quando c'è una musica che ti sostiene...che a volte *drive you*, è fondamentale. Questo per tornare a Luis, *que je l'adore*...la musica spesso avviene, quando è una produzione di Marie, avviene più o meno verso metà o tre quarti, perché lei non vuole l'influenza della musica subito. E poi iniziamo a trovare...una volta che a lei piace la musica ce la fa sentire e iniziamo il lavoro di mettere la danza con la musica e trovare i *cues* interessanti per drammatizzare il lavoro. Perché Marie utilizza la musica in maniera particolare, la sua musicalità non è ovvia, ci sono dei *cues* che tu diresti "ah, io lo metterei qua" però lei no, lo lascia passare perché trova altri *cues*, più sottili, che richiamano altri colori..la sua ricerca è sempre sorprendente, è interessante, specialmente come utilizza la musicalità in *Sacre du Printemps*, il corpo è uno strumento che si aggiunge alla musica del *Sacre*. Sempre per la storia dei sistemi di movimento, c'è all'inizio una parte che fa "naa nanananananaaa.." la testa [solleva la testa spingendo il collo in avanti nella parte finale della musica] oppure puoi fare già

dall'inizio "...naaaaaaaa" [solleva la testa più lentamente a partire dalla prima nota]..l'importante è che tu assumi tutta la melodia, te la fai

I: E quindi è anche una richiesta, per voi, di seguire l'istinto sempre, abbandonarvi alla coreografia ogni volta, perché se scegli di partire dall'inizio poi lo devi fare fino alla fine, poi devi decidere in ogni momento

V: Ogni momento nel momento presente, brava, c'è sempre nel momento presente. Un po' come la traduzione. Tu sei nel momento presente quando traduci, non sai mai quello che ti si dice, tu sei pronta, aperta, disponibile a risentire e mettere fuori.

I: Sì, Carol mi parlava di questo senso di abbandono, di completa libertà nel lasciarsi perdere in qualcosa.

V: Sì, senza avere paura perché...c'è sempre la paura, perché l'incognito, l'ignoto...però poi, c'è qualcosa che ti porta, sempre. Perché comunque il corpo ha una memoria muscolare, quindi...Non all'inizio che tu ancora impari le cose...dopo diciamo un tre o quattro anni che lavori con Marie sai che ti puoi iniziare ad abbandonare, perché il tuo corpo sa i movimenti. E la inizia la parte, il *fun*, perché ti sorprendi da sola in scena, cioè, io a volte in scena mi sono ritrovata a emozionarmi, ad avere veramente dei momenti di grazia, impagabili. Vedi, ho la pelle d'oca, cioè, li puoi avere nella vita normale, ma è altro. Quasi un contatto con il divino, ed è questo contatto con il divino che Marie ricerca nelle sue opere e che è presente in *Bosch*. Infatti lei dice che se non avesse fatto la coreografa si sarebbe data allo spirituale.

I: Com'è per te quando balli *Bosch*, come lo vivi, quale è la tua esperienza vissuta?

V: Beh, *Bosch* per me è veramente tre *tableaux* differenti. Perché, il primo...io ho nel primo un assolo, non so se lo hai visto, quello con le braccia, quell'assolo per me è...è un incontro, a parte che entro con quello in scena ed è veramente dire "questa sono io e ho voglia di comunicare a te che ti amo", c'è questo amore incondizionato in questo assolo che mi...che mi fa aprire il lavoro di *Bosch*, cioè il primo quadro. Quindi lì sono connessa a questa qualità di...già instauro una connessione con il pubblico. Poi il primo quadro è abbastanza tecnico, quindi ho dei momenti...ho sempre un filo drammaturgico all'interno, un mio discorso interiore che ho, però sono molto più attenta, ci sono degli *unison* in cui siamo assieme quindi bene attenta agli spazi, cioè ci sono delle cose tecniche da guardare. Quindi è alternato tra "ok, cosa sto facendo" e "ok, come mi connetto al pubblico allo stesso tempo". Il secondo sono...ho una performance con il microfono che dura tanto e lì c'è un cambio interiore, una...dico al

pubblico: “guardate che sta per iniziare l’inferno”. C’è un *welcome*...quindi personalmente io lascio anche il lato ludico, *naïve*, bello, gioioso, puro, pulito del primo atto per entrare nella parte oscura anche di me, senza aver paura e senza giudizio. Una parte che può far paura e che mi ha fatto paura quando l’ho trovata, l’ho portata fuori. In realtà Marie mi ha spinto, però è sempre comunque un personaggio, quindi c’è una parte divertente, cioè io mi diverto a farlo, però le persone che mi fanno i *feedback* poi mi dicono “ma facevi proprio paura”. Perché Marie comunque l’ha drammatizzato, l’ha creato comunque come a dire qui c’è un cambio netto, sto su due *poubelles*, e utilizzo...a parte poi che è un duetto con il *sound design* e il *sound manager*, perché la voce è comunque distorta però io devo seguire con la voce delle specifiche...è tecnico anche quello. È tutto...sembra che non è niente ma è preciso al punto. Io so tutta la drammaturgia della voce, come deve andare, anche se ho dei sistemi aperti all’interno. Quindi è sempre una negoziazione tra l’apertura e l’abbandono che diceva Carol e il fatto che comunque devi portare...non puoi essere totalmente abbandonato perché poi lo spettacolo potrebbe durare anche 10 ore o 5 minuti, devi comunque mantenere una costanza e una consistenza nel lavoro...

I: E per quanto riguarda il lavoro della voce, che è abbastanza specifico in Marie, e soprattutto facendo la parte che fai nell’inferno, come lavorate la voce, c’è un training particolare che fate, degli esercizi...

V: Mah, in realtà abbiamo dei coaching di voce, abbiamo fatto spesso lavoro di voce e dei coaching semplici, ci hanno insegnato come riscaldare, come aver una durata più lunga del suono, cose più tecniche. Naturalmente non lirica e sempre ai limiti di quello che puoi fare con la voce. E poi ad esempio, quando è stato creato questo assolo, è stato creato insieme. C’era un microfono in scena, nel momento di creazione in un teatro, una residenza, perché prima di portare un lavoro in scena Marie fa un paio di residenze. Lei si prende un teatro, lo affitta e guarda da fuori solo lei, con i tecnici, come sta andando il lavoro, come sarà poi tra dieci mesi a livello di luci, a livello di costumi, lei già vede come può essere. E io naturalmente mi sono messa sulle due *poubelles* che erano lì e facevo dei suoni. E Marie lì ha avuto un flash. E lei ha detto ok, lavoriamo questo, questo sarà l’inizio. E piano piano lei iniziava a dire “ok, facciamo soltanto delle A”, poi “facciamo soltanto delle E”, poi “facciamo soltanto delle I”. Poi ha detto “ok, adesso chiamo Luis Dufort”. E con Luis abbiamo messo le A, lui diceva “devi essere *rock and roll*, qua l’inizio deve essere pesante, *grounded*” e io all’inizio non avevo quello, però poi a furia di cercare l’ho trovato. Quindi la voce viene con il lavoro e con l’aiuto di tecnici esterni, e poi anche lì evoluzione. Quindi il mio lavoro della voce dopo quattro anni si è modificato

abbastanza, perché ho trovato altre sfumature in scena e quindi di conseguenza si sono aggiunte a quelle che già avevo. Però è un po' così, Marie non è una che chiede "oh voglio il la, il do" lei dice "ok, facciamo una voce come se fosse un uccello...mo' però mi piacerebbe più alta..no, questo suona troppo secco, mettici un po' più di respiro" ...lei va veramente a sentire. Ti da un'immagine. Sempre con immagini, eh.

I: Quanto tempo avete lavorato a *Bosch*?

V: La creazione è stata facile e veloce, una delle più veloci, è stata un mese credo. Un mese non continuo, perché lei non ama lavorare in maniera continua. Per esempio, cinque giorni qua, dieci là, una settimana, io credo che siano stati quaranta giorni.

I: Abbastanza veloce

V: Sì perché comunque lei veniva già da uno show che si chiama *Henri Michaux* ed è *sur la même*..la stessa lunghezza d'onda. Quindi lei aveva questa influenza già, se hai visto *Henri Michaux*, viene da questa idea. Quindi il cammino era a metà però...a differenza di *Henri Michaux* avevamo la proiezione. Anche il fatto che lei ha creato tutto un percorso della lente d'ingrandimento e quindi una coreografia per l'occhio anche, cioè una coreografia che non è soltanto una coreografia fisica. Mentre con *Henri Michaux* sono delle immagini che vengono sparate, c'è un ritmo forte, la musica è...Dufort fantastico lì, geniale, però non aveva una drammaturgia nell'immagine veramente. C'era, però è molto diretta, semplice. Con *Bosch*, lei ha sviluppato quest'idea di drammaturgia...che poi io non ho mai visto da fuori, mi piacerebbe vederlo...no, non mi piacerebbe vederlo perché altrimenti significa che non ballo! Però mi hanno detto che c'è tutto un'idea dalla parte del pubblico, che non è solo la danza.

I: Sì...per me, io l'ho sempre vissuta come un...lei che giocava un po' con la nostra fiducia e con il nostro capire, perché vedo che all'inizio tu vedi nell'immagine esattamente la stessa cosa, poi venendo dalla traduzione, è come se fosse proprio una traduzione con testo a fronte, in cui hai da una parte il testo originale e dall'altra la traduzione. Letterale, proprio. Poi quando inizia l'inferno, quello che vedi nei cerchi non è quello che viene rappresentato in scena, magari è una sensazione che voi mettete in scena, però non è più quello, e quindi io mi son ritrovata a far così (mi muovo indietro)

V: Eri persa

I: Sì, mi muovo con voi, dico c'è qualcosa qui che...non mi posso più fidare. E poi arrivi alla fine ed è bello come lei gioca con le immagini di Adamo ed Eva da un punto di vista anche

V: *Gender...*

I: Sì, la politica del *gender*, che vedi, ok non è solo quest'immagine che ci è sempre data ma possiamo giocare in modi infiniti

V: Sì questo è bello, è vero che è bello perchè ti dà la possibilità di vedere che alla fine anche...adesso ci penso con te, che la spiritualità può essere anche vista...può essere qualsiasi cosa in realtà.

I: Ed è anche interessante dal punto di vista della drammaturgia del video che in questa parte tu hai due occhi che ti fissano

V: Troppo belli quei due occhi!

I: Ma di chi sono?

V: Sono di una danzatrice sua storica, si chiama Lucy Mongrain...sembrano gli occhi di un elefante, ma lei è bellissima. Io sono entrata in compagnia quando lei era incinta, nove anni fa. E poi beh, lei aveva fatto già 13 anni in compagnia ed è stato il suo andare, non si sa, magari ritorna eh, però ha un legame con Marie...è un po' come Carol, queste persone che sono lì da tempo. Sono degli incontri artistici, dei legami artistici ecco. Quindi lei l'ha richiamata per fare questo lavoro degli occhi, fantastico.

I: Sì perché, comunque ti chiama in causa, ti ritrovi che fino a quel momento eri tu che guardavi e poi tutt'ad un tratto...

V: Aah, è vero!

I: Guardano anche loro...

V: Sì, e infatti, quando c'è la parte in cui ci siamo tutti e ci giriamo verso il pubblico (gira la testa) il pubblico fa [inspira e muove la parte superiore del corpo indietro]...tutti a muoversi...è bellissimo *Bosch*, io lo ho adorato, spero che lo balliamo ancora, è un'opera che mi ha dato tantissimo, lo abbiamo danzato tanto, tanto, quasi in tutte le parti del mondo ed è veramente...il pubblico è stato sempre...usciva con un'altra visione del mondo, li facevamo entrare in un universo...ah mi fai venire voglia di ballare *Bosch*!

I: Dovresti!

V: Adoro il lavoro di Marie e sono molto felice di lavorare in compagnia...sono nove anni adesso entro nel mio decimo anno...ringrazio sempre il cielo, anche per me è un incontro artistico, è evidente...

I: Come è cambiata la tua percezione della danza, la tua esperienza della danza nell'entrare in compagnia con Marie?

V: Eh io avevo venticinque anni e vengo dal balletto...però il mio rapporto con il balletto non è un rapporto traumatizzante, anzi, perché ho avuto un'insegnante che mi ha seguita dai 5 ai 18 anni e mi ha amata, tanto. È stata anche severa, devo dire, mi ha dato una buona tecnica, però non mi sono mai sentita denigrata, inferiore, è sempre stato un bel rapporto. Quindi io il balletto lo ho sempre visto come una cosa buona, cosa che non vale per molte danzatrici perché sono traumatizzate, perché ci sono delle pratiche che non sono *healthy* eh, sane, però io quando sono arrivata in compagnia...ero felice prima di tutto di iniziare in un nuovo continente una carriera, ero affascinata da Marie, e lo sono ancora. Dicevo: "Madonna questa donna è così forte, ma allo stesso tempo così femminile, sensuale, e la sua forza è nella sua femminilità". La sua intelligenza la vedevo luminosa, per me è una cosa che non avevo mai... l'osservavo e mi chiedevo chi fosse. Quindi per me l'inizio è stato particolare, volevo conoscerla perché dicevo non ho mai visto una donna così luminosa, intelligente, umana. Perché Marie, il modo in cui ci dà delle correzioni, il modo in cui si avvicina a noi a livello artistico, c'è un'umanità, un'intelligenza...è una donna intelligente...ancora dopo nove anni ho il piacere di passare il tempo con lei in studio. Ti rendi conto di quanto il suo genio è presente, è illuminata, non so come dire...e quindi la danza di conseguenza. Marie non l'ho vista tanto perché lei è occupata nelle sue cose, però l'ho ritrovata, la sua essenza e la sua energia nelle sue coreografie. Ma ti devo dire, fisicamente il mio corpo è fatto per il lavoro di Marie, quindi all'inizio ho dovuto fare degli aggiustamenti ma poi ho trovato il mio cammino, la mia Valeria all'interno del lavoro di Marie. E questa è stata la chiave. Perché se tu cerchi di trovare quello che Marie vuole senza mettere te stesso oppure cercando di copiare il passato, le persone che sono venute nel passato, non sarai mai felice, Marie non sarà contenta. E io ho trovato la chiave quando ho detto: "ok, questa sono io, questo è il mio lavoro". Arriva verso il terzo anno forse, quarto anno, quando tu dici "ok, questo è il lavoro di Marie, adesso ci metto il mio". Ed è lì dove poi è stato un incontro più profondo. Ci metti tempo, perché comunque ci vuole tempo. Il lavoro è complesso, la relazione è complessa, perché tu sei un'artista e lei è un'artista, vi dovete conoscere e come

in qualsiasi relazione, bisogna fidarsi e poi trovare, e poi dopo la vita fa anche. Quindi io credo che la danza sia connessa anche alla relazione umana. E quindi più con il tempo ho instaurato una relazione umana e sincera con Marie, più la mia danza e il mio lavoro, e il contatto con la danza, il lavoro, è diventato più profondo.

I: E con gli altri ballerini della compagnia che tipo di scambio c'è?

V: Mah, in realtà sono cambiate due generazioni. Una generazione completa è partita. Sai, all'inizio avevo 25 anni, imparavo, quindi per me erano tutti dei geni, erano fantastici, io ho imparato tantissimo all'inizio, poi pian piano i ragazzi venivano e mi son trovata io a dover insegnare agli altri. Ed è interessante perché insegno quello che mi è stato insegnato, quindi una specie di passaggio generazionale. Passiamo molto tempo insieme, perché in *tournee* stiamo sempre insieme, è un lavoro sempre a contatto, quindi ci vogliamo bene ma per me personalmente, quando ho un momento per esser sola e fare la mia vita me la faccio... Sono un po' come la famiglia.

I: Certo... E invece, se dovessi descrivere il corpo che Marie forma nella danza, anche cose tecniche, per esempio l'uso della schiena...quali punti metteresti in risalto, immagina che me lo devi insegnare.

