THE RISE OF MANIPULACTING

THE PUPPET AS A FIGURE

OF THE OTHER

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ABSTRACT

Since the beginning of the 1980s, artists such as Neville Tranter in the Netherlands, Philippe Genty in France, Ilka Schönbein in Germany and Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté in Belgium have developed a new form of performance that I call manipulacting. By interacting with puppets, performers enter the fictional world of the puppets and appear as their Others. This study argues that manipulacting is a new and distinct form of performance. Although manipulacting combines acting and puppetry, it differs from them because it discloses a human being and an object engaged in a relation of self to Other. Manipulacting is defined by this specific relation and not by a particular aesthetic or technique.

The methodology of the thesis is framed by Practice-as-Research from a directorial perspective. The enquiry includes four personal research projects – *Seaside* (2007-08), *Postalgia* (2008), *Urashima Taro* (2007-09) and *The Maids* (2009-10) – that explore the relations between manipulactors and puppets through different dramaturgical and performative settings, interviews with Neville Tranter, Nicole Mossoux and Duda Paiva, and detailed analyses of *Cuniculus* (2008) by Tranter and *Twin Houses* (1994) by Mossoux-Bonté.

The thesis proposes two areas of new knowledge. Firstly, it suggests a rethinking of the nature of the puppet and an understanding of it by way of its alterity. It discusses the ontological ambiguity of the puppet in manipulacting, by re-functioning phenomenological aspects of thought developed by Sartre in *The Imaginary* (1940) and

Being and Nothingness (1943), and by Levinas in *Totality and Infinity* (1961). Secondly, the thesis explores the specificity of manipulacting by looking at representations of the Other developed in dramatic and postdramatic performances. It explores the alterity of the puppet in relation to dramaturgical meaning, as well as the production of ambiguity in performance. It concludes by discussing the core dramaturgical and performative elements that constitute manipulacting.

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NOTES FOR THE READERS

The mainspring of this thesis is Practice-as-Research. The practice element counts as 40 per cent of the submission, with the written thesis counting as 60 per cent. My methodology includes the following elements:

- The production of three research projects that have been documented through video and photographs: *Urashima Taro*, *Postalgia*, and *The Maids*.

- Interviews with practitioners involved in manipulacting: Neville Tranter, Nicole Mossoux, and Duda Paiva.

- Detailed analysis of the productions *Cuniculus* by Stuffed Puppet Theatre and *Twin Houses* by Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté.

- Historical and theatrical analysis of puppetry and manipulacting.

The submission contains two DVDs. The first one is labelled DVD 1. It contains video documentations of three personal research projects: *Postalgia*, *The Maids*, and *Urashima Taro*. The second DVD, labelled DVD 2, contains video recordings of two case studies: *Cuniculus*, and *Twin Houses*. The video of a particular performance and its location in the appendices is signalled at the outset of each discussion. I suggest that readers watch *Postalgia*, *Maids3* and *UT3.2* before reading Chapter III and watch at least twenty minutes of *Cuniculus* and the full extract of *Twin Houses* before reading Chapter IV. The other videos of *The Maids* and *Urashima Taro* can be watched after reading the whole thesis.

CHAPTER I

MANIPULACTING AND ALTERITY

A theatre stage. On that stage a man and a woman dance. They stop, look at each other and exchange a kiss. This appears to be a classical love scene, with a romantic touch. Yet there is an uncanny feeling about it. The man is actually not a man. He is a puppet. The woman he is dancing with is a real woman but she is also the manipulator of the puppet. Everything becomes more complex. I can see a couple and I can see a lonely woman. I can see a human being and I can see an object. I can see an actress and I can see a puppeteer. The scene described is from *Urashima Taro*, a solo piece performed by Aya Nakamura under my direction and produced by Rouge28 Theatre. This performance explores the interactions of a puppeteer with life-sized puppets. The multitudes of doubles describe a new alterity which becomes the starting point of a questioning about the representation of the Other through the puppet in contemporary theatre.

In March 2011, I participated in a workshop led by American master puppeteer, director and scholar Roman Paska, organised by the Puppet Working Group and the Centre of International Theatre and Performance Research of Royal Holloway in London. Paska argued that the use of puppetry in contemporary performances could no longer be solely justified by tradition, the personal taste of the theatre-makers or the necessity of solving

staging issues such as characters who are supposed to fly or who represent children and animals. The representation of a character or a persona by a puppet instead of a human being had to be motivated by dramaturgical choices. Behind Paska's remark is an awareness of the rethinking of the presence of the puppet figure on stage. The renewal of puppetry over the past decades is the result of an exploration of the dramaturgical meaning of the animated figure in theatre. Artists and companies such as Neville Tranter, Duda Paiva, Ilka Schönbein, Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté, Dondoro Theatre, Blind Summit, Ulrike Quade, and Complicite have developed performances in which not only are performers visible as manipulators but they also interact with their puppets. The interplay of the puppeteer with the puppet provokes an original relationship on stage between two beings that are ontologically different, one being a human person and the other one an object. As French scholar Didier Plassard suggests, not only has the puppeteer entered the space of the puppet by stepping out of the puppet booth but he has entered its fictional world. In his article 'Marionnette Oblige: Ethique et Esthétique sur la Scène Contemporaine' (2009), Plassard observes that the physical relationship between the puppeteer and the puppet has shifted from verticality to horizontality. The horizontal relationship has affected the way puppeteers embody the puppet. It has also transformed the reading of puppetry by the audience because it has affected the alterity of the puppet and his manipulator. The puppet and the puppeteer seem to share the same world, the same actuality within the represented actuality of the stage. The puppet is nearly another person. Here, as Plassard highlights, it is important to stress the word 'nearly'. Because it is 'nearly' a person it can be recognised as an Other, an antagonist. However, because it is 'nearly' a person but not actually a person, it can be abused and even killed without incurring any moral consequences. The co-presence between the

performer and the puppet inscribes the latter as an ambiguous figure of the Other, a philosophical term which I will define shortly.

1.1.   The notion of 'manipulacting'

This study proposes a rethinking of the nature of the puppet and an understanding of it by way of its alterity. The evolution from an invisible performer to a visible one places the relation between the performer and the puppet at the centre of the performance. The puppeteer gets close to an actor through the use of hybrid forms of performance that combine puppeteering and acting and because he gains a dramatic presence. By acting, I mean the elaboration of dramatic characters or personae on stage as opposed to the sole act of operating a puppet. In this study I refer to the hybridisation of puppetry and acting as 'manipulacting'.

I argue that 'manipulacting' is an historical evolution of the visible presence of the puppeteer. It inscribes the presence of the performer, called the 'manipulactor', in the dramaturgy of the performance through his interaction with the puppet.[1] Manipulacting indicates a form of performance which combines the manipulation of a puppet and acting. The word 'manipulation' has been favoured over the word 'animation' because I consider that the puppet is manipulated by the performer and animated (or not) by the audience. Moreover the word 'manipulation' does not bear any religious, psychoanalytical or spiritual connotation, unlike 'animation'.[2] To manipulate means to handle with skill and comes from the Latin word 'manipulus' which signifies 'handful' while to animate means to breathe life into and comes from the Latin word 'animare' which refers to the soul or the mind. 'Manipulacting' is not confined to one

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[1] By convention I use a masculine pronoun throughout this thesis to include both male and female performers.
[2] Especially in Jung's terminology.

particular form of performance but varies according to the dramaturgies and the techniques developed by artists. It refers to their presence next to the puppet and their ability to achieve a hybridisation of acting and puppeteering. The concept of the 'manipulactor' was first used by French scholar Annie Gilles in her article 'Des Acteurs et des "Manipulacteurs"' (Actors and Manipulactors), published in 1994. Gilles defines the contemporary puppeteer as a manipulactor because he should be able to be both a puppeteer and an actor. However, she does not refer to the hybridisation of these two forms of performance. My definition of the concept of manipulacting is different from that used by Gilles because I inscribe the hybridisation of acting and puppeteering at its heart from a performing perspective or a dramatic perspective. By that I mean that the performer is either simultaneously acting and puppeteering or remains always present as a character even when he does not directly interact with the puppet. The hybridisation of these two modes of performances requires the elaboration of a new form of training and facilitates certain forms of dramaturgy. Dramaturgy has to be understood in this thesis as the organisation of narratives, characters, and modes of presentation to convey meaning to the audience in and through the performance. Manipulacting cannot simply be the addition of skills coming from acting and puppetry. The hybrid form of manipulacting creates a dialogue between two beings that are ontologically different, a subject and an object, which opens up horizons for theatrical representations of actuality and enables an exploration of the puppet as a figure of the Other.

During my research, I have often been asked if I was examining the notion of the Other in relation to the work of Jacques Lacan. In his theory of the mirror stage, Lacan argues that the image of the self that the infant sees in the mirror is a representation of himself but, above all, appears as an Other because this image does not correspond to his experience of his own body. Lacan considers the Other within a relation of oneself

to oneself. In *Le Jeu de la Marionnette: l'Objet Intermédiaire et son Métathéâtre* (1981), Gilles adopts a Lacanian perspective to discuss how puppets can be used by children as transitional objects in developing their relation to themselves and the world. She also explicitly refers to concepts developed by British psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott in *Playing and Reality* (first published in 1971). Although I consider the puppet as an image, as it will be further discussed in Chapter III, my understanding of the Other is not Lacanian but related to the philosophy of French Existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre and to some extent to the philosophy of French phenomenologist Emmanuel Levinas. I have favoured a Sartrean phenomenological approach to manipulacting because I examine the alterity of the puppet through its ontological ambiguity. Even if in some cases the relation of self to Other between the manipulactor and his puppet can represent a relation of oneself to oneself, as will be discussed in Chapter IV in regard to the work of Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté for instance, this is not the only possible form of relation. The materiality of the puppet as an object is at the heart of this research because it only represents an Other in the representational actuality of the performance. The ontological dualism presented by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*, first published in 1943, allows me to examine the particularity of the puppet through its ontological ambiguity. I further develop below the reasons for looking at Sartre and Levinas, as well as for capitalising the word 'Other'.

1.2.   Research itinerary

The mode of inquiry of this study is framed by Practice-as-Research through the setting of a dialogue between practice and theory. The aim is to understand how manipulacting inherently engages with representations of the Other because of the co-presence of the

performer and the puppet. The starting point of this investigation is my practice as a theatre director. Since 2005, I have focused my directorial work on the interplay between puppets and performers by collaborating with artists trained in different styles of acting, in physical theatre, in dance and, of course, in puppetry. The next section addresses the itinerary of my research from its origins in my own practice as a theatre director to its development into a PhD project and how the work of Sartre and Levinas have participated in my understanding of manipulacting.

My research on manipulacting started in spring 2005 when I directed a production called *Heartsnatcher* that combined actors and puppets. At that time, apart from a short course in puppetry taken at Central School of Speech and Drama, my experience with puppets was limited. The piece was inspired by a novel by French novelist, playwright, jazzman and engineer Boris Vian that we presented at the Cockpit Theatre in London in May 2005.[3] It tells the story of Clementine, the mother of triplets who believes that her sons, Joel, Noel and Citroen, are constantly under the threat of deadly danger because of terrible and absurd accidents that might happen to them. She constantly seeks approval from Jacquemort, an unpredictable psychoanalyst, about the unreasonable solutions that she thinks up to keep her children safe. Clementine believes that her children are part of herself and that she is a good mother because she permanently fears for their lives. At the end of the piece, she decides to lock them in cages to make sure that they will remain safe. The world created by Vian in his novel is surreal. For instance, the children discovered that they can fly if they eat blue caterpillars.[4] Clementine and Jacquemort were enacted by actors while the children were rod puppets. Beyond the fact that puppets could fly, they also materialised the idea

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[3] I collaborated on *Heartsnatcher* with Juley Ayres, Adam Hypki, Kristin Kerwin and Eleanor Margolies.
[4] In September 2009, I mentioned this project to Duda Paiva before I interviewed him. He loved so much the ideas present in the book that he created *Bastard!* in 2011 freely inspired by *Heartsnatcher* that he presented for the first time at the World Festival of Puppet Theatres in Charleville-Mezieres.

that Clementine considered her children as objects that belonged to her and not as independent subjects. The subject-object relation established by Clementine with her sons was then symbolised by the materiality of the puppets. Yet there was more to find than these aspects inherent to puppetry itself. I made a discovery that pertained to the interactions taking place between actors and puppets.

In one scene of *Heartsnatcher*, there was a particular moment when the mother was holding joyfully one of her sons in her arms because a few seconds before she thought that he was dead. This simple and short scene struck me because I had the impression of seeing a mother with her son while I knew that I was watching an actress with a puppet. From this moment, I developed a strong interest in the relationship between performers and puppets on stage because I saw the possibility to create different levels of reality in theatrical representation through the ambiguous existence of the puppet as an object and an apparent subject. This ambiguous existence of the puppet was not related to the reading of the materiality of the puppet as a dramaturgical sign but to a spectating experience related to a particular interplay between my perception and my imagination. This experience reminded me a previous one that happened to me in 1998 when I saw by chance in Lille a street performance of Ilka Schönbein's show *Metamorphoses*. In this piece, Schönbein was simultaneously a manipulator and a protagonist. She created a silent dialogue through movements and images between her puppets and herself. This memory of Schönbein's piece and the work on *Heartsnatcher* prompted me to extend my knowledge in this form of performance from a practical and theoretical point of view.

In October 2005, I enrolled on the directing strand of the MA in Advanced Theatre Practice at Central School of Speech and Drama and focused my research on the exploration of the relationship between actors and puppets. I directed several

productions looking at this relation (*Beyond the Door*, *The Bush and the Dog*, *Furies*). I also began a research work based on *The Maids* by Jean Genet called *Madame*. In this version, the character of Madame was represented by a puppet manipulated by the maids. I collaborated with Sura Dohnke and Annelot Dits, two actresses who had no experience in puppetry, and with Aya Nakamura as puppet maker and adviser. Three years later, I used the same concept to work on the opening scene of *The Maids* which is one of the four experiments that I have conducted for this research on manipulacting. In parallel to this research project, I read the work of scholars who wrote on puppetry such as Steve Tillis, Henryk Jurkowski, Edward Gordon Craig, Roland Barthes and Annie Gilles. Although their writing was enriching and variously thought-provoking, I did not find any text that related to my experience in *Heartsnatcher*. In spring 2006 I read a chapter of *Being and Nothingness* (1943) by Sartre that discussed the subject-object relationship. I realised that such a relation could be a fruitful perspective to analyse the relation between a human being and a puppet.

After graduating, I carried on developing *Madame*. The piece was presented at the Shunt Lounge in London during one week in November 2006. The outcome was not very satisfactory as I felt that most of the time the puppet of Madame was not sufficiently present as a character. The process of creation was like the blind guiding the blind in the sense that I was directing a piece where no one, including me, knew exactly what had to be done in order to make the relation between the performers and the puppet work. I realised that learning manipulacting would be a long process of research because there was no place where it was taught. Moreover there was very little writing discussing this form of performance.

These reasons led me to study for a PhD on manipulacting in order to identify the different aspects of this form of performance by collaborating with performers

trained in different backgrounds (as none could have been already trained in manipulacting), to understand its historical origins, and finally to produce knowledge about the fabrication of a co-presence between manipulactors and puppets.

For the purpose of my thesis, I have implemented four experiments: excerpts of *Seaside* by Marie Redonnet, *Postalgia*, *Urashima Taro*, and an excerpt of *The Maids* by Jean Genet. These experiments have been conducted during two distinct phases. The first phase includes *Seaside* and *Postalgia* as well as the first and second version of *Urashima Taro*. This early phase occurred between July 2007 and June 2008. The experiments have distinct dramaturgical forms, and for each of them I have worked with performers trained in different disciplines. *Seaside* is a play with five characters written for actors. For this experiment, I have collaborated with a contemporary dancer and a puppeteer. *Postalgia* is a montage of different contemporary texts by writers such as Heiner Muller and Bernard Marie Koltes, performed by a physical theatre trained actor, a lighting designer and myself. Finally, *Urashima Taro* is a devised piece based on a traditional Japanese myth and performed by a puppeteer. These three experiments were shown to audience as works-in-progress.

The second phase includes the third version of *Urashima Taro* which has been presented as a finished piece in England, Wales and France, and three iterations of the opening scene of *The Maids*. This later phase spanned between February 2009 and September 2010. My aim was to find answers and solutions to questions and issues raised during the first phase such as the connection between dramaturgical form and the performers' initial training, the balancing of the presence of the manipulactor with that of the puppet, the integration of the ontological ambiguity of the puppet into the dramaturgy, and the issue of speech in relation to co-presence. The third version of *Urashima Taro* develops the ambiguous relation of the performer and the puppet

already present in the two first versions and also incorporates dramaturgical elements present in *Postalgia* such as the transformation of the identity of a puppet. *The Maids* examines how the ontological duality can be used as a dramaturgical device. It aims at finding solutions to the issue of speech in manipulacting that was already raised during the experiment based on *Seaside*. I also recognised the fact that I had to remain in my directorial position as opposed to that of a performer, as was the case in *Postalgia*, in order to be able to readjust the relationship of presences between the manipulactor and the puppet.

In May 2008 I spent three weeks at the Institut International de la Marionnette in Charleville-Mézières. I had the opportunity to access the Institut's large collection of videos of contemporary performances in puppetry as well as its specialist library. I discovered the early ensemble works of Philippe Genty which already contained forms of manipulacting, as well as the work of artists such as Neville Tranter, Duda Paiva, the Train Company and the latest productions by Ilka Schönbein.

At the outset of my research, my focus was on the gaze of the puppet. I initially thought that the gaze was the main element that constituted the apparent consciousness of the puppet and framed the interactions between the puppet and the performer. I looked at the gaze described by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* (2007) but also at other possible interpretations in psychoanalysis by authors such as French psychopathologist Pascal Le Malefan, Sigmund Freud and Slavoj Žižek, or in non-verbal communication research by authors such as Michael Argyle.[5] However, following my first experiments, I realised that, although the gaze of the puppet played an important role in manipulacting, it was not the only element that supported the apparent consciousness of the puppet and its relationship with the performer. Prior to the gaze, I understood that

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[5] 'La marionnette, objet de vision, support de regard; objet ludique, support psychothérapeutique' (Le Malefan 2004); *The Uncanny* (Freud 1919); 'Looking Awry' (Zizek 1989); 'The different Functions of the Gaze' (Argyle 1976)

the puppet appeared as a subject because of its apparent presence as an embodied consciousness. The interaction between the puppet and the performer concerned a corporeal relationship taking place between them. This focus on corporeal presence also immediately raised the question of the place of the spectator in viewing and constructing the relationship between the performing bodies. From March 2009, the notions of perception, imagination and alterity became central to my research in order to understand why a puppet seems to have a consciousness and appears as an Other despite being an object.

I pursued my reading of Sartrean ontology by examining his theory of the Other and of the image because these seemed productive. I also studied the work on alterity by Emmanuel Levinas, which allowed me to explore the issue of the puppet as Other with regard to its essence as an object. The awareness that a contradiction existed in the fact that an object cannot be an Other in a Sartrean and Levinasean sense but that puppets do appear as Others in manipulacting, led me to examine the experience of the spectator through perception and imagination. Once again, Sartre appeared to me as a fruitful source to comprehend what differentiates perception from imagination and how the two interact together. I have then applied this knowledge to manipulacting.

1.3.   Research inquiry

This study aims at investigating the dramaturgical, performative and philosophical stakes raised by the encounter on stage of two beings which are ontologically opposed. My research addresses the following questions.

- What is the ontology of the puppet?

- How is it possible that the spectator confers on the puppet the value of an Other?

- Who is the Other represented by the puppet?

- How does the initial training and performance mode of the performer shape the construction of the puppet as an Other?

- How does the representation of the Other differ between dramatic (predominantly character-based) and postdramatic theatre?

- What are the possible dramaturgical meanings of the representation of the Other by a puppet?

- Which set of techniques needs to be elaborated to achieve such interaction between performer and puppet?

The four experiments that I have conducted in relation to my inquiry present different forms of interaction between performers and puppets. In each case, the performances involve life-sized puppets as the main protagonists although other types of puppet are used. The setting of each piece is distinct. Each explores a different dramaturgical framing of the alterity of the puppet, and is performed by people trained in different disciplines. *Seaside* is a duet and a solo experiment performed by a dancer and a puppeteer. *Urashima Taro* is a solo performed by a trained puppeteer. *The Maids* is a duet performed by two Stanislavski-trained actresses. *Postalgia* is a trio that combines performers and non-performers with backgrounds in physical theatre, lighting design, directing and puppetry. Finally, the genre of each piece is different. *Seaside* is a contemporary piece that can be described as postdramatic, in that it uses non-naturalistic dialogues, and the different characters seem to merge into one. *Urashima Taro* is a visual piece based on a traditional Japanese story that contains few spoken words. *Postalgia* is a collage of different texts staged as a montage. *The Maids* is a classic piece of modern drama originally written to be performed by actresses.

In addition to these four research projects, I explore the work of two companies

which have elaborated distinct forms of manipulacting. The first case study is *Cuniculus*, created in 2008 by the Dutch company Stuffed Puppet Theatre. This piece was written, designed and performed by Neville Tranter. The second is *Twin Houses*, created in 1994 by the Belgian company Mossoux-Bonté and still part of their repertoire. The piece has been initiated and performed by Nicole Mossoux and directed by Patrick Bonté. These two productions offer distinct representations of the Other that pertain to the mode of manipulacting developed in each piece. Using Hans-Thies Lehmann's study of postdramatic theatre, I argue that *Cuniculus* is a form of dramatic theatre whereas *Twin Houses* belongs to postdramatic theatre. The former tells a linear story with dramatic characters while the latter is a series of tableaux without any text and dramatically defined personae. The representation of the figure of the Other in *Cuniculus* is contingent on the training and the approach to theatre taken by Tranter, who initially trained in Method acting. Through his approach to text, characterisation and dramaturgy his work can be categorised under what Lehmann describes as dramatic theatre. Conversely, Mossoux and Bonté do not use narratives and texts in their productions. Their approach to theatre is a combination of contemporary dance and Grotowski. Their work can be described as postdramatic.

The theoretical framework of my research into manipulacting is predominantly phenomenological. The purpose of phenomenology in this context is to disclose in which way the spectator's consciousness apprehends the meeting on stage of a human being with a puppet. I define the puppet from an ontological perspective as an object which appears on stage as a subject. Subject and object have several definitions. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1978) gives six different definitions of 'subject':

    1) Any member of a State except its Sovereign, person owing obedience to another

2) Member of a proposition about which something is predicated (Logic and Grammar)

3) Thinking or feeling entity, the mind, the ego, the conscious self, as opposed to all that is external to the mind (Philosophy)

4) Theme of discussion or description or representation, matter (to be) treated or dealt with

5) Circumstance, person, or thing, that gives occasion for specified feeling or action

6) Person of specified usually undesirable bodily or mental tendencies (especially in Medicine)

I address the subject from its philosophical definition, defining it as a being endowed with consciousness and opposed to the object.

The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* offers six definitions of 'object'.

1) Thing placed before eyes or presented to one of the senses; material thing

2) Person or thing of affecting appearance

3) Person or thing to which action or feeling is directed

4) Thing aimed at

5) Thing thought or apprehended as correlative to the thinking mind or subject, external thing, non-ego (Philosophy)

6) Noun or noun-equivalent governed by active transitive verb or by preposition

Lalande's *Vocabulaire Technique et Critique de la Philosophie* (1991) completes these definitions by describing the object as 'that which possesses an existence on its own, independent of the knowledge or the idea that thinking beings can have about it' (Lalande 1991: 702; my translation). I refer to the object in this study through its definition as a thing that appears in front of the eye and also as an external thing in

relation to consciousness. I suggest that these definitions of the object partly encompass what constitutes the puppet in its materiality and its opposition to the performer.

The Other is altogether familiar and strange to oneself. The Other exists under multiple forms. It can be someone from another country, of another gender but also a relative or even a part of the self. In manipulacting, the human being is confronted by an anthropomorphic object which resembles him because of its shape, its behaviour, and its movement. The interplay taking place between the manipulactor and the puppet materialises the paradoxical status of the Other as someone both familiar and strange because of the ambiguous ontology of the puppet as subject and object.

1.4.   A Sartrean perspective of manipulacting

The relation of the puppet with the manipulactor is examined through the perspectives of the relation of self to Other developed by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*, and completed by a Levinasean approach of the Other. A Sartrean perspective might be thought a little anachronistic as Sartre is not usually the phenomenologist cited in the current debates in performance studies. For many years Sartre's philosophy has been unjustly neglected in this sphere. As French philosopher Frederic Worms (2009) writes in the introduction to *La Philosophie en France au XXe Siecle - Moments*, his philosophical work is paradoxically unknown due to Sartre's 'excess of fame' (Worms 2009: 16). Worms means that Sartre's strong involvement in the political debates of his time as well as the dominating position of Existentialism as a philosophical trend in France until the 1950s have drawn a lot of opposition. Worms ranks him as one of the three major French thinkers of the last century, alongside Bergson and Deleuze. However, there has been a reappraisal of his work in recent years. To name but a few,

Adrian Mirvish and Adrian van den Hoven edited in 2010 *New Perspectives on Sartre*, which not only took a fresh approach to the topics of Sartre and freedom and his relation to ethics and Marxism but also looks at new subjects such as Sartre and children, and Sartre and religion. Jonathan Webber has edited in 2010 a collection of articles called *Reading Sartre*, which contains new perspectives on Sartre, including amongst others an essay by Sartrean specialist Sebastian Gardner that offers a reappraisal of the transcendental dimension of Sartre's philosophy.

Sartre's main opponent has been Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty's criticisms have had an important impact on the public underestimation of Sartre's work. Because he was a major figure in the French academic world of his time and was for many years a very close friend of Sartre, it is therefore assumed that he knew Sartre's philosophy very well. His arguments against Sartre are often re-used to undermine the latter's philosophy. Mild critiques of Sartre are already present in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, published two years after *Being and Nothingness*. In *Les Aventures de la Dialectique*, first published in 1955, Merleau-Ponty accuses Sartre of offering an ontology based on a severe dualism. Lengthy critiques of Sartre are also present in *The Visible and the Invisible*, first published in 1964, in the chapter on dialectic. In the article 'Sartre and Merleau-Ponty: a Reappraisal', Monika Langer (1998) writes that Merleau-Ponty 'claimed that Sartre's subject is a translucent consciousness coextensive with the world' (Langer 1998: 98). Merleau-Ponty contends that, for Sartre, 'meaning does not come from the world but is imposed on it by the constituting consciousness' (Langer 1998: 98). Unlike Sartre, who splits being-in-itself from being-for-self, Merleau-Ponty argues that it is not possible to separate the consciousness from its objects because they relate to the same world.

Langer contends that Merleau-Ponty has misinterpreted Sartre's dualism. She

supports Simone de Beauvoir's claim that 'Merleau-Ponty has falsified Sartre's ontology' (Langer 1998:101). Sartre's ontology offers a greater ambiguity between subject and object than the strict dualism of which he is often accused.

Mark Meyers makes the case in his article 'Liminality and the Problem of Being-in-the-world' (2008), that Sartrean dualism is not as strict as it seems and contains a potential liminality of the subject and the object through Sartre's concept of nothingness and the relation of self to Other. Although Sartre always maintains a dualism between subject and object, Meyers suggests that Sartre's and Merleau-Ponty's notions of being-in-the-world are close. Sartre's ontology has to be understood as 'a dualism in constant dissolution, as a dualism that is always in the process of slipping into a monism, yet which never fully slips' (Meyers 2008: 87).

In 'Merleau-Ponty et le pseudo-sartrisme' (1955), which is an elaborated response to Merleau-Ponty's critique, Beauvoir develops the idea that Merleau-Ponty presents not the philosophy of Sartre but that of a pseudo-Sartre. She argues that Sartre's and Merleau-Ponty's philosophical positions are closer than Merleau-Ponty claims.

Despite the virulence of Merleau-Ponty's attacks against Sartre, Thomas Busch (2010) suggests that Sartre and Merleau-Ponty have maintained a dialogue in their writings. Sartre has accepted some of the critiques raised by Merleau-Ponty and has changed his own thought in his later work such as *Search for a Method* (first published in 1958) and *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (first published in 1960). This evolution in Sartre's thought has led him to take a great interest in the theory of structures developed by French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. Sartre admits that structures mediate human activities and thus affect individual freedom. He refers to structure in his work as the 'practico-inert', which has a weight and intelligibility on its own. Yet Sartre cannot

accept the determination of structures over human activities because otherwise, as Thomas Busch explains, that would mean that human beings are mere 'pawn players caught in the system' (Busch 2010: 319). Sartre and Merleau-Ponty both ultimately reject the dominating schema of the structures.

Yet differences remain between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty especially concerning the issue of other minds. For Merleau-Ponty there is reciprocity between self and other – for this reason he does not capitalise the word 'other' – whereas for Sartre, there is an opposition. In 'La Question d'Autrui dans la Philosophie Contemporaine' (2006), French phenomenologist Françoise Dastur concludes that Merleau-Ponty's position does not eventually offer a discussion of the alterity of the Other because he considers it as another self, which is not the case for Sartre and Levinas. The negation of the alterity of the Other in Merleau-Ponty's perspective of other minds is the result of 'too much symmetry between the other and the self' (Dastur 2006: 54; my translation).[6]

Nonetheless, the object of this research is not to oppose Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. I suggest that a re-functioning of Sartre's ontology offers a new understanding of the puppet as a figure of the Other because it enables us to grasp the proximity of the puppet as an Other that we recognise as such, but also an Other that cannot be like us because it is actually an object. Levinas offers an original standpoint through an ethical perspective which follows to some extent Sartre's position because he points out the impossibility for an object to be an Other. In *Totality and Infinity*, first published in 1961, Levinas posits that the Other is not another Self. He argues that Self and Other do not form a totality, unlike the relation of the Self with objects. The Other escapes the Self because, as Simon Critchley writes, 'there is something about the other person, a

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[6] All the following quotes from 'La Question d'Autrui dans la Philosophie Contemporaine' are my own translation.

dimension of separateness, interiority, secrecy or what Levinas calls "alterity" that escapes my comprehension.' (Critchley 2008: 26). The concept of alterity is addressed during the research to investigate the relation between the performer and the puppet.

A discussion about the Other is necessary before further investigating the puppet as a figure of the Other. As Dastur suggests, classic philosophy does not consider the question of the Other as an issue. The question is resolved through analogy. 'Because I experience within myself the association between a body and a consciousness, any living body similar to mine can be considered as associated with a consciousness different from mine.' (Dastur 2006: 3) The Other is not solely given to me as a body, as an object in the world, because if that were the case, it would not be possible to see this 'object' as a subject similar to myself. Dastur explains that 'the Other is immediately given to me as a subject, as a "self" ' (Dastur 2006: 4). The experience of the Other is distinct from any other sorts of experiences, precisely because the Other questions the opposition of the subject and the object.

For Sartre the subject does not constitute the Other. He encounters him. The upsurge of the Other in his world operates a decentralisation of the position of the subject. The objects of the world are no longer organised around him. In *Being and Nothingness* (2007), Sartre describes the experience of walking in a park. As he walks, he sees a man passing at some distance from him. 'I see this man; I apprehend him as an object and at the same time as a man. What does this signify? What do I mean when I assert that this object is *a man*?' (Sartre 2007: 278) Sartre argues as follows. 'If I were to think of him as being only a doll, I should apply to him the category which I ordinarily use to group temporal-spatial "things".' (Sartre 2007: 278) In that case there is no new relation between the subject and the objects of the world if the man is apprehended as an object. However, 'perceiving him as a man …, it is to register an

organisation without distance of the things in my universe around that privileged object.' (Sartre 2007: 278). He concludes that 'it appears that the world has a kind of drain hole in the middle of its being and that it is perpetually flowing off through the hole.' (Sartre 2007: 279) Sartre establishes a distinction between perceiving an object and a subject. The Other changes the apprehension of the world that the subject experiences, because the Other is another subject. The apparition of the Other operates a decentralisation of the subject in relation to the world. For Levinas the object is identified with the self and thus becomes part of its identity. Conversely, the Other cannot be identified with the self because he always escapes the subject. The Other must appear as being not myself, which implies the alterity and the negation of the Other. Sartre and Levinas articulate a relation of self to Other as non-reciprocal. The capitalisation of the word 'Other' signifies the insurmountable separation between self and Other. A paradox appears when addressing the puppet as an Other. As an Other the puppet would be immediately given to consciousness as a subject. Yet, as an object the puppet cannot be constituted as an Other. This paradox is addressed in the second part of Chapter III by examining Sartre's theory of the image.

It is necessary to be precise as to which subject the puppet is the Other of. My research is concerned with the interactions between the performer and the puppet; thus the puppet is an Other of the manipulactor. The spectator appears as a witness of this relation of self to Other between the two protagonists. Nonetheless, performer and puppet are Others too for the spectator. The difference between manipulactor and spectator pertains to the fact that the manipulactor constitutes the puppet as an Other of himself because of his interaction with the puppet. The puppet appears as an Other of the spectator because of the actions engaged in by the manipulactor. The puppet by entering the affective field of the character enacted by the performer transforms the

presence of the latter. The performer is no longer situated outside the fictive world of the puppet but affected by the presence of the puppet. By appearing as an Other, by revealing an apparent ontological proximity, the puppet transforms the perception of the performer by the spectator. The manipulactor is no longer apprehended in the same way as when there is no interaction. The performer occupies a new place on stage.

1.5.   Conclusion

Understanding the ontological ambiguity of the puppet as subject and object and its appearance as a figure of the Other in manipulacting is the focus of Chapter III. After presenting the different outcomes of the experiments conducted during this research, I identify the elements that constitute the relation of self to Other between the puppet and the manipulactor by looking at the theory of the Other and the theory of the image developed by Sartre. This chapter concludes by proposing a definition of the ontology of the puppet. In Chapter IV I discuss two models of construction of the puppet as a figure of the Other based on two case studies: *Cuniculus* by Stuffed Puppet Theatre, and *Twin Houses* by Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté. In Chapters V and VI, I return to my practice in order to discuss the impact of the relationship between the ambiguous presence of the puppet and dramatic construction and effect. The puppet does not only structure dramaturgy but in my experiments also responds to dramaturgy. In Chapter V, I use excerpts from *The Maids* to discuss how the ontological ambiguity of the puppet can be applied as a dramaturgical device in order to create different levels of actuality on stage in part in the response to the different levels of representation simultaneously presented by the play itself. I also address the issue of speech in manipulacting especially insofar as dialogue poses technical challenges and helps to contribute to

specific effects of alterity. In Chapter VI, I analyse the ambiguity present in the relation of self to Other between the puppet and the manipulactor in the research piece *Urashima Taro*. Finally, Chapter VII concludes this study by offering the outlines of a method of practice for manipulacting.

The next chapter aims at answering the following questions in order to provide a better understanding of manipulacting: where does manipulacting come from? What are the current trends? How is it different from acting and puppeteering? What is the difference between presence and co-presence? How is it different from mainstream ventriloquism?

CHAPTER II

DEFINING MANIPULACTING

In this chapter, I examine the specificities of manipulacting as a mode of performance. Firstly, I trace the historical evolution that has made possible the emergence of manipulacting. I then discuss the current trends in contemporary puppetry and how manipulacting sits within them. Finally, I examine manipulacting in relation to acting, puppetry, presence, and ventriloquism.

2.1. Historical evolution: from the invisible puppeteer to the manipulactor

At the beginning of the twentieth century, it was exceptional to see a visible puppeteer on stage in Europe. Today, in contemporary performances, such a thing is the norm. At the 2009 World Festival of Puppet Theatres of Charleville-Mézières (one of the biggest international festivals of puppetry), visible manipulators from all over the world performed in all sorts of style and genre. This form of practice is not only used in cutting-edge performances such as *Malediction,* by Brazilian-born Duda Paiva (now based in Holland), a piece that combines puppetry with contemporary dance and acting, but is also found in shows based on biblical myths such as *The Earth and the Universe* by Iranian company Yase Taman, fairy tales such as *Sleeping Beauty* by French company Akselere, or contemporary poetry such as *Cela Fait-il du Bruit?* by French

company Morbus Théâtre. One of the most important characteristics of the history of puppetry in Europe during the twentieth century has been the gradual transition from a hidden puppeteer to a visible multi-disciplinary performer. The issue of the visible manipulator is major because it has created a new reading of the relationship between the puppeteer, the puppet and the spectator.

2.1.1. Puppetry and materiality

A major turn in puppetry was initiated by the Modernists, who towards the end of the nineteenth century challenged the vision of art that had prevailed in previous centuries. As Henryk Jurkowski (1998) describes it, 'The Modernist concept of art as the subjective creation of a human being opened the way to the belief that any such creation must be artificial, since it is "manufactured" by the human and so may be submitted to different analysis' (Jurkowski 1998: 2). Puppetry has been part of this debate about aesthetics from the beginning of the twentieth century. One side of the debate has focused on the idea that the puppet could be a new model for the actor in order to bring the latter outside the realm of naturalistic acting which prevailed in the theatre at that time. Edward Gordon Craig was probably the most famous advocate of this trend through his concept of the Über-marionette. In 1908 he published an essay called 'The Actor and the Über-Marionette' in which he declared that the actor should be replaced by a super-puppet. There is a debate as to whether Craig was serious about the disappearance of actors or whether he used the concept of Über-marionette as a metaphor for the elaboration of a different acting training. Lehmann (2009) argues that 'Craig's Über-marionette by no means wants to drive the human from the stage but instead is meant to indicate another form of presence of the player.' (Lehmann 2009: 73). Conversely, Plassard contends that Craig was actually serious about pushing actors

off the stage, according to writings by Craig recently discovered in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. These writings have been published in 2012 in a bilingual edition by Marion Chénetier-Alev, Marc Duvillier and Didier Plassard under the title *Le Théâtre des Fous / The Drama for Fools*. However, the question of the puppet as a model or a replacement for the live actor is not essential to understand the historical process that brought the puppeteer visibly on stage. More crucial has been the emphasis put by Modernists on the artificiality of the puppet. For them, a puppet should not appear as a substitute human being. They discussed the importance of developing the specific materiality of puppet theatre. As Jurkowski suggests:

> [Modernists had] the conviction that the essential features of the material itself should dictate the production style. Thus the puppet's material and construction was to be the starting point for artistic activity. The theme and the repertory came later, as factors secondary to the puppet figure itself, which became the centre of the artists' interest. (Jurkowski 1998: 75)

Many of the Modernists involved in puppetry came from Fine Arts, such as Paul Klee or Oskar Schlemmer, both members of the Bauhaus Academy in Germany. This particular background probably explains their interest in the materiality of the puppet. Their goal was to develop homogenised aesthetics led by the materiality of the puppet and not by the story to be conveyed. In *Man and Figures of Arts*, Schlemmer presents the puppet as a possibility to 'adjust the functional laws of the human body to the laws of space' (Schlemmer in Jurkowski 1998: 62). He argues that the confrontation of artificial figures with live actors would 'multiply the expressive power of both' (Jurkowski 1998: 63). The contribution of the Modernists has been to consider puppetry as an art form on its own and not as a sub-category of live actor theatre. As such, Modernists argued that puppetry had its own aesthetic laws.

A focus on the materiality of the puppet was not enough, however, to promote the idea of a visible manipulator. The leap was made by the Russian puppet master

Sergei Obraztsov, who embraced Modernist conceptions of puppetry and had a crucial impact on the development of the visible presence of the puppeteer on stage because of his experimentations with glove puppets. Obraztsov initially trained in Fine Arts and in acting before taking a strong interest in puppetry in 1920. From 1923, he explored the materiality of glove puppets in a series of short solo acts that he called 'Romances'. In pieces such as *By the Sleeping River* or *Attitude to a Lady*, he reduced the glove puppets to wooden spheres placed on his forefinger representing the heads, with his bare hands symbolising the rest of the body. In another act called *Mussorgsky's Lullaby*, he turned his own arm wrapped with a cloth into the puppet of a baby. Obraztsov appeared in front of the audience singing a lullaby while cuddling the baby's head, which actually was his elbow. Obraztsov had a wide impact on the puppet world of his time. The successful touring of his solo shows all around the world made him an international figure of puppetry. His impact became particularly strong in the 1930s in the USSR. He set up in 1931 the Central State Puppet Theatre in Moscow, which was the biggest puppet theatre in Russia as well as an educational centre for professional and amateur puppet companies, a museum and a library. His influence spread to Eastern and Central Europe after World War Two, when the countries of this geographic area became satellites of the USSR. Obraztsov understood that the renewal of glove puppetry not only required the exploration of the material limits of this type of puppet but also necessitated that one challenged the notion of the hidden puppeteer. However, Obraztsov was not engaged in a theatrical vision of puppetry as his shows were inscribed in the genre of variety acts.

2.1.2. Disclosing the creative process

Critiques of Modernist conceptions of puppetry started to appear in the 1950s and

spread throughout the 1960s in both Eastern and Western Europe. Some artists rejected the idea that puppetry was only about its materiality. They were more interested in revealing the creative process of their performances and were eager to combine different forms of art in conjunction with puppetry as long as it would convey best what they wanted to express. Thus, they engaged in cross-disciplinary performances. One can see the dual influences of Antonin Artaud, who theorised the creation of a 'total theatre', and the concept of the alienation effect developed by Bertolt Brecht. Artists from both Eastern and Western Europe embraced this new tendency. However, the radical differences between the economic and political systems which prevailed on each side of the Iron Curtain set different routes for the puppeteers of the two blocs.

In Eastern Europe, the situation was in a way easier for puppetry. From the beginning of the Bolshevik revolution, the USSR financially supported puppet companies and theatres because the Communist Party believed that puppetry had a role to play in the propagation of the new ideology. After World War Two, this policy was extended to the satellite countries of the USSR. The puppet theatres that already existed were nationalised and new ones were created with the support of each central state. Therefore the socialist countries had many theatre buildings solely dedicated to puppetry. At the conference 'Marionnettes et Censures', Czech editor Nina Malikova reported that such theatres employed a large number of permanent specialised artists including puppeteers, designers, technicians and directors (Fleury and Sermon 2012).[1] The price to pay for such a good financial situation was the obligation for the companies and theatres to fit the political agenda imposed on them by the Soviet regime as well as accepting the domination of Sergei Obraztsov's conceptions of puppetry through the influence of the prestigious Central State Puppet Theatre of Moscow. However, a few

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[1] The conference 'Marionnettes et Censures' was organised by La Scène des Chercheurs in Paris (9.6.12).

organisations decided to explore new artistic potentialities by disclosing the creative process of puppetry in their performances, which meant revealing the act of manipulation instead of hiding it. The Czech company DRAK was one of them. From the end of the 1950s DRAK created pieces in which the puppeteers not only manipulated puppets in full view of the audience but were also storytellers and actors. Jurkowski reports that the Romanian company Tandarica produced shows that explored the metaphorical possibilities offered by the disclosing of the act of manipulation. In 1967 they created a version of the *Wizard of Oz* in which the heroine, Dorothy, was a marionette and her three companions were masked actors. The originality of the piece lay in the fact that Dorothy was manipulated by her companions. Although she was supposed to lead them during their journey, they were actually the ones in charge of her destiny. In this case, disclosing the manipulator became an element of the theatrical dramaturgy and not just a decision of style. Moreover these two examples reveal that the performers of puppet theatre in Eastern and Central Europe were not only puppeteers but also actors, mask performers and storytellers.

In Western Europe, puppet theatre went on a different journey to explore the visible presence of the puppeteer. This innovative approach first took place in variety shows. French artist Yves Joly is a key figure of the evolution from an invisible puppeteer to a visible one. Joly wanted to disclose the creative process by playing with the suspension of disbelief of the audience. His trademark was to create an illusion and then to break it. From 1949 he created a series of short acts that he regularly performed with his company in the Parisian cabaret La Rose Rouge. For instance, in the short piece *Tragédie de Papier*, Joly built simple forms made out of paper in front of the audience. Then he manipulated each form so it would become an animated puppet. Finally he destroyed them with scissors and fire to bring the audience to reconsider the puppet as

being only a piece of paper. He also conceived *Les Mains Seules* by using just his bare hands to form puppets that would represent the fauna and the flora of the sea before becoming human beings. Although these acts seemed similar to Obraztsov's variety shows because they both embraced the materiality of the puppet as well as the bare hand as a puppet, they were opposed on one major point. Unlike Joly, Obraztsov would never break the illusion of life of the puppet. For instance, in one of his pieces mentioned above, *Mussorgsky's Lullaby*, Obraztsov used to put the baby to bed and leave him. In order not to stop the suspension of disbelief of the public, Obraztsov always did that final action behind the puppet booth. The audience could still believe that there was a baby sleeping behind the booth.

In the 1950s and the 1960s, some soloists who worked also in cabarets went one step further than Joly. They created acts in which the puppet acknowledged the puppeteer's presence. That was the case for artists such as the German soloist Albrecht Roser and the French soloist Philippe Genty. Both used short-string marionettes manipulated in full view of the audience. Unlike Joly, who performed with quite abstract forms or everyday objects like umbrellas that he used as puppets, Roser and Genty used traditional figures of puppetry, such as a clown named Gustaf for Roser and Pierrot for Genty. For instance, during an act Roser would help his puppet to reach a chair so Gustaf could sit down. The puppet would look back at Roser and nod to signify its gratitude. Genty's relationship with his puppet Pierrot was more dramatic. Genty created a short piece in which the puppet Pierrot became aware of the existence of strings that connected him to the puppeteer. Pierrot would try anything to untie himself and would finally cut the strings and die.

Genty and Roser are fine examples of some of the puppeteers from Western Europe who followed a parallel path to that of some companies of the Warsaw Pact.

However, unlike their fellows from Eastern Europe, Western puppeteers did not inscribe themselves within the theatre industry but within the tradition of variety shows. This was mainly due to a lack of funding available for puppetry in Western Europe. Most of the puppet companies were made up of a small number of performers. In *The History of English Puppet Theatre* (1990), George Speaight reports that, in the 1950s, only a few shows produced by the major puppet companies present in Britain could afford more than three operators. They had to perform in cabarets, holiday resorts or public spaces in order to make a living, as they had little access to other venues.

Around the beginning of the 1970s, the situation changed in Western Europe. Sources of funding for puppetry slowly increased because of new cultural policies. In France, the decentralization policy introduced by André Malraux, minister of culture in the 1960s, encouraged puppeteers to have access to the same venues as theatre companies. Thanks to French theatre director Antoine Vitez, a supporter of puppetry, the Théâtre National du Palais de Chaillot opened its doors to puppeteers such as Alain Recoing. This new situation had a massive impact on their practice. Puppeteers emerged from their small puppet booths since the whole stage had to be used. Discussing these historical changes at a conference on The Presences of the Puppeteer organised by Les Saisons de la Marionnettes in Paris, French scholar Chantal Guinebault-Slamowicz argued that the access to new venues in correlation with increased budgets opened new potentialities of exploring the scenic space. Puppeteers had to conceive original scenic apparatus. Guinebault-Slamowicz defines the function of the apparatus in puppetry as follows: 'an apparatus is not seen, it enables you to see' (Guinebault-Slamowicz 2009). Each apparatus represents a specific relationship between the puppeteer and the audience.

