Postdramatic Theatre and Deconstruction: An Anti-mimetic Approach to Contemporary Dramaturgy

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Silvia Dumitriu, declare that this thesis is composed by me and all the work herein is my own, unless explicitly attributed to others. This work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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Abstract

This research offers a new reading of postdramatic theatre understood as a theatrical practice of deconstruction. Drawing on the work of the philosopher Jacques Derrida, it employs deconstruction as a lens for understanding the way new postdramatic dramaturgies expose the logocentric context of traditional 'mimetic' theatre. The paradigm of mimesis, associated (first) with the subordination of the materiality and sensuousness of theatre to reason and (second) with the inscription of an authoritative meaning in the particular use of text, stage and representation, is interrupted by a caesura that establishes a new paradigm: the postdramatic as a radically new engagement with form and theatre practice. In viewing postdramatic theatre as a practice of deconstruction, however, the thesis also shows how postdramatic theatre recuperates the various types of relations and resonances that continue to exist between the mimetic paradigm and postdramatic paradigm, in outlining the idea that innovation does not happen in a void, but is rather a reassemblage, or bricolage, which maintains interesting tensions and oppositional relations to the principles that originally confined theatre to the rational determination of mimesis. The thesis argues that it is through deconstruction that the relations between dramatic and postdramatic are recuperated as representing more than a discontinuation of the traditional formal approach. In pursuing this argument, the thesis investigates four dramaturgical principles that characterize this interplay between paradigms: (1) text, through the exploration of Sarah Kane's plays; (2) body, through the analysis of Romeo Castellucci's stagings; (3) audience, in Forced Entertainment's work; and (4) authenticity in Rimini Protokoll's open dramaturgies. Through these case studies the thesis demonstrates that aesthetic innovation in postdramatic theatre is the result of a general deconstructive movement that sustains relations with the dramatic tradition and reformulates both its ethos and its principles.

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Introduction:
Deconstruction and Theatre

'There is a lack of categories and words to define or even describe what it is in any positive terms' (Lehmann 2006: 19)

In 1999, Hans-Thies Lehmann published his influential book *Postdramatic Theatre*, claiming to 'develop an aesthetic logic of the new theatre' (Lehmann 2006: 18). For Lehmann, this new 'postdramatic' theatre was an attempt to subtract the theatre from its subjection to the classical principles of dramatic action and form, in addition to making the claim that its utopian investment in such a rational model of dramatic development was historically outdated. Inspired by developments in poststructuralist philosophy, in which the relation between history and reason is subjected to a process of 'deconstruction', Lehmann sought to establish a parallel discourse for the theatre, by showing that a similar shift from supposedly trans-historical categories governing dramatic construction, based on reason and codified by traditional mimesis, had now decisively moved towards an awareness of the minimal units of theatrical meaning, the aesthetic effects of a broken or dissonant use of stage rhetoric, and the potential of the partial, particular, accidental or playful to render a theatre that no longer sought to produce a picture of a reconciled world. Instituted by a caesura and established by what seems to be a programmatic interruption of the dramatic tradition, which is exposed as relying on a unitary conception of the world deemed no longer relevant for contemporary audiences after the 1970s (Lehmann 2006: 25), this new type of theatre's palimpsestic

intertextuality stages the crisis of the (traditional) notion of representation. Developing these suggestions of Lehmann, it is the aim of this thesis to show, in a more systematic fashion, how this asemantic potential, explored by postdramatic theatre, can be recuperated through the notion of writing advanced by deconstruction. It is important to recall that this new theatre – and perhaps this dramaturgical/scenic/textual practice – is a practice that 'deconstructs' the traditional coordinates of theatre.

This research, then, aims to offer a new reading of postdramatic theatre understood as a theatrical practice of deconstruction. Drawing on the work of the philosopher Jacques Derrida, it employs deconstruction as a lens for understanding the way new postdramatic dramaturgies expose the logocentric context of traditional 'mimetic' theatre. The paradigm of mimesis, associated (first) with the subordination of the materiality and sensuousness of theatre to reason, (second) with the inscription of an authoritative meaning in the particular use of text, stage and representation, and (third) with a conception of theatre as a derivative activity, needing the legitimation of an exterior principle, is interrupted by a caesura or 'epistemic rupture'. According to Lehmann, the fundamental shift that dismisses the possibility of a reading of recent developments through traditional aesthetic concepts, while problematizing the theatre itself, derives from the suspension of the 'exclusion of the real' which characterizes text-based theatre. Epitomized by performance, this new theatre emphasizes the realness of its operations 'as a constant latent threat to its abstract ethical content' (Lehmann 2006: 4). However, this study will argue that, by focusing on drama and on the 'dissolution of the dramatic concept of theatre within drama' (Lehmann 2006: 4), Lehmann's attempt focuses on the secondary and derivative aspects of the problem – on the effects of disrupting the traditional logic of theatrical text, rather than on the problems of the new theatre. Focusing on mutations of text and the recuperation of the value of moving away from theatre 'tacitly thought of as the theatre of dramas' (Lehmann 2006: 21), Lehmann fails to acknowledge the idea that the primary term determining the history of theatre,

articulating the metaphysical and the theatrical, presence and representation, providing the terms of the dramatic analysis and legitimating its uses, is mimesis. By focusing on deconstructing mimesis, this thesis reconsiders postdramatic theatre as an attempt at reformulating the ethos of theatre, and will advance the idea that the recuperation of the role of the real into theatre is fundamentally a rethinking of the repressed content of representation. This analysis will see the postdramatic as an attempt to introduce stage and body into the economy of signification, and will point to the idea that the 'highest theatrical problem' is related to the project (and desire) to create 'a movement which would directly touch the soul' (Deleuze 2014: 11). The shift into the conception of signifier, made possible through Derrida's analysis of the traditional erasure of the materiality of the sign, will turn theatre, traditionally involved in the signposting of the coordinates of the ethical, into a research into, and reformulation of, the repressed in its relation with the operations of language. As language ceases to be seen as a neutral and rational means to know the world, theatre itself – confronted with the loss of its traditional legitimacy and derivative status – will be confronted with the impact of the disappearance of metaphysical ideality that has defined the problems of theatrical signification. Moreover, mimesis itself will be exposed as a practice that reiterated conventions and appealed to pre-existing power structures, reinforcing the status quo. In reframing of the problem of mimesis, the postdramatic draws attention to the peculiar and radical situations that unsettle the secondarity of theatre with regard to the totalities and idealities advanced by the logocentrism's emphasis on a categorial and oppositional dialectic logic.

As such, postdramatic theatre's engagement with a rethinking of the repressed as the violent, the marginal, the body, the unspectacular or self-awareness is a fulfilment of the destiny of theatre rather than an 'interruption'. I will argue that this divergence between the two traditions is not definitive, and is based on the apparent incommensurability of the two paradigms; as their apparent distinction can be easily

predicated on their different aesthetic interests, the opposition is stated on the basis of the difference between representation and the new, highly contested terms of presence. However, this research will attempt to argue for the idea that 'presence' is another aesthetic term involved in the critique of the dramatic tradition, and as such constitutes a complication of, rather than the final solution for, the problem of theatre. With regard to this aspect, I will use Derrida's warning against the illusion of origin; Derrida warns that the escape from the logocentric discourse, with its emphasis on notions of reasons and sense, is not to be treated likely and that the problem cannot be solved by simply refusing it in the name of the unconscious or the matter (Derrida in Bennington 1999: 20); the unconscious 'is still "metaphysical" because the term is only defined with respect to consciousness, itself thought in terms of presence' (Bennington 1999: 144). Moreover, the recuperation of the postdramatic through deconstruction makes possible the new problematic that establishes a new theatrical paradigm: the postdramatic as a radically new engagement with dramaturgical form within contemporary theatre practice. The main emphasis of deconstruction on uncovering the derivative nature of reason and metaphysical certainties/idealities/totalities is furthermore a lens that allows the rethinking of theatrical dramaturgy as primarily being an open form which invites the spectator into its structure. Furthermore, the interrogation of signifying practices, made possible by deconstruction, will necessarily involve a requestioning of the relation between previously central notions and practices of theatre, and what was deemed marginal and irrelevant to them. Perplexing the hierarchy between high and low, art and the real, the postdramatic is a phenomenon that attempts to shift our understanding from an understanding of mimesis as 'natural' towards a recuperation of the role of absence, the syntax of communication, the play of difference – ultimately mapping a new problematic. In viewing postdramatic theatre as a practice of deconstruction, however, the thesis also shows how postdramatic theatres (for indeed they are plural) recuperate the various types of relations and resonances that continue to exist between the mimetic

paradigm and postdramatic paradigm, made possible especially through the uncovering of polysemy, which is called by Derrida 'dissemination' and is thought of as characteristic of the concept of writing. In outlining the idea that innovation does not happen in a void, but is rather a reassemblage, or bricolage, that maintains interesting tensions and oppositional relations to the principles that originally confined theatre to the rational determination of mimesis, I correlate postdramatic practice with Derrida's idea that the very nature of language confers upon its users the status of 'bricoleurs': 'The only weakness of bricolage – but, seen as weakness is it not irremediable? – is a total inability to justify itself in its own discourse' (Derrida 2016: 151). Undoing the idea of the rigorous development and priority of the principle of reason, Derrida's work enhances a lack and inconsistency inherent in the systematizations of philosophy and therefore aesthetics. As such, we might think of the aesthetic and art in general as the domain that relentlessly attempts to deal with the localized tensions that refuse a simple reduction to the tableau of fixed categories of rational discourse, exposing the difficulties of thinking the relation between the singular and the general, between representation and its repressed, in a manner that problematizes the relation between art and philosophical discourse. I would like to suggest that a shift from the mimetic to the postdramatic makes possible the reconsideration of theatre not as mimesis, but as supplement: 'It is the strange essence of the supplement not to have essentiality: it may always not have taken place. Moreover, literally it has never taken place: it is never present, here and now. If it were, it would not be what it is, a supplement […]. Less than nothing and yet, to judge by its effects, much more than nothing. The supplement is neither a presence nor an absence. No ontology can think its operation' (Derrida 2016: 341). This rethinking of theatre as supplement subtracts the theatre from its subjection to the logic of presence developed in logocentric discourse, and turns the possibility of theatre into a positive notion. Moreover, it can be argued that the postdramatic is a supplement to the dramatic theatre. Nevertheless, the relation between the two paradigms is established in relation to a critical element, and

this situation is complicated by Derrida's reformulation of this practice, as already embedded into discourse and as the basis for any attempt at meaning. Moreover, with the advent of deconstruction, the very idea of the value of intellectual constructions, and with it the traditional aesthetic discourse, is questioned; as Derrida argues, intellectual history 'never constituted a given system, a sort of ahistorical, thoroughly homogenous table, but rather a dissymmetric, hierarchically ordered space whose closure is constantly being traversed by the forces, and worked by the exteriority, that it represses' (Derrida 2004: 5). In this sense, I would suggest, the postdramatic appears as the possibility of a reformulation of the dynamic subtending the aesthetics at work in theatrical tradition itself; the possibility of questioning the local instead of the universal, the reconsidering of ideas of play in the attempt to escape the ambivalence of mimesis, and the reconsidering of theatre's relation to the ethical dimension in theatre's reconstruction. The very questioning of the idea of presence as an effect of discourse will have an impact on theatre, which has traditionally been determined as representation – a secondary and derivative activity that relies on the categories established by philosophy, in the variant of traditional aesthetic discourse. The thesis argues that it is through deconstruction that the relations between the dramatic and postdramatic are recuperated; in this sense, I argue for an understanding of the postdramatic that represents more than a discontinuation of the traditional formal approach, also revealing points of continuity and coincidence with the dramatic tradition. In pursuing this argument, the thesis investigates four dramaturgical principles that characterize this interplay between paradigms: (1) text, through the exploration of Sarah Kane's plays; (2) body, through the analysis of Romeo Castellucci's stagings; (3) audience, in Forced Entertainment's work; and (4) the question of authenticity in Rimini Protokoll's open dramaturgies. Through these case studies, the thesis demonstrates that the aesthetic innovations at play in postdramatic theatre are the result of a general deconstructive movement that sustains relations with the dramatic tradition and reformulates both its ethos and its principles. In this, my claim for a rupture

is not a claim for a radical break. Rather, I argue that, in the reworking of theatre outside the representational and mimetic framework, the postdramatic represents a moment of emphasis on a formal experimenting that openly refuses the idea of fictional closure, the systematic development of character and the enhancing of a message, ultimately contributing to reformulations of theatre's relation to the symbolic dimension of the social as traditionally supported by the principle of mimesis.

As a term resistant to theory building, theatrical mimesis has two dimensions: first, it concludes and asserts a relation of homology between the stage and the real, predicated on the basis of the intelligibility of both the real and the theatre representation; second, as a principle that articulates the coherence of the fictive theatrical world, it determines the subordination of the aesthetic discourse and its elements to the constraints of reason/ethics and as such provides the coordinates of the instruments used in representation: the conception of character, the desirable proportions of different elements of the plot, the emphasis on a rational message. In this ambivalence, resulting from the coordination of both the representation and its interpretive context, mimesis becomes a loaded concept that has been historically reformulated – it has, in other words, determined both the aesthetics and reformulation of theatrical meaning. Unlike drama, which refers action to the ordering principle of reason and originates in the exclusions of the elements that can disturb the perception of the fictional cosmos, mimesis regulates symbolic principles that finally enable a position of security for the audience. While drama is the imposing of the linear reading of dramatic action, which entails the possibility of recuperating the relation between cause and effect, mimesis coordinates and determines the closure of the representation, which is an operation that represses the Other of the principle of reason. As such, one of the first consequences of the postdramatic's questioning of the mimetic form is the dissolution of theatrical 'objectivity', the character and emergence of the realities surrounding the theatre itself, traditionally repressed as a matter of opsis, spectacle; in the postdramatic there is an apparent emphasis on the

spectacular and appearance, but this aspect can be recuperated as a new enquiry into the nature of theatrical signs. From the point of view of the history of mimesis, the postdramatic is the first moment in which the hegemony of the mimetic principle is radically refused and undone. The postdramatic's dismissing of the closed fictive form entailed by mimesis is correlated with the desire for a reformulation of the ethos of the theatrical act; a rethinking of the metaphysical certainty and its pretension to totality, reason and ideality is recuperated as a critique of the use of theatrical signs. Furthermore, the ethical demand to respond to the mistrust of the logos that emerged with the failing of reason epitomized by the Holocaust, the traumatic failing of representation, becomes a limit and a necessary part of the project of theatrical meaning. This rethinking of the mimetic by engaging with the problem of transgression is radically explored in Sarah Kane's work. Moreover, the postdramatic's dismissing of the ideality of the sign, the enhancing of the materiality of the signifier and its role into producing new types of artistic syntax, will evolve into a research that emphasizes the role of difference in producing relevant theatrical situations. As theatre cannot be conceived outside the traditional coordinates of stage, impersonation and play, the reinvention of theatre – even the attempt to create theatre on the streets or in factories, without traditional characters or with the help of no other text than the phone book – will amount to rewriting the very instruments of theatre. According to Derrida, the necessity to go through insufficient formulations is not pedagogical or heuristic, but essential. Postdramatic theatre relentlessly rewrites its own instruments, destiny and project, trying to set new coordinates for new emerging theatrical phenomena that probe the image of a world that is inherently restructuring itself under the pressures and forces of globalization. I would like to advance the idea that the postdramatic necessarily involves a critique and reworking of fundamental elements of theatre: the stage itself, the text, the body. As such, it advances a critique of traditional notions and norms related to (mimetic) representation. No longer a mediating circumstance, the theatrical situation enhances the

relation between the ideas of fictive closure and the problematic enjoyment of representation mediated by the traditional split between stage and audience. For instance, in Sarah Kane's work, this act of passive spectatorship is exposed as haunted by its shadow, the repressed content of both representation and cultural public discourse. The emptiness and inconsequential nature of attending theatre as mere entertainment, the equivocation between theatre and mimetic technique, is undone in a theatrically dangerous and perplexing manner in Forced Entertainment's work. The repression through the discourse of the vulnerable, destabilizing and asignifying body in Castellucci's work enhances the necessity of supplementing reason with the discourse on the singular, the retrieving of the meaning of time in the theatre. The overall idea enhanced by the subversive theatre practices of Rimini Protokoll is that the traditional theatre's propensity towards an idea of the universality of its representations has erased the possibility of recuperating historically marginal subjects. Deconstruction, in its emphasis on 'oblique' associations, as well as in its ability to expose the excesses and violence of inscriptions, can be related to the new anti-mimetic project of theatre. The caesura instituted between the current distrust of mimesis and the history of mimesis opens the theatrical field for a questioning of the aesthetic principles that fundamentally iterated in traditional theatre through the representation of hierarchical oppositions, organizing the field of theatrical discourse in accordance with the discourse of logos. Traditional theatre's sublimating of the accidental through dialectics and its appeal to reason, the subordinating of acts of reading and producing theatre to the idea of interpretation and to pre-existing societal notions of value, and the development of stage action by appealing to the idea of rational telos are exposed in the postdramatic as problems of theatre. Marginalizing interpretation as an act shared by theatre professionals, audiences and critics, the postdramatic exposes the limits of the theatre that relied on the idea of the universality of the principle of reason and its unquestioned ability to reduce the accidental to the higher authority of logos. Reducing mediation to a mere instrument erased in the very practice of theatre as

mimesis, this tradition of theatre relied on the ambivalent gesture of impersonation to convey the laws of reason; exposing the reduction of the excess of the body and subjectivity to the principle of reason, the postdramatic will constitute both a critique and the establishing of the stage as a tool that allows the practice of intertextuality, shifting the limits between theatre's representation and the unrepresented content/subject – theatre's supplement. Derrida's deconstruction of traditional discourse, his emphasizing that the primacy of logos is established through a primary violence that ascribes intelligibility a status independent of the material signifiers it deploys, brings to the fore new theatrical topics and themes: the very operations of writing, the repressing of the Other, materiality, body, violence, accident and the possibility of undoing a set of satellite distinctions: signifier/signified, body/mind, active/passive. As a symbolic articulator of the world, in itself mimesis is irreducible to the linearity it imposes on the theatrical act; resistant to rational explanation, it foregrounds the intertwining of the rational and the stage, subtending the economy of hierarchical oppositions. As such, its theatrical deconstruction of mimesis can advance/mobilize the question regarding the world as discourse, violent inscriptions and the repression of the 'outside'.

The research, then, approaches the topic of theatricality as the specificity of theatrical stage discourse through the lens of deconstruction, which is able to unpick the role of traditional philosophical discourse in constructing the instruments of traditional theatre. While deconstruction is invoked by other commentators, including Lehmann himself, as yet no systematic analysis of the postdramatic as a form of deconstruction has yet occurred. Moreover, this methodological approach, I argue, is able to recuperate the current relating of postdramatic theatre and politics, as 'deconstruction… generalizes the concept of politics so that it includes all conceptual dealings whatsoever' (Bennington in Cohen 2001: 207). Nevertheless, this research will aim to advance the idea that it is by bringing the body into the open, a gesture fundamentally radicalizing the critique of the mimetic tradition, that this postdramatic theatre develops a new set of theatrical

possibilities. The very attempt to rescue the body from its erasure will contribute to problematizations of the scope and limits of theatre and contemporary dramaturgy. Deconstruction itself makes possible the polylogue, the disruption of the linear logic of reason, an exposing of its limiting potential and the possibility of recuperating meaning from both the frustration of traditional forms and instruments, and a thorough engagement with the logic and possibilities of the stage. Greek, medieval and modern are the three main stages that are critiqued by postmodernism's deconstruction of representation in Derrida's *Envois* (1987), a critique in theatrical terms which is epitomized by the postdramatic's emphasis on performance. Nevertheless, this research will argue that both performance and theatre are forced into reasserting the possibility of undoing the general order of representations/language/writing and their relation to the real. Bypassing the binary model, Derrida emphasizes art as the domain of the undecidable, characterized by 'the operation of a certain syntax' (Derrida in Hobson in Cohen 2001: 139).

This research will attempt to argue that the idea of art as a supplement might contribute to our understanding of the new project of theatre. Borrowing the term from Gödel's idea of the existence of truth that is by no means provable, Derrida introduces the possibility of 'activating radically different meanings with the same phrase' (Hobson in Cohen 2001: 139). It is the very engagement with the repressed of logocentric meaning that establishes the polysemy in the theatrical event and ultimately points to the propensity of postdramatic dramaturgies towards open form. Moreover, the traditional problem of 'truth' is challenged within these complex works, which, by engaging with the repressed, epitomized by the body, escape the reduction of true/false. This possibility, subtracting theatre from the order of work/productivity/mimesis in order to emphasize relations, interactions, tensions, is based on a deconstruction of the rational linearity and idea of time based on the relation between cause and effect. The idea of the truth of painting, for example, is recuperated by Derrida as 'faceted', 'concerned with how we

place the inside or outside of the picture, with our speaking of it' (Hobson in Cohen 2001: 145). The problem of representation and 'truth', obscured by traditional mimesis, marginalizes the idea of trace, which 'dispenses with the conception of objective truth values' (Hobson 1998: 14). The trace is part of the constitution of theatre that does away with its realist aesthetic and metaphysical grounding; as such, theatre becomes concerned with its own conditions of possibility. Mimesis, understood as a writing of symbols that contribute to the preservation of categories of experience, fundamentally excludes and represses the labor of representation and the representation of labor. Due to the fact that the (theatrical) language, language as writing, is already an engagement with the normative, the deconstruction of its traditional and 'natural' operations involves a reconsidering of theatre itself and the discovery of a new hypostasis of theatrical meaning. The postdramatic advances the idea of a play that is organized not by mimesis but by 'a certain interpretation of mimesis' (Derrida in De Man 2012: 24). As such, the postdramatic might represent a new type of engagement with mimesis, which hasn't been recovered yet due to the lack of concepts available to unpick the specific operations allowed by this new type of theatre. 'An invention ought to produce a disordering mechanism… when it makes its appearance it ought to open up a space of unrest or turbulence for every status assignable to it' (Derrida in Kamuf and Derrida 1991: 217). Its manifestation is inconclusive at first, being recuperated as a tendency 'to overflow, overlook, transgress, negate (or, at least – this is a supplementary complication – deny)' (Derrida in Kamuf and Derrida 1991: 217). I would like to advance the idea that the postdramatic's resistance to definitions is made possible by our associating drama and logocentric discourse in analysing new forms of theatre: 'Invention ought not, as such and as it first emerges, to have a status' (Derrida in Kamuf and Derrida 1991: 217). Thus, the problem of art, its being situated in the space between a thing and a 'work', the idea of being 'stuff', poses in the context of the postdramatic the problem of passing from the mimetic interpretive vocabulary, with its uncritical and naïve ideas of correspondence

and referent, to a vocabulary aware of the critical influence of deconstruction; this research will argue that, beyond the theatrical and rhetorical effects of this theatre, there is a deconstruction of theatrical instruments at work, and that this deconstruction has to be recuperated. Moreover, the status of the theatre, historically problematic due to its very use of bodies and marks of the 'real', makes it the least 'spectral' of the arts; the difference between the appropriation of the language of theatre to mimesis and the attempt at retrieving it as art is posited by a new theatre that acknowledges the reality of the stage, the materiality of representation and the bodies it uses.

The problem of the subject as a fictive construct overthrows the traditional distinction between text and body, with important consequences for our understanding of the concept of theatricality. In Derrida's terms, the distinction between the modern and the postmodern subject lies in the way it views discourse and adopts it as expression or as practice: 'he who says I in the present, in the so-called positive event constituted by his discourse, would be capable of only an illusion of mastery. At the very moment he thinks he is directing the operations, his place – the opening towards the present assumed by whoever believes himself capable of saying I, I think, I am, I see, I feel, I say... is... being decided by a throw of dice whose law will subsequently be developed inexorably by chance' (Derrida in Hobson 1998: 79). As such, the subject is an engagement with the limits and operations of thinking/writing, and not the reproduction of power structures, relativism or apathetic disengagement. In the absence of a system fundamentally based on ideas of identity and origin, the self as an architectural construct that supplements the articulation of the body comes to the fore and can be related to the crisis of representation and the reconsideration of the instruments of the traditional mimetic stage. As insufficiency and excess, the body is – for deconstruction – troubling and resistant; just as its troubling presence is constantly evoked on a stage that seeks to rework the self/the subject – as we find in postdramatic theatre, with the use it makes of bodies and the constraints imposed upon them by either a general cultural reading or the everyday uses

that seem to escape interpretation. I will argue that postdramatic theatre constitutes a multifarious project aimed at recuperating the theatrical body; it thus implies a reformulation of the relation of text to authenticity in general, through an interrogation involving the body, and, as such, an interrogation emerging from the tension between acting and performing.

The authoritative prescriptions of reason, which have been imprinted on the structure of the stage and the theatrical as 'natural', can be undone in the postdramatic theatre, which, as such, no longer bases itself on dramatic texts and an attempt not to disclose the 'artifices' that make possible theatre itself. As the conception of text shifts, an undoing of the traditional structuring of power in theatre is effected. Intensity takes priority over text, as text itself is restored to its irregularities, representing now both the conscious and the unconscious. This reconsidering will result in a critique of principles of the traditional stage as domination allowed by the operations of violent inscriptions. Against these inscriptions, a deconstructive theatre will advance the principle of solicitation, the 'shaking of totalities'. The suspension of history, part of the postmodern that lives outside the horizon of future and scope, is therefore part of the dramaturgical project of the postdramatic, which incorporates into its structure the interruption of what Derrida calls the 'history of truth', its discourses and the meditation upon its effects. I will argue that this moment is the moment for both critique and the recuperation of possibilities for negotiating and inventing new theatrical meaning(s); by undoing the mimetic model, the postdramatic is an intriguing intersection between critical and artistic theatrical practice. Moreover, a shift from the binary of theatrical ideas/content to theatrical praxis, the reformulation of the relation between mimetic theatre and its instruments, seems to replicate the avant-garde's desire for the overturning of traditional aesthetics. Nevertheless, this resistance to the mimetic model of the postdramatic both undoes the structuring of the forces/processes that constitute the theatrical event and makes the escape from the mimetic constraints ultimately a reformulation of theatre

itself. The traditional model that emphasized the notion of a dramatic goal, the idea of subtext, and the dialectical resolution of the central conflict as a model for subjectivity will be dismantled by postdramatic theatre – rather than simply rejected; and this will happen, critically, by embracing performativity, which implies the perfect overlapping between action and body, as well as novel relations between body and text. This thesis attempts to imply, in other words, that the tension between performativity and theatricality (which emphasized the authenticity of the first in contrast to the artificiality of the latter) is based on a programmatic distrust in traditional theatre and a utopian attempt to retrieve a mode of signification that stands outside the textual mode of traditional theatre. Nevertheless, this study will argue that the reformulation of the relation between theatre and its repressed evades the possibility of a linear reduction and simple understanding, being a theatrical problem itself. As the limits of the performative consist of its inability to deliver a method, an emphasis on the processes subtending the recovering of authenticity, I suggest, is the main project of postdramatic theatre. Concerned with both the architectonic structure of the theatrical event and the machinic production of meaning, the postdramatic shifts emphasis from aesthetic content towards methods of representation. As such, it contributes to the aesthetic theory, while nevertheless aiming at delivering a method for art itself against the traditional legitimation through an extraneous principle; instead, in the postdramatic theatre, the mimetic threatens to disappear from the stage, allowing for new ways of looking at the theatrical signs and new uses of text, body and representation. The very intrusion of the polysemy of the body, text and space in postdramatic dramaturgies reshapes the play of representations as the very play that institutes the stage as such, and not as a replica constricted by the rules of representation; in postdramatic dramaturgies, the logic of the stage is legitimated by the idea of (constructing) the actual. The actual and the authentic are the new goals of theatre in its postdramatic hypostasis. Individuation, event, heterogeneity, immanence are the new interests of postdramatic dramaturgies that

dislodge the subject/character from its subordination to both text and reason, making it the problem of theatre. The emphasis on what was previously understood as accident will contribute to a reformulation of theatre outside the metaphysical coordinates imprinted on aesthetic discourse. In fact, the actual and the authentic are the contents that are typically refused in traditional (bourgeois) theatre through the idea that fundamental honesty is only found within the act of confession. This exteriority of the actual reality of the stage will come to the fore in theatrical debates; authenticity and actuality can be developed and subtracted from the postdramatic engagement with the problems of text, representation and the stage; they are the basis of a play that contributes to a new understanding of stage action. The very play of the postdramatic stage is an involvement with the order of representation, ultimately pointing to collisions between text, stage and representation. In postdramatic dramaturgies the logic of representation is questioned both because of its unsustainable presumptions and because of a general shift in the processes of making sense of the world, emerging from the new state of general connectivity allowed by technology.

This thesis will argue, finally, that the collapse of the traditional linear logic of representation draws attention to the theatricality of the stage and the polysemy of the staging instruments. Sarah Kane's collapse of mimetic narrative, Castellucci's insistence on the logic of the organism, Rimini Protokoll's reference to peripheral elements and realities, and Forced Entertainment's voiding of all mimetical figures constitute new approaches to the problem of theatrical meaning. Resistance to mimetic representation is the very premise of postdramatic theatre's creativity: the fundamental questioning of a world previously ordered by reason.

1. Postdramatic Dramaturgies and Deconstruction

In this thesis, I understand dramaturgy to refer not simply to the linguistic text,

the interpretation of the mise en scène or 'performance text' (as Schechner describes it), but rather to the dynamic forces that traverse the theatrical event, determining constellations of meaning and the seemingly unruly play of the postdramatic stage. Substituting a practice of mise en scène still subjected to the constraints of the text, or prone to conceiving the staged universe as autonomous and based on traditional principles of composition, postdramatic dramaturgies emerge by rejecting the mimetic emphasis on a singular authorial voice, proposing instead a plural, polymorphous, unstable and context-dependent theatre practice. In traditional theatre text, mise en scène and representation supplement each other through their participation in creating meaning – both are marked by their traditional subordination to mimesis with its commandments of beautiful proportions and insistence on the ultimate rationality of the dramatic telos. In contrast to this, the general reformulation of the theatre under the postdramatic paradigm is a resistance, first of all, to the idea of any dramatic closure and, second, to considering text as an ultimate principle of the theatrical event, being an attempt to restore the problem of the relation of body and representation. Although the raising of the problem of representation in the new forms of theatre is considered by Lehmann to be an inherently political issue, I will try to argue in this thesis that the reformulation of the aesthetic has ethical implications, too. The ethos and principles of the traditional dramaturgy of closure are deconstructed in postdramatic theatre precisely because it distrusts unifying meta-narratives: this leads postdramatic dramaturgy to attempt 'to break the glass that reflects a single image of dramaturgical practice' (Dorothy Hewett in Trencseny and Cochrane 2014: 19).

Postdramatic dramaturgical practice is defined as a 'confluence of literary, spatial, kinesthetic, and technical practices, worked and woven in a matrix of aesthetic and ideological forces' (Eckersall, Beddie and Monaghan 2006: 1). In recent theatre practice, the involvement of the audience in the structure of the event allows for the incorporation of the wider theatrical context in reconceiving the idea of dramaturgy. The connection

established by the new type of event is marked by an aesthetic of intertextuality and interchange, acknowledging as a context the fact that 'globalization distributes power in new and confusing ways' (Eckersall, Monaghan, Beddie in Trencseny and Cochrane 2014: 21). With the very shift towards a general intertextuality, resulting from a general interactivity and permeability of the closures sealing off contexts, the theatre is forced to reconsider its dramaturgical form; in resorting to connections that are 'potentially expanding, trans-cultural and open ended' (Eckersall, Monaghan, Beddie in Trencseny and Cochrane 2014: 20), theatre seems to be at risk of disappearing in a general process of communicating. I will argue that this indistinction and blurring of the lines between aesthetically divergent traditions marks a distinction between the traditional aesthetic and its anti-mimetic hypostasis. Nevertheless, the eclecticism of means should not be reduced to a relativist approach to meaning, but as an attempt to deal with shifts in the nature of perception and an informed critique of traditional notions of presence and representation. Moreover, the very dismissing of the idea that performance does away with text is problematic from the deconstructive point of view, which emphasizes the entrapment into the order of representations and mediation: 'Innovations in theatrical art in part depend upon scripting so radically alternative it ensures that a performance cannot be realized in conventional ways' (Kostelanetz in Allsopp 1997: 45). Allsopp emphasizes the idea that the fundamental shift in the conception of text allows for new contexts and debates; 'an increasing rereading of the assumptions that underlie the notions of what constitutes a text, what its material treatments are, what writing is, and how and where it takes place' (Allsopp 1997: 45). As such, the reproblematizing of text and its relation to a general writing reintroduces in theatre the problem of language, by exposing the realness and irreversibility of writing itself. The Sarah Kane case study will argue that her innovations require a non-Stanislavskian approach to staging. Nevertheless, the matter of reconsidering text as writing, characterized by the functions of iterability and prone to the difficulties associated with violent inscription, is central to

postdramatic dramaturgies that are critical, while also dealing with the tension between the aesthetic and the ethical. Deconstruction as a theory emphasized the secondary nature of the referent in relation to writing, the dismissing of the idea of centre, telos, closure – each of these open the possibility of reconsidering theatre's own language. In the attempt to recuperate the increasing complexity of the relations between things, states of things and their representations, a disappearance of the reliance on traditional mimesis reconfigures the discourse of the stage, which incorporates into a theatrical dynamic the reconsidering of theatre's space, of transformation, of the ephemeral and the transitory. Postdramatic dramaturgies disturb the circuits of power that once governed the mimetic stage; the remolding of the body in order to incorporate its hybrid extensions. It disturbs through interweaving sight and imagination, in producing representations that problematize the relation of forces and simulacra found in advertising and fashion. But above all it points to a reworking of the traditional rational model of representation. The theatre ceases to be reducible to a material model of the 'outside' world, becoming a rechannelling and reconsidering of the processes associated with writing in Derrida's understanding. Writing is, for Derrida, a notion that bypasses the traditional distinction between medium and theme; writing goes beyond the simplistic objectivism of traditional discourse, its relying on verification, establishing in the place of traditional competence, derived from assimilating the systematic rationality, the idea that discourse creates interpretive perspectives. Derrida's concept furthermore establishes the necessity of deconstructing the notions that structure traditional discourse, in the attempt to undo its violent inscriptions. As such, deconstruction is a project that relates the gesture of shaking totalities and idealities with an ethical demand. By undoing the relations that were organized by a rational attempt at systematicity, Derrida's discourse advances the possibility of recuperating other types of meaning in theatre, creating the possibility for reiterating a demand rather than a response. By employing deconstruction, by bringing to the fore the questioning of the very instruments that created the mimetic theatre,

theatre creates new events. The thesis argues that at the level of composition, in other words, the theatrical stage will succeed in creating a theatrical 'event' only through a deconstruction of theatre's traditional practices.