V: Eh, allora, io ti direi, le cose principali: la connessione terra-cielo. Questa connessione, questo essere *grounded* con la parte...specialmente i piedi e il bacino connessi alla terra, una colonna fluida e una connessione al cielo, per cui di conseguenza avere un corpo come un canale. Il corpo è visto come un passaggio di energia e quindi questa è la base. Un danzatore di Marie, l'ideale è che ci sia una fluidità energetica, che tu non vedi cose [fa un movimento rigido]. Lei se ne accorge subito, dà dei nuovi *input* per creare comunque il movimento. Poi, il lavoro della colonna, della voce. Questa è la base. Poi questa ipersensibilità nell'ascolto, nell'ascolto interiore quindi nei pensieri e nell'accettazione e nella trasformazione nel momento presente...quindi è un po' come la traduzione, sì, è uguale in realtà, c'è una connessione vedi, perché cosa accade spesso, specialmente negli ultimi lavori di Marie ma anche quando facciamo delle improvvisazioni, c'è per esempio... Adesso sto qui, se dovessi iniziare ad improvvisare, osservo: il verde degli alberi ma allo stesso tempo il suono degli uccelli, e quindi questi sono già due *input* che vengono da fuori e che mi fanno connettere con il movimento. Poi c'è il cane che passa, vedi il mio sguardo si muove e naturalmente la mia mano si è mossa [allunga il braccio sinistro in avanti creando un angolo di 30 gradi all'altezza del gomito ed un altro di 45 gradi con la mano a paletta rivolta a destra], e il mio piede ha fatto

un piccolo arco [il piede è leggermente rivolto a destra]. Quindi c'è questa ipersensibilità di essere nel momento presente con tutto quello che accade, quindi c'è un'apertura dei sensi a 360 gradi, quindi questo è un po' il danzatore di Marie, questo corpo pronto, c'è sempre un essere pronto, sensibile, all'ascolto...senza giudizio perché non è soltanto il bello, lei dice, ci può essere anche il terribile, che va bene, deve venir fuori, io non sono una che predilige solo il bello, ci sono delle cose terrificanti che esistono e che metto in scena, non c'è problema, non mi giudico per questo. Però naturalmente l'idea è sempre di lasciare qualcosa di positivo e luminoso, tu non vai mai a casa dopo un lavoro di Marie che dici "mamma mia, che *pesantum*", vai sempre a casa con qualcosa che hai compreso o che ti ha mosso...Poi che altro, il lavoro con la colonna è alla base, il lavoro con gli organi, la conversazione, questa idea di conversare con il pubblico, c'è un ritmo...Quando io danzo ci sono delle pause, dei silenzi, proprio come quando parli, quindi questo può essere connesso al tuo lavoro. C'è sempre...una verità che viene da un ritmo interiore ma che è ben...non è sempre uguale, c'è un ritmo che viene seguito in una conversazione in modo che il pubblico è attento, un po' come tu sei attenta adesso che io parlo, se parlassi sempre così [inizia a parlare velocemente con lo stesso tono] tu saresti addormentata sul divano cioè dopo un'ora dici "vattene, per favore"...la colonna, la voce, il ritmo, connessione terra-cielo fondamentale, questa...questa energia che è fluida, per esempio in *Sacre* c'è una grande *puissance* sul bacini, questa energia sessuale...che poi non è energia sessuale, c'è comunque un grande lavoro del bacino, nell'*Après Midi d'un Faune* uguale, c'è questo bacino che è sempre comunque..non incavato...vedi questo è il lavoro di Marie, nulla è costretto, è *direzionato*. É fina fina marie, non ti... [fa il gesto di spingere] no...*la direzione*. C'è sempre un'organicità all'interno.

I: E questa cosa che mi dicevi del dialogo con il pubblico, immagino che cambi molto anche in base al contesto in cui performi, in base al luogo, al tipo di teatro...

V: Sì...ci sono dei pubblici che sono molto generosi, altri molto timidi, ma il pubblico in generale io lo trovo sempre fantastico...A volte può capitare che un'*audienza* è strana, ma è perchè è un *audience* che non è abituata a questo tipo di lavoro, perchè è un lavoro che ti emoziona...io ho un amico che non ha mai visto danza, è venuto a vedere dice: "Valeria, io a un certo punto me ne dovevo andare, avevo bisogno di andarmene perchè non sapevo cosa accadeva all'interno del mio corpo, non sapevo se piangere, ridere, ero completamente confuso"

I: Wow, bello...

V: Quindi probabilmente...a volte abbiamo dei pubblici più silenziosi, a volte più attenti e poi ci sono dei pubblici che sono con noi, che ridono...però dipende anche molto dalla cultura del paese in cui andiamo. In Giappone sono molto tranquilli, non applaudono, per dirti. In Cina ti mangiano le patatine in faccia, anche in India, in Messico abbiamo dei telefoni accesi...tutto può accadere! La Francia, l'Europa ci adora, l'Europa adora il lavoro di Marie, Marie è acclamata, abbiamo 5 minuti di applausi...poi sono così abituata a questo che quasi...però in realtà è vero che è una bella domanda, il pubblico. Perché una parte di me danza perché mi piace, non lo faccio per il pubblico, lo faccio per me. Certo il pubblico è importante perché principalmente io ho bisogno di questo. Non mi sono mai posta il problema. Alla fine dei conti però è sempre perché io ho bisogno di fare questa cosa, io sono chiamata a fare questa cosa che è danzare. A prescindere dal pubblico, è più grande di me.

I: Com'è stato durante il confinamento, il non poter andare in studio...

V: È stata dura. Mi sono allenata come sempre, in casa. È stato particolare perché anche se mi sono allenata tanto e in maniera diversa, ho potuto fare degli allenamenti in maniera specifica, cose che non riesco a fare quando lavoro con Marie, per esempio. Quindi mi sono detta che alcune cose le posso fare ancora a livello tecnico come quando avevo vent'anni, altre...ho potuto fare un *check-in* delle mie attitudini, ho fatto...e poi ho scoperto delle cose. In realtà io non amo tanto prendere delle lezioni a meno che non siano delle cose imposte dalla compagnia, perché amo fare il mio lavoro personale e allenarmi personalmente, a volte comunque ho qualcuno che mi segue in maniera personale. Però sono molto nel mio universo, mi piace...è spirituale anche per me. Non è soltanto andare ad allenarmi, fare la classe, stare insieme...la danza ha un contesto per me molto più intimo e che quindi non mi trovo a volte nell'allenarmi con altre persone. Quindi ho scoperto delle cose di cui ho bisogno e in cui sono capace, come gestire il mio umore...anche perché stavo sempre da sola, e non è semplice. Però ho avuto degli obiettivi, ho fatto delle ricerche a livello di danza somatica...ho avuto il tempo di andare all'interno e scoprire cosa mi fa star bene, andare all'interno...ho sperimentato delle cose, ho trovato delle belle cose, anche per poter insegnare in realtà. Ho insegnato a un *petit*...un piccolo gruppo di persone che non fanno danza e quindi per me è stato molto bello questo, perché ti rendi conto di come...mi sono resa conto di come è possibile poter dare...poter insegnare con delle immagini più particolari...delle immagini semplici che puoi dare, come puoi gestire l'energia da lontano delle persone e canalizzarla...

I: E quindi hai insegnato anche attraverso internet?

V: Sì, però non a pagamento, veramente una cosa gratuita per persone che non sono danzatori. Volevo farlo perché avevo bisogno di dare dei *cues*, che tutti possono accedere al movimento...naturalmente non facevo delle cose *crazy*, però li ho sempre trattati in maniera professionale ed è stato più un...parlavo mentre danzavo e mentre canalizzavo l'energia di tutti...è un po' strana come cosa però era...in francese lo facevo, era un continuo sentire mentre parlavo e mentre gestivo, ed era tutto programmato per un'ora e dieci.

I: Bello, interessantissimo.

V: Sì perché avevo una linea che mi preparavo durante la settimana, degli organi, diciamo, connessione bocca-stomaco, e dico "ok, iniziamo seduti, chiudiamo gli occhi, respiriamo", quindi facevo tutto il processo della respirazione, è una specie di conferenza del movimento fatta nello stesso momento in cui tutti si muovevano...no, interessante

I: Molto...e la cosa della lingua per te, con la compagnia parlate in francese?

V: Francese, è obbligatorio

I: E parlate per tutto il tempo del lavoro in francese

V: È obbligatorio però a volte...nelle pause, se non capiscono...in inglese. Poi ho un amico italiano che è entrato in compagnia da due anni quindi con lui in italiano quando possibile. Però in francese, francese...infatti adesso se vado a insegnare in biennale, se devo parlare in inglese, devo un attimo rimettermi nell'inglese...però quando tu insegni *live*, anche se la parola non è giusta, il corpo dice così tanto, che è una forma energetica, quindi...è un po' come la traduzione, non soltanto comprendi la parola ma c'è tutto un *layer* energetico, movimento, *feeling*, come tu lo ricevi, è così enorme a livello comunicativo che non ho paura...

I: Un'altra cosa che mi interessa dal punto di vista della lingua, io mi ritrovo che quando imparo un'altra lingua o vado a vivere in un altro paese...è come se scoprissi anche un'altra parte di me, nell'apprendere una nuova lingua, e non so se hai vissuto un'esperienza simile? Hai scoperto qualcosa di te, una Valeria francese...

V: Sì, sì! C'è una parte di me francese, delle *nuances* che non ho quando parlo in italiano. Perché io il francese lo ho imparato con il mio ex innamorato, e quindi di conseguenza è...prima di tutto ho imparato delle cose con lui, e poi mi ha lasciato delle cose personali, perché io a volte faccio...cioè la cosa più semplice, tu a volte fai la traduzione letterale dall'italiano...e mi ha lasciato dei termini miei che non mi ha mai corretto e che sono tipici...Lui è un insegnante,

però alcune cose non me le ha mai corrette, perché fanno parte della mia personalità. Infatti ho una amica che ride tanto...Ad esempio invece di dire *le buche*, che è il tronco tagliato, ho detto *la buche* che è la macellaia...però allo stesso tempo è il mio modo di essere, il modo di parlare, è una convenzione...all'inizio mi vergognavo degli errori che facevo, però in realtà poi ho capito il perché delle scelte che faccio a livello di vocabolario, e dico "sì, non è corretto, però questa cosa qui mi rappresenta di più e la tengo, non importa se rideranno di me però io la sento così".

I: Sì sì, è interessante, e poi vedi anche delle cose che...in effetti se il tronco è tagliato qualcuno lo avrà tagliato

V: Sì, sì, poi si trovano delle connessioni, dei collegamenti. Però ovvio, quando scrivo una e-mail ufficiale mi faccio aiutare.

I: E come hai iniziato a lavorare con Marie? Ultima domanda che sennò poi ti esaurisco...

V: No, no tranquilla, chiedimi. Vuoi sapere come è successo? Io ero a Napoli. Ho sempre voluto ballare da quando ho cinque anni, e vengo da una famiglia che non sono artisti. Quindi per i miei genitori e la famiglia era un hobby. Io da quando avevo cinque anni sapevo che avrei fatto questo nella vita. "Va beh Valeria, Valeria sogna..". E all'età di venti anni ho iniziato a fare dei piccoli progetti con la biennale di Venezia, ho lavorato con il direttore della Biennale di Venezia, però non era una compagnia...in Italia non esistono compagnie veramente solide di danza contemporanea. Avevo un caro amico, Matteo, che viveva a Amsterdam, mi chiamò e mi disse "Valeria, ho visto un bando di audizioni per la compagnia Marie Chouinard". Io ero a Napoli e non conoscevo la compagnia...io avevo quattrocento euro, era il 2011, non lavoravo, era piena estate e mio padre mi ha detto che se non finisco l'università devo andare via. Mio padre mi aveva fatto un ultimatum, avrei dovuto finire l'università di economia, mi mancavano tre esami. Io sono andata a Amsterdam, e dico, "senti Matteo..." Avevo trovato una casa orribile, con i topi, c'erano le trappole dei topi...la mia idea era prendere lezioni a Amsterdam e cercare di trovare lavoro a Amsterdam. 20 anni, pensi così...adesso all'età di 34 dico "ero proprio senza arte né parte". Dopo dieci giorni c'era l'audizione per Marie, io dico "Matteo, vengo a Amsterdam, andiamo a farci la vacanza in Austria (l'audizione era a Vienna) e ci facciamo pure l'audizione di Marie Chouinard". Figurati se io pensavo che mi avrebbe preso...Faceva due audizioni, una qua con cento persone e una là con altre cento persone, gente da tutto il mondo per un posto—per sostituire la ragazza incinta, quella lì degli occhi. Io e Matteo decidiamo di fare l'audizione e poi andare a fare uno spritz, capisci...ahahah a

venticinque anni. Io mi metto dietro, cioè, “all’audizione chi si mette in prima fila? Sei pazzo! Cento persone in prima fila, vuoi essere fucilato?” Col mio numero...Marie entra, non ci eravamo ancora mossi, entra e fa il giro della sala, viene dietro fino al mio lato...non ci eravamo ancora mossi. Si prende il mio numero. Facciamo l’audizione, dopo mezz’ora su cento che eravamo ne rimaniamo quaranta. Butta tutti fuori. E dopo un’altra mezz’oretta Marie mi chiama al tavolo e dice “Senti, come ti chiami?” “Valeria”, “Da dove vieni?” “Napoli... neanche Italia, Napoli!”. “Parli inglese?” “No”, “Parli francese?” “No”, lei dice: “Vuoi imparare il francese?”, dico “Certo...guarda anche in un mese!” Quando mai impari una lingua in un mese? Ahah...Io ero proprio *naïve*, lei dice “allora sei disposta a venire a Montreal fra dieci giorni, inizi in compagnia?” Dieci giorni a Montreal, avevo le valigie di qua...faccio “Certo!”. Dice: “allora parla con la direttrice e ti fa firmare il contratto”. Dopo dieci giorni, ero a Montreal! Con due valigie, senza parlare l’inglese o il francese, perduta, completamente persa in questa terra, però era agosto, quindi caldo, bellissimo, perfetto...e da lì è iniziato così.

I: Wow, bellissimo

V: Sì, quel giorno che ho vinto un’audizione son tornata a casa...guardavo il soffitto in mutande...ti giuro ero sconvolta, stavo così, per ore

I: Lo shock...così inaspettato

V: Ti cambia la vita...Io pensavo allo spritz, cioè...e questa è Marie. Una che sa, che guarda l’umano. A lei non interessa...lei ha bisogno che il suo danzatore sia tecnicamente pronto, però poi lo vuole modellare, non vuole che sia troppo tecnico perché poi è difficile entrarci dentro...

I: Ti fa capire come realmente è istintiva, è venuta da te prima ancora...

V: Eh lei a volte lo fa, è una sua pratica, vuole vedere direttamente a livello di stile, capisci quanto è istintiva? Come fai? Cento persone, stavo dietro...ero sconvolta. Una bella cosa. Poi chiaro nella vita non sono sempre rose e fiori, ci sono alti e bassi però c’è una verità dietro, c’è un incontro...Non so se ti è mai capitato, ti incontri con una persona, devi fare un pezzo di strada insieme...Io ci credo molto in questo anche perché mi è capitato due volte a livello artistico, mi è capitato anche con il direttore della Biennale di Venezia, il primo, Ismael Ivo. Il migliore coach avuto nella mia vita.

I: C’è una coreografia di Marie che per te è LA coreografia?

V: Ogni coreografia mi ha dato qualcosa. Veramente, è stato un pezzo di vita che ho dato e che ho messo fuori, un pezzo di me. Ovviamente, parlo delle coreografie che abbiamo creato insieme, poi ci sono delle coreografie di repertorio fatte prima che arrivassi e mi adatto, non è la mia *fisicalità* però mi adatto e la trovo. Però di quelle che abbiamo creato insieme naturalmente ho dei legami più particolari...non ti so dire quale è la migliore perché sono delle sfumature di me, sono diversi colori...

I: Volevo sapere, c'è una differenza quando create a partire da zero o quando prendete un'opera tipo il quadro di *Bosch*, c'è una differenza nella maniera in cui lei si approccia e create?