Three forms of puppet theatre emerged from the development of new scenic

apparatus: the black theatre, the 'atomised' puppet booth and visible manipulation. Black theatre has been possible because of technical improvements in lighting equipment. Beams of lighting are projected across the stage in order for the puppets to appear while the puppeteers standing behind remain hidden in darkness. One of the most famous contemporary companies to use this technique is the Spanish company Teatro Corsario. The 'atomised' puppet booth consists of transposing to the whole scenic space the three elements that constitute any puppet booth: screens, frames and hiding spaces. Finally, visible manipulation makes it possible for the puppeteer to have a part in the dramaturgy as a character in the same capacity as the puppet.

The visible presence of the puppeteer brought new dramaturgic stakes suited to the body of the performer. This trend has been the same in most of the Western European countries. In the 1970s the Dutch puppet company Figuren Theater Triangel, run by Henk and Ans Boerwinkel, created pieces which explored the relationship between the visible puppeteer and his puppet. At the same time, the French puppeteers Colette and Claude Monestier rejected the aesthetic of the traditional puppet theatre and decided to perform in full view of the audience. They set up a new company called Théâtre sur le Fil and performed not only as manipulators but also as narrators. Their creations were always focused on two points: the story and the process of creation of the world stage. In 1970, British puppeteer Barry Smith used actors interacting with puppets in *Playspace*, a piece made of a series of short episodes. In one episode entitled 'The dancing lesson', a child performed by a puppet was taught how to dance by a teacher performed by an actor who was also his manipulator.

Although such experimentations as those undertaken by Smith were still rare at that time, they were signs that a whole range of possibilities was open to the visible presence of the manipulator in puppet theatre. This evolution has continued up to the

time of writing this thesis. The different international festivals that flourished in Europe favoured these new trends, as techniques and ideas were shared. British academic and editor Penny Francis reports that since the middle of the 1990s a majority of the puppet shows performed in the UK have been with visible puppeteers.[2] This change occurred through the withdrawal by puppet companies from the variety-act genre in order to embrace a more theatrical dramaturgy in the same vein as the puppeteers from Eastern Europe.

2.1.3. Japanese influence: Bunraku

Japan played an important role in the evolution of contemporary puppetry in Europe when Westerners discovered a traditional form of puppetry known as Bunraku. The original name of this sophisticated art derived from a puppeteer called Uemura Bunraku-ken. British academic Poh Sim Plowright (2002) reports that 'until 1871, the form was known as ningyô jôruri, ningyô meaning "dolls", and [jôruri referring] to Lady Jôruri, whose name lies behind this older title, a figure ambiguously poised between prostitution and Buddhist sainthood' (Plowright 2002: 85).

By nature, traditional Bunraku is not limited to puppetry. Bunraku in its original, Japanese and correct meaning, 'is a form of storytelling recited to musical accompaniment, and embodied by puppets on stage' (Keene 1973: 25). It is a simplification made by Westerners to reduce Bunraku to the puppetry element. The voice of the puppets is produced not by the puppeteers but by the storyteller (*tayu*), who stands on a small platform stage left of the main stage. Bunraku used to be a form of popular theatre that was not viewed as classical drama in Japan. Rather, it is Noh plays which were favoured by the intelligentsia and the aristocrats, although nowadays

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[2] Conversation with the author.

Bunraku is conceived as a traditional form of performance.

I will refer to Bunraku in this thesis only to discuss its puppetry element. In Bunraku, each puppet is manipulated by three puppeteers (*ningyozukai*). The latter are dressed in black and two of them are hooded. The hierarchy is very strict among the three puppeteers. The master-puppeteer (*omozukai*), who is not hooded, is in charge of the head and of the right hand, another operator (*hidarizukai*) of the left arm and the props and finally the third (*ashizukai*) of the legs.

The discovery of Bunraku by Westerners happened in the first half of the twentieth century through the writings of novelists and travellers. One of its most prominent admirers was the playwright Paul Claudel who discovered Bunraku in the 1920s when he was the French ambassador in Japan. In 1926 he published an essay about Bunraku in *L'Oiseau Noir dans le Soleil Levant,* a collection of his memories of Japan (quoted in Gilles 1981: 94). This essay seems to have left a strong impression on theatre-makers. It was cited many years later by French theatre director Jean-Louis Barrault in an article originally published in *Cahiers Renaud-Barrault* which depicts his own experience of a Bunraku performance in Osaka in 1960 (Barrault 2011).

After World War Two, Western scholars such as Donald Keene and Barbara Curtis Adachi studied Japanese culture and history and rediscovered Bunraku. Subsequently, books were published which gave a wider exposure to the form. Roland Barthes dedicated a chapter to Bunraku in his book on Japan entitled *L'Empire des Signes*, first published in 1970. In the 1980s Bunraku companies were also invited to perform in international festivals where they raised a lot of interest amongst theatre-makers. Nowadays Bunraku is an inspiration for a number of contemporary artists involved in puppetry even though most of them have probably never watched a Bunraku performance. It is usually a second-hand experience in the sense that they have been

inspired by other contemporary artists who have seen Bunraku in the past or have read books or articles about it. Today in Britain, any visible manipulation of large-size puppets effected through direct touch on the puppet or through short rods is often called Bunraku-style puppetry although there is no formal agreement amongst the British puppet community on this terminology.

I suggest that Bunraku had two main effects on contemporary puppet theatre. First, it reinforced the evolution that happened in Eastern Europe from the end of the 1950s onwards and in Western Europe from the beginning of the 1970s. It probably convinced more artists that the visible puppeteer was not a bizarre concept to apply to puppet theatre but on the contrary a way to breathe a new life into it. This acceptance may also have been reinforced by the fact that such a form had a strong tradition and therefore could be potentially accepted by Western audiences. Secondly, Bunraku changed the spatial relationship between the puppeteer and his puppet. This relation had always been vertical in Europe. The puppeteer was placed either above or below the puppet. Even in the examples of Albrecht Roser, Tandarica and Philippe Genty, the relation was vertical because they used string puppets. In Bunraku, the puppeteer is at the same level as his puppet. Thus the spatial relationship between the two of them is horizontal. Bunraku has been inspirational for contemporary puppet theatre by reinforcing the principle of disclosing the puppeteer on stage.

2.2.   Current trends

The visible presence of the puppeteer is now preponderant over the hidden puppeteer in contemporary puppet theatre. However, the aesthetic forms used by artists engaged in such practices of puppetry, as well as the themes tackled, are so vast and complex that a

classification on such a basis seems to be not that productive. I suggest that it is more pertinent to look at the materialisation of the physical engagement between the manipulator and his puppet. I propose to turn to a 'body against body' analysis inspired by the classification offered by Stephen Kaplin (1999) which looks at the levels of engagement between the body of the performer and the 'body' of the puppet. These levels of engagement range from an absence of physical contact between the human being and the object to the possession of the human body by the puppet. In between these two extreme relationships, puppeteers and puppets coexist on stage in a sort of "close distance" that renders possible the fact that both the manipulator and the puppet can exist in a relative autonomy. In the following section, I describe these levels of engagement with examples of key artists in each case.

2.2.1. Motionless animation

One level of involvement between the puppeteer and the puppet consists of the paradoxical absence of contact between the two of them. Yet, if the principle of puppetry entails the manipulation of an object in order to transform it in front of an audience into an animated being, how is it still possible to talk about puppetry? Artists engaged in this form of puppetry, such as Christian Carrignon of French company Théâtre de Cuisine, believe that even if the object is not animated, it gains the status of an animated being because of the involvement of the performer with the object. French scholar Jean-Luc Mattéoli calls this form of puppetry 'motionless manipulation'. At the conference on The Presences of the Puppeteer, he defined it in the following terms: 'the puppet becomes motionless and the performer circles around it' (Mattéoli 2009). This form of performance uses salvaged objects (also called impoverished objects) that may have a story of their own and that had a primary function aside from being objects for

performances.[3] It is by default or by excess that the object escapes the anthropomorphic puppet. The object is not docile because it has been constructed for a very different purpose before the puppeteer gets hold of it. It is not manipulated but exposed, and the puppeteer relies on it to become a storyteller. According to Mattéoli, the object becomes emotionally charged because a part of our human history has been delegated to it. The object does not need to be manipulated because of the memory contained in it.

Mattéoli suggests that the object in motionless animation has two dramaturgical functions. Firstly, the presence of the object supports the situations in which a human character is involved. In this case Mattéoli calls the object an 'infra-puppet'. Secondly, the presence of the object supports the self of the human character. He then refers to the object as an 'ultra-puppet'. Mattéoli exemplifies his terminology through two productions by Théâtre de Cuisine.

He first describes the infra-puppet by using a show based on the Odyssey. The performer acts Ulysses, Zeus, the Sirens and the elements by turns. A black shoe with a red lace is set in front of him. It becomes Ulysses' boat without being touched while the performer moves and acts Ulysses. In the famous episode where Ulysses is confronted by the song of the Sirens, the actor fills up the shoe with a sock. Then he puts his hands behind his back as if he is tied to the mast of his boat. The shoe has become an ear that has been plugged. Mattéoli argues that the object always resists the metaphorical sense and is used only to support the narration.

To explain the ultra-puppet Mattéoli uses another show by Théâtre de Cuisine which is about mountaineering. The object is an Action Man. It hangs in the air by a string. The only possible movements of the object happen when the performer accidentally touches it. According to Mattéoli, the unintentional movements of the

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[3] Details about Mattéoli's research can be found in his recent publication: *L'Objet Pauvre. Mémoire et Quotidien sur les Scènes Contemporaines Françaises* (2011).

object are enough to give life to it. Motionless manipulation consists of eliminating the illusion of the manipulation in order to give room to the narration because it is not possible to forget the nature of the object. For Mattéoli, the transition through the alterity of the object authorises the emotion. Motionless manipulation seems to be a trend in contemporary puppet theatre that is attracting some attention from young puppeteers. In 2008 the students of L'Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts de la Marionnette in Charleville-Mézières staged *C'est l'Anniversaire de Michèle mais Elle a Disparu* by Philippe Minyana. The only form of puppetry used was motionless manipulation. Each character had a small puppet that represented his social self. A performer would enter on stage with his small doppelganger. He would put it down in front of him and then he would perform a character. What emerges from the practice of motionless manipulation is the fact that performers must become actors and storytellers in order to make it work. It is the emotions and reactions of their characters on stage in relation to the puppets that convey the life of the still objects to the audience.

2.2.2. Possession

The ultimate degree of relationship between the puppet and the puppeteer is materialised by the possession of the human body by the puppet. This possession does not mean a total annihilation of the human. It is still possible to identify two characters on stage formed by the puppeteer and the puppet. Ilka Schönbein, a former student of Albrecht Roser, is probably the artist who has pushed this type of relationship with her puppets to the furthest extreme. She has created shows such as *Métamorphoses des Métamorphoses* or *Chair de ma Chair* by using deformed castings of her body in papier-mâché that absorb parts of her own body to form monstrous creatures. Schönbein explains how she came to develop this particular form:

> [Albrecht Roser] trained me in string marionette. … I have not kept any strings in between my hands. I have let the puppet take possession of me, of my hands, then of my legs, of my face, of my buttocks, of my belly and of my soul. … I could not stand the distance, and sometimes its proximity becomes unbearable. (Schönbein 2000: 24; my translation)

Brigitte Prost considers that the work of Ilka Schönbein is not an attempt to extend her own body through the puppet but on the contrary 'it is the body of the performer which becomes the extension of her own doubles' (Prost 2009: 47). Ilka Schönbein is not the only artist who has developed such relationship with puppets. Possession relationships can be also found in the piece *Bastard!* (2011) by Duda Paiva, in *The Gertrude Show* performed by Yael Inbar and created by the Israeli company Yael and Revital, and in *Twin Houses* (1994) by the Belgian company Mossoux-Bonté. Paiva, Inbar, Schönbein and Mossoux are all trained dancers which may explain their interest in exploring new relationships between body and object. I suggest that this form of puppetry belongs to manipulacting.

2.2.3. Close distance

The third level of engagement of the puppeteer with the puppet is located between the two analyses above. Unlike motionless manipulation, the puppeteer is engaged in an active manipulation of the puppet but his body is not possessed by it. This produces the impression of a relative autonomy between the two entities because usually only the hands of the puppeteers are connected to the puppets. This is the most common tendency today and it encompasses all sorts of puppet techniques such as glove, mouth, rod, string or Bunraku-style puppets as well as object theatre. Two trends have emerged in the role of the puppeteer in the dramaturgy of the piece. The puppeteer can be either passive or active towards the puppet. By passive I mean that the puppeteer is engaged in the manipulation of the puppet but does not appear as a protagonist of the piece. Of

course, I do not imply any negative judgement by using the term passive. In my view neither trend is better than the other, as the choice is the result of dramaturgical and aesthetic decisions made by each artist. One of the finest examples of the passive role of the puppeteer is the piece *salto.lamento* produced by the German company Figuren Theater Tübingen and inspired by the Dances of Death from the Middle Ages. Accompanied by two musicians, Frank Soehnle manipulates a dozen puppets which represent different aspects of death. Soehnle combines short-string marionettes with Bunraku-style puppets. Although not interacting as a character with the puppets, his visible presence guides the audience as if he were a mute storyteller. *Salto.lamento* has been performed in many international festivals such as the London International Mime Festival and the World Festival of Puppet Theatres in Charleville-Mézières.

An active relationship between the puppeteer and his puppet consists of an interaction between the two of them. The puppeteer turns out to be one of the protagonists inside the dramaturgy of the show and for this reason I argue that this form of puppetry belongs to manipulacting. I suggest that there are three levels of interaction.

In some pieces, the manipulator does not have a defined scenic character. The interaction solely highlights his role as a puppeteer. This is the case, for example, for the performers of the British company Blind Summit in the show *Low Life*. Composed as a series of short vignettes, *Low Life* is inspired by the work of the American novelist Charles Bukowski. In one scene, the audience encounters the character of a Chinese cleaner performed by a Bunraku puppet manipulated by three visible puppeteers. The puppet finds a book and starts to read it. It gets more and more emotionally engaged with the story it is reading and shares its reactions and feelings with the puppeteers. There is an interaction between the animated object and the puppeteers but the latter are merely enacting their role of puppeteers.

Another level of interaction consists in giving an identity to a chorus composed of a puppet and a group of performers. Philippe Genty is probably the artist who has developed with most brio and talent such forms of interaction for more than thirty years. In one scene of *La Fin des Terres* (2006), a group of young men are flirting with a group of young women. The members of each group are dressed similarly. Their leaders are two life-sized puppets, a man and a woman, manipulated by the other members of the group. Although the performers do not have an individual identity, they perform a chorus-character and not their role as puppeteers.

Finally, the manipulator is a defined character who has a dramaturgical importance in relation to the puppets he animates. Neville Tranter is one of the finest artists to have developed such a relationship in his work. In the piece *The Seven Deadly Sins* (1984), he plays the role of Mephistopheles amongst eight puppets which represent the personifications of the seven deadly sins and Faust. Although the technique of manipulation used by Tranter is inspired by Jim Henson's Muppets, his puppets are very different, as they are of human size and are much more sinister. Tranter builds them in such a way that they keep a dynamic pose even when they are not being manipulated. Such design makes it possible for Tranter to keep a dynamic dramaturgy when he swaps from one puppet to another.

This overview of the presence of the puppeteer on stage discloses a new dimension in the relation of the manipulator with the puppet. By entering the fictional world of the figure he animates, the puppeteer becomes closer to an actor. He is no longer in the background of the puppet's world but shares a co-presence within it. I refer to this form of interaction as manipulacting because the performer is capable of both manipulating a puppet and acting a character. The next section discusses the specificity of manipulacting.

2.3.   Manipulacting: a hybrid form of performance

Manipulacting represents an evolution of the visible presence of the puppeteer. It encompasses artists as diverse as Ilka Schönbein and Blind Summit. In this section, I argue that manipulacting is a distinct form of performance. Although it combines acting and puppeteering, it differs from both. I then discuss the notion of the co-presence of the puppet and the manipulactor, its key position in manipulacting, and its differences from the notion of presence. Finally I present the reasons that place mainstream ventriloquism outside the scope of this study although it shares many common points with manipulacting.

2.3.1.   Manipulacting | acting and puppetry

To understand the singularity of manipulacting it is necessary to look separately at the modes of embodiment in acting and puppetry. Although acting and puppetry can be addressed as related forms of performance because they both aim at creating characters or personae on stage, their modes of embodiment are different. Once their differences are established, I will examine manipulacting and present its specificity.

Acting and puppetry

Just as there is no single form of acting, there is no single form of puppetry. For instance, actors trained in the Stanislavskian tradition use different sets of techniques to enact a character or a persona from those used by actors trained in the methods of Lecoq, Grotowski or melodrama. Likewise, puppeteers trained to use glove puppets employ different manipulation techniques from those employed by puppeteers trained in marionette or in Bunraku. The diversity of forms and styles in acting and puppetry

makes it difficult to provide a generic definition which clearly distinguishes the practices from one another.

Annie Gilles offers an interesting perspective to elaborate such generic definition. In her article 'Des Acteurs et des "Manipulacteurs"' (1994), she considers that actors and puppeteers aim at the same goal, which is to enact characters but through different modalities. Gilles argues that 'the puppet can be considered as the other of the character, definitely not like the other of the actor. The other of the actor is indubitably the puppeteer because he is the one who plays' (Gilles 1994: 22; my translation). [4] Gilles earlier suggested that the binary puppeteer-puppet represents 'a split replica of the actor' (Gilles 1981: 104). The duality actor-character is made concrete and visible in puppetry: the performer being at the same time himself and a character on stage. It requires of the puppeteer an ability to inhabit the perceptual and imaginary space around himself and around the puppet as well as a sense of embodiment that includes his body and extends it in order to include that of the puppet. Yet, because puppetry materialises the duality actor-character it requires a consideration of embodiment different from the one required in acting. Puppetry and acting do represent two forms of performance based on the creation of characters. However, there is an ontological difference between acting and puppetry. Acting consists of the staging of human beings whereas puppetry stages inanimate objects that are given an apparent life as beings in relation to human beings. Discussing the differences between actors and puppeteers Ariel Bufano writes the following:

> I make a distinction … between live actors theatre and puppet theatre. The main difference lies in the fact that in the latter, the performer uses a concrete intermediate object in order to communicate with the audience. The actor moves with his own body into a given space, and the limits of his expressive possibilities are bounded by his own skin. In the case of puppet theatre, it is an object, a thing or an off-centred figure of the performer, independent of him but paradoxically

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[4] All the following quotes from 'Des Acteurs et des "Manipulacteurs"' are my own translation.

dependent on the puppeteer, that moves into space which renders it dynamic. The consequence is a body and space issue. (Bufano 1991: 39; my translation)

As both Gilles and Bufano suggest, in acting the character exists through the body of the actor, whereas in puppetry there is a split between the body of the puppeteer and the character, as it is the puppet that is identified as the character, not the performer.

In 'The Actor Occluded: Puppet Theatre and Acting Theory' (1996), American scholar Steve Tillis develops an idea similar to that exposed by Gilles when he defines puppetry as a form of performance where 'the producer of the signs that communicate a dramatic character … and the site of those signs … are split between operator and puppet' (Tillis 1996: 109-110) while in acting production and siting of signs are merged. Yet, Tillis argues that acting and puppeteering both reveal and occlude the performer as producer of the character. The presence of the puppeteer remains exposed to the audience even when he is hidden because the act of manipulation creates a tension within the puppet itself which reveals the presence of the manipulator. This is an interesting point because manipulacting further enhances this tension between the puppet and the performer by exposing the latter as both the Other and the manipulator of the puppet.

Yet, despite the fact that the presence of performers in acting and puppetry remains exposed, these two forms of performances require different forms of embodiment of the character. I will look closely at each of them.

In acting, the body of the actor is that of the character. The actor's body is the unique vessel that carries the character. The spectator perceives the body of the actor as being the body of the character and the actor identifies his body with the character he creates (I do not refer to any psychological identification). For instance, the eyes of the character are the eyes of the actor. Whatever the character sees, is seen by the actor in exactly the same way. This remark seems to be a tautology. However, in puppetry, the

relation between the body of the character and the body of the puppeteer does not follow that principle. In the case of Bunraku, the head of the character represented by the puppet is controlled by the hand of the master puppeteer. The latter cannot see what the character would see when its head is turned in a certain direction. The puppet is not an extension of the gaze of the puppeteer in the same way that the stick is an extension of the arm of a blind person or the scalpel is an extension of the finger of a surgeon. The puppeteer has to connect the movements of his hand controlling the head of a puppet to the apparent sightline of the object. The character is embodied by the puppet, not by the puppeteer. This remark refers back to the idea of the binary puppeteer-puppet being a split replica of the actor. As Barthes argues in *L'Empire des Signes* (2007), when discussing Bunraku, there is a split between the action of the puppeteer and the gesture of the puppet. The puppet has to be identified by the audience as the character.

Acting and puppetry entail two different forms of body schema. In acting, the body schema of the actor is characterised by his own body on stage interacting with other performers or props. In puppetry, the experience of the world of the character is evoked through the puppet and requires the puppeteer's body to experience the world in another way than the actor's body. The body schema encompasses two bodies: the actual body of the puppeteer and the apparent body of the puppet. The puppet moves according to the puppeteer's impulses but, as Podehl suggests, with 'its own will and its own laws' (Podehl 1991: 32). Podehl implicitly refers to the puppet's resistance to the puppeteer. A simple action for an actor, such as walking across the stage, is not simple to achieve with a puppet because of the manipulation skills it requires, but also because the number of movements that can be achieved with a particular puppet depends on its construction. For instance, master string puppeteer Stephen Mottram builds marionettes that are designed to achieve only one specific type of motion such as walking, crawling,

flying or jumping as he believes that marionettes have limited ranges of movement.[5]

The different modes of embodiment of the character in acting and puppetry mean that the number of characters that a performer can enact at any one given moment is different in both forms of performance. In acting, there is a strict equality between the number of performers and the number of characters that are simultaneously present on stage. Although an actor can perform several characters during the same piece, he can only act one at a time. In puppetry, such equality between performer and characters is not so strict. One puppeteer can perform simultaneously several characters, as a Punch and Judy Professor does, or several puppeteers can work together to manipulate one puppet, as is the case in Bunraku.

Manipulacting combines two different modes of embodiment. For that reason manipulacting is a challenge because it requires solving a contradiction. In acting, the actor's aim is to focus the audience's attention on his body whereas the puppeteer's aim is to focus the audience's attention on the puppet. The manipulactor aims at creating a double focus on both him and the puppet. This double focus necessitates that both presences are balanced.

Manipulacting

For a start, the manipulactor must be able to manipulate a puppet. For that reason, manipulacting belongs to puppetry. The difference between manipulacting and other forms of puppetry pertains to the active dramaturgical meaning in the performance of the presence on stage of the manipulactor, who becomes co-present with the puppet. The co-presence of the manipulactor with the puppet implies that the performer enacts a character or a persona alongside the character of the puppet. Different forms of co-

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[5] Mottram made this comment during his workshop 'The Logic of Movement' that I attended in 2007.

presence exist in manipulacting. They relate to the degree of interaction between the puppet and the performer, and the dramaturgical meaning given to the presence of the manipulactor, as well as to the number of performers on stage. I will look at direct and indirect forms of interaction between performers and puppets through the work of three contemporary artists that I class as manipulactors.

Direct interactions are often found in solo performances. This is the case in *Twin Houses* by Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté. Nicole Mossoux creates a dialogue based on physical interaction with five mannequins. In most cases, she is dominated by the puppet she manipulates. The manipulated manipulator paradoxically appears as the puppet of her own puppets. She also develops a mirroring relation with one puppet in the show. They perform the same movements as if each protagonist was the mirror image of the other. This relationship is reinforced by the close resemblance of their faces (all the puppets' heads are casts of Mossoux) and the fact that they wear the same wigs and outfits. I will further analyse this production in Chapter IV.

A strong and direct relationship between performers and puppets also exists in the duet *Malediction* created by Duda Paiva Company in 2008. Paiva and Ederson Rodrigues share the stage with a series of life-sized puppets made out of foam. At the outset of the piece, Paiva and Rodrigues enact a doctor and his assistant in charge of a female patient who happens to be naked, green and literally heartless. The female patient is manipulated by the two performers. Paiva is in charge of the head - and consequently of moving her mouth and producing her voice - as well as her left arm, while Rodrigues manipulates her right arm. The naked green woman flirts with both men and is not afraid to offer them a view of her female attributes. Rodrigues is more engaged in the relationship with the puppet than Paiva, probably because he can more easily interact with her as he is only in charge of one arm.

The interaction between the puppet and the manipulactor can also be indirect. In this case, the manipulactor represents a character who does not interact with the puppet but whose presence next to it has a dramaturgical meaning. *Eshet* (2002) by the Israeli company Etgar explores such a form of diffuse or indirect relationship between the performer and the puppet. *Eshet* (which means wife of) was conceived, directed and designed by Elit Veber. The two performers are Renana Raz and Yuval Fingerman. It tells the Genesis story of Yehuda and his three sons, and Tamar, the woman who links them together and who is forced by convention to marry one of her dead husband's brothers. The puppets are life-sized. The torso of the puppet is strapped in front of the torso of the performer. The head is detached from the rest of the body. It is placed in front of the performer and held by a rod in either the hand or the mouth. The legs and arms of the puppets are those of the performers. There is a doubling between the performer and the puppet. The two performers play the same characters as those of the puppets that they manipulate. Raz performs Tamar, while Fingerman plays all the other characters. Yet, they do not represent the same dimension of the self of the character. The puppet-manipulactor duality either materialises the contradiction between inner and outer self or bears a metaphorical meaning. Towards the end of the piece, Tamar disguises herself as a prostitute to seduce Yehuda because she is longing to have a child. To materialise Yehuda falling under the spell of Tamar, the female performer takes over control of the head of the puppet of Yehuda from her male partner. The fact that the male performer is only in charge of the rest of the body of his puppet double symbolises Yehuda literally losing his mind in front of Tamar's charms. In probably one of the most poignant scenes of the piece, which comes after the death of Onan, the second son of Yehuda, Tamar refuses to follow the funeral rite because she has been compelled to marry someone she did not love and who did not love her either. To show Yehuda

forcing Tamar to pray alongside him, his human double seizes the head of the puppet of Tamar. Yet the spectator can see the head of the female performer turned away to signal disagreement. The splitting in two of the character of Tamar allows the performer to show simultaneously the social behaviour of the character and what she really feels.

Manipulacting is defined by body-character symbiosis. Symbiosis is the result of the co-existence of three identities: the identity of the performer, the identity of the acted character and the identity of the puppet. Two characters and two bodies seem to have a presence. However, only one real living body is present on stage. The body of the puppet is only an apparent body, intimately connected to the manipulactor. This is perhaps the reason why both Mossoux and Paiva compare the relationship between the character they act and the character they manipulate to the relationship between conjoined twins. The characters co-exist as a constant double entity which has two personalities. Some parts of their body are shared and others not. Consequently, the performer needs to embody a particular body schema.

Manipulactors use a technique known in dance as body-parts isolation in order to achieve this body schema. Body-parts isolation is when a single body part is made to move without the support of the rest of the body as if separated from the centre. Because of this, the body part is seen as removed from the subject that moves it and thus seems isolated. As Valerie Preston Dunlop and Ana Sanchez-Colberg write in *Dance and the Performative* (2002), 'fragmented body parts [are] co-ordinated in a manner where the "natural order" is deliberately and rigorously eschewed … so that the dancer's limbs and joints work independently from each other' (Preston Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg 2002: 73-74). The typical example of body-parts isolation is the Queen waving at a crowd. Because she isolates her hand (does not move the arm or the torso), she, the Queen, is not engaged with the gesture, it is not 'hers'. In manipulacting,

the performer identifies distinct parts of his body as belonging to the puppet and other parts as belonging to the character he acts. For instance, in *Angel* (2004) Duda Paiva controls the puppet he interacts with by passing his right arm through a hole located between the legs of the puppet in order to reach from the inside the articulated mouth of the puppet with his right hand and he discreetly holds with his left hand the right arm of the puppet. Paiva simultaneously impels one type of movement with his right arm in order to give the impression that the puppet can speak and look at its surroundings, makes another type of movement with his left hand to give the impression that the puppet moves its right arm, and he keeps the rest of his body still while his head is turned towards the puppet. Although this seems similar to the body schema developed by the puppeteer, there is a significant difference. The ultimate role of the manipulactor is to create a dialogue between these two parts of his self.

2.3.2. Co-presence | presence

In the previous section, I have referred to the notion of co-presence to discuss the relationship of the manipulactor with the puppet. It is necessary to make a distinction between the co-presence of the performer and the puppet and the visible presence of the puppeteer on stage that is commonly found nowadays in contemporary performances incorporating puppetry.

In the case of presence, the visible puppeteer is not fully inscribed inside the dramaturgy, and he is not present to the character of the puppet. His visible presence can be described as a theatrical convention. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the visible presence of the puppeteer in Europe is the result of a historical trend. The presence of the puppeteer was justified by the dramaturgical decision to reveal the theatrical construction of the performance. The opportunity for puppet companies to

perform in venues traditionally dedicated to actors has led puppeteers to go outside the puppet booth and to invent scenographies and dramaturgies that embrace their presence with the puppets.

In manipulacting, the performer and the puppet seem to belong to the same actuality. The bodily presence of the visible performer on stage is at the heart of the dramaturgy of this interdisciplinary performance form. A co-presence is established on stage between manipulactor and puppet, or in other words, between real subject and apparent subject. Co-presence re-positions the performer in the dramaturgy, while carefully maintaining the puppet within this dramaturgy in order to establish a relation of self to Other between them. The relation of self to Other can be direct or indirect as discussed above in relation to *Malediction* and *Eshet*. The relationship of presence between the puppet and the puppeteer gives to each an identity within the dramaturgy of the piece. Conversely, in the case of visible puppeteers, the absence of co-presence entails that their presence on stage has to be understood by the audience as a scenic convention whose usage is not addressed within the dramaturgy of the performance.

I suggest that two main reasons explain why the visible presence of the puppeteer is not translated into a dramaturgical presence. Firstly, many theatre-makers are not aware of the dramaturgical and scenographic reasons that have led puppeteers to reveal themselves to the audience. The visible presence of the puppeteer is no longer used to comment upon the theatricality of the performance. It has become a theatrical convention without being perceived as such. The puppeteer is present on stage because the puppet needs human beings in order to be animated. I will take *War Horse* (2007) as an instance. Produced by the National Theatre in collaboration with South African company Handspring, and a major success since its creation, the piece tells the story of a horse whose life is disrupted by its forced participation in World War One. The horse

is a puppet, built in a very realistic manner. It has a complete body, although it is slightly bigger than a real horse, and all the necessary joints to move like a real one. Even the ears and the tail are articulated.[6] It is elegantly manipulated by three puppeteers. Two of them are inside the puppet and are in charge of moving the legs as well as supporting the body of the horse on their shoulders. The third is next to the puppet, animating the head through a sophisticated rod system. Although the puppeteers are physically present and visible throughout the whole piece they do not occupy any role in the dramaturgy of the piece. They are simultaneously present and absent. It appears that the visible presence of the puppeteer sends two contradictory messages to the audience. On one hand, the presence of the puppeteers reveals their artistic labour. On the other hand, the spectator is implicitly requested to focus not on them but on the puppet. The bodily presence of the puppeteer is paradoxically associated with his dramaturgical absence. Furthermore, the presence of the puppeteer at the head is even more contradictory. On one hand he resembles the person in charge of guiding the horse. He is in costume, not in blacks, and holds the rod as if it was a bridle. On the other hand, such a character next to the horse would surely not be present when the animal is supposed to be lost in the forest and wandering on its own.

The second reason relates to the initial training of puppeteers. Puppeteers are trained to bring forward the presence of the object and not their own presence, as is the case for actors. Their visible presence does not raise the necessity to re-address their training in puppetry because of their dramaturgical absence. The co-presence of the performer and the puppet requires a re-thinking of the performance techniques used by the manipulactor in order to present both himself and the puppet. In recent years the use of visible performers trained not in puppetry but in acting has produced performances in

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[6] It is worth noticing that the posters of *War Horse* display the picture of a real horse and not of one of the horse-puppets used in the show although the main attraction of the piece is the presence of the puppets.

which the presence of the puppet is undermined by an over-present performer, who embodies the feelings and emotions supposedly belonging to the puppet. In such cases, the puppet appears only as an extension of the performer and the spectator reads these feelings through the performer's face and body, not through the movements of the puppet.

The difference between co-presence and presence can be best described as the fact that co-presence rejects the convention of the 'visible invisible' puppeteer because the manipulactor appears as an Other of the puppet. Co-presence implies a balancing of the presence of the performer and the puppet in order to frame the focus of the audience on both of them.

2.3.3. Manipulacting | ventriloquism

I would like to address why I am not making any reference to ventriloquism in this research. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1978) defines ventriloquism as an 'act or art of speaking or uttering sounds in such a manner that the voice appears to come from some source other than the speaker' (1978: 1291). Ventriloquism literally means talking with the belly. This is of course not the case. Ventriloquists do not use their belly to speak. They perform their art by keeping their lips still while moving the articulated mouth of the puppet in synchronisation with the pronounced words.

It is a fact that ventriloquism consists of the co-presence on stage between a performer and a puppet. For that reason it can rightly be considered as a form of manipulacting. However, I suggest that ventriloquism in its mainstream form presents a rather limited type of co-presence. By mainstream form of ventriloquism, I mean performances that can be seen as belonging to the tradition of cabaret and which are now close to stand-up comedy. In this respect, I do not include in my criticism of

ventriloquism performances that make use of ventriloquism but have departed from the traditional dramaturgy of ventriloquism acts.

The traditional dramaturgy of ventriloquism is usually based on an opposition between the dummy and the ventriloquist. The former says out loud embarrassing or shocking comments, usually about audience members or the ventriloquist himself, of which the ventriloquist disapproves. The comedy of the situation is that the audience is well aware that these comments are actually formulated by the ventriloquist. A ventriloquist such as Nina Conti offers a contemporary approach to this dramaturgy. For instance, in her act with a little glove-puppet monkey, the latter constantly reminds the audience that he does not really exist. Conti is the person to blame for everything he says. He also refers to himself as her imaginary friend. Although Conti's approach gives a fresh input to ventriloquism by pushing further the limits of its dramaturgy, her act remains embedded inside its pre-established codification.

I suggest that there are three main reasons why I place traditional ventriloquism outside the scope of manipulacting. Firstly, unlike ventriloquism, manipulacting does not hide the process used to animate the puppet. In the work of manipulactors such as Tranter and Paiva, whose puppets talk to their human operator, the audience can see the manipulactor's lips moving when he produces the voice of the puppet. The role of the manipulactor consists of framing the action in order for the audience to look at the puppet and not at him when the former is supposed to speak, and not to use a trick. The creative process is displayed to the audience in manipulacting. The dramaturgy of ventriloquism is based on a trick of which the audience is fully aware. One of the pleasures in watching Conti's acts consists in an appreciation of the skills of the performer who is able to speak without moving her lips. The audience wishes to find out how the trick is accomplished but does not succeed. The technique used by a

manipulactor to give the impression that the puppet talks is not so important for the audience because the performer does not hide the way he produces the puppet's voice. The production of the puppet's voice is not at the centre of the dramaturgy. Secondly, the dramaturgy of the ventriloquist is actually quite limited. Although the character of the puppet varies according to the ventriloquist who manipulates it, the character performed by the ventriloquist is always that of a ventriloquist. The reason for such consistency in any act of ventriloquism is once again due to the fact that the production of the voice is the main aspect of the performance. The example from Conti's performance clearly reveals this aspect. Although the puppet constantly reminds the audience that it is she who produces his voice, Conti remains in the role of a ventriloquist. She cannot escape the dramaturgy of a ventriloquist enacting a ventriloquist who seems not to be in control of the puppet she is giving a voice.

Finally, as the definition of ventriloquism suggests, this particular form of performance mainly concerns a co-presence based on verbal interactions. Apart from the puppet's head, the other parts of the puppet are hardly engaged in the co-presence between the ventriloquist and the puppet. The finale of one of Conti's acts reveals the importance of the voice over the other attributes that can constitute the presence of the puppet. The presence of the monkey is maintained although Conti progressively hides the puppet from the audience's vision. It is as if the monkey takes over Conti's own body. At the end of the show, only the voice of the monkey remains, speaking openly through the mouth of Conti.

Interestingly, however, Nina Conti produced for BBC Four the documentary *A Ventriloquist's Story: Her master's voice* (2012) about her relationship with her late mentor and lover Ken Campbell. Throughout the documentary there are dialogues between Conti and different dummies that she has brought with her to an annual

gathering of ventriloquists in the United States of America, one being a double of Campbell. The dialogues established by Conti with her different puppets escape the traditional setting of ventriloquism because they appear to be taking place between different parts of herself as a sort of therapy that helps her to find answers to her contradictory feelings related to the death of Campbell. As a matter of fact, the trick of the voice loses its central place in this particular context. What we see is the mourning process of a woman with parts of herself that have now disappeared.

2.4.   Conclusion

In less than a century, the relation between the puppet and the puppeteer has radically changed. The invisible puppeteer has become a manipulactor engaged in the fictional world of the puppet. The originality of manipulacting is its hybrid form, a combination of acting and puppeteering. The manifold techniques existing in both performances and the possible calibrations between them have generated a variety of forms of manipulacting. Manipulacting has redefined the relation of the performer and the puppet in a relation of self to Other. Therefore the alterity of the puppet appears as the central question about this new form of performance. Nonetheless, in order to understand how the puppet can appear as an Other, it requires us first to understand who this being is.

In the next chapter, I look at the ontological ambiguity of the puppet by examining the outcomes of the four experiments that I have conducted during this research in order to identify the elements that constitute the alterity of the puppet. I then analyse these elements by applying a theoretical framework based on Sartrean phenomenology in order to define the ontology and the alterity of the puppet.

CHAPTER III

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE
ON THE ALTERITY OF THE PUPPET

The relation between a human being and a puppet is different from the relation that applies between two human beings. It is important to understand the ambiguous ontology of the puppet in order to produce an effective relation of alterity in manipulacting. This chapter examines the particular alterity of the puppet by adopting a theoretical framework based on Sartrean phenomenology. Comprehending the various aspects of manipulacting has required on my part an approach that combines practice and theory. Such knowledge opens the possibility of the elaboration of a method of practice for manipulacting which allows getting over what is too often called 'the magic of puppetry'.

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first one presents the different ways and strategies that I have employed to fabricate the alterity of the puppet in four experiments conducted during this inquiry. These experiments are *Seaside*, *Postalgia*, *The Maids* and *Urashima Taro*. I have decided to circumscribe the discussions on *The Maids* and *Urashima Taro* to a short presentation and a succinct summary of their respective outcomes because these experiments are analysed in Chapters V and VI respectively. I identify for each project the elements which participate in the failures or

successes of a convincing relation of self to Other between the manipulactor and the puppet.

The second section engages a discussion about the alterity of the puppet framed by the theories of the Other and imagination developed by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* (2007) and *The Imaginary* (2004). I operate a re-functioning of Sartrean ontology in order to propose a definition of the alterity of the puppet in manipulacting. The elements that contribute to a conclusive alterity of the puppet are discussed through key instances of my practice.

3.1. Fabricating the alterity of the puppet

I have explored various possible forms of alterity of the puppet within different dramatic forms and by collaborating with performers trained in different disciplines such as dance, puppetry, physical theatre or Stanislavski-based acting. My aim was to identify the common elements that shape the alterity of the puppet in the different research projects that I have set up. I would like to stress that *Seaside*, *Postalgia* and *The Maids* were practice-as-research outcomes intended to enable exploration of particular challenges, and that only *Urashima Taro* has been developed into a finished piece, which is why many examples in the second section of this chapter are drawn from this latter experiment.

3.1.1. *Seaside*

The aim of my research was to explore a form of manipulacting that would combine dance, puppetry and acting. Dance training requires the acquisition of techniques such as body-parts isolation as well as understanding and embodying notions such as flow,

weight and tension which can be fruitful when applied to manipulacting. By combining dance with acting and puppetry I aimed at exploring a form of alterity of the puppet based on corporeality and physical presence.

I undertook two experiments based on extracts of *Seaside* (1992), a play written by French playwright Marie Redonnet. *Seaside* tells the story of a female dancer, Onie, who cannot dance any longer due to a hip injury. On her way to re-open the Seaside Hotel, her car breaks down in a deserted place surrounded by the sea and a lagoon. She encounters Lolie, a young girl who lives alone with her grandmother in a bungalow. The old woman dies immediately after Onie's arrival. The same night a young man, who has also lost his way, arrives at the bungalow. He reveals that the Seaside Hotel does not exist any longer. He and Lolie dance together before they make love. The next morning, Onie takes to the sea in a small boat after she has buried Lolie's grandmother. Lolie decides to become a dancer. She leaves the bungalow after she renames it the Seaside Hotel.

The first experiment took place in July 2007. I worked for one week in collaboration with dancer, choreographer and researcher Ana Sanchez-Colberg and puppeteer Aya Nakamura. The project was mentored by Nenagh Watson, former artistic director of Doo Cot, a company which used to combine puppetry and live art with different styles of performance such as dance, opera or stand-up comedy. *Seaside* contains lengthy dialogue written in a non-realist style that gives the impression that the protagonists are engaged in monologues rather than real discussions. Some of the scenes that we developed used text while others were only movement pieces. Onie was performed by Sanchez-Colberg while Lolie was performed by Nakamura either through acting or through a puppet. The puppet of Lolie was originally from *Ultra Violet*, a

piece created by Doo Cot, and kindly lent to us by Watson. Nakamura built a prototype puppet representing the young man. None of these puppets had articulated mouths.

We encountered different issues depending on whether we were working on a dialogue or a movement-based scene. The scenes which featured dialogue were of two sorts. One consisted of a dialogue between Sanchez-Colberg as Onie and the puppet of Lolie manipulated by Nakamura. The other was a dialogue performed by Sanchez-Colberg who was simultaneously acting Onie and manipulating the puppet of the young man. Both scenes suffered from the difficulty of giving the impression that the puppet was talking. The production of the voice of the puppets by either Nakamura or Sanchez-Colberg stressed the presence of the performers rather than that of the puppets because we did not manage to connect the voice of the puppet with appropriate movements. As a result, the outside source of the voice was too obvious.

The movement scenes had some more positive results, in particular one which staged the puppet of the young man dancing with Onie and then with Lolie. At the outset of the scene, Sanchez-Colberg dances with the man who is manipulated by Nakamura. Then a shift happens. Sanchez-Colberg takes control of the puppet while Nakamura detaches herself from it in order to enact Lolie. They all dance together with Sanchez-Colberg manipulating the man, up to a point when Nakamura as Lolie takes full control of the puppet and carries on dancing with him. Sanchez-Colberg as Onie is expelled from the triadic relationship and looks at the couple as they move away from her. Despite a better manipulation of the puppet by both performers due to the absence of dialogue, this scene suffered from the design of the puppet as it only had an upper body. This particular construction did not give the impression of a third body. Moreover, when Sanchez-Colberg manipulated the young man, her presence had a tendency to overshadow that of the puppet. Her body was firmly anchored on the

ground and her movements were large and powerful, which gave her more stability and weight than the puppet.

This first experiment showed the difficulty of achieving co-presence because of an imbalanced presence between the puppet and the performer, the lack of an appropriately developed performance register to create convincing verbal exchanges between the puppet and the performer, and, to some degree, because of the weak design of the puppet.

In June 2008, I worked on a second experiment during a week that focused on balancing the co-presence of Onie and Lolie. This time I only worked with Sanchez-Colberg because I found the presence of Nakamura dramaturgically difficult to justify. Apart from the moments when she manipulated the puppet of the young man as Lolie, Nakamura had only appeared in the first version as a puppeteer manipulating the puppet of Lolie and not as one of the protagonists. In this second experiment, Sanchez-Colberg played Onie and manipulated the puppet of Lolie. I built a puppet the size of a twelve-year-old girl whose head, arms, hips and legs were articulated. To solve the issue of the voice of Lolie, I integrated inside the puppet a speaker that was remotely controlled. I recorded the voice of Sanchez-Colberg to use as the voice of Lolie so she would only have to focus on the movements of the puppet.

We worked on two scenes, one with speech and another without. The solution of the recorded voice did not really function because once again we did not manage to create the impression that the puppet was talking, although the results were better than in the first experiment. In order to compensate for the absence of an articulated mouth which clearly signals when the puppet is supposed to talk, three different actions had to be combined together to achieve a convincing dialogue: synchronisation between

speech and body movements of the puppet, exchanges of gaze between Onie and Lolie, and the spatial relation of their two bodies.

The scene without dialogue achieved a better balance between the two presences because Sanchez-Colberg was able to create simultaneously one body rhythm for her character and another for the puppet. As a dancer, Sanchez-Colberg masters the technique of body-parts isolation which is a key skill in manipulacting. She also toned down her own physical presence in order to give more presence to the puppet.

However, the inability to achieve convincing dialogue exchanges between the manipulactor and the puppet is a major issue when working on a play which has dense texts such as *Seaside*. The experiment did not go further because I realised that a play such as *Seaside* was not the appropriate material to be used in order to explore a form of alterity of the puppet based on corporeality. The play requires spending a lot of time on gaining the appropriate skills to give the impression that the puppet talks. I eventually decided not to carry on this experiment.

This first experiment had shown me the impact that the dramatic register has on the form of manipulacting that has to be developed for any particular piece. For instance, a piece such as *Seaside*, which is written as a series of long monologue-like sequences not realistic in style, is not appropriate to performers whose strength is in dance and puppetry but not in acting. As a result, the scenes which had the most positive outcomes were the ones without speech. Moreover it is necessary to work with puppets that have been carefully thought through for the particularity of manipulacting because the design supports the presence of the puppet as an Other in relation to the performer. In *Postalgia*, these two elements have been integrated to the research from the beginning.

3.1.2. *Postalgia*

Postalgia is a twenty-five-minute work-in-progress that experiments with various forms of co-presence between the performers and the puppet. Unlike *Seaside*, *Postalgia* is not a written play but a montage of some of Heiner Müller's short plays and excerpts of Bernard Marie Koltes's play *Roberto Zucco*.

    Postalgia is a collaborative work as each performer was equally involved in the elaboration of the dramaturgy, the making of the puppets, and the performance. The research was presented in February and March 2008 in London at the Shunt Lounge and the Little Angel Theatre after an eight-week research and development period.[1] My position in *Postalgia* is singular compared to the other experiments that I have conducted for this research as my experience is from a performer's perspective. I collaborated with visual artist Monika Kita to document the work through pictures and video. A video of *Postalgia* was shot in March 2008 at the Little Angel Theatre.[2] The perspective given by the video adds to my experience from the inside and contributes to my reflection on this performance. The video is located in Appendix B – DVD 1.

    Postalgia was devised by Zoilo Lobera who was replaced during the project by Amadeo Rosenheim, Boris Kahnert and myself.[3] Rosenheim is a trained actor who specialises in physical theatre with experience in mask work and puppetry. Kahnert is a lighting designer with extensive experience in lighting contemporary dance, installations, and experimental theatre. I am a theatre director trained in acting, physical theatre and puppetry.