Indeed, I would suggest that the process of redefining reality and its relation to representation is becoming the new 'reality' to which postdramatic theatre actively responds. Deconstruction supposes an involvement with the processes of representation through differentiation and deferral, which reject both the idea of a simple reference and emphasize the materiality of the signifier and its 'constructedness' through processes largely named as writing. The impossibility of stepping outside the order of writing enhances the interconnectedness of writing and its reader, which resorts to previously available sets of meanings to decipher the writing. The book is a repertoire 'which can be closed and whose possibility is only established by virtue of the preceding totality of meanings to which the book can refer' (Hobson 1998: 13). Second, this notion of writing eliminates the distinction between simulacra and the 'real', by enhancing the idea of supplementation which institutes the possibility of a reading/writing practice and of enhancing a series of readable/writerly practices. As the postdramatic starts to manifest itself as a work upon the theatre, its model is no longer a pre-existent, definable reality, a sequence of causes and effects jumbled in the work in order to prepare the surprise of recognition and reproduce the dialectical relation between reason and unreason, leading to a reaffirming of reason in the end.

This theatre stands in an interesting relation to Derrida's notion of writing, which is adopted because of its ability to represent a 'better model' (Hobson 1998: 11) for sign systems than the concept of language. In other words, Derrida's work might help us understand how traditional theatre's drawing upon a wider semantic field than linguistic utterances, incorporating the selection of bodies, spaces, gestures and contexts into its fabric, is a circumstance that undoes the idea of the neutrality of the stage. Traditional

theatre constitutes a series of prescriptions that attempt to reduce difference in order to reduce the Other to the order of logos. As such, theatre is ambivalently subservient to the pervasive discourse of reason, in an act that erases the specificity and economy of the sensuous, the residual, the unconscious. The problematic nature of the traditional economy of theatrical representation is exposed in a deconstructive analysis that reveals the undoing of the suppression of the body, the Other, theatre's materiality, the real, the resilience of the stage in creating meaningful experiences and encounters. Moreover, the postdramatic's interest in the very constitution/deconstruction of the instruments of theatre is an attempt to overcome the ethical difficulty associated with impersonation, which historically marginalized theatre; as such, its project is to address the problems in the failed project of representation – not to eschew them. By focusing on rewriting traditional mimesis, casting doubt on its instruments, postdramatic theatre advances possibilities inherent in the project of theatre independently from the rational construction that underlies traditional dramaturgy. Derrida's analysis, by recuperating the accidental and the arbitrary, by exposing it within the structure of discourse and communication, contributes to the possibility of reconsidering the derivative nature of theatrical discourse itself. Allowed to play upon its own possibilities, a theatre based on the deconstructing of theatrical instruments, rewriting a dimension of mimetic dramaturgy, because of the mimetic's articulation of the ethical and aesthetical, also results in a reformulation of the relation between theatre and the real. Third, the supplementary nature of the theatrical act allows for instituting readerly/writerly relations between the writing of the stage and the writing practices in the world, perturbing the relation of supplement to the notion of 'original' itself. Deconstruction allows the possibility of a moving away from 'the underlying assumptions of much traditional philosophic discourse' (Hobson 1998: 16) and its derivative, traditional aesthetics. As such, the fundamental idea that 'no system is closed off from its context, there is always interchange and permeability, however slight' (Hobson 1998: 17), allows

for a recuperation of the relevance of context and the understanding of writing as thinking through writing. Moreover, it allows for a critique of the traditional concept of mimesis.

Emerging through the analysis of texts, deconstruction is an intertextual practice that replaces the history of the truth and displaces it by articulating through the lexemes of trace, differance, pharmakon the possibility of invention/aesthetic intervention. Undoing or addressing violent inscriptions, the deconstructive movement aims at the second movement of this 'dramaturgy', the rewriting of the instruments in a context that no longer allows for the distinction between signifier and signified, intelligible and sensible, presence and representation. Writing, in its emphasis on composition and the vehicles of communication (Hobson 1998: 11), becomes a term that problematizes theatre again; the limits of the linear model are therefore challenged in this theatre, which is ultimately reliant on representations, and as such enacts the demand associated with it, the re-establishing of the ethical (outside the mimetic and logocentric paradigms). The localizing of its means becomes a function of this new theatre, which recuperates the power relations between stage and audience as an effect of the new possibilities of spatializing theatrical relations. I would like to emphasize two ideas here: the intrusion of the event into the structure of the representation as mediated by deconstruction; and the notion of spatializing as a deconstructive idea that acknowledges that the particular effects of punctuation create meaning. The model advanced by the stage is both reliant on and relying on language and representations; the stage no longer articulates the opposition between the accident's place in the fictive whole and its relation to totalities/idealities, but is recovered as the intersection of theatrical (past) discourses and (a future) practice. The new model of text is related to multiplicity but can also be related to the functional mode of the unconscious: 'The unconscious text is already a weave of pure traces, differences in which meaning and force inscribe themselves, a text nowhere present, consisting of archives which are always already transcriptions' (Derrida in Hobson 1998: 22). As such, in postdramatic theatre, the desire for a definitive reading of

the theatrical event is thwarted, as is the desire to understand material data on the stage, deferred and undone by the multiplicities involved in flows of information.

Undoing the idea of the totality of a text, the notion of trace evidences the possibility of overcoming the pre-structuralist version of totality, finding a centre 'which, because it can be either inside or outside, can also be indifferently called the origin or end, arche or telos' (Derrida in Hobson 1998: 22). Writing 'upsets in its origins the passive/active distinction, and thus disturbs causality as a consecutive temporal sequence of action and separately definable elements' (Hobson 1998: 14). The new perspective advances the indistinction between the viewer and the viewed. As Peter Boenisch remarks, new 'reality' above all 'revokes the unapt separation of "production" and "reception" aesthetics' (Boenisch in Trencseny 2014: 21–2). In Eckersall and Beddie's analysis, for example, they propose the notion of 'texturing' to suggest that postdramatic theatre employs the 'gradual shaping of forms' and 'sculpting and tactile elements', and these traits can be correlated with Marianne van Kerkhoven's notion that 'dramaturgy is… above all a constant movement' (Van Kerkhoven 2009: 10). The postdramatic overwhelms the possibility of a simple reference, by engaging with the excess, the indeterminacy, the aconceptuality, the asignifying quality of theatre. The trace articulates a different idea of temporality, space and meaning, which contributes to a reconsidering of the stage. Annihilating the possibility of a clear-cut hierarchical and oppositional reading of the stage, the postdramatic creates impulses and a series of terms rather than signposting social reality.

Advancing the relations/effects/events emerging from juxtaposing different discourses, when the idea of truth is abandoned, deconstruction is a programmatic reworking of the relations between traditional writing, exposed as violent inscription, and the 'outside', considered as the context, the frivolous, the repressed, the event, or even writing itself considered in a broader sense. Moreover, as life and meaning are thought

about as passage or trace, trace is 'dispensing with the conception of objective truth-values which can be determined independently of our knowledge or means of knowledge' (Hobson 1998: 15). As such, difference itself opens the scene of writing, and the multiple arguments/the agon create the stage as the polemics between various registers of authenticity and performing – the postdramatic theatrical (re)frames the envisaged project of a new 'presence'. The relation between writing and difference removes the possibility of theatre as reconciliation, advancing instead theatre as a problem and as the locus of the problem, the unsolvable contradiction. Writing as inspired by deconstruction, then, is an attempt to give up notions of centre in order to (re)discover the multiple resonances between the practices of writing facilitated by resistance to the purported relevance of 'being'.

The main contribution of Derrida to the advances made by poststructuralism was to emphasize and recuperate the dynamic of the relations between the inside and the outside, as intellectual history has 'never constituted a given system, a sort of ahistorical, thoroughly homogenous table, but rather a dissymmetric, hierarchically ordered space whose closure is constantly being traversed by the forces, and worked by the exteriority, that it represses' (Derrida 2004: 5). In the case of postdramatic theatre it can be argued that there is a new emphasis on recuperating the relevance of theatre by making it a reflection of what is happening in the field of the 'real'; nevertheless, I would like to argue that the very attempt at incorporating the 'real' is not theatrically efficient if the theatrical event falls back into the naïve logic of presence, and that the content in theatre cannot be communicated outside a context of mediation. The very desire to incorporate the real into the loose structures of postdramatic theatre is only theatrical when that desire is effected through a reconsideration of the principles of articulating the theatrical event. The programmatic dismissal of traditional dramatic structure, exposed as utopian in its promise of ordering a world that is fundamentally pluralistic and irreducible to the rational model promoted by the traditional paradigm, is the medium for an exploration

and reformulation of theatre as postdramatic. The multiplicity of reformulations emphasizes the search for novel subjects and new ways of introducing onto the stage the previously repressed issues referring to the materiality of the stage, its sensuousness, the body and its relation to representation.

Aside from reconsidering, assessing and reframing the processes of writing, the postdramatic theatre is also involved in the process of reframing new concepts/practices of temporality at work in the surrounding culture. For example, the temporal shift from chronological time to the scale of history is made into an event in Sarah Kane's *Blasted* – an event which further destabilizes the mimetic order without a proper understanding on the part of audiences regarding what happens. It is the very tension between the reality of the event and the presumption of the mimetic/theatrical literacy of the theatre audience that is undone in the work. Kane jettisons the facility of a theatrical language that dismisses violence and the idea of responsibility. Instead, she frames and exposes the blind spots of a developed civilization that complacently dismisses the problematic crisis of the world. The theatrical/real intrusion of a new character, generically named 'The Soldier', signals the moment of rupture; the emergence of a new postdramatic logic of events, just moments after the audience are self-indulgently distanced from the theatrical work, exposing the ambivalent order of representations in relation to its failure; it is the very problematic of the work that waits to be reconsidered by audiences, whom Kane once said were apathetic, complacent and self-sufficient when compared to the audiences at football games. What Kane was aiming at was to stir the same type of involvement and critical fervour exhibited by football fans. The implacable reign of war and the end of enlightened reason are pictured in a work which attempts to do away with the mimetic, suggesting that its fiction is theatrical and necessary. The dramatic shifts in a postdramatic structure, the technique of counterpoint and almost musical development of the themes are made possible by the programmatic undoing of mimetic form. Kane's bold movement was to switch 'channel': the dramatically framed news programme about

faraway wars and the everyday existence of the news consumer are part of the same urgent reality. I will argue, later, that it is by engaging in a deconstructive act that Kane recuperates the theatricality of the stage and deterritorializes theatrical place, annexed by rational meaning. The work theatrically plays with this false distance allowed by the simulacra of television, playing around with the notion of dramatic action to the point that the logic of reality and the logic of the nightmare become indistinguishable. This treatment of time and space is made possible in Kane's play by the way she brings into the dramatic structure the profound irrationality of a casual rape, which unsettles from the outset the idea of reason and the dramatic quest for framing cause and effect; this context exposes from the very beginning that the play is attempting to defy the limits of representation. The play is thus postdramatic in playing with the destructuring of the dramatic form even before the unsettling change of space and time in the middle of the play. As such, the postdramatic reaches one of its most interesting theatrical manifestations, introducing an unsettling question regarding the relation between the subject and the worldwide implacable order of the 'real' underpinning our representations, usually veiling the real in understatements regarding violence. Kane deconstructs the mediated images of violence and war, arguing that, with the help of rhetoric, they can be kept at a distance by the existence of representations. Using theatre's spatializing and distancing devices, Kane is involved in a reworking of our cultural unconscious. I will more thoroughly examine the theatricality of the postdramatic texts of Sarah Kane in the first case study, which is centred on the text and the problem of the falsity of traditional theatre.

Eckersall, Monaghan and Beddie remark that, apart from new theatrical works that radically transform conventional notions of theatrical space and time, we also witness a renewed interest in the resurrection of a realist theatre, in the form of verbatim or documentary theatre. Rimini Protokoll constitute a particularly interesting theatre group, one attempting not only to recuperate the real into theatre, but also the realness of what

is for the most part invisible within traditional theatre (and indeed more generally within culture). By constructing theatrical works about and with the 'experts of the everyday', Rimini Protokoll seek to frame, recuperate and restore a relation between the real and the field of contemporary social representations. Basing their work on the accidental structuring of the cultural (dis)order of representation, they seek to challenge, criticize and problematize the current limits and characteristics of our mediatized culture. The interplay of representations that obliterate the sense of reality is reframed by their work. Their theatrical projects suppose an intervention in the field of representation with the means of theatre, and aim at enhancing the unavailability of those means for some – the real 'others' – those who fail to achieve representation in mainstream Western culture. As such, Rimini Protokoll's work is not merely a documentary practice – although it has this function, too – but a reframing of the relation between our representational apparatuses and shifts in the conception of the real and its relation to a politics of representation. Their open dramaturgies are enhanced as modes of engaging with the unrepresented or misrepresented, which, as such, point to the limits of the cultural and political systems; the theatricality of their work is seldom influenced by the idea that our very bodies, supplemented by Wi-Fi, can interact with the Other as part of an ethical necessity. The very extensions and connections that new technologies make available represent a shift in thinking, which can no longer rely on hierarchical oppositional terms. By focusing on the Other, as the other of theatre, the socially marginalized, the different, Rimini Protokoll's dramaturgies are inherently critical, evidencing the idea that marginality itself is a result and byproduct of mediated (biased) social discourses, constructed through – and constructing the opposition between – social representations and the repressed 'other'. As such, Rimini Protokoll's work is, first, an attempt to reinscribe into the world of representation the possibility of other types of signifying practices and the acknowledgement of the (theatrical) disturbance as part of an ethical project. By presencing a play of concurring representations – of what is invisible in the social reality,

such as the work of migrants, the unemployed, and so on – their dramaturgies use theatricality in order to recuperate both the real and the necessity/realness of representation. By undertaking the task of retrieving the marginal, the order of representation is itself questioned. Their using theatrical dramaturgies in an attempt to recuperate the marginal, the exceptional, the peripheral subjects, outlines the existence of different representational processes at the periphery of the system. While this work is not only a documentary theatre approach, but also an engagement with the idea of socio-aesthetic representation, my analysis will attempt to recuperate the undoing of the violence of classifications of subjects; the ethical dimension of their open dramaturgies will also be enhanced. From the point of view of theatrical practice, the emphasis placed on devising with non-actors can be understood as an attempt to establish a new type of collaborative writing and theatre practice. This aspect will be treated extensively in the fourth case study in this research.

The purely devised work draws attention to the eclecticism of theatre's instruments and the multidisciplinary practices of disrupting the unity and inner coherence of the traditional theatrical work. The principle of combining/editing and the element of chance allow for a reframing of the mimetic/aesthetic distinction. By directing attention towards 'an organic process of discovery' (Pais in Trencseny 2014: 117), the devised process raises the problem of resources and their structuring into the final theatrical work.

Guy Cools advances the notion of 'decentered dramaturgy' to establish a general collaborative practice that is 'both generative and invisible in the development of the work' and that maintains that 'the diversity of the process must be shown' (Eckersall, Monaghan and Beddie in Trencseny 2014: 24). Forced Entertainment's work relies on an apparent questioning of the assumption that theatre has to entertain and as such be mimetic; by adopting a structure that problematizes and dismisses the possibility of creating meaning using the traditional stage, Forced Entertainment problematizes the

notion of the real, and the spectator's belonging to a culture that demands passive spectatorship and engagement in consumerist attitudes. Attempting to rescue the communicative possibilities of theatre, they create a theatrical critique of the prevalent distancing and emptiness of representation. As such, they necessarily employ a decentred use of stage, text and representation. This idea can be related to Derrida's project of overcoming structuralism and its emphasis on structure, made on the basis of the idea that structuralism engages in 'locating even the pathological accident as resolvable according to rule and thus still part of the structure' (Hobson 1998: 20). Moreover, Forced Entertainment's practice is fundamentally involved in both a destruction of the relevance of the mimetic, and in recuperating the dynamics between stage and audience. In this case, criticizing the relation between the inside and the 'outside' as defined by Aristotle's *Poetics* involves taking a position with regard to the regulation of the practice of theatre in relation to the rules of rational/mimetic behavior. The fundamental idea is that 'no system is closed off from its context, there is always a permeability between the two' (Hobson 1998: 17). In Forced Entertainment's work, this distance is radicalized in the attempt to restore the authenticity of reading, through the means of making the audience aware of their central position within the theatre; the desire inevitably fails, but only to stir once more – a desire for closure that is forever frustrated; whose goal is permanently deferred, postponed, contradicted in Forced Entertainment's work. The three elements coming under the deconstructive attack within Forced Entertainment's theatre, then, are closure, 'the possibility of sealing off the context of relevance'; the notion of telos and origin ('the possibility of constructing a series of verifiable steps in the argument'); and the relation between centre and circumference, 'the opposition between important and unimportant, or serious and frivolous' (Hobson 1998: 21). I will discuss this attempt to reposition the spectator in relation to the stage, its representations and the vacuum in the third case study in this research.

As such, theatre creates contexts for stimulating the self-awareness of its audience

members, and the dramaturg is the designer of the situations that seek to integrate the viewer, suggesting 'a need to be responsive to interactive flows of ideas and how they create systems and patterns of production' (Eckersall, Monaghan and Beddie 2014: 24). In order to establish this practice, hybrid, interactive, intertextual works elicit provocations and are justified through the idea of a shared language and awareness between the performers and their audiences. This can be the case in Forced Entertainment's work, but also in Rimini Protokoll's dramaturgies that focus on the possibilities of bypassing previously firm coordinates – between 'here' and 'there', 'now' and 'then' – with the help of new technologies. In the first case, as the stage ceases to be self-sufficient by its dismissing mimesis, its meaning ceases to be self-evident, supposing the mobilizing of either affect or a self-awareness on the part of the audience member, mirroring or supplementing the self-awareness of the performers themselves. In the second case, the interweaving of technology and its wondrous possibilities activates a type of perception which is seldom rejected from theatre, stretching the limits of the theatrical events. In the first case, the familiarity of mimesis is denied, undone, criticized and exposed as failing in the attempt to ground authenticity in the theatrical event; in the second, an all too familiar technology is used to reveal the possibility of transforming the audience member into a performer, sitting in an uncertain but spectacular position with the real, distanced from the subject matter, which is not yet dramatic. The reformulation of the 'real' as/through an event involves a reconsidering of theatre in relation to the idea of the empowerment of the audiences or the creation of situations for self-awareness as regards the status quo and the viewer's passivity. The dramaturgy is centred on the desire to awaken the audience's feeling of responsibility.

The pedagogical dimension of the new dramaturgies revolves around 'identifying their theatrical and the cultural elements that can be learned, taught and enriched' (Eckersall, Monaghan and Beddie in Trencseny 2014: 24). Dismissing the traditional representation and traditional aesthetic discourse, new theatre practices that examine

traditional theatrical instruments and expose their constructedness, as we find, for example, in conventional bourgeois theatre, end in problematizing the representation as inherently political. As such, the activation of theatre as a critical discourse aims at exposing the political, while advancing a pedagogical function for theatre. Nevertheless, the postdramatic can be both political and deconstructive, involving both writing and the meditation around its modes of writing. The impossibility of a single authoritative strategy for connecting the 'micro and macro levels' (Eckersall, Monaghan and Beddie in Trencseny 2014: 30) directs attention to a multiplicity of practices and understandings. The emphasis on the interdisciplinary and collaborative 'disrupts habitual assumptions' (Eckersall, Monaghan and Beddie 2014: 31), making dramaturgy a process of research. As such, what comes to the fore is, according to Eckersall, the interrelationship between aesthetic and critical dramaturgical practices: 'the interrogation and disruption of circular and self-proving orthodoxies, a skill set that involves critical theory, philosophical thinking, historical analysis, and an awareness of the existence and need for cultural diversity in theatrical practice' (Eckersall, Monaghan and Beddie 2014: 31).

The process of 'reading' a performance is described by Eckersall as consisting in 'being able to identify what decisions have been made and why', as well as the ability to translate their affective and cognitive impact (Eckersall, Monaghan and Beddie 2014: 32). Deprived of a set of rules, the reading of the theatrical stage in postdramatic theatre is based on the ability to 'identify, understand and respond to underlying scores or blueprints, and how these blueprints have been articulated in time and space' (Eckersall, Monaghan and Beddie 2014: 32). As such, postdramatic dramaturgies foreground the necessity of a retrieval of meaning that, through constellations instituted by the interplay of elements that problematize the relation between 'inside' and 'outside', points to a troubling relationship between the real and the stage. Emerging as a reworking of the aesthetic, the programmatic disruption of totality, linearity and telos, the troubling intrusion of what was previously kept at a distance, the 'real', impacts on the ethical

aspects of the postdramatic work. The deconstruction of the theatrical instruments regulated by the paradigm of mimesis is at work in postdramatic dramaturgies, foregrounding a general movement towards a destructuring/restructuring of the discourse of the stage; this inconclusive theatre appeals to the audience in two ways: first, allowing for the spectator a position of collaboration within the piece; and, second, foregrounding an unsettling relation between the ethical and aesthetical. As such, the desire to clarify what is presented as uncertain is embedded in postdramatic works, such as Forced Entertainment's, and desire – as a grammatological structure – is retrieved in its potential of recuperating meaning through resonances and play. The idea of responsibility is reframed by Derrida through the concept of 'destinerrance', which is the responsibility to the unknown and cannot be preplanned. A network of possibilities is set into play, allowing for the possibility of a return of the call of the stage. The intrusion of the real onto the stage mobilizes a different type of attitude and reading, which no longer emphasizes the formal commandments of dramatic theatre, but deconstructs them and preserves the dynamic of the theatrical field by providing both new contexts and new concepts for the theatrical work. As such, the problem of postdramatic dramaturgies is to both reflect on the aesthetic and ethical aspects of a work, while foregrounding theatre as a place for the interplay of violent inscriptions and deconstructive strategies, violence and solicitation.

Doing away with traditional mimesis and its formal principles, the postdramatic paradigm appears to suggest the possibility of an alternative theatre, not seen before, whereas deconstruction contradicts this idea by exposing the metaphysical source of the link between origin and the discourse on presence. The move to view the postdramatic paradigm as entirely divorced from the mimetic paradigm must be resisted then. Deconstruction offers, instead – first, a tool for understanding the undoing at work in the postdramatic idea of reframing mimesis, made necessary by the transformation of the perceptions of time and space with the emergence of new technologies; and second, a lens

for understanding the programmatic dismissal of ideas of centre in postdramatic works, by providing a reading which emphasizes the necessity of joining together through a recuperation of the materiality of the theatre and new writing/writing practices. Nevertheless, this new writing practice, which attempts to overcome the limits of traditional theatre, and which attempts to reflect a major cultural shift, is not an innovation that happens in a void. Rather, it is – in this thesis – understood as a type of new theatre writing practice that reformulates the 'old' principles of theatre practice. Moreover, postdramatic theatrical deconstruction involves a re-engagement with ethics, an aspect of this thesis which will be thoroughly analyzed in the case study on the theatrical work of Romeo Castellucci.

Deconstruction is first of all a process evidenced by a programmatic dismissing of the reliance on the metaphysical ideas of the closure of discourse and its being based on the idea of centre. Supplementary, it can be related to ethics: 'This running up against the limits of language is Ethics' (Wittgenstein in Hobson 1998: 235). By resisting mimetic dramaturgical processes, a theatre that attempts to rework the notion of text, the use of the stage and the practice of representation finds itself in the position of deconstructing mimesis and its relation to totality and other idealities. Undoing the idea of totality of a text, the new theatre can be related not to Aristotle's verisimilitude, which is the semblance to the rational principle, but to the notion of trace, which evidences the possibility of overcoming the pre-structuralist version of totality. The new theatre stands in opposition to the traditional idea of finding a centre, 'which, because it can be either inside or outside, can also be indifferently called the origin or end, arche or telos' (Derrida in Hobson 1998: 21). Moreover, the practice of theatre as writing can also be related to pharmakon, one of the lexemes which links the effect to notions of quantity rather than quality. Sarah Kane's work exploits this pharmakeonical nature of theatrical actions: in *Cleansed*, eating a box of chocolates becomes torture, heroin becomes an overdose, literacy evolves into awareness of the length of the sentence, the gradual act of unclothing

becomes strength. The notion of difference as an aconceptual and relational term is particularly relevant to the theatre practice of the postdramatic stage, which ceases to be confined to the rules used to depict an image of the world so as to be judged in accord with their representational 'adequatio'. Difference is 'a term which, without being a logical operation, acts as a negative', is 'each time localized' and involves a 'conservation of heterogeneity' (Hobson 1998: 9). Its coining is based on the idea that differentiation gives meaning, and the term brings together Heidegger's ontological difference and the semiotic difference of Saussure. In *Cleansed* it is torture that gives the measure of love and the truth of its promises; the character becomes what he is under the pressure of reacting to the violence of the world. The difference makes possible the recuperation of distinctions in the emergence of the factical as the basis of meaning without recourse to a metaphysical grounding; as difference is constitutive of any act of meaning, the undoing of the difference between speech and writing is made through this notion.

Second, deconstruction is a recuperation of the forces that operate in the field of writing, imposing violent inscriptions and hierarchical readings based on oppositional sets of terms. Deconstruction evidences the fact that the secondary position of theatre in relation to reality has to be rethought, and – as this thesis argues – that the postdramatic allows for a recuperating of the theatrical dimension of the body, as the fundamentally repressed term in the metaphysical tradition. As such, deconstruction is a tool that not only allows the thinking of theatre outside the traditional oppositions fiction/reality, inside/outside, intelligible/sensible, but a recuperating of the repressed in the form of theatrical event. By reintroducing the repressed into the process/structure of writing, a complex interplay between 'inside' and 'outside' is activated, as the opposition is not simply one of hierarchical pairing, but provides the basis of the entire system of appropriations of value, which stands at the basis of the traditional idea of representation. As such, the recovery of the body into postdramatic theatre discourse occurs in the form of Sarah Kane's recurrence of the idea of the grounding of the text in the relation between

body and desire, or in the form of Castellucci's supplementation and overwhelming of text through associations made possible through the emphasizing of the materiality of the body. The overturning of the traditional distinctions between matter and form results in a rethinking of the relations between the traditional 'inside' and 'outside', in dissonances and the reworking of previously certain 'truths' anchored in the distinction between the signifier and the signified. The rethinking of the body reverberates in a whole series of associations and meanings previously unseen; the pharmakon, like the relation of body and text, is reworked in theatrical works that have cognitive and affective relevance, although they are irreducible to the transparency purported by traditional theatre.

The postdramatic's assumption of an almost perfect overlapping of form and content, to the point that forms become the content itself, is especially relevant when interdisciplinary and intertextual processes are facilitating a participative practice that resorts to notions of proximity and intimacy. By breaking the rules of the closed fictive and non-contradictory depiction of character and action, by integrating a certain degree of improvising and uncertainty as regards the content being watched, the new dramaturgies appeal to the idea of activating the audience member. Playing around with notions of simulation, interruption and process, the form presents an opening of the discussion around who creates representations and what are the valid criteria for interpretation; this emphasis on audience reception is 'trying to manage… how the audience interprets the relationship between… components' (Quirt in Trencseny 2014: 63). This activity becomes the form and locus of the work, being 'exciting' (Quirt in Trencseny 2014: 63). Postdramatic dramaturgy works by reformulating the rules of attending the theatre; it is based on a confrontation with the stage rather than an identification with it. It thus forces the audience 'to make interesting choices about how that functions, and how that articulates something about the world' (Quirt in Trencseny 2014: 63).

The conflictual relationship between drama and performance is played out in new dramaturgies, then, where incipient images emerge in order to get dissolved onstage, leaving emotional traces. One example of this is rendered physical in Forced Entertainment's work. The messiness of the stage is contrasted with the purity and emptiness of representation. The stage play is constructed around the very instruments and possibilities of the stage, which place the individual beyond its expertise. The tension between body and form is played out in a dramaturgy that deconstructs the relation between authenticity and representation and presents it as a theatrical exploration. The disconnectedness of the bodies and materials, for Forced Entertainment, becomes a fundamental reconsideration of the space of the stage. Flooded by images borrowed from theatre history or from other types of discourses, such as the domestic, the amateurish, the personal space of desire and its permanent de- and dis-figuration, the performers advance the necessity and impossibility of presence. The performative format seems to direct attention towards drama and mimesis as not only outdated, hegemonic and authoritarian structures and principles, but as obstacles that impede the authentic exploration of self, meaning and representation. The traditional principles relating reason and imagination are exposed as constrictive, a kind of blocking in a way that leaves marginal subjects prey to their emptiness; the stage populated and haunted by absence, in both the form of the inability to grasp the meaningful representation/image and the emptiness of the mimetic form. This aspect, contrasting desire and form, outlining the deferral and an almost Beckettian state of having to deal with emptiness, will be analysed in the third case study in this research project.

Ruth Kanner considers the main element of postdramatic dramaturgy to be distortion (Kanner in Trencseny 2014: 81). She relates disturbance to the very idea of a language of actions in the theatre: 'The more you disrupt or disturb the work, any element of the work – you find the true essence of whatever you deal with: a specific text or idea or movement' (Kanner in Trencseny 2014: 81). This perspective emphasizes the idea that

theatre is only superficially an activity that is informed by a simplistic concept of mimesis; the theatre director draws attention to the intricacies, relations and normative dimensions associated with and also embedded in the theatrical work. I will argue in the Sarah Kane case study that it is the determination of reason that is supplemented by its overcoming and undoing by the same movement in postdramatic dramaturgies. The disturbance is part of the project of Kane. The reconsidering of the status of text, its diverging from the mimetic paradigm of reason, will determine through a powerful deconstruction a series of chain reactions, the necessity of reformulating the representation and the use of the stage that results in a new postdramatic aesthetic. The bold interventions of Kane in the field of textuality, Forced Entertainment's deconstruction of the relation between authenticity and mimetic form, Rimini Protokoll's retrieving the difficulties associated with representing the marginal, or Castellucci's emphasis on the body as bearer of the aesthetic and the opening of the possibility of theatre's ethics evidence different limits of the mimetic. I will attempt to trace in each of the case studies how the reformulations of basic principles embody a critique of the traditional system of representation. The contemporary theatre rehearses its grammatological structures, and repositions itself as regards the material that is repressed in traditional theatre because of its fundamental rejection of reality. The idea of disrupting the totality as a means to activate theatre is in Kanner's perspective incorporated in her work on developing the text written for theatre. This approach is radicalized in the dramaturgies analysed in this research. For Kanner, working with literary works demands the application of dramaturgical principles of adaptation, and results in a more adequate image of the theatre and its possibilities. 'Because the story doesn't work, so you have to ask challenging questions, especially questions about modes of representation' (Kanner in Trencseny 2014: 83). Kanner acknowledges the fact that listening to the potential of the text and the necessities of the stage leads to problems of technique and the reformulation of traditional dramaturgy. Moreover, she acknowledges

the interference between the political and the theatrical without reducing any element to the other, preserving their specificity. The idea of the quality of the text is based in her desire to discover the language of actions. She resorts to Hannah Arendt's idea that 'action is always something you do to someone, it's not something which only stays with yourself. So it is always an opportunity to change something in the world' (Kanner in Trencseny 2014: 85). This articulation of action in both the political and the poetical/aesthetic mode is conceived in order to specify that action is the very thing that remains in theatre beyond rationality and reason. Her adding that 'true actions cannot be controlled' (Kanner in Trencseny 2014: 85) emphasizes the idea that her perspective is not based on Aristotle; it thus offers an appropriate path for entering Kane's work. One of the most important questions arising from this type of work, then, is whether or not the new dramaturgy can be reduced to the visual element. This aspect will be thoroughly discussed in the analysis of Romeo Castellucci's work. For Kanner, theatre happens because of the moment of unbalance. The inspiration provided by the text is a result of literary criticism and analysis, general science, ethnology and so on. As such, the postdramatic is also a frustration of traditional meaning by the attempt to reinscribe theatre in the scientific discourse of its time.