V: Sì, sicuramente. Lei ha dei flash...per questo pezzo che stiamo facendo lei ha avuto un flash e ha deciso che sarei stata io a farlo. Lo fa con le punte. Dopo settimane mi chiama una mattina perché aveva visto il posto. Poi ci siamo viste in questo posto e lei ha detto che ha connesso ad un libro che ha letto quando aveva 15 anni. Però non ha lavorato la storia del libro ma quello che ha sentito e come si è rivista in quel personaggio. Quindi avevamo già il posto, il personaggio, il sentire di questo personaggio, e mi ha detto immagina di essere in questo posto e questo sentire. Quindi io ho iniziato a lavorare su ciò, poi hai degli elementi...io anche faccio delle *proposizioni*, lei è aperta... “utilizza questo albero, vai là dietro, che ne pensi di questo”. Piano piano ci sono delle cose che la toccano. Lei filma, torna a casa...lavora molto con il video Marie

I: Anche per i pezzi in studio?

V: Sì, video video, video...se li rivede e si ricorda di che cosa ha sentito e riuole quella cosa con quella *fisicalità*, con quell'angolo...Poi è precisa eh, là è proprio precisa, perché la seconda fase, una volta che lei... Inizialmente è aperta poi inizia la fase in cui lei dice “ok, io voglio quest'immagine, questi tre movimenti, con questo ritmo”. Quindi inizia a diventare più tecnico. Per cui, la fase creativa dipende dal lavoro ma è sempre supportata da...la musica in questo caso di Luis è arrivata prima perché c'è stata una collaborazione con l'orchestra Metropoli, quindi è arrivata prima. Però lei non si è connessa subito alla musica perché...vedi, prima non era troppo connessa, poi ha rivisto il movimento con il video, ha detto “ok, questo funziona”. Marie è molto visuale, ha bisogno di vedere, rivedere, risentire...connettere il suono, farsi il suo film, lei ha bisogno di farsi il suo piccolo spettacolo per sé, sentirlo...se non lo sente lo cancella. E quindi questo è l'approccio, però dipende, per esempio per *Bosch* aveva questa commissione quindi aveva il tableau, se parti dal tableau è fatta. Per *Henry Michaux* è venuto fuori dopo anni, lei aveva questo libro di *Henry Michaux* sulla scrivania per anni. Ha iniziato

con un assolo su Carol di un'ora, poi ha detto "no, lo facciamo di gruppo". Però è arrivata dopo al processo, quindi lei processa in maniera onesta e in maniera anche lenta, le cose arrivano calme a lei...Però poi quando arriva è forte, è un flash, e quel flash lo mantiene sempre, fino alla fine. Questo è il suo talento, non molla mai, non ha mai dubbi...ce l'ha dei dubbi, però non lo lascia... quel flash che ha avuto non lo lascia, lo segue. E questo è *inspirante*.

I: Sì, molto coraggiosa.

V: Sì, Marie è coraggiosa. Assume. Assume fino alla fine. Quella donna è una donna veramente forte, si è costruita da sola.

I: L'ultima cosa che ti volevo chiedere è se appunto, da quello che mi dici della maniera in cui costruite, se si può parlare di collaborazione, se è un processo collaborativo.

V: Sì, assolutamente. E anche Marie l'ha detto, a me piace lavorare con i danzatori perchè è una collaborazione. Però lei ha bisogno che la decisione finale sia sua, personale. Poi noi facciamo delle *proposizioni* e lei è apertissima, è sempre all'ascolto, ed è molto umile su questo perché sa che le portiamo delle cose interessanti e molto sensibili. Qualsiasi *proposizione* che ho fatto a Marie, anche se non era proprio interessante, non mi ha mai denigrata, mi ha sempre detto grazie.

I: È un dialogo che avete.

V: Sì, io ho questo dialogo, non tutti lo hanno così. È diverso a seconda del tempo ma anche a seconda di come tu...Marie è una che ti lascia libera di poter costruire quello che hai bisogno di poter costruire, sia a livello artistico che con lei, io credo questo. Perché un altro *switch* che ho fatto a livello di carriera è stato quando ho capito che lei non era lì presente tutto il tempo. Questo lo capì dopo sei mesi e ci soffrì molto, perché pensavo di fare un percorso artistico con lei e vedersi tutti i giorni, invece no. Lei dice, se tu vuoi, creati da sola come io mi sono creata, io ti do il materiale, ti do uno spazio, fai quello che vuoi, creati. Per me è stata dura e poi ho detto: "se voglio restare qui ed evolvermi a livello artistico, lo faccio". Quindi presi una scelta. Poi c'è stato un momento in cui ho avuto una piccola crisi a livello personale e non sapevo se andar via, però poi c'è stato un richiamo, a livello umano, non ero pronta a non poterla vedere tutti i giorni. E quindi ho capito che avevo bisogno di instaurare qualcosa di più profondo a livello umano e quindi insieme stiamo andando in quella direzione. In realtà Marie si adatta a come tu ti poni, è uno specchio. Quindi da quando sono cambiata all'interno di me, e ho deciso di voler avere un bel rapporto, anche a livello umano, io voglio parlare come parlo con te o con

chiunque...perché non è semplice, non tutti hanno un rapporto come l'ho io. Però l'ho lavorato, l'ho voluto e lei in realtà è aperta. Perché ho pensato un giorno quando tornerò a Napoli, sarò vecchia e non danzerò più, voglio ricordarmi che Marie ha fatto parte di me, del mio mondo ed è stato importante. Non voglio avere *regrets*. A livello umano. Voglio vivermela.

I: E lavori anche con altre compagnie o...

V: L'esclusività l'ho con Marie, noi abbiamo garantite 30 settimane l'anno con lei, minimo, quindi quando mi dà lavoro io devo stare ai suoi orari e quello che dice lei. Se ho dei periodi *off* posso lavorare con chi voglio però personalmente faccio più dei progetti personali. Sono molto selettiva, non mi piace tutto, anche perché ci tengo alla mia immagine. Quindi prima di lasciarmi andare ci penso. Sto facendo delle cose personali che mi rallegrano molto, per cui ho dei ritorni anche di ricerca, anche se non sono a livello economico, mi nutrono.

We finish the interview here, I stop recording but we keep chatting, we touch on personal topics, then naturally the conversation return to the choreography. Valeria starts talking, then she stops and asks me if I want to record this. I start another recording. Valeria resumes from where she had left.

V: Volevo dirti che lei, quando ha visto il quadro ha trovato... a parte che lo ha trovato estremamente attuale, non si vede che ha 500 anni, è molto attuale. Spesso ci hanno chiesto, cosa pensa lei dell'inferno, ha voluto rappresentare l'inferno come una cosa tragica...Lei dice no, per me l'inferno di Bosch fa ridere. Quasi lo reputa come una quotidianità, quello che viviamo oggi, quotidiano ma non c'è dramma, la realtà. E dice che si è connessa all'intelligenza estrema di questo artista, che lo ha sentito molto vicino al suo modo di pensare, di connettersi al mondo e vedere il mondo.

I: Sì, è una cosa che ho pensato quando ho visto che faceva Bosch.

V: Lei si è sentita connessa a lui, l'ha toccata, ha detto "credo che sarebbe stato un mio amico".

I: Sì, sì...perché anno degli stili simili, ci son delle cose...anche lui ti mostra la realtà con altri occhi, in maniera inaspettata e anche molto libera, c'è di tutto

V: Sì anche nell'inferno, tu non puoi dire che...è pauroso.

I: È ironico anche

V: Anche ironico! C'è l'uccello con la cosa in bocca, è... particolare. E quello con le note musicali nel sedere? C'è una posa nell'inferno, c'è il sedere con una trascrizione delle note musicali, noi un giorno abbiamo fatto una ricerca e c'è un'artista che ha composto le note che erano sul sedere di questo personaggio!

I: Ah...Questo non lo sapevo!

V: È veramente interessante, se vedi nell'inferno...è talmente un mondo. Vedi ci sono le note musicali ed è stato composto. E anche se vedi i personaggi, di *gender*, non c'è tanta differenza tra uomo e donna, sono quasi degli esseri. E questo, anche lei ha voluto utilizzare il nudo...beh questa pittura bianca. Beh, è una trasposizione di quello che vediamo nel quadro, ma poi non c'è differenza fra uomo e donna. Degli esseri.

I: E avete utilizzato quella musica?

V: No, non credo. Qui c'è la musica di elicotteri [indica un punto preciso dell'inferno nel volantino]. L'inizio è un po' lirico...è bellissima la musica di Luis Dufort. Poi abbiamo fatto il *manege*, te lo ricordi? abbiamo utilizzato...in maniera molto semplice, diretta. Poi vedi questi animali, c'è stata una persona che mi ha chiesto ma perché non sono stati messi gli animali. Io dico: "ma quali animali?". Poi in realtà sono andata a rivedere e in realtà ci sono degli animali. Ma probabilmente è una questione di scelta, decidere di rappresentare gli uomini. E poi a livello di immagine quando viene proiettata, questo è il focus, non gli animali. Quindi ha fatto comunque una selezione. Poi vedi questa palla? Marie si è fatta venire delle palle...sai quelle che adesso utilizzano per il Covid? Avevamo una di queste, prima che arrivasse la bolla. Il suo modo di creare va a *steps*. Abbiamo provato con questa palla però non funzionava e poi si è fatta venire l'idea della grande bolla, e poi...è stata chiara come cosa. Si è fatta dare la bolla con il tubo, entriamo dentro, abbiamo trovato il modo di tenerla sempre...perché a volte si sgonfia, dipende dall'elettricità del posto dove siamo. Ci sono stati degli show che...mai sgonfiata del tutto però in alcuni show, in base all'elettricità e alla corrente...perché dipende dal paese dove vai! É live. L'utilizzo degli oggetti qua, Carol ti ha parlato di questo?

I: Sì, ha detto che avete riutilizzato degli oggetti che erano nello studio e che poi si riferiscono

V: Brava!

I: Questo e anche l'idea dell'oggetto come estensione, o come maniera intelligente. Marie ha bisogno che l'oggetto abbia un uso. Non puoi fare *n'emporte qui*. Anche se è l'inferno ci deve

essere una connessione intelligente, usarlo per fare qualcosa, altrimenti non è toccata e anzi...sono degli oggetti che lei ha utilizzato in altre creazioni, per lei non è facile accettare. Per lei personalmente ha avuto un significato in un'altra coreografia. Quindi sì, riutilizzarli...secondo me è stato catartico per lei. Prendere tutti questi simboli, di tutte le sue vecchie coreografie e riutilizzarli in maniera diversa. Per lei è stata una pulizia. Però devono sempre essere utilizzati in maniera intelligente. Non viene mai gettato un oggetto in scena, viene depositato, trascinato, spinto...c'è l'azione

I: C'è il rispetto

V: C'è l'intenzione...sì, il rispetto di quelle cose. Ci sono tante di quelle cose...non credevo che ci fossero tante cose. Ah, il fatto che non ha utilizzato mai un personaggio nero. Perché non aveva ancora un danzatore di colore...

V: Sì mi chiedevo questo, come cambia con il tempo...Perché i ballerini che c'erano quella volta

V: Eh certo...ma anche la situazione politica, cambia perché comunque il pubblico possono essere *affettés*.

I: Sì, ci sono degli aspetti politici.

V: E lei che non ha mai voluto applicarsi a livello politico deve iniziare a farlo adesso, e lei lo sa che deve iniziare a farlo. Perché se lasci perdere, perdi comunque posizione.

I: Sì esatto. Interessante e anche avendo un cast diverso...questi corpi nel quadro di Bosch hanno un'importanza e son stati letti in maniera diversa...Sarebbe interessante vedere più performances e vederla rifatta.

V: Speriamo che veniamo in Italia e ti invito, con molto piacere.

I: Mi ha detto Carol che lo avete fatto all'aperto?

V: Sì, a Bassano del Grappa lo abbiamo fatto all'aperto.

I: Che bello!

V: Sì però a volte dipende, perché il contesto non è dei migliori per farlo all'aperto ma ci siamo divertiti. Però è stato difficile perché non c'erano le docce. Ci vuole del tempo per levarti la pittura! Però lo abbiamo fatto all'aperto, è interessante ma ci sono molti problemi tecnici, la

proiezione, il suono, le entrate, le uscite, gli accessori, dove metterli...le quinte. Però ci siamo sempre adattati. Questo spettacolo è una questione di occhio, lei guarda questo, è una coreografia solo per gli occhi. Tu fai così (muove gli occhi a sinistra) è un *timing*, fai così... quindi il tempo che tu da lì passi a lì in maniera tranquilla, per la persona che va a vedere lo show, e poi che vedi entrare da là, passa da lì e va dall'altra parte, poi se vedi la tenda muoversi tu ti distrai, hai perso quello che sta accadendo lì... è tutto calcolato.

I: Sì, ed è difficile farlo in un posto in cui non hai il controllo su quello che succede.

Appendix 4: Interview with Luis Dufort (Compagnie Marie Chouinard)

I meet Luis Dufort on June 29, 2020. A new piece by Marie Chouinard will premiere at the Centre d'Art Contemporaine de Montreal the day after, with his music. We agreed to meet outside in my neighbourhood, and I invite him for a coffee and few snacks in my back garden, where we can talk quietly without interruptions. It's early afternoon, and I spent the morning trying to re-arrange my flight to Italy after the one I booked was cancelled, so I am quite distressed, but when Luis arrives and we sit down to talk, I manage to forget about it. We have a brief informal conversation; he asks me about my project, and I start explaining it and why I thought Marie's work was an interesting case study, how I understood it as a feminist rewriting.

L: Marie is not very political, I think she stuck very closely to how she felt, she saw the painting without any political agenda. That's the way I perceive it.

V: Yeah, I think that's also in construction with the audience, and whoever forms part of the audience...

L: True

V: Because for me that was striking, and also because I'm into feminist studies maybe, I can see the last part, Paradise, in those terms

L: Yeah

V: But maybe for someone else it would be different. And it is a conversation with us...But that painting...the performance...when I watched it, I was "all right", and I wrote the day after to the company thinking this is really something interesting

L: You saw it live?

V: Yeah, in Lisbon. And they had organised a cycle around Bosch for that season. From March on there were music, movies...

L: So, all kinds of different translations of the same work or different works by Bosch?

V: Yeah, well, there were different works, it was really trying to make different connections, there was a documentary on Bosch at some point, there was a conference, there were movies

that were related to the Seven Deadly Sins, and the same with the music...and also interesting because inside the performance she uses these eyes

L: Yeah

V: And you find that those eyes are important in another painting by Bosch, which is *The Seven Deadly Sins*

L: Yeah

V: So, there are these reverberations of...of meaning and references. But it was interesting to see that it was picked up by the Centro Cultural de Belém, it's where I watched it in Lisbon...and also with a translatorial eye, looking at it from the point of view of translation, I had this feeling that she was playing with it, even if she wasn't maybe, for me that was definitely... the first part it's really like a facing page translation, you have the text, you see what is being translated, you can see it performed by the dancers as it is, and then, when you move towards hell is confusing, and it's another type of translation, one that...I was also moving with them, wondering what was going on and confused...you are playing with trust in a way because I was trusting you, now I don't know if I can trust what I see, it doesn't correspond...and then in the end you have this other sort of engagement with the text and the multiplication of the bodies...that was all particularly striking.