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[1] *Postalgia* received support in-kind from the Puppet Centre Trust, Shunt and the Little Angel Theatre, and funding from Arts Council England through its Grants for the Arts programme.

[2] This video was filmed during a rehearsal which took place a few hours before our performance at The Little Angel Theatre in order to shoot the same scenes from different angles and to avoid blurred images as much as possible due to the low level of lighting used during the performance.

[3] Although Zoilo Lobera initiated the original idea of *Postalgia*, he had to pull out of the project because of other professional commitments and was replaced by Amadeo Rosenheim.

The starting point of our devising process was the making of the puppets and the elaboration of the scenography. We built a human-sized puppet that was dressed in the same white uniform as the three performers. This puppet has a few special features. Its arms, legs and head can be detached from the torso. When its jacket is unzipped a cage is revealed. It is lit by an internal battery-operated lamp and it becomes a small puppet booth where another puppet is trapped. During the show, the head of one of the performers also appears inside this cage. There is also the puppet of a woman in one of the legs of the big puppet. She is the final protagonist of the life-sized puppet. The second element of our process consisted of elaborating the scenography. During the first half of the piece, the performance takes place in darkness. The audience sits on the floor on one side of the stage area. Behind them, we placed large-sized mirrors. They are used to reflect back the lights coming from torches used by the different protagonists to light each other. As a result, in most scenes with dialogue, the protagonists do not look directly at each other when they speak but look at the reflection of their interlocutor on the mirrors. The darkness of the stage also decreases the visible presence of the person in charge of manipulating the puppet although it does not hide him completely. The next section presents the themes, the actions and the protagonists of *Postalgia*.

Description of the piece

At the outset of the performance, the audience members are guided into a confined space that looks like the cell of a jail. Inside, four characters are dressed in white. Three of them are embodied by the performers. The fourth one is the human-sized puppet, the main character of the piece. At the outset of the piece, the four figures seem to be guards and they form a unified group. As the action unfolds, the character of the puppet is rejected by the rest of the group and from the position of guard he eventually

becomes a prisoner. Alongside this rejection, he acquires individuality whereas the three others only exist as a chorus-character.

The piece is divided into nine scenes. The purpose of the dramaturgy is to create not a clear storyline but a succession of visual impressions linked together through the figure of the human-size puppet. For clarity, I refer to the character of the main puppet as the 'puppet-guard' and those of the performers as 'guard A' for Rosenheim, 'guard B' for Kahnert, and 'guard C' for me. I use 'him' or 'her' to talk about the puppet as subject, and 'it' to talk about its materiality as object.

The characters in *Postalgia* are divided into three groups. The first one is formed by the three performers, the second by the puppet-guard and the last by three little puppets. I will describe each group and look at the relations that they establish with the two others.

The three performers can be described as a 'chorus-character'. Although we make use of soliloquies and dialogues, we form a homogeneous entity as 'the guards'. This identity as a chorus-character is reinforced by our identical costumes and behaviour. We adopt the same attitude towards the other characters of the piece. There is no attempt from one of us to show any particularity or individuality. Our relationships are mediated through the puppets, although in different ways according to the type of puppet used. The interaction with the puppet-guard is a two-way relationship, in the sense that it also seems to interact with us, whereas there is no interaction with the little puppets.

The puppet-guard is the main puppet of the piece. As discussed above, it is a human-size Bunraku-style puppet dressed exactly like the three performers. It is manipulated by one, two or three people, depending on the action. Its head is always manipulated by Rosenheim, except at the very end of the piece when I take over its

control. It is a very heavy puppet that has a fully articulated body. The back of the cage is open and a slit has been made in the back of the jacket worn by the puppet-guard in order to operate the little puppet trapped inside the cage. The head of the puppet-guard is manipulated through a horizontal rod inserted at its back. If necessary, the torso can be supported by holding a short rod placed in the lower back of the puppet. Legs and arms are manipulated by direct grip. The puppet-guard interacts with the three guards and the little puppets.

Three little puppets form the last group. There is one trapped in a cage, another one that walks along a string in the manner of an acrobat, and the little woman dressed in red, hidden inside the left leg of the human-size puppet. They are twenty-centimetre-tall rod puppets made out of foam and latex. These puppets only interact with the puppet-guard. They do not have any relationship with the characters of the manipulactors.

Framing the alterity of the puppet

Postalgia displays three forms of manipulacting. The first is an indirect relationship between the performer and the puppet, the second a direct relationship without manipulation of the puppet, and the last a direct relationship but with manipulation of the puppet. Each form of manipulacting differs from the others because of the different calibrations of acting and puppeteering that they combine. These variations frame the alterity of the puppet and are examined by looking at specific moments of the piece.

Indirect relationship

At the outset of the piece, one scene displays the puppet-guard, engaged in a conversation with guard B. The puppet is solely manipulated by Rosenheim as guard A

but there is no direct interaction between them. However, the presence of guard A contains a dramaturgical meaning that affects the reading of the presence of the puppet-guard. During the whole action guard A stands behind the puppet, slightly to one side. The puppet-guard seems to be only concerned with guard B. The action is framed in such a way that the presence of guard A is not put forward. Yet, his discreet presence behind the puppet can be read as the authoritarian figure that secretly controls the behaviour of its citizens. If the puppet does not interact with guard A, in contrast, it does react to guard B.

In this scene, the exchange of gazes between guard B and the puppet is not direct. Due to the scenographic choices that we made, the characters see each other through the mirrors placed behind the audience. To engage in a conversation, the puppet-guard lights the face of guard B through the reflection of the mirrors. In turn, guard B does the same. The audience can see the faces of the two protagonists appearing from darkness. The interaction between guard B and the puppet reinforces the individuality of the puppet because guard B reacts to it as if it was a human being not an object. Guard B seems to be wound up by the nonsensical comments of the puppet-guard about imagination and perception. His reaction contributes to the individuality of the puppet that has been initially generated by Rosenheim. The presence of Kahnert and his interaction with the puppet supports the fabrication of the alterity of the puppet.

Direct relationship with no manipulation

During one particular scene, the puppet-guard remains constantly motionless. However, guards A, B and C address it as if it was able to respond to them. The puppet-guard sits on its own on the floor. The three guards stand a few metres behind the puppet. An interrogation starts. At first, the interrogation takes place between A, B and C in relation

to the escape of one of the little puppets on a tightrope. They do not look at each other directly to communicate but light each other's faces with their torches through mirrors. Then a shift happens and the interrogation is directed towards the puppet. This time, the torches are pointed at the face of the puppet. The three guards press the puppet with questions. Their aggressiveness increases, as they repeat the same questions in German, Spanish and French: 'Who was guarding him? Who was responsible?' Their speech turns into shouts and eventually, as the torches are switched off, their voices become animals' cries. At no moment is the puppet touched.

The objectness of the puppet, in other words its quality or state of being an object, is accentuated by the absence of manipulation. Yet, despite it being motionless, I argue that the apparent subjectness of the puppet, in other words its quality or state of being a subject, retains some presence because the upright seated position of the puppet gives the impression of a dynamic stillness. The stillness acquires a dramaturgical meaning because it can be read as the consequence of the fear felt by the puppet-guard or, on the contrary, as a mute disapproval of the aggressiveness of his former colleagues. This scene keeps the dramaturgical layout that has been established at the outset of the piece. The actions and shouts of the three guards seem to be legitimised by the puppet's lack of reaction. The stillness of the puppet is read not only as the result of an absence of manipulation but also as the response of the character embodied by the puppet to the aggressiveness of the guards.

Guards A, B and C never stop behaving towards the puppet as if it was one of them, although it does not show any sign of life. They maintain with the puppet the same relation that has been established since the outset of the piece. Because their reactions are similar to those they would have with a human being, they contribute to the apparent alterity of the puppet. In this instance, the puppet appears as an Other not

through movements that are read on the puppet but through the reactions of the performers, which are read as coming from outside the puppet. Actions are framed to focus the spectators on the actions of the performers in relation to the still object, and to give dramaturgical meaning to the stillness of the character embodied by the puppet.

Direct relationship with manipulation

This last instance carefully looks at the beginning of one scene of *Postalgia* in order to examine the actions implemented by the three manipulactors to display the apparent alterity of the puppet through a direct relation with manipulation.

At the outset of this scene, the three guards help their colleague after he has apparently woken up. The scene is lit by a lantern rigged above the puppet-guard, clearly revealing the puppet and the performers to the audience. The action starts with the puppet lying down with its back on the floor. The three guards, performed by Kahnert, Rosenheim and me, sit around the body of the puppet.

Rosenheim is on the right side of the puppet facing its upper body, Kahnert is on the left side close to the left arm, and I am on the right side of the puppet, next to its legs. We first manipulate the puppet in order to give the impression that it is waking up. Rosenheim holds the rod on the back of its head with his left hand and places his right hand on its right hip. With the help of his left hand, he tilts the puppet's head upwards. Then Kahnert places his right hand on top of the right hand of the puppet and holds its elbow with his other hand. As Rosenheim moves his right hand under the back of the puppet to push the upper body upward, Kahnert holds the left hand of the puppet down against the floor and I hold the left ankle of the puppet with my right hand in order to slightly bend the left leg of the puppet. We all freeze. The puppet looks straight ahead. Its upper body is slightly upwards, supported by its left hand. From this position, the

puppet's head is moved by Rosenheim to the left and looks at Kahnert's face. Then, its head is turned to the right in order to look at Rosenheim's face. Then Rosenheim sits the puppet up by putting his right hand on the left shoulder of the puppet in order to pull the upper body up. In that position the puppet faces me and we exchange gazes.

In this example, each of us has to focus on specific parts of the puppet, and simultaneously we have to be aware of the actions of the two other performers in order to form the impression of a being in motion. Ensemble work in puppetry always requires such a double level of awareness. However, there is a third level of awareness required in manipulacting because each of us also interacts with the puppet as character. Our interaction with the puppet amplifies the meaning of its actions. The manipulactor is part of an ensemble, and yet he interacts individually with the puppet animated by this very same ensemble. The manipulactor is inside and outside.

The staging of the scene openly integrates the performers as part of the dramaturgy. The puppet appears to need the support of the three men surrounding it in order to move its weak body. The subjectness of the puppet is supported by our constant focus and by our reactions to the puppet's actions. This scene is not about how the character of the puppet-guard usually behaves when he wakes up, but about the relation of these three men toward their fragile companion.

The exchanges of gazes establish a relation of self to Other. By looking at each of us, it is as if the puppet-guard has integrated us into its actuality. This mutual awareness inscribes our presence inside the dramaturgy of the scene. Our visible presence and the visible manipulation contribute to the impression that the puppet is an apparent Other because we all react towards it as we would do to any human being. In this third form of manipulacting, the performers and the puppet share a more equal co-presence on stage than in the previous two, which put forward either the presence of the puppet or the

presence of the performer. Yet, such a co-presence can be decreased if for instance the act of manipulation blurs the image we are trying to create. I will shortly come back to this specific issue.

The three forms of manipulacting used in *Postalgia* display three levels of co-presence which affect in turn the alterity of the puppet. The degree of co-presence is calibrated by the manipulactors according to the meaning that is given to the puppet as an Other. The alterity of the puppet varies in these three cases because of the different calibrations between acting and puppeteering. The indirect relationship reveals that puppeteering is predominant over acting. The discreet presence of the manipulactor suggests a hidden form of authority. The manipulacting technique used in the case of direct relationship without manipulation relies almost completely on acting. Nonetheless, the dynamic stillness of the puppet is essential to its apparent alterity because it confers subjectness to it. Finally, as mentioned above, the direct relationship with interaction balances acting and puppeteering. This form of manipulacting is the most difficult to achieve and has been further developed in *Urashima Taro*.

The research process has mainly consisted of finding solutions to articulate together the relationship of the three guards with the main puppet, elaborating the required techniques for achieving each form of manipulacting, and developing a dramaturgy appropriate to manipulacting. These three elements are closely linked. For instance, we decided to make the puppet-guard appear as a fragile character that could not walk on his own but had to be supported by other people because the heavy weight of the puppet-guard made it very difficult to manipulate especially when it was standing up. Moreover the performer squatting behind the puppet in order to control the feet during the walk of the puppet would have lost his presence as one of the characters. Such an action would not have a dramatic meaning but would only appear as an act of

puppet manipulation. In this example, the visible manipulation could appear as gestures of care towards someone. The manipulacting technique has shaped the relation of the guards with the puppet as much as the dramaturgy has shaped the manipulacting technique.

In most of the scenes, the three of us were present together on stage. We did not work with a fourth person who could have played the role of an outside eye, except at the very end of the process. Mischa Twitchin, founding member of Shunt, worked with us for two days in order to bring some more coherence to the dramaturgy. However, his contribution was not focused on the quality of manipulacting that we could achieve. We were not able to check whether the relation of our bodies with that of the puppet and the directions of our gazes were affecting the presence of the puppet. I recognise the lack of an external eye as an important issue because an inaccurate body position can create an imbalanced presence between manipulactors and puppets which eventually affects the alterity of the latter. For instance, a significant part of my directorial work in *Urashima Taro* was spent in giving to Nakamura precise indications about the positions of her body in relation to that of the puppet, the directions of gazes, and the timing of her reactions to the actions of the puppet. This work requires a lot of time as the performer is given constant feedback before being able to embody these technical constraints and then play with them. It also requires from the performer and the director a lot of dedication as it can be very tedious and frustrating. This emphasises the key relationship between body and gaze in the execution of manipulacting. For these reasons, I decided not to be part of the next experiments as a performer but to pursue my directorial role.

3.1.3. *Urashima Taro*

Urashima Taro is the only research project that has been developed into a full

production. It had the longest research and development period (sixteen weeks between September 2007 and September 2009), the more showings of works-in-progress (twenty-eight), and has been professionally performed about thirty times across England and France between April 2010 and July 2012.

We developed three distinct versions of *Urashima Taro*. A detailed presentation of each of them can be found in Chapter VI. Here I discuss the logic behind the evolution of this project, and specifically the interaction between theory and practice in the elaboration of this experiment.

This research project can be separated into two research phases. The first took place between September 2007 and May 2008. It includes the first and the second versions of *Urashima Taro*. The second took place between January and September 2009. This phase takes into account the issues that appeared in the two previous versions of *Urashima Taro* but also integrates a deeper knowledge of Sartre's relation of self to Other.

In September 2007, Aya Nakamura and I developed a ten-minute work-in-progress based on the Japanese myth of Urashima Taro that was shown at the Shunt Lounge in London during three nights. This piece is built in two parts. In the first one, Nakamura is a storyteller who presents the life of a young fisherman called Urashima Taro with his old mother and how he dies after accidentally falling into the sea. The second part does not contain any text. Nakamura plays a woman who resuscitates Urashima. They share for a brief moment a love story until Urashima decides to return amongst the dead. The body of Urashima only includes a head and two arms while the rest has been replaced by a fishing net, in order to materialise a hybrid being caught between life and death. The small room in Shunt Lounge where the performance took place was covered by fishing nets in order to give the impression of a spider web where

Urashima has been caught. The design of the puppet stresses the importance of the gaze of Urashima as the rest of its body was less present, while still visible, because of the proximity between the stage and the audience. At the time of this experiment, my research mainly examined the role of the gaze in the object-subject relation between the puppeteer and the puppet. The outcomes of this experiment seemed to confirm that the gaze was the main element in the fabrication of the alterity of the puppet. I later realised this was not completely true.

Between March and May 2008, we developed a second work-in-progress of *Urashima Taro* which was thirty-five minutes long. It was once again presented in the Shunt Lounge but in a much bigger space. We kept the same puppet but increased the place of the storytelling in the dramaturgy and we changed the relationship between Urashima Taro and Nakamura's character. In the previous version, the presence of Urashima Taro was stronger than that of Nakamura while in this second experiment Nakamura's character became a dominating figure. The consequence was a decrease in Urashima Taro's presence. The dramaturgical inversion of the relationship between the two protagonists has amplified the physical presence of Nakamura's body in relation to the hybrid body of the puppet. The result has been an imbalanced presence between Nakamura's character and Urashima.

My research residency at the Institut International de la Marionnette in Charleville-Mézières took place immediately after the performances of the second version of *Urashima Taro*. It gave me the opportunity to reflect on this experiment by analysing videos of other practitioners engaged in manipulacting. In parallel, I further deepened my reading of Sartre. The combination of both changed my understanding of manipulacting. At the outset of my research, my hypothesis was that the relation of self to Other between the manipulactor and the puppet was fabricated by the exchanges of

their gazes. Although this is partly true, I realised that the gaze played a secondary role. Instead of focusing on the gaze to explain how a subject appears as an Other to another subject, I looked at the notion of embodied consciousness described by Sartre as the body being consciousness itself and not a screen between consciousness and the world. This notion is further discussed in the second section of this chapter. Between the first and the second version of *Urashima Taro*, the body of Urashima Taro became less present because of a change in the scenography. In the first version, the exiguity of the stage area had allowed the audience to focus on the puppet. Moreover the use of fishing nets in the scenography stressed the presence of the puppet. The second version of *Urashima Taro* was performed on a bigger stage. The scenography was composed of too many elements and the lighting design revealed the whole space instead of focusing the attention of the audience on the action. The combination of these different factors has diluted the presence of the puppet on stage which consequently weakened the co-presence between the puppet and the manipulactor.

In order to re-establish a balanced relationship between the manipulactor and the puppet it was necessary to give the latter a stronger physical presence. Nakamura and I realised that we had to redesign the puppet of Urashima in order to give the impression that he had a full body. We also decided to include more puppets in order to multiply the presence of 'puppetic' bodies on stage and decentre the physical presence of Nakamura and we worked on a new scenography and collaborated with a new lighting designer. These changes had a positive impact on the co-presence between Nakamura and the puppets present onstage.

In Chapter VI, the discussion about *Urashima Taro* focuses on the ambiguous relationship of the manipulactor with the puppet and how this relationship creates an

ambiguous dramaturgy of the Other. This ambiguity has been developed through four dramaturgical elements: power, duality, intimacy and shadows.

3.1.4. *The Maids*

Between April 2009 and September 2010 I worked on three iterations of the opening scene of *The Maids* by Jean Genet. The first two versions were shown as open rehearsals and the final one was presented to an audience in October 2010 as a work-in-progress. The research period was relatively short as we spent around two weeks on each of the first two iterations and a week on the last.

The action of *The Maids* takes place during one evening. Two maids, Claire and Solange, attempt and fail to murder their employer, Madame. The opening scene stages a ceremony where the two maids symbolically perform this murder while their employer is absent. The structure of the ceremony is as follows. Claire enacts Madame while Solange enacts Claire. Madame is arrogant towards the maid and humiliates her until the moment that the maid decides to take revenge. She insults and slaps Madame and eventually strangles her. Yet, the strangulation is never completed because of the ringing of an alarm clock which signals the end of the ceremony. The maids are back to their respective identities, Claire as Claire and Solange as Solange.

In *The Maids*, the actors play characters playing characters. One actor plays Claire playing Madame and the other plays Solange playing Claire. Genet seems to deliberately blur the identity of the protagonists. Moreover, at different moments of the scene Claire stops playing Madame and Solange stops playing Claire. The play is therefore profoundly concerned, at the level of dramatic construction and representation, with play-acting, role-playing and performance as an Other. This makes it both pertinent and challenging in terms of the themes of this study. The fact that this scene itself stages

different levels of performance, and that this is a significant part of my interest in this particular piece, accounts for the decision only to work on an excerpt rather than the full play, as I am interested in this structurally and by way of dramatic construction, rather than as a full drama in its own right.

In this particular experiment, the actor playing Claire embodies Madame through a puppet. By adding a puppet on stage, I have materialised the figure of Madame as a permanent presence. This choice responds in a muscular way to the theme of doubled presence and layers of role-playing, whilst taking these a step further. During the scene, Madame appears as a subject except at specific moments when she is deliberately disclosed as an object when Claire or Solange want to address each other directly. My research has been focused on finding ways to handle this scene about pretence, play-acting and appearance in which the embodiment of the Other is materialised by a puppet. The importance of play-acting in this experiment has led me to work with performers initially trained in acting although they had little experience in puppetry. Throughout the whole process, I have collaborated with Juley Ayres and Kristin Kerwin, who are Stanislavski-trained actresses. Kerwin enacts the role of Solange and Ayres the role of her sister, Claire.

The three iterations of the opening scene of *The Maids* explore different dramaturgical settings in order to create different levels of actuality on stage in relation to the ontological ambiguity of the puppet of Madame. I have learned through this experiment that it was essential to establish the puppet as a convincing subject in order to create dramatic changes when the objectness of the puppet is disclosed by the performers. If there is not enough difference between the moments when Madame is supposed to be a subject and when she appears as an object it is not possible to create different levels of actuality on stage. Once again, body and gaze appear as the main

elements that support the subjectness of the puppet. However they had to be approached differently than in *Postalgia* and *Urashima Taro* because of the central place of the production of the speech of the puppet in *The Maids*. Although I acknowledge that we did not fully achieve a convincing subjectness of Madame, it was essential to aim for it. If, for instance, Madame had been staged only as an object treated as such by the maids, no relation of self to Other between her and the two maids would have been possible. The dual identity of Madame as a subject and an object has been the thread of the experiment because it allowed me to integrate the ambiguous ontology of the puppet within the dramaturgy.[4]

The relation of self to Other between the puppet and the performers is both indirect and direct depending on which character interacts with Madame. As discussed in Chapter II, manipulacting is about establishing a co-presence between the manipulactor and the puppet by giving a dramaturgical presence to the performer. Although Claire has few direct interactions in character with Madame during the three iterations, she potentially has a dramaturgical presence next to Madame, not only because she is operating the puppet but also because her presence as a character is always possible given the performer's presence onstage. This passive or indirect presence already exists in Genet's text when Claire appears at very specific moments of the scene as herself and not as Madame. Unlike the indirect relation between Madame and Claire, the relation between Madame and Solange (who plays Claire in this excerpt) is direct. During the whole scene, they continually confront each other. The combination of these two forms of relations and presences between the two performers and the puppet shapes the form of manipulacting explored during this experiment.

In Chapter V, I discuss how the dual ontology of the puppet in *The Maids* has

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[4] As already discussed in Chapter I, I staged in 2006 a free adaptation of *The Maids* called *Madame*, based on a concept similar to the one developed for this experiment.

been integrated into the dramaturgy to create different levels of represented actualities, which itself entails doubling and role play. Each of the three iterations makes use of a particular puppet and approaches differently the relationship taking place between the two performers and the puppet. I also discuss how the fabrication of the speech of Madame has been developed in order to avoid as much as possible an imbalanced presence between the puppet and the two performers.

3.1.5   Main outcomes of the experiments

Through these four experiments, I have learned that the apparition of an alterity of the puppet is only possible when the presences of the performer and the puppet are balanced. Yet, their presences are initially imbalanced because a human being has more presence on stage than an object. It is therefore necessary to rebalance these presences in order to achieve any form of manipulacting. Beyond the diversity of dramatic forms of these research projects and of the training backgrounds of the people who have participated in these experiments, I have observed that three recurring elements play a key part in the balancing of the presence of the performer and the puppet and therefore contribute to the fabrication of an alterity of the puppet.

Firstly, the puppet appears as an Other when one has the impression that the puppet has an autonomous body that seems to act and react to its surroundings autonomously from the person who manipulates it. To achieve such an impression, it is necessary that the apparent body of the puppet seems detached from that of the manipulactor. This apparent separateness allows physical interactions between them. The autonomous body of the puppet contributes to the apparition of an embodied consciousness – in other words, a consciousness that relates to the world through its body – which I refer to as *body-as-consciousness*. The second element is the apparent

gaze of the puppet. By looking at the character enacted by the manipulactor, the puppet integrates its human protagonist into its fictional world. Yet, a direct gaze between the manipulactor and the puppet is not necessary. The exchanges of gazes can be framed by a scenographic apparatus such as the mirrors used in *Postalgia* or the protagonists can share an object of vision which mediates their gazes. Finally, speech can be used in order to establish a relation of self to Other through dialogue but is a secondary element compared to body and gaze. Hence, the fabrication of the alterity of the puppet is the result of the apparent presence of the puppet as a body-as-consciousness, its apparent ability to see the manipulactor in order for the latter to appear as an Other of the puppet, and its ability to engage in a dialogue with a human being although this last element is not always needed.

In these four experiments, body-as-consciousness, gaze and speech are calibrated differently according to the dramatic form of each piece and the initial training background of the manipulactors. For instance, in *Postalgia* the alterity of the puppet is fabricated by a combination of body either with gaze or with speech. There is no direct exchange of gazes when the character of the puppet talks to one of the human guards because the protagonists seem to see each other through the mirrors placed behind the audience. The direct exchanges of gazes only happen when there is a physical interaction between the puppet and the manipulactors. In *The Maids*, the gaze plays a role as important as speech because the exchanges of gazes are direct. In this particular treatment of *The Maids* the performer in charge of manipulating the puppet is much more visible than the one in *Postalgia* who remains mostly in darkness. The result is a weakened presence of the puppet of Madame as body-as-consciousness. In *Urashima Taro* the alterity of the puppet is supported by the physical interactions between the puppets and the performer as well as their exchange of gaze but not by

dialogue. Understanding how the alterity is fabricated is a necessary stage in order to understand why body and gaze, and to a lesser degree speech, contribute to constitute the puppet as a figure of the Other. The next section aims at answering this question.

3.2.   Alterity and ontology of the puppet in manipulacting

This section examines the relation of self to Other between the manipulactor and the puppet by applying a theoretical framework based on Sartrean and, to some extent, Levinasean phenomenology, illustrated by instances from the experiments discussed above. I particularly look at the discussion conducted by Sartre about the Other in order to understand the fabrication of a co-presence between the manipulactor and the puppet on stage. The inquiry specifically addresses the argument developed by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* that the relation of self to Other is the result of our presence in the world as embodied consciousness. The inquiry also raises the issue of representing an Other by an object. The contradiction of an object-as-Other is discussed by examining perception and imagination in the spectator's experience of puppetry. Finally, the inquiry operates a re-functioning of Sartrean ontology in order to propose a definition of the ambiguous ontology of the puppet.

3.2.1.   Construction of co-presence: body and gaze

The fabrication of co-presence suggests that the manipulactor and the puppet are initially required to appear distinct from one another. This distinction is materialised by the fact that they seem to have distinct bodies on stage. When the distinction from the manipulactor is not clearly established, the puppet appears as an extension of the manipulactor, and thus, is mostly present on stage as an object and not as a protagonist.

The result is a weakened form of co-presence. In an experiment such as *Urashima Taro*, Nakamura establishes a co-presence between her and the different puppets in the piece by establishing a clear distinction between her body and that of the puppets. The puppets seem autonomous from her although they are actually under her control. To understand why such a distinction is necessary, I suggest looking at Sartre's definition of consciousness.

As Frederic Worms argues, Sartre presents consciousness not as an abstract property but as 'the essence of human beings as such' (Worms 2008: 16). Following the German phenomenologist Edmund Husserl, Sartre defines consciousness by its intentionality or directedness towards an object. For Sartre, as Sebastian Gardner explains, 'the concept of consciousness must be the consciousness of something which differentiates itself from its objects and is conscious of itself as doing so' (Gardner 2009: 48). There are two possible modes of consciousness for Sartre: pre-reflective and reflective. Pre-reflective consciousness is immediate consciousness. Sartre describes it as impersonal because it is not consciousness of itself. Pre-reflective consciousness does not need the notion of self. Conversely, reflective consciousness is consciousness taking itself as its object. Reflective consciousness for Sartre is the Cartesian cogito. However, and this point is very important for the study of manipulacting, Sartre does not agree with Descartes about the separation between body and mind.

For Sartre, as Kathleen Wider explains, the body is 'the subject of human consciousness' (Wider 1997: 112). The unity of the body shows the unity of the subject with regard to the world. The body is actually consciousness and not a screen between consciousness and its objects. As Canadian scholar Monika Langer writes, the existence of flesh is 'a vehicle of an interworld in Sartre's philosophy' (Langer 1998: 112). She argues that the existence of consciousness as body 'spells an inevitable and eradicable

alienation insofar as it engages consciousness in a world which it continually surpasses, and confers on it an eternally elusive "being-for-others"' (Langer 1998: 105). The distinction of bodies is a key element of the co-presence between the manipulactor and the puppet because it confers on the puppet its belonging to the world as an embodied consciousness. The performer and the puppet seem to be present to one another because of their presence on stage as subjects. The distinction between the apparent body of the puppet and the real body of the manipulactor contributes to the epiphany of an apparent consciousness in the puppet.

To operate a distinction between these two bodies, the physical presence of the puppet through its materiality is not enough. It is essential that the body of the puppet moves in such a way that it seems autonomous from the body of the performer and that it seems to deploy an apparent internal logic of movement. For instance, the uncanny feeling that spectators may experience when they watch Nakamura and Urashima dancing together comes from the impression that two autonomous subjects are present to each other through the interactions of their bodies despite the awareness that one of the protagonists is actually an object.

The apparent autonomy of the body of the puppet is difficult to achieve because of the dramatic function of the manipulactor on stage. The double focus on the manipulactor and the puppet can remind the audience that the latter is physically connected to the former if the manipulation is too visible which, in return, affects their apparent separation. Thus, it is necessary not to disclose to the audience how certain parts of the body of the puppet are manipulated. The arms and the legs of the puppet can be controlled by a visible but subtle grip of the manipulactor's hand, or they can be the actual arms or legs of the performer but partially hidden by a piece of costume. For instance, in *Urashima Taro*, Nakamura places her hand behind the puppet's hand of

Urashima to hold it discreetly, or she slips her right arm through one sleeve of Okoto's kimono to create the impression that the puppet has an arm. Moreover, manipulactors tend to mask as much as possible the physical connection between their body and the head of the puppet. The reason is that the head supports the apparent gaze of the puppet, which also contributes to the co-presence of the manipulactor with the puppet.

The gaze often functions as a key sign of consciousness of the puppet. In *Phenomenology of a Puppet Theatre*, Jan Mrázek (2005) suggests that the eyes of the Javanese Wayang Kulit puppet are its 'power of vision. … The eyes give the sensation of the puppet's subjectivity and visual agency, as opposed to being an object of visual gaze' (Mrázek 2006: 35). The puppet is more than a thing that can be seen; it is also an apparent subject that can see. When the gaze of the puppet is not precise as often happened in the first and second iteration of *The Maids*, then the puppet loses its apparent subjectness. This function of the gaze as a sign of consciousness is found in many forms of puppetry.

The gaze of the puppet plays an important part specific to manipulacting: it reinforces the separateness from the manipulactor by stressing the dramaturgical presence of the latter. The visible presence of the manipulactor on stage does not imply that he has a dramaturgical presence. However, if the puppet looks at the manipulactor and the latter responds to this gaze, the human performer appears as part of the actuality of the puppet.

In the third version of *Urashima Taro*, I used this function of the gaze to establish a co-presence between Nakamura and the puppet of Okoto when the two enter the stage for the first time. At the outset of the scene, Nakamura can be seen by the audience as a visible puppeteer, as the puppet is the only one engaged in an action. Okoto looks at small paper cut-outs of men that she has pulled out from a box and laid

down on a small table while Nakamura is next to her, slightly behind, looking at the side of Okoto's face. After a short moment, Nakamura stops looking at the puppet while the latter carries on her previous action. Nakamura moves her head forward to look at the paper cut-out of one of the men in front of her, and then laughs at him. At this moment, Nakamura appears detached from the puppet. Suddenly, Okoto turns her head towards Nakamura, looks at her and shushes her in an authoritative manner. Nakamura looks at her, and then moves backwards, looking down as a sign of submission to Okoto.

The dramaturgical presence of Nakamura as a character has been established through four related actions:

- Okoto has a clear dramaturgical presence but Nakamura has not

- Nakamura stops looking at the puppet in order to be engaged in an action distinct from that of Okoto. However, Nakamura's presence remains unclear

- the puppet looks at Nakamura and forces the latter to return her gaze

- Nakamura's character feels ashamed of her action.

The fabrication of co-presence is progressive. Firstly, the two bodies are detached from one another because they are engaged in different actions, and then, the exchanges of gazes between Okoto and Nakamura disclose them as Others.

However, the gaze of the puppet can integrate the presence of the performer in the dramaturgy of the piece even if this gaze does not provoke a strong reaction from the performer. The fact that the gaze of the puppet is returned by the performer is enough to create a co-presence between the two beings. For instance, in *Postalgia*, as discussed above, the simple fact that there are exchanges of gazes between the puppet-guard and the manipulactors constitutes their co-presence. It is not necessary for the

manipulactors to react to the gaze of the puppet with strong emotions. Yet the reaction of Nakamura in *Urashima Taro* established a clearer distinction between the puppet and her than the sole fact of exchanging gazes with the puppet as in *Postalgia*.

During the making of *Postalgia*, there was no external eye to supervise the interactions of the different bodies present on stage. Although the gaze of the puppet-guard is precise, the relation of our bodies in relation to that of the puppet can contribute to a decrease of the puppet's subjectness. This can happen when, for instance, the body of one of us hides the direction of the gaze of the puppet or when the manipulation is not subtle enough to give the impression that the body of the puppet is autonomous from ours. This emphasises the interdependence of body and gaze in the fabrication of the alterity of the puppet.

This interdependence is very well demonstrated by Sartre in describing the relation of self to Other. As Langer explains, 'in virtue of its body, consciousness has an "exterior" and can experience the other's gaze. This gaze simultaneously reveals the other as subject and makes me aware of a facet of my own being which, on principle, will always elude me' (Langer 1998: 106). For this reason, as Langer concludes, 'my body is at one and the same time the body which I live and the body which is an object for the other' (Langer 1998: 106).

Sartre suggests two ideas. Firstly, the Other can only be apprehended by the self as a subject. Nakamura's character reacts as if she looks at a human being and not at an object. By pointing the gaze of the puppet towards herself, Nakamura signals that her character is part of the actuality of the puppet. Secondly, Sartre positions himself within a Hegelian standpoint to argue that the Other is the subject who mediates my relation to myself. In other words, the Other allows me to be aware of aspects of myself.

However, Sartre disagrees with Hegel on the point that the Other is given to the self by an explicit act of mutual knowing. If that was the case, that would mean that the Other would be relegated to the status of a mere object. In *Totality and Infinity* (1991), Levinas exposes clearly why the relation of self to Other cannot be based on knowledge. He argues that to be an 'I' consists of being identical to myself. Yet this identity is not static as in the tautology 'I am I' but dynamic. Levinas defines identity as follows:

> To be I is, over and beyond any individuation that can be derived from a system of references, to have identity as one's content. The I is not a being that always remains the same, but is the being whose existing consists in identifying itself, in recovering its identity throughout all that happens to it. It is the primal identity, the primordial work of identification. (Levinas 1991: 36)[5]

As Françoise Dastur explains, 'for Levinas the world is not something different from the "I" but a mode of existence for the "I"' (Dastur 2006: 37). Knowledge is only a mode of existence of the self that is part of the dynamic process of identification. The self takes possession of the world in order to 'consolidate or extend its own identity' (Dastur 2006: 37). The subject does not find anything other than itself in the object. The self gives a meaning to the object, which Levinas refers as its finality. For this reason, Levinas argues that the relation of the subject with objects is a relation of knowledge.

Conversely to the relation of the self with the world, Levinas contends that the Other is not another self. The relation to the Other is a relation to an alterity which 'is not the simple reverse of identity, and is not formed out of resistance to the same, but is prior to every initiative, to all imperialism of the same' (Levinas 1991: 39). For Levinas, self and Other can exchange everything except the act of existing (*l'exister*). The self is alone and has no power over the Other. The Other cannot be an object of knowledge because knowledge is an identification process. If this were the case it would mean that the Other would be part of the identity of the self, which would be problematic for

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[5] The same has to be understood as the 'I' or the self.

Levinas. In Levinasean phenomenology, there is an opposition between the relation of the subject with objects and the relation of the subject with other subjects.

For the same reasons, Sartre claims that the relation between self and Other is 'a negative and internal ontological relation, as opposed to a relation of knowledge' (Gardner 2009: 138). In *Being and Nothingness* (2007), Sartre presents a scene depicting a person absorbed in spying on someone by looking through a keyhole. This scene echoes the previous example from *Urashima Taro* when Nakamura's character is caught by Okoto laughing at one of the paper men. The voyeur hears footsteps behind him and feels ashamed of his action because someone looks at him. For Sartre, the Other appears in the pre-reflective consciousness of the self because the Other is immediately given to consciousness through the senses. The situation of being looked at is lived by the voyeur, and not known by him. Vision has no epistemic power because, as Gardner highlights, 'the meaning of the Other's look is instead that of an action' (Gardner 2009: 139). When the voyeur is caught looking through the keyhole or when Nakamura's character is caught laughing at one of the paper men, they are suddenly aware of themselves engaged in a specific action, at a specific location, at a specific time. Through the gaze of the Other, they are able to grasp themselves as objects. As Mark Sacks underlines, 'I am the very object that has been seen' (Sacks 2005: 288). Yet, Sacks also stresses that Sartre does not mean that being objectivised by the gaze of the Other implies that I become a mere object and the Other is a pure subject.[6] It means that 'I become aware that I am essentially a human being, an entity that is fundamentally as much a spatio-temporal object as it is a conscious being' (Sacks 2005: 285). As Langer suggests, 'the other is not originally given to me as object but as presence in person, as a subject who reveals to me my being-for-others' (Langer 1998:

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[6] 'Objectivation' and 'objectivise' are related words and refer to making an object out of something or someone (Barnes 2007: 653).

106). The inter-subjective awareness consists of an immediate subject-subject relation.

The Other is the subject who mediates my relation to myself. Nakamura's character feels ashamed of her action because she encounters the phenomenological gaze of the puppet. She is able to grasp a part of herself of which she was not aware, in this instance her mocking attitude. The gaze allows the manipulactor and the puppet to be aware of each other but also to distinguish from one another. The Other appears as the one that confirms and denies the 'selfness' to the oneself, but also as not being the oneself. Selfness or ipseity (*ipséité* in French) is defined as the individuality, the set of all the properties, unique or not, that characterise an individual.

Nonetheless, the puppet is only an apparent subject with an apparent body and an apparent gaze and, surely, Sartre never intended his theory of the Other to be applied to puppets as they are not subjects but objects. Moreover, as Levinas contends, it is not possible for an object to be an Other. In *Totality and Infinity* (1991), Levinas adopts a Platonic perspective to compare the perception of seeing an object and seeing an Other. He argues that 'objects have no light of their own; they receive a borrowed light' (Levinas 1991: 74). Conversely, the Other does not appear in a 'light exterior to it. … It is by itself and not by reference to a system' (Levinas 1991: 75). Unlike the object, the Other is not immanent to the Self but transcendent. Self and Other do not form a totality because the Other escapes the self. The priority of the Other in regard to the self has to be absolute. Hence the Other is 'the Absolutely Other' (Levinas 1991: 39) and for this reason there is an absence of reciprocity between self and Other.

If we agree with Levinas, how can we explain that the puppet appears as a figure of the Other despite being an object? For these reasons, it is necessary to interrogate what constitutes the experience of the spectator watching a puppet in order to understand what lies behind the presence of the puppet.

3.2.2. The absent Other

In *Marionnettes et Marionnettistes de France*, published in 1947, French scholar and puppeteer André-Charles Gervais shares his experience as a member of the audience watching a glove puppet show. The account of his experience brings an interesting perspective to the discussion about the apparent subjectness of the puppet and, thus, requires full citation.

> When I attend a puppet show, I agree to believe in a lot of improbabilities. The scenic characters do not have human size, I can only see half of their bodies, their wooden faces are still, their gestures are stiff and inaccurate, their voice is disproportionate, and their walk is unreal. It all rests with illusion and with the work of my mind. From time to time, the doll offers me a springboard that my imagination uses to gather momentum. On this given sketch I can focus thoughts and dreams in order to invent the scenic character. This work of the mind can be subconsciously done when I fully surrender to the aesthetic delectation. I can enjoy the show and forget myself. However at different moments of my experience, a splitting of myself happens which allows me to observe the psychological attitude produced on me by the show. By analysing myself I enjoy a superior action, the one happening between the I-spectator and the protagonists of the piece. By acknowledging that my pleasure has been guided, I increase it. By moving from the convention of theatre to the truth of my introspective quest, and by passing from an external unreality to an inner reality, I feel the pleasure given by the flexible mechanism of my mind and by the overpowering leaps of imagination. (Gervais 1947: 35; my translation)

Gervais suggests that the starting point of his experience is perception. His description first highlights the objectness of the puppet. He then explains that the perception of the puppet triggers his imagination which offers him a new experience: the manifestation of the subjectness of the puppet. Finally, he acknowledges that his experience as a spectator is heightened when he is absorbed by the actions of the performance, and at the same time, he is aware that he watches an object.

Gervais raises the idea of an interplay between imagination and perception. He also draws attention to the fact that consciousness can be directed towards the puppet through two modes of relation depending on whether consciousness focuses on the objectness or the subjectness of the puppet. I suggest further exploring the interplay

between imagination and perception in puppetry by examining it through the theory of image developed by Sartre in *The Imaginary* (2004). I will start this discussion by presenting the distinction between perception and imagination, and then I will focus on their role in the spectating of manipulacting. [7]

Defining perception and imagination

Following the German phenomenologist Edmund Husserl, Sartre posits that perception and imagination are two different ways for consciousness to be related to an identical object. Perception is an intentional act directed towards an object. Perception of an object is constructed by the plan that the perceiving viewer has of this object and it is contextualised by its surroundings. The intentionality does not necessarily refer to reflective consciousness. When I look at one side of a car in the street I expect the other side to exist without thinking of it. If it happens that the other side is absent I will be surprised. An object is never entirely given to a subject by visual perception. One can only see one side at a time but as Husserl points out, 'perception furnishes us with a full object-consciousness, even though only part of the perceived object is intuitively given' (Husserl quoted by Gallagher and Zahavi 2009: 96). The profile which appears in perception is transcended by the viewer in order to grasp the object itself. We see more than what is actually given by perception through what Husserl 'terms horizontal intentionality' (Gallagher and Zahavi 2009: 96). Horizontal intentionality implies an expectation of the absent profile.

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[7] Scholars such as Henryk Jurkowski and Steve Tillis have both discussed the role of imagination and perception in their studies of the spectator's engagement with puppetry performances. In *Aspects of Puppet Theatre* (1988), Jurkowski refers to the concept of opalisation to explain the spectator's experience of puppetry, whereas in *Towards an Aesthetics of Puppet Theatre* (1992), Tillis develops the concept of the double-vision. However Jurkowski and Tillis do not define beforehand the terms 'imagination' and 'perception'.

Sartre argues that the image is not a thing but a relation. He defines the image as 'an act that aims in its corporeality at an absent or non-existent object, through a physical or psychic content that is given not as itself but in the capacity of "analogical representative" of the object aimed at' (Sartre 2004: 20). What is imagined is an object that is not present but that we bring back to our consciousness. Imagination does not have the same knowledge content that perception contains. 'In perception knowledge is formed slowly; in the image, knowledge is immediate' (Sartre 2004: 9). The image does not bring us any additional knowledge of the object that we already know; perception always brings additional knowledge. Sartre argues that 'the object is therefore correlative with a certain synthetic act, which includes among its structures a certain consciousness and a certain "intention"' (Sartre 2004: 11). Unlike the object of perception that appears in an infinite series of profiles, the object of imagination 'possesses in itself only a finite number of determinations, precisely those of which we are conscious' (Sartre 2004: 16). Therefore, between perception and imagination there is a difference of nature and not of degree. In the case of perception, the object 'is "encountered" by consciousness' (Sartre 2004: 7); in the case of imagination it is not, the object is absent.

Non-psychic images

Sartre draws attention to the fact that images can be psychic, such as the memory of someone, but also non-psychic, such as a photograph, a caricature or an imitation. Sartre argues that the perception of these particular objects can lead us to imagine absent objects. Sartre gives an example which is particularly relevant to understanding how puppetry affects the spectator's imagination. He presents a female impersonator called Franconay imitating a famous artist of his time, Maurice Chevalier.

Sartre first admits that the impersonator makes use of signs in order to create the image of Chevalier but he argues that there are no existing connections between sign and image. Sartre specifies that 'the consciousness of imitation is a temporal form, which is to say, [one which] develops its structures in time' (Sartre 2004: 26). Talking about Franconay's imitation, Sartre points out that the object Maurice Chevalier is a weak form that can be either interpreted as 'Maurice Chevalier, or a small woman pulling faces' (Sartre 2004: 26). The signs are used for guiding the audience's consciousness. Sartre argues that sign consciousness and image consciousness are bridged through memory and affectivity. As Sartre contends, 'all perception is accompanied by an affective reaction. Every feeling is feeling about something, which is to say it aims at its object in a certain manner and projects onto it a certain quality. To like Pierre is to be conscious of Pierre as likeable' (Sartre 2004: 28). The concept of a 'pure' perception does not exist. As neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (2000) writes in *The Feeling of What Happens*, 'The records we hold of the objects and events that we have once perceived include the motor adjustments we made to obtain the perception in the first place and also include the emotional reactions we had then' (Damasio 2000: 147). The affective reactions attached to perceptions play a central role in the imaging consciousness.

In Sartre's example, the audience only perceives Franconay at the outset of the act. Then they read the signs and recognise them as belonging to Maurice Chevalier. What the audience imagines of Chevalier is what they already know about him. Yet these signs are limited, rigid and abstract. Even though they have recognised that Franconay is imitating Chevalier, this knowledge is not enough to constitute the image of Chevalier. In the past, the audience has encountered Chevalier through posters, movies, newspapers and magazines. These memories of Chevalier have been accompanied by

affective reactions. These reactions are intentional. The audience has projected on Chevalier a 'certain expressive nature something like the essence of Chevalier delivered to intuition' (Sartre 2004: 28). When the audience watches Franconay imitating Chevalier, these affective reactions are awakened and 'incorporated in the intentional synthesis' (Sartre 2004: 28). The affective meaning of Chevalier appears on Franconay's body. It actualises a synthetic unification of the different signs. The unification animates the rigid, limited and abstract qualities and gives life to the signs. When the audience watches Franconay, they ignore the details of her body. These elements are perceived as indeterminate masses. However, these indeterminate aspects are not eliminated from the imaging synthesis since they are still needed to represent the indeterminate aspects of Chevalier. Sartre emphasises that the synthesis is never entirely achieved. Instead of maintaining a clear distinction between the imagined essence of Chevalier and the perceived body of Franconay, there is interplay between imagination and perception: 'A hybrid state follows, neither fully perception nor fully image.' (Sartre 2004: 29)

Sartre establishes a link of intentionality between perception and imagination in the context of non-psychic images. The perception of Franconay in the case of the image of imitation is the trigger of the imagined object, here Chevalier. Discussing non-psychic images in general, Sartre argues the following.

> These various cases all act to 'make present' an object. This object is not there, and we know that it is not there. We therefore find, in the first place, an intention directed at an absent object. But this intention is not empty: it directs itself through a content, which is not just any content, but which, in itself, must present some analogy with the object in question. (Sartre 2004: 19)

Sartre calls this content an analogon. The analogon gives the absent object as it is given in perception although it does not make real what it represents. As Sartre writes, 'In the imaging attitude, in fact, we find ourselves in the presence of an object that is given as

analogous to that which can appear to us in perception' (Sartre 2004: 117). Sartre stresses the importance of a resemblance between the material content and the object which it represents in order to provoke an affective response from the viewer.