2. Mimesis and Deconstruction

Derridean mimesis bypasses metaphysical distinctions between ideality and materiality, foregrounding the play of - and the fundamental dissemination that characterizes – writing. Disturbing the linearity of rational perspective, it enhances the possibility of a construction that 'can occur out of interruption' (Hobson 1998: 198), through differential relations. Moreover, novel configurations can emerge through interrogation of the 'proper meaning' of a text or work (Derrida in Kamuf 1992: 83), which refocuses aesthetic discourse on reframing the relation of meaning and structure, emphasizing the necessity of a distance from the presumed neutrality of reason. The

postdramatic's attempt at stepping out of the 'history of truth' and rational mimesis, its passing through a critique of transparency and the formalist constraints that structure traditional theatre meaning, advances first of all the value of a new relationship between the stage and its spectator, based in a situation that exceeds interpretation, enhancing the intertextual and no-longer-repressed material and playful use of the stage. It is my argument that the reframing of aesthetic instruments and concepts results from a questioning of closure, whose role is both sublimated by and determinant of the construction of traditional theatrical discourse. As traditional mimesis comes under scrutiny, its reliance on closure and totalities such as text, characters, and plot is recuperated as a chain of terms that rely on the logic of dialectics and sublimation, reproducing a particular teleological understanding of history and meaning. As the meaning of traditional mimetic language is recuperated as mere effect by a deconstructive approach, the rearticulation of the stage and its effects interrupts the emphasis on structures of interpretation in order to allow for a restructuring of the relation between text and context. Through the postdramatic, grasped as a deconstructive theatre practice, both the mimetic context of theatre and its wider cultural context contribute to the creation of a new theatrical practice, which produces a disordering mechanism that attempts to frame the possibility of new theatrical encounters. It is the 'invention of the other' (Derrida in Kamuf 1992: 209) that sits at the 'centre' of this attempt to liberate experience from the dogmatic rhetoric of 'truth' and its history as mimesis. This rethinking of the limit of theatrical experience in contemporary theatre is fundamentally related to the intrusion of the 'real' onto the stage and the deconstruction that opens the problem of the relation between text and context, drama and its repressed. The new type of text achieves its effect only through its reframing of the structure of power relations in traditional theatre; the reframing of the role of the text necessarily challenges the relation between power structures and meaning. Derridean mimesis can be used for recuperating the specificity of the processes involved in producing meaning in postdramatic

dramaturgies, as reading is dependent on the series of differential relations in regard to a mimetic language which is perceived by audiences as the 'natural' language of the stage. Irreducible to a strict economy of meaning, the postdramatic aims to affect rather than be a mere vehicle for something else. This approach is rendered possible by the very possibility of a reference to the terms the postdramatic aims to subvert; the recuperation of general intertexuality is allowed by the deconstruction of mimetic instruments and becomes part of a set of theatrical operations that allow the localizing and producing of meaning and new forms.

Derridean mimesis allows this very transport of meaning across theatrical forms, elements, and instruments. The strategy of reframing old concepts is determined by the opportunities the stage offers to explore both the limits and problems of the classical concept of theatre, freeing the stage for new enquiries instead of rational analyses of ideal human behaviour. As such, the postdramatic is a 'post', a reframing that brings to the fore the role of mimesis in constructing 'natural' relations between theatrical instruments and concepts; the possibilities opened up by the recuperation of the theatrical stage into the structure of meaning enhance the diversity of new approaches to meaning. While emphasizing the fundamental iterability of elements of discourse, the postdramatic openly recognizes the possibility of disrupting them from their mimetic context with theatrical effects. By turning them into elements of a totally different context, by acknowledging the role of play in the constructions of the theatrical stage, their understanding is based in differential relations that resituate the spectator at the 'centre' of the work. The means by which context is used to dislocate theatre from its traditional relation of logocentric truth makes possible a questioning of its being a reconstitution of 'the system, the whole of history' (Derrida in Kamuf 1992: 173). What comes to the fore is the complexity and non-linearity of processes that compete in the creation of theatrical meaning.

By allowing onstage that which overwhelms traditional 'totalities' and 'identities', by marginalizing the desideratum of relating text to an overarching principle such as consciousness or logos, this theatre mobilizes the possibilities marginalized in a general order established by traditional mimetic aesthetics. By bringing to the fore the actor as supplementary to the character, and non-theatrical texts that paraphrase and replace the authoritative texts of the mimetic tradition, this theatre emphasizes and criticizes the fundamentally secondary nature of the mimetic stage in relation to reason, and the violent participation of reason in structuring the stage discourse. As such, the materiality of stage processes, the repressed content of mimetic language, becomes the primary mode of engaging in a critique of the dominance of traditional mimesis. Mimesis as adequatio is exposed as an extension of the metaphysics of language. 'The criterion of agreement between the model and the result of the mimetic process implies a reduction of mimesis' (Gebauer 1995: 300). It is the very questioning of the limits of the traditional model that impacts on the production of new theatrical forms. Here, the ambivalence of impersonation, the dramaturgical role of the accident, the felicitous recognition are all reframed. More than an attempt at simply dissolving the authority of the mimetic, the postdramatic is a mode of engaging with the violence of traditional writing, which obscures the role of rhetoric in creating effects of meaning. The restructuring of theatrical meaning is an attempt to anchor theatre in the language of its own cultural context, an attempt to lay out in the open the new possibilities and dangers associated with a mainstream proliferation of dramatic discourses that repress the marginal, the accidental, the Other. The irony permeating the structures of postmodern sensibilities directs attention towards a shift that derives from a changed relation between text and context, which theatre attempts to recuperate. Permeating the structures of meaning, this irony points to the reframing of the reasonable: 'The act of irony, as we now understand it, reveals the existence of a temporality that is definitely not organic, in that it relates to its source only in terms of distance and difference and allows for no end, for no totality

[this is indeed the mirror, a technical and nonorganic structure]' (Derrida in Kamuf 1992: 211). It is this specularity of the language which marks a definite distinction between dramatic and postdramatic theatre. Accepted in its singularity, as the effect of a particular injunction of texts and meanings, the text in the postdramatic is no longer unique, but the premise of an act of communication which may nevertheless fail.

It is the essential role of mimesis in generating meaning that makes Derrida's notion one that 'has nothing proper to itself' (Gebauer 1995: 306). Allowing the play of significations, this notion dismisses the idea of an actual and complete act of knowledge/intentionality as the basis of the communicative act. Mimesis allows for the recuperation of 'entry to textuality in multiple sites and locations' (Gebauer 1995: 294). The pre-existence of language is a situation shared by both actors and audiences, generating a 'play of contingence and necessity' (Gebauer 1995: 295), which is neglected and irrecuperable in the traditional mimetic theatre. It is within this general context of a writing that permanently rearranges a play of forces in the 'real' that certain operations are recovered as meaningful and authentic. However, the postdramatic can be defined in opposition to its historical predecessor in terms of its emphasis on difference. It is this distinction from its Aristotelian precedent, which associated mimesis with the rule of law and rationality, that allows deconstruction to understand theatre as a play of signifiers rather than a reproduction of structure and power. Mediating without telos, being a doubling without origin, the postdramatic is a decentring operation that establishes a non-univocal relation between text and its reading. Related to the destruction of closure, it mediates a transport of meaning as a series of differential relations between texts; however, conceiving text as writing, the postdramatic stands at the breaking point of traditional mimesis, where new, previously repressed and eluded configurations of meaning can claim the right to exist. As there are no positive terms for addressing 'reality', language itself being derived from this inconclusive and strangely orchestrated play of writing, the possibility of avoiding the idea of the free play of the signifier is established

through the idea of context. As the world is already text and the result of a particular and historical context, Derridean mimesis mediates the possible and inevitable transformations of meaning that may impact on the reorganizing of the field of experience. In this context, postdramatic theatre represents the possibility/necessity to dislocate from 'natural' (metaphysical) context mimetic representations, and to develop a deconstructive critique of the writing that traditionally established mimesis by relating it to closure and repression.

'The mimetic processes must not be examined in isolation from the political and the economic' because 'mimetic processes cross over boundaries drawn between culture and economy' (Gebauer 1995: 302). The very metaphor used by Derrida to explain his notion of mimesis is 'mimosa', which bypasses the distinction between plant and animal and points to the fundamental ambivalence of the term, which crosses the distinctions between theory and practice. Derrida emphasizes through this image the impossibility of placing mimesis into the binary structure commanded by reason. Moreover, the simulacral possibility, always menacing writing, is connected by Derrida to Kant's idea that the genius gives rules to art. Escaping the hegemony of mimetic form, the postdramatic appears legitimated in its attempt to reframe the process of artistic meaning by bringing to the fore an aesthetic which attempts to generate new terms. Associated with mimesis, a series of lexemes such as the pharmakon, the hymen, the fold, the trace resituates theatrical meaning, which, no longer regulated and policed by the principle of reason, can more properly describe the ambivalence, the excesses and the felicitous act of postdramatic theatre(s).

3. Mimetic Structures and Power Structures: Girard and Brecht

Resistance to the theory of mimesis hinders our ability to discuss the operations by which it relates to inscriptions of power. The source of an impossible 'clear-cut split

between subject and object', mimesis 'resists an unequivocal distinction between what is and what should be' (Gebauer 1995: 2) and 'characterizes the act of producing a symbolic world, which encompasses both practical and theoretical elements', implying 'the recognition of power' (Gebauer 1995: 3). Its operations of transferring meaning through different contexts, and even through different media, without the possibility of pointing to an original source of meaning, lead to a transfer of power mediated by mimesis. A discussion of the anthropological dimension of mimesis will contribute towards a functional understanding of the traditional theatrical form.

A. Girard's Anthropological Theory of Mimesis

Girard's theory of mimesis emphasizes the role of desire in the production of symbolic forms. Emphasizing the role of a rational revelation in structuring the inevitable crisis resulting from competitive situations, Girard looks at ritual and tragedy as the interruption of 'the operation of the mimetically produced mechanism of violence' (Gebauer 1995: 257). Girard's theory explains the idea of violence in relation to the symbolic articulation of order, enhancing the fact that social discourse is not a purified system of significations but a context for a competition that can potentially violate the very idea of order on which society is based. As such, the symbolic, whose order is based on the existence of prohibitions, is permanently menaced by a mimetic desire that is emulated by others and introduces into society a competition whose violent potential institutes the permanent possibility of crisis. It is this relationship between rationality, power and discourse, which is also analysed by deconstruction, that brings to the fore the idea that the operations and situations introduced by mimesis are irreducible to a pure and punctual 'meaning'. Girard's theory focuses on the pre-existence of a complex language that describes the world. Moreover, the idea of a language whose 'crisis or vacuity… does not limit progress' (Derrida in Kamuf 1991: 95), and that does not prevent

signs and structures from functioning, can be related to the proliferation of mediated dramatic spectacles in the contemporary cultural context. As such, mimetic desire can also be related to the order of simulacra.

Read from the perspective of Derrida's theory, Aristotle's mimetic theory represents 'the ethical and teleological discourse of consciousness' (Derrida in Kamuf 1991:105), a principal and violently established primacy of the rational over the theatrical. Read through Girard's lens, however, theatrical mimesis is a structure that allows for a temporary solution to the crisis that menaces society from the inside. For Girard, representation has the function of localizing and dismissing a particular choice/course of action/character as the source of disturbance that threatens the rational order; this theory emphasizes the role of a maximum dissolution and undifferentiation in producing a distancing effect. Nevertheless, the function of traditional mimetic representation is disturbed and subverted by the order of simulacra, which uses the metaphysical language of logos and its dialectics as primary modes of articulating spectacles and the production of desire; the postdramatic's emphasis on the real is constitutive to a moment when the 'real' itself is in crisis, and emerges only through a critique of the metaphysical idea of the sign, with its reliance on the series of hierarchical oppositions between presence/absence, intelligible/sensible. While Aristotle's theory of catharsis and theatrical representation places mimesis as a theatrical solution to the problem of meaning, Girard emphasizes the idea that the role of mimesis is constitutive to the creation of both order and disorder, as it allows both violence and acquisitive processes. In respect of Derrida's theory, the pharmakon of theatrical discourse is considered by both Aristotle and Girard as a remedy; it is the preservation of the status quo that structures the interpretation of aesthetic mimesis. From the point of view of deconstruction, both theories emphasize the role of power structures in constructing meaning. Derrida focuses on the critique of the rational apparatus that attempts to sublimate the materiality and role of the arbitrary in constructing effects of meaning, recuperates mimesis as a power controlled by a logical

'machine' that mystifies its own production processes.

The symbolic articulation of the world is thoroughly explored by Girard, whose theory of mimesis recuperates the relation between the dynamic of social relationships and mimetic processes. His analysis can be related to Bataille's idea that literature is not innocent. In Girard's anthropological theory, it is the very mimetism of desire which becomes the source of a rivalry that establishes a violence of interpersonal relationships whose destructive potential menaces the status quo. The diffuse violence menacing the symbolic order is channeled by ritual and kept at a distance by prohibition. 'All modern ideologies are immense machines that justify and legitimate conflicts that in our time could put an end to humanity' (Girard 1987: 31). Framing and constructing the disruptive nature of the accident through dialectics, and restoring the unitary perception through spectacular framing of the danger, cultural mass media representations become complicit in privileging and dramatically framing certain approaches to the exclusion of other equally important issues. Bypassing strict demarcations between knowledge and power, this notion of mimesis as a symbolic articulation of the world is correlative with the existence of the prohibition of the law, and mediates the transfer of values and adoption of prescribed models. Facilitating the appropriation of goals deemed valuable by others, acquisitive mimesis becomes a recognition of the fact that models are built into the world (Goodman in Gebauer 1995: 17) and are not mere theoretical descriptions of it. This particular understanding emphasizes the idea that conflictual mimesis emerges necessarily from mimetic desire – as long as the goals derived from a particular worldview are deemed relevant because of the existence of others who seek to achieve them, an unmastered rivalry and certain polarization of forces is inevitable. The very idea of a conflict of interpretations, positing the rivals as doubles, derives with necessity from the existence of mimetic desire, which is irreducible to a rational standpoint. Girard's emphasis on the idea that contemporary violence is 'incapable of attaining anything sacred' (Girard 1987: 36) can be correlated with a symbolic crisis that is correlative with

a crisis of the criteria of legitimacy of knowledge and a crisis of the concept of the real. As such, the violence of reason and its association with metaphysical language is foregrounded by postdramatic theatre as an attempt at recovering a discourse on the real; dismissing the linear structures of traditional theatre, the new theatre(s) focus on exposing the various relations between the 'real' and mimetic form, foregrounding a critique of the association between power, language and mimesis as part of a project that aims to recover authenticity. The emptying of the stage of realist content and references, the emphasis on conflictual juxtapositions of monologues, the dissolution of a logic of progression and resolution – all these ultimately point to a mimetic desire that is no longer able to articulate its interpretations in a conflictual situation, but discovers itself as a deconstructive device, in its complex relationship to institutions, structures and language. The emphasis on the social situation of the spectator points to the crisis of the traditional concept of responsibility and points to a shift in the relation between structures of representation and the distribution of power.

According to Girard, sacrifice does not cause violence to disappear from society, but offers a temporary relief that allows for a renewing of the community's belief in order. The anti-mimetic character of the prohibition is correlative with the enactment of the mimetic crisis, which represents 'the disappearance of any and all contested objects in the midst of conflict', turning 'acquisitive mimesis into conflictual mimesis' and offering the solution of 'the unification of conflict against an adversary' (Girard 1987: 29). Considering the ritual based in 'the paradox of transforming the conflictual disintegration of the community in social collaboration' (Girard 1987: 20), Girard emphasizes the idea that ritual is based in 'the purified and the schematized trace of past confrontations' (Girard 1987: 21). As such, aestheticization, part of the production of ritual, is a process that empties the ritual form of its violent content, mediating the reappropriation of the crisis of mimesis through a reframing of the violation of the prohibition. Mimetic theatre's aesthetic, its recentring of the perception of accidental violence in the rationality of

drama, can be understood as serving a similar function to ritual. In line with Aristotle's thought, 'tragedy can and should assume at least some of the functions assigned to ritual in a world where ritual has almost disappeared' (Aristotle in Girard 1977: 290). As such, the idea of ritual as a possibility for rechanneling the violence that menaces order from the inside can be used as a lens for understanding the very relation between reason and accident in dramatic theatre. In Oedipus, the radical loss of all distinctions that make possible the social order is based on a convoluted narrative by which truth comes to be constituted as such and is associated with a final punishment that appears to restore the rule of law. 'This shrinking back, this putting at a distance, is the restauration of the lost difference' (Girard 2004:85). However, the logic of representation that mediates the exclusion of the marginal serves a social function; according to Girard, a certain arbitrariness of discourse justifies the choice of the victim. As such, the problem of violence is merely temporarily solved by the closure of the dramatic fiction. The mimetic theatrical form is an attempt to correct and prevent the eruption of violence, which remains nevertheless a permanent possibility.

The logic of mimetic desire necessarily develops as violence, and it is the interpretation of the crisis which 'becomes the founding act of a new order' (Gebauer 1995: 258). Both a precondition for the mechanisms of violence and opportunity for arbitrary cathartic discharge, mimesis stages the transformation of the personal into a situation of social relevance. Within the logic of mimesis, the climax marks the moment when 'each rival becomes for his counterpart the worshipped and despised model and obstacle, the one who must be at once beaten and assimilated' (Girard 1987: 26). While acquisitive mimesis constructs a logic of values and certain relations, conflictual mimesis displaces the individual from their practical situation and places them in an environment of pure competition. The emphasis on the formal dimension of the competition is informed by a frenzy that can at any point disturb the symbolic articulation of the world. As the logic of representation is menaced by disorder, the crisis of the worldview that

orders and generates values and models is internal.

Unlike its historical predecessor, the postdramatic deals with the destabilizing of the criteria of reading/writing, introducing a doubt in relation to the apparent 'naturality' of the mimetic instruments used to depict the world thereby questioning the passivity of the spectator. Emphasizing the specificity of the theatrical encounter, the postdramatic criticizes the mass media discourses that construct dramatic narratives by singling out enemies and victims. The mass media relating of the mimetic crisis to the goal of social harmony, as well as enhancing the danger associated with the reproduction of the violent undoing of prohibitions, can be reframed as a lens for recuperating the relation between mimesis and power. Girard's idea that the mimetic is a logic that generates the construction of a meaningful world, as well as the violent resolution of crises, emphasizes the logocentric perspective. Nevertheless, the very crisis of mimesis as an articulation of the world is essential for understanding the postdramatic's emphasis on exposing the relation between logocentric meaning and mimesis, as well as the necessity of reframing the discourse on/of violence, the body, the repressed.

B.Brecht and the Postdramatic

Brecht's interventionist aesthetic is represented through a request to reframe theatre as an instrument of social critique, in which the spectator is assigned the role of active witness. Refusing the escapism of traditional mimetic theatre, Brecht emphasizes a certain lack of relevance of the traditional mimetic form as regards the real circumstances shaping the historical moment. Brecht's theatre reframes the theatrical idea of conflict by connecting the Marxist metanarrative of class struggle with the structures that allow representation. His ideas of Gestus and Verfremdung introduce the possibility of a distanced critique and aim at disrupting the empathy produced by traditional theatrical mimetic form. 'By replacing the "Vortäuschung der Harmonie" ("feigned harmony") of bourgeois aesthetics with the Hegelian clash of thesis and

antithesis, he sought to confront his spectators with real alternatives and show that their decisions would shape the future' (Bradley 2006: 4). Conflict is no longer primary, but an expression of the forces at work in a particular social order. Nevertheless, the particular solutions envisaged for correcting this evasionist tendency of the mimetic, which legitimized the passive enjoyment of representation and turned theatre into a distraction from 'the battleground of daily life' (Brecht in Kuhn 2015: 123), are dependent upon a particular understanding of social solidarity, which is now historically outdated. In contemporary theatre, the focus on liveness attempts to resensitize audiences to the consequences of political violence and expose the misrepresentations associated with daily news drama. It is the very restructuring of the relationship between the political, responsibility and citizenship, mediated by the mass media discourse, that demands a different understanding of context and participation in theatre. Nevertheless, the political theatre of the twentieth century, developed as an important theatre form by the same pressures that define changes in society, ultimately deals with the problems inherent in the very structure of representation. It was the very failure of the 1968 moment, emphasizing the inefficacy of public protest and the temporary nature of the solidarity between the working class and the intellectuals, that defined the relation between theatre and the political in terms of (access to) representation. The audacity of documentary forms of the German theatre of the 1960s, in their attempts to rework the difficult Nazi past, and the enthusiasm behind the agitprop forms that attempted to raise awareness regarding the Vietnam War, are now forms rendered problematic in their dependence on a macronarrative of universal emancipation. 'Provocation alone… does not make a form' (Lehmann 2006: 28), at least not any more. In order to achieve a certain effect of presence, postdramatic theatre has to reframe and deconstruct representation itself, in order to expose the relations between politics and representation.

Brecht's aesthetic represents a first moment in the emergence of a critique of signs and sign systems that participate in the construction of theatrical meaning. I will argue

that his project represents the seminal moment for the critique of mimesis as a particular approach that obscures as much as it conveys, organizing the field of perception and meaning in a movement that permanently represses an 'outside': the Other, the violent, the body. It is the very submission of the accidental to the constraints of reason, a principle of mimetic drama established by Aristotle,that is deconstructed by Brecht's theatre. The historical aspect of reason is recuperated in his dramaturgy, as well as the operations of chance. Overcoming its confinement within the logic of the spectacular and catharsis, the conflict is reframed through Gestus, which transforms the structural basis of reading, connecting the text with a context that is shared by audiences and characters. Brecht's dramaturgical ideas, representing a critique of spectacular mimetic reason, bring to the fore a certain emptiness of meaning of the Aristotelian concept; the formal self-sufficiency of traditional mimesis can be related to the deconstructive approach that emphasizes the idea that the categories and principles of reading/writing are established by a reason with an historical aspect, through a violent gesture of appropriation. Through Brecht, the opposition between reason and history comes under scrutiny, and a series of novel and theatrical possibilities emerges. 'The spectator is no longer taking refuge from the present in history; the present becomes history' (Brecht in Kuhn 2015: 46). While signs are historical and the very particular aesthetic solutions foregrounded by Brecht are historically dated, his approach still emphasizes the dissonance between representation and 'truth', which is still possible in his perspective as he relies on a metanarrative of history. Nevertheless, his critique establishes the possibility of a different type of spectatorial participation and involvement in the production of meaning.

The postdramatic's emphasis on the production of meaning through a critique of representational practices is possible through deconstruction. The dislocation of signs and theatrical instruments from their emphasis on 'fullness', 'totality', 'principle', etc., the lack of 'central' elements, the disordering quality of the new theatrical text, point to the necessity of distancing from the pervasive disorder of media and the need of reworking

the possibilities for finding meaning in new situations. Through a critique that establishes the fragmentary, the local, the accidental, new emergences of and possibilities for meaning are addressed. Conflict between characters as the primary mode of engaging audiences is replaced by enquiries staging the clashes made possible by a general field of writing; it is in this wide context of writing, considered by Derrida the generalized notion of context, that particular representations and narratives of mass media can be questioned in a manner that alludes to the critical impulse behind the Brechtian Gestus. It is the simulacral production of media narratives that imposes upon reality the dialectic logic of representation, which stands at the basis of a proliferation of 'writing' practices that impact on the dissolution of meaning. It is the ambiguity of these practices, the impossibility of understanding the consequences of this pervasive disorder of meaning, which is counteracted by postdramatic theatre's critique of drama and the propensity of the stage towards representation. As such, theatre sets 'a perpetual conflict between text and scene' (Lehmann 2006: 145). It is in this respect that the postdramatic can be considered a post-Brechtian theatre. The critique of signs exposes the possibility of 'the singularity of coming of the other' in theatre, and emphasizes 'the opening or expectation, a certain submission, a certain faithfulness to the coming, each time, of a singular other' as 'a dimension that cannot be brought into what is called the domain of ethics' (Derrida in Hobson 1998: 143). As such, deconstruction, an attempt to restructure the approach to the problem of representation, brings to the fore the necessity of thinking about the subject. I will argue that the ethics of theatre, reformulated by Brecht and a series of visionaries in twentieth-century theatre, is a rethinking of the meaning of theatre and the consequences of representation.

4. Theatrical Problems

The traditional association between aesthetics and metaphysics comes to the fore

in Aristotle's coining of the concept of mimesis, which establishes the possibility of aesthetics, a long history of interpretations of the relationship between art and meaning. In Aristotle's understanding, the term mimesis refers to the imitation of a unitary and complete action, respecting the desired outcome of beautiful proportions, developing in accord with the commandments of verisimilitude, as an illustration of that which is present, the logos or the truth. In the overall structure of the representation, the accidental and the deceptive are strategic means that contribute to the emphasizing of the rationality of the world, their marginal ontological/epistemological status being recuperated as such through the skill of the playwright; they are the means that contribute to the final recognition of the universality of the law and also the creation of a specific aspect of art, the cathartic effect, which purges the spectator's excess of fear and pity, enhancing his or her rationality. Mimesis as representation is always a reiteration of the principle of rationality, the primacy of logos, which organizes the field of perception in accord with its own hierarchies and classifications. Adhering to the idea that the value of representation is dependent on the value of the things represented, Aristotle's discourse makes it an ornament whose value is derivative and secondary. In this foundational act, imitation and poetics are intertwined, meaning is policed by rationality and the specificity of theatre, its representational propensity, marginalized as the very idea of the 'improper'; a debased double of rationality, theatre can only be considered as type of shadow of reason.

The traditional dismissing of the spectacle as a mere addition to a text-(based drama) is constructed in opposition to the ideality of the dramatic text. Considered the least important element of theatre, the specificity of spectacle is undermined; it is allocated the role of mere appearance in a context organized and based on hierarchical distinctions that claim the superiority of reason over appearance, materiality, sensuousness, instability. It is the argument of this thesis that, through this gesture, theatre is established as a repressed term, and that its complex articulation of presence

and absence is obscured by the logic of presence. Unlike the textual element, the idea of spectacle relies, in Aristotle's theory, on arbitrary choices, which both fall short of the universality of reason and are unthinkable from the paradigm of truth. The recuperation of the stage by postdramatic theatre as part of a meaningful discourse articulates an alternative aesthetic which disturbs the logic of dramatic coherence (of reason) and the idea of a faulty secondarity of representation. Derrida reconsiders the traditional emphasis that is placed on the notion of a 'plenitude' of meaning or presence and exposes it as a mere effect of logocentric thinking. He allows, through the analysis of the arbitrary sign, dislocated from its illustrative status as naive reference to the real, the recuperation of what is - in theatre - irreducible to the order of the 'proper' and the 'history of truth'. Theatre as a machine that relies on signs and representations is impacted by this discourse, which dislocates text from its traditional primacy. Emphasizing the violence that establishes logos as the principle of theatre through its delegate, the concept of mimesis, a deconstructive lens can help retrieve the value of the self-thematization of the postdramatic as an attempt at criticizing the rationality of traditional representations and recuperate a new situation for the subject. Dislocated from a rational perspective, the subject is recuperated as participant in the (dis)order of writing. 'The access to writing is the constitution of a free subject in the violent movement of its own effacement and of its own bondage' (Derrida in Hobson 1998: 31). In postdramatic theatre, complex attempts to arrive at meaning derive from programmatical attempts at dislodging the subject/character from the expectations related to mimetic form and logocentric language. Acting in a field crossed by forces that organize meaning in hierarchical oppositional terms and structure the possibility of action only in relation to reason, the postdramatic subject's attempt at rearticulating meaning and history necessarily implies the deconstruction of the perspective that represses the stage itself and the materiality of its signifiers – actors, setting, and even text. It is this entrapment of the individual into the larger context of writing, determined by metaphysical language and reflected in

personal, cultural, political and institutional practices, which constitutes the new situation of the subject. This emphasis on the peculiar materiality and 'absence' of the stage establishes the possibility of deconstruction. Insofar as absence is structurally present in the sign, as Derrida demonstrates, insofar as the delivery of the message can fail, associated as it is with the metaphor of postal services (Hobson 1998: 177), and insofar as the text offers an opportunity for displacement that might potentially result in an emergence of the new, theatre can establish the project of its postdramatic hypostasis as a reconsideration of the relation between theatre and ethics. A stage that leaves aside its dramatic representational content enhances the very impossibility of theatre stepping outside representation; the critique of traditional representation aims at creating new circumstances for meaning and, as such, at creating the discourse on the new condition of the subject .

Derrida asserts that the very idea of the irrationality of the sign is established by logocentric thinking, in its movement of establishing the principle of a centre (of truth) that proposes the effacement of the contingency of signifiers and the secondarity and inferiority of writing in relation to speech – a logocentrism that can be related to Aristotle's dismissing of stage as spectacle. Deprived of 'essence', however, the theatre can be recuperated as a machine involving signs, syntaxes, rhetoric and play. The propensity of traditional mimesis towards referentiality, substitution, and analogy can be recuperated through Derrida's theory as a particular theatrical project involved in the recuperation of specific logocentric effects of meaning and the repression of the Other and the 'outside', in a complex and yet misrecognized articulation of violence and reason. However, it is the very relation between drama and simulacra that is repressed under the authoritative regime of reason as a regime of purified signifiers. Derrida's reconsideration of logocentric meaning as a hierarchically structured field of oppositions that, first, obscures the violence of the primary distinction that poses the superiority of the intelligible over the sensible and, second, represses the emergence of what comes under

the rubric of 'irrational' becomes the basis for a new understanding of theatre. Derrida's main intervention is to undo the oppositions and emphasize the idea of writing as a model for a reconsideration of the structure of the communicative act. His writings about writing emphasize the irreversibility of writing, its being in fact a generalized context in which effects of meaning and presence are produced, its being determined by the receiver, its being characterized by absence, dissemination and difference, as well as its being a pharmakon, irreducible to the operations and analysis allowed by the principle of rationality. This approach, recuperating reason's operations as mere effects allowed by the history of metaphysics, and its emphasis on a 'present' logos, impacts on the constitution of the concept of theatre itself. Derrida's analysis retrieves the idea that a general writing, bypassing the distinction between active and passive, orders and governs the possibilities that stand at the basis of producing acts of meaning. Inspired by Freud, Derrida emphasizes the idea that 'the present in general is not primal but, rather, reconstituted, that it is not the absolute, whole living form which constitutes experience, that there is no purity of the living present' (Derrida in Hobson 1998: 22). It is the very dislocation of theatre from its rational communicational structure based in the ideality of the drama that establishes the postdramatic project as an enquiry into the very relation between representation and presence, introducing the movement of difference as 'the differential matrix' (Hobson 1998: 27) through which elements of signification are determined, both writing and theatre. The marginalizing of text in postdramatic theatre represents a marginalizing of logos and its demands, putting theatre itself into question in order to retrieve the particularity of the theatrical situation. Obscured in traditional theatre, which understands it by erasing it, the stage is no longer a vehicle for a transferable meaning but part of the structure of procuring theatrical meaning. No longer retrievable as (logocentric) interpretation, the meaning of the stage is no longer reliant on identification and analogical processes, but on the activity of producing a slippery engagement with the (dis)order of representation(s). Set against the idea of the free play

of the signifier, this postdramatic stage speculates, destructs totality and identity, plays with the density of signs, irony, and self-reflexivity, in a manner resistant to definitive appropriations. Dismissing the 'depth of meaning' (Derrida in Hobson 1998: 88), both deconstruction and the postdramatic emphasize the role of surface in the construction of meaning. While the postdramatic distances itself from the formation of illusory wholes and the depiction of rational idealities, preferring to rupture the diffuse expectations related to the mimetic, Derrida emphasizes the unavailability of a 'present' anterior to language. Deconstruction legitimizes an incoherence which proceeds against its formal mimetic model, while at the same time limiting the free play of theatrical signifiers by foregrounding the constructedness of traditional mimetic instruments. As such, the postdramatic can be recuperated as an engagement with the deconstruction of representation.

'The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures' (Derrida in Hobson 1998: 19). As Derrida suggests, signs procure their meaning through differential processes, and in the postdramatic the radical questioning of theatre can be recuperated as deconstruction that reassembles representations, processes that were previously hidden, the materiality/presence/absence of the stage, the impersonation. This reassemblage can only proceed by way of criticizing and rewriting the project of a theatre no longer bound to the naivety of realistic reference. It is the operation of the stage that interests the viewers, who are no longer protected by their voyeuristic passivity, being called to respond to the frustration of meaning associated with the intrusion of the 'real', the liveness of direct address and precarious framing of their spectatorial condition. As a certain scepticism in relation to the referentiality of language shapes the theatrical event, the problem of text and the structural absence that characterizes the stage gives way to a rethinking of the role of context. Moreover, from the formal point of view, the readability of the postdramatic is ensured by certain

processes of selection, ellipses and repetitions, which are associated with and made possible by the lifting of closure. This thesis attempts to argue that deconstruction provides the means for unpicking the adventures of the signifiers which are dislocated from the structural unity of mimesis; its resistance to metaphysical language and its structures make it the appropriate tool for understanding the 'materiality' of theatre, the relation between body and text, and the problematizing of the representational structure and apparatus. The traditional idea of representation, correlating the sense of beautiful proportions with the constraints of rationality, establishes the fundamentally (ethically) faulty stage and the desirability of correcting it by the careful observance of rules that regulate the production of aesthetic images and meaning. By contrast, it is the view of this thesis that the subversiveness of the theatrical medium, corrected by Aristotle through subordinating the materiality of the stage to the linearity of rational processes, derives from the impossibility of thinking, within the traditional paradigm, the very idea of a difference that establishes the relation between representation and the 'real'. Derrida's emphasis on difference, a term that preserves relationality without opposition, and his critique of totalities, idealities and the use of closure can help us retrieve the specificity of postdramatic approaches to representation and meaning.