L: On my side, this comes to the point where my relationship to Marie...when we do a new creation, we never think about the process, the meaning...I'm not saying I'm not thinking about it, or that she is not thinking about it, but we both don't really talk about it, it's very rough and we have this...an invented word, that we call *connettix*. Between us, we just have this kind of...I think we are both very sensuous, we both feel with our ears, with our eyes, and that way we are very close and we wanted to be...we have a feeling when it works and when it doesn't work. So, we talk about the mechanics and say "ok, this is too long", and this is very straight, we are not at all talking about meaning. It's very focused on what you see and hear

V: It's intuitive

L: Yeah...well, it's intuitive yeas and no, I don't like too much that word because I think...would you say that nature is intuitive? It's not intuitive, it's organised. It may look random, but it's really organised. So, I think that you have to be open-minded when you do

creation, so that you have this space where chaos and auto-organisation, auto-regulation inside a work...because it's a complex thing, it's a complex structure. And you must be humble enough to accept that you are not in total control of that work. That in itself a work has to grow, by itself, by its own structure. And the more the piece evolves, the more the piece tells you what to do and what to not do. Because it takes form in front of you and you have to be humble and open and see, "ok, even if I have an idea that intellectually would be nice to incorporate, but the work won't accept it" because it has already its own rules that are grown. So I think in this specific case, Bosch, one of the reasons why we didn't have a lot of talks like...in music we call it extra-musical, everything that relates to affect, that the music wants to translate or something that you want to translate that does not come from the music itself, it's called extramusical. In this case, everything was from within the Bosch piece. So, this acts exactly like the partition, like a score, and for her it was a score for the dance also. So, everything, the meaning of the piece, was already there in front of us and we never...I am talking on my side anyway, and we didn't have that talk with Marie, maybe I am wrong, maybe she has a political stance or something, I'm sure there is on her side, but we really tried to translate the painting in its roughness, it's beauty, in a sensuous way, the way we perceive it, the way we want to translate it.

V: And I was wondering how... just talking about the music, how do you start composing? Especially the music in Bosch but also can be extended in general. Were you inspired by the painting, did you have already some ideas or did you start from the videos that Marie was sending as they were putting the piece together...at what point and in which configuration?

L: Well, we always have this workflow, where she is in the studio, she is working without music, or sometimes she uses music of other people just to add a kind of vibe or something. So, normally how we work is that she in the studio and she is filming the dancers, and then when she sees something nice happening, she calls me and she is all excited, like, "Oh, Luis, Luis, I have this project...". But in that case, it was a bit different because normally she has her own stuff in her head, or sometimes she uses...there's a piece called *Henry Michaux*, that's another kind of translation, literally a translation of the painting, like, literally, they are doing the scores...So in those cases it's different. In most of the cases, I'm not in her head, so I don't have any...she just talks to me and then I just make music with the video that I see a bit there, and most of the times I present music that I am composing for myself, actually. Where I am into my own process and then I make her listen, "this is what I do right now, maybe I can

change something”. So it’s not always specifically for the dance, sometimes it comes from my own little drawer and then we do it, we construct like this. I make music, she dances on it, then we adapt, maybe something it’s too long, “change this or that” and then we construct work like that. But for Bosch it was a bit different because we both had the same reference, which was the painting. So, I was as advanced as her in a way because we had the same score. So, the painting for me was...The time when the painting was made it was completely...It’s crazy when you look at the painting and what’s in there for the time, there’s a lot of taboo and there’s a lot...because of religion and everything. And the roughness and the fact that he could have painted that, is quite amazing. So, there’s something that is very bold for the time, and I wanted to translate that also into the music where, like in the *Énfer*, the music was completely complex and very intense...very contemporary, very written also, serious. So, to me it was a way to...because contemporary music is very underground right now. In the 40’s when composers rejected tonal systems and said, “we don’t do harmony anymore, we are just going to use sounds and noise”, the general public really...you don’t hear a lot of composers right now. If you go to an orchestra now, it’s all people who have been dead for two hundred years...Beethoven, Mozart, we all know those composers but actual contemporary composers, there are tons of them, they are alive, but they are not played in bigger orchestras. So, that was for me a way to present this music that nobody really knows, in front of their faces, with no concern at all about...giving the audience no break at all. Because I could do it, because it was going with the painting. So, we normally don’t do...I think, in my artistic process I rarely...if there’s something that is, let’s say, really intense with the dance, I’ll go the other way with the music sometimes, just to do a counterpoint or have more depth to what you see. But with that scene which is so intense and with the music that goes in the same way...both go on the same way; it was a cool thing to do. So, it was way over the top, absolutely. But it does also act as an important part of the piece because if I would not go that way, so intense, then the third movement, would not be so releasing. So, the contrast was really important, so afterwards I can go very minimal and you are not bored.

V: Yeah, it was like a shower...

L: yeah...and the contrast in the music was also important I think, because there is a contrast in the painting.

V: Which is something interesting in the order that she used for the performance, it’s even starker this contrast because she started from the central panel and then she went hell and

paradise, so the contrast is very stark and that's echoed in the music. And as for the first part, what was your inspiration for the music of the first part? Is it related to the time of the composition of Bosch's painting?

L: Yes! It's true. That's another thing, to me, it was important to...because I really did it for other pieces of Marie...we did *Orphée et Eurydice*, which is mythological, where I use a lot of old instruments, acoustic instruments from Greece. And now I use more music from the Renaissance, and I wanted to give that vibe. Because in those years, these instruments are really cool, interesting. Before everything got modelled in a kind of occidental way, there were a lot of instruments that sounded weird that disappeared. So, to me, to bring back those sounds, it was inspiring. And it was a way to connect. To put the people in the vibe of that. A kind of respect, also. So that way, ok we pay respect for the time period but then we are going from that period and into 2000...so there's a lot of sampling of those kinds of instruments and that's...also those instruments bring back a kind of...for the general public, that doesn't know much about these instruments...it brings us to a vibe of ceremony. There's something ceremonial about it, something calming but also spiritual I would say, because of the voice...of the way I use the harmony, which is ancient also...so there is a vibe that's going towards that relaxing, mystical, spiritual kind of thing

V: Which then comes back in the end

L: Yeah, exactly.

V: And, as for the vocal work you did with Valeria, because she was having this performance, she said that she also put it... had a dramaturgy of it and she was working with you as well for that. Can you tell me a bit more about it?

L: Well Marie is always very picky about the use of voice. She always uses voice in all of her works. This was a bit complex, in the sense that Marie was really picky about that and...now we get in another kind of complexity which is reproducing what I do in the studio and when they go on tour with people and everything. So, to me it was important to have something that's very simple to use, so I bought a software and I use different kind of plugs in where I change her pitch...I put a lot of effects so that she sounds pretty much like...something that is not totally human.

V: Yeah. It's visceral in a way, you feel it in the guts and it's at the same time beyond

L: Yeah, so for this it was about having something organic, that comes from the voice of a female but she doesn't sound as a female, it can be a male, an animal...if you close your eyes I'm not sure what it is.

V: Yeah, this makes me think about...what I see in the work of Marie Chouinard, there's always this sort of transformation, metamorphoses, becoming of bodies

L: Yeah

V: Which not necessarily is related to a meaning but are bodies that can become whatever. And so, it's interesting because it offers huge, endless possibilities of being. And even looking at the figures and people who populate the painting, they are just embodied as being, it is not so important what they are, and they can change...so it is interesting that in the use of the voice there is this idea. And how long have you been working with Marie? I know it's been many years, but how did you start working together? I was curious.

L: Ah, that was just...random thing, the normal story, which is always kind of random. I was a student, I was an undergrad in those years, beginning my undergrads, and one of my best friends was working with the sound technicians of Marie Chouinard, for a piece called *L'amande et le Diamant*.

V: Ah yes, I love that one.

L: That was more than twenty years ago, I think. Dancers had some rings, and sending wireless some midi-notes, which is information to trigger a sampler. So, they would do this and then you would hear a song, a sound, like a *ding, ding ding*. Which is kind of a corny idea, but anyway, that was twenty years ago. So, I knew nothing about that, and one day I went to, you know, bring some CDs to some of my friends. And I didn't know that, but my friend had the task of putting the song into a sampler, working with the sound guy at the company. So, I went there, and they were both there. The sound guy is called Eddie Freedman, he did a lot of sound conception for Marie. Not musically but technically, putting speakers and stuff like that. I went there and the sampler that they had there, I had the same at home and I am kind of a nerd with machines and they were struggling to put sound there, they were like sweating, they didn't know what they were doing and I just said, "Hey guys, you just have to do this and that" and then the sound man, Eddie, saw me and said "ok, you have to come to the studio". So, my first thing with Marie was as a programmer. Because after that, it's nice to have sound that makes

ding ding, but then you want to change the sound, to mute it, to multiply...so I ended up doing a programme. So, Marie learnt to know me, and she liked me a lot. So, because of the technical prowess in that piece, I did the tour with the company and I got to know the dancers, and the dancers liked me a lot...you know, I was young, I was happy to be there, it was a good vibe. And she knew that I was studying composition and I had just won an international prize for one of my compositions and she knew about it so she... she had some solos to do, she had a first day view big show at the *Musée d'Art Contemporain* where she was doing some solos...So, she gave me the opportunity to compose for those 2 or 3 short solos, really short. I think she wanted to test me out also. And from there we just kind of kicked off. So, all the original music, I'm the one who makes it. She has another couple of collaborators, she has collaborated with another guy before me, he's called Robert Racine. He's more a conceptual artist who also makes music and she made some collaboration with him, but since then I always make the music.

V: And do you also work with other people in other projects or?

L: Oh yeah yeah. With dance I mostly work with Marie. I worked with another choreographer, but just two pieces...one is called *Mon Petit*. But with Marie, she keeps me quite...we have a lot of jobs to do and because it's been so long, I like to keep it exclusive with her in some ways. I might do other projects eventually but...for dance is that. But I do music for films, I do my own compositions, I do also audio-visual works, my own 3D kind of visuals with sound and everything and I teach at the conservatory.

V: And did you ever work together for the visual composition as well? Because I know that she is very visual in the way she works.

L: I never did a visual for her, we almost did something together visually for a piece that she is doing right now, but she decided to put the visual aside, which is very simple. She did the visual of that...but no, I never did video for her yet. [In a chat we have after the interview, Luis corrects himself: Actually, I remembered that I did a video work for her *Cantique no. 2*, I also did the programme which is a granular synthesis. And a declination to an interactive installation in *Cantique no. 3*.]

V: Would you say that the other projects you have dialogue with what you do with Marie?

L: Yeah, absolutely, as I said, I compose my own music and a lot of my own music...like, she calls me, sometimes it's very fast. She thinks music can be composed, I don't know, I work very fast and I am very efficient when I work, but one of the reasons I can be very fast is that I have always a lot of material from my own stuff. So, when she calls me and she says, "I need it in two weeks"...just for the piece tomorrow, she called me three weeks ago and she wanted to have thirty minutes, and I said, I have a new album coming out, I can take some stuff from there...so everything is into that relationship, because...well, sometimes, even for me, *Henry Michaux* is heavy metal music sample that I use and I love heavy metal and I use it...so to me it was a nice opportunity to do a piece. When I presented that to Marie, I thought she was not going to like it and she was "Yeah"! So, it's completely...it's very intense, this piece is very intense. And also...I would say, what was most of a challenge was the *Variations Goldberg (Body Remix)*, because that was very specific and I was not smashing, like, Sebastian Bach music on my own so...to really work with Bach and the interpretation of Bach, putting an axe in there and cut it and everything...that was something that was really made for the company, that had not much to do with my own universe. But it was really nice. Because the good thing when you compose for dance is that because it's not concert music, where people are only listening to the music, as a composer you can compose some moments in which there's almost nothing in there. You can be very minimalist. Or you can be very conceptual in a way. Whereas in a concert, that doesn't work as much. When you do this instead, you have to think that there are dancers on it, so the way to receive the music is not the same, because the mind gets busy by looking at the dancers. So, the music can be way beyond, this gives me the opportunity to make some work that are more conceptual, which I never do for my own music. It's for me...other doors where I can look inside and try some stuff that are much more experimental, that I can take afterword and rework for my own stuff as well. So, it goes both ways.

V: Yeah, that's interesting, and also the same happens when you watch a performance without music and with, it changes completely what you are seeing, it's incredible

L: Absolutely.

V: I was also wondering, so you travel with the company?

L: No.

V: Does it change the quality of music? Because I can imagine that you produce a sound but then it's not always...

L: Yeah, that's a problem, yes. I think that's a problem, but one that getting older I don't mind anymore, when I was younger, I was a bit "Oh, no, my music, what are they going to do"! Yeah, at first I was more travelling with them but then...it became too expensive to bring me for nothing, I was just... Yes I could have made sure of the sound, but I worked two hours and my job was done, I was just alone and not knowing what to do. So...it can be a bit sad, I must say, but I think Marie tries to offer the best quality. But sometimes I am a bit paranoid, or scared they'd use MP3 versions...Sometimes it happened they did some edits in the music without me knowing necessarily, because they had to cut, and I had a phone call, "we have to cut", I said "yes", but it's kind of weird, because...the *Goldberg Variations* when I saw it...I had done it and it was five or four years without seeing it and I saw it back in Montreal and there was something that changed. That was not really good. But I think it's normal, sometimes you just have to leave it. It's hard to have this consistency on tour, especially when the people inside the company change.

V: Because also they feel differently the music and...

L: Yeah, some people won't touch it at all, other may touch it...and the sound system depending on the theatre is not the same

V: Yeah, exactly

L: Because my music is composed for speakers, it's really detailed and the dynamic range...so sometimes can be very active and full of harmonies and almost harsh, so if you don't take care of the sound, it can be almost aggressive.

V: I was thinking, *Le Jardin des Délices* was also performed open air once in Italy. So, I was thinking that must have been very difficult in terms of stage, music, projections...

L: Yeah, right, I wish I would have seen that.

V: And I was listening to an interview of Marie, some years ago, and she was saying that you both use the golden mean in your work, and I was wondering if you can go a bit more in details about that

L: Well, we did this once or twice. I sometimes do it because it's just a fun way to cut sections into time. When you start a piece, sometimes Marie...Ao, the big difference between a choreographer and a composer is that a composer is maybe more aware of *la grande forme*, the

big form of a piece, because it's part of our heritage. Symphony, *rondeau*, *sonata*...and different kind of dance... everything is based on structure. And sometimes choreographers don't think about the big timeline, so to say to Marie, "ok, at three minutes we have this, at four that...". Sometimes the golden mean is a way to put some points where I will meet the music, change a section...There is a piece called *Le Nombre D'Or*

V: Yeah, yeah

L: So that's probably it, but

V: It's not used often, not in Bosch

L: No, that's just "ok, let's do it that way". Because we need a structure. It's like the Fibonacci, sometimes I use that in my music. The Fibonacci Series is a bit the same thing, is like, one, one, two, one plus two three, two plus three five...and it makes the same kind of natural...It's Italian!

V: Yeah, I know! And are you there when they put the music together with the dance? Sometimes they would look at the music and say "Ok, this is cue, we do this" and...

L: No! I was much more in the studio in the beginning, me and Marie...maybe because it was the beginning, we needed more...I was much more present and much more available also. And especially for...we made *Le Cri du Mond*, which is a big piece and then we had *Les Variations Golderg*, which was a big, big piece, that was a complex one. I remember one day, because it's a long piece, so on my CD I made a lot of tracks so she could cue the tracks. That was all day, you had to advance the CD...So I made a lot of indexes. And I think there was a misunderstanding or maybe she didn't want to do it the way I wanted, I am not sure, but when I went to see it, she was...completely destroying the music because she was going from track five to track two...she was cherry-picking the music to fit the dance! She was completely lost and I think that's one of the first times I said to her...I was kind of mad, it came from deep inside, I am not this kind of guy but...again, it was not my ego or for me, I didn't mind, but it's just because she was wasting the time of everybody when I did the work already. And I said "no, you are going to calm yourself, redo everything and leave it play". And I was really persuasive, she had no choice. And everything worked. Because I worked with the video, and I put the music on the video. So, I don't know what happened with this, maybe it was a lack of confidence, that was in the beginning...but since then, I sent the music, and she dances on the

music. So, I don't have to be there in a way because we have this process now and it's very efficient. And I think she likes it like that. I don't want to interfere also...because it's another...she invites me, and I see it when it's almost done. And then I can say "well, this is a bit long, I can cut it if you want". We do small changes and adapt. But the cool thing of working with videos during the process is that when I receive the video, and when I make the music for the video, it's fun for a composer because...even though the choreography is not finished, most of the times is not, and even when it is there's a lot that changes because there is a lot of improvisations, and a certain amount of freedom you have. It's going to be the same kind of thing but not exactly the same. So, when I have the chance to put the music on the video it's good for me, because sometimes I can tell there are some accidents that I can see with the music, or there's something that I see on the video that was just improvised but was super beautiful. And then I just put the music on that specific movement and it's a way for the composer to say to the choreographer, "you see, this timing, I did this on purpose, and you have to keep it". Well, you do what you want but...