The puppet as an image

I propose to consider the puppet as an analogon because it allows the audience to imagine its subjectness through its present objectness. I suggest that puppets are non-psychic images situated between images that bring immediately to consciousness absent objects such as portraits or sculptures, and images that make use of signs such as those found in impersonator performances. Puppets appear more or less immediately as Others depending on their design and the quality of their manipulation but also in relation to the affective response of the audience.

The visual similarities between puppets and the real subjects they are intended to depict can be slight. For instance, in object theatre or in the case of stylised puppets such as those used by Yves Joly, the audience first has to recognise the few signs of subjectness before they may imagine a character. Conversely, realistic puppets such as those used in *Urashima Taro* provoke a more immediate affective response because of their strong resemblance to human beings. When I look at the puppet of Okoto in *Urashima Taro*, I might see a piece of painted papier-mâché attached to a piece of black cloth controlled by Nakamura but I also encounter an old and grumpy woman who treats Nakamura's character as a submissive servant. The objectness of Okoto manifests itself through its materiality as a thing which includes its appearance, its design, its range of movement and the type of manipulation used in order to animate it. These elements are perceived. The subjectness of the puppet appears when the puppet seems to escape its own materiality as an object and thus seems to act freely.

Okoto is not perceived as an old, grumpy and authoritative character but imagined as such. In reality this old woman is not present on stage. The ontological impossibility raised by Levinas that an object cannot be an Other finds its resolution in the fact that the puppet does not represent an Other but, as Stéphanie Lefort (2007) writes in *Marionnettes: le Corps à l'Ouvrage*, 'the puppet offers a model of representation of the absent Other' (Lefort 2007: 110; my translation). Beyond its apparent presence the puppet always points at an absence. The only present human being onstage is Nakamura who is engaged in the manipulation of an object that resembles another human being. The old woman belongs to the imagination of the spectator.

The transformation of this particular object into the analogon of Okoto is the result of a double triangulation between the manipulactor, the puppet and the audience. The first triangulation is internal because the audience imagines the existence of the puppet as subject by focusing on the puppet itself. This triangulation combines the design of the puppet and the quality of the manipulation. For instance, Okoto appears old because of her wrinkled face, her costume, her thin body and her crippled left hand, in other words, because Okoto has been built to look like an old woman. She also appears old because Nakamura manipulates her in such a way that the puppet behaves like an old person. Her body slightly swings from side to side when she walks as if she has a problem to balance herself, and she shows difficulties in sitting down or standing up. She also punctuates her actions by short grunts which indicate her grumpiness. The second triangulation is external because the audience imagines the subjectness of the puppet by focusing on the interactions between Okoto and Nakamura's character. These interactions give a certain meaning or quality to the movements of the puppet, and thus they also contribute to the existence of the puppet as subject. For instance, the

interactions between Okoto and Nakamura give to the former an authoritative quality because of the violence present in their relationship and the fear she inspires in Nakamura's character.

The sum of these elements is perceived as signs that refer not to the materiality of the puppet but to the character it represents. But these signs are not enough to give to Okoto the full appearance of a subject. The affective response of the audience is necessary in order to realise the signs into the image of Okoto. Yet, as Jonathan Webber, the English translator of *The Imaginary*, points out in his philosophical introduction to Sartre's essay, the affective response to the same image might be different from one viewer to another depending on personal experiences. We can suppose, for instance, that the puppet of Okoto does not provoke the same reaction in different audience members because the elements that contribute to the imaging synthesis of Okoto might have various impacts on different people. Some might imagine Okoto as an old and grumpy woman because her presence and reactions remind them of the emotions that they experienced in the past when they encountered similar persons. Others might not have such an affective response because the objectness of the puppet remains too present.

As discussed above, knowledge provided by images is limited and given immediately while perception offers an infinite number of profiles of one object. For Sartre, imagination involves 'quasi-observation' because, as Webber states, 'there is nothing that can be discovered about the object as it is imaged' (Webber in Sartre 2004: xxi). For instance, when we look at the portrait of the Mona Lisa, the knowledge that we have of this particular person is limited to what is present in Da Vinci's painting. We cannot change our perspective when we look at the portrait, which means that we will never know what the figure's legs or back look like. When applied to manipulacting, the

knowledge of the absent Other represented by the puppet is limited to the elements created and presented by the artistic team of a particular production. In this case, knowledge is bound to the particular image fabricated on stage through the combination of manipulation technique, movements, design and characterisation.

The physical distance between the audience and the stage also contributes to the imaging synthesis because it generates different affective responses. For instance, when I watch *Urashima Taro* from a seat located far away from the stage area, the distance blurs the ontological differences between Nakamura and Okoto. But when I sit near the stage, the proximity exposes the materiality of the puppet as well as Nakamura's labour to manipulate and interact with it. As a result, my affective response to the apparent subjectness of Okoto is stronger in the first case than in the second.

Nonetheless, I suggest that the crudeness of the signs of consciousness of the puppet cannot draw the audience away from perceiving the puppet as an object and the character it interacts with as a puppeteer. Therefore, the puppet maintains a distancing effect because imagination never fully takes over perception. Perception confirms the puppet as a real object while imagination displays the puppet as an apparent subject. This dual mode of existence of the puppet establishes a synthetic reality because the puppet belongs to two different levels of actuality: its objectness is real but its subjectness is not.

In the essay, 'Notes on Puppet Primitives and the Future of an Illusion', Paska writes that 'the object must first "become puppet" before it can start to become a character' (Paska 1989: 38). He argues that the first transformation is 'performative' whereas the second is 'symbolic'. I suggest that Paska actually describes the interplay between perception and imagination. The object has to be imagined as a subject before it can be imagined as a particular Other. The role of body and gaze is precisely to give

the impression of an apparent subjectness to the puppet because body and gaze allow the spectator to imagine the object as having a life of its own. Once this apparent life is established, it is possible to imagine a particular character.

3.2.3. The ambiguous ontology of the puppet

The purpose of this last section is to offer a definition of the puppet through its ontology. The previous discussion has highlighted the dual role of imagination and perception in the fabrication of the apparent subjectness of the puppet. I propose a re-functioning of the ontology developed by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness* (2007) in order to articulate the particular ontology of the puppet and to understand the reasons for its ambiguity. Firstly, I will briefly present Sartre's ontology, and then I will adapt it to the puppet. Finally, I will look at the concept of Nothingness proposed by Sartre in order to identify why the ontology of a human being differs from that of a puppet.

Sartre establishes being-in-itself and being-for-itself as the two modes of existence of the human being. The being-in-itself is what it is. For instance, a rock is only a rock: its identity is given to it. Anything that may happen to it is predetermined by its rocky nature. In-itself is defined by its essence, which is what makes it a being of a particular kind with a particular set of qualities. It is a non-conscious being. Being-for-itself is consciousness which surges up from being-in-itself. Hazel E. Barnes, the English translator of *Being and Nothingness*, describes being-for-itself as a 'nihilation of being-in-itself' (Barnes in Sartre 2007: 650).[8] The upsurge of consciousness in existence appears before it is given any nature. Consciousness has *to exist*; it has *to be* before being defined by its being, before having any sort of place guaranteed in the

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[8] Barnes gives the following definition of '*néantir*': 'A word coined by Sartre. Consciousness exists as consciousness by making a nothingness arise between it and the object of which it is consciousness. Thus nihilation is that by which consciousness exists. To nihilate is to encase with a shell of non-being. The English word "nihilate" was first used by Helmut Kuhn in his *Encounter with Nothingness* (Barnes in Sartre 2007: 653).

being. The existence of consciousness is attested before that of its essence is. Therefore, as Sartre puts it, with being-for-itself 'existence precedes its essence' (Sartre 1996: 26). Being-for-itself allows human beings to escape their own contingency, their facticity, which is being-in-itself, and thus to be free. Facticity is defined as 'the For-itself's necessary connection with the In-itself, hence with the world and its own past' (Barnes in Sartre 2007: 652). The facticity of the being-in-itself is a contingency which affects freedom. For instance, the fact of being born without legs affects one's freedom to walk.

I suggest a re-functioning of these categories in order to apply them to the puppet. The being-in-itself of the puppet is its facticity as a thing. Its materiality is the contingency that defines and thus delineates its appearance, its range of movement and the type of manipulation used in order to animate it. These elements are given to the puppet and thus constitute its facticity. To say that the puppet appears to exist as a being-for-itself is to suggest that the puppet has a consciousness on the theatre stage. It means that the puppet seems to be able to act and to think autonomously as a human being would. This apparent consciousness places the puppet at an apparently similar level to that of the manipulactor, because they seem to share the same existence as being-for-itself.

Nonetheless, the puppet does not tear itself away from the existence of the objects to integrate the mode of existence of the subjects. It remains an object. The puppet offers a contradiction between what it is and what it seems to be. This contradiction opens up the possibility for a dramaturgy based on the relationship between human and non-human beings that is different from the relationship between human beings, between human beings and objects, and between puppets.

Sartre articulates the relation between in-itself and for-itself as an internal negation. The for-itself constitutes itself by negating the in-itself. As Sartre explains, an

internal negation is a relation between two beings such 'that the one which is denied to the other qualifies the other at the heart of its essence – by absence. The negation becomes then a bond of essential beings since at least one of the beings on which it depends is such that it points towards the other' (Sartre 2007: 198). Sartre calls 'Nothingness' what enables the for-itself to be both separated and bound to the in-itself. Meyers describes Nothingness 'as something which "is-there", as a kind of presence, but also as something which, quite simply, is not … The for-itself is separated from the in-itself in the sense that nothingness is "something", yet bound to it in the sense that Nothingness is really that – nothing' (Meyers 2008: 87). Meyers argues that Sartre's Nothingness is a figure of liminality because it enables Sartre to articulate the dualism of the being as neither continuous nor discontinuous. I suggest that the asymmetric relation of in-itself with for-itself also exists for the puppet but at a different level of actuality.

Sartrean ontology provides a theoretical framework to understand how the materiality of the puppet as an object and its apparent presence as a subject relate to each other. There is an asymmetry between the objectness and the subjectness of the puppet because the subjectness of the puppet is bound to its objectness through an opposition. The subjectness of the puppet is possible because it exists as not being an object and yet its existence as a subject is possible because it seems to oppose its essence as an object.

The bond and the separation between objectness and subjectness are similar to the Sartrean Nothingness. The materiality of the puppet is nihilated (*néantir*) in order to create a distance from its essence as a thing. The distance allows the manifestation of an apparent consciousness within the apparent body, and thus, constitutes the existence of the puppet as subject.

However, the opposition between objectness and subjectness is not internal because the nihilation (*néantisation*) of the objectness of the puppet cannot be realised by the puppet itself but only by the joint actions of the puppeteer's manipulation and the spectator's perception and imagination. Spectator and performer nihilate the objectness of the puppet and constitute the apparent consciousness of the puppet. Unlike human beings, the essence of the puppet as an object precedes its existence as a subject because the former is real while the second is not. The puppet actually presents a reversal of the Sartrean ontology that applies to human subjects.

The external negation discussed above implies that the objectness and the subjectness of the puppet exist at different levels of actuality. In *Recherches sur les Structures et la Symbolique de la Marionnette* (1971), Roger-Daniel Bensky points out that the 'real signalled by the puppet is not the objective real, but the real considered through a subjective and symbolic perspective, that is to say, an unreality which has been accorded the value of reality' (Bensky 1971: 27; my translation). The asymmetry existing between the objectness and the subjectness of the puppet results from the fact that the former is real but the other is not.

In order to remain within a Sartrean phenomenological standpoint, I will not use the word 'unreal' to describe the subjectness of the puppet but instead I will follow Webber's translation and use the word 'irreal'. In his notes on the translation of *The Imaginary*, Webber writes the following explanation:

> 'irreal' and 'irreality', … are not English words at all. They are my rendering of the French adjective and noun 'irréel', usually translated as 'unreal' and 'unreality'. But these would be misleading here. Sartre's use of 'irréel' here seems to follow one sense of Husserl's 'irreal'. Since Husserl's term is usually rendered into English as 'irreal', my rendering of Sartre's term preserves this connection. Further, Sartre's 'irréel' does not denote, as 'unreal' seems to, the class of objects that could exist but do not. Rather, an irreal object in this work is an object as imaged by consciousness. This object may be real: the irreal Pierre may be the real

Pierre as imaged. Conversely, unreal objects that are never imaged will never be irreal. (Webber in Sartre 2004: xxviii)[9]

The irreal pertains to a mode of presentation where the absent consciousness of the puppet acquires a kind of presence. The subjectness of the puppet is 'irreal' because the puppet provokes in the viewer similar impressions that one has when one sees a human being, although the objectness of the puppet is not suspended. Okoto is not *unreal* because in that case it would mean that her presence as a subject is nonexistent, which is not true. In the actuality of the performance, the subjectness of Okoto is present. It is neither an illusion nor given by bodily presence but given in an intentional act via some material intermediary, which is made of the combination of the materiality of the puppet, the manipulation technique and the interactions with the performer.

The dual mode of existence of the puppet establishes a synthetic reality. The real is inscribed in the materiality of the puppet, which makes the latter exist as an object while the irreal is inscribed in the apparent freedom of the puppet, which makes the latter exist as a subject. I refer to the materiality of the puppet as the representational body. It is opposed to the body-as-consciousness of the puppet which I refer to as its irreal body. The unity of the puppet is constituted by its belonging to two modes of existence and two types of actuality.

The puppet exists simultaneously as both an actual object and an irreal subject. It cannot be just one or the other. Its objectness is necessary for the constitution of its subjectness and it never disappears from the perception of the spectator. There is an asymmetry of existence between the objectness and subjectness of the puppet because

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[9] Discussing the Husserlian notion of the 'irreal', James Richard Mensch writes in *Introsubjectivity and Transcendental Idealism* the following.

> The individual, temporal being which is not real, but rather irreal, is that of the experiences of consciousness. Irreality has for Husserl a double significance. It signifies that such experiences are not subject to the causal determination which characterizes real being. It also signifies that the experiences of consciousness are outside of the 'actual' or real world which defines its entities through their causal relations. (Mensch 1988: 14)

The connection made by Webber between the usage of the word 'irreal' by Sartre and Husserl seems to be related to the second significance of the Husserlian irreal proposed by Mensch.

its objectness is always present and real while its subjectness is imaginary and only exists through the objectness of the puppet. This asymmetry between the objectness and the subjectness of the puppet is the foundation of the particular alterity of the puppet, and consequently produces an ambiguous relation of self to Other.

3.3.   Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to offer a new perspective in the understanding of the alterity of the puppet framed by aspects of Sartrean phenomenology. Following Levinas's definition of the Other, I have raised the contradiction that exists when one discusses the alterity of the puppet because of its ontological existence as an object. I have suggested considering the theory of the image developed by Sartre in order to define the puppet as an absent Other.

I have operated a re-functioning of Sartre's ontology in order to analyse the ambiguous ontology of the puppet through the interactions and oppositions of its real objectness and irreal subjectness. The outcomes of the different experiments that I have conducted during this research have highlighted the necessity of balancing the presence of the puppet with that of the manipulactor in order for the puppet to appear as an Other. Achieving such a balance is key in manipulacting because the presences of the performer and the puppet are initially imbalanced due to their existence as subjects at different levels of actuality. By examining manipulacting through the relation of self to Other defined by Sartre, I have concluded that the alterity of the puppet is the result of the separateness of the real body of the manipulactor from the irreal body of the puppet, as well as their exchanges of gazes which seem to confirm the outcomes of my experiments.

As Sartre and Levinas contend, a relation of self to Other is a subject-to-subject relation. The particularity of manipulacting is that the puppet exists as an image of a subject and not as a real subject. The puppet is an analogon which points the spectator's consciousness towards an absence. I would like to stress this imaginary existence of the puppet as a subject because too often its existence is described as an illusion of life. If the puppet were to provoke such an illusion, its perception by spectators would involve a false belief as to its nature. Yet, spectators are aware that they do not watch an object which moves according to its own will for some mysterious reasons. The existence of the puppet as a subject is similar to some degree to the experience that I have when I look at a photograph of a friend. Although I can see my friend in the photograph, it does not make her present. I remain aware that I am looking at a photograph which points my consciousness towards an absence. Because the puppet can only exist as an image of a subject, the role of the manipulactor is to create the appropriate conditions for the manifestation of such an image on stage.

In the article 'Bad Faith and the Actor' (2009), Anthony Fisher examines acting from a Sartrean perspective. He develops the concept of 'auto-mimetology', which he defines as 'an analysis of the phenomenon of mimesis in terms of the being for whom mimesis is a fundamental possibility: "man" ' (Fisher 2009: 2). He suggests that mimesis is what Sartre names the Imaginary. Applied to manipulacting, mimesis implies that the imaginary presence of the puppet as an Other pertains to the imitation of the essential qualities that constitute a being as an Other. The mimesis is realised through the separateness between the real body of the performer and the apparent body of the puppet, their exchanges of gazes, the actions and reactions taking place between the manipulactor and the puppet, and sometimes speech. Nonetheless it is possible to argue that there are several ways for a puppet to become the analogon of an absent

Other. For instance, Fisher discusses the ontology of the actor from a form of acting mainly defined by Stanislavski. It seems relevant to study how the puppet can represent an absent Other by looking at distinct forms of theatre, such as those defined by Lehmann as dramatic and postdramatic. In order to explore a wider hinterland, I will look at the work of other practitioners involved in manipulacting. The next chapter is a detailed analysis of *Cuniculus* by Stuffed Puppet Theatre and *Twin Houses* by Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté, whose works belong respectively to dramatic and postdramatic theatre.

CHAPTER IV

CASE STUDIES

TWO REPRESENTATIONS OF THE OTHER

In the previous chapter, I have suggested that the ambiguous ontology of the puppet pertains to its belonging to two modes of existences, object and subject, and two modes of actuality, real and irreal. I have proposed a definition of the ontology of the puppet based on a reversal of Sartrean ontology that applies to humans. For these reasons, the puppet is not an Other but an image of an absent Other. It remains an object that is constructed, set in action and dramaturgically framed by a human being in order to appear as an irreal subject to an audience. Since several representations of the alterity of a puppet are possible, I suggest a study of these representations through two forms of theatre identified by Lehmann (2009) as dramatic and postdramatic. According to Lehmann, dramatic theatre is focused on the primacy of the text whereas postdramatic theatre does not establish a hierarchy between the text and the other elements that constitute a performance. As Lehmann writes,

> [w]holeness, illusion and world representation are inherent in the model 'drama'; conversely, through its very form, dramatic theatre proclaims wholeness as a *model* of the real. Dramatic theatre ends when these elements are no longer the regulating principle but merely one possible variant of theatrical art. (Lehmann 2009: 22)

The differences proposed by Lehmann between the concepts of dramatic and postdramatic theatre bring a fruitful perspective to distinguish two models of

representation of the puppet as an Other. These models are examined through two case studies: *Cuniculus* and *Twin Houses*. *Cuniculus* was produced in 2008 by the Dutch company Stuffed Puppet Theatre. The piece was conceived and performed by Neville Tranter. *Twin Houses* was produced by the Belgian company Mossoux-Bonté in 1994 and is still part of their repertoire. *Twin Houses* was conceived and performed by Nicole Mossoux, and directed by Patrick Bonté. Although both performances are solo shows and use large-sized puppets, I suggest that *Cuniculus* and *Twin Houses* respectively are instances of dramatic and postdramatic theatre. Although the alterity of their puppets pertain to their body-as-consciousness, their apparent gaze, and in Tranter's case, their speech, the fabrication of these alterities is materialised differently in terms of performance, dramaturgy and design in these two pieces. In the next sections, I analyse separately the prerequisite criteria of the relation of self to Other for each piece, and then examine how this relation is performed.

4.1.   *Cuniculus* by Stuffed Puppet: Talking heads

In the first part of this section, I discuss the prerequisite criteria implicitly set by Tranter by examining his concept of characterisation, the design of his puppets and the manipulation technique used. In the second part, I analyse how these criteria inform the relation of self to Other performed in *Cuniculus*. My analysis is based on watching the piece in Berlin in October 2009, an interview with Tranter conducted on the day following the performance, and a video of the show. Before engaging in the analysis, it is necessary to give a brief account of Tranter's biography in order to understand how his artistic background has informed his current practice.

Neville Tranter was born in 1955 in Australia. While studying at Queensland

University to become a teacher, he took evening drama classes with Robert Gist, an American actor who came from Lee Strasberg's school. After graduating, he spent two years as a trainee puppeteer for Billbar Puppet Theatre. He learned how to build and manipulate all sorts of puppets as well as occasionally doing some voiceover work for the company's shows. At the end of his apprenticeship, he moved to Melbourne where he set up his own company, Stuffed Puppet. In 1978, he had the opportunity to perform at the Festival of Fools in Amsterdam. At that time, this event was the biggest alternative street theatre and fringe theatre festival in the world. Tranter never went back to Australia, and has been living in The Netherlands for more than thirty years. After moving to Holland, his work focused on the creation of solo shows in which he appeared as one of the characters. He decided to use Muppet-style puppets because he felt that 'they were the most direct puppets to be in the middle of an audience' (Tranter: 2009).[1] His first solo show, *Studies of Fantasy* (1982), was presented with great success at the World Festival of Puppet Theatres in Charleville-Mézières. The show attracted very good reviews from French national newspapers. His second, *The Seven Deadly Sins* (1984), a work inspired by the myth of Faust, established him on the circuit of international theatre festivals. Since then, he has produced more than a dozen shows.

Cuniculus (2008) is a piece about survivors living in a world ravaged by violence and chaos. It tells the story of a small group of starving rabbits: Lupus, Uncle Claudius and Sissy. They live confined to their warren to remain safe from a war happening above them. Every day they wait for Mutti, an old and mute female rabbit, to bring them food as she is the only one who dares to go outside the warren. Amongst these rabbits lives a human character performed by Tranter. This character does not have a name. He wears a pair of red plastic rabbit ears and thinks he is a rabbit. They all

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[1] Interview with Neville Tranter on October, 22nd 2009 in Berlin. All other quotes are from this interview unless otherwise indicated.

worship a giant skeleton rabbit that they address by the name of Vatti. Every morning they pay their respects by greeting him with a Nazi salute and the utterance: 'Vatti'.

One day, Mutti brings into the nest a baby rabbit. She asks Tranter's character to look after him. As soon as Lupus and Sissy discover the presence of the baby rabbit, they order Tranter's character to kill it because they do not want another mouth to feed. Tranter pretends to follow their order but instead hides the baby rabbit. Later, Randy, a rough rabbit in quest of food and sex, visits the nest. He seduces Tranter's character, letting him understand that he is a human being and not a rabbit. After the death of Mutti due to old age, Tranter's character accepts his humanity. Sissy confronts him and tells him how she and Lupus have found the baby rabbit, smashed his head and eaten him. He is eventually expelled from the rabbit nest by Uncle Claudius and has to go and live above ground as a free man. [2]

4.1.1. Prerequisite criteria of the relation of self to Other

Tranter is part of a Stanislavskian tradition taught to him by Gist during his training in Method acting. He acknowledges that the Method acting training he undertook in his youth has been very influential in his work with puppets. The characters in *Cuniculus*, whether performed by him or embodied by the puppets, have clear intentions in each scene and have super-objectives for the whole play. Actions in *Cuniculus* are developed through a linear time frame that creates a clear storyline constructed by the dialogue between the protagonists. Text is central in Tranter's work. In an interview published on the website of BIAM 2007 (Biennale Internationale des Arts de la Marionnette), he says that 'my creations are truly theatre pieces, with a script and characters' (Tranter 2007). This remark implies his conception of theatre is close to what Lehmann calls 'dramatic

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[2] A video of *Cuniculus* is located in Appendix C, DVD 2.

theatre' as 'dramatic theatre is subordinated to the primacy of the text' (Lehmann 2009: 21). Tranter creates a homogenised world that symbolises human society. During our conversation, Tranter defined the characters in *Cuniculus* as archetypes. They represent different examples of human behaviour through psychological characteristics. Tranter never shatters the universe he has created. He maintains the dramaturgical subjectness of the different protagonists present in this piece. The construction of the puppet as a figure of the Other pertains to characterisation, puppet design and manipulation. Each element contributes to the alterity of the puppet.

The characters

During our interview, Tranter told me that he wanted to play the central role of *Cuniculus* but did not want to be a hero. He defines his own character in the piece as an anti-hero because things happen to him whether he wants them to or not. His character serves the other members of the community. As mentioned above, Tranter's character does not have a name at the outset of the play; he also believes that he is a rabbit. His physicality on stage imitates the movements of a shy and clumsy animal. Although it is obvious that his plastic ears do not make him look like a rabbit, it seems that the rabbits believe him to be one of them. Or, at least, they pretend to believe such a thing. His presence as an obedient servant appears to be very convenient for them. He serves them food, cleans the nest, submits to their tantrums and insults, listens to them repeating the same old stories and compliments them. He seems to be a good person although a bit simple. The presence of Tranter as a servant is common to most of his shows except for one. Undermining his social position in the dramaturgy, allows him to decrease his presence in order to stress that of the puppet. The purpose is to create a balanced co-presence.

There are seven rabbits in total, and Tranter sometimes manipulates two puppets at the same time. The puppets can be divided into two groups. The first group is formed by Mutti, Vatti and the baby rabbit. Mutti represents motherhood. She takes care of the community. She is mute and only communicates directly to Tranter's character. Vatti is the image of the father. He is a giant skeleton overshadowing the whole stage with his still and permanent presence. He is only animated twice. First, when Sissy has a nightmare and the second time after Mutti's death. Although Vatti is supposed to be a rabbit he actually looks like a wolf. His presence discloses a sinister element. However, he is presented as a hero for having held off the invasion of their territory for eight seconds by standing in front of the enemy tanks. The baby rabbit represents innocence. It talks and is looked after by Tranter's character, who plays the role of a big brother. Mutti and the baby rabbit only interact with Tranter and are less present on stage than the other puppets. They represent a symbolic family to Tranter's character.

The second group of puppets is formed by Lupus, Claudius, Sissy and Randy. They all speak. They represent different aspects of human survivors in a war context. Lupus is wicked and manipulative and survives by abusing others' weaknesses. Sissy is a cruel and selfish female rabbit who gets what she needs by abusing or seducing others. She is very close to Lupus. Uncle Rufus feigns senility in order to appear harmless, although he understands and knows more than he pretends to. Finally, Randy is a more rustic character. He has a limited range of vocabulary and an exceptional sexual potency which he trades for food but, nonetheless, he has a good heart.

Tranter's puppets are made in the image of the dramatic actor. They express emotions through text, supported by a general body expression. Tranter materialises this Other through design and the manipulation technique he uses. Both elements are closely

related: a particular design affects the manipulation technique used and a particular manipulation technique requires a specific design.

Design

Tranter's puppets are characterised by a strong physical integrity. In other words, they keep the same size and shape during the entire piece and they have limited points of connection with Tranter's body. The design of each puppet has two functions. Firstly, it supports the character and quality of the puppets. This function of the design contributes to the apparition of puppet as the analogon of a specific character. For example, the baby rabbit is a sweet little puppet because of its big eyes, its smiling face and its plump body (figure 4.1), whereas her dropping whiskers and ears, her grey eyebrows, her thin body and her sad eyes make Mutti appear old and tired (figure 4.2).

Figure 4.1 Tranter and the baby rabbit
Video capture © Stuffed Puppet Theatre (2008)

Figure 4.2 Tranter and Mutti
Video capture © Stuffed Puppet Theatre (2008)

Secondly, the design dictates how the puppet can be manipulated. It encompasses the range of movements that the puppet can make and the spatial relation between the puppet and Tranter's body. These limitations, inherent to the specific design of the puppet, are there facticity as being-in-itself. All the puppets share the same design

principles apart from the baby rabbit and Vatti. I will examine the specific design of these two puppets before describing the design of the others.

Vatti appears on stage more as an effigy than a puppet and represents a symbolic figure rather than an actual character. As previously mentioned, he has a very sinister aura. Vatti is a figure two and a half meters high mounted on wheels, which can be moved up and down the stage. His arms are manipulated from behind. The other parts of the puppet do not move. Because of his size and shape he hardly looks like a rabbit. The baby rabbit is a small version of the other rabbits. It is about thirty centimetres long, and its head and mouth can be moved. However, unlike the other puppets, its trunk is hollow. It is filled by Tranter's forearm, which goes through the whole body of the puppet from the tail to the mouth. The design of this particular puppet requires a greater point of connection between the representational body of the puppet and Tranter's body than for the other puppets in *Cuniculus*. Here, Tranter's forearm is the point of connection whereas in the case of the other puppets the point of connection is limited to Tranter's hand. As a result, this puppet cannot stay in an active body position when it is not animated. Tranter makes the character speak through the articulated mouth of the puppet. The same device is also used for the other puppets.

The five other puppets are about eighty centimetres high. Unlike the baby puppet, they can sit upright on their own without the intervention of Tranter to stabilise them because the trunk and the legs form one solid element. There are no joints for the torso, the legs or the feet. The puppet is stabilised by large feet and the rear legs. This feature gives the puppet a low centre of gravity. It frees Tranter's hand that is not in charge of moving the head of the puppet to manipulate one of its arms or another puppet. All the limbs of the puppet' body seem petrified in a dynamic tension. They do not hang freely even when not animated. The only movable parts of the puppet are the

head and occasionally the arms. The skin of the puppets is made out of fake fur stuffed with cotton balls. This material gives some flexibility to the upper part of the torso and enables the shoulders to follow the movement of the head. The head is the part of the puppets which contains the most movable parts. It can make similar movements to a human head. The puppets' mouths are articulated and twice as large as Tranter's. They also have big long ears that shake whenever they speak or move their head. The result is an amplification of the movements of the head. Their faces are sculpted out of rigid foam which gives each puppet only one possible facial expression throughout the whole piece. The puppets' eyes are the size of a golf ball and are protuberant. A glittering material that reflects light is used to indicate the pupil in order to reinforce its resemblance to a real eye. These elements support the impression of a visual agency which is read as a cognitive activity on the part of the puppet. Manipulation is by direct contact. Tranter places one of his hands inside the head of the puppet through the back in order to move the head as well as the mouth. His other hand can directly grip the wrist of the puppet to move the rabbit's arm.

These puppets can stand on their own, speak and look at the world around them but are not designed to move into space. When Tranter needs to bring a puppet to a different point of the stage, he simply lifts it in the air and places it in its new location. The design contains the ontological duality of the puppet. On one hand, it enhances the appearance of the puppet as an irreal subject because the design allows for the impression that it can speak, look and have cognitive activities through the movements of the mouth, the head and the ears. On the other, the petrified limbs and torso reinforce the objectness of the puppet by giving it a constant rigidity. The use of colour in *Cuniculus* reinforces this duality. The puppets' bodies range from light to dark grey or brown. The only body part whose colour contrasts with the rest is the head. For

instance, Sissy has a greenish face with thick red eyebrows and pinkish ears which contrast with her dark brown fur. This artificiality of colour is combined with anatomical realism. Even Tranter's character follows this pattern, as his plastic rabbit ears are painted red whereas he is dressed in grey. The design of these puppets responds to the necessity of separateness between their apparent bodies and the real body of Tranter in order to support the fabrication of the puppets as embodied consciousnesses. The design also integrates the possibility for the puppets to ostensibly see and talk. These elements of design constitute the first stage of the fabrication of the alterity of the puppets, the second being the manipulation technique used by Tranter.

Manipulation

As I have indicated above, the design dictates the range of movements that the puppets can make. Nonetheless, it also reflects the image of the puppets as apparent Others according to Tranter's vision, in which their most important features are their ostensible ability to speak and to look. Hence, Tranter has built them in order to emphasise the direction of their gaze and the movements of their mouth and head. I suggest that his puppets can be described as 'talking heads'.[3]

Visible manipulation always carries a contradiction by bringing the puppet to life but revealing to the audience how it is done. A short discussion between Tranter's character and Sissy displays how Tranter deals with this issue. Before talking, Sissy looks at Tranter, and then looks towards the audience to deliver her line in a very patronising tone: 'You should also change your name. Good for you' (figure 4.3). Her head and mouth movements are very large. Tranter's head is motionless and looking sideways at Sissy, which makes his face less visible than that of the puppet from the

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[3] It is interesting to point out that Tranter has made puppets for several operas which have only a head and a pair of hands. Their design emphasises the primacy of the head over the rest of their representational body.

audience's point of view. The movements of his mouth are less important than those of Sissy's mouth. When Sissy has delivered her lines, she freezes. It is now the turn of Tranter to become animated. He laughs and then answers her, 'You're crazy! Crazy!', making fun of her while moving his head and exposing more of his face to the public, as shown in figure 4.4.

Figure 4.3 Sissy talking to Tranter video capture © Stuffed Puppet Theatre (2008)

Figure 4.4 Tranter laughing at Sissy Video capture © Stuffed Puppet Theatre (2008)

Figure 4.5 Sissy menacing Tranter Video capture © Stuffed Puppet Theatre (2008)

As soon as he has finished delivering his line, Sissy turns abruptly towards him and stares him in the eyes. Tranter's immediate reaction is to start at Sissy's movement. He stops smiling and fear can be read on his face as if he realises that he should not have talked to Sissy in such a way (figure 4.5). He gives an apology. In that situation, Sissy appears as a threatening character.

This particular example draws out two interesting points. The first is to note that Tranter's manipulation is focused only on moving the head and the left arm of Sissy. The rest of the body remains still. The lighting design accentuates this focus by only revealing the upper part of the puppet, leaving the rest of its body in darkness. At no moment in this scene, and more generally throughout the whole piece, does Tranter animate the legs or the torso of a puppet. This contrast between upper and lower parts of the body is found in Tranter's body itself. Only his head and arms actively play a role in the act of manipulation. The rest of his body is used as a support. Tranter applies his own acting approach towards building characters to the design and the manipulation of

his puppets. I suggest that his approach to characterisation which entails a general physical attitude for each character, the right speech delivery and intention, and the display of emotions mainly through the face and the gaze is shaped by his initial training in Method acting. The bodies of Tranter's puppets are frozen into a very specific physicality in order to participate to the fabrication of the image of a particular character through the internal triangulation discussed in Chapter III. This dynamic stillness creates the impression of a permanent muscular tension that signifies life (the back is straight up, and their legs and arms are bent in order not to hang beside the body) and also underwrites some of their qualities as characters (the fact that Claudius has one ear up and the other down accentuates the senility of his character; Randy's permanent erect penis suggests his obsession with sex).

The second point concerns the contradictory consequences of Tranter's presence upon the alterity of the puppet. His presence both establishes and denies the quality of Other to the puppet. On one hand, it is an enduring reminder to the audience of the objectness of the puppets because Tranter simply looks more alive than they do. Moreover, Tranter's visible labour to manipulate the puppets and produce their voices amplifies their objectness. On the other hand, the visible presence and labour of Tranter establish the puppet as an Other. In the above example Sissy appears as a threatening character because of Tranter's reaction of fear. Tranter creates an incomplete logical chain of events in which missing parts are filled by the audience's imagination. If we pay closer attention to Sissy, it appears that she does not look at Tranter angrily when she abruptly turns her head to confront him. Her face always looks the same because it is a mask. Rather, immediately after her action, Tranter's face changes and goes from laughing to fear. Sissy's anger cannot be perceived on her face. It is imagined by the audience because of Tranter's reaction. His reaction belongs to the external

triangulation taking place between the audience, the manipulactor and the puppet. It completes the internal triangulation in order to achieve the fabrication of the puppet as an analogon of a specific absent Other. Tranter believes that revealing how the voice is produced frees the audience from wondering about how it is done, unlike ventriloquism. By accepting the convention, audience members become more eager to understand the puppets as subjects. By his presence and reaction, Tranter enhances Sissy's alterity. Nonetheless, it is worth pointing out that although Tranter does not hide the manipulation process, he is very careful to direct the attention of the audience away from it.

The above discussion discloses that Tranter's training in Method acting has led him to create performance that belongs to dramatic theatre, which in turn has shaped the representation of the Other that he constructs through his puppets. Tranter's achievement pertains to his ability to materialise this particular image of the Other through careful and thoughtful choices in terms of design and manipulation techniques.

4.1.2. Performing the relation of self to Other in *Cuniculus*

In order to understand the embodiment of the puppet in Tranter's work, I have analysed Tranter's prerequisite criteria of the relation of self to Other through his concept of characterisation, the design of the puppets and the manipulation technique used. The discussion now looks at Tranter's performance of this relation through the perspective of the dramaturgy, the body and the gaze.

Dramaturgy

The dramaturgy of *Cuniculus*, unlike *Malediction* (2008) by Duda Paiva for instance, is not intended to impose ruptures in the telling of the story in order to remind the

audience that they are actually watching a man playing on his own with inanimate dolls. Tranter never breaks the universe that he creates for his puppets and his character. However, what the dramaturgy does is to enable Tranter to embody the puppets as apparent Others through different modes of performance. He is usually one of the protagonists and sometimes only a manipulator. Tranter swiftly passes from one mode to another without breaking the continuity of the performance. Most of the time, the puppets appear as subjects because Tranter manipulates them in order to give the impression that they are alive. Nonetheless, Tranter sometimes stands a few metres away from one puppet and builds a dramaturgical situation in which the puppet is treated as an Other although it appears on stage as an inanimate object. A particular extract of *Cuniculus* contains these different modes of embodiment.

It is morning time. Tranter's character wakes up Uncle Claudius and Sissy in order for them to get ready to eat, as Mutti will soon come back with food for everyone. He brings them to the dining table, where plates are already set. Figure 4.6 presents the setting for what follows.

Figure 4.6 (From left to right) Vatti, Tranter, Sissy, Claudius
Video capture © Stuffed Puppet Theatre (2008)

Each puppet stands at one end of the table. Tranter manipulates only Sissy. He is

positioned on one side of her, leaving a gap between her and Claudius. Dramaturgically speaking, Tranter's character is not involved in most of the scene but appears as a discreet witness. Sissy attempts to get the attention of Claudius. Dialogue and stage directions are as follows.

SISSY   *(She faces the audience. She turns her head and looks at Claudius. Then she turns her head back again towards the audience.)* Hi Uncle Claudius!
(She pauses. She looks at Claudius who does not move. She turns back towards the audience.) Wanna have the day of your life?
(She pauses again. There is no reaction from Claudius. Sissy looks again at Claudius, and then moves her head back to its initial position in order to face the audience.) Would you like a blow job later?
(Another pause. She looks back at Claudius but he has still not reacted. She eventually turns her face towards the audience and speaks angrily) You old fruit cake!

TRANTER *(Suddenly looking at her.)* Sissy! Stop it! *(Sissy looks at him, and then turns her head away.)*
(He turns his head to stage right.) Lupus! Lupus!

SISSY   *(She looks in the same direction of Tranter.)* Lupus! Lupus! *(Tranter leaves Sissy motionless on the table to go and get Lupus.)*

In this comical scene, the fact that Claudius is not at all animated when he is addressed by Sissy does not give the audience the impression that Sissy is talking to an inanimate object (although this is what happens). This scene is built on information and events that happened previously, which give a logical sense to Claudius' lack of reaction. Prior to this scene it has been established that Claudius is half-deaf and senile. Hence, it appears plausible that Sissy could say something obscene to Claudius without him reacting to it, because of his physical and mental condition. In other words, the audience understands that Claudius is alive in this scene although Tranter does not touch him. Moreover, it suggests that an audience can still consider an inanimate puppet as an Other, once it has been established as such in the past and within the right dramaturgical framework. Tranter plays with the ontological dualism of the puppet by deliberately deciding not to manipulate Claudius and still having the audience not to

consider him as an object. The puppet retains enough characteristics to be considered as an analogon of Claudius. This is rendered possible because of the particular design of this puppet. Tranter would not be able to create a similar dramaturgical setting with the baby rabbit because without Tranter's forearm it would collapse on itself and look dead. Tranter has used this dramaturgical device in previous pieces such as *Salomé* (1996). During our interview, he acknowledged that he was fully aware of this mechanism.

Body

The body position of Tranter in relation to his puppets signals whether or not a relation of self to Other has been established between the two beings. As mentioned above, Tranter does not always have an active presence as a character in *Cuniculus*. The co-presence between him and the puppet is indirect. In these moments, he positions himself behind the puppet in order to have as little as possible visible presence from the audience's point of view. The only being to have an active dramaturgical presence is the puppet. Tranter stands behind the puppet in a very still position whereas the body of the puppet moves. The body of Tranter appears as only one of the elements that surround the puppet. Moreover, Tranter's position means that the puppet cannot ostensibly see him. In that case, Tranter and the puppet do not seem to belong to the same actuality and, thus, there is an indirect relation of self to the Other.

On most occasions, Tranter is located next to the puppet. This body position gives him an equal presence with the puppet. In that setting, he becomes part of the surroundings of the puppet because not only is he more visible from the audience's point of view, but also the puppet can potentially 'see' him. A direct relation of self to Other is thus possible. Henceforth, the spatial relation between the two bodies indicates in which level of actuality Tranter is more likely to be located. I have used the

expression 'more likely' because Tranter always stands in between two different actualities even though he can appear to belong more to one than the other according to the dramaturgical situation. I suggest that it is not possible to get rid of a certain ontological ambiguity.

As Sartre suggests, the separation of the bodies represents the separation of consciousnesses because consciousness is always embodied. When applied to puppetry, this means that a clear separation between the body of the puppeteer and the 'body' of the puppet represents one of the elements that constitutes the puppet as an Other of the manipulactor. In the case of Tranter's puppets in *Cuniculus*, I have highlighted that they are designed to have a strong physical integrity. Their bodies are not completed by any body parts of Tranter. However, Tranter's hands contain an ontological ambiguity because, as a point of connection between him and the puppet, they simultaneously belong to Tranter and to the puppet. The hand in charge of moving the head of the puppet is not visible by the audience. During our interview Tranter admitted that his hand becomes the character. It has its own rhythm and range of movements which are different from the rest of Tranter's body. The hand manipulating the arm of the puppet has a more ambiguous position because it can be seen by the audience. Tranter's hands contain an ontological duality by being both self and Other. If Tranter was to be seen performing with an invisible puppet, it would look as if he were interacting with his own hands, as if they were not part of his body schema. They are the locus where the puppet's subjectness and objectness are mediated. Tranter's mouth contains an ontological duality similar to his visible hand. It is the actual source of the voices of the different puppets but it also appears to only be the source of the voice of Tranter's character because the puppets ostensibly produce their own voices.

Although Tranter creates the condition for the co-existence of different levels of

actuality on stage, he does not cross them from a dramaturgical perspective. The dramaturgy does not reveal that the puppets are ultimately manipulated by Tranter. The puppets do not realise that Tranter is actually moving them, nor does Tranter treat them as pure objects.

Gaze and voice

Gaze is essential in Tranter's work for setting up the relation of self to Other between him and his puppets. Tranter's character becomes part of the actuality of the puppet from the moment he enters their fictional world. During our interview, Tranter suggested a reason why the character of the puppet is 'alive' on stage.

> You have the sense, when you watch him, that he is very aware of his surroundings. He sees and reacts to the surroundings and I am a part of the surroundings. So when he sees me, he reacts to me. The audience has to see him reacting to me, otherwise there is nothing. He is nothing. (Tranter 2009)

In order for the puppet to see him, Tranter has to be physically positioned next to the puppet he manipulates and not behind it, because the puppet's visual agency structures what it can or cannot ostensibly see and therefore contributes to the fabrication of its apparent gaze. One scene between Mutti and Tranter's character reveals how the gaze constructs the relation of self to Other. I will first describe what the audience sees and then the actions performed by Tranter.

Mutti sits on Tranter's lap. They rub their noses one against the other as a sign of affection (figure 4.7). Then Mutti puts her head against Tranter's chest. Tranter says: 'Lupus says my ears will fall off' (figure 4.8). Mutti looks him in the eyes (figure 4.9), and then looks at his ears (figure 4.10), finally turning her head away from him and laughing (figure 4.11). Tranter joins her and laughs too (figure 4.12).

Figure 3.7 Tranter and Mutti rubbing noses
Video capture © Stuffed Puppet Theatre (2008)

Figure 3.8 Tranter talking to Mutti
Video capture © Stuffed Puppet Theatre (2008)

Figure 3.9 Mutti looking at Tranter's eyes
Video capture © Stuffed Puppet Theatre (2008)

Figure 4.10 Mutti looking at Tranter's ears
Video capture © Stuffed Puppet Theatre (2008)

Figure 4.11 Mutti laughing at Tranter
Video capture © Stuffed Puppet Theatre (2008)

Figure 4.12 Tranter laughing at himself
Video capture © Stuffed Puppet Theatre (2008)

Mutti's body faces the audience whereas Tranter is slightly angled. His left hand controls the puppet's head and his right hand the puppet's right arm. Tranter performs the following actions in this scene. He turns the head of Mutti towards his face in order for its eyes to be positioned in front of his eyes as if they are staring at each other. He moves its face towards his face so the puppet nose touches his nose. He applies short lateral movements on the puppet's head so its nose rubs his nose. He does not move his own head. He moves Mutti's head back, keeping the eye contact, he turns its head away from him in the direction of the audience and he places it against his chest. Tranter turns his head slightly towards the audience and looks into the distance. His gaze is not focused. He delivers his line. When he has finished, he turns Mutti's head back to its previous position. When its head has reached the position, Tranter immediately turns his

head towards its face. There is a brief eye contact. Then Tranter tilts its head up, the eyes pointing towards his plastic ears. It stays there for less than one second. Tranter moves its head down again, with a short punctuation when its eyes are at the same level as his eyes in order to mark another eye contact. Tranter moves the puppet's head downwards until it faces the audience. Then Tranter jiggles the puppet's head up and down in synchronisation with the sound of its laughter that he also produces. At the same time he has moved the arm of the puppet in order for its hand to be in front of its mouth. Tranter has also moved his head down, which enables him to hide his eyes and his mouth from the audience. As Tranter stops shaking Mutti's head he ceases its laughter. Tranter tilts his head up, facing the audience and starts to laugh as his own character.

This twenty-five-second scene is technically complex. Except for the heads and the right arms of Tranter and the puppet, the rest of their bodies remains still. The head moves because it supports the gaze. The faculty of looking supposes a physical activity of the body. This scene contains five different usages of the gaze:

- mutual acknowledgement, when Mutti and Tranter look at each other;

- staring at a specific point, when Mutti looks at Tranter's ears;

- looking into space without focus, when Tranter talks about something that worries him;

- looking away to break eye contact when Mutti starts to laugh;

- eye contact with the audience, when Tranter's character laughs at himself.

These usages of the gaze form a dramaturgical thread which constructs the relationship between Tranter's character and Mutti. Only one sentence is pronounced in this scene. Most of its meaning is conveyed through the exchanges of gaze between the two characters. This scene shows a moment where Tranter appears to be very concerned

about Lupus' remark. By looking into the distance, he seems to be fully immersed in his feeling of anxiety. At that moment, Tranter's character is pure non-thetic consciousness who does not occupy any position in the object-world perceived. The way that Mutti looks at him is very important. She makes a sudden eye contact with him, then looks at his ears, then makes another eye contact and finally laughs at him. By her gaze, Mutti objectivises Tranter's character. The consequence is that Tranter becomes conscious of himself and of the nonsense of his anxiety. The fact that he laughs at himself suggests that he has discovered an aspect of his being; he has been able to consider himself as an object of his own consciousness because of the gaze of Mutti.