A rewriting of theatre's own instruments and project is correlated with a 'disorganizing' of 'the whole ontological machine' (Derrida in Hobson 1998: 78). If, through Derrida's lens, the mimetic can be read as a 'code', an 'organon of iterability' (Derrida in Kamuf 1991: 91), this aesthetic principle, which relies on the hierarchical opposition between the intelligible and the sensible, can also be related to two inherent possibilities: 'the disruption… of the authority of the code as a finite system of rules' and 'the radical destruction… of every context as a protocol of a code' (Derrida in Kamuf 1991: 91). Problematizing the reliance of character, plot, drama on a metaphysical language that dismisses the materiality of (their transformation into stage) signifiers, the postdramatic points to the violence of a reason that, by violently associating 'presence' with a logic of

identity, marginalizes the role of the stage in the production of meaning. For the postdramatic, on the contrary, it is the very emphasis on the peculiar materiality of the stage that disrupts the 'ontological' apparatus and points to the reality of the representation. The mimetic's repression of 'outside', the 'Other', the violence, the accidental and the stage itself points to a reconsidering of the relation between the presumed transparency of the representation and an appropriation of the stage by particular configurations of historical forces. The necessity of deconstructing the relation between traditional theatrical instruments and logos gestures towards the recuperation of the ability of the stage to resignify that which has been previously erased, marginalized or obscured in the order of mimetic representation. The closure that ensures the possibility of logocentric effects of meaning and presence, emphasizing the association between theatrical value and the idea of a mimetic, self-sufficient whole, is lifted in order to allow for the recuperation of fragile distinctions that stand in non-oppositional relations. This approach emphasizes that only deconstruction, through its distancing from metaphysical language, recuperates the aesthetic effects of tampering with closure. As such, the non-mimetic de-emphasizing of the objective or subjective 'present referent' (Derrida in Kamuf 1991: 93) diverts attention towards the politics and production of processes of representation, exposing 'illusions of mastery' (Derrida in Hobson 1998: 79), in a discourse that emphasizes the necessity of rethinking the relation between the ethical project and theatre. At this point it is useful to refer to Derrida again: indeed, for Derrida the idea of justice is not deconstructible, and he emphasizes the idea that it is not calculable: 'like strange attractor, it has to provoke negotiation, a negotiation between the calculable and the justice's incalculable' (Hobson 1998: 232). Rather than relying on the dramatic sublimation of accident and matter in representation, the postdramatic exposes the simplifications that frame the traditional policing of theatre, warranting theatre a limited and derivative meaning, dependent upon a particular understanding of the relation between theatricality and responsibility.

Mimetic theatre's ambivalent reliance on notions of presence and representation inevitably introduces the topic of 'truth' values and their relation to the stage. In his response to Plato, the recuperation of the value of the theatre is regulated by Aristotle through the appeal to reason, in the form of both a sense of proportion and the telos of the theatre; and, by a parallel movement, the very specificity of theatre, its subverting notions of identity through enactment, is isolated by the mimetic stage as merely accidental. This ambivalence towards representation stands at the core of traditional theatre, and for this reason is pervasively explored by the postdramatic, which inherently chooses as its topics the very discussion of the previously repressed problems associated with the use of stage, representation and text. As such, the postdramatic is both a critical moment in the history of theatre and also an aesthetic attempt to rework the opposition between representation and the 'real'. Moreover, in reconsidering the subject, not as based on notions of identity and ideality, on ontology and metaphysics, but as constructed through textual relationships, fundamentally rehearsing grammatological structures, postdramatic theatre activates a new type of theatrical discourse.

The enigmatic quality of the term mimesis both suggests a relation of homology between the stage and the world, and the emphasis on the 'real', the 'present', which keeps its model at a distance. Nevertheless, deconstruction questions the possibility of the existence of the world as such, as everything that is known (and 'real') is experienced through a process of writing. 'Writing', 'trace', 'inscription' undo the 'array of satellite distinctions: signifier/signified, body/mind, passive/active' (Hobson 1998: 13). Defamiliarizing the rhetoric of the mimetic stage, the postdramatic seems to point to a new type of theatrical syntax. And by drawing attention to the impossibility of 'origin', postdramatic deconstruction allows for the recuperation of theatre as writing and as supplement of the real.

Moreover, its relation to dialectical order, its 'exclusion of the real' (Lehmann

2006: 4) along with its sublimation of the materiality of the stage, emerges from a perspective that attempts to erase the materiality of the signifier and which orders the field of (theatrical) discourse around a hierarchy of oppositions: word/body, rational/accidental, action/actor. Within the traditional theatre, drama is an authoritative model that results from Aristotle's response to the original problem of mimesis as formulated by Plato: the ability of theatre to subvert the (rational) order, the decaying of the order of the state, promoted through characters who lament and cry, the vicious constitution of the actor who pretends to be an expert in multiple tasks – a 'jack of all trades and a master of none' – and the necessary consequence of this lack of knowledge: a senseless discourse. Within this critique, theatrical representation is nevertheless presented ambivalently: the very condemnation of theatre as the corruption of morality and reason is reframed by Plato when he envisages the possibility of instructing valuable members of society, the guardians, through theatrical representations.

I would like to foreground the idea that a (shadowy) double of theatre lies in its potential to recuperate the very apparatus through which representation itself is made possible, insofar as representation has been marginalized as a necessary medium and as the means erased from/in the structure of representation. As the historical model of drama and its reliance on mimesis aims at repressing the materiality of the stage in order to promote the ideality of its signifiers, a certain circularity between the ontological and aesthetic reading of the theatre, violently inscribed by the dramatic tradition, is played out in traditional mimetic theatre. In this context, postdramatic theatre is, first, an attempt to rewrite a new concept of mimesis, inspired by practices/theories such as John Cage's compositions, which attempt to recuperate into the structure of the (musical) work the accidental and aleatoric by framing it and using it to create contexts for recuperating a thinking on the real. Cage looked at the establishment 'of a field of equivalence that is characterized by unimpededness and interpenetration' (Allsopp 1997: 48). Second, the

postdramatic aims at the dissolution of the old ideological structures that sat behind the concept of drama and mimesis, emerging as a political testimony that criticizes from a particular historical point of view a tradition that thought itself to represent truth, reason and other metaphysical structures. Artaud's project relates to the oblivion of the paradoxical nature of theatrical representation, which is understood to be both the abstract and the concrete, shaped by both contingencies and transgression, connected to becoming and to a notion of passage and metamorphosis of ideas. Artaud's insistence is on a notion of theatre as proposing an image of the unrepresentable, and the cancelling of pervasive social representations in order to affirm its own language can be related to Derrida's discourse of a theatre that plays around with its own possibilities as writing. Nevertheless, the idea that writing determines theatre is the aesthetic norm, producing a tradition that has established the rule of dramatic text as prior to the conception of images and representations. As Derrida does not acknowledge the particularity of the theatre/stage as a place where the law is suspended, his discourse on mimesis does not acknowledge the paradoxical identities and functions possible through theatre; instead, he sees the stage as the 'place bearing the mark of our notion of representation'. His anti-Hegelian rejection of dialectical synthesis failed to recuperate the submission of theatre to the writing/logocentric discourse; the rhetorics of the stage, in their deceptive 'natural' hypostasis, the mimetic, failed to recuperate the distinction between the 'real' and representation as inconsequential for the legitimacy of theatre. I will argue that postdramatic theatre attempts to recuperate its being distinct from the 'real', and that it is this conception which was made invisible by the dramatic paradigm. Third, the stage gets flooded by the antinomy between body and words, creating a polyphony directing attention to the gaps and to the necessary process of supplementation in the act of reading. A more democratic aesthetics attempts to restore theatre's marginal subjects, facts, and accidents, reframing their relation with its audiences; at the same time, a radical aesthetic points to the unavailability of fixed positions which were assumed as already

there by logocentrist writing. The stage is employed in order to represent the limit of discourse – its minimalism points to the lack of discursive resolution. In all these approaches, the stage itself is reconfigured not merely as a means, but as an instrument of deconstruction.

The paradigmatic shift from dramatic to postdramatic theatre is addressed in this research as being fundamentally related to two causes: the postmodernist distrust of big narratives (famously developed by Jean-François Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition*) and the fundamental shifts in conceiving perception and the body, allowed by the emergence of a field of general interactivity and connectivity. As such, the new theatrical phenomena will be analysed in relation to both their problematizing and disrupting of the closure that characterizes traditional theatre, as well as in their attempts and claims to represent the real. It is the fundamental reformulation of the relation between the real and the relation of text/writing, performed by deconstruction, that exposes the idea of the subjection of theatre to control from an extraneous discipline, the ontology reformulated in traditional theatre's aesthetics. Exposing the traditional reliance of theatre aesthetics, specifically on notions of presence and identity, gives way, through the reformulations of deconstruction, to the possibilities of a reformulating of the principles at work in theatre as such. The critique of transcendent ideas of presence, logos, centre, telos that traditionally regulated the logic of dramatic theatre, and implied the existence of a single authoritative reading of human action, is undone in a perspective that, by discovering and exposing the gesture of subjecting theatre to the sole authority of dramatic text/author/theatre director, restores to the theatre a non-originary notion of representation. No longer secondary to the 'presence' of the other, representation keeps its secondary status; it ceases to be a derivative, but will engage with the difficulties emerging from the collapse of its authority, which it previously shared with logos. Mimesis's fundamental ambiguity, its pointing to both what it repeats and to the difference that makes it 'another', makes Derrida adopt it in order to explain how it is in

the very outside of the classical paradigm and its ontology that one finds the possibility for the constitution of meaning. A fundamental mimetism of language, incorporating accident into its 'essence', is nevertheless to be referred in theatre to the emergence of a 'destiny' – the heterogenous, the historical – a destination. The fundamental distinction between writing and communication is played upon: whereas writing is defined in such a way as to suppose the possibility of meaning against the idea of the death of its writer and receiver, theatrical mimesis supposes the idea of the 'envoi', which establishes the responsibility and ethical demand. Nevertheless, the traditional model of mimesis is not to be confused with Derrida's mimesis; the aesthetic term is to be questioned because of its very imbrication in the system of a general field of writing and representations that can no longer be reduced to the classical precedence of the signified over the signifier. Liberated by the authoritative claims of reason, which have codified the dramatic action and its telos through subjecting them to the notion of mimesis, theatre becomes a particular type of writing, whose task is to reintroduce and reformulate in solicitation the distinction between sensible and intelligible, trace and archive, body and mind.

As writing itself is deprived by origin and telos, and its horizon is a 'dissymmetric, hierarchically ordered space whose closure is constantly being traversed by the forces, and worked by the exteriority, that is represses' (Derrida 2004: 5), the possibility of thinking beyond hierarchical oppositions – word/body, signifier/signified, reason/accident – informs the very dramaturgy of the postdramatic theatrical event. This possibility is opened by the postdramatic theatre's rejection of structure, order, telos, as well as its emphasis on the materiality of the traces and differences which enter the stage once the problem of meaning is reformulated as an unstable result of the play of material signifiers. No longer justified by the end that exemplifies the dialectics and hierarchical opposition of reason and irrationality – no longer subdued by the constraint of not representing the real but enacting verisimilitude (the plausible instead of a 'daunting' real, in which good people could suffer without reason) – postdramatic theatre reframes

the relation between the spectacular, rhetoric and its materials, instituting a play that constitutes the theatrical event. The deconstruction of idealities such as truth, the ideal, sense, the transparency of expression or intention, establishes the theatrical event as a critique of forms that aims at recuperating into its writing the repressed of the mimetic paradigm – its excluded, the real.

The traditional logic of representation is questioned in the form of the body under threat (Sarah Kane), the body as an archive of experience (Castellucci), the performer subjected to the expectation of entertaining their audiences (Forced Entertainment), or the invisible realities of labour (Rimini Protokoll). The relation between body and representation is reframed in each of these four case studies; in the first two it is activated by the ideas of transgression and taboo, while in the last two it is reconsidered as the inscription of theatre's bodies in a new type of social order. The questioning of the status of the real and its representations on the stage make way for innovative reformulations of the role of the elements of theatre; as such, the postdramatic overcomes the idea of staging as a minimal circumscription of the rational structure and order of the script, and proposes instead unfamiliar situations, previously rejected from the stage. It is both their unsettling emotional quality and the disruption of the dramatic logic which makes the postdramatic theatre a re-engagement with the ethical, political and aesthetic problem of representation: as such, the stage gets populated by characters deprived of telos but characterized by a certain desire that makes them transgress the social rules (Sarah Kane), characters whose bodily presence overwhelms with emotional associations and the rationality of their discourse (Castellucci), performers who testify to their desire to overcome their entrapment in the logic of cultural commodities and testify to the desire for an impossible elsewhere (Forced Entertainment). Moreover, as theatricality becomes a descriptive term for describing the postmodern world, the stage trope gets refunctioned: it reframes the peculiar activities of subjects whose labour is seldom underrepresented in the socio-cultural landscape of the city. Refunctioning theatricality as a way of

recuperating the value of the marginal is interesting because it goes against the pervasive understanding of theatricality as the artificial, the emphatic or the stagey.

The reframing of text and traditional theatrical forms advances new types of relations with the other, representing the opening of a new ethical possibility for the stage. As the former rules are dismissed, the stage opens as the place of the other who reframes the problem of ethics without resorting to reason. It is this presentation of alterity which reopens the space of the encounter with the audience. Sarah Kane, in *Blasted*, suspends the ability of the audience's understanding while confronting them not only with the possibility of – for example – rape, but with the escalating of violence into a full-scale civil war, overwhelming the stage with the dominance of the irrational. While this perspective is the very opposite of the principle of rationality presented by Aristotle as the only legitimate solution to the problem of theatre, the very suspension of rationality and the very suspension of the law in theatre allows for the recuperation of the logic of violence. The ambiguous dismissal of the rule of the three unities within the conception of the structure of the play, which is fractured in the middle by the appearance of a third character, creates a polysemy around which theatrical significations are articulated in an almost poetic manner. The accidental is employed as a means to both relativize the difficult emotional state constructed in the first part of the play, a rape which is almost accidental and inconclusive, and to supplement violence by suggesting that it shouldn't be a thing theatre hesitates to construct and then analyse. The postdramatic approach of Sarah Kane to the problem of violence, her inventive approach to the formal problems, assumes that the problem of pain is unavoidable. As such, her plays deal with the problem of transgression and necessarily reframe the problem of freedom and hope.

The ethos and formal principles of traditional dramaturgy are refunctioned in stagings reconstructing the instruments of theatre. The emphasis in Castellucci's work on the problem of the body aims to retrieve the problem of impotence and greed, sublimity

and degradation, the body and its excesses, its being an archive of experiences, a supplement to memory and the word. The problem of power is reframed with the aid of bodies taking presence onstage, a presence that seems more compelling than the action the body performs. In *Oresteia*, the idea of tragedy is reinterpreted in a series of actions which aim at showing the context of Oreste's killing of his mother; his prosthetic arm is the necessary supplement for his lack of will, evident in the casting of a tall and thin actor. This reinterpretation of tragedy puts aside the notion of hubris, outlining a historical necessity, a following of the script, a force less than life itself, and the entrapment of the individual in a series of circumstances, rules and language. The staging makes little use of language, and is based on one of the dustiest translations of the text, highlighting therefore the derivative aspect of the staging which reframes the problem of irrationality outside the rational paradigm of theatre. As such, irrationality is not explained, but fills the stage.

Further, the use of formal innovation opens the way for enigmatic characters/performers to occupy the stage. The enigmatic character is made possible by the fact that the character is no longer subordinated to the meanings contained by an authoritative text. Its essence is subversive, and untamable by words or irreducible to them. Forced Entertainment's work, for example, is an attempt at a deconstructing criticism of traditional theatre. The perplexing emergence of a question revolving around the value of spectatorship, made urgent due to the generalizing of this state of 'participation', is supplemented by the disruption introduced by reality in the structure of the show. The criticizing of a pervasive use of drama in constructing social reality, as related to a utopian sense of presence and meaning, undoes and deconstructs the relation between the stage and the viewer. Apparently a position that contradicts Derrida's insistence that viewer and viewed are interconnected, the reconsideration of the relation between stage and spectators points to the gap and void established by rejecting mimesis as a structuring principle. The perturbing of the convention of mimetic reading introduces

the structure of drama into the relation between stage and audiences, a drama which becomes postdramatic due to the power play between the audience and performers, which destructures that relation in order to let meaning emerge. The stage is constructed and deconstructed, made into a means or an instrument, spatializing the polyphony of theatre's discourse, relying alternatively on facts or reason. As such, a game is established onstage, and its play relates to distributions of power and meaning. Mimicking the mimetic perspective, producing its simulation, it aims at recuperating a notion of authenticity into/through the very interweaving of the fabric of their theatrical worlds. Moreover, the theatricality of postdramatic theatre implies in this case the transformation of the power games of the traditional stage into a play of signifiers which attempt to suggest a way out of the perplexing crisis of modernity, with its emphasis on the subject and its opposition to the object. Reframing and dismissing mimesis and drama enables Forced Entertainment, in particular, to thematize the anxieties of performing, the emptiness of the representation, the desire for a completion which is only mimicked by the mimetic form.

The postdramatic paradigm also thereby prepares specific new encounters between the audiences and the writing of the stage: 'Everything depends on not understanding immediately' (Lehmann 2006: 87). The deferral of understanding emerges from the indistinguishable relation between material and significations, much in the sense of Derrida's undoing of the distinction between form and content, theme and medium. The theatre becomes the medium through which a new postdramatic theatrical writing emerges, through a critique of the traditional mode of subjecting the practice of theatre to the authority of reason and its correlative, morality. The postdramatic theatre does not resolve itself through the autonomous aesthetic judgement of the audience member: it resists that kind of summary judgement, or seeks to frustrate it in some way; rather, it seeks to implicate the audience in the theme of the play and through the play of signifiers/traces and provisional meanings that elicit the emergence of an active

spectatorial practice. Here 'writing' and the stage appropriate or perhaps even incriminate the audience; for example, in Forced Entertainment's works, which derive from the assumption that audience expectations are hostile to the emergence of new theatrical meanings, a new relation between responsibility and writing is nonetheless claimed.

It is the very critique of the association between reason and form that first establishes a caesura between traditional and postdramatic theatre. As the shift is introduced programmatically due to the 'shaking of the belief in the historical model of drama' (Lehmann 2006: 13), for its conflicts and resolutions have been 'the model for a desired, imagined or promised development of history' (Lehmann 2006: 13), the very telos of the new theatre demands a reconsideration of all teleological interpretations of the theatre and its instruments. Nevertheless, it is interesting to discover that the very attempt to position themselves beyond the dramatic model and its hierarchies, the very attempt to foreground a new theatrical discourse, through re-engagement with the problem of body and text, (necessarily) leads Forced Entertainment to a different understanding of impersonation, a different occupation and notion of the stage and a new discourse of the theatrical sign. By enhancing the presentness of the stage and its ability to structure meaning within the theatrical event through its associative logic, postdramatic theatre foregrounds its ability to represent in its criticizing of traditional representation. Nevertheless, this self-reflexivity of postdramatic theatre does not reduce the fascinating power of the stage, but, in an almost paradoxical way, contributes to it. In Castellucci's work, for instance, a poetry of the stage emerges through the enhancing of the level of representation and the staged action. The abstraction and the concrete supplement one another. The anonymity and the concrete meet one another for theatrical effect. The human being onstage meets horror and the impersonal. As Castellucci writes: 'We don't believe anymore in a "natural" mimesis: the stars do not shine upon our sorrows, the waves of sea do not capture the rhythms of our desires, and the wind does

not do our remembering for us' (Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 60). If it is this disbelief in the traditional mimesis that reorders theatre in accord with other types of frameworks, postdramatic theatre cannot avoid delving into its own past in order to realize it is a rewriting of theatre, and this is because, for postdramatic theatre, there is no possibility of relating the theatrical sign to a pure origin. As a different answer to the problems already at work in the modern paradigm, postdramatic theatre cannot avoid being a deconstruction and reframing of punctual and semantic problems in the old literary theatre.

As such, deconstruction offers a lens for examining the tension between the two traditions. Undoing the idea of sublimated mediation, regulated by the proposal of the subjection of the mimetic to the rational, the postdramatic paradigm offers a stage that is conscious of itself, which attempts to articulate the previously repressed material with spectacular consequences. The potential for spectatorial deconstruction is anchored in the very presence of the stage as the space of discourse, offering the point of an exteriority in relation to the discursive practices defining subjectivity/ego/character as emerging through action. This new postdramatic theatre emphasizes the interferences of writerly practices based on the notion of utility in the construction of 'models', and attempts to undo them by playing around the practical rather than logical conditions of text onstage. The writerly practice of the audience member results from a clash that emerges through the relation of supplementation between stage and experiences regulated by ideas of telos in the social world. This writing practice is also a reconstruction, or the possibility of a reconstruction, through the play and adventures of theatre's grammatological structures, which replace in the old dramaturgy the role of anchoring representation and theatre in metaphysical and theatrical aesthetic discourse. The very suppression of the irrational in the traditional dramatic theatre is reframed by postdramatic deconstruction in the movement of a syntactic play with different layers, principles and instruments of the stage that point to the previously repressed potential which has always played a part as the not-

yet-actualized potential of the theatre. A new writing practice emerges through emphasizing the clash and supplementation within the traditional modes of operating of dramatic theatre. Exposing the inconsistencies of the stage, the postdramatic becomes a deconstruction of the theatre in practice, leaving its audiences perplexed by the constructions that cease to signify but which enhance the relation between what was previously conceived as accidental and text, body and stage. Liberated from the constraint of having to illustrate, the stage is no longer subjected to the constraints imposed on it by the distinction between reason and accident. The materials of the stage are significant, and the signification has a materiality which should not be marginalized. Due to this reciprocal relation, the postdramatic seldom proposes defamiliarization with the strategies of reading and the impulse of the audience to anticipate, opening up the possibility of new types of theatrical events. It is the very deconstruction of the relation between reason and the possibilities embedded in the stage that is involved in the production of theatrical meaning. The deconstruction of the mimetic stage will advance the disruption of necessity, structure and logic of composition in order to draw attention to the real by shifting the dynamic between stage and audience. By marginalizing the autocratic principles of the stage and by frustrating the principles of reading and employing the stage for the illustration of a fable, the postdramatic theatre rediscovers its creative possibilities within the disjunction between reason and theatrical opsis or 'spectacle'.

Derrida's fundamental intervention is to think the opposition natural/cultural as having 'the function in our thought of getting history started by disengaging history from its opposite, nature – but such an opposition is unsustainable Derrida argues' (Hobson 1998: 27). For theatre, this idea mobilizes a different understanding of the body and what has previously been thought as its irrationality. According to Derrida, it is the very 'notion of writing, with the values of "irrational" or the veiling of the vision of language which makes possible the notion of the "arbitrariness of the sign"' (Hobson 1998: 27). The

'radical dissolution of the logocentric hierarchy' (Lehmann 1997: 57) involves a process of de-semanticization of the mimetic language of elements of theatre and the recovering of 'body, rhythm, breathing, the here and now of the unthinkable presence of the body, its eroticism', which 'undermine the Logos' (Lehmann 1997: 57). The disappearance of the centre is closely connected to the dismissal of the semantic structure of the text, opening up new relationships with situations of enunciation, placing an emphasis on context and communication with audiences, and introducing texts that were previously thought to be 'untheatrical' (such as lists, data, fragmented speech deprived of telos or structure). The intrusion of what was previously repressed as the insignificant real prepares new ways of using the space of the stage, creating 'a space that is itself placed on the borderline of logic and reason, on the threshold between what is thinkable and what is beyond reasoning' (Lehmann 1997: 56). To rediscover the stage as a 'multiplicity of voices, a "polylogue", a deconstruction of fixed meanings, a disobedience of the laws of unity and centered meaning' (Lehmann 1997: 57) is to implicate the stage in the destructuring which twists and turns around the other of reason and recuperates its positivity. As such, theatre draws attention to 'the silence of the logos, silence as the structural interruption of any continuity of logos' (Lehmann 1997: 57).

This exposing of the limits of the representative status of drama, mimesis and dialectical synthesis is performed through a reconsideration of the relation between the aesthetic and the ethical, which emerges as urgent due to the general context of questioning the logocentric discourse and its hierarchical structuring. The new forms of theatre recycle and reframe elements of the mimetic dramaturgy in order to affirm neither the things themselves, nor their representations, but the theatre as a representation which shows more or less things or their representation, or rather installs a machine, in Derrida's terms. It is this very introduction of the notion of play and its correlation with writing that regulates the mimetic as non-essential, as both repetition and difference, producing 'effects of reality' through a series of terms. The play can only lead to a

fragmentary representation according to Derrida. Nevertheless, as the reconsideration of mimesis exposes the traditional relation between mimesis and reason, as a violent inscription that relates theatre to an absolute origin representing the traditional hierarchical field, the introduction and recuperation of the play into the structure of theatrical mimesis contributes to the destruction of the idea of drama.

One of the first consequences of a deconstructive analysis of theatre consists in the undoing of the firm opposition between reason and accident, revealing the cleavage through which reason was instituted as a first principle as being operated through language and a repression of the 'other'. As such, reason's legitimacy is an operation within language that structures the field of the real in a violent inscription that is endlessly repeated in the history of theatre. It is this violence that the postdramatic attempts to counteract, by proposing a critical discourse on the discourse of reason's usurping of the legitimacy of the theatrical stage and its potential discourse. The problem of the text and its theatricality, traditionally based on the subordination of dramatic mimesis to reason and the sublimation of performative means into an image that is considered a merely accidental means, will get reformulated in postdramatic theatre as an attempt to reintroduce into the theatre the crisis of representation. It is the very crisis which announces the end of the rational paradigm and enhances a refunctioning of representation and its relation to the ethical. Within the postdramatic theatre the old significations are recirculated with the aim of constructing a new anatomy of the theatre that would lend itself to aberration and multiple explorations of the possibilities of a multifarious rhetoric – thus enabling the stage to render the real palpable. The very attempt to recuperate body, stage and polyphonic text, the 'outsides' of the traditional hegemony of the dramatic principle, will lead to a reconstruction of our mode of reading/writing, which will take into account not only the transparency of the signifier in the voice, but also the echoes of the unspoken and repressed.

To consider deconstruction a lens for understanding postdramatic theatre, then, is to propose several different problems, reconsidering: (1) the central status of text in relation to its staging; (2) the unstable dynamic of the elements involved in the creation of the theatrical event once the constraints of the subjection of the mimetic to reason is lifted; and (3) the resurgence of the materiality of the stage and of the body, which are traditionally sublimated, insofar as in traditional theatre the act of mediation is considered marginal and accidental. These three aspects are intertwined in postdramatic theatre in the following way: the lifting of the closure and the general intertextuality established by deconstruction will first of all point to the authoritarian principle of reason and its interacting with the logic of the stage in the traditional staging. The very notion of centre as a means of structuring the character and action and of rendering insignificant the accidental through the mediation of a dialectical thinking will get reformulated in mise en scènes which undo the hierarchical subordination of stage elements to the traditional text. Mise en scènes such as Robert Wilson's level their elements, making theatrical works about the possibility of theatre to create theatrical meanings equally significant with words. 'Staged text (if text is staged) is merely a component with equal rights in a gestic, musical, visual, etc. total composition' (Lehmann 2006: 46). As the textual element is refunctioned into the theatrical landscape as music or as a residue haunting its memory, the stage achieves the status of a stimulus that aims to elicit an emotional response. 'The principle of the destructing of coherence' (Lehmann 2006: 62) directs attention towards achieving a status of presence, made possible by the appeal to the liminal; a 'play with the density of signs' (Lehmann 2006: 89) and associative powers of memory. Therefore, the word becomes a reformulation of text which no longer accepts its assigned place within the mimetic structure, the dramatic text being disrupted, relativized and supplemented by its reframing in the mise en scène. It becomes a trigger for the unconscious ability to make sense of irrational, enigmatic and unstable meanings even without, or perhaps against, the formal traditional apparatus of mimetic theatre. The

latent is the focus of the very exploration of text beyond its communicative and informational dimension, determining a change in the nature of action and the conception of the role of character/actor. For this reason, in the postdramatic paradigm, the old reliance on the primacy of the Ego is replaced by 'a new type of speaking subject' (Lehmann 1997: 59).

This thesis argues, then, that the critical apparatuses developed in postdramatic dramaturgies represent both an attempt to reformulate the traditional instruments of theatre and the desire to recuperate new contexts for theatrical meaning. Unveiling the intricacy of metaphysical assumptions in the traditional design of theatre, deconstruction pushes to the limit the relation between theatrical situation and the real; moreover, what is at stake is not the real, but the ability of these complex dramaturgies to turn the 'real', the theatrical 'presence', into aesthetic terms and stimulate comprehension and participation. This operation can only be performed by deconstruction, which acknowledges the entrapment of both subject and theatre into the order of writing. What this thesis attempts to argue is that the opposition between the stage and the real is not a simple circumstance, but the determining factor in this project, necessarily involved with the undoing of the realist and mimetic tradition. This theatre ultimately unveils the authoritative inscription of reason in the mimetic, pointing to the possibility of a reformulation through a critical reappropriation. Deconstruction is part of the project of establishing new emerging possibilities; as it acknowledges and (re)contextualizes the reliance on reason in theatre, postdramatic dramaturgies problematize the syntax necessary for the recuperation of the 'outside', the repressed, the body and the reality of the stage. Destabilizing hierarchies and recuperating the traditional subjection of theatre to reason as problematic, deconstruction is directed against the hegemony of dramatic text and the mimetic emphasis on the sublimation of the real.

5.Pre-histories of the Postdramatic

The postdramatic as 'theatre at the vanishing point' (Herbert Blau in Lehmann 2006: 133) is characterized by 'rhizomatics' (Lehmann 2006: 132), a continuous process of 'contamination' of the formal with a new preference towards the historical and the local. This results in the problematization of the relation between form and meaning, which impacts on the very conception of the nature of elements of artistic discourse. Dismissing the category of drama and the holistic notions associated with the mimetic orchestration of meaning, the new aesthetic(s) emphasizes the contribution of a certain belatedness of meaning, which relates the text with the context and turns the participatory situation into an active aesthetic. Based in a hybridization of meaning and a dismissing of traditional categorial thinking, the postdramatic deals with the rest, resistant to interpretation, including the 'real' as both means and task of the new aesthetic. A certain distanciation with regard to a 'history of truth' and the traditional idea of mimetic authority is turning play, disruption and discontinuity into situations of elucidation of representation and its dynamics. This practice, which brings to the fore Derrida's ideas of dissemination, the undecidable and the pharmakon, foregrounds the possibility of criticizing the discourse that made theatre 'essentially' mimetic and secondary. A recuperation of theatre as writing, in Derrida's understanding of the term, allows for the possibility of considering theatre as a practice conditioned by a 'structurally vague consensus' and aims to produce the very operations that subtend the reality and production(s) of representation, instead of just reiterating the pervasive cultural representations. Moreover, the stage itself can be considered an ex-centric point in the relation with the real; its peculiar materiality, reduced traditionally to the debased logic of absence, can allow for a deconstruction of the 'real', of 'representation' and mimetic theatre.

This investigation of the real in the context of theatre destabilizes the formal structures established by tradition and is influenced by shifts in the visual arts during the 1960s and 1970s. The postdramatic is an aesthetic phenomenon that thrives on the crisis

of language and the disappearance of traditional truth values that shaped the dramaturgy of mimesis. The specificity of its operating mode(s) and praxis emerges in the clash between the cultural critique of 'language' as truth and the unveiling of the particular values and cultural baggage associated with the traditional elements of theatrical language: actor, drama, imitation, identification, catharsis, etc. The postdramatic is involved not only in the creation of new forms, which emerge through the use/construction of new theatrical instruments and aesthetics, but in a displacing of the former emphasis on 'plenitude' in favour of the ephemeral, surface, play of appearances, traces and differences. This dislocation, manifested through the advancing of the theatrical, is a comment upon the excess of the logocentric approach, which refused to apprehend the reality of its own play, the constructed nature of its 'natural' emphasis on reason, and the repression of the Other, the body, matter, and the arbitrary. I would like to suggest that the postdramatic, in allowing the 'real' to enter the theatrical stage, is necessarily a reworking of the general field of writing which, in its traditional hypostasis, repressed the other of logos and iterated the traditional split between stage and audience, process and representation. As such, the postdramatic is a range of phenomena that, by remediating what has traditionally been naturalized as the very idea of theatre, by engaging with the play of representations and exposing the distributions of power inherent in theatrical constructions, aims at recuperating new theatrical configurations and meanings.