V: It's a suggestion

L: It's very nice is a way for me to have an input...I would not say on the choreography but to show her the things that I compose, that works really with the movement, now it's your choice to keep it or not, but it's a way to express my voice. So, in that way Marie is very open, and she is very open to my comments, and she is also very open to say "no, no, I don't like it at all" and I can also say...I most of the time like her work, most of the time my comment is that it is too long. Or sometimes, I am not a big fan of the screaming voice, I like my music not to show affect and emotion, it's mainly...I like beauty that is very structured and complex. To me is the real beauty. But that's personal, so sometimes when it gets too emotional...but that's my problem in some ways

V: But that's interesting because in a way it goes close to a dramaturgical eye or stance, where you are in conversation and in fact put your input in the way the choreography develops

L: Yeah.

V: By making suggestions. And it's a collaborative process, with the dancers, but also with the composer, and the fact that it's not just with the music but also the movement...it's interesting.

L: Absolutely. I think what Marie likes in me is that I have no ego, about cutting my music for example, I don't mind that at all, unless you do without telling me. What's important for me is that it works for her and for the choreography, that's the main thing. And I think that because she knows that well, she knows that when I say something it is not because I want to save my music or whatever, she knows that I'm talking about the piece. I'm never talking about the music alone. I think it made me humbler and more...you know, at the beginning when she was cutting some parts I was "oh, but that's the best part", so it's not going to work to say that. You have to say "ok, I'll fix it, I'll find a way to fix it, so it doesn't impact too much". Sometimes though, I can say "no, no...you are missing something", I have to sit down and explain, and sometimes it works

V: yeah that's interesting and that's the difference when you work on your own and with a choreographer, it's that you are engaged in a conversation, a dialogue, you have to give some things up

L: It's like a couple. I think it's the same thing in love. I'm in love with my wife for twenty-six years now. And a lot of people ask me the trick and it's forget your ego. If you want to win an argument, even though you know inside of you it's your mistake, but you still want to win it, your couple is not going to work. So, it's the same thing with Marie. In that I am not emotional when it's about art, I say, "Ok, I made a mistake, or ok, you are right, let's find a solution".

V: Yeah, and that's interesting because I can also see it from the point of view of the translator and in translation, where you are always in dialogue with the original text

L: When you want to put yourself and then you say "Oh no, you have to stay back"

V: Yeah, sometimes you have to stay back, sometimes you see that there might be a point for doing it, so it's a dialogue and a humbling dialogue in a way

L: yeah, absolutely, yes

V: And it works for the best of what comes in the end. There's another question that I have. In the tryptic, in the panel Hell, there is one character who is bent like this, and he has on his butt a score for music

L: Oh yeah, ahah

V: So, I was wondering, if you knew!

L: Ahah, yes!

V: Because I found out that the fact that he was like that is because at the time they used the word *flatulenza*, in Italian, flatulence, when it was bad music!

L: Ahah

V: So, I was wondering if you thought of it when you were composing?

L: No, but I did play what was there, I wanted to hear but no.

V: Is it playable?

L: Yeah. But no, no. Ahahah.

V: Ok. Because I thought that'd be interesting and also the fact that is probably very discordant music, I don't know, I can't read but I imagine

L: Yeah...let me look again

V: Because I found this article about the history of farting

L: I saw that article, yeah. I think it was "A Bum Note, Music Score Written on the Butt". There's so much detail in that piece, is so funny.

V: Yeah, it's incredible because you can lose yourself in it...and maybe that's the point, I don't know. What is the sensation that the painting gives you, when you first were in front of it and thought "ok, I have to propose some music for this", what kind of somatic sensations did you feel?

L: Well, as I said, the first impression is the boldness of the piece. When you look at it, you cannot say that there's a big evolution between this and "Make America Great Again" rally in the US. I mean, in French there's a word, *l'homme*, meaning that where is man there is flaw, like, we are destroying the planet, we don't care, we...and I know it's pathetic. We are self-humiliating ourselves. Which for me is a good thing because the planet doesn't care, we're only a fraction of a second in the history of the planet, so we're going to basically die, we're

going to be the sixth extinction and so on...I don't want to be too pessimistic, but this piece is kind of a big middle finger

V: To that

L: And also, there's some beauty in it, it's not just a big "fuck you" but also...it's the complexity of the human and the paradox of human being. It's glory basically. It's very human, everything is human, you have religion...so that is what strikes me. How he managed to show everything in there. I am not a specialist in paintings but, I've been to Florence, and you see all those academic paintings, beauty beauty, beauty...and then you see this. It's kind of a punk way for the day. So, there's something very close to contemporary society too, a lot of relationships that can be drawn.

V: Yeah, very human in the way it traces the sensorial, and sufferance...also in a way it seems to go through stages of life as well.

L: Absolutely

V: The first part, it's extremely...and in the way I perceived the performance, it is naïve, innocent, being newly born, and then you go through this phase of confusion and chaos and destruction and to the acceptance of things...I don't know, as they are

L: Yeah, what I like in the works of Marie is that there is a lot of room for interpretation. I think Marie felt close to that painting, because if you see prior works, those images are in her work since the beginning in some ways.

V: Yeah, it struck me.

L: So, I think she found a kind of brother in that painting, an artist she can relate too. And you feel it when you see that she is very free into that, and she goes into each part of the piece in a completely engaged manner, there's some reserve but there's nothing too much. I really appreciate the fact that Marie is open to having my music as well, which doesn't have any compromise at all, no compromises. It's very heavy music, but because it's danced it works, and I think it brings depth to the piece. I think some problems that I had with dancers and choreographers is that they chose whatever music. And make a personal playlist that goes from jazz, piano to classical bits, to techno track, all in one piece. It takes out a lot of depth to the piece. What I like about Marie is that she leaves me...I take control on the big form of the

piece. Because even though the music can be very changing, because it's all original music I can always keep some elements and bring back elements, and I think it brings something that is...interesting, because it goes back to the real traditional of ballet, which is a real composer and a choreographer, and the composer has the craft of the composer, that's creating. And I think it's a lack nowadays. There are still choreographers that work with composers, but I think there's a problem there in dance. I think choreographers want to use any kind of music they like and don't take any risk. So I respect that from Marie, to take this kind of music where I can go completely mad, and you know, people...well, I am the composer so they are not going to say in front of me that the music sucks but most of the time I truly think that a lot of people enjoy the music, whereas if you put the same kind of music in a concert they...maybe they wouldn't accept it, I think it is a way to have people discover this, say, "ok, contemporary music exists and it can be beautiful, it can be very hard...but it can be very beautiful and nice to listen too also". So, I think it serves also as an introduction to this kind of music, which is a small, small part but she gives work to a composer who makes really complex music and I think it brings the level of the piece to...for some people listening to that kind of music must be an experiment in itself, it's not like music for cinema, even the music for cinema became really simple, it always sounds the same...it's changing a bit, they are taking more chances, there are some composers who are becoming a bit more daring, but it only serves emotive purposes. The music is only there to put emotions, action music, romantic music...it's very formatted. So, to me it's a privilege to see a big dance company, to see dancers dance to that kind of music, to put so much time to find cues and everything, so I appreciate that.

V: And do you also think about the dancers? When I was talking to Valeria she said that the music is so important, to have a music that supports you, drives you, because sometimes you are tired and to have a music that in that moment drives you is so important, and talking about Michaux she said that was fantastic because you are tired but you have the music so you keep going...so, I was also thinking how it is a negotiation between many things and if you were also in a way thinking of that, if when you are composing you are already imagining...

L: Well, no. Because I don't know totally what the dancers are doing, when I compose, because it's at the beginning of the process. But when I see the dancers dancing on my music and I see how they feel into their bodies and I see them sweating, because it's intense, and it's not necessarily always in relation with the beat only, it can be just a drone, but to see that they feel the energy that I feel in the drone, because...do you know what is a drone in music?

V: No

L: A drone is like, just one big note. There's all this drone music, it can be very ambient, but it can be very full, it's just like "Fffffffu" [moves his hands forward]. And to see that they can feel all the little particles of energy in sound work. Normally it sounds something like this, but it's made of all little things. So, it's like grass, if you take a view of the grass from a certain height, it is only green, but when you go close and close and close, you see all the details. So, to know that the dancers are...and it's another thing, they listen to it a lot of time, maybe even more than me. So, they get to different listenings, they are able to go through different layers of the music. And I can tell this because sometimes they say "oh, the music is really amazing" and I know that when they say that to me is because they understand the music. They come to understand it and they are probably the best listeners...the humans that best know my music are the dancers, that's for sure.

V: Yeah, because you know it, but also you embody it

L: Yeah, so I always have a lot of respect. To me is such an honour to see them dance to my music and dance is such a high discipline, it takes a lot of work and they are so humble. Dancers are amazing artists.

V: Yeah. And is interesting also...I think there is a shared interest, or maybe resonance, feeling, in nature and structure in your work and the work of Marie. Because it is so structured and it has so many references to nature in a way or another, it's very organic.

L: Yeah. You'll see tomorrow the piece. The piece is from my new album that is going to come out and the title is "Into the Forest". So, it's very, very organic music, very intense, micro, very fast, very nervous, very articulated. Yeah. I go a lot in nature, I do a lot of running and stuff like that. An hour from here you are in deep woods. And I get more and more touched by that. My music is definitely a kind of translation of nature, speaking of translation. I truly want to transmit what I feel when I walk in the woods, you know, all the euphoria that you feel after a big, long walk or a run in the woods, you feel so good. My video work also works with nature a lot, yes.

V: And how did you live this time during lockdown, the confinement? Were you still able to go outside?

L: No, I just went yesterday...last week it was my first run in weeks. Wait, I'll show you some photos.

Appendix 5: Interview with Eliot Smith (Eliot Smith Dance)

I interview Eliot at the Barre Studios on the 25th of November 2018, two days before their premiere of Froth on the Daydream, while the other dancers are rehearsing a part of the choreography where he does not appear. Until this moment I watched their rehearsal and was allowed to take some notes, photographs, and videos. We sit outside the rehearsal space and start talking.

V: Just a couple of questions. First of all, who decided to make this adaptation of the book, was it you or was it Geffré, was it somebody else...

E: So, I'll give you a quick introduction

V: Yeah, yeah...

E: So, Eliot Smith Dance, based in Newcastle, we are a repertory company and over the past first three years a lot of the works were created by me and still are, but over the past two years, I've now been inviting international choreographers to come and work for the company, in terms of creating new works, commissioning them. It wasn't until a year ago that I had an initial conversation with Mathieu Geffré, to create a work on ESD dancers, and of course there was logistics behind that, in terms of how many dancers, what you want the work to be about, but he came up with the idea of *Froth on the Daydream*. So, this is Mathieu Geffré's take on the novel.

V: Ok, and do you know why he chose this novel, like, did he give you any reasons for, like,

E: He had read the story when he was younger, and Mathieu is French

V: Yes, that's why I was asking...Because I think it is not so well known in England?

E: Noo, it's not. I found the book, and there is also a film, in French. I realised that *Froth on the Daydream* has a particular taste for particular people, and that's fine, and I think that's what made me be excited about the work, and Mathieu, he is creating a work that the majority of the public audience might not know of it, and when they do get the grips, with, even the first chapter, they notice that that's not a typical story, it's not the typical novel, and in fact that's what makes the work exciting

V: So, you got to know the book through the dance that you were performing

E: Yes, yeah, and that was quite exciting for me, because when I commissioned other choreographers... some of them have been abstract works, so I gather already that is the style that the choreographer wants to bring to the company, to the dancers, what can give as a gift to them. With Mathieu, I had seen him before, in National Dance Company Wales and I was very impressed by his dancing...and I knew that he was starting to choreograph his own works, he is starting out now, and he is a notable choreographer, excellent, but when he came up with *Froth on the Daydream* I knew this was also going to be very new for the repertoire, and that's exactly what I was hoping for, and Mathieu has done that

V: Ok. In which language did you read the novel? Did you read the novel in English, in French?

E: English

V: English. And the company, do you know, the dancers did they have to read the novel?

E: Yes. So, the process: Mathieu came in March, this year, 2018 for four days, research development. And that was for him to get to know the dancers in the studio, the dancers to get to know Mathieu, to understand a little bit about the work that he was hoping to choreograph on us, because it was pending on funding. Then when we were offered and awarded a grant to create this work, Mathieu made it very, sharp that he wanted us to know the story inside out. He did say you can watch the film, which I have done, because for me, as a dancer, or as a human, I find it a lot... words are just not always my easiest, I always like to see visuals, and I read some of.. 'cos there is an English version of the book. Which I've read, I haven't read the whole book, I've read chapters, because I've been looking at particulars, my role in the work.

V: Ok, and did you watch the movie by Michael Gondry, *Mood Indigo*?

E: Yes, that's the one

V: Ok, yeah

E: Which was very hard for me and for the dancers. I remember asking them, is very hard first to concentrate in the film, because there's so much going on, and the moment when you see the love part, the male and female coming together coming together, it's so beautiful but something crazy happens in the background...and it's, I think that's what Mathieu has also been inspired by, within that particular novel.

V: And some parts, like, the music, some parts of the music also appear in the, in the movie, I find that interesting, like when you dance the...

E: Oh yeas, the unison, the beginning, yes, that's the one. That's also interesting because the movement, you can tell from the dances that Mathieu created, some of the work's movement is very clean, very classical sometimes but then he changes and flips it, by using a lot more the hips, or use more the shoulders, doing something that a typical dancer wouldn't do. And I think that's him really bringing up the craziness, the differences within the work

V: Yeah, I was thinking about that as well. As the language is so, like, different in the novel, and you have a body language which is also so different

E: Yes

V: That's kind of mirroring...that's very cool

E: Yeah, thank you

V: yeah, so, how did you divide the work, like, for example, what amount of flexibility did the dancers have, you had, and Mathieu had? I you are working with a choreographer that comes from, you know, outside

E: Yes, Mathieu came with a set material, some of it, so the unison phrase, that was his material...Canon parts was his material... but then he would give us some task-based work, to go away, he would give us a lot of...he would say this is what I want, you, for example, my solo, the book. My book was my prop, so he made evident that I have 20 books, I look into the book and I'm searching for the professor, I'm reading about the professor, and then I would go away, and I would create that material. And same for the other dancers...but Mathieu would then, come in afterwards and then he would start saying "I like this, I don't like that, put this on..." So, it becomes more... collaborative, and Mathieu likes that, he likes to give you very much set material and then give some task-based, put his own resonance, which I think has been quite exciting because it allows us to bring in what we've been reading, what we want to try and portray, to help the choreographer and also the novel... To bring that out

V: Yeah, like a mixture of different perspectives that come together

E: Yeah.

V: And even like in the rehearsal right now: “ok I like that movement of the head so let’s go with it”, so that’s really collaborative

E: Yeah and I should also mentioned that Mathieu, he... with facial expression... in this work it is very easy for us to bring out face. But Mathieu wants us to try and strip that back a little bit. He doesn’t want it to be drama... He wants the drama to come from within the body and the face, pull it back a little bit. But I think because if you start adding the face, it then loses its sense of quality it becomes cheesy.

V: Yeah, and also if you have a lot of props then it becomes maybe a bit too much.

E: Yes. And that’s why I think, when you watched it today, when Giacomo was saying to Yamit, the rehearsal director, Mathieu is asking us to keep it stripped back, go forward and take it back. So, hopefully we’ll see, we’ll see if that means to an audience...

V: Right. So, you started working with different artists and inviting choreographers, what do you think are the main advantages of this approach? How do you think it enriches the company, also in terms of sharing experiences and repertoires of images that everybody brings?