Dialogue plays an important role in the construction of a relation of self to Other between Tranter's character and the puppets he talks to. If Tranter does not manage to give the audience the impression that the voice comes out of the puppets, the latter would only appear as extensions of Tranter and not as Others of him. This aspect is important even though the audience is fully aware that Tranter produces all the voices. Tranter is able to synchronise the words that he utters with the movements of his hand in charge of manipulating the mouth of the puppet. However, unlike puppets used in television programmes such as Spitting Image where the puppeteers are hidden, or unlike ventriloquists who are able to conceal the source of the puppet's voice by not moving their lips, Tranter's mouth movements are visible. A careful look at the strategy used by Tranter to achieve the plausibility of a dialogue between him and a puppet reveals that the direction of the gaze as well as the movements of the head structure these dialogues. In the scene with Sissy threatening Tranter, it appears that the one who speaks is the one who moves. The character engaged in a speech displays his mouth and eyes to the audience. When Tranter makes the voice of one of the puppets, he positions his head in such a way that it is less visible from the audience's point of view. His head

is either tilted sideways and looking down or placed behind the puppet's body. He keeps the opening of his mouth to a minimum and he occasionally uses the hand of the puppet to mask his own mouth. Moreover, the direction of the gaze also indicates to the audience which character is talking. When Tranter's character talks he always looks at the face of the puppet, except when the puppet does not look at him. When a puppet talks, just before delivering the lines it looks at Tranter's face for a very short moment but then delivers the line towards the audience. This coordination of the directions of the gaze between Tranter and his puppets contributes significantly to the construction of a relation of self to Other.

The gaze transforms a relation of oneself to oneself into an apparent relation of self to Other. If we watch *Cuniculus* only focusing on Tranter's performance, it appears that he enacts all the characters of the piece. The audience can read the supposed emotions of the puppets on his face. Tranter cannot hide them because he is fully visible on stage but what he does consists of framing the action in such a way that he guides the gaze of the audience towards the puppet and not towards his face. If, for instance, a puppet wants to look at a particular object, Tranter directs his gaze to the side of the puppet's head, and he directs the gaze of the puppet towards the particular object it wants to look at. In other words, the gaze of Tranter is mediated by the gaze of the puppet. Most of the time, Tranter is positioned behind the puppet, a little way to the side. The puppets either stand on a table or they are held by Tranter but in both cases they are below him. Tranter directs his gaze towards the side of the puppet's face. It is as if his gaze follows a high-angle movement from his eyes to the puppet's head and then 'exits' the puppet through its eyes. By mediating his gaze through the puppet, Tranter directs the gaze of the audience towards the face of the puppet and not to his face. The coordination of his gaze in relation to the irreal gaze of the puppet enables

Tranter to build a relation of self to Other, and a triangular relation with the audience through the puppet. Thereby, the puppet is the object that attracts the gaze of the audience through the careful mediation of Tranter.

The construction of the puppet by Tranter as a figure of the Other is framed by the settings of dramatic theatre. The construction of the puppet as an irreal Other of himself is mainly established through gaze and speech, the body playing more of a supportive role although it clearly indicates a separateness between Tranter and the puppet. In the next section I examine *Twin Houses* (1994) by Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté, whose work, I suggest, is an instance of postdramatic theatre. The outcome is a construction of the alterity of the puppet that is radically different from that created by Tranter although also based on the body-as-consciousness and the gaze of the puppet.

4.2.   *Twin Houses* by Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté: Thinking bodies

Created and performed by Nicole Mossoux with her long-term collaborator Patrick Bonté, *Twin Houses* (1994) offers a model of representation of the alterity of the puppet shaped by visuals, soundscapes, materiality and movements. Produced by a company with a reputation for creating performances that aim at the unconsciousness of the spectator, *Twin Houses* presents a series of isolated situations between one woman and five life-sized puppets. The form of theatre produced by the company can be described as postdramatic because of its emphasis on scenography, sound and bodies, and the absence of text and logical narratives.

In the first part of this section I discuss the implicit prerequisite criteria that inform the construction of the puppet as a figure of the Other by examining Mossoux's concept of characterisation, the design of the puppets and the manipulation techniques

used. In the second part, I analyse how these criteria inform the relation of self to Other as performed by Mossoux in *Twin Houses*. Before starting this investigation, it is necessary to understand how Mossoux's and Bonté's backgrounds have shaped the elaboration of *Twin Houses*. My analysis is based on seeing the show at London International Mime Festival in January 2006 and at Manipulate in Edinburgh in February 2009; on a first interview with Nicole Mossoux that I conducted on the day of her performance in Scotland, and a second conducted over the phone in October 2009; on other published materials; and on video extracts of the piece.

Mossoux has been dancing since she was a child. She studied ballet from the age of six, and then contemporary dance at Maurice Béjart's Mudra School in Brussels. Mudra was a higher education centre of training and research in performance. The programme of study encompassed dance, singing, music theory and theatre. An important influence there was Fernand Shirren, who taught her eurhythmics.[4] However, she reports that she became conscious that she was not suited to be an interpreter of other people's works. She felt the need to search for her own artistic language, looking for inspiration in disciplines outside dance. In 1985, she met Patrick Bonté, who came from a theatre background. His interest was originally in Grotowski and physical theatre. After studying philosophy and literature, as well as acting, he worked as an assistant director in Belgium and Quebec for theatre and radio. He also wrote many plays, film scripts and adaptations. His encounter with the Belgian Grotowski-influenced group Opus Theatre led by Pierre Wincke has been influential in his approach to theatre. He worked for the company as a lighting designer and dramaturg. He learned from this company about the meaning of gesture and about the search for a method of training. He also acknowledges the influence of Kantor's texts and shows in

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[4] German manipulactor Ilka Schönbein also studied eurhythmics before training in puppetry.

his directorial work as well as the Butoh company Sankai Juku. Mossoux and Bonté have been collaborating together since they met, the former as choreographer and performer, and the latter as director and dramaturg. Their first production was the solo piece *Juste Ciel*, created in Brussels in 1985, which toured very soon in the rest of Europe and in Africa. To date, they have created together more than twenty-five performances and four films.

Mossoux and Bonté (2009) define their work as 'theatre-dance'. Bonté describes this practice as follows:

> The particularity of theatre-dance pertains to its ability to create gestural languages – that are neither coded nor imitative – that act like an autonomous and understandable language, structured by the rhetoric of the form that supports its readability. What is at stake is the mental being of the actor-dancer, his complex imagination, his contradictions, his impulses, and his way of focusing and reacting to the needs of the situation in which he finds himself immersed. His movements respond to an inner narrative. They are natural and transposed. It is possible to see from this combination of dramatic tensions and concerns for gestural languages a theatre of behaviour. (Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté 2009: 9, revised translation by P. Piris)

Theatre-dance is a hybridisation of theatre and dance, not a juxtaposition of one with the other. The order of the words, with 'theatre' being placed before 'dance', is important. It indicates the theatricality of their work. Dance is used as a tool which articulates their theatrical work. According to Bonté again, theatre-dance is articulated through 'propositions of actions and intention that lead the performers towards movement' (Bonté 2009: 8). In *L'Actuel et le Singulier* (2006), a book of conversations between Mossoux and Bonté with Anne Longuet Marx, Mossoux explains that for both her and Bonté interest lies in the creation of innovative forms, not for the sake of innovation as such but to compensate for the fact that the scenic languages which they studied did not allow them to express themselves. Defining their work, Mossoux explains that it consists of the following:

to reveal the 'sensitive' and, inevitably, the faults; to deface and shift the real in an attempt to disclose it. These forms of performance are concerned with the presence of the body rather than its mechanics or its expressiveness. We explore what hides behind presence: emptiness, or, on the contrary, excess? (Bonté, Longuet Marx & Mossoux 2006: 19; my translation)[5]

She suggests that *Twin Houses* also engages with presence, with the desire to 'feel what may be called the presence of the world, in order to nevertheless recognise oneself as alive' (Mossoux 2006: 20). About her solo shows, she expresses the need to find 'stage partners, towards whom [her] actions will be oriented' (Mossoux 2006: 71). These partners can be her own shadow, as in *Light* (2003), found objects, as in *Kefar Nahum* (2009) and, of course, the puppets of *Twin Houses*. Unlike Neville Tranter, Mossoux and Bonté do not normally use puppets in their work. Apart from *Kefar Nahum*, *Twin Houses* is their only performance integrating puppets.

The company describes *Twin Houses* as 'a multiple monologue [which] presents Nicole Mossoux and five articulated mannequins, whose bodies are intertwined in such confusion that it is no longer possible to know whether it is the performer or the mannequin who manipulates the other and has the control' (Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté 2009: 10).[6] During a discussion after a performance at the Hopkins Centre's Festival of International Puppetry in the USA, Mossoux and Bonté shed some light on the origins of the show:

> Mossoux's father had a twin brother, and the two married two women who were sisters, lived in two halves of the same house, had the same number of children at roughly the same intervals, and even drove the same type of car. … the company took this concrete example of existence as a twin and expanded it to make a universal portrayal of how all of mankind is subject to a bitter internal conflict between its differing impulses. (Scott 1996: 10)

The puppets materialise the different voices that inhabit one single person which draw to our attention that the Other represented by the puppet is ultimately another oneself.

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[5] All the following quotes from *L'Actuel et le Singulier* are my own translation.
[6] A video extract of *Twin Houses* is located in Appendix C, DVD 2.

Twin Houses consists of a series of situations, separated by blackouts and without any utterance, that invoke a woman surrounded by beings which resemble her. Original music by Christian Genet is constantly played throughout the piece. The absence of dialogue and narrative connections between the different scenes helps to define the piece as postdramatic. A general feeling of oppression emerges from the performance. Most of the time, the puppets seem to control the character performed by Mossoux. There are five puppets. Four of them are female or androgynous. The fifth is a tall, bulky and bald man. All the puppets are made from a mould of Mossoux's face. At the end of the piece Mossoux is on her own without any puppets. Her face is without expression. Her right arm starts to act as if it was autonomous. Suddenly, her arm takes the shape of a snake and grips the left arm as if it was a prey. The two arms seem independent of each other and of Mossoux (figure 4.13). This final scene is perhaps the key to perceiving the meaning of the whole piece, giving the audience to understand that the previous scenes were maybe the hallucinations of a mad woman who was always on her own.

Figure 4.13 Mossoux alone on stage
Video capture © Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté (1994)

4.2.1. Prerequisite criteria of the relation of self to Other

The position of Mossoux as a performer in *Twin Houses* is ambiguous because she is caught in between theatre and dance. *Twin Houses* is neither a dance piece nor a piece of theatre in the way that *Cuniculus* is, for instance. However, it is certain that the show would not exist without Mossoux's physical ability as a dancer. To understand the origin of this ambiguity, it is necessary to be familiar with Mossoux's concept of character, and to understand the way in which this concept is materialised in terms of the design of the puppets and the manipulation technique used.

Characters and personae in *Twin Houses*

During my discussion with Mossoux, it appeared that the ambiguity of the piece is reflected in her ambiguous concept of character. Although she considers herself as a character in the piece, she is reluctant to consider the puppet as such. Instead she uses the word 'being' to define it. She argues that the distinction between the two pertains to the fact that, as a human person, she always carries her own personal experiences whereas this is not the case for the puppet. According to Mossoux, the dancer – but she could say that about any sort of performer – is 'inhabited, not by his dance, but by a being, another of himself who takes hold of his gestures during the time of a performance' (Bonté, Longuet Marx & Mossoux 2006: 72). It is important to understand that dance for Mossoux is not an end but 'a means that allows the body to exist more fully, a kind of 'revealer'[7], an ability to create language' (Mossoux 2006: 70). During our conversation, she referred to Heinrich von Kleist's text *On the Marionette*, written in 1810, in which a dancer admires a puppet for its grace. Mossoux argues that Kleist puts forward the quality of 'absence' of the puppet, and the fact that

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[7] Mossoux uses in a metaphorical sense the French word 'révélateur', the chemical product used in photography to develop photographs.

this quality should be applied to the performer and not to the puppet. The movements of the marionette are perfect because the latter 'is not cluttered by muscles, intentions, or a previous meal, in other words, by personal experience' (Mossoux: 2009).[8] Mossoux does not conceive the puppet as a character because it does not act anything. It is already what it is. It does not have any personal experience that it needs to overcome.

The question of absence on stage is central in the work of Mossoux and Bonté. She mentioned to me that she and Bonté talk a lot about being absent on stage. Nonetheless, their notion of absence is also ambiguous. It is about absence while being present on stage. As Mossoux explains, 'we are not at all absent. It is the result of a very dense presence which makes you think that you create an impression of absence in which the spectator can enter' (Mossoux: 2009). The absence as defined by Mossoux is the ability for a performer to give space to the spectator's engagement in the piece. Because of this focus on absence, the performer has to avoid psychology and expressivity. Bonté defines expressivity as 'the realm of first degree … that kills the emotion' (Bonté 2006: 33). The absence discussed by Mossoux does not refer to a dramaturgical absence since she is present on stage as a character who is an Other for the puppets of the piece. Interestingly, Mossoux admits that she has to apply psychological intentions to the puppets in order to enhance their presence in relation to her as a character. On one hand, her character avoids psychology and expressivity in order to stay in the background, whereas, on the other hand, the puppets make use of them in order to exist on stage.

The following section describes the different protagonists present in *Twin Houses*. I have decided to refer to Mossoux as a character but to use the term 'persona' and not

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[8] Interview with Nicole Mossoux on February, 4th 2009 in Edinburgh. All other quotes are from this interview unless otherwise indicated.

'character' for the puppets, as it is close to the notion of 'being' favoured by Mossoux. It also establishes a distinction between the figure of the Other represented by the puppets of *Twin Houses* and that represented by Tranter's puppets in *Cuniculus*.

The main character of the piece is Mossoux, plus five puppets which I will call the Androgyne, the Lady, the Double, the Witch, and the Man. Mossoux looks like her puppets, wearing make-up and a synthetic wig to enhance her resemblance to them. Her face remains still but not neutral. There is a strange mixture of sensuality, innocence and surprise about her. Throughout the piece, she is a dominated figure overpowered by the puppets. She reacts to what they do. When she shares the scene with two puppets, she is even less present, and seems to be a witness of the relationship that takes place between the puppets. In the scene with the Man, there is more interaction from Mossoux because what is at stake is a relationship between a man and a woman. It is interesting to notice that both Mossoux and Tranter have decided to act characters that are submissive in order to give more presence to the puppet in relation to their own characters. This strategy contributes to the decrease of the ontological imbalanced relation that exists between a human being and a puppet on stage.

The persona of each puppet is shaped by the relationship it develops with Mossoux's character. The Androgyne, the Lady and the Man are figures that clearly dominate Mossoux. They exercise different forms of domination over her. Mossoux's relationship with the Androgyne is that of a master with a servant, the puppet telling Mossoux's character what to do. The Lady seems to consider Mossoux as a rival. She tries to overpower her by displaying how elegant and pretty she herself is or by executing impossible actions. She constantly puts Mossoux's character to the side as soon as she tries to interfere. The Man uses his physical potency to treat her as a sexual object. He keeps on kissing her, touching her chest and eventually making love to her,

although it is not very clear whether or not Mossoux's character consents to it. The Androgyne and the Lady are attached to Mossoux's body like conjoined twins. The fact that their heads are strapped to one of Mossoux's shoulders creates an impression of unity and division: unity, because both the puppets and Mossoux share the same body, and division, because the puppets appear very autonomous. The Man is either joined or not. The relationship between the Double and Mossoux's character appears peaceful at first but the puppet gradually becomes more and more dominating over Mossoux's character. She and Mossoux play a lot of mirroring games. She has a complete body and considerably resembles Mossoux. The Witch is the only character who does not acknowledge the presence of Mossoux. Her sole concern is with the preparation of a magic potion, Mossoux being kept in the background. She is placed in front of Mossoux's body and is joined to her arms.

The design of the puppets

In *Twin Houses*, the design of the puppets allows Mossoux to express the intentions of the puppets' personae through the movement of each one's whole representational body. To schematise their construction, they can be described as a head prolonged by a piece of cloth. The puppets were built not by a puppet-maker but by Belgian make-up artist Jean-Pierre Fillotor. Mossoux wanted her character and the puppets to share an equal presence. Fillotor suggested that their heads should be built from a cast of her own head. Then each head would be reshaped according to the persona of the puppet. Finally, he suggested that she would be made up to resemble the puppets. Because of the realistic features of the face, the eyes are not made especially prominent and so do not reinforce the direction of the gaze. The puppets do not speak. Their faces do not have articulated mouths (as mentioned earlier, there is no text in *Twin Houses*). These puppets have a

large range of leg and arm movements, as these body parts actually belong to Mossoux, but they collapse on themselves without the support of Mossoux.

The design of the puppets varies depending on whether they are fastened to Mossoux's body or detached from it. The Androgyne and the Lady share the same design principle. Their head is prolonged by a neck supported by one shoulder. This shoulder is strapped by elastic to one of Mossoux's shoulders. They wear half of a long dress which vertically covers one side of Mossoux's body depending on which shoulder the puppet is attached to: the right side for the Androgyne and the left side for the Lady. They only have one arm, which is actually Mossoux's arm (figure 4.14).

Figure 4.14 Mossoux and the Androgyne Video capture © Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté (1994)

Figure 4.15 Mossoux and the Lady Video capture © Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté (1994)

The Androgyne shares her legs with Mossoux's character. The Lady has a fake leg held by Mossoux's right hand, so that the entity formed by Mossoux's character and the puppet has three legs. The right leg of Mossoux is used as a support in order for the other two, the fake and Mossoux's left leg, to perform impossible actions such as the ability for the puppet to float in the air with her two legs stretched out, as shown in figure 4.15. The heads of these puppets have a limited range of movement because they are manipulated by the shoulder.

The Double has a more complete representational body. She has a head, a complete shoulder girdle, and two arms and wears a long dress which hides the fact that she does not have any legs (figure 4.16).

Figure 4.16 Mossoux and the Double dancing Video capture © Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté (1994)

Figure 4.17 A reflection Video capture © Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté (1994)

As shown in figure 4.17, this puppet is identical to Mossoux. The arms hang freely beside her body when not being manipulated. The design of this puppet renders possible the choice between several points of connection between the puppet and Mossoux. Mossoux can control it through a direct grip of her hand on the neck of the puppet. When Mossoux lies on the floor, she can hold the shoulder plate with her legs and the puppet's arms with her hands.

The Witch is a small figure dressed in black (figure 4.18). Her head and shoulder girdle form one solid block and are placed in front of Mossoux, at the level of her chest. Mossoux's arms go through the shoulder plate of the puppet, and then through the sleeves of the puppet's costume to become the arms of the witch. The puppet's legs belong to Mossoux. They appear when the puppet hitches up her dress to sit down. Her face is an aged and shrunken version of Mossoux.

Finally, the Man is probably the most complex puppet (figure 4.19). Like the Androgyne and the Lady, he has one head and only one shoulder but he has a complete

outfit, brown overalls. His head can be attached to Mossoux's right shoulder, held from the neck or placed on top of Mossoux's head. Mossoux's legs are fitted inside the costume of the puppet. The costume is not closed in the middle, which allows Mossoux to put either one arm, two arms or no arm at all through the sleeves of the overalls. In the first case, she shares the upper part of her body with the puppet, in the second she disappears inside the puppet and in the last case she does not share her upper body.

Figure 4.18 Mossoux and the Witch Video capture © Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté (1994)

Figure 4.19 Mossoux and the Man Video capture © Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté (1994)

Manipulation technique

The form of manipulation developed by Mossoux is adapted to the type of puppets she uses in the show. The visible manipulation is always integrating within the dramaturgy. Each movement has a meaning. The manipulation does not belong to any implicit convention that has to be understood and accepted by the spectator. When Mossoux holds a puppet, the gesture is part of the dramaturgy. For instance, Mossoux holds both hands of the Double as if she and the puppet are holding each other. When Mossoux and the Double share the stage with the Androgyne, the latter is the one who seems to be holding the hand of the other puppet, as shown in figures 4.20 and 4.21.

Mossoux employs two main techniques of manipulation. In the first one, she holds the neck of the puppet with her hand. She uses this technique to control the

Double and sometimes the Man. This technique allows precise movements of the head but limits the other body parts of the puppet that can be manipulated. The second technique consists of controlling the head of the puppet with the shoulder.

Figure 4.20 The Androgyne and Mossoux looking at the Double Video capture © Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté (1994)

Figure 4.21 The Androgyne and the Double looking at each other Video capture © Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté (1994)

This is a unique technique developed by Mossoux. It gives a limited range of movement of the head but allows Mossoux to share her arms between her character and the puppet. She uses it for the Androgyne, the Double and sometimes the Man. The scene with the Man contains the different manipulation techniques used by Mossoux, as detailed in the following description of this particular scene.

Mossoux wears a corset-like top, which enhances her feminine aspect and reveals her skin, and a skirt whose hem hangs out of the left side of the man's outfit. The skirt covers the left leg of the Man's costume. Mossoux's body is vertically divided in two distinct halves. At the outset of the scene, she is lying down on a wooden block as if she is asleep. The Man is above her looking at her (figure 4.22). At this moment, only Mossoux's legs are inside the costume of the puppet. She holds the puppet's neck with her right hand. The Man wakes her up with an abrupt, long and intense kiss. They detach from each other and Mossoux's character sits up, facing the audience. The puppet is on her right side. She looks dazzled and breathless. She turns towards him and

as their eyes meet, she starts. The Man approaches her again and kisses her. His movement forces her to pivot on herself. When she is back to her previous position she has slipped her right arm through the right sleeve of the puppet costume and has attached the head of the puppet to her right shoulder. The Man has now an arm, as shown in figure 4.23.

Figure 4.22 The Man looking at Mossoux while she is asleep Video capture © Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté (1994)

Figure 4.23 The Man awakening Mossoux Video capture © Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté (1994)

He stands up, forcing Mossoux to follow him, and they walk together. Mossoux looks behind her as if she wants to escape but the man brings her head back towards him. He cannot look at her eyes because of the manipulation with the shoulder that does not allow such range of movement. There is something a bit grotesque and exaggerated in his walk which looks like a caricature of military steps. His arm and his legs are engaged in over-exaggerated movements whereas Mossoux's arm is still and placed alongside her body. She looks at him as if fascinated or frightened. They kiss each other once again. The kiss is followed by a tango, the man taking the lead. As they stop dancing he places his hand on her chest. Mossoux's character looks at him and pushes his hand away. He does it two more times. On each occasion, she looks at him and removes his hand. He stops annoying her and they walk again.

All of a sudden he takes her head in his hand and makes her pivot on herself as he pushes her down on the floor. He lies on top of her, hiding her body completely from the audience's vision, and they make love. They suddenly stop and roll on their backs. They remain still for a moment as if they were sleeping. Then, as the Man remains motionless, Mossoux's head raises and turns towards the man. In a sudden gesture synchronised with the sound of thunder coming from Genet's soundtrack, the Man pushes her chest down with his hand. She is on her back again. After a few seconds, her head raises again. This time she looks in the opposite direction to the man in an attempt to escape as he sleeps. The puppet jumps on her. They roll together on the floor. During this action, Mossoux puts her left arm through the available sleeve of the puppet costume, places his head on top of hers, and closes the top of the overalls. This change is done with their backs to the audience.

Figure 4.24 The Man looking for Mossoux
Video capture © Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté

Figure 4.25 Mossoux hiding inside the Man
Video capture © Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté (1994)

A pause. The Man sits up, still with his back to the audience. He is alone. Mossoux's character has disappeared. He looks for her, first on all fours (figure 4.24), and then walking up and down the stage. Through the opening of his costume, the audience can glimpse Mossoux hidden inside him (figure 4.25). The only element remaining of her is a piece of her skirt that hangs out of his costume. He looks at it, presses it against his chest, and then tucks it inside his costume.

He walks towards the wooden block on which Mossoux was sleeping at the beginning of this scene, and sits on it. He seems to be waiting impatiently for her to come back. As nothing happens, he takes a pack of cigarettes from one of his pockets, gets one cigarette out and throws away the pack, visibly irritated by the situation. Then he looks for a lighter in his pockets but as he cannot find one he angrily throws the cigarette away. He stands up and exits the stage.

A few seconds later, Mossoux's character and the Man reappear together. This time, no part of her body is inside his costume. She holds his head with her hand and his costume hangs next to her. As they walk across the stage, he shrinks in size. He turns into a little boy walking next to her, then into a baby that she holds in her arms and finally he becomes a baby bump against her belly as she leaves the stage.

Mossoux uses the dance technique called 'body-parts isolation', as described in Chapter II, in order to perform a relation of self to Other with the puppet. She identifies the parts of her body that belong to the puppet and isolates them by giving them particular rhythms and movement qualities that are different to the body parts belonging to her character. To clearly differentiate the movements of one of the puppets from those of the character, the persona leading the action has larger movement than the other one. This is a similar technique to that used by Tranter when he wants to indicate who the speaker is, except that the movements are not limited to the head of the puppet but encompass its whole apparent body. She also constructs an imaginary centre to the puppet from which all its actions are generated. This centre is located at the point of connection between the body of the puppet and Mossoux's body. Mossoux describes this as its 'vital point' or 'ki', although I prefer using the term 'metaphorical centre' in order to stress its artificiality. The metaphorical centre has to be located at a central point of the representational body of the puppet and not in a peripheral area such as the

hand in order to diffuse all the movements of the puppet to the rest of its body. Moreover, it has to be a part of the puppet which Mossoux can control. For instance, it cannot be located in the torso of the puppet because Mossoux cannot initiate any movement from there, as this part of the puppet is only a piece of fabric. For all the puppets appearing in *Twin Houses*, the metaphorical centre is the neck of the puppet because it is central and can be controlled. The metaphorical centre of a particular puppet remains always the same but the body part used by the performer to control it can change during the course of the performance. For instance, Mossoux successively controls the metaphorical centre of the Man with her hand, her shoulder, and finally her head when she is inside him. By changing the body parts which control the puppet's metaphorical centre, Mossoux also changes the quality and the range of movement available to the puppet. When it is her hand that manipulates the head, the latter can move like a human head but the arms of the man's body cannot be animated. By swapping the manipulation from the hand to the shoulder, the Man gains the use of one arm but its head movements become more limited. For instance, it cannot look at Mossoux's character any longer. When finally, its head is placed on top of hers, the Man has a complete body although its head movements remain limited.

The representation of the Other displayed by Mossoux through her puppets is informed by her training as a contemporary dancer, and by the performance register elaborated over the years with Bonté. The design and the manipulation technique focus on the body as the main apparatus to disclose the relation of self to Other between Mossoux and her puppets. Mossoux's construction of the puppet's alterity privileges the body; its movements give the audience the impression that they are in the presence of someone with volition. Mossoux speaks of 'thinking bodies' to describe the state of her puppets. The head of the puppet does not get the main attention of Mossoux's

manipulation. At many moments in the scene with the Man, there is no eye contact between the two protagonists. One can see here a materialisation of Mossoux and Bonté's reluctance to employ expressivity that can be easily read on a face. As Mossoux (2006) suggests, 'the face is the most expressive part of the body. This is the reason we avoid giving it the role of bearing the emotional charge, as it can only be reduced on the face to a given meaning' (Bonté, Longuet Marx & Mossoux 2006: 33). However, the face of Mossoux does not become a mask without expression. Her face is 'lived through, impregnated but not frozen in a neutral attitude which anyway would be deluded' (Bonté, Longuet Marx & Mossoux 2006: 33).

4.2.2. Performing the relation of self to Other in *Twin Houses*

This section explores the performance of the relation of self to Other by looking at the way Mossoux and Bonté approach dramaturgy, body, gaze and presence.

The dramaturgy

Unlike *Cuniculus*, *Twin Houses* is not constructed as a logical sequence of events which reveals the deep-seated motives of each character. The scenes that form *Twin Houses* resonate with each other because they explore different aspects of the relationship between a manipulator and her self through five puppets by means of action instead of speech. These scenes ultimately sketch the outlines of the character performed by Mossoux, a character inhabited by her own doubles.

Mossoux is always part of the dramaturgy. Her character does not draw back from time to time as Tranter does, for instance. Although the scene with the Witch appears to be in contradiction with this dramaturgical setting, if we carefully look at it, it appears that Mossoux maintains a certain presence of her own character. The Witch

never acknowledges the presence of Mossoux. Nonetheless, Mossoux's character displays discrete reactions with her body to the actions of the Witch. Small details such as a sudden movement of her shoulders or the position of her head suggest that Mossoux is concerned as a character by what the Witch does. The relation of the two bodies is significant of this understated relationship. Although Mossoux holds the puppet in front of her own body, her face is nearly as visible as the puppet's face. They both face the audience. There is no attempt to hide her presence from the audience. Mossoux never enacts the supposed feelings of a puppet. For instance, she hardly reacts to the puppet through facial expressions which would allow us to understand the feelings of the Witch. The only possible reading of the relationship between her and any of the five puppets is done through the interactions of their bodies. The relation of self to Other between Mossoux and the puppets is constantly present throughout the piece but there are variations in the modes of embodiment of this relation.

The dramaturgy allows a modulation of the physical appearance of the puppet as an Other in relation to the course of the action. The Other in *Twin Houses* does not have a fixed shape. It is a fluid entity whose form changes according to the nature of its relationship with the character of Mossoux. This is particularly the case in the scene with the Man. As the scene unfolds, the growing power of the puppet over Mossoux's character is materialised by the fact that he absorbs more and more parts of her body, up to the moment that she completely disappears. Later, Mossoux operates a deconstruction of the Man by playing his life backwards, starting from a male adult and ending up with him as a foetus inside her. The fluidity of shapes of the irreal Other is performed by changing the point of contact between the puppet and the body of Mossoux.

To balance her presence with that of the puppet Mossoux has 'puppetised' her own body. The make-up and the wig make her face resemble the puppets' faces. Her movements are stylised in order to have a puppet-like quality. The dramaturgy of *Twin Houses* operates a reification of Mossoux's character to make her appearance less human. This dramaturgical choice is manifested by particular work on body and gaze. Other examples of 'puppetised' performers can be found in the work of artists such as Arianne Mnouchkine (*Tambours sur la Digue*), Giselle Vienne (*Showroom Dummies*) or Philippe Découflé (*Tricodex*). Nonetheless, these performances only contain human actors who move like puppets. The particularity of *Twin Houses* is to offer to the spectator the confrontation between a 'puppetised' performer and a puppet.

The body

The relation of self to Other between Mossoux and the puppet does not follow a unique schema of embodiment but varies significantly according to the type of puppet she manipulates. I will look at these relations when the puppet is either attached or detached to Mossoux's body by examining her relationships with the Lady, the Double and the Man.

In the case of the conjoined twin puppets, it appears that we are confronted with a hybrid being made of Mossoux and the puppet, sharing the body of Mossoux. The use of body-parts isolation by Mossoux in order to create within her body distinct rhythmic and movement qualities, gives the impression that her body is split lengthways into two parts with a head at the top of each half. These two half bodies can move simultaneously but with distinct gestures. The most striking example is to be found in a scene in which Mossoux and the Lady play a couple of mourners. In that scene, the puppet is attached to the left shoulder of Mossoux. Both Mossoux's and the puppet's

heads are covered with veils which hide their faces and shoulders. It is therefore impossible for the audience to know which head belongs to whom. They seem to form one entity and one does not look more or less alive than the other. It is only during the following scene that the audience can distinguish which half of the body is occupied by the puppet, because the veils have been taken off. The fact that two beings share one body is highlighted in the course of this particular scene. At one moment, the puppet lifts her dress up, which reveals Mossoux's leg adorned with stockings and suspenders. Mossoux's character, realising that her leg is exhibited to everyone, has an argument with the puppet because she wants to hide her leg but the Lady keeps on lifting up the dress. The puppet appears as an Other that is attached to the self. The Other has taken hold of a part of Mossoux's body as if she has been alienated from a part of herself. The Other is similar to a parasite that emerges from the self and confiscates a part of its body. Other examples of parasite relationship can be found in *L'Ecole des Ventriloques* by Point Zero and in *Side Show* by Ulrike Quade.

The relationship of Mossoux's body with the Double is rather different from that with the Lady. This puppet is detached from Mossoux and has a complete representational body. The most recurrent actions consist of the performance of mirroring movements between the two, which reinforce the impression that the puppet is a reflection of Mossoux's character.

It seems at first that we are in the presence of one singular being that is present in two distinct bodies. The puppet seems to materialise another self of Mossoux located outside her. The puppet is a split of the self, as if the reflection of Mossoux in a mirror has taken life and become autonomous. The self can observe itself in action as if outside its own body. There is an auto-objectivation of the self. It is able to see itself as it sees

any object. Yet this double of the self looks back at itself and, in turn, considers the self as an object. Thus, from a split of the self surges up an Other who has the power to objectivise the self. The relation between Mossoux and the Double follows this evolution. As the action unfolds, the mirroring games between the two protagonists cease. The puppet becomes more autonomous towards Mossoux's character and begins to dominate her. When Mossoux keeps on shaking her knees, the Double asks her to stop moving by placing its hand on them. Later, it is by exchanging gazes that the Double asks Mossoux to stop shaking her whole body. By the end, they both lie down on a wooden block. While Mossoux's character seems asleep, the Double raises itself up, and observes Mossoux, before lying down again, as if making sure everything is under control. This double of the self has become an Other and escapes Mossoux. Like Goliadkine, the hero of Dostoyevsky's novel *The Double*, the puppet gradually gains autonomy and confidence to finally take control over Mossoux.

The Man is either joined or not to the body of Mossoux's character. This is the only character engaged with Mossoux in an eroticised relationship. As described above, the Man absorbs more and more of Mossoux's body parts. It suggests that the Other consumes the selfhood of Mossoux, going as far as dissolving her identity, through the disappearance of her body. Towards the end of this scene, Mossoux comes back with the Man next to her. The Man ends up as a foetus inside her. Similarly, this transformation can be interpreted as the slow disappearance of the Other as a lover, because Mossoux's character identifies herself as a mother and no longer as a mistress. The Man, as the Other, is expulsed and replaced by a child.

Throughout *Twin Houses* Mossoux performs different forms of embodiment of the puppet as an apparent Other. Her dance skills are instrumental to support the construction of the alterity of the puppet. Mossoux seems to reverse the mimetic

relationship set between puppets and human beings. Instead of creating a figure of the Other that moves like a human person, she embraces the limitations of the object and makes herself move like a puppet. This particular way to engage with the alterity of the puppet becomes even more noticeable when one looks at her approach to gaze and presence.

Gaze and Presence

Mossoux uses her gaze and the apparent gaze of the puppet in many different ways according to the available range of movements of each puppet and the specific dramaturgy of each scene. Although Mossoux can look at all the puppets, not all the puppets can look at her. When Mossoux uses her shoulders to manipulate a puppet, she cannot turn her shoulder inward enough for the eyes of the puppet to meet her own eyes. Moreover, the shoulder does not allow fine movements. The result of that is the inability of the puppet to precisely focus its gaze on the objects that surround it. Hence, many puppets have a rather limited range of head movements and a poor ability to look precisely at objects. Out of five puppets, Mossoux can create the impression of a gaze similar to that of a human being only for the Double and the Man when she controls its head with her hand. The restricted ability to focus the gaze of most of the puppets can appear as a real problem. In puppetry, the gaze plays a key role in creating the impression that a puppet is an apparent subject, as it is read by the audience as cognitive activity. An imprecise gaze reinforces the objectness of the puppet. Moreover, objectness can be heightened by the presence of Mossoux next to the puppet because she has the ability to look with precision at her surroundings. To counterbalance the combined issue of gaze and presence, Mossoux has developed a particular strategy that I will present by analysing the opening scene of *Twin Houses*.

Mossoux's character shares the stage with the Androgyne. They stand behind a desk that hides the legs of Mossoux. In this scene, Mossoux's eyes are half-closed as if she is very tired or half-asleep. A book is open in front of them. They both look at it. The puppet flicks over the pages of the book with its hand. When this action is completed, the puppet stands back, looking ahead. Mossoux does the same but with a slight delay. She turns her face towards the puppet but not enough to be able to look at its face. Then, they both tilt their heads down in order to look back at the book. Suddenly, the puppet makes a sharp movement by straightening its neck up and moving its hand in the air as if it has an idea. Its gaze is directed to the front. Mossoux turns her head slightly towards the puppet. The puppet points with its finger to a specific line on the book. Its gaze is also focused on that particular spot. Mossoux looks down in the same direction. The puppet gives the impression of reading by moving its finger across the book from left to right with synchronised movement of its head. Mossoux follows its finger moving across the page by also moving her head from left to right. When the puppet has finished reading, it stands back still looking at the book and makes a hand gesture to invite Mossoux to write something in the book. Mossoux has not moved her look away from the book. She produces an oversized pencil and writes on the page. Mossoux looks neither at the pencil when she exhibits it nor at the lines she writes, as if she is not able to focus precisely on the objects in front of her. The puppet follows Mossoux's action by moving its head from left to right. When she stops writing, the puppet stands back, makes another hand gesture, looks down in the direction of the lines and reads the words written by Mossoux, following them with its finger. Mossoux decides to do the same. When the puppet finishes its reading, Mossoux resumes writing. The puppet follows her action with its head looking down at the book. As Mossoux raises her pencil up, the puppet quickly looks up, put one finger on its mouth as if

thinking about something. At the same time Mossoux again turns her head slightly towards the puppet. Then the latter looks down and turns the page. Mossoux follows the hand of the puppet on the book looking at the new page. As the puppet turns the page, it also turns its face to the left, in the direction of the book, but it looks above the book. Then the puppet hits the page with its hand in the same way that a pianist would hit the keys of a piano in rage. Its focus is not on the book. Mossoux seems to be affected by this sudden act of impatience. She first turns her head in the direction of the puppet but without looking at it and then turns her head in the opposite direction. The puppet moves its hand off the book and gently pats the table, with its head looking down. Then, it moves its hand up. Simultaneously, Mossoux raises her hand and turns her head towards the audience. They both put their elbows on the table and they gently tap their respective cheeks simultaneously.

Two observations arise from this description. Firstly, it appears that neither the puppet nor Mossoux look each other in the eyes. I have already explained that the limitation of movement due to the technique of manipulation prevents the puppet from sufficiently turning its head towards Mossoux's face. However, Mossoux has the physical capacity to face the puppet, and yet she does not do so. Instead they both look at the book which is at the centre of the action. Secondly, it appears that both the puppet and Mossoux display an unfocused gaze. For instance, when Mossoux writes in the book she does not look at what she is doing but slightly above the book. This is not normal human behaviour when writing. People usually tend to look at what they are writing. However, the inability to get a correct focus for a puppet is a frequent problem in puppetry. I suggest that the unfocused gazes and the avoidance of eye contact are deliberate choices made by Mossoux that reveal her particular relation of self to Other. Firstly, the fact that there is no direct eye contact between them but that their mutual

gaze is mediated through the book seems to indicate that Mossoux built a relation of self to Other based on what the protagonists are physically doing together. One can see in that choice a major difference from the use of the gaze by Tranter. In his case, the relation of self to Other is based on what the different protagonists are saying to each other. Physical interaction is limited because the puppets that he uses are mainly designed to talk. Secondly, Mossoux's ability to look is similar to that of the puppet. It seems that they share the same limitation of movement. I suggest that these two choices have been deliberately made in order for Mossoux to balance her presence with that of the puppet. Decreasing her capacity of gazing is a way to avoid the puppet losing any chance to be solely considered by the audience as a mere object. It seems that Mossoux loses parts of her human nature in order to share some equal grounding with the puppet. The alterity of the puppet requires a 'puppetisation' of Mossoux herself.

4.3.   Conclusion

It appears that the form of theatre chosen by Tranter and Mossoux influenced the construction of a particular representation of the Other through a puppet. Tranter, who favours a dramatic writing that focuses on dialogue, intentions and storyline, fabricates an Other that exists through language. His choices in terms of dramaturgy, design and manipulation respond to a relation of self to Other based on verbal exchanges. In *Cuniculus*, the shape of the irreal body of the puppet remains always the same. It also appears autonomous as it can stand on its own without losing its subjectness. Conversely, Mossoux and Bonté do not use verbal exchanges in their representation of the Other. *Twin Houses* is a theatre of situations built through the physical actions that occur between the puppet and the manipulactor. The Other in *Twin Houses* is intimately

linked to the self. The irreal body of the puppet is subjected to possible variations, as in the case of the Man. It is also dependent on Mossoux's body, as the puppet is partly constituted and supported by her body.

Tranter shapes the puppet to behave like a human being. He concentrates his manipulation on the head of the puppet and reproduces human-like movements. Mossoux shapes herself to behave like a puppet. She explores the whole body of the puppets and integrates their limited range of movement to her own performance. The dramaturgy of *Cuniculus* is mainly conveyed through the verbal interactions happening between the different protagonists. There are not any actions as such. For instance, the murder of the baby rabbit is not performed but described by Sissy after it has happened. The fact that Randy and Tranter's character make love is suggested by the dialogue as an act that is going to take place or that has taken place. Actions occur in the past or in the future but never in the present time of the performance. In *Twin Houses*, actions take place in the present. For instance, the Man and Mossoux's character make love during the performance.

Nonetheless, beyond their different training backgrounds and the forms of theatre that they produce, the interest of these practitioners pertains to their choice about who the Other is in relation to them. Although they both perform a relation of self to Other with puppets, they have made different decisions about what constitutes an Other and how the self relates to it. Ultimately, Tranter and Mossoux do not refer to the same Other.

Tranter presents with brio the relationships between human beings by materialising different aspects of human nature such as cruelty, fear, weakness, empathy or love through the different puppets of *Cuniculus*. Although these Others have the shape of rabbits they symbolise a group of humans. The fact that the rabbits hate human

people constitutes the character of Tranter as their ultimate Other. Dramaturgically speaking he is not a rabbit, and ontologically speaking he is the only one not to be an object onstage. Tranter subtly succeeds in integrating the dual ontology of the puppet within the dramaturgy of *Cuniculus*. In Tranter's work, the Other is the one who is different and whom one can be tempted to eliminate. There is an ethical dimension of the relation of self to Other in *Cuniculus*. Sissy and Lupus do not hesitate to murder the baby rabbit in order to get food. Sissy takes pleasure in telling Tranter's character how she killed the baby rabbit and even nearly manages to get Tranter eating it. Through the relation of self to Other, Tranter evokes the relation of an individual facing the rest of society. In that sense, the Other represented by Tranter is close to the Other presented in *Postalgia*. In *Cuniculus*, the human being is the one rejected by society whereas in *Postalgia* it is the puppet. The puppet needs to appear as autonomous to materialise the separation between self and Other and represents an outer Self. The alterity displayed in Tranter's work foregrounds the commitment of the self towards the Other as described by Levinas in *Totality and Infinity* (1991). The rabbits have made the choice of abusing the Other and eventually destroying him in order to survive. They embrace the cruelty implied by their decision. Conversely, Tranter's character makes a different choice. He places the Other at a higher level than him. He sacrifices his own food to feed the rabbits and he takes risks to save the baby rabbit. His devotion to the Other bluntly indicates that the actions of Sissy and Lupus are purely immoral and that they cannot be excused because of circumstances beyond their control such as a war.

In *Twin Houses* the puppets materialise different aspects of the character performed by Mossoux. She interacts with herself in the manner of a schizoid person confronting the different personalities that inhabit her, which explains the variations of shape of the Other as in the case of the Man. Unlike Tranter's character, who eventually

separates from these Others when he leaves the warren, as he finally accepts his human nature, Mossoux cannot escape them because they are inside her. When at the end of the piece there are no more puppets on stage, the relation of self to Other is still present but this time inscribed on her very own body. The Other is no longer autonomous but an excess part of the self which emerges from the body of the manipulactor or appears as a clone next to it. This is an inner Other that deprives the self of its physical and psychological integrity.

The two representations of the Other have in common the resistance of the Other to the self, the fact that it always escapes the self whether it is an inner or an outer Other. It is important that self and Other are not merged, otherwise the dialogue between the manipulactor and the puppet is lost. The particularity of manipulacting pertains to this irreal dialogue. The work of Tranter and Mossoux also discloses that the relation of self to Other requires that both entities exist on apparently close ontological levels: Tranter's puppets are humanised to appear ontologically close to a subject, while Mossoux reifies herself to appear like a puppet.

Through the study of *Cuniculus* and *Twin Houses*, I have identified two distinct approaches to fabricating the alterity of the puppet. In the next two chapters, I return to *The Maids* by Jean Genet and *Urashima Taro* to focus the research on the dramaturgical possibilities offered by the ambiguous presence of the puppet as an object and an apparent Other. *The Maids* explores the ontological ambiguity of the puppet in relation to levels of actuality on stage. *Urashima Taro* looks at the ambiguous relationship between the puppet and the manipulactor to create a dramaturgy of ambiguity which invites the audience to reassess their perception of the irreal subjectness of the puppet.

The next chapter looks in detail at the ambiguous ontology of the puppet as a

potential dramaturgical device to create different representations of actuality on stage throughout three iterations of the opening scene of *The Maids*. I also discuss the necessity of having a particular approach to body and gaze in manipulacting when it involves the production of the speech of the puppet.

CHAPTER V

THE MAIDS

ONTOLOGY, DRAMATURGY AND SPEECH

The series of iterations based on the opening scene of *The Maids* by Jean Genet allowed me to explore different relations of alterity that pertain to the dual ontology of the puppet as a real object and an irreal subject. The particularity of the staging of this scene relates to the inclusion of a puppet on stage which materialises the figure of Madame, a character within the drama, as a permanent presence. It is interesting to note that this is a step beyond the dramatic construction of the play, in that Madame is arguably more absent in an orthodox staging of Genet's piece by virtue of being played by one of the maids. Here she is more present by virtue of being a puppet manipulated by one of the maids. However, the experiment is pertinent because it requires a close engagement not just with manipulacting but with registers of presence, alterity and performance. Yet, the presence of Madame differs from that of the two maids (played by actresses) because Madame is disclosed either as a subject or an object. The dual ontology of the puppet becomes a dramaturgical device which intends to associate the two forms of existence of the puppet with different levels of actuality. As discussed in Chapter III, there are two levels of play-acting in Genet's text as the actors play characters playing other characters. In this experiment, each level of play-acting is related to a different form of existence of the puppet. Its existence as a subject is intended to disclose a

relation of alterity between Madame and Solange, and sometimes between Madame and Claire. The existence of Madame as an object is intended to disclose the relationship between Claire and Solange. The form of manipulacting used in *The Maids* does not consist of a direct dialogue between the puppet and its manipulator, as was the case in *Postalgia* and *Urashima Taro*, but rather of an indirect interaction like the one described in Chapter II when discussing the piece *Eshet* by Israeli company Etgar.[1]

This experiment also explores speech when a relation of alterity is established between a human being and a puppet. *Postalgia* already contained some scenes with dialogue. However, their setting in terms of scenography did not put forward the presence of the performer in charge of manipulating the puppet and producing its voice because he remained in the half-light. I have also explored the issue of speech in *Seaside* as discussed in Chapter III and *Madame*, a piece inspired by *The Maids* that I directed in 2006, but in both cases their outcomes were not satisfactory in terms of techniques and co-presence between the performers and the puppets and therefore needed further research. In *The Maids*, the manipulactor is as visible as the puppet, which implies that the source of the puppet's voice is also visible. For this reason, the manipulactor's presence has an important impact on the fabrication of the alterity of the puppet. The purpose of this particular experiment with *The Maids* has been to look for strategies that integrate the voice without weakening the alterity of the puppet. In the time available and given other areas of focus, I did not choose to work on a solo piece containing dialogues between the puppet and the manipulactor because I knew that it would be too difficult to achieve. Neville Tranter spent many years practising such a technique in order to master it. For this particular treatment of Genet's play, I also chose not to have Solange involved in the manipulation of the puppet in order to keep the

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[1] See discussion page 60.

original setting established by Genet. In the play, Madame is only played by one of the maids at a time and not by both.