As Lehmann suggests, the 'practitioners of contemporary experimental theatre are actually well versed in the historical avant-garde, the neo- and post-avant-garde' (Munby in Lehmann 2006: 7). However, turning the disruptive quality of avant-garde approaches into a type of artistic or technical competence subverts the very idea of liberation of subjectivity from the structures and demands of a bourgeois aesthetic. The postdramatic, inheriting the crisis of meaning inherent in the traditional project of art, decentres the logocentric topology of the stage, without, however, proposing an essential and ultimate

solution to the problem. Most of the postdramatic dramaturgies relativize the traditional mimetic form and its instruments, promoting, instead of order and hierarchy, practices that thrive on discontinuity and disruption. Defining the new theatre in contrast to its mimetic avatar, this thesis argues that the postdramatic is an attempt at dislodging theatre from metaphysical discourse, and an attempt to deconstruct and rewrite theatre as a specific activity. Merging together the critique of a proliferation of spectacles based on neoliberal capitalist values and an awareness referring to the interconnection between context and text, their indefinite play, the new theatre phenomena seem to emphasize the irreducibility of representation and the difficulty of working at the limit of language/representation. As the idea of closure is associated with a passivity that endangers good citizenship, the new theatre creates an opportunity to rewrite the crisis of subjectivity, meaning and representation. I would suggest that it is precisely this commodification of representation, and the inability to step out of the perpetual simulacral constructions of 'meaning', that demands a deconstructive approach. Moreover, the theatrical instruments for this critique have already been proposed by Brecht. As such, the postdramatic responds to a crisis in/of the concept of the real. Its materiality, its liveness, its disrupting propensity are attempts to (re)invent the relation between logocentric assumptions and expectations, and the logic of the real. It is this relation between a phantasmatic notion of the 'real' and traditional mimesis that turns the postdramatic stage into a place of disturbance and unsettling questions.

Postdramatic theatre can also be understood as a questioning of the possibility of meaning in the context of mediated spectacles and the dissolution of former criteria of legitimacy and reference. As 'the bond between perception and action, receiving meaning and "answerability", is dissolved' (Lehmann 2006: 184), the very idea of (mimetic) competence, with its emphasis on metanarratives of logos, is in crisis. In the context of a generalized spectacle, theatre aims to restore the conditions of intelligibility by emphasizing the resistant body, as well as the theatricality of the stage. By embracing the

self-thematizing and self-reflective approach, the postdramatic makes theatre both theme and medium of the theatrical representation, allowing for the restoring of the dimensions of perception. By analysing and mobilizing the theatrical play, the very relation between bodies and their representation(s) becomes the content of the stage. The groundwork for these new explorations of the stage was prepared by the radical dismissing of Cartesian structures that emerged with the research on the body in the visual arts of the 1960s and 1970s.

The 1960s mark a fundamental change in the understanding of theatre, the mythology of the public feast marking an interest in the augmentation of the role of play and imagination in constructing theatrical meaning. By adopting the insights and analyses of structuralism and cultural anthropology, theatre distances itself from the Aristotelian emphasis on organic representation and the idea of art for the sake of art. Peter Brook's *Lear (1971)*, Mnouchkine's *1789* (1971), Luca Ronconi's *Orlando Furioso* (1969) are characterized by an overt adoption of theatrical conventions and an enthusiastic exploration of expressive means. The audience is reconsidered as an active and reflexive partner, and the mise en scène marginalizes the traditional aesthetic coherence in order to stimulate a critical approach. The attempt to resituate theatre in the space of a cultural debate leads to a resignification of the theatrical elements and effervescent theatrical research on the impact of ideology on everyday life.

The shift in the visual arts of the 1960s and 1970s towards recuperating the asignifying body brings to the fore the relation between metaphysical language and the ways it informs the institutional discourses and structures, and the repression effected by logocentric discourse. Influenced by critical discourses (structuralism, psychoanalysis, anthropology) that emphasize the complexity of the human psyche, the art of the 1960s distances itself from the formalist approach of the 1950s. In an attempt to change the relations between artists, institutions and society as a whole, visual artists abandoned

traditional art forms, painting and sculpture, in order to create new visual art forms that embodied a radical critique of the lack of (social) value of traditional aesthetic norms, distancing themselves from the ideas of the American critic Clement Greenberg. Adopting the repressed body as a new aesthetic means results in a disruption of the structure of communication and a radical reconfiguration of the notion of art. Remapping the body as a source of motivation and identity, visual arts, performance art and theatre will bring to the fore the problem of the complex relation between materiality and the structures of a metaphysical language which, according to Derrida, inform traditional cultural and political discourse as well as the institutional praxis. In the 1960s, the dramatism of the vital display of the body enhances the violence of its excess; the representations the Actionists bring to the fore are those of the ugly body in an attempt to fight what they call 'the prostitution' and inflation of the beautiful. Grotowski's laboratory emphasizes the tortured body as the focus of a theatre in which the actor is saint, refusing exhibitionism and engaging in a sacred and mythical representation. In the 1970s, the body is exposed as the locus of the negotiation between the social and the personal. The histrionic visual artist of the 1960s is followed by the artist as activist; an emphasis on social alienation and a new understanding of representation and responsibility generates a new field of enquiry in the intersections between body and language. The body is related to the unavailability of a fixed meaning, being element, focus, event, etc. I would like to argue that the visual arts' new interest in the body ultimately emphasizes its reliance of a transformable, mutable and resistant material rather than on the structures of discourse. The difference in cultural and political context generated the divergence between the approaches towards the body in the 1960s and 1970s. While the 1960s are characterized by an interest in the vital body, supported by a structuralist critique and an anthropological interest in ritual, the 1970s are characterized by the artists' marginalizing of the use of pigments and the idea of perspective in favour of banners, flags, posters, video, sound; as their work focuses on the discovery of a language with social resonance,

artists draw attention to the politics of representation. Joseph Beyus brings to the fore the idea that traditional requirements of art, such as unity and harmony, fail to exhaust its possibilities. Emphasizing the social function of art, body art draws attention to the alienation of the individual. Once the tragic potential of the frenetic body of the 1960s is exhausted, the associations between violence and the body are explored in durational events that aim to recuperate the conditioning behind certain normalised embodied praxes. Chris Burden reappropriates the violence of the banal television programme in an act that stages his being shot in a gallery, on 19 November 1971. Gina Pane and Stelarc create situations related to automutilation, Martina Abramović emphasizes the strangeness of the interaction between the naked body and the clothed body. The aim of the artistic acts that decentre the body and stress its limits in a participatory event is to disrupt habitual strategies for reading the relation between the body and the structures that allow representation. The social reframing of the body aims to recreate the opportunity for social action and draw attention to preconscious impulses that need to be analysed through a political framework. A semiotization of the social is correlated with an attempt both to criticize the establishment and establish the necessity of the critique of the politics of representation. A particular new art form, conceptual art embraces the textual pharmakon and emphasizes the privilege of the idea over other material and aesthetic concerns, emerging as a rejection of illusion and a critique of the ambivalence involved in mainstream (art) representational practices. As the medium and material become primary means by which an attack on holistic images takes place, the arts are transformed in the 1960s and 1970s by an emphasis on content. The event takes precedence over the traditional requirements related to the organic unity of artistic representations, which are exposed as a means of repressing the advent of the other and the body.

From the point of view of deconstruction, the body, represented in traditional logocentric discourse by the idea of nature, is correlated with a fundamental repression

that obscures processes of negotiation. 'Desire is already practical relation. Human desire is labor' (Derrida in Kamuf 1991: 332). Influenced by the autonomization of theatrical language in the theatre of the 1970s and the attempts of the visual arts in the 1960s and 1970s to reframe the body, its political conditioning, its subversive and expressive uses, the postdramatic deliberately uses it as a disturbance of the logocentric economy of effects of meaning. Inheriting the interest in frustrating formal discourse in order to retrieve meaning and affect, the postdramatic raises the fundamental problems of representation, fable and theatrical signifier, in the context of a reconsideration of the role of the repressed, the body and the materiality of the stage. 'The dramatic process occurred between the bodies; the postdramatic process occurs with/on/to the body' (Lehmann 2006: 163). As such, the postdramatic is a reframing of theatrical discourse, the unveiling of a network of active lines of discourse that push the theatrical, the body, the desire and the sensuous to the margins of thinking.

The resignification of the theatrical elements in 1960s and 1970s theatre, a result of the assimilation of the heritage of the historical avant-garde, is manifested in the autonomization of the elements of scenic discourse; ceasing to model themselves on the 'real', transparent and rational model, theatre language is reworked due to the influence of cultural critiques. A diversity of approaches is the result of acts contesting the traditional logocentric context associated with traditional institutions. Emblematic figures of the new theatre, Living Theatre, Bread and Puppet Company, or Peter Brook bring to the fore the expressive use of the theatrical sign, and the use of the overt theatricality of the stage, in order to create situations for communication rather than distanced passive contemplation. Theatre is seen as a response to the current state of affairs and as a means of achieving an informed and passionate involvement in the creation of the future. Ceasing to merely serve the construction of a harmonious representational whole, the scenography becomes functional rather than descriptive, the fictional dialogue is interrupted by direct address, which at times makes the theatrical

event closer to a political meeting, the text is marginalized by the emphasis on image structure, which is informed by both the evolution of the visual arts and an interest in using new materials. The classic use of the stage as an illustration of a dramatic text is replaced by a search for new structural relations between audience and actors. Corresponding to a shift in contemporary conditions and thinking, the theatre stage is refunctioned as a trope of theatrical discourse. An emphasis on the role of theatre in producing an awareness of both the political and cultural contexts impacts on the new processes of producing theatrical meaning, which favours the articulation of the expressive and socially relevant discourse. The very idea of the relation between the social and mimetic art is exposed as problematic; employing shock as a strategy, the new theatre attempts to provoke change. The refunctioning of old factories and found places, the enthusiasm for intercultural approaches, the experiments with the musicality of language and the poetry of the found object, etc., signal an attempt at reworking the dynamics of theatre. An inheritor of this hybridity of means, the postdramatic represents a shift that articulates possible responses to a general crisis of representability and communication. Foregrounding the clash between theatrical language and the 'real', the new theatres question the relations between cultural context, body and theatricality.

This research advances the idea that the postdramatic's concern with the nature of theatrical meaning can be recovered by a deconstructive approach. It is only a deconstructive work which can reveal and undo the oppositional logic that values reason over the body, the rational over the sign and syntax, while erasing the possibility of thinking the stage in neutral terms. In postdramatic theatre, the opportunities for novel significations burst through the framed encounters between the representational logic of the spectator and the machinic exposure of the underlying operations of language and the discursive regimes producing signification. The recentring of the aesthetic language around the body operates a reversal of representational logic, introducing into the aesthetical realm the apprehension of the propensity of the stage towards representation;

the clash between the stage and the text emphasizes the body as the locus of negotiating meaning. As the holistic story, the ideal meaning, the final message is rejected as pertaining to the logocentric order, the notion of text undergoes a necessary fragmentation. 'The text has no longer an unquestionable centre, and thus it is necessary to experiment with its topology, with its atopia' (Pavis 2013: 44).

Moreover, postdramatic theatre recuperates the stage as the locus for an investigation of authenticity. If 'truth governs the fictional element of its manifestation, which permits it to be or to become what it is, to declare itself' (Derrida in Kamuf 1991: 475), theatre undergoes a shift which, by displacing theatre from mimesis as adequatio or unveiling, by revealing the effect of truth built into the (mimetic) representation, shifts emphasis from the mimetic dialogue of characters towards the act of communication. As such, theatre liberates itself from the authority of the dramatic text, while nevertheless seeking to re-establish 'the truth of fiction' (Lacan in Kamuf 1991: 475). The common sense distinction between fiction and reality can be rethought through Derrida's analysis of Lacan as a dynamic that ensures the birth of truth. The text is no longer an expression of 'consciousness' and ego. 'The effect of full speech is to reorder past contingencies by conferring on them the sense of the necessities to come, such as they are constituted by the little freedom through which the subject makes them present' (Lacan in Kamuf 1991: 479). As such, the text of postdramatic theatre and the acting seen on the postdramatic stage can be related to the pharmakon, the 'line' between character and actor with the hymen, the stage with the play of difference that separates without opposing and allows for the emergence of a new meaning.

Chapter One

Sarah Kane: Blasting Mimetic Representation

Let us begin, momentarily elsewhere, with cinema: *Persona* (1966) is an Ingmar Bergman film built on the difference between life and theatre. The opening sequence is composed of a series of frames, which seem almost random and violent in their juxtaposition, but are charged ambivalently with emotional power: a strange arachnid, the slaughtering of a sheep and the gesture of nailing hands to a cross. The following frames are stills and fragments of figures which appear to be patients in a septic environment, a hospital which evokes loneliness; one of the figures, a child of uncertain gender, wakes up from the bed, tries to caress the camera, what is beyond the camera, the viewer or the image or director; by shifting the angle we witness him/her caressing an image that shifts, strangely created by the overlapping and mixing of two female figures. The narrative of the first half of the film, set in a mental institution, begins with the doctor's presentation of a new case to a young nurse, Alma. The patient is a famous actress who, during a performance of *Electra* – or so the backstory goes – had suddenly fallen silent and started to look around her as if she were surprised at being there; she had stayed that way for a minute, continuing to look around her, dismissing the whispering of her colleagues, after which she had resumed the performance. She later confessed that she wanted to laugh; nevertheless, the following morning she had stopped talking. In spite of tests proving that her cognitive abilities were intact, the actress remained silent. Sister Alma is in the room when the actress reacts with hysterical laughter to theatre plays on

the radio. She is alone in her room when she reacts with horror to a television image showing a man self-immolating as a political protest. Nurse Alma adores the actress, or the idea of her being an actress, and confesses to her that she admires her strong will, represented by her decision not to talk any more. The illness depicts the strange interruption of a mode of living and a crisis of the real. Why is this important to this case study? What it offers, I think, is an image that will synthesize the crisis of representation that inspires the postdramatic turn; in *Persona*, one of cinema's most 'theatrical' films, both spectator and actor confront – indeed, refute – the fakeness of representation; and what the film goes on to describe is how the actress lives the destruction of the previous pattern of her existence with all the moral ambiguity she had previously left unacknowledged. There is something of this same pattern, I suggest, at play in the work of Sarah Kane.

This case study, in fact, will argue that an understanding of Sarah Kane's theatre plays is impossible from within the mimetic paradigm, as Kane's fundamental claims challenge the traditional idea of the stage as the locus of a dialectical reducing of the accidental to the fundamental ruling of reason. Like Bergman's film, Kane both annoys and exhausts the act of interpretation, which is the fundamental activity assigned to the spectator and critic in the mimetic paradigm, and which would encompass the certainty of the work by retrieving the meaning of what can be perceived from the mimetic paradigm in the face of what offends or perplexes. This is important given the critical reception Kane's work initially encountered. Indeed, by focusing only on the (apparent) content of the play and overlooking how it was intimately related to a bold intervention in theatrical form, Sarah Kane's critics unwillingly emphasized the limits of a tradition which, although based on reason, favours uncritically certain types of representation and theatrical subjects. Starting with this critical juncture, this case study will argue that there is an incongruity between the mimetic socio-realist tradition and the reworking of theatrical form in Kane's work. I would like to emphasize in particular the idea that the

inconsistencies in critical reception were based on a failure to acknowledge the formal innovations proposed by Kane and her (re)problematizing of violence, the other of the logocentric system, in its complex relations to discourse, transgression and representation.

1.1. Critical Reception: Shock, Trauma and Violence

The mimetic reading which reduced *Blasted*, Kane's first play, to a sum of unthinkable acts failed to account for the formal innovation that subtended the intrusion of violence in her plays, as well as its ability to trouble the symbolic mimetic order; by unveiling the very contribution of violence in structuring reality, Kane, through her plays, retrieves accidents that are casually described in mass media while preserving the reference to a theatrical tradition that problematizes suffering: Buchner, Shakespeare, Bond and Artaud. However, Kane takes a step further in that she problematizes in a theatrical way the relation between the unthinkable and power, discourse and violence; her works rely on the theatrical imagination in order to convey the reality of transgression. Within this new aesthetic, the body, traditionally understood as an instrument, is questioned and reframed, supplementing the inconclusivity of words; text is no longer a self-sufficient and linear developing of a rational plot, able to subject other elements of staging to its ruling, but a reservoir of potentialities that advances power plays, the role of desire and intensity of lack in determining action, or the confrontation with the impossibility of narrative closure. This aesthetic, which takes on the responsibility of addressing violence, is a project whose aim is to reframe the ethical with theatrical means.

Kane problematizes the notion of theatrical text and the role of the body in shaping the theatrical event, establishing a text that necessarily inscribes into its image the structure of the body as part of the structure of meaning. For example, the image of the soldier crying his eyes out as he rapes Ian, in *Blasted*, alludes at the same time to a number

of effects and contingencies: a collapse of dialogue which in fact originates in Ian's dismissive attitude, as I will argue; the compulsive and traumatic nature of warlike violence; the soldier's collapse into profound despair when thinking about the suffering of his girlfriend, who was raped and had her eyes sucked out before being killed. The violence in question may be contingent but it is not a random act of nature. It represents a sophisticated act of sadism and cruelty, a fundamental defiance of ethical commandments, a perversity which gestures towards a general loss of meaning. As such, *Blasted*'s images of rape might represent for the soldier the paradoxical overlapping of both an imaginary enactment and a tender desire to undo the brutality of (his girlfriend's) being raped – to save her and to suffer for her; while, at the same time, representing a brutal succumbing to the lack of meaning, which is understood only through talking to Ian. This moment of 'crying his eyes out' while raping Ian represents a moment of desired self-annihilation and a subjective act of taking responsibility for her death, for both being involved in the violence of war and not having been able to be there to save her. As such, the suicide of the soldier is the paradoxical result of his re-establishing himself as a subject, creating the personal coordinates for interpreting the general state of horror and lack of appropriate response. Paradoxically, what the play conveys is the crisis of conscience and the desire to engage with the real in a conscious and rational manner; what the play stages is the precarious state of the Western cultural discourse, which, by relying on the dramatic construction of the Other, is the counterfeiting of reality in pervasive representations. By contrast, Ian is pictured as the expression of the state of interest, personal gain, cynicism and imagined superiority, haunted by the fears he allows, incapable of engaging with 'truth'. Surprisingly, the ineffectuality of the subject when faced with the contingency and brutality of violence, his fear and his trajectory from abuser to a state in which he lacks hope, serve to recuperate his humanity against the background of the generalized disorder of the war. The soldier's tears are the manifestation of the character's surprising emotionality, and provide the lens through

which the images he evokes should be read – as a tragedy repeating itself, the return of the historical repressed.

This case study will argue that it is on the confrontation between the Other and the order of discourse, between the culturally accepted discourse and the carefully planned omissions, that *Blasted* is constructed as a meaningful and humanist play on the possibility of meaning. Moreover, the image also suggests the impossibility of situating oneself/the soldier in a fixed and non-ambivalent relation to the world; after being a political instrument of warlike violence, his status as a subject is menaced. The soldier embodies the dilemma of choosing between representing oneself and responding to war; solicitation or violence. The political discourse that radicalizes the 'other' belongs to the same category of omitting in discourse the fragmentary, the solitary, etc. The rape itself establishes the collapse of rational meaning and mimesis, in which reason will be developed as a premise for action. A discourse rooted in the imaginary possibilities of the stage restructures meaning outside the mimetic, however, enhancing the necessity of a new theatrical project. Kane thus introduces into her theatrical text what Derrida calls 'spatiation'; her particular use of rhythmic pauses and theatrical images assigns a theatrical dimension to the dialogue, distancing text from a mimetic linear interpretation. What is presented in the image is the emotional context of the uttered words; as such, her text, made by the play of images, temporalities and interruptions, reframes both violence and the notion of dramatic meaning and text by destabilizing it. Text is at the same time the basis and the inconclusive means, bringing to the fore the idea that 'art isn't about the shock of something new' (Kane, letter to Graham Saunders, 13 February 1998). The mixed feelings and ambivalence of the world are deconstructed in the paradoxical images that represent the structure of her plays, forwarding the crisis of representation; 'the body of the text is under attack as well' (De Vos in De Vos and Saunders 2010: 131). I will argue that, in relation to this crisis, Kane's aesthetic can be seen to have important resonances with Artaud's problematizing of the relation between theatre and text.

Steve Waters has observed that Kane's work is at the same time a symptom and a cause of a reconsideration of a theatrical and cultural practice that reads meaning exclusively in relation to traditional forms. He emphasizes the idea that her aim was 'to attack the shared codes of legibility and value that enabled this consensual practice' (Waters in Luckhurst 2006: 381). Waters also shifts the focus from the immediacy of violence to the presencing of trauma and suffering in the work: 'A central concern in Kane's work, however, is a passionate, almost pathological identification with pain and trauma and a concomitant desire to communicate the horror of pain in its own idiom' (Waters in Luckhurst 2006: 373). Moreover, Waters sees in this shift the possibility of a fundamental reworking of the political and aesthetical dimensions of theatre. The resistance of Kane's work to the already labelled denominators of reality comes from a desire to refer theatre back to reality, based on the problematic resulting from the fact that the mimetic fails in such an undertaking. As such, her work is seen as a 'response to political conflicts enacted in the name of fixed identities and categories' (Waters in Luckhurst 2006: 373). Waters' article on Kane revolves around discovering new layers of meaning in the text of *Blasted*, layers that were obscured by its first recuperation as a statement regarding the present circumstances, developed in a mimetic reference to the Bosnian war. As such, he attempts to shift the analysis of the play from a too close mimetic inspection in order to reveal a theatrical potential that could testify to a play which makes us reconsider, more deeply, our understanding of postdramatic theatre as the conveyor of new ethical subjects and an activator of new theatrical perspectives: 'The startling thing about *Blasted* is that it makes more sense now than it did 10 years ago… it is about something we currently understand: the fear that at any moment, our whole society can be ripped apart' (Ostermaier in Waters in Luckhurst 2006: 373). The recuperation of the theatricality of Kane's work is a complex endeavour in that it has to account for the value of the shock related to the breaking of traditional aesthetic rules, and to the outrage created by the intrusion into the aesthetic of an extra-moral territory. Nevertheless, this

aesthetic approach can be seen as ruled by the form of cruelty envisaged by Artaud – indeed, what Artaud says of his own heroes applies equally to the characters who populate Kane's plays: 'My heroes... dwell in the realm of cruelty and must be judged outside of good and evil. They are incestuous and sacrilegious, they are adulterers, rebels, insurgents, and blasphemers... it is not a purely corporal cruelty but a moral one; it goes to the extremity of instinct and forces the actor to plunge right to the roots of his being so that he leaves the stage exhausted. A cruelty which acts as well upon the spectator and should not allow him to leave the theatre intact, but exhausted, involved, perhaps transformed' (Artaud in Sellin 1968: 129).

Hillary Chute emphasizes two traits shared by Kane's work and the 'theatre of cruelty': 'blood' and 'rigor' (Chute in De Vos and Saunders 2010: 162); enhancing the metonymical character of the work, she refers Kane's work to Phelan's idea that 'metonymy is additive and associative; it secures a horizontal axis of contiguity and displacement' (Phelan 1993: 150). As such, Kane's play *Cleansed* can be related to a 'punishing theatrical experience' (De Vos and Saunders 2010: 164). Chute further advances the idea that within Kane's work is implied a negotiation of 'the processes of representation and spectatorship by an insistence on a collapse of critical distance' (Chute in De Vos and Saunders 2010: 161). Moreover, as the ethical dimension of the representation is at stake, these plays stage the quest for ethics and identity as part of their theatrical project. Kane 'rearranges the fraught process of looking at performance' (Stephenson and Langridge 1997: 133). What I argue in this case study is that the readings that bring to the fore disruptive aspects are effects of reading Kane's plays through a mimetic frame that (first) considers text as a self-sufficient base for developing the spectacle and dismisses as secondary the image structure of the play; (second) views text as a self-sufficient representation of characters who act based on reason; (third) presupposes the hierarchical opposition between body and text, desire and reason, stage and the real. By dismissing the logic of the real and the facilities of realist theatre, Kane's

plays undo the very logic that sustained the symbolic articulation of the real and reveal 'an acute awareness of this critical flaw and of the crises generated by humanist thinking' (Waddington in De Vos and Saunders 2010: 141).

This case study will argue that cruelty, which links the body to the ethical by staging the 'right' circumstances of a crisis, is irretrievable from the perspective of a rational worldview, which is supported by and engaged with through mimesis. Fundamentally disorienting and estranging, a work which dealt with 'issues of mass conflict' and 'the torments and ecstasies of the individual' (Saunders 2002: 29) expands the role of subjectivity far beyond its confinement to 'realist', rational and societal coordinates. Rather, Kane's lack of interest in linear narrative brings to the fore characters who are subjects caught in the fabric of 'truths'/representations and language, engaging with the very possibility of meaning, even as it disintegrates. The very act of trying to make sense of Kane's plots on the basis of logocentric order and the hierarchical opposition between meaning and violence ends by perplexing the reader, as the body itself, which is made into a support of desire, is traditionally erased from the discourse of 'truth'. This case study will argue that the theatrical principle informing Kane's reconsidering of the play structure and the role of the stage in structuring discourse is based on her commitment to deconstructing pervasive cultural representations and destabilizing rational meaning. Kane's cruelty resides in the images her theatre proposes, which are an attempt to rework the structure of meaning in the aftermath of a transgression; the paradoxical images she invokes in her theatre are correlated with a sustained interest in shattering the whole, the logocentric project of totalities and idealities. Acts of individualistic defiance of the law, supplemented by attempts to requestion meaning, open up the possibility of discussing, portraying and undoing the relation between violence and the repressed, which is fundamentally mediated by language/writing.

Kane's work gives form to the encounter between the subject and violence, shifting

the limits of theatrical imagination and talking about the 'real' through emphasizing a situation of crisis. Pushing the limits of language, representability and stage action, her plays talk of events rather than drama, the rational course of action prescribed by Aristotle; these events occur through a deconstruction of the basic principles of drama. The stage is created and inhabited by a violence that necessarily dismisses the traditional coordinates of representation; the shock of reception results from an underacknowledged relation between discourse, body and violence. Paradoxically, it is the distancing and defamiliarizing effect allowed by Kane's theatre that, according to the author, does not advance new material, but theatrically reshapes events presented by mass media, which stand at the basis of the aesthetic shock: 'Art isn't about the shock of something new. It's about arranging the old in such a way that you see it afresh' (Kane in Saunders 2002: 28). Nevertheless, the recuperation of violence into theatrical discourse is a profoundly ethical gesture; the ethics of Kane's work is related to the project of exposing the relation between violence and discourse, enhancing Derrida's idea that violence is to be understood as correlated with language; attempting to rework the violent inscription of mimesis, Kane's work shapes an experiential theatre. Furthermore, the premeditation supposed by including real-life events pictured by mass media in her plays is supplemented by an attempt to rework traditional theatrical forms in order to find the proper form. As such, both order and theatrical rhetoric are questioned and reworked in her plays, which aim at (re)inscribing violence into a discourse of meaning.

In spite of its being labelled as an immature gesture, Kane's work is a reformulation that belongs to the canon of traditional theatre: 'Fear and pity may be aroused by spectacular means; but they may also result from the inner structure of the piece, which is a better way, and indicates a superior poet' (Aristotle in Sellin 1968: 100). As such, Kane's purported failure as regards the requirements of theatrical tradition can be reassessed. Moreover, the play's ineffectuality can be related to the use of traditional mimetic instruments in its staging. These mimetic instruments, derived from an

apparently systematic conception that is based on the hierarchical opposition between mind and body and the exclusion of violence from discourse by its being related to the domain of 'nature', are unable to recuperate the instability of body and the 'truth' of desire on which Kane's work is based. Kane shifts the focus of theatre from its being a representation of reason and order, to a questioning of the representations of which reason makes use; her work aims at recuperating the barbarous and the vulnerable, depicting the extremes of life and creating unusual images. Her language emerges as an attack and critique directed against the certainties of mimetic dialectics, the facilities of a language that was rejected by Artaud, too, in the name of the intense emotional, experiential and bodily catastrophe. The reformulation of theatre language is motivated by the desire to undo the mimetic's power of conveying popular and uncritical attitudes towards violence. By relating violence and meaning, Kane's work overcomes the mimetic and realist conception of theatre. In Kane's conception a radical overturning of the mimetic model is effected: meaning is craved for and impossible, while violence is permanent and always menacing the resources of the living. This overturning of theatre's habitual linear logic of mimesis frustrates audiences, of course, but also testifies to the power of the art form to disrupt and problematize prevalent cultural representations. Reality as constructed by Kane is not the quotidian real, but the matter of nightmares, cravings, repressions, failures of meaning – placing her characters at the extremes of subjectivity. It is only through a misunderstanding of the fundamentally anti-mimetic aesthetic of Kane that her plays were reduced to a depiction of horrors. Through enhancing theatre's powers of transgression, Kane emphasizes the profound subjective experience in which the link between moral laws and corporeal cruelty is exposed and played upon.

By taking transgression as possibility, Kane deconstructs the mimetic position associated with the promoting of the simplistic aesthetic that isolates violence from thought. 'Those who employ spectacular means to create a sense not of the terrible but

only of the monstrous, are strangers to the purpose of Tragedy' (Aristotle in Sellin 1968: 100). Kane's plays are not monstrous, and neither are her characters. For example, in *Blasted*, a middle-aged journalist (Ian), who indulges in excessive drinking and smoking in spite of having lung cancer, can also be interpreted as a somewhat tragic figure who is merely trying to escape the reality of his dying; the dismissive verbal abuse, the ambivalence of his gestures of affection, the high opinion he has of himself, his acts of transgression, and his oblivion as regards this transgression, are supplemented by his becoming helpless and blind, a desiring but fallible subject. Kane herself defends the character against a reduction to moral categories: 'I could see that other people would say that Ian was a bastard, and I knew they would. But I think that he's extremely funny' (Kane in Saunders 2009: 55). Moreover, the mentally disabled female character from *Blasted*, Cate, is resistant to a simplistic recuperation as the victim in the play. Although sexually abused, she will expose throughout the play the possibility of failing to attend and understand the atrocities she experiences as a proof of her ability to engage in hoping; her resistance to evil points to the resilience of humanity through an appeal to the idea of hope. 'I don't think that Cate is simple. For me, Cate constantly surprises me, she has this very idealized image of what sex should be, but it's not from a position of naivety. I see her as possibly the most intelligent of them all. I think the thing that stops Cate from being a stereotype is those surprising things. She has sex with people you don't expect, and I think it's grounded specifically. I don't think there's any aspect of her supposed simpleness which isn't grounded – and again it may have been an unconscious thing because I was reading a lot of Shakespeare at the time, and also I read *Waiting for Godot*, which okay, they're not fools, but they're clowns, again who are capable of massive insight' (Kane in Saunders 2002: 68). As such, the fundamental problem brought to the fore by Kane's text is the questioning of the fundamental division in Aristotle's conception of the text and the spectacular. *Blasted* suggests that the erasure of the body in the attempt to focus on meaning and reason overlooks or denies the possibility inherent to theatre itself:

to make body an event; that all repressed content will at some point haunt the structure of theatre's discourse.

The localizing of violence is a fortuitous act and its localization is seldom confused in the Western representational system – this is what Kane seems to suggest, that audiences are living in a manufactured world with no proper meaning. Explored and exposed, the representational system fails because it doesn't acknowledge its own violence, its precluding access to a real universality, its subtending a discourse that appears to construct a general idea of peace, but tolerates war from a distance. Judged in relation to the values it is supposed to represent, the Western world lacks a reworking of the notion of subject, allowing for distortions of notions of truth and value; it is within this context that Kane's work is articulated as an attempt to reconfigure the relation between ethics and meaning, body and experience, desire and lack. Representing this state of anomy and indecision, characters like Ian in *Blasted* or Tinker in *Cleansed* rework the 'dramatic' consequences of the cultural situating of the subject on the remains of the discourse of humanism, which failed with the Nazi camps. The discussion of transgression is part of a theatrical project that aims at recuperating the resilience of the human subject against horror and the limits of the project of language. As such, Kane's work refers to the exceptional, the limit and the law. Moreover, Kane's work questions drama due to the mass media reliance on dramatic structures, which obscures a definitive act of violent inscription, that of distinguishing 'the other' as barbarous. The very blasting of the notion of place associated with the idea of safety, giving place and sense to the displacement on the theatrical stage, the very locus of Western representation, is an attempt to suggest that further reconsiderations have to be made in order to expose the disorder of violence, permanently menacing the subject from both inside and outside. *Blasted* questions the relation between the secrecy of the rape, the dismissing of violence happening elsewhere, and the pretension of legitimacy of Western representational logic. The basis of the exploration of the surprising alliance between the domestic sphere and the violence

inherent in it suggests an unsettling conflict between desire and transgression, the order of work and the order of the subject's desire. Moreover, by exposing the casual occurrence of the rape, Kane advances a mise en abime, the fact that the system of theatrical discourse is both closed and open, demanding and distanced. According to Levinas, rape is a form of war, as the violence of war is 'not so much in injuring and annihilating persons as in interrupting their continuity. Making them play roles in which they no longer recognize themselves, making them betray not only commitments but their own substance, making them carry out actions that will destroy every possibility for action' (Levinas 2001: 21).