E: Sure. I always say there’s two advantages in bringing a choreographer in. One, is the dancers. And the other is the audience. So, if we come to the dancers, the company, bringing choreographers from outside is very useful in terms of...you learn new skills, you learn new works, you learn new practitioners, you learn new ways of moving, there’s a sense of variety...when it comes to audience, it’s important because the company being Eliot Smith Dance, one would suggest, what you are seeing is Eliot Smith’s works, while in fact it is a genre of dance. So, the audience gets not to only see Eliot Smith’s work, but they also get to see works from other acclaimed choreographers and that’s really exciting. And it is resonant when we go to places that are less engaged with the arts. So, we tour to very small-scale theatres or memorial halls. We do also go to big theatres, like next week we premiere at the Sage Gateshead... and what’s so special about that is, the elderly, who are less able to get on the bus or go into the city centre, we bring first class dance to them, so we are bringing Mathieu’s work, bringing Rosie Kay, my own... in the past Lorenzo Pagano, Maggie Boogaart, all internationally renowned, and when you hear the feedback from the audience, one that always strikes me is “thank you so much for coming here, I never knew these beautiful performances, exceptional dancers and choreographer would come to this small memorial hall”, and it has always been part of our DNA,

V: I see what you mean. I come from a very small village, and we have been having for a couple of years an international cinema festival, and it's the feeling, that something that is really good coming to your...

E: You are part of a bigger community. You've got a small community but when the international comes in, you feel part of the world, part of that big community, which I think we need a lot more in the world in this moment.

V: Yes! So, talking about smaller locations, I also see in your company there is this kind of willingness to rescue some figures from the past, for example the work on the Pitmen Painters and this idea of, yeah, rescuing some figures... even with this, about Vian, I mean, he is not so well known in England and bringing it to the wider audience...

E: It's quite interesting that you talk about that because earlier this week I was at Durham Cathedral and I was invited to give a talk about how we are trying to move out, take dance into other parts of the country, and many of the big companies don't. They purposely invited me for it, they have been inspired by how I use heritage and culture, within my work, and I believe that, not dance just has the power to transform lives but that dance has the power to communicate to audiences through heritage, through our past, through culture, so that, when the audience think they know what they know, actually they get to know a lot more, and a different side, because we are talking through the physical body, the physical form... So, when we look at Mathieu's work, which is why he brings that novel and puts it through the physical body and people will see, the audience will see perhaps something just a little bit different compared to the book and to the dance or they may actually see something new, that they have never seen in the book, and it makes them go back to the book and read it further. And coming to the miners that was very...that was a pivotal point for ESD, because that changed my movement vocabulary. We are specialised in the Martha Graham's technique, which is, people say !that is very historic technique!, actually it is a technique that allows us to be built strongly, we talk about the contraction and the release, I believe it's very much of a foundation for dancers, so that they can be in dances like Mathieu's, Maggie Boogaart, mine... so that they have a very strong core to project out, and I think it's a very fundamental ability here, you are right, try to bring past into the present and how does that resonate into the future, and it reminds people

V: Yeah, I was thinking also of *Pioneers of Courage*, which is based on historical figures

E: Yes

V: So how does this engage with memory, you know, cultural memory and the way people remember things, what do they remember, what not?

E: Definitely, definitely. Within *Portraits of Courage*, one of the sections was looking at Emily Wilding Davison, and Emily was, she was a very big northern ambassador for women and also across the world, because she was part of the suffragette movement for women to have their vote and that really inspires me. That, women, and you know, also the work that I did, I didn't want to become very political but it did bring in a very natural evolutionary politics in the work, because William Armstrong, he invented a lot of the mechanical, and the powder, the gunpowder, and he was the first to have his house be lit up in Cragside with light bulbs, but he was very much talking about men, but when you look at Emily Wilding Davison she is very much the opposite, she had the courage to speak for women, to have their vote and how does that come together. And you see that in *Portraits of Courage* at the end, the final section all the characters come together and that was a very big statement for me, because they never probably met, because of the times they were born and their work, but I wanted to show the audience that we should all be together as a community, we are one and I am sure they'd be looking down saying what's going on in this world, we need to work together.

V: Yeah, so even in terms of historical canon there is a sort of subversion, like, also subverting the canon

E: Definitely, definitely. I think my new work that you've seen today, which is still in the process, *Poppies*, that's very new, that's another step change for me because *Pitmen*, *Portraits of Courage*, I created a duet, *Moonlight*, which is very abstract, but in the past two years I've been looking very much at character, and theatrical... now *Poppy* being inspired by Flanders fields, and *Poppy* itself, I am looking at war and World War I, I wanted to take a portrait, abstract, so not just showing the audience "I am a poppy and I am a flower" but actually show what has been the aftermath of war, because war still goes on today and War World I was supposed to be the last war of all world wars and actually it had the opposite effect. And you see this within various countries around the world and it's quite upsetting and I think is very hard for the youth of today and that's my aim within *Poppies*, to show that we are bodies, we are humans, and we shouldn't be killing or going to war, we should be protecting the world, in fact, the most important devastation at the moment is global warming, that's what war should

be about, we should be human, try and protect the world, not fighting against each other in this world.

V: Yep. Do you think of making a piece about that? It just popped to my mind...

E: Do you know, yes, I think that is a work, I think inside it is starting to flare up, there's a fire burning inside when I've come to the point where I want to create a work about that. I think, *Pitmen*, *Portraits of Courage*, *Poppies*, I think there is a particular timeline, trying to flow through, I think, me being the choreographer if I was outside looking into it, I definitely see that there is a thread coming through, and my work for the next year, I am looking at nature, and at particular birds, red kites, it's an endangered species... now I am looking at nature and how we need to protect a particular environment, how birds have very much of an understanding when weather becomes bad or good, they flock, in a very mysterious but very direct way. And perhaps after red kites I've done heritage, I've done war, I've done history, I've done now nature, I think now it has come to the pivotal point when I am going, how I wrap all four together and say to our politicians of today, look what's happening in this world, we need to change.

V: So how helpful it is to start from, you have a given narrative, a given image, already, like with the paintings

E: Ah the paintings, yes

V: Or with this, with something that is narrative, how helpful is that in creating the work and to what extent it is limiting? If it is.

E: *Pitmen*, I was inspired by the paintings, and what was captivating and so different was that these were miners who weren't just drawing for drawing's sake, they were drawing and depicting their lives. So, they show in their paintings their friends their fellow friend dying in the mines, because it made us now realise what it was like, it is informative works. They showed the women at home, baking, you know, whilst the man went down in the mines. Women had a very much important part in the miners' lives, they had to protect their family, the children, they had to go to the shops, they had to save, they had to cook, they had to clean. So, what the Ashington Group, the Pitmen Painters have done for us, for our generation, is showing what it was like through art, through its visual form and for me, I was inspired by all of them but that would take four days of work, of performance, so I chose six paintings that

touched me and the six that could come together to show a life of a miner. I would say it was quite easy, choreographically, in terms of I took the paintings, and it was a tableaux, so I would assume what the audience or the visitors at the museum could see, they would see that on stage, it would begin [moves his body] and then it would stop. And it was down to me and the dancers to interpret what would have been happening in that scene, and I think that's when the artistic licence comes into it, you get to add a bit of your own into it. But of course, we did a lot of research, we visited the museum, we interviewed a few miners, we looked at a lot of archives, we were in collaboration with Woodhorn Museum, they've just been brilliant and really understood our company ethos. So, in terms of your question, it's down to the choreographer, for me, I took the paintings, I wanted to show to the audience the paintings but through the physical body and then I added a bit of my own interpretation, on the research I gathered from outside. For Mathieu's work, I know he's taken the characters, the four characters, but he's also brought out some particular sections, the main theme sections of the book but then he's just added a little bit of his own essence, and I think that's allowed. Because that is the choreographer's interpretation and I think that's what excites art, because art is about, not just about the present and the past but also about the future.

V: So, if I define it as a translation into another medium, because it resonates with a lot of things that a literary translator has to do like, the research, going to archives and then back to the text and then try to stay with it but also you have to, you know, put your little things there and change it a little bit, would you agree with that?

E: I do. And I think it's important to mention, when you see a piece of art, a piece of art, like a painting, it's finished, when you see a piece of dance, I don't think it is finished. Now, a choreographer will, most choreographers say it's actually never finished, and I assume that is true. But I think the reason why they say it's not finished is because when I look at dance, there's something...the form is the same but what's different every time is the dancer. The dancer brings their world into the stage, and I am not just talking about the character, I am talking about their personal life. So, one day, in a performance, everything might be happy outside, and the character might be happy. But the next day he might have had a breakup or a divorce, or heard some bad news from family, that's going to affect the physical body, and then they have to become happy, and what I say to my dancers is "actually, bring what's outside, bring it into the studio", because I think that's how my dancers really show honesty on stage, presence on stage. And sometimes when I see dance, I don't see that. It becomes movement, it

becomes dance. Pretty dance. We shall go to a theatre and be moved I would walk away going “that make me reflect, that made me cry, that made me happy, that made me do something, tomorrow, make it change... and sadly, I think a lot of dance doesn’t do that normally. I think there are very few choreographers who can do what I’ve just said, and I think that also takes time, and it’s a very big collaboration between the choreographer and the dancers.

V: And trust

E: Yes. That’s very important that you mention that.

V: Yeah. So what would you say is the importance of Boris Vian’s novel, *Froth on the Daydream*, today, how is it relevant?

E: Ah, ok. I have someone in my family, a relative, who is coming to the performance and I am aware that she actually has a particular health problem. And I think what this piece will do is to show everyone, not just my relative, and I’ve spoken to her about it.... Which she is fine about. I think it opens a door to, say, a realization of life? Love will be in this duet, but also what comes from love is not just happiness but also pain. And so, you see within this work variations of life, depictions of life. Of health, love, friendship, misunderstanding, grittiness unravelling. So, although Boris Vian, the author, was writing in the 1940’s, I think what Mathieu’s has done is quite clever, he has made in a new way that is going to hopefully speak to today’s audiences and actually perhaps many of them want to read the book, to find out more. I think there is a lot more darkness than there is lightness within the work, and I think more towards the end, because, when one of the dancers he goes out, to the audience and tells them about the new world, and that new world isn’t always happy. And I think in fact that links back to what we talked about *Poppy*, World War I, that was supposed to be the end of all world wars, but actually had the opposite effect, so, it was just to show that yes, this work does, I believe, speak to the audience and in fact we’ll find out in the premiere! I think this particular programme, this premiere programme on Tuesday, it’s three works, we have, *Froth on the Daydream*, Mathieu, we have *Artemis Clown*, which is Rose Kay, which you haven’t seen and I am sure you will love, and then *Poppy*. There is a mixture of three works, different movements, but I think what is quite special about this programme, my aim is that the audience will go away being moved, and I don’t think they’ll be moved in terms of happiness, I think it will be a time to be moved and reflect, on three different chapters in life, you have Mathieu’s work *Froth on the Daydream*, about health, love, relationships, the quirkiness, based on *Froth*

on the *Daydream*, you have *Artemis Clown*, Rosie Kay, which is on very particular pieces of Bach's music, looking at the woman as a dancer, a voice, you look at *Poppy*, which is a statement on war, conflict, and sacrifices... So, although some moments may be quite happy, I think the audience will be leaving going "that was a very nice type of programme".

V: I have a couple more questions but not many... So what do you think about, there's seems to be a growing concern about crossing boundaries within media, playing with films, playing with literature, with different things, dance, what do you think about this, do you feel a need when you create to draw from different sources?

E: I think... Look, I think media, has had a very big effect on the world, first of all. If I take you back a little bit. If you look at up until 1970s, 1980s, dance, or any theatre art form, you would go to the theatre. TV started to come out, television, but then we have mobile phones and now dance has changed a lot, you can watch a full dance piece on your mobile phone, you don't have to go to the theatre. So, I think, that sometimes has a bad effect, because for the audience it has become really easy for them to see dance, while actually seeing dance is about being in the theatre, or a room or a space, hearing the dancers breathe, seeing the dancer perform with so much exploration. In terms of how it affects works, I think works, I think it can have the power to complement works. Because you can speak, if people are in the studio you are feeling it, you can pronounce it on you Twitter, or your Instagram, on facebook or email, and you can keep drilling in your sense of direction, feeling about the work, to make them be more aware, and I think it is also interesting that it brings a lot more scope and collaboration, not just regional but national, international, in the work. But does that really answer your question?

V: Yeah, and in terms of production I was thinking, was it the first time that you use Kickstarter? And...

E: Yeah. So, Mathieu's that was our fourth successful Kickstarter. We've had one a year ago now. Kickstarter is quite special, although it's American, it was a useful funding strategy, which there are also here in the UK. But Kickstarter allows us to show to the audience around the world, to say this is what we believe in, and if you believe in those too, you can become part of this. And we picked up, in fact, a lot of collaborations, and people who were not just giving sponsor towards the work, but they actually showed interest. It isn't just about sponsoring, it's they wanted to be a part of the work, a part of the creation, part of the dance.

So that's been quite interesting and again, if it wasn't for the media, we wouldn't be able to do that. A lot of companies have started to work that way, especially you see this in America, a lot, you see this in certain countries in Europe. I think in places like England we have subsidies, in terms of outcomes in England, so they...they believe in great art, culture and if you have a great idea they will put an application, fund that, because they believe that art is for everyone, and we believe that too here. Whereas, some countries, they don't have that economic support, that sponsor support, and they have to look for patrons, which can become very hard. Because you really have to get people who believe in you.. But that also happens here at ESD.

V: Yeah and I was thinking also in terms of how that can limit you? In both cases you are responding to an audience, right? On the one hand is the people who backed you and on the other it is somebody, but it's just one person, an institution maybe, paying for that.

E: Yeah, and also it allows them to have a conversation. We got some Twitter, the company's page has started to build and people, the audience, are starting to have a conversation, back and forth, about the work and also, through emails, which I think informs and entrusts me and the dancers. The dancers, any dancer, loves to hear feedback from the audience, whether it has been good or bad. Because it's their burning desire that they want to, one, entertain the audience, and be let them be moved, they also have their own talent, they want to dance, but also, they want to fulfil the choreographer's interpretation. And so the outside community can have an input on that because they give feedback. And we take that feedback and put it back into the work

V: Why did you decide to present these three pieces together? Like, more or less you said it's about touching people and building something but is there a certain reason why you decided to put these three pieces together?

E: At the time, a year ago, no. I think the only reason of why I asked these two choreographers, great choreographers, Mathieu, because he was a great dancer, but he was starting to be more involved with choreography and I wanted to give an opportunity to a new established choreographer. And he is male. I really wanted to bring in a female choreographer and finding a female choreographer was actually quite challenging, and I'll tell you why: in the past two years the UK has been talking about of course, women's rights. The artistic property of women should be equal, and I am all for that, I mean, my biggest icon was Martha Graham, a woman. And this particular choreographer, Rosie Kay, I was really inspired by her drive and ethos and

recently she was awarded national portfolio of Arts Council England and I can see from reading and hearing that she is a choreographer, being a woman she has worked so hard since she graduated from London Contemporary few years ago, and she is still going hard, still going tough and she's creating works, her works *MK Ultra*, *Five Soldiers*, a lot of her works are actually a lot of statements to the audience. She might not be seen saying this is a statement, but she was a choreographer that I really enjoyed, it was a woman, a female, I loved the historic past of how she went from London Contemporary (it's where I trained) and so it all fitted in well. And then obviously my work *Poppy*. I didn't know at the time when I chose Mathieu and Rosie what were the works. Now, one would say that's quite dangerous for the director, for normally he would have an initial conversation about what is the work first. But I trusted them, and I think they trusted me, I hope, and then we started talking about *Froth on the Daydream*, and Rosie's *Artemis Clown*, I felt like, yeah, this may be a deep format but that's alright, I think it fit in anyway.

V: Do you think people are going to... because, perception, is it going to be influenced by the fact that the three are together?

E: Maybe, yes. Of course, yeah. Within, the programme that you've seen, I give an introduction. And in my introduction I don't talk about it being a statement, I don't know if you've read it, it just talks about "I am very pleased to invite Mathieu to choreograph this work and Rosie's and my work *Poppy*. But there will be people in the audience, probably a typical theatre audience, might see why he has put this programme together, is he trying to give us a statement. I think now, now that I look back, yes. Now I think there is a statement, but it has not been intentional, but I am going with it, because I believe things are meant to be, I believe that things happen, very spiritually, that it's happening that way so I allow it to be that way. Again, we are taking this programme on tour in Spring next year... So, I look forward to the feedback from the premiere! Because then I'll be able to judge if it is

V: Ok, and as for the music, settings and costumes of *Froth of the Daydream*, were they decided by Mathieu?