The research consists of three iterations of the opening scene of *The Maids* developed in April 2009, April 2010, and September 2010. Each experiment is about twenty-five minutes long. I refer to the three iterations as *Maids1*, *Maids2* and *Maids3*.[2] I collaborated with Juley Ayres, who plays Claire playing Madame through a puppet, and Kristin Kerwin, who plays Solange playing Claire.

This chapter is divided in two parts. The first explores the ontological duality of the puppet as a dramaturgical device to create different levels of actuality while the second discusses the elements that contribute to the production of Madame's speech.

5.1.   Dramatising the ontological duality of the puppet

The three experiments conducted around the opening scene of *The Maids* explore the dramatic potential of the ontological duality of the puppet as a real object and an imaginary subject in the relationship taking place between Claire and Solange. I define Ayres as the performer playing for the most part Madame but sometimes appearing as Claire and I define Kerwin as the performer playing Solange who pretends being Claire. I was particularly interested in exploring the dramatic presence of Ayres playing Claire in moments of interaction between Claire and the puppet and moments when Madame's alterity is deliberately removed. The next sections present briefly each experiment and discuss how the ontological duality of the puppet was intended to affect the dramatic presence of the performers. The design and the characterisation of Madame vary from one version to the other.

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[2] A video of each iteration can be found in Appendix B, DVD 1.

5.1.1. *Maids1*

Madame is portrayed as young, whereas the two maids are in their mid-forties, as shown in figure 5.1. The costume of the two maids consists of black skirts, blouses and tabards. They look like contemporary cleaners, not traditional ladies' maids. Ayres wears a pair of long white gloves that is more visible than the rest of her costume. This particular feature supports the reading of her left arm as being that of Madame and not hers.

Figure 5.1 Ayres and Madame in *Maids1* © Adam Hypki (2009)

The puppet is first disclosed to the audience as an object that Claire and Solange assemble in order to give it the role of Madame. The puppet was built from different parts of disused mannequins. Madame's head and torso are papier-mâché casts of a female shop-window mannequin. The head is a mask dressed with a wig and painted with light make-up. The eyes are prosthetic, which gives them a realistic feel. Eyelashes have been added to enhance Madame's feminine aspect. The lower part of its body is a wooden stand that belonged originally to a dressmaker's mannequin. It allows the puppet to stand by itself and it takes some of the weight of the upper part of the puppet away from Ayres. I borrowed the idea of the stand from Tranter after watching videos

of his shows during my research residency at the Institut International de la Marionnette in 2008. The lower part of the right arm, including the hand, is a cast of the arm of another shop-window mannequin. A long white evening glove is fitted on the lower arm. I fixed a tube to the lower arm to connect it to the torso of the puppet. The arm, the head, the torso and the wooden stand are removable. The left arm of Madame is actually the left arm of Ayres, which matches the right arm of the puppet, as they both wear long white evening gloves. Ayres holds the head of Madame by passing her right arm through a hole located at the back of the torso of the puppet, up to another one located at its neck. Then she seizes the head through a pole inserted inside it. Her wrist forms the neck of Madame.

The appearance of Madame changes throughout the scene, becoming more and more human-like. After being assembled, her representational body looks like a hybridisation between a human body (torso, head, right forearm, left arm) and an object (a wooden stand instead of legs, a tube instead of an upper arm). When Madame sits on the chair, she loses the wooden stand. Her long dress covers the absence of legs, which enhances her human-like appearance. Finally, when she sits on Claire's lap, Ayres's legs become her legs.

The purpose of staging the preparation of the ceremony is to establish Ayres and Kerwin as Claire and Solange from the outset of the scene. Throughout the rest of the scene, Ayres deliberately suspends the alterity of Madame by re-establishing its objectness in order to appear as Claire when she wants to directly address Solange. At the end of the scene, Madame is disclosed as an object by Solange when she pushes away the puppet to strangle Claire. Although one can say that there is little direct manipulacting going on in this iteration of *The Maids* because Ayres does not have a direct relation with Madame except on one occasion, Ayres's dramatic presence is of

two sorts. She has an active presence as Claire which is linked to the existence of Madame as an object. Madame has to lose her alterity in order for Claire to engage directly with Solange. She also has a passive presence due to the fact that she has been established as a character during the preparation of the ceremony. Although some members of the audience may not acknowledge this form of secondary presence, it is there.

In this first experimentation, the objectness of Madame was too present throughout the scene to really create dramatic changes when its subjectness was suspended. The perception of the puppet materiality and the fact that the manipulation was not sufficiently precise did not allow the audience to imagine the existence of Madame as an Other. For the second experiment, I decided to approach differently how the dual ontology of Madame is displayed in relation to Claire and Solange.

5.1.2. *Maids2*

In *Maids2*, Madame is portrayed as a hysterical character. She retains the hybrid appearance that she had in *Maids1* but the young woman has been turned into a bald monster (figure 5.2) with dilated eyes, rough make-up, frantic movements and a cockney accent. Kerwin and Ayres wear pale green nurses' uniform.

Figure 5.2 Madame in *Maids2* © Monika Kita (2010)

Apart from the head, the design of Madame in this version is very similar to that of the previous one except for two changes that had negative consequences for the manipulation of Madame. Firstly, Ayres's arm is no longer used to join Madame's torso and head. Instead, Madame's head is attached to the rest of its body by a neck made out of foam and covered in white fabric. Ayres's hand is holding a rod inserted inside the puppet head directly from behind the back of the head instead of passing her arm through the torso of the puppet in order to reach its head. The puppet can then stand on its own without being headless. Secondly, I fitted castors under the wooden stand in order for Ayres to wheel Madame, which allows more movements across the stage. For this reason, Madame and Ayres are the same height. The position of Ayres's body in relation to the puppet has changed as she has to stand behind the puppet and not next to it in order to manipulate it. Because Madame is the same height as Ayres, the latter is hidden by the puppet. These changes have an impact on the manipulation of Madame, as Ayres has lost much of her control over the torso and cannot focus the gaze of the puppet precisely as she cannot see its direction. As a result, Madame's gaze is often off-focus, which affects its subjectness. The hybrid appearance of Madame evolves towards a more human-like shape, as was already the case in *Maids1*, but it happens at an earlier stage in the scene. Once the puppet is dressed, the tube connecting its right forearm to its shoulder is partly hidden by a fur wrap and the wooden stand by the red dress. When Madame sits on Claire's lap she also gains a pair of legs.

This second iteration of *The Maids* takes a different direction from the previous one because it intends to show Madame as a subject from the outset of the scene. There is no staging of the preparation of the ceremony. Madame appears out of darkness alone on stage. Ayres is hidden by the puppet while Solange enters the stage pretending to be Claire only after Madame says her first lines. Ayres is acknowledged by the audience as

a manipulator up to the moment that she is given a dramatic presence as Claire by the puppet. Madame invites Claire to step forward in order to appear next to her by tapping on Claire's shoulder. They exchange gazes and then Madame asks her: 'My dress! Quick!' There is another exchange of gazes between them. Then, Claire looks towards the direction where Solange has just exited to talk to her directly: 'Claire, are you there? Claire!' When Solange comes back, Claire looks at her with a reproachful gaze. Yet, Solange does not acknowledge Claire. She only looks at the puppet. This is the only moment in the scene when direct manipulacting is applied. During the rest of the scene, Ayres appears six more times as Claire but solely when the alterity of Madame is suspended. These moments take place when Madame has lost an argument against Solange and Claire wants to show her disapproval to Solange, when Solange refers to herself as Solange instead of Claire, and when Solange does not seem to be listening to Madame. The scene ends with a blackout before we can see Solange's attempt to strangle Madame. In this second iteration, the objectness of Madame is not revealed by Solange.

Unlike the previous experiment, Ayres is hardly visible when she manipulates Madame because she remains most of the time behind the puppet and not next to her. The change of body position which had been dictated by the redesign of the puppet had a negative impact on the relationship between Claire and the puppet as well as between Claire and Solange. The dramatic presence of Ayres was reduced because she lost most of the passive presence that she potentially had in the previous experiment. As a result, the relationship between Claire and Solange was not clearly shown as mediated by the presence of the puppet. This loss of ambiguity impoverished the dramaturgy of the scene as Madame and Claire could not have an alterity simultaneously. Moreover, the loss of control by Ayres over the puppet did not support the fabrication of Madame's

subjectness. Thus, it appeared necessary to change the design of the puppet and to improve the manipulation technique, as well as establishing a clearer relationship between Claire, Solange and the puppet.

5.1.3. *Maids3*

In this last experiment, Madame is portrayed as an upper-middle-class lady, of the same age as the two maids, and elegantly dressed. Its head is from the puppet used in *Maids2* but the face has been repainted, and eyelids have been added to enhance its feminine aspect and give it a sort of blasé look (figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3 Madame dancing with Solange in *Maids3* © Monika Kita (2010)

The puppet wears a black wig which completes the feminine aspects of its appearance. The upper right arm has been changed in order to look more real. A left upper arm has been added. Below the joint of the elbow a short extension can be tucked inside the glove worn by Ayres in order to connect her left lower arm to the puppet. Madame wears a black top with sleeves which cover the arms. The stand has been removed. Instead, Madame always sits on Ayres's lap. The lower part of its body is made out of black gauze that covers Ayres's legs. Ayres and Kerwin are dressed in

traditional maids' costumes, that is to say, black dresses, long white aprons and white cuffs.

From the outset, this third experiment displays the presence of Ayres as Claire. Unlike the first experiment, Ayres's dramatic presence as Claire is established through the subjectness of Madame and not through its objectness. Ayres and Madame appear together engaged in a physical interaction. They share together a silent moment of intimacy. They look at each other, Madame tenderly stroking Claire's hair. Solange is upstage looking at them. As soon as she approaches them, Madame gently pushes back the head of Claire. A few moments later, Madame looks again at Claire, who then turns her head towards Solange to talk directly to her. The purpose of this particular staging is to establish the presence of Ayres next to Madame as Claire and not as a puppeteer. The use of manipulacting from the start of the scene is intended to inscribe Ayres's presence within the dramaturgy of the piece through a relation of alterity with the puppet. This dramaturgical choice potentially gives an ambiguous meaning to the relation between Claire and the puppet and between Claire and Solange when Ayres is only engaged in the manipulation of Madame. Moreover, Ayres is constantly visible next to the puppet because Madame is not placed on a stand but sits on Ayres's lap.

There is no more use of direct manipulacting during the following part of the scene. Madame's alterity is suspended three times during the whole scene at key dramatic moments. The first moment occurs when Solange asks: 'Are you ready?' Ayres pushes Madame to the side as done in the previous experiment but this time she takes more time to complete this action. She faces Kerwin directly and answers back as Claire: 'Are you?' Solange replies 'I am'. Her answer is not addressed to Madame but to Claire. The second moment happens when Madame's subjectness is suspended by Claire because Solange refers to herself as Solange instead of Claire. As already done in

Maids2, Claire suspends the alterity of Madame to tell Solange off by looking directly at her sister while she turns the head of the puppet away from Solange. This time, Solange looks back at Claire and not at the puppet. The third and final moment happens when Solange ceases Madame's alterity by pushing the puppet to the side in order to strangle Claire, as already done in *Maids1*.

Unlike the previous iterations, Madame's objectness is acknowledged by both characters and not only by Claire. Kerwin plays an active role in the dramatic presence of Ayres as Claire because she responds to Claire and not to the puppet when Claire addresses her directly.

5.1.4. Outcomes

The Maids has contributed to deepening my awareness of the fragility of the puppet's subjectness. In order to integrate the ontological duality of the puppet within the dramaturgy it is necessary that Madame's subjectness is firmly established, otherwise the puppet is mostly perceived by the audience as an object. The alterity of the puppet is the result of technical skills as well as a careful framing of the moments when Madame loses its subjectness.

The main issue encountered throughout this research relates to the difference of presences on stage between the puppet and the performers. In the last experiment, the moments when Madame's subjectness is bracketed had in my opinion a stronger impact than those in the two previous experiments for three reasons. Firstly, the apparent body of the puppet resembled the body of a real human being while in the other versions she was a hybrid being. Secondly, the direction of its gaze improved and it was supported by a better coordination of Ayres's and Kerwin's gazes. Finally, we developed better

skills to give the impression that Madame was talking, although these skills were far from being perfect.

These actions were intended to fabricate a better image of Madame as an Other in order to increase the affective response of the audience. As it appeared, it was only by reducing as much as possible the ontological differences between the puppet and the performer that the moments revealing Madame's objectness could create dramatic changes and disclose the relationship between Claire and Solange. One key instance of such dramatic changes happened when Ayres pushed down the puppet of Madame in *Maids3* in order to appear as Claire directly addressing Solange.

The decrease of ontological differences was also the result of having developed a particular restricted form of acting. The performers had to calibrate their expressions, had to stand or sit at precise points of the stage, and had to reduce their movements across the stage. These choices reduced the spontaneity and the freedom of the performers. As a result, the performance lost some of the violence and theatricality present in Genet's text and Ayres's presence as Claire is best described as a persona rather than a character. If *The Maids* were to become a theatrical production, it would require improving the technical skills of the manipulactor, and adding more moments of interaction between Claire and the puppet, for instance, by increasing their exchanges of gaze, in order to increase Claire's presence without weakening that of the puppet.

5.2.   The voice of Madame

In Chapter III, I have presented speech as a secondary element participating in the fabrication of the alterity of the puppet, compared with the primacy of body and gaze. However, when a puppet is supposed to talk, speech becomes a major constraint in

manipulacting because the production of speech can easily imbalance the presence of the puppet in relation to its human protagonist. This section presents the different elements that frame the elaboration of Madame's speech by looking at speech movement, body position, characterisation and gaze.

5.2.1. Speech movements

The puppet used in *The Maids* does not have an articulated mouth, which means that alternative solutions had to be found in order to create the impression that it is talking. I already used the same type of puppets in the past when I worked in 2006 on *Madame* and when I developed the research project *Seaside* with Sanchez-Colberg and Nakamura. To partly solve the problem of the absence of an articulated mouth, I adapted some of the manipulation techniques used by traditional Bunraku puppeteers to support the impression of Madame's speech. Watching videos of traditional Bunraku performances, I noticed that the puppeteers tend to coordinate speech with puppet head movements that follow the shape of a bow tie or a figure of eight laid on its side. We used these movements for the speech of Madame. To emphasis specific words in Madame's dialogue with Solange, the flowing movement of the head was broken by sharp back-and-forth head movements in order to punctuate the text. This is demanding technical work that requires extreme precision and focus, which we partially achieved.

5.2.2. Body position of the performer

The position of Ayres's head in relation to the puppet requires consideration. The direction of her gaze is an important indicator to frame the speech of the puppet. It indicates who is talking and it enhances or diminishes the perception of the manipulactor's face by the audience. In *Maids1*, Ayres's sideways body position in

relation to the audience diminished the visibility of her mouth. This puppet was also shorter than Ayres which meant that Ayres looked down at the puppet. The position of Ayres's body gave a clearer indication of the direction of her gaze than if she was the same height as the puppet. Moreover, the difference of height meant that Ayres's face was slightly away from the field of vision of the audience when they looked at the face of the puppet. In *Maids2*, Ayres hid behind the puppet, so her face did not compete with that of Madame. However, this position did not allow her to control precisely the direction of the gaze of the puppet. Because of the addition of castors under the puppet stand, Ayres appeared to be the same height as Madame during the few moments when she stood next to the puppet. The direction of her gaze was not as clear as it was in the previous experiment. In *Maids3*, I changed the body position of Ayres in relation to Madame. Instead of having them both standing, I asked Ayres to sit on a stool positioned at an angle of about forty-five degrees from the audience while the puppet sat on her lap facing the audience.[3] Although both faces were at the same height, the directions of both gazes were distinct from one another. Ayres looked at the side of the face of the puppet while Madame looked in front of her. In this configuration, Ayres's face was less visible than that of the puppet because the audience only saw the side of it. I also asked her to tilt her chin down, which further diminishes the visibility of her mouth. This new positioning of Ayres also decreased the visibility of the emotions shown on her face as she produced the voice of Madame.

5.2.3. Characterisation and voice

The production of voice implies the necessity for Ayres to go through different types of emotions such as anger, fear or tenderness. Yet, when one says something with any sort

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[3] This position is similar to the position used by Tranter with Mutti as described in Chapter IV.

of emotion it is usually translated into physical reactions on the body and above all on the face. In manipulacting, performers and puppets stand next to each other. Therefore, audiences can see the face of the manipulactor when they look at the face of the puppet because both faces appear inside their field of vision. For this reason, audiences can read on the face of the actual speaker and not on that of the puppet the emotion contained in the voice.[4] The face of the performer appears immediately more alive than the still face of the puppet which contributes to an imbalanced presence between the puppet and the performer.

It is therefore difficult for Ayres to restrain her attitude while producing the voice of Madame. This is an important matter to solve. If emotions heighten her presence too much the attention of the audience is attracted to her instead of the puppet, which inevitably decreases the alterity of Madame. For instance, in *Maids2,* the frantic movements of Madame and the fact that she was portrayed as a hysterical person did not help Ayres to control her level of emotions as well, as it required her to produce a style of speech for Madame whose pace was very fast. As a result, Ayres's presence was too strong and the puppet was too difficult to manipulate. Eventually Ayres could not connect the voice of Madame with the movements of the puppet because the production of Madame's speech was beyond her ability. The puppet's head was only moving back and forth without much punctuation of the text. The transformation of Madame from a hysterical character in *Maids2* to a manipulative and composed one in *Maids3* helped Ayres to achieve a better voice of the puppet. Madame did not have excessive emotions, which reduced the expressions that could be read on Ayres's face. The slower pace made it easier for her to connect the words with the movements of the

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[4] As highlighted in Chapter IV during the discussion on *Cuniculus*, the emotions present in the puppets' voices can be actually read on Tranter's face. Tranter has developed a particular strategy in order to focus the attention of the viewer on the protagonist who is supposed to talk.

head and the torso. However, such choices have produced a very controlled form of acting because Ayres had to constantly hold back her emotions and gestures.

5.2.4. Voice and gaze

The speech of Madame is also supported by the exchange of gazes between the puppet and Kerwin. If the puppet does not look exactly at the person it is supposed to be talking to, the speech is not convincing. For this reason we spent a lot of time finding the sightline of the puppet when Madame had to look at Solange. It is important that the face of the puppet is visible from the audience's perspective most of the time. If the spectators cannot see the puppet's eyes, and consequently the direction of its gaze, Madame's apparent consciousness decreases. The direction of the gaze of the puppet plays a major role in the imaging synthesis operated by the audience through their visual perception of the puppet. It is less important that the audience cannot always see Kerwin's face because as a human being she always maintains her subjectness. However, I aimed to have her face as visible as possible in order to reinforce her co-presence with the puppet.

The exchanges of gazes between Kerwin and the puppet were particularly difficult to achieve when their physical distance was greater than one metre. In *Maids3* we produced satisfactory exchanges of gazes between the puppet and Kerwin by developing the following strategy. Firstly, during most of the scene Ayres stayed in the same place so we could determine a series of focus points related to the movements of the puppet on her lap. Secondly, Madame and Kerwin stood close to each other, which made it easier for Ayres to find the right focus. Finally, Kerwin had to stand at very specific points of the stage when she was not positioned next to the puppet. These decisions improved the exchanges of gazes between the puppet and Kerwin but they

also forced the performers to remain static on stage, as most of their movements had to be choreographed, which eventually reduced the freedom and the spontaneity of their performance.

5.3. Conclusion

This series of experiments allowed me to develop my knowledge of the alterity of the puppet by exploring two aspects of manipulacting that have been less present in my other experiments: the integration of the ontological duality of the puppet as an element of the dramaturgy and the production of the speech of a puppet.

Playing with the two modes of existence of the puppet requires that its subjectness is firmly established, otherwise the moments when its subjectness ceases do not have enough impact on the audience. As described in Chapter III, the subjectness of the puppet is established by its body-as-consciousness and its gaze. These two elements are related to the level of technique achieved by the performers and the design of the puppet.

The manipulation skills in *Maids1* and more particularly in *Maids2* were not sufficient to establish the puppet as an autonomous being but they improved in *Maids3*. The design of the puppet used in *Maids1* and *Maids2* stresses too much its materiality, which did not support its subjectness when compared to the real bodies of the performers standing next to Madame. The design of the puppet used in *Maids2* also had a negative impact on the precision of the gaze of the puppet. The puppet design in *Maids3* improved the subjectness of the puppet because it more closely resembled a human being. Yet, it would have been a better choice to dress Madame in a different

colour than black in order to improve the separateness between the puppet and Ayres, who was also dressed in that colour.

During this research, the fact that Madame was supposed to speak entailed a reconfiguration of the way that the body-as-consciousness as well as the gaze of the puppet were established by the performers. Speech involves emotions as well as additional physical activities from the performer in charge of its production. These two elements increased the presence of the performer, which had a negative impact on the alterity of the puppet as it imbalanced its presence on stage. I have realised that the characterisation of the puppet has to be carefully thought out in order to rebalance the presence of the puppet.

This experiment has also stressed the role of Kerwin in the fabrication of Madame's subjectness and alterity. In Chapter III, I have suggested that the imaginary presence of the puppet as an absent Other is the result of a dual triangulation between the manipulactor, the puppet and the audience. The first is an inner triangulation which entails that the audience has the impression that the existence of the puppet as a subject seems to come from the puppet itself because the manipulactor effaces as much as possible the act of manipulation. Inner triangulation mainly pertains to the materiality of the puppet and the manipulation technique. The second is an external triangulation as the audience has the impression that the puppet is a subject because of the interactions between the puppet and the performer. During this experiment, the external triangulation is mainly performed by Kerwin. Her reactions as Solange give a particular meaning to Madame's action. When we started working on *The Maids*, Kerwin found it difficult to perform in such a way. As an actress, she is used to receiving emotions from her fellow actors and then to react to them. Yet, in this particular staging, Kerwin cannot feel emotions from Madame except when she is close to her, because then she can feel

the energy and warmth coming from Ayres and see the hyper-realistic eyes of the puppet. My work with Kerwin consisted in examining each emotional state of the puppet in order for her to react to them. I carried out a similar work in *Urashima Taro* as it appeared that Nakamura's reactions to the puppet increased its imaginary presence as an Other. The length of the research and development period – over nearly two years – and the fact that the final version of *Urashima Taro* has been performed more than thirty times between 2010 and 2012 has allowed us to refine and increase the reactions of Nakamura in relation to the actions of the puppets. The next chapter further explores this aspect of manipulacting by looking at the ambiguous alterity of the puppet in *Urashima Taro*.

CHAPTER VI

URASHIMA TARO

AN AMBIGUOUS DRAMATURGY OF THE OTHER

In the course of my research, I have searched for practical solutions to incorporate implicitly the ontological ambiguity of the puppet as an Other into the dramaturgy. In the previous chapter, I have examined how this ambiguity of the puppet could be used as a dramaturgical device in *The Maids* to explore levels of actuality on stage. Manipulacting produces another form of ambiguity related to the ambiguous relation of the manipulactor with the puppet. However, this dramaturgical ambiguity inherent to manipulacting can be easily overlooked. When this happens, we recognise an impoverishment of dramaturgical meaning in the production.

In close collaboration with puppeteer and puppet-maker Aya Nakamura, I set up the research project *Urashima Taro* to explore through practice a dramaturgy of ambiguity in order to achieve two main purposes. The first is to establish a balanced relationship between Nakamura, the solo performer, and the puppets she interacts with. The second purpose consists of incorporating the ontological ambiguity between the manipulactor and the puppet in the dramaturgy through four dramaturgical elements: power, duality, intimacy, and the use of shadows. The structure of this chapter follows these two objectives. The first part presents the different stages of this research project that were concluded by the elaboration of a one-hour piece. It focuses on the different

choices of relationship that were tried out between the manipulactor and the puppets. It also tackles practical issues related to the elaboration and acquisition of manipulacting skills to achieve such a dramaturgy. The second part takes a close look at the final staging of *Urashima Taro* to examine the four elements that I have used to explore the dramaturgical ambiguity of the manipulactor-puppet duality.

6.1.   The development of *Urashima Taro*

Urashima Taro is the name of a fisherman, the hero of one of the oldest Japanese legends. *Urashima Taro* was developed in three stages. In order to clearly distinguish each version of *Urashima Taro*, as well as the variations within each of them, I call them *UT1.1*, *UT2.1* and *UT2.2*, and *UT3.1* and *UT3.2*. The three main versions of the piece were produced in September 2007, May 2008 and September 2009.[1] The elaboration of the first two versions took place during the first phase of my research while the third version during the second phase. This latest version has been shaped by the theoretical findings that I have presented in Chapter III. Nakamura and I designed the scenography, devised the storyline, and made some of the elements of the set. The specific role of Nakamura has consisted of making the puppets and performing the piece, while mine has been directing and writing the piece, as well as designing the video projections and the soundtrack. Bob Frith, artistic director of Horse and Bamboo, a theatre company specialised in mask and puppet works, mentored us for one week during the elaboration of the third version of Urashima Taro. His support was instrumental in the reshaping of the dramaturgy of the piece. Before describing each

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[1] Videos of the three main versions can be found in Appendix B, DVD 1.

main development of the piece, I will give an account of the myth that has inspired this research project.

The myth tells the story of a poor fisherman called Urashima Taro, who lives unmarried with his old mother. As a reward for saving a turtle, he is invited to the underwater palace of the Dragon's daughter, also known as Otohime. When he reaches the palace he is greeted by Otohime and is served delicious meals and entertained with dance and music. After three days, he asks for permission to leave the palace as he misses his village and mother. Otohime agrees and gives him a box as a keepsake of his stay. However, she tells him in no case should he open it. When he arrives back home, Urashima Taro does not recognise his village. Old ruins stand where his house used to be. He understands that time under the ocean is different from time on earth. Desperate, he ignores Otohime's warning and opens the box. Inside he finds a mirror reflecting his face. Suddenly white smoke escapes from the box. As the smoke vanishes, the mirror reflects the face of a very old man, and a moment later Urashima Taro dies and is transformed into a crane, which symbolises long life in Japan.

There are several explanations of the meaning of this myth. However, there is a common Japanese expression known as the 'Urashima Taro effect'. It refers to the impression of strangeness felt by someone who returns home after many years abroad, similar to the story of Rip van Winkle. The following sections describe each stage of the project by examining the co-presence between Nakamura and the puppet through the dramaturgy and the design of the puppet. Nakamura's character is referred as Otohime.

6.1.1. *UT1*: Otohime, a sporadic presence

This first version, developed and presented during one week at Shunt Lounge in London in September 2007, is ten minutes long. It followed a workshop undertaken by

Nakamura with Ilka Schönbein at the Institut International de la Marionnette in Charleville-Mézières in August of the same year. I acknowledge this early stage of the research as a form of manipulacting largely influenced by puppetry, in the sense that the presence of Urashima prevails over that of Otohime. The puppets and masks used in *UT1.1* were made from casts of Nakamura's own body and face. Their construction followed Schönbein's puppet-making technique. Nakamura made them during the workshop with Schönbein. We used them for the elaboration of *UT1* and *UT2*.

The piece is structured in two parts. The first begins with Nakamura narrating a story loosely based on the legend of Urashima Taro. Unlike the original myth, Urashima Taro is not invited by Otohime but drowns in the sea by accident while fishing on his boat. Otohime encounters him as dead. At the outset of the piece Nakamura stands in the dark, her face only lit by a candle. As she sits down, she reveals a half-mannequin next to her. Figure 6.1 shows Urashima Taro before his death. It is a solid block made in papier-mâché that has no articulation. Urashima Taro's mother appears as a mask on the other side of the mannequin.

Figure 6.1 Urashima Taro with his mother © Monika Kita (2007)

The second part does not contain any storytelling. The lighting reveals the whole stage. The half-mannequin lies flat on its face in a room covered with fishing nets. Nakamura

as Otohime stands upstage right. She walks towards the body, kneels down and eventually makes a prayer before falling asleep. As she sleeps, the soul of Urashima Taro emerges from the dead body. He looks at Otohime. She wakes up and looks back at him. He rises in the air to reveal himself as a half-human half-fishing-net being. He is a ghostlike figure that seems to be caught between life and death, as shown in figure 6.2. He moves around the space trying to find out where he is. He eventually discovers his new appearance and turns towards Otohime (figure 6.3). They seem to be attracted to each other. After a moment, Urashima looks at the room again and sees the half-body on the floor. He moves towards it, replaces it in its initial vertical position, and realises that he is actually looking at his own corpse. Suddenly Otohime pulls him away from the petrified figure as if she wants him to stop looking at his own image. There is a short struggle between them. Urashima eventually forces her to let him go. He approaches his double and slowly disappears behind it. Otohime says a short prayer and then mimes a bird flying away from Urashima.

Figure 6.2 Urashima Taro in *UT1.1* © Monika Kita (2007)

Figure 6.3 Urashima Taro facing Nakamura © Monika Kita (2007)

The piece remains mostly focused on Urashima Taro and on the way he reacts to his surroundings which include the presence of the young woman. Otohime is not

strongly characterised in this first version. Moreover, there are many moments when Nakamura does not appear as Otohime but remains a puppeteer. There is a discontinuity in her dramaturgical presence on stage. Thus, the relation of self to Other between her and the puppet is not constant during the piece. The second stage of the research focused on the dramaturgical presence of Nakamura in order to balance co-presence.

6.1.2. *UT2*: gaining presence, losing ambiguity

Nakamura and I continued the experiment, aiming to create a longer piece in order further to explore the presence of Nakamura as Otohime.[2] We did not change the puppet of Urashima Taro but experimented with other forms of puppetry: Kamishibai and shadow theatre. Kamishibai is a traditional Japanese form of paper theatre that consists of illustrating a story by showing a series of pictures that depict each action (figure 6.4). Kamishibai is a potentially interesting combination of puppetry and storytelling. We integrated two forms of shadow theatre. One consists of back-projecting on a screen paper cut-outs, water in motion, and plastic sheets using an overhead projector (figure 6.5). The second type of shadow was simply created by placing Urashima Taro and Nakamura in between a lantern and the screen (figure 6.6).

Figure 6.4 Kamishibai in *UT2.1*
© Monika Kita (2008)

Figure 6.5 Shadows created by using an overhead projector
© Monika Kita (2008)

Figure 6.6 Shadows created by using a lantern
© Monika Kita (2008)

I was particularly interested in this second form of shadow theatre because the two protagonists are transformed into images.

In this second stage of the research, Urashima Taro is haunted by the image of Otohime, which he sees on the surface of the sea when he is fishing on his boat by moonlight. One night, he decides to catch the image but falls in the water and drowns. Otohime finds Urashima's corpse and resuscitates his soul. Otohime appears to be a malign character who gives drugs to Urashima Taro in order to control his feelings so he will stay with her. During his sleep, Otohime visits him at night and secretly devours his soul. Urashima eventually remembers his old mother and his village. He also understands that Otohime is dangerous and decides to leave her. He finds his inanimate body and reunites with it. Otohime sends him back home in his boat. On his return, he finds a modern city instead of his village. He dies after he opens a box maliciously left on his boat by Otohime.

Urashima is always seen in interaction with the character enacted by Nakamura. To that extent there is a constant relation of self to Other between the performer and the puppet. I decided to have Otohime as a malevolent character in order to create dramatic tension between the two protagonists. However, the character of Otohime became too dominating over Urashima as she constantly appeared trying to control him. Their relationship was imbalanced because of the excessive presence of Nakamura on stage as a character and a performer. Another dramaturgical problem arose in relation to Nakamura's presence on stage. *UT2.1* intertwines moments of storytelling with moments of action throughout the performance. The story is told by Nakamura using the Kamishibai while actions are performed through manipulacting and shadows. This dramaturgical choice did not appear to be effective because it created confusion around the presence of Nakamura as a character and a storyteller. It also put an emphasis more

on the telling of the story than on the interaction between Otohime and Urashima. In September 2008, we presented *UT2.2* at the In/scisions Festival at Central School of Speech and Drama, a variation of the piece where most of the storytelling was cut. This choice gave some more clarity to Nakamura's presence as a storyteller and a character because the storytelling only took place at the beginning and the end of the piece. Yet the presence of Nakamura still remained preponderant and undermined that of Urashima Taro.

6.1.3. *UT3*: Re-establishing ambiguity

UT3.1 and *UT3.2* were respectively created in April and September 2009.[3] *UT3.2* is about one hour long. We introduced new puppets in order to diversify the manipulactor-puppet relation. Although Urashima still appears to be manipulated by Otohime, the latter is in turn manipulated by an old woman materialised by a puppet which could be seen as her mother. She is called Okoto. She takes the decisions that used to be taken by Otohime in the previous version. We also introduced Kameo, a baby, half-human and half-turtle, born from Otohime and Urashima's passion. To some extent Kameo also manipulates his mother through his tantrums.

Figure 6.7 Otohime and Okoto
© Monika Kita (2009)

Figure 6.8 Kameo and Otohime
© Monika Kita (2008)

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[3] The last stage of *Urashima Taro* received support from Arts Council England, The Puppet Centre Trust, UK-Japan 150, Central School of Speech and Drama, Horse and Bamboo Theatre, Shunt and The Little Angel Theatre.

Like Urashima, the puppets of Okoto and Kameo have been built from casts of Nakamura's body. Okoto, Kameo and Urashima Taro are life-sized puppets, although Kameo is slightly different from the other two as he has an articulated mouth.

To further explore the ambiguous presence of the puppet as an Other, we built Urashima Taro and Otohime in such a way that they could change appearance on stage. Urashima Taro was dressed with a long kimono that gave the impression that he had a complete representational body (figure 6.9). His hybrid appearance was only disclosed when Otohime undressed him (figure 6.10). This required Nakamura to redesign the puppet. As to Okoto, the puppet was built with the face of Otohime hidden under the mask of an old woman. The mask was only removed towards the end of the piece (figure 6.11).

Because the apparent body of Urashima looked like a real human body, its presence next to Nakamura increased because it amplified the affective response of the audience. The redesign of this puppet had another positive impact on its presence on stage. In the two previous versions, Nakamura was holding the puppet through a rod inserted horizontally behind its head, as shown in figure 6.3. The audience could see Nakamura's hand controlling the head of the puppet. In the third version of *Urashima Taro*, the manipulation was done through a rod that vertically prolonged the neck of the puppet and that was concealed by the costume of the puppet, as shown in figure 6.9.

Figure 6.9 Urashima Taro in *UT3.2* © Monika Kita (2009)

Figure 6.10 Urashima Taro undressed © Monika Kita (2009)

Figure 6.11 Two Otohimes © Monika Kita (2009)

The audience could not see the connection between Nakamura and the puppet, which increases their apparent separateness.

We went back to the original myth and wrote a new storyline. At the outset of the piece, Otohime wants a man and begs Okoto to find one for her. The old woman chooses Urashima Taro, who lives in a small village with his angry mother. One day, he saves a turtle and is subsequently thanked for his action by being invited to spend one day at Otohime's palace. Once he is in the palace, he is seduced by Otohime and promised a life of eternal pleasure. However, he is not allowed to return home. Kameo is conceived from their union. After his birth, Otohime ignores Urashima. One day he tries to possess her but he is violently rejected. The image of his mother reappears, accusing him of having abandoned her. As he tries to escape from Otohime's palace, he is stabbed by Okoto. Okoto reveals her real identity when she takes off her mask. She appears as another Otohime. Before dying, Urashima Taro has a last dream where he finds himself lost in a modern Japanese city, looking for his mother's house. He encounters strange characters. When he wakes up, Otohime undresses him. Except for his head and arms, the rest of his body has been turned into a fishing-net. He looks like the Urashima of the previous versions. Otohime invites him for a last dance. At the end of it, Otohime seems to be about to give him a kiss but instead blows on his face. Urashima Taro collapses. He is no more than an inanimate puppet hanging from Otohime's hand.

The use of language is limited in this version. Nakamura's character as Otohime hardly speaks except to make the voices of the paper theatre characters. The only sound that is heard from Urashima Taro is him crying after he has been rejected and beaten by Otohime. Okoto and Kameo do not speak but punctuate their actions by grunting. The two moments that do not take place in Otohime's palace are performed with the paper

theatre. Nakamura is no longer a storyteller but Otohime, who manipulates small paper puppets of the different protagonists. A light is pointed towards her face to remind the audience of her constant presence. We used the Kamishibai box that we had in *UT2* but altered it to fulfil its new purpose (figure 6.12). In *UT3.2* we added the recorded voice of Juley Ayres, who acts as a narrator, in order to clarify the storyline but also to create a clear distinction between the storyteller and the protagonists of the piece.
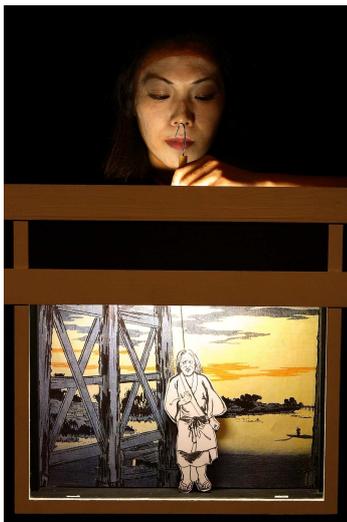
Figure 6.12 Kamishibai in
UT3.2 © Monika Kita (2009)

Figure 6.13 Setting of *UT3.2*
© Monika Kita (2009)

The stage represents the inside of a Japanese house and is divided into three zones (figure 6.13). The Kamishibai where Otohime manipulates the little paper figures is located downstage right. Otohime's main room is centre stage. It is delimited downstage by the audience and upstage by three screens. We use side lighting to focus the attention of the spectator on the stage area and to create shadows on the front side of the screens. In the middle of the stage there is a small table. The main screen, placed upstage centre, is the third zone. In *UT3.1* it represents the bedroom of Otohime and is used to back-project life-sized shadows of Otohime, Okoto and Urashima Taro, as well as little shadows made with paper puppets coming from the Kamishibai. In *UT3.1* the shadows were produced in performance using the same technique already described in

the previous section. Live shadows were only used at Shunt Lounge in April 2009. In *UT3.2*, performed for the first time in September 2009, we stopped creating the shadows during the performance (except for the little shadows) and instead we filmed them and projected them on the front of the screen, as seen in figure 6.13. In both cases, real shadows in *UT3.1* and projected ones in *UT3.2* are images of Urashima and Otohime. The means of their production, a video projector or a lantern, does not change the affective response of the audience, as the images look similar. After each performance, audience members often ask us if there was more than one performer on stage because they thought that the shadows were created during the performance. They seem not to have noticed that these shadows were actually filmed images.

Nakamura constantly interacts with the different puppets. Her presence does not undermine those of the puppets. We have carefully created a balanced relationship between Otohime and Urashima, and have deliberately shown her character dominated by Okoto. By transforming Okoto into a double of Otohime we have dramaturgically turned a relation of self to Other into a relation of oneself to oneself. To achieve such a relation, we have developed a form of manipulacting that was appropriate to the dramaturgy and to Nakamura's skills. I discuss it in the next section.

6.1.4. Adapting manipulacting

The manipulacting technique that we have developed during this project aims at integrating Nakamura's character within the fictional world of the puppet without undermining its presence. The puppet can only appear as an Other if, in turn, the performer appears as an Other of the puppet. We looked for different technical solutions to establish their relationship when we started this experiment. It was the first time that Nakamura had performed as a manipulactor. As a puppeteer she has been trained to put

forward the presence of the puppet while maintaining her own presence at the back. Nakamura is aware that a loss of control of her own energy can decrease the presence of the puppet. The challenge for her has been to step upfront to enact a character while maintaining the presence of the puppet. In *UT1.1*, the transition from puppeteering to manipulacting happened through a shift in the position of her body in relation to that of the puppet. From being placed behind the puppet, she came in front of it in order to be 'seen' by Urashima. Yet she had to negotiate her body position and that of the puppet with the audience. To face Urashima she has to be careful not to hide the puppet from the spectator's gaze. The setting of a relation of self to Other in a solo work such as *Urashima Taro* necessitates that the manipulactor is constantly aware of her body position in relation to the puppet and the audience. Because Nakamura did not have previous training in acting, she found it challenging to enact Otohime. In *UT1.1* it is more accurate to describe Otohime as a persona than as a character because she brings most of the attention to the puppet.

Another difficulty that we encountered is related to the interaction between Otohime and Urashima Taro when they were both moving across the stage. Nakamura did not have any problem when she was only puppeteering. She could easily move the puppet across the stage and remain stable. The problem only occurred when they were also interacting together. This issue was not resolved during the first stage of *Urashima Taro* and reappeared during the next development. The difficulty that Nakamura experienced in order to negotiate her body with that of the puppet increased in *UT2.1* and *UT2.2* as there was a constant co-presence between them. This was particularly the case during the dance sequences. Nakamura had a tendency to lose her balance when she had to move across the space with the puppet while interacting with it. I understood that Nakamura behaved as if Urashima was an actual person who could support her

weight. In order to move the puppet across the stage she was projecting her weight towards the puppet. Inevitably she lost her balance.

Nicole Mossoux offered me a solution to the issue of instability encountered by Nakamura. The problem was that Nakamura did not fully manage to physically ground her body. Mossoux told me that her work with the puppets of *Twin Houses* consisted first of finding her centre of gravity in order to ground her own body. Then, as described in Chapter IV, she searched for a metaphorical centre for the puppet which must be easily controllable and from which movements are impelled to the rest of the representational body of the puppet. Duda Paiva confirmed to me during an interview that he uses a similar technique to negotiate his body in relation to that of the puppet. He first grounds himself by knowing where and how his body is located in space. Then he looks for what he calls the 'fake axis' of the puppet, which can be understood as a metaphorical centre. To balance Nakamura with her puppets, I devised a simple exercise that consisted of Nakamura first finding her centre of gravity as Otohime. Then she had to find the metaphorical centre of the puppet by moving it around her while she remained in the same place. Finally, she moved across the stage while maintaining the metaphorical centre of the puppet. The problem was rapidly solved.

The calibration of the level of co-presence between Nakamura and the puppets has been a long process. In *UT1.1* Urashima had too much presence over Nakamura while in *UT2.1* and *UT2.2* it was the opposite. Finally, in *UT3.1* and *UT3.2* we reached a balance between the presence of the different protagonists as a result of new dramaturgical choices, changes in the puppet design and the elaboration of appropriate manipulacting skills. In the second part of this chapter, I present and analyse the four main dramaturgical devices that I have used in order to explore the ambiguous relationship between the manipulactor and her puppet.

6.2. Performing ambiguity

The ambiguity of the interactions between the manipulactor and the puppet is inherent to manipulacting because of the ontological differences between these two beings. This ambiguity is shaped by the dramaturgical meaning given to the presence of the puppet as a figure of the Other. The ambiguity of the manipulactor-puppet relation taking place in *Urashima Taro* is shaped by four dramaturgical devices:

1. The relation of power between the manipulactor and the puppet

2. The puppet as a doppelganger of the manipulactor

3. The degree of intimacy between the manipulactor and the puppet

4. The use of projected shadows of the protagonists to blur ontological differences

These four elements are present in *UT3.1* and *UT3.2*. The first (relation of power) is found throughout the three stages of the research, the second (doppelganger) only in the latest stage, while the third and the fourth ones (intimacy and shadows) are found from the second stage. I present each element individually and discuss its dramaturgical impact.

6.2.1. Relation of power

In *UT1.1* there is a mutual attraction between Nakamura's character and Urashima Taro. However, Nakamura's character does not succeed in keeping the soul of Urashima Taro. The latter chooses to return to his body in order to rest forever in peace. Nakamura is simultaneously confronted with an Other that she seems not to be able to control – someone who escapes her – and with an object that she perfectly controls. The ambiguity that stems from their co-presence enriches the meaning of the piece. For instance, it could symbolise the unconscious fear of Nakamura's character about

Urashima Taro's love. On one hand it seems that the fisherman is the one who decides to leave her, but on the other hand Nakamura is ultimately the one who takes that decision as she controls Urashima Taro. The audience is free to take this ambiguity into account, but nonetheless it exists.

The nature of the relation between her and Urashima Taro changed in *UT2.1*. She became a dominating figure who put a spell on Urashima Taro to control him. Otohime constantly dominates Urashima Taro except at the very end of their relationship when he decides to leave her. There is not much difference in terms of meaning in the dual role of Nakamura as a manipulactor and as Otohime as she controls Urashima Taro in both cases. The puppet as an object and an Other is subjected to her domination. Therefore, Urashima Taro does not have an apparent freedom which would be opposed to Nakamura's character. Until the end of the piece, she places Urashima Taro in the order of objects because, as Levinas explains, she is the one who gives him his finality. The result is an impoverishment of symbolic meaning due to a decrease of ambiguity in the co-presence of the manipulactor and the puppet.

The co-presence between the manipulactor and her puppets is balanced in *UT3.1* and *UT3.2*. Otohime is both a manipulative and manipulated character. She appears dominated by Okoto, who acts in place of the Otohime that appeared in the previous version. In *UT2.1* Otohime is the one who sets her cap at Urashima Taro, who lures him to her palace and who puts a drug in his drink. In *UT3.2*, Otohime asks Okoto permission to be given a new man but it is the latter who decides who that man shall be. When Okoto selects Urashima Taro, Otohime disagrees with her choice. Yet she eventually has to submit to Okoto's decision because the old woman uses violence upon her. Okoto is also the one preparing the drug that Urashima Taro will drink in a later scene. Otohime appears almost a servant of Okoto. Nonetheless, it is Nakamura who is

actually controlling Okoto. There is an interesting contradiction between the apparent control of Okoto over Otohime and the fact that Okoto is controlled by Nakamura. I have already mentioned this point when discussing *Cuniculus* and *Twin Houses*, as both solo performers play characters submissive to their puppets. In *UT3.1* and *UT3.2* Otohime does not appear on her own on stage but always with one of the puppets. She also has less initiative than in the previous stage of the research because of the role of Okoto. There is a clear distinction between Nakamura as a performer who perfectly controls all the puppets and Nakamura as Otohime who submits to Okoto, endures Kameo's tantrums, and protects herself from Urashima's attack.