The perplexed attitude of *Blasted*'s critics has been reassessed in light of postdramatic theory, which emphasizes the value of Kane's text in praising the fragmentation, dispersion, intertextuality and mixing of genres, the resonances between lyrical and physical, the poetry of her language and her use of the image. Kane's texts become an important moment for the reassessing of theatre's value in light of its attempt at overcoming mimetic and linear modes of reading – her work inhabits the dimension of a disorderly fragmentation and represents the dissolution of the traditional order of (theatrical) truth. Kane's texts have consequently become the epitome of postdramatic theatre, its formal innovations being readily assimilated to the principles of fragmentary, intertextual, ceremonial theatre and – ultimately – limited to representing (mimetically) the dissolution of subjectivity. The recuperation of Kane's work has often been referred to this difference, without properly acknowledging her complex rearticulation of theatricality within it. As Grieg astutely observed: 'Sarah Kane was not some petulant enfant terrible who simply gloried in shocking audiences; she was a committed, sophisticated, challenging playwright who had a fine sense of the traditions she came from' (Rebellato 1999: 281).

Mark Ravenhill outlined the classical sensibility of the young writer, who was 'often abrasive for a modern audience… used to the reassurances of sociology or psychology'

(Ravenhill in Saunders 2002: 19); lurking behind the problematic structures she advances is the influence of Jacobean theatre, themes from Shakespearian plays, Seneca's stoicism reinterpreted, Ibsen's interest in the domestic, Brecht's emotional distancing, the Beckettian sense of theatrical metaphor and the surrealist annihilation of rationality. Drawing material from diverse sources makes Kane construct characters who defy the fundamental traditional conception of characters presented in exposition, developed through a confrontation with a problem and dialectically reduced to a final position in the end. These characters are a nucleus of poetical desire, paradoxically involved in an action that disrupts and problematizes their sense of belonging to the world. For these reasons, I argue that Kane's work can be understood as a radical theatrical problematizing of the relation between the order of 'truth', the logocentric order, and the repressed, the blind spot of reason. This reformulation of the relation between discourse and violence results in a different conception of character, a central role for the image structure and a polyvalent meaning of lines. By undoing the traditional hierarchical oppositions between reason and accident, and by exposing the relation between violence and discourse, enhancing the irrational, her work deals with the problem of the Other; by the lifting of the closure which correlates with the notion of the rationality of representation and the repressing of both violence and the body, Kane advances a worldview perpetually rendered accidental by desire and lack; accident is (re)inscribed into the act of communication. By advancing a new discourse on the real and its violence, Kane destabilizes the traditional theatre's emphasis on text; the meaning of words is always correlated with the context of the image. By emphasizing desire instead of will and reason, by enhancing the role of the detail into a play of chance that disrupts linearity, by exposing the relation between violence and reason as primary, her plays aim at advancing a statement on the reality and possibility of a new understanding. Waters' analysis uncovers a reading of the plays as rooted in an attempt at a 'jolting vision of causal relationships within the violence and terror of our time' (Waters in Luckhurst 2006: 34). What Kane

attempts to do is bring violence onstage in order to demystify it; the image is the very modality of undoing the reduction of meaning to the linearity of a plot and a modality of emphasizing the inconclusivity of the appeal to reason. As if reason itself, in a movement that both deconstructs its pretenses and acknowledges the establishing of the subject in a violent movement reducing its singularity, always refers to something outside itself in order to express its power.

1.2. Dramaturgy and Image Structure in Kane's Plays

It is the impossibility of reading *Blasted* through a mimetic perspective, trying to appropriate the stage language created by Kane to describe a cataclysmic rupture of the constraints of a form which fundamentally emphasizes reason and its ability to order the world, that prevents the recuperation of the theatrical value of Kane's work. The fundamental break with the tradition is represented by Kane's refusal to see the accidental as part of a theatrical dialectics. By enhancing the accidental nature of violence, in a manner reminiscent of Hannah Arendt's notion of the banality of evil, Kane brings to the fore character as the bearer of a choice and interpreter of the real, a nexus of indexical relations. In this considering of character not as a pure essence whose action is unfolded according to a dialectical principle, but as a chance to explore the ethical in circumstances without 'meaning', Kane does away with hierarchical oppositions, embracing instead the possibility of deconstruction and the musical technique of the counterpoint. Instead of representing a pre-existing 'essence', 'presence' and rationality, her subjects deal with and embody the necessity of restructuring ethical discourse. By relativizing the order of representations through accident, by pointing to the inconclusivity of a representation which reworks the order of mimesis, Kane is deconstructing the fundamental subordination of the character to the text and to the rational in the mimetic paradigm, as well as the traditional theatre's emphasis on message. The theatrical image emphasizes

the irreducibility of life/the real to hierarchical oppositions, while the imagined action does not offer a solution to the problems it brings to the fore. This reshaping of theatre corresponds to a shift in the nature of the theatrical encounter; the 'experiential' nature of this theatre consists in its provoking, 'usually in a violent manner, its audiences to feel as opposed to think' (Wallace in De Vos and Saunders 2010: 88).

In a sense, the reduction of *Blasted* to a mimetic reading is correlated to a misunderstanding of the image structure of the work. Recuperated as 'violent spectacles' that unnecessarily plague the mimetic form, the 'excessive visceral imagery of the plays' (Wallace in De Vos and Saunders 2010: 91) failed to be related text; 'the context of the image' failed to be supplemented by words (Kane in Saunders 2002: 46). Perceived as 'physical assault' (Wallace in De Vos and Saunders 2010: 91) due to the lack of 'proper' framing, the sudden disruption of the order of the drama through a generalized war in *Blasted* was rendered a questionable effect of an inexperienced writer; initially, the critique failed to understand that the very disruption of war problematized a fundamental unpreparedness in the face of violence, and that Kane was both questioning mimesis and the idea of theatrical closure. Nevertheless, Kane was not only problematizing the relation between power, violence and discourse, but advancing a new aesthetic, both theatrical and at the same time aiming for 'truth'. '*Blasted* has little interest in surface reality. Instead, it is structured by the enigmatic qualities of dreams and nightmares where particular orders of logic are suspended and an alternative set of images comes to play' (Wallace in De Vos and Saunders 2010: 92). It is the very inconclusive play of words and images which articulates the work as 'an uncompromising but irreverent mix of anti-naturalistic experiment, absolutist in timbre, truth-seeking in aspiration, provocative in its viscerality, fragmenting of character and excessiveness' (Wallace in De Vos and Saunders 2010: 98).

This open dramaturgy relies on a permanent movement of supplementation of the

meaning conveyed by words and imagery. The door that makes the two characters 'enter' a luxurious and private space becomes the 'disquieting object' (Saunders 2002: 57) used by the soldier and the journalist in an anxiety-induced 'elaborate game of cat and mouse' (Saunders 2002: 57); the hotel room that impresses Cate will later be destroyed by a mortar bomb, in a gesture that erases the first part of the play and prepares the way for a dangerous establishing of violence as an order of discontinuities and an exposer of limits. It is at the complex level of imagery that the play discloses its reluctance to conform to the rational linear reduction of classical dramaturgy. The images are paradoxical expressions of the experiential. As Kane puts it herself: 'If you skip the connection between all this, if you skip the emotional reason, the play does appear to be completely broken back, just split into two halves which means it fails totally' (Kane in Saunders 2002: 46).

The violence in her work is not merely a series of unrelated images emphasizing the physical element, but a profound problematizing of the occurrence of violence and its relation to ethics; the uncovering of violence and its relation to the cultural discourse is but one of the coordinates of a work that startles in order to provoke. Most troubling in *Blasted* is the avoidance of the stereotype: the almost casual manner in which the misbalance of power between two characters turns into a rape, and also the humanity of the soldier who, I argue, is not the villain, but a tragic figure. What Kane proposes through this play is the experience of a descent into a very intense state of crisis and a hell of living, where normal ethics and values seem insufficient. The first half of the play portrays what will be discovered as a state of lethargy and exhaustion, a state that is unable to produce the new through the exertions of the will, through an affirmation of the individual, but one instead where the principle of rationality has been usurped or is at least menaced by inaction. Ian's emotionally deadened account of a crime taking place in New Zealand is the expression merely of a habit. His recounting of the crime over the phone exposes a troubling relation between the enjoyment of the sensational violence he voyeuristically encounters and the journalistic work that 'legitimates' his vocation. His being a journalist,

of course, supposes his interest in maintaining the general status quo through the generating of commentary, the framing of the event and the calculated approach to audience interests. As producer of the news, he manipulates his audience through sensational accounts of violence which subtend the idea that violence always happens to others, never oneself. As such, Ian is a character who exhibits self-sufficiency and arrogance, but also a surprising and troubling interest in Cate. Moreover, the very idea of the play, 'a crisis of living' (Kane in Saunders 2002: 61), is paradoxically present from the very beginning. Ian defies the reality of his own illness and mortality by drinking and smoking. It is the projection of the action of the play against this background of mortality that makes *Blasted* an existential play. It is this unsustainability of living under certain conditions that makes *Blasted* such a complex portrayal of desire and fear, and the ability to shape consciousness and determine behaviour as some kind of fatality; it is the very unimaginable nature of the deeds performed in the play that stands at the basis of the necessity of structuring in theatre as a response to the world. Nevertheless, an appeal to mimesis, an attempt to reduce the theatrical ideas in the script to already ascertained values and evaluative modes of behaviour, leaves aside the very matter of the crisis of conscience and also the reality of the inability to feel and react. Subjectivity is amplified and undone from the inside; there is no simple character whose will is transparently reflected and consistently followed through the actions on the stage. Kane writes: 'I don't think *Blasted* is a moral play. I think it's amoral and I think that this is one of the reasons people got terribly upset because there isn't a very defined moral framework within which to place yourself and assess your own morality – or distance yourself from the material. I think there's a great deal of moral manoeuvre in the play and that's probably one of the most distressing things. I suppose it's not about social breakdown – it's about the breakdown of human nature itself' (Kane in Saunders 2009: 61).

The familiarity between the two characters in the opening scene of *Blasted* stands at the basis of a terse exchange of lines that testifies to the intense emotional quality of

their encounter: on the one hand this is magnified by Cate's waiting for a response regarding the abrupt end of their relationship, while, on the other hand, Ian uses her in an attempt to forget about his dying. 'When I'm with you I can't think about anything else. You take me to another place' (Kane 2001: 22). The details are spare and do not add up to the creation of unitary characters, but fundamentally suggest a misbalanced relation with an uncertain past reiterated without a clear motivation: 'I'm glad you've come. Didn't think you would (*he offers her champagne*).' (Kane 2001: 4) Their familiarity is the very means for mimicking the traditional technique of exposition while the play really focuses on the theatrical overturning of an ambiguous, complex relationship into an abusive use of power. The transgression shifts the coordinates of representation, which is slowly permeated by the matter of nightmares, turning the stage into a place of 'real' expression of intense suffering, denial and lack of reason: 'the only reason it's any more devastating than reading a newspaper is that all boring bits have been cut out' (Kane in Sierz 2012: 205). The tension constructed in the first scene, correlative with the difference in social status of the characters, descends into a situation where order has been transgressed and words and actions testify in an unrelenting manner to the disruption of an inclusive order; transgression perpetrates the opening onto the chaos it discloses, while reaffirming the presence of the limit. It is to this moment that Kane draws attention; the momentary transgression does not succeed in annihilating the law. Ian's situation becomes increasingly difficult, and the following action presents the difficulty of arriving at the self. Ian attempts to trick Cate into not leaving him as he experiences with great intensity the fear of being killed, as a reflection of unclarified guilt; as the unconscious contents are brought to the fore, we are able to recuperate both. But Cate is uninterested in helping him as a result of the abuse he has perpetrated. Cate becomes laconic and rejects Ian, whereas Ian feels the desperate desire to compel her into liking him again. Cate's response is: 'You're a nightmare (*she shakes*).' (Kane 2001: 33) By succeeding in articulating this response, Cate is able to distance herself from Ian's needs, finally acknowledging his

cruelty in a corporeal manner, unable to emotionally respond to him any more. For the first time in the play she actually articulates her beliefs without letting herself be manipulated by Ian and brought to a condition of submission: 'I don't believe in killing / You'll learn / No I won't.'(Kane 2001: 32) After the rape, she finally takes emotional control over the situation – 'Do it. Go on, shoot me. Can't be no worse than what you've done already / (*Ian stares*)' (Kane 2001: 34) – and reframes reality around the pain, the body and the desire to immediately leave the hotel room.

Kane insists on the idea that ignoring the image structure of her plays results in a misunderstanding of the work; the critics, who used to 'take the meaning from the words' (Kane in Saunders 2002: 46), have misrepresented the play and ended up labelling Kane and her character racists. In defending *Blasted* and its particular imagery and treatment of form, its fundamental irreducibility to the words, Kane points to what exists beyond the words: 'You have to look at the context of the image' (Kane in Saunders 2002: 46). Imagery is used in Kane's work to destabilize the possibility of linear reading and to rework the relation between meaning and violence. The soldier who rapes Ian is 'crying his eyes out', pointing to the monstrous quality of traumatic suffering and an emotional succumbing to the impossibility of meaning, the absurdity of the world; the context of the image points to his being a victim of the system of representation which refuses him a status. The collapse of dialogue is determined by Ian's refusal to present his story, the war, in the newspaper; in the soldier's desire for access to discourse and representation, he is the bearer of a pure desire (for truth) and the surprising conscience amidst the pervasive destruction of the war. Introducing the structural possibility of violence into the events unfolding on the stage, the theatrical form is necessarily broken, embodying at the same time a critique of reason, a critique of traditional theatrical form and the possibility of engaging with and retrieving a meaning from violence. The imagery points to the existence of multiple layers of meaning, punctuating the becoming of the characters and refusing the fixation of sensibility into the hierarchical structures established by reason.

Kane's plays destabilize dichotomies and problematize the body in its relation to suffering, the unavailability of hope and the necessity of recuperating the ethics of responsibility.

The poetic image is an event that 'always interrupts or derails absolute knowledge', and 'never moves by itself, like those machines, bringers of death' (Derrida in Kamuf and Derrida 1991: 235). Bridging the gap between a stage that exposes cultural violence and the spectators, the image addresses itself to the other, allowing the other to sign it (Derrida in Kamuf and Derrida 1991: 237); 'no poem without accident, no poem that does not open itself like a wound' (Derrida in Kamuf and Derrida 1991: 233). The problem of violence and pain builds the irrational into the theatrical circumstances which advance the evolution of Kane's characters; this irrational supplementing and destabilizing of meaning is inscribed into her work through image. The reworking of mimesis is inherent in this theatre, which attempts to shape a new existential position, the human being in a quest for meaning in which body, desire and language each have their role.

Instead of the comfort associated with the conventional dramatic form, Kane proposed a new way of framing that does away with the idea that 'everything happens off-stage' (Kane in Saunders 2009: 67). 'The shock was not about the content; it was about the arrangement of the content into an unfamiliar form which put the audience through the experience of collapse. The nature of that experience is such that it was not possible to fully locate oneself in relation to the material' (Kane in Saunders 2009: 90). Nevertheless, the decision to bring onstage the repressed material has important aesthetic consequences, being an operation that reworks the relation between meaning and violence. Conveying and problematizing the relation between inside and outside, reason and unreason, representation and violence, is correlative with a questioning of the notion of closure. 'One of the consequences of tampering with closure is an extreme sense of the fragility of distinctions' (Hobson 1998: 21). As such, Kane's work is not an argument

reproducing the dramatic. Rather, it points to the limit that traditionally separated the stage from the auditorium and determined reason as the aesthetic principle behind the coherence of the fiction. In *Blasted* there is an apparent tension between the first half of the play, which develops a 'social, psychological and sexual tension' (Kane in Stephenson and Langridge 1997: 131) up to the occurrence of sexual abuse, and the second half, which represents the macroscale disproportion between political subjects, which is to be understood as a result of (political and cultural) discourse. Exposing the necessity of a critique of representations, Kane's theatre problematizes rather than proposes solutions. The very opposition between a luxurious hotel room in Leeds, where an uncertain act of sexual abuse occurs, and the violence of war that destroys the limits of traditional fiction is undone in a theatrical act advancing the theatrical idea that, in spite of their apparent dissimilarity, in fact the two acts of violence problematically belong to (the structure of) the same play. '*Blasted* changed reality because it changed the means we have of understanding ourselves… It makes demands on us. We must either respond to it or reject it and in doing so we define ourselves' (Bond in Saunders 2002: 190).

The misunderstanding of the relation between form and content in Kane's work is due to their being evaluated from the point of view of traditional mimetic form, in its socio-realist hypostasis, a model Kane explicitly rejected. Aristotle's unities are overtly dismissed in *Blasted*, and none of her plays relies on the model of a dramatic plot and its dialectical structure. Rather, they picture a fundamental state of instability, accident and intrusion. The lifting of the closure on the stage in *Blasted*, the intruding into the apparent closed mimetic fictive whole of a soldier and of war, is in fact a reconsidering of the role of the closure in systematizing the space of discourse. By bringing to the fore the reliance of violence on discourse and the reliance of discourse on a more fundamental form of violence, Kane questions the principle of totality that derives from logocentric thinking; by pointing her analysis to what is both possible and seen as accidental, the violence described, Kane destabilizes traditional notions of (aesthetic/logocentric) mastery and

retrieves the possibility of authenticity. This is done through deconstructing the mimetic form and its reliance on reason. The mimetic perspective, which leaves unquestioned the premises about form, its reliance on reason, its dialectics and its emphasis on bourgeois values, fails to recuperate the very violence that resulted from it (as form) and the meaning of this violence, which both accuses and exposes the possibility of ethics: 'I think the obsession with the content that the critics have means that any play which contains scenes of violence will be seen as a violent play rather than a play about violence, because they don't know how to talk about it' (Kane in Saunders 2009: 82).

1.3. Play Analysis and Deconstruction

In this case study I have argued that the mimetic structure in Kane's work is undone, problematized and overcome; by dismissing dialectical synthesis, by introducing the accident in its most radical form – violence – onto the stage, by breaking the principles behind mimetic structuring, by overturning and deconstructing the discourse of reason, Kane remediates a structure that had been declared by tradition to be the epitome of theatre. Kane's attempt to move beyond the mimetic outraged critics who were reluctant to acknowledge the recuperation of theatrical value within her discourse on violence and labelled *Blasted* as 'a disgusting feast of filth' (Tinker, *Daily Mail*, 19 January 1995), while simultaneously criticizing Kane for not knowing 'what she thinks' (Saunders 2009: 61). There is, however, a problematic tension between violence and mimetic structure that is theatrically developed throughout her work. By displacing violence from its pure exteriority to the system of logos, and from its association with 'nature', ultimately Kane brings to the fore the underlying cultural violence, which according to Derrida comes after and through the differentiations made possible by discourse. I would like to suggest at this point that, in this approach, Kane's dramaturgy marks the movement out of the mimetic structure, which aims at enhancing the notion of responsibility. I will argue that

her critique is an attempt to rework the relation between theatre and violence, to dismiss the traditional emphasis of theatre on ideas of closure, allowed by the formal appeal to the overarching principle of reason, and to advance an understanding of character which bypasses both the simplistic division good-bad, and the possibility of a reading based on opposed pairs of terms. The characters in her plays problematize suffering and, in a contemporary fashion, the nature of the relation with the existential themes of suffering: suicide, illness, love, the meaning of life, grief, the sense of loss or the absence of any certainty. The poetic nature of such existential themes is by no means incidental in her plays, as they are abundant with lines which have more than one meaning, surprisingly marking places of a perplexing thought and the irreducibility of life itself to the linear structure of mimesis. The series of resonances allowed by the theatre work of Sarah Kane, in fact, points to the fundamentally limited power of reason to depict a human existence marked by transgression. The derivative nature of reason in relation to the law and its primary prohibitions is reworked in Kane's work, which as such performs a deconstructive gesture. Reasons are advanced, undone and supplemented in a theatrical work that fundamentally advances its meaning, play and progression by means of paradoxical images. Rejecting the linearity of a linear progression, disrupting and supplementing the rational expectation, Kane's work attempts to rescue the possibility of the ethical from nightmarish visions of 'sensible hell' (Saunders 2002: 86). 'Kane is boldly lowering the theatre's drawbridge and letting the barbarous world in' (Cavendish in Saunders 2002: 86).

The experimental approach to form of a playwright of 'classic sensibility', whose influences are Buchner, Shakespeare, Ibsen, Beckett and Bond, essentially turns her work into a reworking of mimesis which reformulates the principles of action, emphasizes the multidimensionality of the action and allows for a strange contemporary imagery to burst onto the stage. It is the image structure of the plays that articulates the multidimensional discourse that she attempts to convey: the luxurious hotel room in Leeds, which

impressed Cate so much, is exploded; the knocking at the door of the hotel room is the basis of an ambiguous game of knocking which introduces the dynamic of the relationship between the soldier and Ian; Ian's gun is overpowered by the soldier's rifle; the newspapers for which Ian worked are used in the end to wipe his ass; Cate tears up Ian's jacket in a burst of anger at the rape that has occurred. The soldier's rape of Ian while crying his eyes out, and Ian's attempt to survive the feeling of despair through masturbation and trying to strangle himself or eating the baby, are perhaps not as unexpected or shocking as some critics once considered – once we accept Ian's utter lack of remorse, demonstrated throughout the play, his hedonism and his utter inability to believe in any higher principles. The rejection of Kane's theatrical imagery and the resistance to its powerful conveying of the unavoidability of pain and violence point to a certain hypocrisy involved in the mimetic: 'A lot of people said to me when they read it before it was performed: "we're not sure about the baby eating", and I kept looking and thinking "is it gratuitous? What does gratuitous mean anyway? And does it become unbelievable?"... Reading *Blasted* is much harder than watching it, because when you read it, it's literally he eats the baby. When you see it he's clearly not eating the baby. It's absolutely fucking obvious. This is a theatrical image. So in a way it's more demanding because it throws you on your own imagination' (Kane in Saunders 2002: 66). Kane's stage is the magnifying glass that puts under a microscope the reverberations of an exhausted reason and its relation to violence, the presencing of a staged world where the universality of its project has failed, that makes available a whole new series of associations and contributes to this violent stage imagery.

At the centre of the deconstruction that develops the play of reason and unreason, in what seems to document a fundamental 'impurity' of life, the body is exposed as more than a mere instrument of reason. Undoing the facilities of the mimetic form with its emphasis on socio-realism and linear development of plot, submitting her characters to proofs that endanger their sense of self, and creating situations within which these

characters show their resilience and ability to fight against the sense of randomness and despair, Kane reworks the idea of a simple hierarchical opposition between body and reason. In fact, Kane subtracts the body from the traditional discourse that subjected it to commandments of reason, outlining the idea that there is no simple opposition between body and reason. The imagery underlines the idea that there is no simple economy behind the translation of the body into theatrical discourse; Cate's fists at first scare Ian, making him ask a lot of questions, while her fainting fit is used by Ian to simulate sex while pointing a gun to her head, coming at the exact moment when Cate 'sits bolt upright with a shout' (Kane 2001: 27). The image Kane creates at this moment conveys the subversive energy of Cate and the ambiguous and ridiculous reaction of Ian to being surprised, the weakness that supplements his menace: Cate laughs hysterically while Ian points the gun at her from behind. Moreover, as Cate faints again, he kisses her and she wakes up. The images convey a density of reactions and relations which is irretrievable from the mimetic perspective. *Blasted* is full of references to the body, from Ian's reluctance to comply with the doctor's advice, his excessive drinking and smoking, to intense discussions about food, sexuality, masturbation, clothes, the possibility of being shot or dying. In the image that closes *Blasted*, the memory of Cate's being sexually abused by Ian and her passionate defending of her vegetarianism and disgust at sausages and their smell seems a world away, as the violence on the streets has shifted the whole meaning of 'reality' and deemed suffering an elementary reality to which we should respond. Undoing ideas of privilege and outlining the possibility for an ethical act to respond to the arbitrariness of violence, a general state without principles but with historically traceable causes, the final image pictures Cate sitting next to Ian's head eating sausage and bread and washing it down with gin, then feeding Ian with the remaining food and gin, then hugging herself for warmth and sucking her thumb. The meaning in the image is a recapitulation of the whole structure of the play, which traces an evolution not reducible to linear mimetic structure. While rain pours down again, in this devastated and immanent world, Ian finally becomes

subject by saying to Cate 'Thank you'. His last gesture also recapitulates the play. The conjunction of the two images points to the possibility of hope, to the resilience of meaning and to the existence of the limit that has been transgressed. The imagery completes and supplements what is already at work in the script.

In *Phaedra's Love* Hippolytus's body and desire are reinscribed in the economy of the real and saved from repetitively and apathetically engaging in random sexual activity, watching television and compulsive eating. Through Hippolytus, Kane problematizes the consumerist attitude that associates an advertisement's promises of happiness with the forever precarious reality of consuming, proving – through a royal figure – that the hedonistic attitude ultimately signifies the dismissing of the very possibility of happiness. The repetition of pleasure is the very thing that endangers enjoyment; problematizing the relation between desire and limit, which, according to Bataille, establishes the possibility of the erotic, the character's apathy signals the very disorder and randomness established by the lifting of prohibitions. In the absence of consciousness, awareness or purpose, the experience of searching for pleasure becomes meaningless. For Hippolytus, the gesture that establishes meaning is Phaedra's despair at his lack of emotional response, the shaking of his emotional numbness by a sensational deed which, although based in an unreal accusation, or perhaps because of it, brings him back to occupy the limit between the acceptable and the unacceptable. Hippolytus is rescued as a subject at the moment when his sovereignty is confronted with the limit of his power.

Kane's powerful attempt is based on the desire to question meaning in a world whose reliance on the principle of reason seems outdated. The action of *Cleansed*, for example, is framed by the ambivalent gesture of turning a university space, alluding to the Enlightenment project, into a project based on punishment and the exclusion of the Other; it is the very failing of the rational project of humanism, haunted by its shadow, which is irreducible to a Hegelian synthesis and becomes the locus of a dramatic

speculation on desire and lack. The characters trapped in this institution are the excluded: the mentally disabled Robin, the homosexuals Rob and Carl, the drug addict Graham, the woman who sells her body. The punishment system is both spectral and hallucinatory, seeming to be based on a purified concept of reason, similar to that employed by the ideology of ethnic cleansing; the rationale behind the cleansing act is based dramatically on an institutional structure, nameless figures performing the torture. It is the extension of the violence of inscriptions and classifications into cultural violence which is explored: 'Universality is always monopolized as empirical force by a determinate empirical force' (Derrida in Hobson 1998: 31). The characters themselves seem to be unaware and oblivious of the reason behind their exclusion, and in spite of the punishments inflicted on them, seemingly because of their untruthfulness, they seem in fact to be punished for their ability to love; their evolutions evoke the deconstructive manner of understanding the subject: 'a scene of intersections, of complex competing forces, in a theatre which is that of language and writing itself' (Hobson 1998: 79). The linear conception of time purported by Tinker, the ambiguous 'doctor' administering punishments in the institution, is based on the project of re-education, while the actions of the other characters emphasize a pluri-dimensionality and permanent negotiation of desire and lack that is resistant to linear progression. It is Tinker's attempt to reduce the sign to its traditional secondary status, a representation of reality, that polarizes the action of the play, which depicts the characters engaging with the difficult language of love; logocentric language is used against the problematical nature of the ethical engagement with the other, which generates the rest of the scenes. This ethical problematic in the play can be recuperated through a Levinasian lens, however, as a living quality which, as Simon Critchley puts it, is 'a corporeal obligation to the Other, an obligation whose form is sensibility' (Critchley 1992: 180). The resilience shown throughout the play emerges from their desire, which possesses a grammatological structure, accommodating contradictions. Moreover, the body is treated as some kind of building site, which points

to the lack of autonomy of the self in the sense of its insertion into the world and its extension into the language. The problem of and engagement with the ethical is contrasted with its reduction to the rule and order of surveillance and punishment.

The event which stands as the basis of the play is the ambivalent intrusion of Grace into the structure of an institution whose function is to punish and 'rescue'. Willingly deciding to give up the world as well as all resort to the 'real' due to the loss of her brother, which is overwhelming her, she introduces into this postdramatic theatrical universe, traversed by rules, the idea of the accidental and of a desire which can be neither denied nor fulfilled. As such, she brings into focus the topic of the substitute and its relation to desire; as a character, she turns from an impatient and strong-willed person into a shadow of herself. Her function throughout the play is ambivalent, as she points to the denial of ideas of responsibility and the possibility of self-destruction as inherent in the project of loving. Kane mentions Barthes's work in order to point to the paradoxical imagery linking love and destruction in *Cleansed*: 'There's a point in *A Lover's Discourse* when he says the situation of a rejected lover is not unlike the situation of a prisoner in Dachau' (Kane in Saunders 2002: 93). Moreover, her very presence marks the challenging of the very principles that stand at the basis of the distinction outside/inside, their simple opposition; as a foreigner in the order of the asylum, she is not a prisoner, but the bearer of a poetic project that will finally fail. Her alterity introduces into the play a different temporality, the delay. 'The structure of the delay in effect forbids that one make of temporalization (temporization) a simple dialectical complication of the living present as originary and unceasing synthesis – a synthesis constantly directed back on itself, gathered in on itself and gathering – of retentional traces and potential openings' (Derrida in Kamuf and Derrida 1991: 73). The temporal horizon of Robin is modified in Grace's act of teaching him how to write and how to count; it is this gesture which will lead to the awareness of the length of his confinement in the institution and contribute, alongside his being ignored by the increasingly delusional Grace, to his suicide. Moreover, the

relationship between Robin and Grace is marked by the structure of the gift, responsibility and hope. It is this structure of reciprocity which is destroyed by Tinker in an uncanny act of torture during which he forces Robin to eat the two boxes of chocolates he wanted to offer to Grace. This act culminates in a destruction of the humanity of his desire to express love and gratitude, in urinating on himself because of fear and horror, which is furthermore enhanced through Tinker's name-calling and the series of automated gestures that picture him trying to wipe the urine away with Grace's books as she walks onto the stage. Grace will be the source of a disturbance in the asylum, as her presence seems to suspend Tinker's sadistic involvement in punishments and his cynical detachment from the inmates who are perceived as fundamentally different and faulty. Grace determines in Tinker an uncertain desire, an unconscious urge to protect, to become aware, to become a subject rather than a function; Grace's presence marks a fundamental requestioning of the moral project of punishment he is involved in, insofar as, through her, Tinker gains access to the perplexing intuition of what Levinas calls the infinite. It is this paradoxical framing, which follows the logic of possibility and the adventures of desire, that structures the action in *Cleansed*, offering no simple explanation for what is.

The displacement of Grace from the real world is therefore, from the point of view of the scene that opens the play – Graham's ambiguous death – both overdose and euthanasia, an act of supplementation, while as regards the logic of the institution offering the possibility of action, it is an accident. Both fated and desired, her entrance into the asylum introduces both desire and the undecidable into the structure of the play, disturbing Tinker's logic of calculation. As undecidable, it upsets the binary logic, and introduces the (dramatic) possibility of the uncertain into a closed world that uses punishment in the attempt to re-establish 'order'. Due to the experience of the uncertain in his relation with Grace, Tinker will resort to the fetish; this fetish signals for Derrida the setting up of 'something as the "real thing", subject to some ban or taboo, for which

the fetish is a substitute and some kind of equivalent' (Hobson 1998: 114). It is the resistance of her inconclusive status to the logic of order and punishment, introducing desire and therefore the need for interpretation, that makes necessary Tinker's relation to the (imprisoned) woman, as yet another substitute/supplement; as a sexual object, she will be used as a means to deal with the conflict between a superior desire to protect and save and a regressive urge to (sexually) dominate the other. The scenes between Tinker and the woman emphasize the presence of an inner conflict which will result in Tinker's engaging with the reality of the other. The torment that inspires an unexpected desire demonstrates the humanity of Kane's approach; the emergence of a love-like and unexplainable impulse in a character who seems to be immune to the suffering of others is marked by the impossibility of associating its object, Grace, with a simple act of sexual objectification. This conflict will make Tinker undergo a transformation which is both liberating and necessary, while at the same time ironically and tragically enhancing the wrongness of the punishments he inflicts on the inmates for their 'wrong' doing. This emphasis on logocentric rules is shaken and problematized in his encounter(s) with the woman, which points to the troubling quality of the problem of desire for Tinker as a character; the economy of substitution allows for a reframing of the logocentric economy of reality once the limit is affirmed. Tragically, and yet necessarily, the opportunity to engage with a new understanding and a new existential situation leads him, in the economy of his encounter with the woman, to a sexist attitude; the negotiation between the old and the new will reinstate the logocentric discourse. While Grace disrupts his autistic-like approach to the world, it is the Woman, as a supplement, who in tolerating his clumsiness, ambivalent gestures and substitutions mediated by desire, in allowing herself to be named Grace, restores his peace, outlining the correspondence between logocentrism and phallocentrism. In the final scene, representing Grace/Graham's apprehension of the inutility of her sacrifice and Carl's suffering for his love, we can no longer say whether his silent scream is for his own loss or an acknowledgement of the

fundamental tragic nature of the world.