E: Yes. He knew what he wanted. We spent a day in Newcastle looking at from very different charity shops to the typical Primark, H&M, and then he got a lot of props. So, I think for *Froth on the Daydream* props really add another layer...

V: What are your feelings when you dance this piece?

E: Well first of all, there are four different characters, and I have to acknowledge that I am Chick, and I am very much inspired and want to be like the professor. On the other hand, there are other characters, like Chloé, they have a noble character but we all have a sense of one direction, generally... and my character changes, I become the doctor, I love that part, but one of my feeling when I dance this work, I am trying to bring the today, to make it relevant today. I try and think of something or someone I am passionate about, and I want to just know more about this thing and hopefully on Tuesday that will be ... yes, it's the professor, but I was not really thinking about the professor, I am thinking about someone else, so that allows me to become that. When I jump into duets, I try to link back to the story, the real story of *Froth on the Daydream*, the film I try to pull off all these things... The costumes, we only did it once, and I knew it straight away from that, it really gives me a sense of support, really just gives me support. And *Poppy*, well, my top now is bare, so I am trying that, I am doing that because I try to get into that mood, trying to get into that feeling, and of course lights have an effect.

And most importantly, what do I feel? I just love it, I just love to dance, I just love to perform, even if I can get bad-tempered if something goes wrong, but it is because we all have a passion, we want to do it right. And talking... just finally I was dyslexic, a slight dyslexia, you know. When I was younger, I found words were very hard. I went to speech therapist up until I was eleven years old, 'cos my words were back to front, so it made it very clear to me now that I can look back, I know why I dance, it's because, I talked through my body, it's a lot easier for me. I find it very hard talking... people are going to say, "but you wrote a book, how did you write a book?". I collaborated with Helen Redfern, my works, you create works, you give talks, but that comes with practice, and I think what has been my medicine is dance, dance allows me to evolve, to be who I am. I think that's what I mean when I say dance has the power to transform lives, you see that in children, in the various cities across the world. Body language, Martha Graham talks about this a lot, "movement never lies"

V: Yeah, I know that quote.

E: This is dance, I am moving now, and when you watch news reporters, they are choreographed, because they are told to do that, you can see they are trying to move, that's choreography. Does that help you?

V: It does, it does... and just a last question, did you only draw on the source text, meaning the novel and the film or even like, other, completely different sources? Like: "I've seen this scene

from that TV series”, or maybe, like you know, whatever that gives you inspiration that comes through the work. When I was looking into Jonathan Watkins for *1984*, I didn’t know this but there was a part that was inspired by a, a cartoon, so I was “Ah, ok!”

E: Yes. Yes, there has been a discussion with the dancers, we all would say: “ah, reminds me of that”. I think, Mathieu’s just being allowing us to do that. Because I think he sees it as that’s how we are trying to fulfil the character, but he would say, a few times, go back to the book. Go back to the book. I mean, now, it’s what, it’s Saturday, Sunday, Monday but tomorrow (that’s my day off), I will go back to the book, I will just read it I will watch not the full film, but I’ll just watch the character Chick, how the director portrayed him in the film, and most importantly I’ll keep true to the choreographer, because it’s very easy for a dancer to add your own thing in and if the choreographer has always directed you, to bring it back...

V: Yeah, so the idea was to stay quite faithful to the novel

E: Yeah.

V: Ok, I think we are done. It was very nice.

E: Thank you so much.

Appendix 6: Interview with Giacomo Pini and Paloma Moscardo

I meet Giacomo Pini and Paloma Moscardo for a short conversation over lunch, soon after their rehearsal, and a few days before the premiere of Froth on the Daydream. I already know Giacomo, with whom I exchanged messages and to whom I asked to keep a journal of the creative process, and I am meeting Paloma for the first time. The interview was arranged the evening before and we have a short time, as I need to catch a bus for Sheffield. The atmosphere is informal and relaxed, and we keep chatting about various things after the interview.

V: So, you had to read the book before performing

G: Yes

V: And you watched the film

G: We watched the film

V: The film by Michael Gondry?

G: I think, yes, the latest

V: *Mood Indigo*?

G: Yes, the latest version, *Mood Indigo*

V: And in which language did you read the book?

G: Italian

P: In Spanish

G: And I watched the film in French

V: And you watched it in Spanish?

P: In English

V: So, you see how many languages, and I also watched the movie in English, so many interpretations from the translators

G: Absolutely

V: And in Italian it is a very good translation, I have read the book in Italian. And how long have you been working for *Eliot Smith Dance Company*?

G: For a year

P: Same

V: Is it the first time that you work on a performance that is a transposition or translation of a previous book, novel, painting, or whatever other artwork?

G: No, actually no, I worked with Gary Clark on a transformation of an old surrealistic French film, I don't remember the name, so it's not new for me.

V: And was it the first time for you, Paloma?

P: No, either. I work for Jose Tirado, and he created a work about *The Little Prince*, super famous, in Madrid

V: Ok so you work for different companies besides this

P: Yes

G: Before this

V: Before this, not at the same time

G: Sometimes also at the same time, because it's short project-based, so...

V: Yeah

P: I work at other projects at the same time and it's ok. So, we are freelance

G: Freelance

V: Experimenting a lot of different styles and things...So did you know the book before starting the project, had you ever heard of Boris Vian or this book?

G: Actually, no, I didn't

P: I didn't either.

V: Ok, and... not even the film, *Mood Indigo*? No?

G: I did know the actors, though, in the film

V: Who do you represent in the performance?

G: So, I am Giacomo and my character's name is Colin

P: And I am Paloma, and my character is Chloé

V: And if I asked you to describe the character in a sentence, or two sentences, what, how do you feel your character is?

P: My character makes a change during the show. She is quite strong at the beginning, she is strong, she knows what she is doing, she falls in love with Colin, she is alive, she is super... and then she's got a cancer and she goes down down down, she depends, her life depends on flowers... So at the end she goes really sad...

V: Ok and what about yours?

G: I really like my character because I can relate to some aspects of him. I would say he is very clumsy but also very genuine, simple... sometimes naïve, but definitely very romantic. Very romantic and he loves the idea of being in love even before he is in love.

V: Yeah, true

G: That's what I like about him. And then obviously he changes a lot throughout the book and the film and then the piece... by the end he is very consummated by this burden that he has to carry by the end of the book, again, we are not sure what happens, my interpretation is that he will die. Yeah.

V: Ok. And what do you think... what of the book do you think is more relevant today?

G: That's a hard question. Something is very modern to it, I think is definitely the world of work, so when Colin starts to work, it really de-humanises him, he loses his humanity and he is just like a robot, doing a task

V: This is a strong point

G: And in the film this is really something we can relate to today. Anything else? I mean, obviously the personal stories, so I mean, when a person falls ill. The idea of illness.

V: Yeah.

P: The idea of trying your best to get better and you can't do anything

V: Yeah, ok. And when you were thinking on your own characters did you only rely on the book, the DVD, or did you also have other sources of inspiration from other artworks, or scenes that you can see in a street, anything that came to your mind while you were developing the character...

G: Yeah, actually, there's a scene that Mathieu focuses on, it's called the squint, and it's social dancing, is part of the book and the film as well, and in the film there's a very interesting interpretation of how the body is moved and this kind of dance, coming from the description in the book, but then we were encouraged to look at people dancing socially, like in clubs, and discos, stuff like that, so just how their body naturally moves rather than a formal dance, you know, so that was something that really related to us. How do you dance in a party? How do you actually have fun with dance in your character as well. So that was very interesting for me.

P: Something really... not very important, but I found a picture of a skeleton with flowers inside. And it was, it really captivated me, because I was the one that has the flower inside, the cancer, and that image hit me like... If you can send it to her...

G: Yeah, we can send you the picture if you want!

V: Yes! Send me!

G: It's a ribcage, just strip open with flowers like blossoming inside

V: Oh, beautiful, yeah, must be very beautiful. So, what do you feel if I described this process as a translation into another medium? Would you agree or not?

G: What sort of medium?

V: The medium of dance. A translation from the book into the medium of dance, would you agree, or would you think, "oh not, this is not a translation really"

G: It's a hard one, because what does translation mean?

V: Yeah, that was my second question ahah

P: Ahahah

G: So, what does translation mean to you? I think translation is just coming from one thing to another, in many different ways, so it's definitely that. What we've done is definitely a translation. It's just another form of expressing your ideas

V: Yeah. So if I said that it's a way to better understand the text, to create and re-create it in another form and getting new relations to appear, to surface, you would agree with that.

G: Definitely.

V: About kickstarter, what do you think are the main advantages or disadvantages, like do you feel freer because it's not a theatre commissioning the work and they may want something specific or maybe not? It's interesting to use kickstarter I think, it's a way that allows you to bypass difficulties in getting the work staged.

G: I think it's because, well, the people who give you some funds and donations might be the people who are actually interested in this project and they want to see you on stage and when you create, I think you should really think about whom you are creating for, rather than the venue itself, but of course also the venue is super important. So, I think it's definitely a combination of facts in this case. I think kickstarter is just a new way to do it and if people who want to see it pay to see it then you know, anyway they can, they support, sometimes it's about giving a free space to the artist to be in and develop the work, sometimes it's giving some money towards props, costumes, rehearsal time...

**ELIOT SMITH DANCE- CREATION OF *FROTH ON THE DAYDREAM* BY
CHOREOGRAPHER MATHIEU GEFFRE'**

Notes from dancer Giacomo Pini's artistic diary

- Colin's beginning solo → getting ready at the mirror while talking to his mouse.
Use of gestures to convey the actions of preparing himself to go out.
Use of gestures to represent the conversation with the mouse ('there's going to be love in the air', meeting a pretty girl and kissing her...)
- CHARACTERIZATION: Start to find out what is peculiar about Colin: he's clumsy, romantic, naïve, rich, simple, generous.
- The 'street sequence' → introduction to the surrealistic world of the book
- The 'squint' → the party. Using the description of the 'squint' in the book to make a new type of social dancing. Wavy use of spine, use of chest and pelvis, very close to the other person but without touch. Quite sexual but not explicit.
- The first duet with Chloé → anxiety about behaving correctly, presenting yourself at the best and not give a bad impression. Falling in love. Surprise of the kiss and longing for more, until Chloé kneels down and asks Colin to marry her (choreographic choice to reverse the stereotypical image of a man kneeling down to propose to the woman. Interesting/ironic swap of gender roles).
- The second duet with Chloé → illness and how it affects the body. Love and desperation, trying to help your loved one get better. Support, encouragement, despair.
- Colin starts to work in order to pay for the flowers to cure Chloé → solos about the different job roles and his progressive getting more and more empty, tired, desperate, poor.
Job 1: creating guns by lying on top of them naked
Job 2: following straight lines on the floor (physical interpretation not from the book)
Job 3: Telling people bad news → delivering envelopes to audience members containing bad news from the 'minister of bad news'.
(example: When: tomorrow, Who: Your mother, What: Fall down the stairs)

Appendix 8: Interview with Mathieu Geffré

I interview Mathieu Geffré on February 10, 2019, while I am in Newcastle to carry out fieldwork with Eliot Smith Dance company. We meet at the café of Dance City, a dance school and theatre where he is working to produce a piece of community dance.

V: Maybe to start you can tell me a bit about yourself, your work, and how *Froth on the Daydream* fits in your repertoire

M: My name is Mathieu Geffré, I am a choreographer and artistic director of the company Rendezvous dance, I am also very much of a freelance choreographer, so I have been working now since 2012 as a maker. This has been the four years transition for me until I decided to actually stop performing and focus on choreography - I say four years but it's actually not four years. It has been, well, seven years, it took seven years for me it actually stops performing, cos I really stopped and made the clear decision last year. So, you know, I have different practices according to the company I am working with. For my own company I am working on stories and concepts that have to do with LGBTQ+ communities, this is what I am interested in, I feel there are a lot of stories that need to be told and are not told yet, regarding this community, which is the community I belong too as well, so this is really important to me. When it comes to working with companies as a freelance choreographer, the task changes, of course, according to the context, according to the conditions I am being given, and according to the companies themselves. So, I do work with human beings, I don't work on my own with an idea which is just, you know, my own agenda. I need to know the company, what the company could embody or not, and make something that is relevant to the company. So, when I had the commission to work for a new production on Eliot Smith Dance, I knew the company before, and I knew them for being of course, well, they say they are a Graham-based company, but also, I had seen them perform and I thought there was an interesting theatricality going out of the company work. Which was an aspect of my work that I wanted to develop. So, the first decision was made of making a character-based work, and then I've just been asked to offer something that...without any conditions, what would you make for the company? And with the idea that I wanted to make a story, a narrative work, I basically got my notebook, really, of ideas that I wanted to translate to choreography, and I found this book by Boris Vian, which is *l'Écume des Jours*, which I had read three times already, and somehow, I kept going back

for some reason, and I didn't really know why, I was always going back to this book. That was a book that I read first when I was eleven years old. And then I kept going back to it and in different layers, I think the layers is the aspect of the storytelling that was very interesting to me, and the fact that there were so many readings possible!

So, I thought that it was just the perfect story for this commission, being extremely aware that the conditions of this piece, being such a short piece, would require I edited the story quite a lot. Which was for me also very interesting work as a choreographer to actually take the essence of the work to present it.

V: Did you know if the novel was famous already in the UK, or Boris Vian?

M: So, I didn't think it was to be honest, because this is a novel that I've tried to offer as a present to a friend of mine 6 years ago, and I had really a hard time to find it. I just had to go through very independent networks on the internet, you know, to find a published copy.

V: Yeah, yeah, that's...I was also going around and trying to find it, there are 3 translations into English but it's impossible to find them.

M: It's really difficult to find them, and even, there are three different titles

V: Yeah

M: *Foam of the Daze*, *Froth on the Daydream*, which is the one I picked, and another one which I don't remember

V: Yeah, *Mood Indigo*

M: I think the movie was more famous, *Mood Indigo*

V: Yes, also the movie

M: The movie was more famous, but, you know, the cinema distribution in the UK is very limited and so I am not sure that the story was actually really well known in the UK, I don't think so.

V: Did you take inspiration from the book only, or also from the movie, or also from other things that have nothing to do with book or movie?

M: So, I always need many entry points when I start to work. So, the music is a big entry point. Of course, the book. This is a massive entry point; this is basically my score. The movie, I watched it, again, a second time, and also... as source of inspiration but it was also important to me to make my version of the work, and to see the work resonating with me and with the company. So I wanted to have my score, I really try to expand it as much as I can, but I might also be interested in... what the time was in France, when the story was written, so in the 50's, post-IIWW, and to be honest that's quite a dark period for French history, there's been a lot of revenge desires and cruelty happening in the streets, so those were not easy times at all, so the historical context is important to me, and the cultural context is important, and it's through the music. So, the use and the choice of the music was very important, especially in relation to the book as you know...

V and M: Cos there are so many references!

M: But that had to make sense to me as well, within the storyline, so I kind of, found the references and I wanted to find a way so that it's a bit more of a distorted way of approaching the music so it could be relevant as well, for me as a maker.

V: Did you have to ask permissions for adapting the novel or for...No? Ok

M: No, I probably should have but...

V: And, you were saying about the limited time of the performance, did you have any financial or time limits, I mean, of course you have them in every production, but how does it affect the production of the piece?

M: I would say that it did affect it quite a lot. If I am honest with you, but that's to do with the administration of the company in relation with me, and that is something that was not necessarily well managed, so...you know, the communication was not clear enough, so I had an ambition that was much bigger than what was possible in the end. But you know, I think restrictions are tools in order to develop creativity. The more you are restricted the more you have to find a way to tell the

story, and especially a story that is so...almost magical, you know, it's so surrealistic, it is a surrealistic story, with lots of elements which are difficult to recreate without special effects.