The ambiguous relation existing between the manipulactor and the puppet in *Urashima Taro* can be understood from the different meanings of the word 'manipulation'. Firstly, 'manipulation' is defined as the ability of the manipulactor to handle her puppet so that it appears as an irreal subject and potentially as an irreal Other. Yet, the Other escapes the self while the self controls the object. In other words, the Other cannot be controlled even in extreme relationships, such as those of a master and a slave. This opposition is at the heart of manipulacting because the audience is always aware that the relation of self to Other taking place between the two beings sharing the stage is not actual, as there is no Other. Secondly, 'manipulation' also describes the influence of one person over another to gain a benefit. The relation between the manipulactor and the puppet offers an ambiguous dramaturgy of the Other because it combines these different meanings of the word 'manipulation'. One manipulates a puppet because one desires the object to appear as a subject. Through manipulation it becomes an irreal Other. One manipulates the Other because one ultimately refuses its alterity by treating it as one would treat an object.

UT3 is intended to go one step further than the previous stages of the research project because it integrates the contradiction of the two meanings of 'manipulation' in the dramaturgy of the piece by revealing Okoto as another self of Otohime. The ambiguous relation of the manipulactor and the puppet is materialised by transforming the puppet into a doppelganger of Nakamura.

6.2.2. The doppelganger

The revelation of Otohime's double takes place when Okoto removes her mask. This scene depicts an uncanny moment in which the subject faces herself. At that instant, the Other turns into another Self. The revelation of Okoto as the doppelganger of Otohime is not an event that is isolated from the rest of the dramaturgy. Alongside the apparent submission of Otohime to Okoto, there are clues throughout the piece which indicate that Okoto and Otohime are actually the same person. For instance, after a shadow scene during which Otohime and Urashima are engaged in sexual intercourse, Okoto appears on stage relaxed and content, smoking a cigarette as if she has been the one making love with Urashima. When Okoto picks up from the floor a paper puppet representing Urashima Taro and brings it behind the screen, it is Otohime who concludes the action in shadow by putting the paper puppet in a cage. This cage is later brought on stage by Okoto. When finally Okoto removes her mask, there are two Otohimes on stage: one made of flesh and blood and one made of papier-mâché. The two Otohimes look at each other, and then the actual Otohime lays her head on the shoulder of her double. Finally, the irreal Otohime comforts the actual Otohime by stroking her hair, as in figure 6.14.

This scene reveals simultaneously two different actions. Firstly, we see two women sharing a moment of tenderness. Secondly, we see a woman on her own

stroking her hair. There are two beings on stage but only one person. The revelation of two Otohimes raises three remarks. Firstly, this scene suggests that Otohime has always been in control of the situation and that the character of the old woman does not exist.

Figure 6.14 The two Otohimes sharing a moment of tenderness © Monika Kita (2009)

Secondly, this scene also explicitly suggests that the puppet was never an Other. The apparent interactions between Otohime and Okoto are interactions of Otohime with herself. By taking off her mask, the puppet signifies that the Other is the self. The caress of the hair can be read in two different ways. If I read this action as the double of Otohime stroking the actual one, I consider the double of Otohime as a subject. If I read it as the actual Otohime stroking herself, then I consider the double as an object. This possible double-reading of the action places the arm of Nakamura making the action of the caress in a liminal position: it is her arm and it is not her arm. In fact, my reading of the situation depends on the object of my consciousness. If my consciousness is directed towards a present object, in this case the arm of Nakamura, it means that I am engaged in an act of perception. Thus, I perceive the double of Otohime as an object. If my consciousness is directed towards an absent object, the arm of the double of Otohime, than I am engaged in an act of imagination. Although the imaging synthesis is never complete because many details remind me that I am watching an object, my

consciousness is only directed towards an absent or a present object but not both. Finally, the relation of oneself to oneself between Otohime and her double is only apparent because the latter remains a puppet controlled by Nakamura. The double of Otohime is an irreal self. Moreover, instead of describing this relation as a relation of oneself to oneself, it is probably better to address it as a relation of the self with another self. Consequently, the other self remains a figure of alterity.

The ambiguity of the manipulactor-puppet relation still prevails even when it is dramaturgically exposed. As discussed in Chapter III, beyond its irreal presence the puppet always points at an absence. In *UT3.2* each puppet forms with Otohime a series of couples: lover/mistress between Urashima Taro and Otohime, mother/daughter between Okoto and Otohime, child/mother between Kameo and Otohime. The relations between Otohime and them are based on conflict. They are always concluded by the submission of one of the protagonists to the other through violence: Okoto beats Otohime, Otohime tells off Kameo, Otohime drugs Urashima Taro, Urashima Taro attempts to rape Otohime. Although Otohime is engaged in different forms of relations with the three puppets, she remains the central figure of the piece. Everything revolves around her. Nakamura is alone on stage, surrounded by doubles of herself that she has made.

The relation of self to Other between Otohime and the puppets hides a relation of oneself to oneself. The apparent conflicts between Otohime and her doubles materialise different forms of this relation of oneself to oneself performed by Nakamura. Nonetheless, Urashima, Okoto and Kameo are not explicitly disclosed as doubles of Otohime. To disclose the actuality of the relation between Nakamura and her puppets, it has been necessary to bring on stage the puppet of Otohime. The apparition

of the doppelganger discloses that Otohime's identities as a mistress, a mother, and a daughter are fake. These Others do not exist. They are absent Others. She is alone.

6.2.3. Intimacy

To accentuate the ambiguity of the relation of the manipulactor and the puppet, I have experimented with different degrees of intimacy between Otohime and Urashima Taro. Unlike the two previous versions of the piece, in *UT3.1* Urashima Taro does not appear on his first entrance as a ghostlike figure. When he arrives at Otohime's palace he is still 'alive'. His appearance and his way of moving across the stage are very human-like.

Urashima Taro and Otohime get more intimate as the action unfolds. At first, Otohime gently lays her head on Urashima Taro's shoulder and places her hand on his chest, which seems to give him a lot of trouble (figure 6.15). Later, he will stroke her hair and will attempt to kiss her. She invites him for a dance which will be concluded by a long kiss (figure 6.16). Their intimacy goes a step further when they appear as shadows and make love. For this particular moment, Otohime fully undresses. The audience clearly sees the shadow of the naked body of Nakamura before the two lovers consummate their passion (figure 6.17).

Figure 6.15 Otohime seducing Urashima Taro
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Figure 6.16 Otohime and Urashima Taro kissing
© Monika Kita (2009)

Figure 6.17 Naked Otohime
© Monika Kita (2009)

Yet, the couple formed by Otohime and Urashima is not an ordinary one, as the latter is an object. The more intimate their relationship is, the more uncanny it looks.

One cannot help thinking that Otohime is actually kissing a puppet, not a human being. The intimacy produced by the nudity of the performer and the performance of a sexual act with Urashima Taro affects the consciousness of the spectator. The existence of Urashima Taro as an Other is shattered and the staging abruptly displays the relation of oneself to oneself performed by Nakamura through the puppet. Nakamura is alone. She actually makes love with herself.

I suggest that there are peaks and troughs in the degrees of intimacy taking place between a manipulactor and a puppet that affect the interplay between imagination and perception in the consciousness of the spectator. The interplay between perception and imagination is at risk of ceasing when Otohime and Urashima Taro make love because their level of intimacy at that moment goes beyond these limits. The perception of the puppet by the spectators no longer triggers their imaging consciousness in order to aim at the absent being that Urashima Taro is. Instead they only see a woman engaged with an object. This phenomenon is comparable to the concept of the Uncanny Valley developed by Japanese roboticist Masahiro Mori (1970). Mori describes the Uncanny Valley as the moment when the appearance of an inanimate being, such as a robot, a prosthetic hand or a puppet, becomes so humanlike that it inspires an uneasy feeling in the people watching, whereas a less humanlike appearance does not provoke such reaction.

The puppet is not an ordinary Other because of its objectness. Too much intimacy removes the action happening between the performer and the puppet from its dramaturgical context and presents it in its crude reality. Although the performance of moments of intimacy between two actors can be unsettling for audiences, it is not comparable to those happening between a human being and a puppet. There is a scene in *Malediction* (2008) by Duda Paiva Company where one of the performers is having

sex with a frog lady. The man is so absorbed in his action that he does not realise that the puppet is falling to pieces. The scene turns into a masturbatory act witnessed as such by the other performer (and the audience) which creates a break in the dramaturgy. Interestingly, Nakamura told me that during moments of intimacy (she was discussing the scene where she seduces Urashima Taro) she also felt that she was performing some sort of public act of masturbation. Intimacy participates in the disclosure of the puppet as an absent Other because it breaks the imaging synthesis taking place between imagination and perception. Of course, the degree of intimacy necessary to stop the imaging consciousness varies from one spectator to another.

Yet the love scene in *UT3.2* is not directly witnessed by the audience. They only see the shadows of the two lovers. In the next section, I discuss the effect of the perception of their shadows instead of their actual bodies on the consciousness of the viewer.

6.2.4. Shadows

In *UT2.1* we introduced some sequences in which Urashima and Otohime appeared as shadows. Nonetheless, it was in *UT3.1* and *UT3.2* that we used this technique extensively. The shadow sequences often follow or precede a scene performed in front of the audience and therefore they create a dramaturgical continuity between a direct perception of their bodies and that of their shadows. In Chapter III, I have argued that the puppet is an analogon as defined by Sartre in *The Imaginary* (2004). Urashima is an irreal subject because he is not present to consciousness. What is present is the representational body of the puppet set in motion by Nakamura. When Urashima appears as a shadow he remains an image. As to Nakamura, she is an actual subject because she is encountered by consciousness. However, when she appears as a shadow I

do not perceive her but instead encounter an image of her. She is no longer present to my consciousness. This is so true that the shadows of Urashima Taro and Okoto are video projections in *UT3.2*. As discussed above, several spectators told me after the show that they thought that the shadows were made in performances up to a certain moment. We have deliberately introduced confusion about the nature of these filmed shadows by adding actions that were not possible for Nakamura to achieve as it meant that she had to be simultaneously at two locations. Nakamura does not need to be present on stage when these shadows appear on the screen. These shadows are analogons of Urashima and Nakamura. Nonetheless, in many occasions Nakamura performs the voice of the projected shadows of Otohime and Okoto from behind the screen. Unlike her body, her voice is present on stage. The final result is a synthesis of the actual (the voice) and the irreal (the body). This synthetic reality blurs the ontological differences between Nakamura and the life-sized puppets. The ambiguity of the relation of self to Other between the manipulactor and the puppets decreases in relation to the diminution of their ontological differences. Yet, the ambiguity is never totally removed because the audience always knows that Urashima is a puppet and Nakamura a human being.

6.3.   Conclusion

The ambiguity of the relation between the manipulactor and the puppet is based on the ontological nature of the puppet – an object which appears as a subject endowed with consciousness. The couple formed by the puppet and the manipulactor contains a dramaturgical meaning that two puppets or two actors interacting together would not have. In manipulacting the animate and the inanimate are face to face, as if they belong

to the same world because the puppet appears as a subject. The ambiguous presence of the puppet next to the manipulactor creates two levels of relation between the manipulactor and the puppet: an irreal subject-subject relation and an actual subject-object relation. *Urashima Taro* discloses the puppets as representations of absent Others. These beings that surround Otohime only exist in the imaging consciousness of the spectator. She is amongst empty shells that are deformed doubles of her as a child, an old woman, and a man. These absent Others represent what Otohime no longer is, is not yet, or is not. They refer to a present being, the manipulactor. Beyond her effort to balance her presence with that of the puppet and to erase her domination, the manipulactor remains at the centre of the dramaturgy. The research piece could also have been named *Otohime* because these absent Others tell us about her.

Urashima Taro has been a laboratory to experiment with manipulacting with a performer coming from puppetry. It completes the work undertaken on *Seaside* with a trained dancer and a puppeteer, *The Maids* with two trained actresses, my own experience as a manipulactor in *Postalgia*, and the study of the work of Stuffed Puppet Theatre and Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté. I have had the opportunity to elaborate different techniques and strategies adapted to the skills of the performers and to the specific dramaturgy of each project. In Chapter VII, I present a method of practice for manipulacting that summarises these experiences.

CHAPTER VII

A METHOD OF PRACTICE FOR MANIPULACTING

Manipulacting consists of the staging of a relation of self to Other between one or many human beings and one or many puppets. It is a hybridisation of acting and puppeteering skills. The diversity of acting and puppetry techniques available to theatre-makers combined with the different possible calibrations of these two forms of performance have produced many distinct forms of manipulacting. In Chapter IV, I have argued that performances described as dramatic theatre develop forms of manipulacting distinct from those described as postdramatic because the alterity of the puppet is constructed through different means. In *Cuniculus* by Stuffed Puppet Theatre, which I view as dramatic theatre, Tranter establishes a relation of self to Other based on verbal interactions by means of gaze and speech. The manipulacting technique he has developed, as well as the design of the puppets, supports this decision. As to *Twin Houses* by Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté, which I describe as postdramatic theatre, the relation of self to Other is established by a somatic dialogue between Mossoux and the puppets. Moreover, the diversity of the initial training of the manipulactors, such as Method acting for Tranter, contemporary dance and Grotowski for Mossoux and Bonté, contemporary dance and Stanislavski for Paiva, and eurhythmics and marionette for Schönbein, contribute to the diversity of the form. For all these reasons, it would be a long and difficult task to establish an inventory of all the different methods of

manipulacting. However, there are a number of core principles that are constantly found in the scope of performance encompassed by manipulacting. The aim of this chapter is to present the findings in terms of practice which are applicable to manipulacting by me or other practitioners. I propose a method of practice that looks at a series of performative elements and conclude this practical outline by addressing dramaturgical questions that should be carefully examined by theatre-makers engaged in manipulacting.

Balancing co-presence

In manipulacting, there is potential conflict between the presence of the puppet and that of the performer. The challenge lies in giving the impression of two characters or personae being present on stage. The fact that the performer is also a character threatens the apparent alterity of the character of the puppet. Presences have to be balanced because initially there is no balance between the manipulactor and the puppet. The performer appears more present than the puppet because he is alive. For this reason, the initiative of the action has to appear to come from the character of the puppet in order to set a balance with its human counterpart. Moreover, the performer needs to hold back his character. The puppet has to act and the manipulactor has to react. This order must be followed, otherwise co-presence remains imbalanced.

Movement is not the only principle which enables the performer to interact with the puppet. The notion of 'character intention', drawn from acting, plays an important role in manipulacting. For instance, Paiva argues that his approach to characterisation is very Stanislavskian. For him, 'the puppet needs to have an inner journey' (Paiva 2009) before entering the theatrical space. Even in the case of performances whose primary

approach is through movement, it is necessary to add a psychological dimension to the puppet, otherwise its presence will be weakened by the manipulactor.

Dual triangulation

The fabrication of the alterity of the puppet is given by a dual triangulation between the puppet, the manipulactor and the audience. Firstly, the puppet appears as a subject to the audience through the manipulation of different parts of its representational body by the manipulactor. By looking at the puppet, the audience identifies a being whose movements, either stylised or not, remind them of those of a living being. This is an internal triangulation because the existence of the puppet as subject is intended to be read by the audience by focusing on the puppet. Secondly, the puppet appears as a subject to the audience because of the reactions of the character embodied by the manipulactor in relation to the gestures of the puppet. These reactions also give a certain meaning or quality to the movements of the puppet, and thus they contribute to the existence of the puppet as a subject. The dual triangulation is an effective tool to establish a relation of self to Other between the manipulactor and the puppet. The danger is to privilege one triangulation over the other. If the manipulactor is too focused on the internal triangulation, his own dramaturgical presence on stage may be weakened. If on the contrary he privileges the external triangulation, the puppet may lose a lot of its apparent subjectness.

Distant awareness

The manipulactor should remain constantly aware of the relation taking place between his character and that of the puppet while maintaining an emotional distance between

the two. He should develop a state of awareness that is directed not only to the puppet but also to his presence on stage. The purpose is to keep watch on the interaction between his character and the puppet. This can be described as if there are three people on stage: the character of the puppet, the character of the manipulactor who reacts to the actions of the puppet, and the manipulactor in control of the whole situation. Tranter describes this state of awareness as follows:

> There is a third eye, like a very objective eye. That is me signalling the audience, looking behind what I am doing like a camera, directing myself at the same time. It is very rational. Although I am very emotional in the piece, there is a very rational, objective act happening at the same time. (Tranter 2009)

Maintaining an awareness of the interactions taking place between the puppet and the character of the manipulactor allows the latter to establish a balanced co-presence.

Centre of gravity, metaphorical centre and fixed point

To appear alive, the body must be in motion. Movements have to follow an internal logic. Manipulacting is identified as the creation of two characters and implies that the actual body of the performer and the irreal one of the puppet are distinct from one another. This distinction results from the way that each body relates to the other. This relation is achieved by combining three elements: the awareness by the manipulactor of his centre of gravity, the creation of the metaphorical centre of the puppet and the establishment of a fixed point between the manipulactor and the puppet.

The first step is based on the ability of the manipulactor to establish stability in his own body. By being aware of his centre of gravity he can interact with the puppet without creating any movement with his body that blurs the action. The centre of

gravity has to be understood in the sense developed by Rudolf Laban (1971) in *The Mastery of Movement*.

> Since all our movements, but particularly the carriage of our body, are influenced by the physical law of gravity we might refer in this connection also to the 'centre of gravity' which in the human body is situated in the pelvis region and is, in the normal mode of carriage, above the point of support. (Laban 1971:58)

The centre of gravity is used by manipulactors to inhabit space. It allows them to be stable and grounded, direct their energy towards the puppet and avoid drawing attention to themselves. As Laban explains, the loss of balance is either the consequence of 'the centre of gravity being moved into a direction in space while the supporting part of the body has no action, or the support of the body being removed without the centre of gravity being shifted into any direction in space' (Laban 1971: 67). By being aware of their centre of gravity, manipulactors can affect the way an audience perceives the effect of gravity on their body by emphasizing certain parts of it, for example, by muscular tension, posture, or walk from chest or hips, regardless of where actual weight is centred.

Once stability in the manipulactor is established, the second step consists of the performer creating the metaphorical centre of the puppet. As discussed above, puppets have their own centre of gravity, which is inherent to their design. For instance, the rabbits in *Cuniculus* have a low centre of gravity which allows them to stand up straight when not being manipulated. In addition to its centre of gravity, the puppet also has a metaphorical centre, which is defined as the part of the puppet from which all its actions are generated. The metaphorical centre is different from the centre of gravity. It is located at the junction between the puppet's representational body and the body part of the manipulactor that generates its movements. It gives the impression that the puppets are weighted and located in space in order to appear alive. This is what Paiva calls the

'fake axis'. He explains as follows: 'If you imagine a cross, that is how we know where we are horizontally and vertically, and that is how we balance our body and we make shapes. I have mine, of which I am totally aware. Then I have the external one, the fake one of the body of the puppet' (Paiva 2009). Different puppets can have different metaphorical centres. For instance, in *Cuniculus* the metaphorical centre of the puppet is the mouth. It is controlled by Tranter's hand and allows control of the head and the upper torso of the puppets. In *Twin Houses*, for most of the puppets the metaphorical centre is located in their neck, as this is the point of junction with Mossoux's shoulders.

Metaphorical centres can be placed in various areas of the representational body of the puppet as long as they allow a good control of the puppet in order to diffuse movements to the rest of its body. The body part of the manipulactor connected to the puppet is usually located in a peripheral region of his body such as the hand. There is a potential tension between the centre of gravity of the manipulactor and the metaphorical centre of the puppet because gravity tends to push the puppet towards the earth.

The third step consists of establishing the fixed point of the puppet in order to stabilise the constant tension by maintaining a relatively constant distance between the puppet and the manipulactor. The fixed point inscribes the body of the puppet in space. If the level of a puppet's head goes up and down during the course of a play, the puppet is not grounded and therefore does not appear as an independent being but as an extension of the performer. Centres of gravity and metaphorical centres are notions that need to be grasped and embodied by manipulactors in order properly to interact with puppets.

Somatic dialogue

To interact with the puppet, the manipulactor establishes a specific body schema by

using body-parts isolation which allows him to divide his body into two parts: the part that generates the movement of the puppet and the part that generates movement for the character he acts. For each part, the performer establishes different rhythms and qualities. Subsequently, the manipulactor modulates the movement intensity of one part of his body in relation to the other in order to express whether it is himself or the puppet that generates an action at a particular moment of the piece.

A somatic dialogue is established between the real body of the manipulactor and the irreal body of the puppet. The manipulactor impels a movement from his body out towards the puppet, which seems to have been initiated by the latter. There is an effacement of the manipulactor. Then, the movement returns from the puppet to the manipulactor which provokes a reaction in the body of the manipulactor. In her article 'Monstrous Births' (2011), Carole Guidicelli reports that Patrick Bonté and Nicole Mossoux call this combination of movements a 'boomerang effect [which shows] a body torn between two opposite intentions, two rhythms, in order to introduce the idea of division, of fragmentation' (Guidicelli 2011: 8).

The attention of the audience is guided by the use of these movement principles. To direct the focus of the audience to the puppet and not to the performer, it is crucial to create a significant discrepancy of intensity between the movements of the two bodies. Hence, if the performer wants the audience to look at the puppet, the latter needs to move much more than him. The degree of intensity depends on the subtlety of movements produced through the puppet. In the case of discreet movement such as breathing, the performer needs to have perfect stillness. If the movements of the puppet are large, those of the performer do not affect the focus of the audience as long as he is cautious enough to keep them understated. On the contrary, if the performer wants the audience to focus on him, he has to move much more than the puppet. The design of the

puppet can also contribute to guiding the gaze of the audience by enhancing the movements of the puppet, as discussed in Chapter IV in regard to the role of the big ears of the rabbits of *Cuniculus*. It can also play a role in the performance of verbal dialogue between the manipulactor and the puppet. I address this matter later in this chapter.

Gaze

There are two gazes that need to be examined in manipulacting: the real gaze of the manipulactor and the irreal gaze of the puppet. As discussed throughout the thesis, the gaze of the puppet combines two functions. Firstly, it supports the irreal subjectness of the puppet by giving the impression that it can see its surroundings and react to them. The apparent gaze of the puppet supports the manifestation of a consciousness by suggesting cognitive activities. In order to function, the gaze needs to be precise when the puppet is supposed to look at a specific object or place. This function of the gaze is common to many forms of puppetry. Secondly, the manipulactor appears to belong to the fictive world of the puppet when the latter looks at him and reacts to his presence. It can be an exchange of gaze, as happens in *Cuniculus*, for instance. This form of exchange of gaze can be defined as direct. Or the gaze can be indirect, as happens in *Twin Houses*, where on most occasions the puppets do not look at the manipulactor but at where the manipulactor looks. They share an object of vision.

The gaze of the manipulactor also has several functions. The manipulactor guides the gaze of the audience through the direction of his own gaze. For instance, by looking at the side of the head of the puppet, the manipulactor signals to the audience that the focus of attention is the puppet. If the manipulactor exchanges gazes with the puppet, he signals that he is also part of the action. This aspect of the gaze is combined with the interaction of bodies between the manipulactor and the puppet.

Five possible calibrations of the gaze exist when manipulactors and puppets interact together:

- The puppet looks at the surroundings while the manipulactor looks at the puppet.

- The manipulactor looks at the surroundings while the puppet looks at the manipulactor.

- The manipulactor and the puppet exchange gazes.

- The manipulactor and the puppet share an object of vision by looking at the same place in their surroundings.

- The puppet and the manipulactor do not look at the same place for reasons inherent in their relationship. It could be that they are scared of each other, or that they are purposely ignoring each other because of an earlier argument, or that they are both absorbed in very specific tasks.

It is worth noticing that, in the last two cases, the type of gaze is strongly connected to the specific dramaturgy of a scene. If a puppet and a performer look in indeterminate directions for no dramaturgical reasons, there is a loss of the focus of the action that may bring confusion to the audience about where to look. These options are combined in performance, often in rapid sequence, as in Tranter's example described earlier in Chapter IV when he interacts with Mutti.

Finally, it is important to bear in mind that the precision of the gaze of the puppet is always compared to that of the manipulactor. A discrepancy in the level of precision between their two gazes has a negative impact on the alterity of the puppet. There are two ways to deal with that issue. Firstly, the puppet has a very precise gaze, comparable to that of a human being. Secondly, the manipulactor can 'puppetise' his

own visual agency in order to match the imprecision of the gaze of the puppet. This is a radical choice, not often used but functional.

Gaze plays several functions in manipulacting. It gives the impression of consciousness in the puppet. The calibration of the gaze between the puppet and the manipulactor is an additional tool to frame the focus of the audience. From the audience's perspective, the gaze of the puppet towards the manipulactor is a key dramaturgical element in establishing a relation of self to Other. This is certainly one of the skills that takes a lot of time to acquire in manipulacting.

Speech

The elaboration of speech is not necessary in manipulacting. It is possible to create a piece in which the puppets are mute, as is the case in *Twin Houses* and in *Urashima Taro* (I refer to the life-sized puppets). The use of speech in a production is entirely a dramaturgical choice. The difficulty of manipulacting consists in framing speech movements in order to create an apparent discussion between the manipulactor and the puppet.

When speech occurs, dramaturgical and design choices will lead the theatre-makers to decide whether the puppet has an articulated mouth or not. In most cases, speaking puppets such as those used by Paiva and Tranter have articulated mouths. The articulation system is quite similar to the one used in a number of TV puppets such as the Muppets. An articulated mouth gives an additional sign to the audience to understand the order of the discussion. It requires the acquisition of specific skills in order to synchronise the movements of the hand in charge of the mouth of the puppet with the spoken words. Yet, it is possible to create the impression of speech even for a

puppet without an articulated mouth by framing carefully the position of the manipulactor's body in relation to the puppet and the direction of their gazes, and by finding alternative movements to those of the mouth.

The difficulty inherent to speech lies in the ability of the performer to create the impression that the source of the puppet's voice is located within the puppet, although it comes from a visible outside source. The challenge is furthermore increased in solo performances because the performer presents the voice of the puppet as well as the voice of the character responding to it. When the two characters have a conversation, confusion about who is actually talking has to be avoided. It is important to calibrate the different movements that are involved in speech. Once again, speech is about organising movements between the puppet and the manipulactor.

The character who speaks has to be the one who moves the most. When the puppet talks during a conversation, it appears that the movements of its head and of the upper part of its body are intensified in order to draw attention to them, as they are the supposed source of the voice. In comparison, the head and upper part of the performer's body remain still. The only part moving is his mouth. In the case of the puppets with articulated mouths used by Tranter and Paiva, the size of the mouth is twice as large as that of its human protagonist. The opening of the mouth of the manipulactor is kept to a minimum whereas the opening of the mouth of the puppet is extremely wide and usually enhanced by the design of the head. The manipulactor has to avoid situations where the audience sees both mouths moving at the same time and next to each other when the puppet is supposed to talk. Conversations should be framed in such a way that the puppet does not face the manipulactor when the latter produces its voice. To signal that the puppet is talking, the puppet looks at the manipulactor, turns its face towards the audience, delivers its text facing the audience, then turns back to the manipulactor to

signal that it has finished talking. As the puppet talks, the manipulactor places his face in a way that makes it less visible to the audience. To do so, he looks sideways at the puppet, places himself slightly in retreat from the puppet, or uses parts of his body or of the puppet, such as its hand, to mask the movement of his mouth. When the manipulactor answers back, he faces the puppet before he eventually starts to deliver his lines, still facing the puppet. The head and the upper body of the puppet are still.

The way that puppets deliver speech requires a particular approach. As French puppet master Alain Recoing suggests, puppets cannot deliver speech through breathing as actors do because 'the doll does not breathe. It performs. The script will not be phrased by breath but by movement' (Recoing 1994: 33; my translation). French scholar Patrice Freytag gives a good description of the way speech has to be delivered by the puppet.

> The manipulactor needs to structure the text of the character by decomposing it into 'blocks of meaning' – words, sentences, groups of sentences – in direct connection not only to the sub-text of the character but also to the movement pattern of the puppet. These 'physical actions' aim at creating the impression that the puppet is animated by an autonomous, coherent and 'natural' thought, not in the sense of a naturalistic copy of life, but instead in the sense of an independent structure which possesses its own logic, and that belongs to the world of the character in such a way that [the manipulactor] is able to make 'real', in other words believable, the gestured and textual discourse of the puppet, despite the necessity of a poetic transposition. (Freytag 2004: 102; my translation) [1]

Freytag points out the importance of creating speech through movements that are not mimicking human beings. This is particularly true when working with puppets that do not have an articulated mouth. In *The Maids*, for instance, when Madame speaks, her head moves in bow-tie shapes, punctuated by sharp back-and-forth movements. Although these movements are not natural, they can create a speech pattern that is coherent and believable if the technique is fully mastered.

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[1] Freytag also borrows the terms 'manipulactor' from Annie Gilles but his definition is closer to the original than mine.

Finally, as discussed in Chapter V about *The Maids*, the level of emotion present on the manipulactor's body and face when he performs the speech of the puppet can decrease the subjectness of the puppet by highlighting too much his own presence. The result is an imbalanced co-presence between the puppet and the performer. To avoid such an issue, it is important to calibrate the levels of expressivity of performer by carefully choosing the characterisation of the puppet.

Conclusion

Manipulacting is about organising movement and body on stage. As Tranter explains, it is about 'what you want the audience to see. ... And just as important, what you want the audience not to see' (Tranter 2009). The awareness of the centre of gravity by the manipulactor and the control of the metaphorical centre of the puppet, the use of body-parts isolation and the calibration of the amplitude of movements allow the manipulactor to establish a dialogue between his character and the puppet.

There are some dramaturgical questions that need to be tackled by theatre-makers working in the field of manipulacting. These questions are directly connected to the ontological aspects inherent to this form of performance, whose core concept is the apparent relation of self to Other between a human being and an object. Ignoring these aspects reduces tremendously the dramaturgical meaning of a production.

The first question has to do with the reason for choosing to embody a character by a puppet in relation to a human being. As discussed at length in this thesis, the apparent relation of self to Other always contains another relation to do with the ontological ambiguity of the puppet. The puppet represents an absent Other that needs to be clearly defined. There are many possible Others: the Ultimate Other which

symbolises a rejection of an individual by society, another Self, or an intermediary figure between two human beings. This is not an exhaustive list and many more meanings of the representation of the Other can be added.

The second question has to do with the choice of the puppet design in order to represent the Other. Design plays a major role in the form of manipulacting that is developed but also in the meaning given to the Other. The conjoined twin puppets used in *Twin Houses* and their resemblance to their human protagonist have a *raison d'être* that differs from the choice made by Tranter to have talking rabbits in *Cuniculus*.

Finally, as discussed in Chapter VI about *Urashima Taro*, the relation of power between the puppet and the manipulactor has to be carefully examined. The theme of manipulation is difficult to avoid in puppetry. The relation of self to Other between the puppet and the manipulactor always implicitly contains a relation of domination that can be either accentuated or on the contrary reversed.

Addressing these dramaturgical questions is as necessary as developing the right skills to perform manipulacting. Theatre-makers should be aware of the ontological issues related to the staging of the puppet as an irreal Other.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to present manipulacting as a new and distinct form of performance that emerged in the 1980s. The specificity of manipulacting is to establish a relation of self to Other between a performer and the puppet that he operates in order to create the impression of a co-presence. As discussed throughout my research, there is no specific aesthetic or technique that defines manipulacting. What matters is the encounter on stage of two forms of alterity. Manipulacting focuses on the confrontation on stage of the real presence of the performer with the apparent presence of the puppet. To study this particular form of performance I have been engaged in a journey that has intertwined moments of practice and theoretical reflection in order to understand what constitutes the puppet as an Other.

By looking at Sartre's theory of the Other, I have suggested that the alterity of the puppet appears when the representational body of the puppet seems to separate itself from the real body of the manipulactor in order to confront him through actions or dialogue. The puppet is apprehended as an Other because it seems to have an embodied consciousness. Gaze, and to a certain extent speech, complete the fabrication of the alterity of the puppet. I have suggested that the ambiguous relationship taking place between these two beings results from their ontological differences. When one watches such a form of performance, one often experiences an uncanny impression. Levinas

helps us to identify the reason for this uncanny feeling when he contends that an object cannot be an Other. The Other is that particular being who escapes the self while the object belongs to the identity of the self. There is an apparent contradiction between the impossibility raised by Levinas for an object to be an Other and the fact that the puppet appears as an Other in manipulacting. I have proposed to answer this by examining the theory of image developed by Sartre in *The Imaginary* (2004). I have concluded that the puppet is not an Other but the image of an absent Other. Although this image is initiated by perception, it appears to consciousness as an irreal being because consciousness is directed towards an absence.

In order to define what constitutes the ambiguity of the puppet as an Other, I have operated a re-functioning of Sartrean ontology. Because the puppet is an object that becomes a subject through performance, I have suggested that the essence of the puppet as object precedes its existence as subject. By applying to the puppet an ontology that reverses how Sartre defines human ontology, I mean that the materiality of the puppet as an object has to be already present in order to allow the manifestation of its apparent subjectness. I suggest that the ambiguous relationship taking place between the manipulactor and the puppet is the result of the encounter on stage of two beings who belong to two different modes of existence and actuality.

Nowadays, well-known artists such as Nicole Mossoux, Duda Paiva, Neville Tranter and Ilka Schönbein have established manipulacting in the circuit of international festivals.[1] Yet, the number of productions exploring the relation of self to Other between the puppet and the puppeteer remains limited despite the fact that most contemporary puppet performances display visible manipulators. The reason is certainly to be found in the difficulty in gaining the appropriate skills to perform onstage such a

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[1] It would certainly be an interesting study to examine and compare the representation of the Other created by these very different solo artists.

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relationship. Sylvie Baillon, artistic director of French puppet company Ches Panses Vertes and member of the pedagogic team of L'Ecole Supérieure Nationale des Arts de la Marionnette in Charleville-Mézières reported that in 2011 only one student of the school decided to develop such a form of performance for her final piece because it takes a very long time to gain adequate skills.[2] Moreover, the dramaturgical aspects inherent to the ambiguous relationship between the puppet and the manipulactor need to be understood in order effectively to explore manipulacting. The potentialities of manipulacting are fully disclosed when the ambiguous alterity of the puppet is integrated with the dramaturgy of a production. One of the purposes of this research has been to provide a better understanding of this new form of performance in order to support such dramaturgical choices as well as to offer a set of recommendations in order to develop the appropriate skills.

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[2] This information was given at the conference 'Le Corps Hybride du Solo Marionnettique' organised by Université d'Artois. The piece discussed by Sylvie Baillon was *Allume, Eteins!* (2011) by Yngvild Aspeli and was the subject of Marie Garré Nicoara's conference paper 'Corps Infiltrés au Service d'une Hybridation Temporelle' presented at the same conference.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEWS

Nicole Mossoux

Neville Tranter

Duda Paiva and Ederson Rodrigues

Kristin Kerwin and Juley Ayres

INTERVIEW WITH NICOLE MOSSOUX

Edinburgh 04/02/2009

Paul Piris: D'où est venue l'idée de travailler avec des doubles dans *Twin Houses*?

Nicole Mossoux: L'idée n'était pas de faire des doubles de moi mais plutôt que nous soyons à égalité. Je ne savais vers quel niveau de réalisme on allait arriver entre les marionnettes et moi. J'ai d'ailleurs fais des essais avec un marionnettiste mais qui n'ont pas été très concluant. Je m'étais dis 'tiens ces des personnages un peu lunaire. Il a commençait à fabriquer des choses qui était tout de suite stylisées. Et dans ma tête j'allais rejoindre la stylisation des figures. Mais ca n'a pas fonctionnait comme ça et j'ai fais appelle au maquilleur Jean-Pierre Fillotor et c'est lui qui m'a dit si vous vous ressemblez on doit partir de ta tête et ensuite on remodèlera des caractères et tu seras maquillée comme eux. On est parti des moulages de mon visage.

PP: Quelle formation avez-vous?

NM: J'ai une formation de danse classique au départ, j'ai fais l'école Béjart à Bruxelles. On a eu un enseignement qui était une tentative d'ouvrir l'interprète sur d'autres techniques que la danse. Il y avait des expériences et des personnalités vraiment intéressantes, d'Eurythmique notamment avec un professeur du nom de Fernand Shirren, des notions de jeu, de chant, d'improvisation.

PP: Comment vous conciliez sur scène le fait d'être à la fois un personnage et à la fois la manipulatrice d'un autre personnage? Comment cela se passe en vous?

NM: Dans la concentration. C'est sûr que la décision, que la majeur partie de tes intentions vont vers la marionnette. C'est-à-dire que dans la première scène de *Twin Houses* et dans d'autres ils vont vers ce point la de l'épaule, qui est son centre a elle. Ca se répand vers sa tête, vers son bras, éventuellement vers sa jambe quand elle a ma jambe. La concentration qui va rester est plutôt de façon négative. C'est plutôt un retrait qu'une volonté de porter un jeu, alors qu'à la marionnette tu dois donner pour qu'elle soit un peu crédible énormément de volonté même de psychologisme, tout ce que l'on s'interdit au plateau. Tu dois lui donner la décision. C'est elle qui réagit d'abord et puis toi. Autant toi il faut que tu te retire sinon les présences ne vont être jamais à parts égales.

PP: Dans le passage de l'amant vous êtes très égaux.

NM: Il y a plus de jeu de ma part. Il y a quelque chose qui se relâche un peu.

PP: Vous existez tous les deux en même temps ou bien c'est lui puis vous puis lui?

NM: Ce n'est pas si systématique que ça. C'est comme dans la vie, tu es en train de parler, en même temps tu sens que tu es assis, tu entends de la musique, enfin tu as quand même des possibilités de couches. Je n'ai pas travaillé très méthodiquement. Je n'ai pas appris la marionnette. J'ai fais un petit stage où on ma appris la marionnette. De regarder ce qu'elle va faire, et puis nous prendre à témoins et puis faire. Ca se fait plus instinctivement. J'ai travaillé avec un miroir parce que je ne les vois pas car elles sont à coté de moi afin de me rendre compte du potentiel de vie qu'elles avaient. Je travaille beaucoup seule et à un moment donné Patrick arrive quand j'en peux plus, que ca ne va plus du tout (rires), que je ne sais plus quoi faire avec tous ce qu'il y a. Il me renvoie les signes que je donne. C'est son rôle. Petit à petit la dramaturgie s'articule. Toujours après. Le vrai point de départ de *Twin Houses*, c'est la découverte d'une vieille poupée sur un marché, une vieille poupée en tissus. J'ai commencé à lui faire un visage. Et j'au eu envie de mettre ça en scène, de chercher. Ca fait appelle aux souvenirs de petite fille. Petit à petit j'ai essayé avec des têtes en frigonite, ces têtes qui portent des perruques, avec des bouts de tissus. Comment elle pouvait être avec moi et moi avec elle. La thématique est venue des faits. Je ne me suis pas dis que je vais travailler sur le double, sur la complexité. Non. Je me suis dit que vais travailler avec des figures.

PP: Est-ce que le double viens du fait qu'en vous retrouvant seule cela devient aussi une réflexion de vous-même sur vous même? Cela devient un dédoublement et en même temps ce n'est pas vous exactement?

NM: Ce n'est pas une réflexion sur moi.

PP: Je veux dire une exploration.

NM: Une exploration mais à travers moi. Venant de la danse, cela ne m'intéresse plus depuis longtemps de travailler sur mon corps par exemple. Sur ce qu'il peut faire, pas faire, etc.. J'ai besoin d'un partenaire. J'ai travaillé avec des ombres. C'est plutôt de se retrouver dans un studio avec quelque chose en face. Un défi aussi. Quelque chose qu'on ne connaît pas. *Capharnaüm*, mon dernier spectacle, c'est ça aussi. Dans ce spectacle j'utilise des objets trouvés qui sont truqués pour voir, respirer, vivre. C'est des choses qui traînaient au studio, qu'on a trouvé en tournée, sur les marchés. Des objets de rien.

PP: Pour créer ces personnages qui sont sur vos épaules, vous avez besoin d'y croire ou pas qu'ils existent ?

NM: Je n'ai pas forcément besoin de savoir ce que je ressens de l'intérieur mais j'ai eu besoin du témoignage d'un miroir pour me dire 'ah oui ça existe!'

PP: C'est-à-dire vous en tant que spectatrice de vous même face au miroir.

NM: De nous. D'un nous forcement. Mais on a toujours envie d'être surpris, peut être pas de trouver des confirmations de ce que l'on a envie de faire mais d'être interpeller. C'est comme quand on travaille avec des comédiens et des danseurs et soudain tu vois un truc et tu dis 'merde c'est ça!' Enfin tu ne sais pas ce que c'est, tu es interpellé, étonné, dérangé parfois. Et c'est ça que tu vas garder. Je me rappelle, je travaillais au studio avec Gertrude, les marionnettes ont des noms comme ça, le téléphone sonne, je

vais décrocher et je vois que c'est elle qui décroche. C'est un truc con mais ca fait que tu y crois.

PP: La technique est particulière. Vous manipulez avec votre épaule.

NM: Fabrice a fait des moulages d'une partie de mon épaule qui est repris par des élastiques qui fait qu'on a beaucoup de mobilités. Le centre de la marionnette se trouve à ce niveau là.

PP: C'est le cou son centre vital.

NM: Oui c'est son 'ki'. Chez elle c'est là. Si je commence à manipuler avec la main ca ne marche pas. Je n'y crois pas. C'est la même chose que quand tu engages un mouvement central ou un mouvement périphérique. Tu ne dis pas la même chose. Pour la marionnette, il doit être central parce qu'elle a tellement peu de consistance.

PP: De corps?

NM: elle n'a pas d'épaisseur. C'est un tissu avec une tête un peu légère. Tu dois faire démarrer du centre. Le centre pour elle c'est le cou parce que c'est le contact avec moi, parce que c'est la partie du corps que tu peux articuler le mieux puisque logiquement son centre se serait son nombril. Mais je ne peux rien faire de là. Je ne peux pas vraiment me couper en deux, tandis qu'ici je peux.

PP: Est-ce que cela veut dire que vous avez deux centres, le vôtre et celui de la marionnette et donc vous devez jouer avec ces deux centres de gravité ou centre vitaux?

NM: Oui. La marionnette est comme un cerf-volant mais tu dois assurer la prise centrale qui est le centre vital. Ce n'est pas elle non plus mais toi qui injecte la vie. Tu dois garder un contrôle central.

PP: C'est toujours un aller-retour. C'est vous qui contrôlez et après la marionnette qui prend le dessus puisque vous dites que vous devez vous effacer.

NM: C'est un peu ça. Tu recules. Tu ne te projette pas. Tu t'introjecte! Je ne sais pas comment dire. Mais c'est vrai que tu t'efface. Tu vois ce qu'elle voit. Du coup ton regard n'est plus porté vers l'extérieur car ça passe vers l'intérieur.

PP: Quel est le rapport au regard? En général votre propre regard est-il porté là où les marionnettes regardent ou bien vous regardent-elles?

NM: Elles ne me regardent pas. Elles ne savent pas (pouvoir en belge) elles n'y arrivent pas sauf parfois le personnage de l'homme.

PP: Comment est manipulé l'homme?

NM: Il y a trois situations. Il est manipulé par le cou au bout de la main, il est placé sur l'épaule et il est sur la tête. Il est aussi un tout petit bébé.

PP: Est-ce que vous avez un autre rapport avec lui parce que vous le manipulez avec votre main?

NM: C'est ça. On devient deux. Mais c'est aussi un rapport homme femme. Il y a quelque chose différent. Les autres personnages sont soit un peu androgynes soit des femmes. C'est plus cette femme qui est à l'intérieur de moi que je joue avec ces marionnettes. Tandis que l'homme est plus le vis-à-vis. Il est très grand. Il mesure deux mètres à un moment. Par contre, il y a une petite sorcière avec qui je ne suis pas du tout en rapport avec elle. Je suis un support que l'on accepte je crois mais je ne suis plus partie prenante de ses actions. Elle fait ce qu'elle veut.

PP: Vous devenez un genre de castelet, un paysage.

NM: Oui je pense. Enfin c'est comme cela que je le ressens. Là je fais ce qu'elle fait. Elle ne fait pas ce que je fais. Il y a un renversement. Mais tout marionnettiste doit vivre ça. J'accompagne. Je suis le castelet mobile.

PP: A part la scène avec l'homme, c'est toujours la marionnette qui décide et vous vous suivez.

NM: Je réagis aussi en tant que personnage. J'ai aussi mon avis sur les choses mais il n'est pas premier, il est réactif. Elle a l'action et j'ai la réaction. On pourrait dire comme ça.

PP: Ca se passe comment quand vous avez deux marionnettes en même temps, une sur chaque épaule?

NM: C'est comme dans tous les rapports à trois, il y a toujours deux plus un, jamais trois. Il y a un psychiatre qui m'a fait lire un livre où il parle assez bien de la relation à trois. C'est presque deux contre un. Dans le contre il n'y a pas de notion négative. Ce qui difficile à saisir c'est dans le passage de la relation entre Denise et moi à la relation entre Denise et Gertrude. Il y a toujours des petits tournants difficiles à prendre. Il y a un moment où Denise est là, on se regarde, on se voit. Puis Gertrude intervient et Denise doit me quitter. Et c'est très difficile de ne pas faire de mimique avec la main mais de faire en sorte que Denise enregistre qu'elle me quitte pour regarder l'autre.

PP: Le passage se fait grâce au regard?

NM: Oui, c'est beaucoup ça. Mais son regard à elle. Ce n'est pas moi qui vais voir ailleurs, c'est elle qui va voir ailleurs. Donc elle me lâche. Il suffit d'enlever quelque chose, juste d'enregistrer qu'elle me lâche. Mais comment elle me lâche, c'est toujours des petits tournants, quand le deux plus un devient un plus deux. Le regard c'est le plateau. Etre sur un plateau, c'est un certain type de regard. J'ai toujours cette image, mais c'est un certain type de travail aussi, où tes yeux ne se projettent pas mais laissent le regard du spectateur se projeter dedans. L'impression que l'on peut passer à travers. C'est le trou de l'âme. Tu permets au spectateur de regarder dans tes yeux. Tu es là et tu n'es pas là. Cela permet au spectateur de rentrer à l'intérieur. Tu ne vas pas le chercher, il peut venir.

PP: Pour vous, il y a t'il un rapport entre la conscience et le regard?

NM: Oui. La marionnette doit acquérir une consistance qu'elle n'a pas. Il n'y a pas de sang, il n'y a pas de muscle, il n'y a pas de chaleur.

PP: C'est un objet qui doit devenir un personnage.

NM: Ou un être. Je préfère être à personnage. La marionnette a cette capacité de permettre au spectateur de s'identifier complètement. Ce n'est pas comme avec un acteur qui a son vécu supposé, qui nous plait ou nous plait pas. Il n'y a pas de relation humaine. Il y a un soi qui peut se projeter dans une figure. C'est ça qui peut être miraculeux. C'est là sa force. C'est avec ton vécu et non pas ton imagination que en tant que spectateur tu y crois. Qu'importe si le manipulateur y croit si le spectateur peut y croire. J'ai eu ça en voyant justement les anglais de Faulty Optic. Il a une figure de petit vieux que Gavin Glover tient dans ses mains. Il a un petit gilet sans bras et tu y crois. C'est ça la force de la figure comme disent les allemands, Figuren. J'aime bien ce mot qu'utilise les allemands, Figuren. Ni personnage, ni marionnette. Il y a une connotation un peu gnangnan dans ces termes. Ce serait bien que le français se débarrasse de ces mots, change.