At the moment in which her transformation is complete, when she is no longer in her body, when she can no longer identify her desire, the whole spectacular evolution, with its logic of desire, collapses. This type of desire, which denies reality and longs for the unobtainable at all costs, involves the denying of all boundaries, taking unnecessary medication and going through imagined transgressions such as the imaginary consummating of the incestuous relation to her brother. This gesture will create the first moment of punishment perpetrated against her. This punishment, performed by voices that rhythmically temporize their beating and accuse her of this transgression, is supplemented by Graham's attempts to help her detach, anticipate the kicks, and defy the reality of what is happening to her. It represents a moment in the play when we can no longer say whether the scene of punishment is real or an expression of her guilt. Her unrelenting desire to not deal with the loss of her brother, to express her unconditional love to him, and to live her love beyond any limitations, with a belief in the indestructibility of love, which gives her the power to defy these acts of violence, will collapse in the end, when Grace finally understands the senselessness of trying to make her brother alive again. It is perhaps an emotional shift that shatters the structure of her being, which she unrelentingly designed; a momentous recognition in the mirror shatters the project of becoming the idealized being she thought Graham to be. In the end, having become an uncertain being, which is half herself and half her brother, she/he finally realizes the impossibility of her projection becoming a reality; she is confronted with the satiation of desire, which points to the redundancy of desire when lack is finally overcome. This bitter and shattering acceptance of her being distinct from him, and of his being distinct from her, is bitterly supplanted by the shock of her having achieved an unnecessary sacrifice, the self-effacing of herself in changing her sex. Suddenly disrupted from her project based on desire, she becomes aware of the reality surrounding her through being symbolically abandoned by her brother. The previously rejected and denied

states of depression, sorrow, psychic destructuring and silence suddenly take their places in the economy of the real, shattering her – pointing to the destructive outcome of following her desire; in the same moment when the irresolvable tension between reality and desire is shown in her mutant body, and in being deserted by the projection of her brother, she suddenly asks for help. This irrational desire is a form of hubris, which leads to Robin's punishment and death, and to Grace's self-destruction. The projection of Graham can be paralleled with the destructive intervention of the Ghost in *Hamlet*; in both plays the desire for purity leads to a destruction of the real. Only, in *Cleansed*, it is the introjection of the other, which is made possible by love, which acts as the initiating factor. Grace's useless sacrifice is contrasted in the end with Carl's ability to cry in front of all the misfortunes reason has brought upon them. The image of the sun getting brighter and brighter and the sound of the rats becoming louder and louder establish the presence of both desire and cruelty in the world. In this way, the play refers to the relation between love and projection, supplementation and desire.

Tinker is a function within the rational system, which is based on the emphasizing of dualistic oppositions and hierarchies, which are correlative with a continuous repression of the 'outside'. Within this play an interesting movement is performed, as the action is already placed in a space marked by closure, by the exclusion of the other – an exclusion that evokes the fundamentally malign nature of the difference that constructs the Other as other. As such, the play metonymically represents the space maginalized by the very structure of its discourse; it refers to the space where the infliction of punishment on the marginal is legitimized and performed in the attempt to reduce their difference through punishment and re-educate them. Those who are present in the space of this institutional establishment are those whose identities are not effectively protected by the rational construction of subjectivity. The punishment, made on the basis of the presumption of an 'essence' of human nature and on the idea of a 'presence' based on the rationality of the subject, is the gesture that perturbs their existence; it extracts the

marginal figures from all relation to their environment, by inserting them into a surveillance apparatus, which is centred around the visual and auditory dimensions of the pleasure of pushing its victims to the limit. The recuperation of the rational as writing, 'as an iterative structure cut off from all absolute responsibility, from consciousness' (Derrida in Kamuf and Derrida 1991: 92), is paired with the necessity of pain developing as a correlative of unreason. Stressing the limits of the subject, the moments of torture represent a different type of narrative, the limits of being subjected to pain and its problematic relation to subjectivity; supplementing this narrative, the violence perpetrated in these very visual scenes is turned into a transgression of the promises made to another being, recuperated in a narrative of suffering in the name of love. Moreover, the play shifts emphasis from logocentric ordering towards the ethical, opening out towards a deconstructive gesture, through Tinker's confrontation with desire. Tinker is the representative of the historically established system, which is allowed to resort to acts of punishment; moreover, the character it portrays brings to the fore the relation between the logocentric repression of difference and the constitution of an outside which is questioned throughout the play. The deconstructive gesture emerges through the advancing of the function of policing the rational principle; the movement of adjusting reason to 'reality' generates a permanent movement of supplementation. In Carl's narrative, the progressive reduction of his limbs is an attempt to supplement lack with desire, emphasizing the resilience of the desire to communicate.

The simple opposition between body and reason is, of course, questioned by deconstruction, which – as I have proposed in this thesis – may be considered as a lens for analysing Kane's theatrical work. The traditional exclusion of the body and the emphasis on reason are based on an initial distinction between nature and history, which is exposed by Derrida as a violent gesture that establishes the possibility of rational discourse as such. The divisions of reason within discourse are based on 'the dialectic between the dialectical… and the non-dialectical' (Derrida in Hobson 1998 : 69); in other

words, the distinctions between mind and body, intelligible and sensible, are based on the dialectic with the presumed non-dialectical transcendental unity of Being. In Kane's work, with the absence of the resort to a unifying and universal principle of reason and the idea of God, the intramundaneity of the quest of her characters inscribes them into a postdramatic horizon where body, desire and meaning are violently challenged. The traditional submission of stage and play text to mimesis, and of action to the dialectical determination of mimesis, is inscribed in and through the way the theatre reaffirms meaning in terms of a firm distinction between accident and meaning: but in Kane, this dialectic collapses. Traditional ideas of identity and truth, inferred on the basis of the universality of reason, obscure the operations made possible by Kane's writing. In her work the repetition of the hierarchical oppositions, the grammatological space within which the individual is inscribed, are challenged. Kane's plays act on mimetic structures and undo them from the inside, rejecting the mimetic in favour of an approach that sees theatre rather as a supplement in Derrida's terms: 'It's crucial to chronicle and commit to memory events never experienced – in order to avoid them happening. I'd rather risk an overdose in theatre than in life' (Kane in Stephenson and Langridge 1997: 113). It is not merely the idea that mimetic theatre is unable to produce meaning, however, but that, historically, its relevance, its emphasis on the rationality of the human subject, has become problematic. Focusing on excess, Kane fundamentally challenges theatrical form.

The postdramatic framing in Kane's plays derives from her attention to the return of the repressed and advances its ability to undo or deconstruct the hidden relation between violence and reason, to problematize the relation between reason and violence in the form of a quest for ethics. Her theatre questions discourses that stand at the basis of representation; in *Blasted* – for example – she interrogates the cold rationalist and opportunistic approach to manufacturing an acceptable discourse on violence, by turning it into an object of sensationalist interest, while in theatre she interrogates the oblivion and purging of theatre of 'real' content. Merging the two together, she creates a play whose

discomfort resides not so much in pure violence, which I will discuss later in this case study, but in creating a connection between peacetime Britain and civil war, as well as between an apparently honorable middle-aged man and an act of rape. Her approach consistently pushes against the resistances that stand at the basis of the prestige of the mimetic form, its cancelling of the accidental in the overall structure of a linear story. In *Blasted*, the reliance of mimetic form on closure is undone and problematized, with the door that made Ian and Cate enter a separate dimension, the privacy in which certain abuses of power occur, becoming the surprise that both unexpectedly and expectedly occurs. Ian's opportunistic approach evolves into a rationalist view of readers' interests, dismissive of the logic of the war, and this perspective is contrasted with the soldier's solicitation for an act of public acknowledgement, a tragic desire for access to discourse and the re-establishment, perhaps improbable, of the 'I'. Earlier, I argued that the sequence between Ian and the soldier was misunderstood by critics, and that, rather than seeing it as an unjustified moral attempt to punish the sexual abuse in the first part of the play, it has a catalytic function for the ensuing sequence. As such, I read *Blasted* as an exploding of the mimetic structure that enhances three different models of dealing with violence and suffering. The play sits much more on the resonances it creates, and not on a linear logic, subtending the dualistic and moralistic distinction.

1.4. Kane's Theatre of Violence and Desire

The interrogations which become manifest in Kane's plays undo the traditional relation between text and stage, conventionally understood as bound to the principle of reason; by reframing the relation between stage, body and desire, by encapsulating the tension between reason and desire, Kane also undoes the idea of character as directed by reason and will. Moreover, Kane's work seems consistent with Derrida's questioning of traditional categories; 'what is happening is not the destruction of the subject, but its

deconstruction' (Hobson 1998: 95). In her work, as in Derrida's, the subject is an interpretive structure, both active and passive, permitting a questioning of 'meaning', 'text', 'subject' (Hobson 1998: 96). Her theatre is based on situations that allow the negotiation of meaning, and assert the emergence and possibility of new occurrences against a pre-existing framing of discourse. In *Blasted*, the oblivion of the suffering of the other turns into event(s); in *Phaedra's Love*, the divergence between morality and political reason and discourse paradoxically restores meaning; in *Cleansed*, the relation between love, desire and punishment is explored; in *Crave*, the clash between the principle of reason and transgression undoes the idea of identity; in *4:48 Psychosis*, the psychiatric repression of the reality of pain is deconstructed. Her plays deal with the insertion of the individual into a rational order that seems oblivious to abuse, treating it as an accident. Language as the 'possibility of repetition and thus of decoding, of transference of a word or phrase out of its context and into another whose intentional field is hitherto unrelated' (Hobson 1998: 99), functions in Kane's plays by activating the tension between the 'accidental infelicity', the absence of intention which is by no means accidental to language, and idealization. By problematizing the relation of the individual to language, by enhancing the relation between decision and rationality as determinant, Kane develops a new theatrical language and discourse on theatre that derives from the virtual, the already latent possibility of violence.

The recuperation of the discourse of reason perverted by a lack of belief, disrupted from its reliance on a system of ideality, and as such characterized by an opportunistic logic, subsequently undermines mimetic form from the inside, its failure being reflected in the emergence of a dissymmetry as a compositional fundamental feature of Kane's theatre. Moreover, this questioning of the principle of rationality makes Kane's theatre irrecoverable through traditional mise en scène, which, as an interpretive structure of making the text represented to its audience, relies fundamentally on the hierarchical opposition of body and mind; this impossibility is based on the fact that a reason

grounding both text and mise en scène in the traditional discourse of mimesis interprets the use of violence as a moment of action, missing its gradual insinuation in the power game between the characters, making of *Blasted* a display of horrors: 'the physical horror of such a spectacle would in the theatre be a sensation so violent as to overpower the purely tragic emotions' (Bradley in Saunders 2002: 61). The stage's traditional legitimacy being determined by reason, the fundamental gesture that roots mise en scène theory in the discourse that privileges mind over body is reluctant to recuperate the relation between the violence of Ian's ambivalent longing for and dismissing of the human value of Cate; from the traditional determination of violence as an accident in the tragic structure that is supported by notions of morality, the violence in *Blasted* is 'an act too horrid to be endured in dramatic exhibition, and as such must always compel the mind to relieve its distress by incredulity' (Samuel Johnson in Saunders 2002: 61). The emphasis on reason would be an act incompatible with recuperating the critique of a personal and social unconscious event assembled as a state of siege that menaces the edifice of reason from inside the mimetic form and from inside theatrical reason. Through Kane's work the accidental becomes event and new questions are asked.

Her theatre is constitutively resistant to the traditional oppositional hierarchy between intelligible and sensible, which is inscribed in and through the concept of (theatrical) mimesis. Instead of mimetically structuring meaning and providing an aesthetic distance to contemplate the action which folds back onto reason after a series of spectacular accidents, her theatre is informed by the menace of a permanent disaster and an equal reaction that restates the resilience of human hope or desire. The principle of the autonomy/legitimacy of the stage as a type of rational analysis of reality is reframed by Kane, which invites an appraisal of the relation between violence and writing. The retrieval of the dissymmetry of the power relations between characters leads to new theatrical forms, which subsequently lead to a deconstruction of principles of theatrical mise en scène and also point to the necessity of a contemporary problematization of

failure. Moreover, her questioning of the relationship between failure and desire, the way they theatrically enhance one another, leads ultimately to a performative model of 'interpretation'. Kane's deconstruction sees desire as a grammatological structure, which performs itself within the mimetic system. The link between desire and text can therefore be seen as linked to performativity. It is the paradoxical nature of desire, reinforced at the moment of failing, which articulates the humanity of her characters. It is desire that makes Ian, the abusing journalist, human, through his ability to experience desire and suspend for a moment his opportunistic take on things: 'When I'm with you I can't think about anything else' (Kane 2001: 22). The horror in *Cleansed* offers a circumstance that allows for the resilience of human hope and provides the opportunity for becoming oneself; the framing allows for a reproblematizing of self and notions of value, which are valuable as they rely on a confrontation between violence and desire. I advance the idea here that the mise en scène in Kane's case depends on a negotiation of the mise en scène with the performative model, without which the text's representation necessarily fails; this is necessary because the gesture that establishes mimetic theatre is based on a fundamental refusal of violence, and a repression of the discussion between reason and violence due to an unquestioned allegiance to the principle of reason. The performative model, affirmed as a radical critique of the traditional discourse of the theatre, developed as a non-unitary methodological approach, offers the aesthetical option of disclosing the violence inscribed onto bodies by discourse; Tinker in *Cleansed* is an instrument for a type of discourse, with the exception of the scenes he shares with Grace, by whom he is overwhelmed and fascinated. He performs the force associated with the punishing discourse of reason, somehow becoming both its embodiment and an impersonal figure, totally indifferent to the suffering he inflicts – he becomes human almost inadvertently as a result of Grace's presence. His impersonal and ambiguous use of the rationalist principle will give him the appearance of a positivity which relies on the effects of traditional discourse, as expressed by Derrida: 'the moment of present meaning, of

"content", is only a surface effect, the distorted reflection of the writing on the fourth panel, into which you keep falling, fascinated by appearance, meaning, consciousness, presence in general' (Derrida 2004: 384).

The traditional tension between the mise en scène and the performative model prevents the recuperation of the theatrical value of Kane's work. Tinker's performance in *Cleansed* reveals the darker side of performativity, constituting a disruptive reference that aims to underline the consequences of public discourse of media and its erasure of the marginal; a shadowy representation of the regressive and cynical elements in a collective unconscious, Tinker's 'essence' as a character is non-existent, non-motivated, yet his role in the play and his punishing power are unquestionably clear and made possible by the general structure of the discourse of the play. 'Tinker' as a verb means 'to make small changes to something, especially in an attempt to repair or improve it'; he represents a function, before engaging with the suspension of will, desire and projection through Grace's presence. He refers to a reality, as the outcasts he deals with all possess a sense of being misplaced, as bearers of guilt, which doesn't make them any less human, but in fact makes them love more deeply, more profoundly. The intriguing lack of clarification in the script as to why Tinker punishes them becomes irrelevant, as in the real world guilt and violence seldom direct opposing discourses and actions. Moreover, as a character, Tinker is paradoxical, his cruelty being supplemented by his experiencing a momentary access to consciousness that prevents him from taking advantage of Grace and also causes him to abstain from preventing her from getting into the institution, in a desire almost to have her stay; the encounter with Grace is disorienting, making him project his love onto the woman before erotic frustration bursts out and his cruelty is exposed once again; nevertheless, it is this openness that makes him experience the other as she is. The play represents a quest for meaning in order to experience salvation. Grace's being admitted to the hospital is a mad project of refusing a world without unconditional love, relying on a reframing of the myth of Isis and Osiris. Kane is never just shocking; she is blatantly

clear about the paradoxical nature of both the humanity and inhumanity of suffering. It is the deconstruction of the possibilities hidden by the discourse of reason, its ability to polarize and divide, the violence of its inscriptions and its subtending horrifying possibilities of destruction, that becomes the very matter of theatre for Kane. Deconstruction is a necessary step towards the reconfiguring of ethical discourse and recuperation of the Other, which lies behind the dialectical use of the 'same and the other' in, for example, the discourses of mass media. In other words, Kane's work sits in a tense relation to the portraying of violence in mass media and the role of reason in a discourse that fundamentally encourages violence or repression. It is the return of the repressed which makes her work powerful and demanding, and her work is a postdramatic exploration of the theatrical necessity to see the link between ideas and violence. The lack of attention to the non-mimetic theatrical possibility of theatre and the real virtuality of the dark side of reason fundamentally prevents the recuperation of a theatrical value that might restore beauty to humanity, which is paradoxically and resiliently searching for hope. Challenging traditional conceptions of aesthetic distancing and mise en scène, ideas reliant on the mimetic model, as well as the opposite model of performativity, which posits itself as a fundamentally positive recuperation of 'humanness', Kane raises the problem of the necessity of deconstructing the basis of theatre in order to allow for other virtually possible discourses. The first step and the originary gesture in her work, is the lifting of the forms of closure supposed by mimesis in order to allow for the emergence and theatrical actualizing of the repressed.

I would like to suggest that *Blasted* functions primarily as Kane's aesthetic manifesto, which prepares the emergence of new forms, able to present the Other. Her programmatic interest in destroying the mimetic form is made with the desire of remediation of its speculative function and of anchoring theatre in the 'real', by making present a violence made (accidentally and necessarily) distant by television. Her gesture of setting a mortar bomb in the middle of the play should not be recuperated as a mere

realist occurrence but as a dramaturgical means to disclose the possibility of a theatre that engages with problems that are urgent and real; the generalized violence is as such the very context where the ethical question is played, and the script will reveal in fact that the destruction of the apparent order of the play is based on the contribution of discourse in creating and dismissing violence. Apparently out of place after having apparently built a reasonable plot based on Ibsenian 'principles', the blasting of the set will explode the idea of fictive closure due to its being oblivious of every latent and virtual possibility of the stage as well as the contents of the 'real'. This 'blasting' of the set contributes to the further characterization of Ian as, confronted with such an unexpected and improbable occurrence, he asks whether or not he is drunk. The stage is revealed – for Kane – to be fundamentally a place where the discourse on law is opened and as such mimetic closure is suspended from its regulating function. Moreover, the play also presents audiences with the effective destruction of its set at a certain point, which I believe can be understood as a symbolic attempt to distance Kane's theatre from the pervasive aesthetics of superiority of distancing and as a means to deny interest in the fakeness of theatre. More than a mimetic reference to an actual occurrence of violence in peacetime Britain, her gesture of destroying the set signifies the effective destruction of an idea of theatre which, by its recourse to facile solutions, its reliance on common psychology and its dealing with the inconsequential, has become irrelevant. By allowing the repressed to conquer the stage and destroy the mimetic, Kane destabilizes a notion of theatre and points to the fact that the mimetic was not even there in the first part of *Blasted*; the very assimilation of the idea of the rape by the audiences of a mimetic structure would only incriminate them as passive and private consumers of violence. Kane's stage lifts the promise of the safe distance of the stage and endangers the passive act of mimetic consumption; the outrage this provoked in critics was created by misunderstanding of the fact that Kane put morality aside in order to represent a quest for ethics; such criticisms, however, marginalized the aesthetic basis for the way Kane sought to undo the apparent

structure of theatre's work; nor could it acknowledge that her work was created from the outset against the mimetic theatre. Her writing of plays is, in this sense, only retrievable from a deconstructive perspective which points to the fact that speech is 'made possible by the exclusion of nothingness, silence and madness' (Hobson 1998: 149). Fighting with the desire to escape the reality of death, Ian drinks gin to the point that he is barely conscious as he abuses Cate. In other words, deconstruction as a project concerned with the relation between violence and writing is the proper basis for recuperating the ethical value of Kane's work.

While it is unacknowledged, I would suggest that the deconstructive style in Kane's dramaturgy makes her approach inherently anti-Hegelian, insofar as identity is not given prior to the developing of action and there is no simple contradiction between characters. This distancing from the Hegelian synthesis also allows for the adoption of the deconstructive idea that 'all determination is a negation' (Richter in Hobson 1998: 147). Excess and dissymmetry structure the language in her plays, which, as can be found in Derridean deconstruction, is seen as 'first the site of responsibility to the other' (Hobson 1998: 138). The staging of alterity in *Blasted* is also a violent questioning after the Same, where the topic of access to speech provides the easiest recuperation of the relation between deconstruction and Kane's theatre. Kane in fact enforces reflexivity, pointing to a short circuit through an event in the staging of rape and political non-personal violence. The very topic of the play is the intrinsic violence of certain discourses, and the possibility of theatrically reimagining the quest for ethics. The voice of the Other is not constructed by a dialectically simple opposition to the same, which is established violently by the principle of reason. Moreover, the Other ceases to be associated with the phantasm of violence, ceases Ian's nightmare of being caught and killed, as the phantasm offers, as Hobson puts it, 'the referent which can be signified but not intuited' (Hobson 1998: 141). Ceasing to be substituted for the phantasm that originates fear and which circulates in the discourse of mass media, the Other's bursting onto the stage marks the impossibility of a

real relationship and dialogue. Their dialogue testifies to a 'relationless relation', 'a relation of incommensurability which cannot be wholly suspended' (Hobson 1998: 142). Moreover, Kane's work acknowledges the need to look at the Western vision of distinguishing between reason and violence through a deconstructive lens, enhancing the idea that this Western-centric perspective is not unitary and closed but encloses tensions and reformulations. Some of Kane's plays can be assimilated to what Artaud names 'the theatre of the seraphim', where 'the events of a dream' appear as if 'directed by [a] deep inner consciousness' – what Artaud proclaims about his own theatre could be said of Kane's: this theatre can 'teach me the meaning of the events of the waking state in which naked fatality directs me' (Artaud 1988: 275). The previously unheard voices of the misfit lovers in *Cleansed* can be related to Artaud's desire for another type of theatre: 'to describe the cry that I dreamed, to describe it in living words, with the appropriate words, and mouth to mouth and breath to breath, to make it pass not into the ear but into the chest of the spectator' (Artaud 1988: 275). The troubling potential of the play emerges from a theatrical situation that shouldn't be reduced to a dramaturgy of mimesis, identification and catharsis, against which Artaud himself protested. Kane destabilizes reason and as such rediscovers desire and Artaud's dream: 'One must be deprived of life, of the nervous irradiation of existence, of the conscious wholeness of the nerves, in order to realize that the Sense, and the Science, is hidden in the nervous vitality of the marrow, to realize how mistaken those persons are who put all their faith in Intelligence or in absolute Intellectuality' (Artaud 1988: 110).

This is as pertinent today as it was when Kane was writing in the 1990s: the mimetic reference provided by contemporary events such as the terrorist attacks in Paris on 13 November 2015, the transgender transition of Caitlyn Jenner, or the results of the EU referendum in the UK in 2016 provide the opportunity for reframing the violence in Sarah Kane's plays as urgent, real and consequential; the political issues formulated by Kane are, however, theatrically relevant, not in their sending a message about the current

state of affairs, but in the reformulations and situations they ostensibly allow, threatening traditional notions of identity, purpose and value. Responding to a contemporary world where private crimes get extensive sensationalist attention in newspapers while interethnic conflicts happening elsewhere are barely acknowledged, Kane questions the validity of the criteria subtending the diversion of public attention through the mass media. The idea of the sensational aspect of violence is undone in a powerful and profoundly theatrical work that raises questions of responsibility and demystifies violence, exposing its mechanisms and its eventually protruded limits. In many respects, her theatrical work is based on deconstructing the violence inherent in media, which is a type of writing that accommodates at times particularly violent deeds; as such, the infamous episode in which Ian's eyes are sucked out of his skull in *Blasted* is not an invention but is inspired by a news report – a fact that happened in connection with a football event. Kane gets inspired by the randomness of violence and desire, constructing conflicts that set into play the deep humanity of her characters. It is the intertwining of the seriousness of the political and the show-like manner of presenting it in order to gain public support that makes Kane interrogate reality with the means of theatre. Her protest, transparent and marked by outrage, is nevertheless neither the product of a desire to shock nor the product of a sick mind, but an interrogation of the violence of the everyday: 'If I die here I was murdered by daytime television' (Kane 2001: 188).

Foregrounding characters who 'variously try to assert themselves as selves, even as the boundaries of their ethos as individuals deteriorate owing to violence, madness, love or other interpersonal conflicts' (Fordyce in De Vos and Saunders 2010: 104), Kane enhances the inability of reason to either explain, or solve, or heal, contemporary subjects. The political gets reformulated in a vision of a crumbling world, as 'middles fall apart in Kane's work' (Fordyce in De Vos and Saunders 2010: 104); this topology, based on the collapse of the centre, based on the universality of the principle of reason that is dissolved, permits the recuperation of poetic resonances and a general dissymmetry that makes her

work inherently postdramatic. She reformulates the drama by fundamentally problematizing the relation between inside and outside, reason and desire, the repressed and its ability to undo closure. This vision of the postdramatic world undoes the very basis of traditional aesthetic discourse, and subtends a critique of its being built on metaphysical distinctions favouring the intelligible over the sensible; the dismissing of the traditional objective of the character and of the clear-cut distinctions between irrational and rational – all lead to a reformulation of the tension between the mimetic and the ethical. It is the very ethical demand that restructures a world that is 'radically immanent' (Fordyce in De Vos and Saunders 2010: 108), in which reason is exposed as an accessory of a will responding to the lack of a unifying perspective on the world. 'Kane's plays seem obsessed with responding to a world where ethical response appears haphazard, non-existent, unfulfilled' (Fordyce in De Vos and Saunders 2010: 108).

Indeed, I would suggest that the destruction of the hotel room, which constitutes the background of the first scene in *Blasted*, a destruction that is typically interpreted as a disorienting and problematic split that endangers the possibility of reception and understanding of the play, is in fact an effective aesthetic gesture which advances the possibility of a remediation of the mimetic structure. This remediation is established by means of introducing into the mimetic structure the event which empties and relativizes meaning, both enhancing the 'shadow' and its destructuring abilities, as well as the possibility of tracing relations and parallels which evade the idea of a simple dialectical synthesis; the theatrical work of Kane strives to convey the existence of forces more elemental than reason, whose violence is expressed in the constructions of the Other, which *Blasted* effectively destabilizes – although the critics have failed to recognize this, focusing exclusively on a mimetic reading of the play which made them misapprehend the author's programmatic rejection of the Aristotelian aesthetic. The project of violence that emerges through, and is retraced in, the play is a failed one. I would suggest instead that *Blasted* is a play about violence and its ramifications on a wider scale, paralleled by an

irresponsible discourse on the necessity of war. Disrupting the uncertain voyeurism of an act of rape, outrageous in its almost random and casual manner of occurring, the play baffled and distanced its audiences, who were unable to process the occurrence of violence in their living rooms or in their theatres. Exposing a certain hypocrisy among the critics, the unanimous rage directed at Kane looked at the lack of verisimilitude of the situation instead of attempting to recuperate the theatrical logic of this mise en place of violence. It is this theatrical artifice of making the violence break into the structure of the play that deconstructs ideas of privilege and distance, reverberating against the idea of an aesthetic privilege and enhancing the idea that it is based on a political one. Revealing the intricacy of the political into aesthetic framing and decisions about reception, the critics have unknowingly fostered the debate about the irrelevance of mimetic theatre in advancing a discourse on violence. What critics failed to understand is the fact that the soldier in the play is also the victim of a worldwide (dis)order, and as a character he raises the problem of a just discourse about the merciless violence involved in war.

Moreover, the idea that *Blasted*'s dismissing of the mimetic form happens through the appearance of the soldier is only an apparent feature of the work, as the very intrusion of the violence in the form of a rape is the result of an unfair negotiation that occurs in the first scenes. In other words, for Kane there is no thematic fracture between the first part of the play and the scenes between Ian and the soldier: 'the tension of the first half of the play, this appalling social, psychological and sexual tension, is almost a premonition of the disaster to come' (Kane in Stephenson and Langridge 1997: 130). The mimetic form's reliance on a dialectics based on reason, according to which both parties develop their argument in order to progress towards a higher synthesis, is in fact undone in the first half of the play. A principle of reason which is divorced from the current state of facts and affairs, individualistic and xenophobic, obsessively used to mask an emotional state of disconnection and fear, is exposed and questioned throughout the play. Moreover, the very task *Blasted* pictures is the complicity of reason in creating a state of chaos,

something remarked on by Bond when he suggested: 'There's a huge difference between Tarantino and *Blasted*. Both deal with chaos. One says chaos is dangerous for us but we have to go into chaos to find ourselves. The other says that chaos is a gimmick, a new device – it's a trick' (Bond in Saunders 2002: 25). Kane's message is advanced in a simultaneous dismissing of the mimetic form and its inherent attempt to resort to the structuring principle of reason; apparently, Kane uses the familiar format of habitual socio-realist theatre, a room, in order to enhance the setting of the failure of reason. Nevertheless, the specific difference which matters theatrically for the peculiar happenings depicted in the play is that the room in which Ian hides a gun under his pillow has a door through which the repressed, the outsider, the Other, enters with a rifle. This case study has argued against a moral reading that attempts to place Ian in a guilt-punishment structure, focusing instead on the relation between reason and violence.

Through *Blasted*, then, theatre's reliance on mimesis as a rational structure that isolates the accidental, the violence, is exposed as redundant and oblivious of the real events happening in the contemporary world; the destruction of the set is merely a reminder of the reality of both violence and the facts depicted throughout the play. For Kane, the rape is a matter that, if temporarily disturbing and then aesthetically dismissed, through the audience's distancing from the work of an 'inexperienced writer', is subsequently used as a dramatic device, the intercourse's suspending of the specifics of time and space being exploited in the play script. Kane's theatrical force derives from her ability to remediate the mimetic theatre's propensity to (rational) speculation and its promotion of this value through the act of 'aesthetic' distancing.

The intrusion of the soldier onto the stage is not a violent intrusion of the villain but the ambiguous figure of the victim, the anonymous soldier obeying orders and witnessing the horrors of the war that rages outside the room. The intrusion of contemporary history (of the Bosnian war) into the fabric of the theatre breaks down the

wall that separates the theatre from life. More than a mimetic incorporation that will reduce the Other to the same and represent the Western project of the movement of history, Kane's play on the contrary proposes the impossible synthesis of the Same and the Other. The idea for the possibility of ordering the world exists before the start of the play; the tensions that explode or implode within the play constitute merely the aftermath of the violence involved in classifications, what Derrida calls the violence of inscription. The social and political divisions created through discourse become the subject of power plays throughout *Blasted*, enhancing the idea that violence in the contemporary world is in fact created by reason and discourse. The creation of the Other is dramatically and theatrically charged. One might say that Kane merely has the fierce theatrical force and imagination to thoroughly follow through the idea of violence upon which war is prosecuted and, by suspending the widely held belief in the safety and moral superiority of Britain, to imagine the consequences of an unlikely yet possible emergence of a state of violence: 'The unity of place suggests a paper-thin wall between safety and civilization of peacetime Britain and the chaotic violence of civil war. A wall that can be torn down any time, without warning' (Kane in Stephenson and Langridge 1997: 130). Kane uses the temporality of the play to suspend the antagonism in the media, and reveal the humanity of both victims and perpetrators. The fact that the soldier's intrusion is the product of a miscalculation on the part of Ian and his opportunistic view of life, based on a certain understanding of the play of politics, taking advantage of his position (which allows him, in his role as a journalist, to manufacture the cultural discourse on violence), shapes the action in the play. The world as discourse, the rational project, is deconstructed in the play; it is a project that has failed to do justice to the Other insofar as it cannot come to terms with its own violence. The inner contradiction of the rational project is exposed in the form of the exploding of the mimetic form, creating the opportunity for deconstructing the cultural discourse. The scene between Ian and the soldier incorporates a theatrical imagination emerging with theatrical necessity from Ian's power to downplay

the arguments of the other side. If his character fails to defend himself in front of this possible perpetrator, it is because of the difficulty of reframing the reliance of the whole system on the principle of reason. An inertia and an inability to understand the situation frames Ian's encounter with the soldier from the very beginning.

The destruction of theatre as mimesis opens up the possibility of a deeper engagement with the principle of reason as such and its reframing in the context in which violence occurs. By effectively undoing the rule of continuity, Kane reveals the basis of the distinctions between casual acts of violence during peacetime and the idea of violence as the undoing and overturning of social relations and hierarchies. Nevertheless, I argue against the idea that there is a real fracture in the middle of the play, enhancing the idea that *Blasted* is concerned with a gradual exposure of the relation between violence on one hand and desire and reason on the other. Objecting to the dismissing of the emotional reasons that subtend the play, 'the self perpetuating circle of emotional and physical violence' (Kane in Saunders 2002: 46), Kane points to the fact that, without them, the play falls apart. I would like to argue that it is in three phases that theatrical meaning is reformulated in *Blasted*: an abuse of power that happens anonymously in a luxury hotel room, a failure to deal with the traumatizing and compulsively violent nature of war, and the desire to find meaning in the immanent, as a desiring subject. As such, the episode between Ian and the soldier is based on the paradoxical authenticity of communication; presented with the crisis, the two figures point to the limits of their understanding of the world, enhancing the impossibility of the true communication and the impossibility of Ian's validating a suffering which is not his own. Saunders enhances the idea that the 'small scene' that includes 'an intricate set of directions related to the number of the knocks upon the door' is 'crucial to the dynamics of the play as the door literally functions as the device through which the soldier's entry triggers the radical switch in mode and tone that occupies the second half of the play' (Saunders 2002: 58). Rather, in Kane's first play, which further sets the aesthetical coordinates for a deeply original work, what occurs

onstage undoes traditional expectations of synthetic negotiation within the structures established by and through mimesis – that is, a form of theatre fundamentally determined by the principle of reason.