V: Yeah, which is something that's interesting in your version because in the novel you have so many things going on and it's so surrealistic and you can have a lot of imagination going on around it but then when you watch the performance it's like, this black space of the theatre. And so, it's about the bodies performing... mostly

M: Yeah, absolutely

V: There's very little in terms of props, which is interesting

M: Yeah. Had I had the budget and the capacity, I would definitely have made a full evening and I would have really explored the lighting, much more. This is something that I thought would have had great potential, also because the book starts in a very colourful way and gets greyer and greyer. So, there is a change, and the shift of colours is also something that I was very interested in, and I was trying to do with the lighting, and the space compressing slowly. The more the main character is getting ill, the more the space is closing down onto her. So that was extremely interesting. So, what I felt the most interesting were not all the little crazy ideas, which are just embellishing the story for me, it's what was related to the principles of dance which is, time, space, and weight. So, all of that was...everything was in relation to how from the body I can actually start saying a story that is quite quirky, quite dark, at the same time about human beings. Working with all those elements at the same time.

V: Yeah, and as for the language of the novel, which is very, as you say, it's very quirky, crazy...and how did you try to render that, if you did, in movement? 'Cos you see that you have some points where it's more classic, you have tilts or something like that and then you have the parts that are more twisted...

M: Yeah, I think I really wanted to depict an idea of...I would say the very operatic emotions of the characters in contrast with the swing and the groove of the period. So, I was always trying to work...almost towards the jazz style of dance, in opposition with a more classical approach which is the one of the emotional journeys, the one that is more internal. And I was interested in

conflicting those two styles, that was also very relevant to me, and it was very genuine, you know, but... you do research, you know, to kind of work for those two things.

V: And another thing, Eliot says ESD is a Graham-based company, and I was thinking as I was watching the performance that there are parts in the ensemble scene, or in the beginning when everything is going well, there the movements really start from the centre of the body and then when things run amok, they go a bit crazy and they cannot control it anymore, it's the limbs that are leading the movement, so I found that very interesting

M: Yeah, I don't have any Graham training at all, I've been Cunningham trained, so I don't know Graham technique at all...the dance starting from the centre is very much my style, is very much my identity so a lot of the material came from me, from my body, and this is only due to time. If I had had more time with them, I would have definitely researched a bit more what would be their writing and my writing, how would do they react to me and how would I react to them. But because we had such a short time, I had to really generate a lot of material. So...I don't think there was a clear choice to make the second part of the piece start from the limbs, do you think that has to do with the performance or the writing?

V: Well, I thought it matched very well this idea of, like...when I read the novel, in the end it's like, every chapter starts in a different place, which a different character doing something else, it's like he's following them and doesn't know where they are going, and then you have Alise in her solo, who is like, guided by her hands, mostly

M: Yeah

V: And Colin as well, and so I thought that that reflected it very well, so in some points I was "Oh, wow!"

M: Very important to me I wanted the time to change the space, as you say

V: Yeah

M: Be able to really try to create different atmospheres, and almost feel that "this is it, this small stage". I think that the despair of the characters makes them move from their limbs, they almost drag behind their limbs. There is a sense of control when you move from the centre, there is a

sense of running after something when you dance from the limbs, and all those four characters are running after their own lives, their own ambitions, really. And there's nothing they can do because they are really into the Greek tragedy, almost

V: Yeah, yeah, true

M: It's fatality, it's going to happen in the end. They can try to save it as much as they want, it's going to happen. Darkness is happening.

V: And how did you develop the characters? How did you see the characters?

M: So... this was a very collaborative process...the characters for me came...actually came out quite quickly. It had to do with the performing skills of the dancers...so, I saw, yeah, we develop them together and tried to find a storyline that could actually respond to the dancers themselves. Not trying to put a mask on, trying to use who they are in order to develop the characters. I thought, also, the two second, supporting characters are...require a bit more maturity, so what is important to me is that the two main characters have a sense of youth and naivety, so they are like falling in love for the first time. And that was very much Paloma and Giacomo. We've been working on the opposite between maturity versus innocence and how this counterbalance though the piece, this changes through the piece...Yeah, I don't know if I can say much more about that. I think the idea of youth and innocence has been a massive factor for me to make a decision.

V: So, in terms also of how they move

M: It is about how they move, it is about how they look. It's been like a casting a bit. Yeah that was also a lot about how they looked

V: Ah, ok. And I think you play a little bit with gender expectations, you have strong female characters in the performance, and Chloé, especially, whereas in the book she is a bit, always in the background and not really taking action. But you make her a bit more...she's proposing!

M: To me she is the main character. To me she is the main reason why this book is happening, she's the element that is making the book start. And we follow her journey through the illness and through...she's the cause of everything. That's why she had to be the main character, to me. She had to be quite poignant, and she had to lead the storyline. And that's a decision, I mean, I'd be

very interested in seeing the opposite. To choose another character and to see, what if I was leading the story through this character and see what would happen. But, in this case, I mean, Paloma was a great source of inspiration as well. So, I think there is a genuine desire to work with her, but I also thought that this story was about Chloé.

V: So, yeah, it's like her point of view, she is the main character

M: To me, yes. Yeah. It's just like, when you have such a...when you have such an editing work to do you need to make decisions that are very clear and so, who do I articulate the story around, who do I want to follow from the beginning...although in the piece she enters quite late, doesn't she? Is she in the beginning beginning?

V: No, first is Colin opening, and then you see, first you see Alise passing and then you see from the other side

M: Yeah. And then she is the last one to enter somehow. And even the first scene for me that could be whoever, it doesn't have to be those characters. And then when she enters for the first time, you know, that is very much her. So, she enters quite late within the work, but, yeah, the work had to happen because of her.

V: Because of her. Yeah, that's true, she is the one who sets things running...

M: Tilting the world

V: Otherwise, they would have stayed in this idyllic space. True. And did you work on adaptations of other media before, I know that you've done *Murder My Sweet* before...How does that help you when you do something similar?

M: So, *Murder My Sweet* was not the development of an existing work, it was being inspired by a cinematic era, you know, in order to actually draw my piece. *Murder my Sweet* was inspired by American film noir era, so that was my first entry point. Second entry point was Cluedo game. You know when you have to kind of, discover who killed someone, and so on... So, it was about creating a Cluedo game onstage.

V: Cool!

M: Getting inspired in terms of the atmosphere from the film noir era, which has helped me a lot in terms of developing characters and almost developing lighting atmosphere. So, I feel, I mean, I love cinema, and cinema is a massive source of inspiration. Because it talks about human beings, and I think the dance I am making talks about human beings. I'm not interested so much about making, what I call 'architectural pieces', which I enjoy very much but...do you know what I mean by architectural?

V: More formal

M: Yeah. Or I would say, they are basing on the actual body in movement as a structure within the space.

V: Ok, yeah

M: This is not something that makes me dream yet... maybe one day, but not at the moment, I think I am interested in the human on stage and how that experience can be relatable from an audience perspective. And that's what does cinema to me...the cinema experience, and that's the aspect that I like.

V: And, as per the creative process and the setting of the piece, how much amount of flexibility did the dancers have in creating the choreography, did you work with them from improvisations?

M: Yeah, within this context it was very much like me coming with material, with ideas that would generate material together. Just because I didn't have much time.

V: So, it was collaborative

M: It's always collaborative, I never come as a dictator trying to, you know, saying that's it and you do it or...it has to be an exchange because the dancers have to respond to it. It's dance, you know, from the moment it's onstage it's theirs, it's not mine anymore. So it is always an exchange and a dialogue. But yeah, I came with a lot of material still.

V: And another thing that I was thinking about, you were saying that space was very important...I thought that there was a clear demarcation of the two couples, by space, so

M: Yeah

V: the way they...and gaze, I noticed how Colin and Chloé were looking at each other and Alise and Chick no. And then, the way that Chloé and Colin use up and down movements in their lifts and also travelling through diagonals in space, while Alise and Chick were almost staying put, and pivoting around themselves, it looked a little bit like the Rubik's Cube, when they are dancing together

M: Yeah, yeah

V: So, I was thinking, was that wanted...

M: I think, every time we meet Colin and Chloé, they meet in outer spaces, so for me there was a sense of, as much as I wanted to work with the very specific areas, you know, in order to create an environment and a space...when Colin and Chloé...their love is bigger than life. And that it's translated through the use of the space. It's bigger than any space, it just covers the space, it that could have happened in the audience it would have happened in the audience as well. When it comes to Alise and Chick, it's a completely different relationship, they are separating, and so compressing them within one space while they try to separate, it was for me something quite interesting. How they can't get away from each other, but they are getting away from each other. So, their relationship is much more material. It's only about the materialism of us. And that just created an interesting contrast to me. With Colin and Chloé we just... we are on the level that, that goes further than the real world. With the others, we are very much in the real world and dealing with the real world, you know, that what actually makes our existence happen...

V: Yeah, very cool, really, and what about the use of gesture and pantomime? You use quite a lot, and in an interesting way to me.

M: Yeah. So, to me dance has to have an accessible aspect. I don't have the ambition to make dance that only communicates to an audience that has an educated eye. I need to find a way to communicate to an audience that has never come to the theatre. And to do that, one of my tools, which is also a language I like to develop, is to use the idea of symbols, and use the idea of gestures. So, using the gesture or movement within choreography because you may not understand when a dancer makes a massive spiral with the whole body around the space what it means but what you

will understand as an audience member who has never been in the theatre, is if a dancer is offering a handshake to another dancer, and that's very clear. It's hello, or it's an agreement, or it's a contract, but there is immediately an accessibility to the work and to what the storyline is trying to say on stage. That is very much relatable. So, it's important for me to actually include those gestures within the choreography.

V: As a symbol

M: So, even if I lost you, I can grab you back.

V: And that has also something to do with your dance company, 'cos I think it's very interesting that with your dance company you are creating a project that is about working with people who have not done dance before...Can you tell me a bit more about this

M: Well, once again, this is a bit for me how I can make dance readable. And I think that the theatre has always its challenges, one of the main challenges being the fourth wall—what happens in between the stage and the auditorium? And why is it so separated? And why, when we try to break this wall, this is so challenging? Now I've just worked on a production when one of the dancers was going into the auditorium and as soon as the dancer was doing that everybody was just like (inspires)

V: Yeah, freezing

M: Absolutely, freezing and nervous, and so...I don't want to break the fourth wall in a provocative or threatening way, I want to break it in an inviting and welcoming way, almost not establishing it. Working with a community class for me is already doing that. Because what I am doing is that I am...there is a bleed of the audience space within the performative space. So that is the first reason, second reason is because of the nature of the next project. It's the story of a couple of gay men attending a concert by Nina Simone in 1976 and expressing the stories, emotions, hopes and feeling through the choreography. So basically, we get in the head of those two characters and discover how they respond to Nina Simone's performance. Well, in 1976 it was forbidden to do that as gay men. So, the community for me is the important aspect, is the heart of this story, has a reflection, an impact, because there is a community around, observing. So, this is a story that has to do with the political context and the social context in 1976. But what's important to me also, is

really to engage with dance and to help people access themselves and trust their body. So, beyond the work itself, working with communities is always a way for me to actually offer dance as a way to access wellbeing, physical and mental wellbeing. And that is something that is very important and I see that it's working. I have been working with the community since September, once a month for two hours workshops, and led us to tomorrow, we are having a performance tomorrow for the season launch. And then we keep going all the way until the creation and I can see... I can see that people feel much better in their body, and when someone feels much better in their bodies, thought the use of dance, it means that it's someone who will feel much better in their bodies when there is a job interview, when they have their first date, when they have you know, in life. From the moment you can stand, you can stand in a studio but you can also stand in a street.

V: Yeah, that's true.

M: And, you know, if I can provide that to people

V: That's huge.

M: That's massive.

V: Yeah, true. As for breaking the fourth wall and trying to be accessible, I was thinking maybe also this idea of revisiting or adapting works that are already know, it's a way of doing that. Because, as part of the audience, having a point of entry point, I may know the story, I have watched the film, it's also inviting.

M: Yes, yes, I agree. I agree and there is something that I am interested in and is trying to revisit...it's always about giving a new perspective, isn't it? And you can see in music, very very often and from very early on, you know, like, composers have been revisiting all the composers' music. Variations on the theme of Carmen by blablabla...from a new composer. Or variation on the theme of blablabla...How many covers do we hear nowadays... of really classic songs that we all know that are being revisited by a new musician. And I think this is something that we haven't really done in dance. Of course, you have a hundred of *Swan Lakes*, you have a hundred of *Rites of Springs*, but this is not a revisit for me, this is just, like, doing your version. While revisiting an existing work, not taking those themes but taking the actual dance, revisiting it. So, this is

something that I feel interested in doing... and I have some ideas coming about that but I won't reveal them!

V: ahahah!

M: But I think that will be the next work, actually, about revisiting in the dance. I think this is an interesting approach.

V: And would you agree to call it translation, and if not, what ideas do you associate with translation?

M: I think translation is that, you know...translating something into dance. Yeah, absolutely. This is about...'cos dance is a language. Or better, the moving body is a language in itself, you know, the word dance is always a bit scary, sometimes...so, the body motion is a language in itself. And so, it means that in theory, if it is a language, then it has the potential to translate something that has another language. So, it can translate music, it can translate texts, it can translate architecture, sculpture, anything that has the destiny to actually communicate. So, I would agree by saying that what I have done was a translation or a revisit of a story that was existing through the medium of text and plays, I don't think there was any dance version of it before.

V: No, I've done some research and haven't found. Theatre performances, yes, there's opera

M: Oh, is there?

V: There's an opera, it was staged in France, Russia, and Germany, the same one done by a Russian but...there are mangas, in Japan, there's a Japanese movie, it's incredible how much you find, like, this story is very little in the UK and there you find a massive thing in Japan

M: Wow

V: It's incredible and in terms of memory. This is also interesting because translation has also the power to maintain memories alive, by maintaining texts alive, in different forms and in my understanding of intermedial translation, and to export them and put them in circulation, so that different imaginaries are, you know...

M: Yeah, for me it's important, it's the importance of art in different levels because it has the responsibility to carry the memory and without memory there is no history. Most of the information we have from our past comes through art and you know, sometimes you can wonder about the relevance of dance art form for instance, because it's a very ephemeral art form and we just, we're in the space for an hour and review the memory of something. It doesn't stay. Unless you do a video-dance or you know, unless a support is going to exist again in thirty years I don't know, but...I do believe it's still important because it leaves a memory, we still have recording of dances from the beginning of the century which inform us about what was happening in this time. History is built on art, really.

V: Yeah, and being there and doing the remembering together or just, you know, revisiting

M: Absolutely, so important. Yeah. Finding a new meaning, finding, yeah...but which text was it? You know sometimes we hear on the news like, oh, this is exactly as it was told thirty years ago by this writer and...Yeah, it's important, actually to remember that.

V: And it's interesting also that by doing that you put different perspectives according to the different contexts, so you see that there are changes. So for example I've seen in different versions how the relationship between men and women in *Froth* were changing a little bit, so you have the opera, which is still...you see women, and, very much Alise as like, this girl who offers some sort of cheating opportunity to Colin, and then you see in other movies where female figures become stronger or more relevant and it's interesting to see that

M: The choices that are made

V: And how do you make it relevant in Japan

M: Yeah of course

V: There, there was a very nice take, the part that was talking about loneliness, and the part that was talking about problems at work, they were made a bit bigger and more relevant in the movie adaptation, so you were in a place of alienation and loneliness

M: Yeah, absolutely, it's true because the movie talks a lot about the industrialization and how that turns human beings into bodies, into machines...and this is not something I felt I was able to explore within the 20 minutes condition.

V: Yeah, what I thought you examined very well was the vulnerability of bodies, and especially in the duets between Colin and Chloé, and then you have the same...you have another duet and in the end it's him doing some of the same steps but alone, and all the time it's gradually, kind of deteriorating, gradually becoming less strong and active

M: Yeah. Thank you.

V: And breathing also came forward. You could hear them breathing and it was reminding you of the physical body breathing and having problems doing that.

M: That is what is interesting to me, it's the performative state of the work

V: What dance can do

M: And what dance can do when it's performed, when it's embodied, you know. The rehearsal is just giving you a first idea of the frame of it, but yeah...