PP: En tant qu'interprète qu'elle est le rapport entre imagination, perception et mémoire quand vous êtes sur scène?

NM: Il y a une scène avec des pleureuses où j'ai des images très concrètes qui m'arrivent, soit de l'actualité, soit de choses qui arrivent à mes proches en ce moment. C'est très bizarre. C'est l'évocation, la mémoire. C'est des choses qui se sont passé récemment. Parfois des évènements plus anciens. Mais ce n'est pas le cas de toutes les scènes. Il y en a d'autre où je suis plus en train d'observer qui se passe. Il y a toujours une certaine distance. Je me sens comme un veilleur, comme si j'étais derrière. Pas très loin derrière mais là, d'apparence pas très nette avec un peu de conscience pour pouvoir faire que ce corps, cette figure, puisse exister. Il faut que je surveille ce qui se passe. Je crois que quand tu parviens à cet état là c'est le mieux pour le jeu. Je ne sais pas si c'est à ce moment là que le spectacle passe le mieux mais tu te sens plus juste. Tu es un peu derrière, en diagonale. Et tu vois toi, ton personnage, et l'autre qui évolue.

PP: Et votre regard?

NM: Je fais faire un exercice en stage où tu regarde derrière. Ce n'est pas ça que je pense quand je travaille moi mais c'est un exercice qui te coupe du regard directionnel. On n'est pas dans une situation réaliste. Le spectateur doit pouvoir se mettre à ta place et ne pas te regarder et lui dire quelque chose. Il est toi. Il faut te rendre poreux, accessible.

PP: Si on pense à une relation triangulaire entre la marionnette, vous et le spectacle, est-ce que vous vous voyez comme un veilleur qui guide le spectateur?

NM: Non car la marionnette peut exister sans moi. Même si je suis seule sur un plateau, je suis le veilleur de mon propre corps qui est une enveloppe de transition, de passage, d'émotion. Je ne dis pas ça spécialement pour la marionnette. La marionnette peut très bien exister toute seule. Si je me cache, théoriquement elle devrait arrivait à vivre. Donc il n'y a pas de triangulation.

PP: Pour vous c'est comme si vous deveniez un intermédiaire?

NM: Une triangulation avec le spectateur fonctionne bien quand il y a deux acteurs. On travaille très peu dans le vis à vis, dans la relation directe entre deux en se disant que c'est peut être plus intéressant que si l'un des acteurs par exemple va envoyer un coup à l'autre, il ne l'envoie pas directement mais il laisse le spectateur dans le temps entre le coup envoyé et le coup reçu ou dans la direction, dans le type de regard qu'ils ont entre eux. Le spectateur devrait pouvoir intervenir. Mais avec les marionnettes ce n'est pas pareille.

PP: Est-ce que vous faites en sorte que le regard du spectateur entre en vous pour qu'il soit sur le plateau ?

NM: Mais ça c'est en général. Il y a quelque chose comme ça pour être soi même de l'ordre de la figure, de l'ordre de l'effacement que la marionnette a naturellement. C'est Kleist qui a dis ça. J'ai eu une altercation avec un critique français car il me disait que je me trompais sur Kleist. Kleist dit que le danseur envie la marionnette pour ses qualités d'absence. Mais ces qualités d'absence il ne faut pas les appliquer à la marionnette mais à l'interprète. Ce dernier a beaucoup à envier à la marionnette qui a justement cette possibilité de transparence qui fait que son mouvement est parfait. Nous on est encombré par nos muscles, nos intentions, ce que l'on a mangé avant. Tout notre vécu nous encombre. Mais il ne faut pas appliquer ce vide à la marionnette puisqu'elle l'a. C'est à l'acteur qu'il faut l'appliquer.

PP: Sartre dit que ce sont les corps qui séparent les consciences. Est-ce que pour vous il y a deux corps sur scène, le vôtre et celui de la marionnette? Il y aurait deux corps et en même temps il n'y en a qu'un, le vôtre. Dans un article vous parlez de siamois qui sont attachez à votre corps. On voit clairement deux corps différents, ce ne sont pas des extensions de vous.

NM: C'est deux êtres mais c'est un seul corps. La marionnette n'a jamais de corps. Elle a des prothèses. Même pour une marionnette portée devant c'est le corps de manipulateur que l'on sent. C'est son énergie. Le vivant est le manipulateur. Le vivant c'est le corps. Il n'y a pas de corps de marionnette.

PP: Pour vous, il n'a pas de corps de marionnette ou il y a un corps irréel?

NM: Il faut s'entendre sur le mot corps. Qu'est ce que c'est un corps?

PP: Pour Sartre c'est le sujet de la conscience.

NM: Est-ce que le mot corps sous-entend vie? Non. Pas spécialement. Un cadavre c'est encore un corps. C'est de la matière organisée.

PP: Organisée cela peut vouloir dire distinct. On va faire une distinction entre deux corps car ils sont bien distincts.

NM: Celui de la marionnette et celui de l'acteur ? Non je ne crois pas. Ce n'est pas possible. La marionnette n'a pas de corps même si elle est articulée, si elle est complète. C'est le mot corps le problème. C'est quoi un corps.

PP: Vous préférez le mot 'être'.

NM: Oui. C'est différent.

PP: Pourquoi? Parce que 'être' ça a un rapport avec la conscience?

NM: Oui, avec la pensée en tout cas. J'aime bien l'idée de corps pensant plutôt que la pensée et le corps. Tout ce qui propre à la perception et qui renvoie à l'imaginaire, à la mémoire, à la réflexion. C'est l'ambiguïté des mots. Patrick Bonté et moi on parle beaucoup de l'absence, d'être absent sur le plateau. Mais on n'est pas absent du tout. Il y aune espèce de résultat dans une présence très épaisse qui fait que tu crois donner une impression d'absence dans lequel le spectateur peut rentrer. Mais toi tu n'es pas du tout absent. Tu es très présent. Ton veilleur est là.

PP: L'absence ce serait la capacité de laisser de l'espace au spectateur?

NM: Oui car entre l'état de l'acteur sur le plateau et ce que le spectateur perçoit les choses sont parfois très opposées.

09/10/2009 (Phone Interview)

PP: Je voulais vous poser une question par rapport au fait que vous m'aviez dit que lorsque vous manipuliez les marionnettes de *Twin Houses* vous tendez à être une sorte de veilleur derrière chaque marionnette. Je voudrais savoir spécifiquement à propos de la scène avec l'homme, dans laquelle vous êtes tous les deux actifs. Vous êtes moins en retrait dans cette scène. Il y a une égalité entre vous deux. Je voudrais savoir si vous êtes les deux êtres simultanément ou bien si c'est vous, plus lui, puis vous etc... Selon ce qui se passe au niveau de l'action.

NM: C'est sûrement la scène qui est la plus jouée de mon coté. Parfois on ne voit que lui. Là le problème est réglé. C'est un aller-retour rapide je dirai.

PP: Pour vous c'est donc un aller-retour rapide.

NM: Il semble. Oh non. C'est difficile à dire. Cela dit c'est comme dans la vie. Tu peux faire deux trucs en même temps.

PP: J'ai discute avec plusieurs personnes, la marionnettiste avec qui je travaille par exemple. Elle me dit qu'elle est l'un après l'autre. Par contre j'ai discuté avec Duda Paiva, lui me dit qu'il est les deux à la fois. Donc je voulais savoir ce qui se passe pour vous.

NM: Tu sais il y a quand même un truc. Ce qui permet d'être à la fois lui et moi, disons, c'est l'entre deux. Il y a plein de moments où c'est la distance entre sa bouche et la mienne, le poids qu'il me donne. Tu vois ce n'est pas lui en tant qu'autonome. On est lié. Je pense que dans cet entre-deux, en tout cas dans cette situation là, c'est ça qui est vivant.

PP: Qu'est-ce que vous appelez exactement l'entre-deux?

NM: C'est à dire qu'il me donne des signes. Il me dit 'viens par là', 'Allez! je t'emporte dans un tango' ou bien on se dispute. C'est plutôt la relation qui est présente. Ce n'est pas que je dois passer de lui à moi, c'est que l'on maintient une relation, comme quand tu joues avec un acteur. Et c'est ça qui fait que ce n'est pas compliqué. Ce n'est pas une gymnastique mentale, lui et moi, c'est nous.

PP: Est-ce que c'est parce que c'est chorégraphié aussi?

NM: Non. Ce n'est pas pour cela que cette relation est le centre de la concentration. La concentration est dans l'entre-deux. Ca serait encore plus nécessaire, parce que une fois que tu chorégraphie, que tu mets dans la musique, le danger est que les choses deviennent plus mécaniques.

PP: Quand je dis chorégraphié, je veux dire que vous savez à peu prés ce qui se passe.

NM: C'est écrit mais ce n'est pas ça que tu fais. Au contraire, tu pourrais te dire que quand tu chorégraphie, que tu mets sur la musique, il y a des choses plus métriques, le mouvement et de l'un et de l'autre se suffisent. En fait non. Ca ne suffit pas. Il faut maintenir ce truc relationnel.

PP: Quelque par puisque in fine c'est vous qui le manipulez, il vous fait une proposition…

NM: Et je réagis.

PP: Mais véritablement, avant que vous faites une proposition, c'est vous qui la faites.

NM: Oui d'accord. Mais la marionnette il faut lui donner l'initiative. Elle ne peut pas vivre si elle subit, elle est vite morte.

PP: Ce que je veux dire c'est qu'à la base la marionnette étant un objet, c'est vous qui de toute façon prenez les décisions même si ce n'est pas réfléchit.

NM: Tu ne peux pas dire que tu lui donne vie. Il faut qu'elle prenne vie et tu peux alors dire après que tu lui donne vie. Ce n'est pas concevoir la vie. C'est elle qui doit prendre, qui doit décider de vivre, ne pas subir mais la créer elle-même. On peut être que clair que dans une poétique pour dit cela. C'est très difficile. Tu ne peux pas mettre les choses à plat. Sinon par des mots comme prendre vie. Pour moi c'est le mot prendre qui est important. Elle décide de prendre sa vie. C'est le coté volontaire. Tu dois lui donner l'initiative. Elle doit prendre le pouvoir.

INTERVIEW WITH NEVILLE TRANTER

Berlin 22/10/2009

PP: Thank you again for agreeing on doing this interview. I really enjoyed your show *Cuniculus* yesterday. My very first question is very broad. It is to know about your background as a performer and how did you come to choose to work with puppets?

NT: I didn't grow up with puppets. I went to university to become a teacher to teach young children. In the evening I was doing drama classes which were interesting. I learned from Robert Gist. He was American and he came from Lee Strasberg's school. He taught me for four years as an actor in Queensland in Australia and he was a great teacher. In the town I was studying there was an elderly couple Bill and Barbara. He was the photographer of the local newspaper. He had always a hobby to do puppets and when he retired he became a professional puppeteer. It was traditional, in a booth, glove puppets. Barbara his wife she came originally from Vienna and she has done a lot of radio work in Australia. She left Vienna the day before Hitler entered Austria. She was also a great teacher. She took me to my first opera, to my first classical music concerts. She not only taught me arts but she taught me many, many things. From her husband I learned how to make puppets, carving, because they were looking for a trainee to help them on tour. They got a grant to train me for two years. I made the puppets for one of their shows. I did also a couple of the voices. All the voices were on tape because she has done a lot of radio work. She hired professional actors to do voices. She would always leave space on the tape for the reaction of the children. That's how I began. After that I moved to Melbourne. It is two thousand kilometres from where I trained and then I began Stuffed Puppet. I found an actor and a musician and we did our first show. It was a cabaret with short pieces. We did experiments, political satire. The musician had a brother so we had a band. We had live music and experiments in the booth, outside the booth. The owner of a theatre restaurant saw the show and invited us to come to his theatre restaurant for three months as a second act of a cabaret group Busby Buntlis. The Busby Buntlis has just been to Europe a year before in Amsterdam in 1977. At that time there was a festival called the Festival of Fools. It was the biggest alternative street theatre and fringe theatre in the world at that time. So they were invited again in 1978. After we have done a three month show, they say 'come with us with the puppets so we'll have a big show'. I came to Amsterdam and I stayed.

PP: What kind of puppet were you using at that time?

NT: They were all different. I used marionettes, glove puppets, rod puppets, I used masks, costumes. I was experimenting in all different directions.

PP: And then at some point you decided to use only… how would you call your puppets?

NT: Hand puppets like Muppets.

PP: That came later somehow?

NT: I chose them finally because they were the most direct puppet to be in the middle of an audience. With marionette there is always distance between you and the puppet. There is always a metre. It has a different quality. It is difficult to do very dramatic things with marionette. It is possible but it doesn't have the same impact as this kind of puppet I use that reacts very directly and very quickly.

PP: Is it because you chose to work with this type of puppets because they are more dramatic that you started to become one of the characters on stage?

NT: My first solo piece, which was called *Studies of Fantasy*, had great success in Charleville-Mézières in 1981. That's where I have been discovered in my first international puppetry festival. I had a great review in the French national newspaper Le Monde. It didn't help me because the year after I had a very difficult year. I wasn't getting noticed enough with this performance so I had to take a risk, to do something to get attention from the newspapers. So I decided to do *The Seven Deadly Sins*. That was my final break. That's when I chose the style. The piece was a knock-out. People had never seen something like that before. A very strong show. I played Mephistopheles and Faust was a naked puppet in the first row and there was only the devil and seven deadly sins. They were the puppets. Mephistopheles didn't talk so only the puppets talked and Faust did not talk. I also needed to do it to prove to myself because I had never seen any puppet theatre for adults or very little and I had to find it all out to myself. I suspected that I could do it, I felt it very strongly. I had to follow my feelings. I had to take a risk. So I dared to take a risk and it paid off. It was a big step for me to do that. After the first gig in Amsterdam I thought 'Oh what have I done! I can't do that. It's awful.' Then I got used to it and I finally realised that I really had to do this step forward. Also because I wanted to reach older adults. That's why I use adult themes. Faust is very European.

PP: It is still difficult to get this sort of audience to see puppetry.

NT: It is also a very intimate format. It's not like circus. You don't play for houses of a thousand like what Philippe Genty does. It is a different kind of theatre he does. It is non-verbal.

PP: How do you make sure that both of the characters you act and you animate are alive at the same time?

NT: It's something that has developed over the years. Not only it took me a long time to have the courage to play an extra character next to the puppet with a voice. From the beginning I discovered I could do voices. Especially in *The Seven Deadly Sins*, the puppets were so strong that I thought I couldn't compete with them as an actor. After this play I did another play called Underdog where I played a handicapped boy who can't speak and the puppet had all the power in the whole play. After that I had to take another step where I had to become as strong as the puppets and I did a play called Room 5. I played a nurse woman and she was a very strong character. She was just as strong as the puppets. It took me a long time to get that.

PP: It is very difficult to find a balance not to overtake the puppet.

NT: If I want to be technical, because it is technical and I didn't realise how technical it is until I started to teach, it is to do with focus. What you want the audience to see. What is important. And just as important, what do you want the audience not to see. It's learning, choosing the things, the right order of things because you are telling a story.

PP: Basically you are saying that you are directing the focus of the audience in order for them to look where you want them to look. Is it done through your own gaze, in other words, where you are looking at, or is through the position of your body, or is it the way the puppet is moving?

NT: I've always been very aware of my audience because what I do on the stage is not just for me. It's a dialogue with the audience which means, because I am using a very visual form of theatre, animated puppets, I'm very aware of when a puppet does this, what the affect it has on the audience. So I'm totally aware of my audience during the whole performance because that is what makes the dialogue happen. It is what's happening with the audience that is what I'm doing. So I'm very aware of what I'm doing, maybe it is emotional, I'm still very aware technically of what I'm doing. And it's to do with learning to do action-reaction and knowing, one of the most difficult things as an actor anyway, to learn to be still on stage. It's very difficult. And the puppets, because their heads are masks, they are moving masks in the space, there are moments when they just can't move the whole time. They have to be still before they move again. For me it's a choreography, it's like dancing. The puppet is still then it moves, then it's still again. That moment when the audience look at the movement, because your eyes always go to the movement, always. Magicians know that very well. And I'm also very aware of that. I know that if the puppet says something to me really emotional like the last scene with Sissy where she is really cruel, really cruel, the impact always comes over to the audience not in the movement but in the stillness. When the puppet says something to me that is violent, the violence comes over to the audience not in 'you've seen this' but in the stillness that the xxx comes to, and that stillness is like a suspense of time, you stop the image just for that moment so the audience have the impact, that they have the time, you give them the time to have the impact of what's happening, in order to feel and to understand.

PP: You are talking about stillness. Is it the stillness of the puppet and also your stillness?

NT: I suppose.

PP: Does it mean that you need to be aware of your centre of gravity, in order for you to be in such a position that you won't wobble, that you are in full control of the puppet as well?

NT: Yes.

PP: Do you also create a fake centre of gravity to the puppet that can be called a metaphoric centre?

NT: Yes, although with puppets because you can take them and move them through the air without being realistic. You can just take the puppet and do that and people will still believe in it. It's due to the fact that the puppet has to come alive. Once my hand is in

the puppet and starts to animate the puppet, it has to be a hundred percent alive. Alive means that the character is alive on stage, that you have the sense when you watch him that he's very aware of his surroundings. He sees and it reacts to the surroundings and I'm a part of the surroundings. So when he sees me, he reacts to me. The audience has to see him reacting to me otherwise there's nothing, he's nothing.

PP: When you put your hand in the puppet, does your hand, as a performer, become no longer your hand to become the head of the puppet?

NT: Yes, then it becomes that character. Absolutely.

PP: So you are doing like dancers using movement isolation in order to create different characters with their body.

NT: Yes. And I've learnt to do that because I've found that, as I said, the puppets are the greatest actors on earth, they were much better than me at the beginning. I became a better actor because they taught me to become a better actor, by opening myself up to them, by really listening and watching them when they move and seeing that when they do that they are so strong. I wish I could do that that I can say anything in one movement. The other thing which is very strange is once a puppet is really come to life in the audience and the audience sees it and then when I take my hand out of the puppet, the audience is waiting again for the puppet to become alive again. So it does lose its life energy although it's been still, you know it'll come back again, and you're waiting for that moment.

PP: I notice that in this show, when you leave the puppet they keep a position, they look like a statue contrary to a glove puppet for example which is just an amount of cloth when you take your hand off it. Are your puppets made for this purpose, to look like statue?

NT: Yes. They have to have a body language that when you look at them they are statues but they have also a language, even when they are still.

PP: I trained in acting and one of my tutors always told us that as an actor you need to create a statue for each character you act that has a very specific physicality. So when you do nothing you always go back to this statue and not to your own physicality. That's what you do with the puppets. They have a statue.

NT: Yes and because these are rabbits, you can see that their bodies can do this. It took me a while when I was building them to make them so they do stand because at the beginning they were falling over. Until I can find a way of doing it so I can place them, take my hand off of them and they can stay there.

PP: What are the puppets made of?

NT: The face is made out of foam; the body is filled up with cotton wool like for teddy bears. Just the head is carved out of foam.

PP: What is happening when your character has a conversation with two puppets?

NT: It's to do with focus. If this puppet is about to say something, if I move the audience will look at me. If I remain still and the puppet moves, I know that the audience will look at the puppet. So if the puppet moves and the other moves as well, the puppet will look at both of them.

PP: Is it two against one?

NT: It is two against one but I need to show through the character that the two are working against me.

PP: How is it when your character is acting with only one puppet? Are you the two characters at the same time or are you one and then the other?

NT: As I said it's like a choreography in a sense that if I'm standing with Claudius then I know that if I look at him like this the audience see me looking at him like this and if I look up there like this I know they are looking at me until he looks at me. Then I know that they are looking at him. Then he starts to talk. Even though people can see my mouth moving when he talks, they are watching him because the movement began with him. You have to understand that. If you know that, you work with it. It's an illusion. You could say that there are three people on stage because there is me, doing my role, knowing that when he does this I have to react as my character. There is a third eye like a very objective eye. That is me signalling the audience, looking behind of what I'm doing, like a camera watching what I'm doing, directing myself at the same time. It is very rational although I'm very emotional in the piece, there is a very rational, objective act happening at the same time. That's something I've trained to do. It's learning how to be an observer of what you are doing because it is a very visual form of theatre.

PP: Do you work with mirrors?

NT: I only look in a mirror if I want to see how big the puppet is in relation with me because that's what the audience will see. It has to do with size.

PP: You are just feeling what's happening knowing what the rules are. Do you have sometimes outside eyes watching the rehearsals?

NT: No but I'm very aware that I'm doing it for the audience.

PP: It's interesting how the initial training of a performer affects the way he works with a puppet.

NT: When I first started I didn't think of it at all but actually it was always there. I've learnt by watching Sesame Street because it's television, television with a camera: how the puppets come on into the space, how they enter, at the moment when they look at the audience, then they look to each other then back to them. And I learned a lot by watching them.

INTERVIEW WITH DUDA PAIVA
AND
EDERSON RODRIGUES

Charleville-Mézières 24/09/2009

Paul Piris: Thank you for the interview.

Duda Paiva and Ederson Rodrigues: You are welcome.

PP: My first question is to know about your background as a performer and how you came to choose puppets.

DP: I have a background first as an actor when I was very young. I went to drama school when I was fourteen and then when I was sixteen I started doing dance because as a teenager, my voice was changing so I would never get any role with text. So I was getting frustrated with the situation. I was always taking the funny parts, the physical things because I couldn't use my voice. Then, go to the dance. That's how it's started, the interest for dance. I started to appreciate it very much and be more technical. Then I joined a theatre-dance company in Brazil. I was learning many things with the professionals. Then I moved to Holland as professional dancer as well. Ten years ago, in Holland, I saw the first puppet ever because I'd never ever watched a puppet show in my life. When I saw the first puppet made of foam, kind of things I use nowadays, it was a collaboration between a dance company and a puppet company. For me it was strikingly intense moment because in that period of time in Europe, modern dance was extremely for yourself, very intellectual. The fourth wall was very solid, a very thick fourth wall!! And the puppet came to break this wall in a very beautiful manner. I believed that the puppet needs the audience to stay alive. The audience is constantly telling "your puppet is alive" and they believe in that. It is a straightforward communication between artists and audience. The puppet is a good bridge for that. So that was my great interest with puppet.

PP: Then you have been developing one particular technique using a specific type of puppet.

DP: Yes. Puppet made of very light foam. It's very elastic foam. I like this kind of material because I find it generous. It can extend my movement as a dancer and if it breaks you just glue back. It is very easy going, very friendly as material.

PP: You make your own puppets?

DP: I make my own puppets. I have to tell you one thing. Everything that I do is ninety percent autodidact. I have learned how to cut puppets by myself, I didn't go to any school. Making theatre was just learning as an actor or as a dancer. Just looking,

observing people, observing life in streets and in itself is how I started to make my own theatre.

PP: It was interesting that you said that you trained as an actor first because when I saw your show *Angel* I thought, the guy can act. He is not only a dancer. A lot of dancers are very good in puppetry because there is an understanding of the movement. But acting is different. You find a lot of puppeteers who cannot act or dancers who cannot act but you can find more easily actors who can dance. Of course they cannot dance to the same level as professional dancers. It is very interesting that you have three skills as a performer: dancer, actor and puppeteer.

DP: It's true. It is a very specific technique and there is not many people there combining them nowadays because, first, it is easier to teach a dancer how to become a puppeteer than to teach a puppeteer how to become a dancer. As a dancer you are at school and you have to mould your body and that's not in three months that you can do that. It takes a lifetime. The next step for me will be to work more and more with dancers to give puppeteer education to professional dancers.

PP: How do you consider the puppet? As an other, a double, as part of you or as something else?

DP: It's everything together. That's the playfulness of it. You can have the puppet as your partner and sometimes just as your reflection. You can break the code whenever you want to bring irony to your work. I like very much irony and puppets they do allow me to do that.

PP: How do you make sure that both the character you are acting and the character you are puppeteering are alive at the same time?

DP: It's focus. Always you have to give priority to your puppet. Puppet is first not us because we have energy. From the moment I look, I have energy in my eyes, I'm pulsing, I'm an alive thing. The puppet is dead. You have to give life. So all the time the puppet has to make twice an effort to be alive. So the puppet has to come first.

PP: Does it mean that you need to withdraw yourself?

DP: You have to give a little distance and you need to be able to breathe air through the puppet. The puppet has to breathe first. Breath and focus are the two things that make a puppet alive.

PP: When you say focus to you mean the eye focus?

DP: Yes, eyes, direction, where the puppet is looking at. And of course, the puppet needs to have a journey inside so before you enter the theatrical space your puppet needs to have already a brain that I bring myself. This brain has just to detach from me and give will to the puppet. But it has to be there.

PP: Do you mean that you have to construct a whole story for the character?

DP: Oh yes.

PP: It's very Stanislavskian.

DP: Very Stanislavskian but for puppets. So, there is something that I don't know if it is Stanislavskian because Stanislavski never taught me how to split myself in two.

PP: So you split yourself in two.

DP: Yes. I have these two brains. I have my own brain of my character and I have the brain of the puppet who is another character. These brains have to live, they have to act simultaneously.

PP: So you are two characters at the same time.

DP: Yes but the fun of it is how you believe in it. First you have to install the life of one character and then you install the life of the other one. You have two. Then these two can start to interlace. And then it's when you are like 'how my god! It's really alive!' You don't know who is who any more. That's when the puppet becomes independent.

PP: One performer told me that when they are two characters through acting and puppetry, they are one or the other. But you are saying that you are both at the same time.

DP: Yes, totally. I like to improvise as well. If I let the life of the puppet be, the puppet takes over. I can start to do something and the puppet is doing something else. Almost there are two voices at the same time. But you have to trust this life. It is a bit a schizophrenic situation and you have to allow yourself to go in this space.

PP: How does it work when the two of you are doing the lady? You, Ederson, are doing one arm and you, Duda, are doing the other arm and the head. Ederson, do you feel as well being part of her? Are you feeling that the two of you are two characters plus a third one and part of you is her?

ER: As a dancer, I work a lot with isolations. My arm is doing something but I'm not paying attention to its movement. You have to be both characters.

PP: How does the connection between the two of you happen in order to have a coherent manipulation of the puppet? Is it because you know each other a lot for example?

DP: No. It is set in the choreography. But sometimes I like to make him crazy. I do things on the spot and he has to follow. But that's what I find really fun. Even when I work as a solo I try to surprise myself as an actor when I'm there. I don't like to repeat the same thing everyday and the person that is taking the boat with me needs to have the same sense of adventure. I have to be here now and not go through appointments. I don't believe in appointments. Appointments, they help you to build something but there is a moment when you as an actor you have to go somewhere else. That's what I believe.

PP: Do you work with the gravity centre or maybe something similar that you may call differently? Nicole Mossoux speaks about vital point, her own one and an imaginary one for the puppet.

DP: It's the fake axis. If you have a cross, that's how we know where we are – horizontal, vertical – that's how we balance our body and we make shape. And then I have mine. I'm totally aware of that and then I have the external one, the fake one of the body of the puppet.

PP: Where do you locate it?

DP: First I have to understand the skeleton of the puppet. That's why I like to work all the time with mirrors. Because if the image is here I have to be here to look at it and to look exactly how it works because then for each puppet I have to know what works and what doesn't work. I have to visualise that and then doing this to know exactly what this means or what that means and how the body of the puppet will move. I have to visualise this external, this fake body.

PP: Where does the impulse of life of the puppet come from?

DP: It's always where my hand is. The movement is always roundish. You make a semi-circle all the time. It's not like this.

DP: The movement below always has air..

PP: It has the shape of a wave.

DP: The movement above has no air.

PP: Is it what you used for the speech of the puppet?

DP: Yes but also for the puppet to move. It always starts here in the brain because it has to think. It doesn't just walk.

PP: Speaking about the speech. I have noticed that in the piece *Angel*, when the puppet speaks you hide your mouth with your hand. And in *Malediction*, you wear doctor's masks over your mouth. Is it not to confuse the audience about the source of the voice?

DP: No. I don't care very much.

PP: But you are hiding your lip movements by using it.

DP: Yes but it is more to define the doctor. Of course it helps but it works as well without. But there is a technique for that. The mouth of the puppet has always to be bigger than yours. Because if you do a small movement with the puppet mouth, visually your mouth is stronger than the mouth of the puppet and people look at you. If you do big movements with the puppet mouth, the focus goes on the puppet. You don't have to pretend that you are a ventriloquist. That's the beauty I think of this technique. Everything is in your face. You give a chance to the person that is watching you to decide whether he is going to believe or not.

PP: There is also a pleasure to know that we are tricked and to think at the same time: These guys are so good!

DP: It's a game that I play with the audience.

PP: I would like to know if you have developed a set of techniques to combine acting, dance and puppetry. I don't think that it is about adding different skills, it's like creating new skills or new ways to use them together.

DP: I have started to develop a technique about creating a dialogue between puppet and manipulator through choreography. It's a technique that I have developed and I teach it in many universities and during international festivals. Sometimes I do a show and I give a workshop as well.

PP: Is there any rules of this technique?

DP: Mainly, people who come to this workshop are puppeteers. I let them to get in contact much more with the body. I integrate movement patterns or they can use sometimes their body as a landscape. The puppet can have the body as a living architecture. It's like we are painting a canvas. The body becomes a canvas and the puppet is painting. There is a lot of degrees. You have to see this workshop. It is difficult to say one thing. I use exercise of isolations; create choreographic patterns, creating boxes so that the puppet can go through. So you can do an architectural design with your own body. The exercise is to embody the movements of the puppet. It is to give awareness to the person. Sometimes, I spend hours only on one movement. If the puppet wants to go from here to there to pick up something, it may take three hours. How the puppet goes there, how the puppet will look? If it's really looking? So there are many degrees and you can be very specific. As I said, I like to surprise myself and my colleague on stage. When I have a structure I like to kick it out. But it does mean that everything that was built before is extremely technical and precise. Then when I reach that point I can kick it because I can always come back to that.

PP: So you need to have a very precise structure in order to be able to go away from it.

DP: Yes, otherwise you are just a rebel without cause. You can go there but you cannot come back and that's the danger.

PP: How do you look at the relationship between your body, gaze and speech in comparison to the ones of the puppet?

DP: That's again going back to Stanislavski. You need to have the pattern of the puppet and yours very defined because then you can always surf through one and the other one. You always come back in the same way. You always know who is who immediately. It's a Stanislavski method for Siamese!! I'm joking.

PP: Thanks a lot for your time and for such a good show.

DP: You are welcome.

INTERVIEW *MAIDS*

KRISTIN KERWIN AND JULEY AYRES

London 20/04/09

PP: What has been your experience on this project?

KK: It's been different because I'm having to act with an object which has a face and a body. It's been a challenge. It's been awesome and very fun.

JA: For me when I initially took on the project I was very interested because it was a puppet and the fact that the characters were using the puppet as a puppet. We were not trying to pretend that it was Madame. That's why I thought it was interesting about it. That's the kind of way of how I wanted to approach it. I suppose I knew it's going to be difficult I wasn't aware it was going to be quite so challenging because you have to think so many technical things. This does not come easily to me because I tend to work a lot quite instinctively. So it's quite hard for me to stop and really work out where I had to look. But at the same time I think also, which wasn't expected once I've started, you can also bring in that instinctive side and the fact that you have to kind of push everything through the puppet which is quite difficult. So for me it was a huge challenge. It's difficult to work through a puppet I think but it's really interesting.

PP: Both of you have a very different experience in this piece because you, Kristin, are outside and you, Juley, are inside. I would like to know how it is for each of you to perform with a puppet.

KK: For me the challenge came from the fact that I'm used to working with live actors which have facial expressions and everything! So for me it's difficult because I tend to have my eyes drawn to the other actor not the puppet. The challenge was having to actually make the puppet be the character and not the puppeteer who is doing the voice and the actions. Then I have almost given the puppet the emotion that is coming through from the actor for me to react to. I have to really have this suspension of disbelief because it is a puppet but in order for me to act with it I have to treat it as if it is the actor. So I count on the puppeteer/actor that is doing it to get my feedback on stage.

PP: Is there some point when you feel that it is the puppet that is giving you emotions, that you don't need to create your own emotions?

KK: There are a couple of points which are when I'm making direct eye contact with the puppet. And that I'm really interacting in a direct face to face manner. Also the scene when I am down on the ground, she's above me and she is pulling my hair and doing things to me. That makes it all that more real. Those are the moments when it feels that she is real.

PP: Is it when you are very close to her?

KK: Yes. When we do the scene with the chair that's another time, and also just before the strangling.

PP: Is it because you are drawn into her eyes or you can feel stronger Juley behind as the puppeteer?

KK: I guess it's probably both. It may sounds strange but because suddenly there's a warmth attached to her which is you, Juley. A physical warmth in that space that might make a difference too. Also looking into her eyes helps during these three scenes.

JA: I think also what is very different about this project is that we are working very much with the puppet as actors as the characters. For me the best way of work is for my character to be using the puppet. I'm not like just using a puppet. My character Claire who is being Madame is using the puppet. This changes everything for me. It would be very different if I was coming on and say I'm an actor playing Madame being a puppet. I'm not. I'm Claire playing Madame through the puppet. So when things like the puppet drops that's how this is really different than perhaps if we were doing a puppet piece with puppet. We are not pretending that we are puppeteer. We are actually using a puppet in our room. This is something we've built, we've made. That's why she looks like she does. This is something we've been creating as characters and this is where I've come from really. But I think the other thing that was quite interesting that you were saying Kristin because I forget that what you've got is this puppet face. That's what you see all the time. I'm actually also looking at the puppet which is very strange because my urge is to look at Kristin. Especially if I'm Claire but I have to kind of be Claire that is so much absorbed in Madame. It's a long process. I'm beginning to feel we are getting threads of it because you could feel the difference when the strength is there for both of us. It just works. There's a relationship, there's a connection between us both and then something happens. It's like that kind of special. It's just that moment when you just think "Ok, I don't know what it is. I can't tell you, but it's something that works". And it's the connection between us that then works through the puppet. And of course we don't know how much we've really got of that because we can't see. We can only feel what feels good. And often I did find when it feels right that you say "That's good! You've got connection going."

KK: And you can't feel it at all because you are behind her.

JA: I can really feel when it's coming off you, it comes through the puppet through me, I can feel it. It's quite strong actually. Which is a surprise.

PP: Is it during these three moments that Kristin was talking about?

JA: It is true that it is when we are very close. And actually with the strangulation moment, the way I've been working is that I'm quite absorbed as Claire in this moment. So I'm really absorbed with Claire, the puppet, the moment. So the moment when she puts the puppet down I'm: "What!?" it froze me .

PP: In this moment you don't have much text so you can really concentrate on the breathing of the puppet.

JA: It's really nice actually. The text that's another thing. It's heavily text based so you have a lot of text to remember which is fine. But when you're having to remember and move: "Look at your head in the right direction. This is the bit when you go down." Obviously you've got that in any kind of acting. "oh, this is the bit when I move over there!". You've got also this other. You've got the puppet to think about and how you are moving. It's a lot going on really all at the same time which is quite difficult.

PP: How will you described the differences between puppeteering and acting?

JA: For me it's completely different. Well… I don't know. I say that but actually I put the exact same energy in. There is no less energy coming from me. What I have done with the voice, that's Claire pretending to be Madame. So in a way I'm still being Claire so I'm still being acting. I'm still working on a character and thinking about what they did Madame, how they developed it. So I suppose in that way it's quite similar. The only thing I'd say it is different is that it is so technical. Although I think it's getting less like that. I think you could do so much work continuing the exploration between the two characters, how they play the puppet. You could probably do lots around that and it would really make it growing in a different way. I say it's really different but you approached it in a same way. But it's very technical that's sometimes a bit frustrating. There's been a couple of moments when I've just thought "I actually don't care where she is looking. It will come out. Just let feel it!!" But it doesn't. You can't just feel it. You've got to know, you've got to think which direction you are looking in. This is difficult for me.

PP: The technical part is the biggest difference for you.

JA: Having to think where she is looking, to think of her hand movement, that kind of thing. The technique. Of course you can play with the fact that they are not puppeteers. They're two women playing with a puppet. It's not the same.

PP: But at the same time the puppeteering needs to be good because the puppet needs to look alive. Otherwise the piece doesn't work.

JA: Yes. But equally I think it is as important for the puppet to work as for the actors to work. The two things have to happen somehow otherwise the puppet doesn't work either. You might get it technically perfect but there is something missing. Personally I would tend to work on the feelings where Claire is coming from which is a kind of actor point of view, and then you get the techniques right. And things like keeping my face flat as it's quite hard.

PP: Well. It's not about keeping the face flat because you can't really. It is more about finding the way to project a character not on its own body but outside, through a puppet.

JA: I've seen it done very well.

PP: The difficulty is when there is text because it means there's a voice which means there is emotion.

JA: I think it will be interesting to work with no text actually. It's a bit like being silent in a play where you don't say very much. You are still doing a lot of work actually and

you are very important because you are on stage otherwise you won't be there. Yes it will be very interesting actually because it will be very different.

PP: Although, Kristin, you are not puppeteering, except during a short moment, what are according to you the main differences and similarities between puppetry and acting?

KK: I think what Juley was saying was dead on. There is much more to remember when you are a puppeteer than an actor where there is less technical things to remember normally. Because I do one arm once and for me that's really nothing because I'm not in control of the character. I'm just adding the little bit. But I've found that interesting because I had to look at her, as I'm manipulating the one arm, and making sure I'm matching what she is saying, what she's doing. So just that little bit for me I understand how it must be for you Juley all the time. But I'm not in control of the whole body so I'm having to work with you at the same time. In some way it is very similar to acting I guess. It's just that I'm working with an object instead of an actor. Well with both actually.

JA: When you are doing the puppetry, there is also a whole side of things you're not having need to do. When you are actually there and you just got your body there is also things you're having to do. You don't think about when you are acting, you just do it. In a way, when you are a puppeteer you are suppressing it, such as if you design to do something bizarre with your body or your arm which just does not work. At the same time, you could see it the other way. This is a very interesting opportunity to literally boil everything down and push it through. It could be a different form of freedom.

PP: How do you treat on stage the puppet: as an object, a being or something else?

JA: I actually treat it not in the same way as a being but it's a part of me. It is part of something I'm doing. It becomes an extension of me. So when Kristin hits her I'm really quite horrified by that. She's hitting her! And I've said to you a couple of times and although I'm joking, in some ways it's like "Go a bit easy! It's quite hard!". I'm a bit protective of her. And when you are doing her hair, there is a part of me "That's something I'm using". It's strange.

KK: You feel ownership towards her.

JA: Yes. You definitively feel a connection. I can't just say: "It's a shoe." I think the minute, even if I pick a shoe up, I'm starting to play with it, it would of course create something to happen.

PP: Is it because you are using parts of your body as body parts for her?

JA: Yes and my hands. Like when the head comes back that's interesting because it makes it feel almost real. The best moment when I feel that it works, is when her body is almost on mine which means she's taking on part of me: the breathing and sometimes the hand comes. And this is hard but it feels much more whole like I'm attached to her in some way.

PP: Do you feel like it's another person and at the same time it's you? A self and another?

JA: Yes it is! And of course, and I think this is what it is very good for this play, she's really appalling without being me. So I can really go for it. I can be absolutely disgusting and appalling. It's not really me, is it? It's a sort of freedom as well.

PP: How is it for you Kristin?

KK: I think I see her more as an object. What brings it back especially is when I touch her, when I feel her. It's definitely those moments when I snapped back to: "she is an object". And she's made of papier-mâché. Even when I'm moving her arm in the one scene it just reminds me. And at the same time trying to bring that little arm to life is kind of nice I have to say. I'm remembering that she's an object as soon as I touch her or I bump into her or I slap her or I do anything physical with her.

PP: What's happening when you are not touching her?

KK: Like we said before, when I'm able to look at her in the eyes or to be very close to her face then it's different. I feel that she is more, how to say, not human, but that she's got characteristics of a being rather than just an object.

PP: So for you, Kristin, she is alternatively either an object or a being?

KK: Yes, depending on my interaction and what I'm doing at the moment.

PP: Whereas for you, Juley, she's more either part of you or something else?

JA: Definitively I feel something else. I can't deny that even if I've got different feelings for her because I work so closely. So when I pick up the arm even it's "Yes, this is her arm!". It's interesting when you, Kristin, come to take the head off as well. It's quite a strange feeling because you take control. I've normally got control for that because I'm controlling the body and then you take the head off and there is nothing I can do about it.

PP: How do you feel, Juley, when Kristin takes the head off?

JA: I'm really annoyed. She can't take the head off! That's the agreement between the two sisters.

PP: Do you feel naked because you are revealed?

JA: Yes I do feel revealed definitively.

PP: You can do whatever you want and suddenly we see your head behind the white dress.

JA: I'm suddenly exposed. Especially you are aware that you're trying to keep yourself behind and suddenly "Here you are!" Yes it's strange.

PP: What is the difference between believing in a puppet as a character and believing in an actor as a character?

KK: Having seen many puppet shows as an audience member, it's totally a different experience of believing that puppet than it is as an actor on stage believing that puppet. As an audience member if I were watching this, I can probably totally suspend my disbelief and feel that she was a real character. But as an actor on stage with her, I sometimes feel that she's more of an object. Maybe that's to do with the fact that I'm acting versus just watching. There's a lot of things I'm doing and I don't get a lot back from her as far as a human. So it is more difficult for me to believe in her as a being. But if I'm in the audience I can usually believe that.

JA: I'm not sure as a concept how much difference there is if you think about it. There is the Brechtian idea that you know that the actors are telling you a story. There are not real people. This is not a forest. There is no difference between saying "This a forest we're creeping through" and "Look here is a goblin!". It's just part of a whole thing of telling a story which we come involved in. Which is why, we are bothering to make sure that the puppet looks in the right direction. Otherwise why we would bother? We would just say "Well look it's two women playing with a puppet. It doesn't matter. It really doesn't matter because they are playing with a puppet." But they are not. They are playing with puppet- actors and they are telling you a story. It's different. And that's why you do all this work and try to make it technically correct I guess. So I do think on the whole if you do look at that as a cold question you could say "Well, it's all part of the same thing." But I do think you only use puppets for a reason.

PP: What has been your inner process to manipulate Madame? What is happening in your head?

JA: Obviously, there is the technical stuff I'm trying to think of. But actually that tends to be almost like a battle between how I want to do it. And how I want to do it, it's just to feel it somehow which doesn't really work. So my inner process is to do with touch. It's actually to do with feeling the puppet and being able to make it move. It's not about being lifelike. It's about this feeling that there is something happening. Something happens that as you say makes her live. Because if she is not moving, she dies. It has to be much bigger as well. So it's two things. This inner thing going on with me that I'm trying to push something through. So the way I've approached this for example is Claire is being Madame. She is really taking this essence of Madame with someone she partially admires, thinks she is beautiful but hates. So there are these things going on. And she takes that essence of Madame and she's trying to be Madame. This is her chance to be someone. She isn't. She is the same as an actor. It's the same thing. An actor gets on stage and they can be someone else. And it's very liberating. In a way it's like double. Claire is doing it and I'm doing it. So I guess that's the approach. That's something you push through, you try to get with the puppet. And then of course the other side is really thinking about the technical staff which I've found very difficult. Trying to get that kind of thing right as well, at the same time not losing.

PP: So you have to do different things at the same time. Is it because there is the talking?

JA: Yes probably. But I think actually it's also probably that you have to do a lot of work. I think you could get it but you'll have to work a lot. But prior of rehearsing and really playing. I think puppeteers do work longer than when you are only using your own body to find that something.

APPENDIX B

RESEARCH PROJECTS DOCUMENTATION

DVD 1

POSTALGIA

THE MAIDS

URASHIMA TARO

Postalgia (19mn)

Filmed by Monika Kita at the Little Angel Theatre (London) on 18 March 2008 – Edited by Paul Piris

Devised and performed by: Boris Kahnert, Amadeo Rosenheim, Paul Piris – Puppet making: Zoilo Lobera, Aya Nakamura, Paul Piris – Lighting design: Boris Kahnert – Graphic design: Adam Hypki – Music: Frank Lambert – Texts: Heiner Muller, Bernard Marie Koltes, Charles Baudelaire, Boris Vian

The Maids

Maids1 (25mn)

Filmed by Paul Piris at Central School of Speech and Drama (London) on 23 April 2009 – Performers: Juley Ayres, Kristin Kerwin – Scenography, puppet making, directing: Paul Piris – Text: Jean Genet

Maids2 (21mn)

Filmed by Monika Kita at Central School of Speech and Drama on 22 April 2010 – Performers: Juley Ayres, Kristin Kerwin – Scenography, puppet making, lighting design, directing: Paul Piris – Scenographic advice: Adam Hypki – Text: Jean Genet

Maids3 (25mn)

Filmed by Monika Kita at Central School of Speech and Drama on 7 October 2010 – Edited by Paul Piris – Performers: Juley Ayres, Kristin Kerwin – Scenography, puppet making, lighting design, directing: Paul Piris – Music: Jean-Baptiste Aubert – Text: Jean Genet

Urashima Taro

UT1.1 (11mn)

Filmed at Shunt Lounge (London) on 15 September 2007 – Edited by Paul Piris – Performer: Aya Nakamura – Puppet maker: Aya Nakamura – Scenographers: Aya Nakamura, Paul Piris – Director: Paul Piris.

UT2.1 (29mn)

Filmed by Monika Kita at Shunt Lounge (London) on 10 May 2008 – Edited by Aya Nakamura – Performer: Aya Nakamura – Puppet maker: Aya Nakamura – Director: Paul Piris – Scenographer: Nathalie Maury – Lighting designer: Alistair MacDonald.

UT3.2 (55mn)

Filmed by Valmar Kass at Rich Mix (London) on 18 December 2010 – Performer: Aya Nakamura – Puppet maker: Aya Nakamura – Director: Paul Piris – Scenographers: Aya Nakamura, Paul Piris – Sound and video designer: Paul Piris – Narrator: Juley Ayres – Set builder: Phil Newman – Lighting designer: Nao Nagai.

APPENDIX C

CASE STUDIES DOCUMENTATION

DVD 2

Cuniculus

Extract of *Twin Houses*

Cuniculus (2008)

Stuffed Puppet Theatre (80mn)

Concept, performer and puppet maker: Neville Tranter – Text: Jan Veldman – Director: Hans Man in 't Veld – Scenography: Desiree van Gelderen – Music: Ferdinand Bakker, Kim Haworth

Twin Houses (1994)

Compagnie Mossoux-Bonté (20mn)

Concept and choreography: Nicole Mossoux – Directors: Patrick Bonté, Nicole Mossoux – Performer: Nicole Mossoux – Music: Christian Genet – Scenography: Johan Daenen – Costume designer: Colette Huchard – Costume makers: Anna Tourn, Patricia Eggerickx – Puppet maker: Jean-Pierre Finotto – Puppet maker assistant: Fabrice Siciliano – Lighting designer and sound operator: Patrick Bonté – stage manager: Mikha Wajnrych – General manager: Pierre Stoffyn / Claude Taymans