Although the critics have attempted to recuperate the value of some of her plays through the political circumscribing of violence, noting that *Blasted* 'is a play that was political in origin, political in content and political in its effects' (Sierz in De Vos and Saunders 2010: 45), my research suggests that Kane's work undoes the very idea of both aesthetic and political privilege and contributes to a reconfiguring of the discourse on the Other, exposing the relation between symbolical and real violence. Kane's *Blasted* succeeds in deconstructing the mass media discourse on the Other and in disrupting the discourse regarding social justice; insofar as mass media discourse is reliant on drama, *Blasted* becomes a postdramatic questioning of the validity of the political framing of drama, built on a perspective which constructs warlike violence in terms of political necessity. Ian's being a journalist upholds the very possibility of understanding the play: his detached and cold reporting of a ritualistic crime over the phone, his cold disinterest as he does so, points to the ambivalent emotionality of his character. In command of his impersonal journalistic approach, his cold routine, his cynical exploitation of the need of the reader to feel both frightened and reassured, as well as his utter lack of emotional involvement, Ian represents the state of emotional numbness which eludes the world and the needs of the Other. In the second part of the play, Ian is reassured and confident while casually informing the soldier that 'No one's interested' (Kane 2001: 47) in his story. Even in the face of the profoundest personal threat, Ian reiterates his indifference with his statement: 'I write… stories. That's all. Stories. This isn't a story anyone wants to hear' (Kane 2001: 48).

This journalistic perspective, which overtly exposes the calculated manner of delivering the news as a form of commodity, which contributes to the manufacturing of

the status quo, stands at the basis of an interrogation regarding the structuring of public discourse and the possibility of action. This exposing of the self-assuredness at the basis of the rational project, the imagined fictional closure of the Western discourse, is theatrically unveiled by the occurrence of the Other. 'The play becomes an example of cultural memory loss, in which an Other that is repressed or silenced in art (although always implicitly present) returns in the real world to break the silence of their forgetting' (Sierz in De Vos and Saunders 2010: 56). Questioning the relationship between journalistic reporting and truth, the play opens the problem of accepted cultural violence and plays around with the difficulties associated with the misrepresentation of violence as sensational, while relying on a fantasy of safety. The Other's appearance, in the form of the soldier – the return of the repressed – violently disrupts the presumed unity that guaranteed identity and the superiority of civilized order over the Other's barbarity. It is this radical questioning of what it is to be human which makes *Blasted* more than a political statement on the violent possibility of a threat which menaces a civilization numbed by a self-deluding dream of safety, constructed with the help of mass media. Kane points to the weakness of the individualist position just as much as she points to the desperate violence used by the Other, as a last resort; the soldier's voice and his plea for acknowledgement of the senseless suffering can turn the theatrical figure, seldom seen as a villain, into a suffering subject, whose violence is a result of post-traumatic stress and his traditional inscription in a social and political order which condemned him to war. Leaving aside the problem of the real referencing of an actual civil war disrupting one of the most advanced political systems in the Western world, *Blasted* raises the problem of the relation between radical silence and the access to speech. The political emergence of a state of crisis and extreme violence becomes the basis for questioning, retrospectively – and recuperating – the very violence of the privileged, whose unpreparedness for a critical politics or human rights is based on the oblivion of the humanity of the Other. In this way, Kane's theatrical statement is the result of an enquiry which attempts to question values

without relying on mimesis.

Kane's technical approach in *Blasted* is informed by the technique of counterpoint, her formal experiment being informed by an interest in destabilizing the set of rules of mimetic form, thereby articulating the troubling display of 'emotional anguish and aggression' (Sierz in Saunders 2010: 51). The reframing of the uncertain and morally ambiguous abuse that happens in the hotel room in the context of a war can be seen, not as a meaningless addition, but as an opening preparing the theatrical configuration of the response of the civilized against the background of violence and death. A sudden shift in a political situation forces Ian to be confronted with the meaninglessness of his life in the eyes of the other and with the possibility of death, making the play not an exercise in grotesque physicality, which outraged some critics, but an attempt to deal with the value and the finitude of life. While the character of Ian displays some constant traits, his deluded sense of confidence, erupting in a callous manner in both halves of the play and the detachment following his entrapment by the soldier who menaces him with a gun are provoked by his inability to realize the change in the situation: 'Think I might be drunk' (Kane 2001: 40). As such, the scene seems to be based on a temporary suspension of an overt arrogance, an inert belief in the rationality of the real, as if the political crisis will be solved through some deus ex machina. The racist remarks in the first part of the play are suddenly challenged by a situation in which he assumes a superiority which is not readily comprehensible. Even as he is menaced by a gun-wielding soldier, Ian enters a dialogue in which he still imposes negotiation: 'Give us a cig. / Why? / 'Cause I've got a gun and you haven't' (Kane 2001: 40). Nevertheless, directed by a principle to preserve himself, Ian enters an almost casual dialogue about violence and the realities surrounding it, the theatrical situation being built on the resonances and dissymmetry between the two characters. The rape in the first half is half-forgotten, being treated like a casual occurrence: 'When was the last time you – ? / When? I know it was recent, smell it, remember / Last night. I think. / Good? / Don't know. I was pissed. Probably not' (Kane

2001: 42–3). In contrast to Ian, the soldier exhibits at least some awareness regarding violence, and even displays the presence of a tortured conscience, which makes his dialogue with Ian – another presumed murderer – confessional and overwhelming. However, the soldier's desire to understand the reason for all these atrocities and to offer the world its own image is a dream whose possibility is easily dismissed by Ian: 'Proving it happened. I'm here, got no choice. But you. You should be telling people. / No one's interested' (Kane 2001: 47). In order to expose the radical gap between the cultured and the suffering, Kane offers the unsettling picture of a senseless violence motivated by political choices. The theatrical idea of the collapse of the world pictured by the play reveals the duplicity behind the discourses manipulating the public into agreeing with the necessity of war: 'Ever seen anything like that? / Stop. / Not in photos? / Never' (Kane 2001: 47). Ian's main function is to reflect, in the second part of the play, both numbness and a disgusted fear at the real violence of war. As the soldier starts to recount the raping and violence, Ian reacts with both disinterest and a dismissive attitude: 'Three of us – / Don't tell me / …I fucked the women. Youngest was twelve…. / Charming' (Kane 2001: 43). Ian's listening to the soldier's stories about the horrors of war is possible only because Ian is threatened with a gun, the soldier's discourse being finally dismissed due to a sense of complacency and a sense of striving to normalize the state of affairs: 'I do other stuff. Shootings and rapes and kids getting fiddled by queer priests and schoolteachers. Not soldiers screwing each other for a patch of land. It has to be… personal' (Kane 2001: 48). The compulsive storytelling of the soldier and his taking a position against the reality of war into which he is forced can therefore be contrasted with Ian's confused sense of loyalty: 'You a soldier? / Of sorts. / Which side, if you can remember. / Don't know what the sides are here. Don't know where…' (Kane 2001: 40). It is a certain sense of loyalty and an emotional turmoil that humanizes a figure forced into war, who experiences guilt for both appearing innocent at home and for not being able to rescue his girlfriend from the atrocities that happened: 'At home, I'm clean. Like it never happened' (Kane 2001:

48). The discourse of the rapist soldier both reframes the first half as non-redundant and challenges the idea of a singular response to surviving the horror. If there is sense in the play, it is in providing three very different perspectives on rape and abuse, which dismantle the idea of a fundamental difference between the violence happening in the war and that which is subsiding. The soldier's raping of Ian is in fact not a surprising occurrence, but the result of a violent collapse of dialogue. Its possibility derives from a history of horrors to which Ian is blind, and the spectacular moment on which a mise en scène should focus is the dialogue between Ian and the soldier, a dialogue on violence, incomprehensible and unwelcomed, uncomfortable and stammered, without reason or comprehensible scope, rather than the rape and sucking out of Ian's eyes. The importance of making discourse out of violence and having the testimony dismissed, failing in the attempt to be witnessed, is what makes the soldier succumb to the compulsion of violence once again. Throughout the scene, a certain respect is directed to Ian. It is the lack of response and Ian's dismissal of true violence that makes the dialogue falter, initiating the sequence of violent rape, which can be understood as a compulsion deriving from the soldier's suffering – of having seen his girlfriend tortured and killed. The violent acts are accompanied by a litany of the soldier over his girlfriend Cole's death: 'He ate her eyes. Poor bastard. Poor love. Poor fucking bastard' (Kane 2001: 41). The soldier himself is a victim, and violence erupts in a kind of hopeless cry, a picture of the world which silently brings to mind the memory of the Holocaust, all the more horrifying as a repetition and augmentation of the unspeakable tragedy: 'Saw thousands of people packing into trucks like pigs trying to leave town. Women threw their babies on board hoping someone would look after them. Crushing each other to death' (Kane 2001: 50). The image of hunger amplifies the horror of violence. The soldier's own hunger amplifies his humanity, not as in some productions, which merely amplified his villainy by focusing solely on his basic needs. Trapped in a machine of war, the soldier has the desire to be represented. To have his humanity recognized, in spite of the fact that he is now broken. Moreover, his

judgement of Ian is both literally and metaphorically relevant: 'Can't get tragic about your arse' (Kane 2001: 50). With the soldier's suicide, a type of closure of the problems in the first part of the play occurs.

I have been arguing that the structure of the play has thus been misunderstood, and that, with the soldier's suicide, a new type of theatrical problematizing occurs. Ian's blindness constitutes a possibility for suffering, which allows Ian to deal with an entirely new situation, at last feeling need and despair. Moreover, this scene opens by reframing the problem which had been suspended by the soldier's intrusion onto the stage: 'You're a nightmare' (Kane 2001: 51). In other words, this part of the play reframes the problem of suffering as a problem which is both personal and general. The scene is a reformulation of the conflict between Ian and the soldier at the macroscale: 'Most people gave up' (Kane 2001: 51). In spite of the suffering, Ian resorts to a series of tricks to have Cate near him, a cynical attempt to manipulate her with the idea of the rape. In the desire to make Cate lose hope and feel bound by him, he suggests that her boyfriend will know what happened even without her telling him: 'Soiled goods. Don't want it, not when you can have someone clean' (Kane 2001: 52). Nevertheless, Cate's suffering has made her more active and aware of her place in the world. The almost childish and shy Cate of the play's first scene has turned into a being who is responsible for a child, revealing a surprising maturity and ability to react to a world in disarray: 'Got to get something for Baby to eat' (Kane 2001: 53). Ian's plea for Cate to stay is rooted in his vulnerability and newly acquired disability, which can now be set against his initial display of despising the weak. Kane's dramatic force in further developing the character without denying him the chance to display humanity, in spite of his trajectory in the play, which has until this moment been constructed against Ian's proclivity, is what makes *Blasted* 'a hopeful play' (Kane in Krasner 2016: 482); in Kane's words, 'For me, the play was about a crisis of living. How do we continue to live when life becomes so painful, so unbearable? *Blasted* really is a hopeful play because the characters do continue to scrape out of the ruins. There's a

famous photograph of a woman in Bosnia hanging by the neck from a tree. That's lack of hope. That's shocking. My play is only a shadowy representation of a reality that's far harder to stomach' (Kane in Saunders 2009: 61).

The framing of the problem of despair and death is supplemented by the dramatic investment in hope, in Cate's desire to take care of the baby. Cate's resilient belief in the value of human life, in spite of the horror surrounding her, and in spite of the rape in the first scene, structures the last scenes of the play, comprising the final and informed decisions about the value of life. Faced with despair and loneliness, declaring his belief in the randomness of life and the inexistence of a higher purpose, unable to commit suicide due to his being prevented from using his gun to kill himself, left by himself onstage, Ian searches for the most basic sense of self-gratification, the masturbatory act. A blind man whose despair is expressed first in masturbation, then in trying to strangle himself with his own hands, then trying to clean his shit with the newspapers he worked for, then laughing hysterically, having a nightmare, crying with bloody tears, being hungry and eating the dead baby, before dying with relief. These are a series of poetical moments that allude to the possibility of Ian's subsiding emotionality and a desire which was never so intense. The relief offered by the moment of death is interrupted by Ian's waking up due to rain starting to fall on him, perhaps washing away his bloody tears. In the same final image, of Cate sitting by Ian's head, Ian is denied even the possibility of dying. Faced with the impossibility of an overcoming of his despair or of satiating his desire for death, Ian finally has to cope with life as it is. Ian sits by Cate after having eaten sausage and drunk gin. An image that refers to the layering of the story, to the multiple stages necessary for achieving a conciliation with life as it is, suffering and hope, is sealed by Ian's final utterance: 'Thank you' (Kane 2001: 61). Moreover, this moment is underpinned by an ironic one: 'When I watched the blood being washed away by the rain I just saw how Christ-like the image is. Which isn't to say that Ian isn't punished. He is, of course, he dies, and then finds out that the thing he has ridiculed – life after death – really does exist.

And that life is worse than where he was before. It really is hell' (Kane in Saunders 2002: 64).

1.5. Conclusions

The misunderstanding of the play's humanist message and rationale is due to the fact that *Blasted* innovates at both theatrical and formal levels, being irrecoverable within the mimetic paradigm of theatre. At the centre of the play is the very idea of a mimetic violence which is impossible – in Derrida's understanding, we can have the violence of an inscription; violence as such is the very absolute singularity. Kane's construction of the character of the soldier is not a rudimentary sketching of the violence inherent in the undoing of the law, nor a spectacular and dramatic reversal of a balance of forces, but represents the introduction of what Derrida names 'the singularity of the coming of the other', 'the opening or expectation' which 'has a dimension that can't be brought into what is called the domain of ethics' (Derrida in Hobson 1998: 143). Hobson notices that a question of responsibility is therefore raised outside the 'neatly presented philosophical realm' (1998: 143) as the Other challenges the principle of the universality of Law. The situation of the soldier is like that of 'asking everything and nothing' – as Derrida says – of placing 'the debtor… in a situation of constant heteronomy' (Derrida in Hobson 1998: 143). The inaccessibility of the Other is short-circuited by a theatrical calculus that counters the political calculus and forces the incommensurability of suffering onto the stage, based on the refusal to accept the opportunistic discourse of media. The intrusion of the soldier onto the stage is not only a radical dismissal of mimesis, but an exposing of its inability to overcome the reliance on a Western understanding of the economical rationality of the real. Subtracted from the simple opposition presumed in mass media, which constructs ideas of rational action, the soldier and Ian develop what Derrida names 'a mad relation, a relation without relation, which comprehends the other in a certain

relation of incomprehension' (Derrida in Hobson 1998: 145). The situation constructed between Ian and the soldier is a 'rapport sans rapport' (Derrida in Hobson 1998: 145); it is 'a relation which whether interrupted or continued, is paradoxical, which involves guilt without fault' (Hobson 1998: 143).

The interruption of the soldier in the order of the play is more like an irruption from within the mimetic model of the problem of the relation between theatre and law than a pure shifting of focus towards an annoying digression and revolting regression to the 'discourse' of the body. Moreover, the theatrical destruction of the set, as I have noted above, materially figures the symbolic necessity, characteristic of Kane's plays, of destroying the effigy of theatre, its inertia and institutional power, in order to redeem its force and restore the repressed as the very content of theatre. Against a mimetic theatre which reinstates the obvious and violently inscribes the mimetic form with a quasi-religious respect as the epitome of theatre, Kane considers her theatre, first and foremost, as a formal challenge, and her interest, second, is in creating theatrical imagery out of the rupture that challenges mimetic form. I suggest we understand this dual dramaturgical approach as a mode of deconstruction: Kane's destruction as immanent to a theatre which seems diverted from its function by having become a mere entertainment act and means of facile reassurance to its audience; and it is this destruction of theatre as mimesis that points to a theatrical necessity rooted in desire. In contrast with a traditional notion of mimesis which reflects reason and submits violence to its programme of redemption, Kane invents a theatre that both resists the temptation to engage with its formal facilities and puts at its centre the violence of a desire that cannot be satiated. This case study has argued that, basing her theatre on the play of desire and necessity, Kane constructs a new stage logic, theatrical in its essence, opening the possibility of a life-affirming reading of her work; the reading of her plays as a series of acts of brutality and an inclination towards morbidity is made on the basis of marginalizing the deconstruction of the mimetic gesture. By questioning the relation between reason and violence, Kane theatrically

questions the hierarchical divisions that constitute the mimetic order, while also pointing to the possibility of setting new ethical problems for the theatre, by means of decisive and urgent gestures. In one sense, the fundamental point in this case study has been to establish and point to the derivative nature of theatrical mimesis with regard to writing conceived by Derrida as emerging fundamentally from difference – to break, as Kane does, with the rationality of traditional representational form without thereby becoming merely a formal treatise on representation: 'My plays certainly exist within a theatrical tradition… But they are not about other plays; they are not about methods of representation' (Kane in Saunders 2002: 26).

Kane introduces into the theatre a paradoxical new term: desire and its ability to move the body; its paradoxical force derives from the fact that 'desire's condition of impossibility is also its condition of possibility' (Derrida in Hobson 1998: 115). Restructuring the discourse of reason and mimesis, Kane puts at the basis of her theatre that paradox of desire. 'The desire or the phantasm of the intact kernel is irreducible – despite the fact that there is no intact kernel' (Derrida in Hobson 1998: 115). In this context, the interruption she prepared for her audiences in the middle of the play is a remediation of the theatre which allows the laying out in the open of the problems subsiding within the paradigm of mimesis. The violence that explodes mimetic form and confines theatre to being a discourse of reason, as well as a violent inscription and reduction of the Other to the same, are played out in Kane's theatre in the staging of the very violence that erases difference: its condition of impossibility that is desire's ownmost possibility.

Chapter Two

Romeo Castellucci: Theatrical Imagery and the Body

2.1. Castellucci's Theatre: Deconstruction, the Theatrical Image and the Body

In the case study which follows, I will demonstrate through the analysis of Castellucci's theatre that the emphasis on the body is correlative to the attempt to subtract the body from the economy of representation and the logocentric determinations of the teleological space of the mimetic stage; this traditional space, marked by hierarchical oppositions and the work of balancing representation and interpretation, is recovered as a complex apparatus that deals with the entrapment of the subject into the webs of language. Magnifying the body, this corpus of work can be understood as a reflection on the margins of abjection, understood by Kristeva as those 'processes of expulsion necessary for the establishing of borders between the "I" and the other' (Barrett 2011: 70). As such, Castellucci's work reproblematizes relations to representation, situating the body both in a theatrical space defined by inconclusiveness, and a space defined by the lack of mimetic reference. Recovered in its marginality, the body, for Castellucci, becomes an uncertain mise en scène of impulses that cannot overcome its own abject conditioning: the existence of a 'vortex of summons and repulsion' (Kristeva in Barrett 2011: 70) in regard to which rational distinctions must be seen as derivative and secondary. Moreover, the expression of the body is made possible through a new type of theatrical image. Used as a machine for producing a critique of the representational propensity of theatre, Castellucci's stagings necessitate the recuperation of the relation between representation and abjection, the ethical and affective dimensions of the body. Centring its action on an inconclusive body, this theatre thus reveals the violence and policing inherent in

representational practices. Through the analysis of that which escapes the economy of representation and the aesthetics of clarity, and by emphasizing the superficial and secondary relation between body and language, Castellucci recreates the opportunity for talking about theatre as the possibility of disclosing a suffering that resists interpretation. Referring to the staging *On the Concept of Face* (2011), I will argue that Castellucci's use of theatricality relies on taboo and its relation to affect. Castellucci's theatrical attempt to recuperate the face of the Other is based on undoing the logic behind the repressing of the body, which is inherent in logocentric discourse. The silence of a theatrical stage, which resists traditional mimesis and its reliance on interpretation, can be related to the idea that 'that which is not servile is unspeakable' (Bataille in Derrida in Botting 1998: 114); instead of a mimetic structuring, Castellucci's stage privileges the subversion of the language that entraps potential subjects into consumerist/representative and simulacral practices, introducing the possibility of what Bataille calls 'objects' that 'make us slide' (Bataille in Derrida in Botting 1998: 114).

In Romeo Castellucci's work the spectator feels the work of a mutation resulting from a different manipulation of the language of theatre and a redefinition of its instruments. Claudia Castellucci considers the work of Societas Rafaello Sanzio an examination of the theatre's 'own specific language', which is advanced as its most pressing 'political task' (Claudia Castellucci in Kelleher and Ridout 2007: 2). Through Castellucci's work, the postdramatic theatre becomes an arena for a secondary reconsideration of the relationship between representation(s) and theatre. Establishing theatre as a machine that can rework representation, meaning and body, Castellucci's stage is haunted by logocentric distributions of presence and meaning; the stage is questioned through a reversal that turns the secondarity of traditional characters in relation to the action into a presence that endures the 'truth'. Through an emphasis on the body, Castellucci disrupts the traditional economy of representation, presenting the audience with 'attempts to rebuild theatrical language through a passionate and

aggressive dismantling of traditional performance' (Novati 2009: 52). Through a deconstruction of traditional rational coordinates, this work aims at making the body an event of meaning and a referent.

Emphasizing difference and deferral, as well as the mystery associated with what is seen from the logocentric perspective as the precarious state of being, the theatrical image sits in-between traditional notions of absence and presence. The body advances an alternative set of coordinates and focuses on the affective. The stage itself becomes a precarious circumstance that shows the surface of things, while – through this 'exhibiting' – drawing away from an assumption that the show is different from what it 'is'. Moreover, Castellucci's theatre is postdramatic in doing away with the idea of a complete and certain presence. Presence becomes an effect of the troubling of traditional representation and a new emphasis on form that relates to the possibility of discovering alternatives to the logocentric mimetic discourse, constituted through the image. Theatre turns into a celebratory place of resistance with regard to prevalent practices of representation, enhancing the idea that, as Claire Colebrook puts it, 'points of view, self, position, and "who speaks" are effects of distribution' (Colebrook 2005: 199). As such, the stage is radicalized, understood as a place of display, articulation of surfaces and the possibility to expand the categories of experience outside the emphasis on 'truth' values.

This second case study will advance the idea that, by enhancing the polyvalence of the theatrical image that frustrates mimetic codes of reading, Romeo Castellucci's stage becomes the spectacular locus for substitutions which both question and negotiate the relation between the representational and the singular. 'In the absence of a coherent narrative we are faced with a confusion of imagery that performs what Lorenzo Mango calls "dissolution of representation"' (Novati 2009: 52), which directs attention to the very shifting from a rational structuring towards a recovery of the body's participation and divergence from the 'history of truth'. Doing away with acting in the conventional sense,

Castellucci's stage is occupied by unsettling figures, cryptic remains of dramatic language, strange actions reluctant to betray their secrets to rational attempts at reading the stage as a representation of something. These silent theatrical worlds are supplemented by crafted soundscapes, bringing into the structure of the event a permanent state of dispersal that refuses the fixation of the figures onstage into a type of anthropocentric reading. The engaging of the spectator into the work is initiated by acts of frustrated spectatorship, which disrupt the representational frame and its expectations, unfolding, instead, across multiple temporalities: those of the spectators, the figures onstage, its images, and the theatre event. The playfulness introduced at the core of the work will perform the deconstruction of the relation between theatrical image and representational thinking. Castellucci's profound reconsideration of the simple partition between audience and stage positions the spectator at the centre of the task of recuperating difference, traces – compelling them to destructure and restructure meaning. This theatre both enhances the intensity of theatrical effect – in excess of rational meaning – and at the same time stages the recuperation of the body within its theatrical discourse. The progressive establishing of the stage as a place for a drama of the image rather than of words, with their rational emphasis, contributes to the constitution of a new form of theatrical reading provoked by the power of the spectacular image; this image articulates, in a manner that is both clear and perplexing, the paradoxical difference between theatre and rationality, the real and the image.

I will advance the idea, in this chapter, that Castellucci's image-producing dramaturgies are theatrical in their staging of the clash between what sits under the label of the 'anonymous' and the traditional 'matter' of the stage, with that which by its nature has an inconclusive relation with reason, and traditional forms; Castellucci's theatre representation is thus haunted by accident, the excess of a seemingly inconsequential detail, and the enigmatic quality of bodies – it resists being reformulated as the expression of a logocentric discourse that prevents the recuperation of new relations and the

recuperation of the stage into the structure of the theatrical event. His theatre, instead, performs a gesture of opening, in its will to create a form that resists interpretation. As it points to a reality of/in the image, this theatre establishes a play with the different temporalities evoked by the work: the audience's entering into an affective state that allows for the uncertain remembering of a different time and place, while witnessing the figures onstage; the distancing of the audiences through the emergence of a gesture that resists (mimetic) interpretation; the tense elaboration of resonances that both distance and help the audience advance through the work; the reference to historical events and figures in an attempt to speak about ideas rather than adopt the dramatic model; the highlighting of the marginal as evoking the uncertainty of time in its repetitious activity. Each sequence seems to evoke both the breaking of the mimetic code and the impossibility of reducing the body to the linear perspective of traditional dramaturgy, with its emphasis on reason, text and order of dramatic succession. This theatre articulates, in its reformulations of meaning, the idea that temporality is constructed and achieved rather than given; it starts with the possibility of a non-rational yet meaningful image that emerges with this work on and with time.

As such, the body, the face, the gesture are subtracted from the mimetic economy of representation, with its univocity and linearity, and restored as potentialities that shape the very discourse of theatre, while promising a new ethical engagement with the real. A body able to bring to the fore the temporal disarray and surprising resilience of meaning points to the ineffable as that which escapes words and deeds. The spectacular production of the images is correlative with the constructing of temporalities traditionally excluded from theatre, while a secondary movement of framing the detail becomes essential. The very presence of the theatrical image is what is restored by Castellucci's theatre; this theatre subtracts the image from the demands of representation and restores its literality. Paradoxically, the autonomy of the image and the relations it ultimately conveys and restores point to the possibility of a different logic of the real; a different economy of the

image, which no longer mediates, but attempts to 'speak' or rather bear witness to the solitary acts that resist interpretation. It thus challenges the audience into producing affective responses to the work onstage; they are involved in reinterpreting the 'substance' of the stage and progressing towards reformulating the 'idea' of the theatre as a result of encountering its resonances and rhythms, conveyed in and through images, in a constant movement of supplementation. Being offered a glimpse into the uncertain and unknown matter related to an Other whose intuition is inaccessible to me as a spectator, the theatrical experience turns into an unfolding of an uncertain progression; to follow the adventure is to retroactively be able to understand and allow for the emergence of relations and connections that attempt to ground the image in understanding, when this understanding escapes the clear-cut logic of oppositions and hierarchies.

Representation is undone in Castellucci's work through pointing at the very limit of interpretation, the suffering body. Delivered from its adjunct and habitual role as an interpretative structure that represents, metonymically, the whole, the staged image will develop in Castellucci's work according to an iconoclastic will to destroy the representations of mimetic theatre and their condensing and reductive approach to meaning, based on hierarchical distinctions and on the reducing of the excess of the body. Reframing the mimetic instruments of the stage, this theatre will quote and reinterpret theatricality, will become aware of the theatre as a medium and theme, enhancing metamorphosis as a mode of engaging the relation between mimetic form and theatre's repressed; this problematization of theatrical form will both engage theatre with its own potentiality and undermine the logic of the appropriation of meaning. Operating against the violent inscription of mimesis as a representation of meaning, Castellucci's theatre deals with the possibility of escaping representation and engaging in the construction of the image of the 'real'. Undoing this type of clarity, which is based on rationality, the theatrical images disrupts the body from the discourses that suppress its frailty and modulations; this theatre attempts to frame the body's relationship with a cultural

repertoire of obsolete meanings, which affirm its conditioning and its repression.

In the attempt to overcome and destroy the facilities of the logocentric discourse that privileges the mind and the search for 'essence', Castellucci's theatre advances the idea of the body as an expressive surface, articulating an 'inside' and an 'outside', skin and viscera; as such the theatrical stage enhances the body's involvement in relations and its becoming. For Levinas, ethics 'is enacted at the level of skin' (Critchley 2014: 180). Societas Rafaello Sanzio's theatre, by attempting to retrieve from the theatrical image the commitment of sight into the seen, by undoing the hierarchical oppositions and the distinction between body and mind, accident and 'meaning', and by focusing on recuperating the temporality of the image and the spectacular dramaturgy of leaps and interruptions, is a staging of the possibility of closeness. This dramaturgy ultimately enhances the necessity of putting at work an inversion, perplexing its audiences in order to restore a new relation between private and public; it enacts the reframing of the logocentric aesthetic project and as such contributes to a reconsidering of the ethical dimension of theatre, a project which was – for traditional theatre – appropriated by reason. The body as skin and flesh, crossed by forces in its becoming, is correlated in this theatre with the impersonality of the world as event; the impersonality of the real, dismissed by the traditional structuring of meaning, is reflected through/in the impersonal staging of this theatre. Theatrical space is reconsidered as a quintessential expression of an urge to meaning, its defiance of mimetic logic being expressed in its renouncing the idea of a backstage; everything happens in full sight, without rest, and yet according to a logic that is impenetrable at first. The impersonality of the spaces makes the violence directed against bodies even more terrible, as there is no room for distancing oneself from its occurrence.

The play of affect is the very supplement of this strange and broken physicality, which frustrates anticipation; and yet, in its scarcity of responses to images of suffering,

Castellucci advances the possibility of overcoming the literality of the images of the body in pain in a new ethical project. This ethics emerges as a result of work that advances through blows to the stomach, as a 'theatre of commotion' (Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 30). What this theatre ultimately articulates is the availability of a discourse on violence which escapes the traditional positing of violence as the other of meaning; accident just occurs, perplexing the logic of representation. In this theatre, violence is a site experienced from diverse and diverging perspectives, elicited by affect. The clashes and hesitations that take place through/in the image of the stage ultimately point to the problem of ethics and the responsibility of the spectator for the image. In this theatre that does away with notions of rational mediation, Castellucci emphasizes the unavailability of the questions, thus the standard responses that audiences expect of the theatre. This theatrical work advances interrogations regarding the nature of representations and the subduing of the body and violence to the mimetic. By emphasizing the body's tense relation with meaning, by exposing its vulnerability and its suffering, violence is recuperated as the very instance that problematizes the real. By recuperating the 'anonymous' matter of life, by singling out the stage figure that is both active and passive, simultaneously hiding and exposed, by working with the supplementation of the affective and the loss of meaning, Castellucci's theatre focuses on a stage that wants to make clear the residual; the presence of the image, effected through a careful dramaturgy of resonances and interruptions, will point towards the figural presence and the retrieving of meaning.

It is the unavailability of revelation and the inconsistency of reason that posits the body as the locus of a disorder and a seemingly passive conveyor of the tensions between reason and meaning, the representative system and the machinic production of theatre. The body is crossed by both theatre and the inescapable real. Castellucci's theatre is directed against the 'continuous, pervasive, gaseous' (Claudia Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 28) disorder created in contemporary culture by an omnipresent 'chorus' that uses

language to explain and orient, and against the cultural reductive logic of analogy; his theatre cancels the representational frame. In the irreducibility of the image, Castellucci merges together theatre and the impersonal, with spectacular questions regarding representation itself and its relation to the real being signalled. By putting at the centre of theatre the endangerment of the meaning as message, which is linked to the legitimation of traditional theatre, this stage employs interruption as part of its dramaturgy; by adopting this strategy it deconstructs the series of theatrical relations, relying on the idea of the world as a whole, which is expressed through the ordering principles behind its representations. As such, the dramaturgical emphasis on dismissing the formal principles of the mimetic theatre is also a reworking of the potential of the image, stressed to the limit, to point to the stage as the inconclusive site of presence.

The presence of the image is what this theatre machine aims to create; it points to the irretrievability of the body, its resistance and untranslatability into the linearity of traditional theatrical discourse. Castellucci's theatre mimes images, quotes characters and strategies for acting, annihilates psychology and words, in a manner that dismisses the sublimation of the material into politics of representation. It is through the focus on what the French philosopher Georges Bataille once called an 'agitation' that belongs 'to all men (except for the police and friends of the police)' (Bataille in Surya 2002: 142) that this theatre seeks to escape the control of psychological signposting; this Bataillean image emphasizes the relation between the scenes of physical violence and the violent inscriptions and practices of punishing resulting from writing. To express a different point of view, as a citizen of the city, is problematic in a culture that associates representation with politics and writing with policing. This case study will argue that Castellucci works to undermine these representations, to subvert them by reframing the role of affect in theatre; conceived and dismissed in the logocentric paradigm as accidental, excessive or simply violent, it will constitute the basis of the exchange between auditorium and stage. In the space opened up by the lack of communication and

suspension of the power of the word, affect is retrieved as paradoxical, ambivalent and as the support of the reformulation of the ethical.

A desire to desert the representational coordinates of theatre and distance theatre from the type of communal discourse of politics and media determines Castellucci to adopt the form of the show and develop his discourse on the basis of the surface and the skin. As such, he enhances the idea of a '"central" nothingness' of being (Claudia Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 68), which destabilizes the logocentric discourse. This theatre advances the necessity of subtracting the visual from logocentric constraints, restructuring surfaces against the repressive entrapment in the logics of utility and meaning. In this sense, Castellucci's work refers to the ruins of representation and its ethical project, related by Castellucci to the Nazi camps. A body which not only refuses language, but is recovered by moving between a state of dispersal, latency of meaning, and the archival nature of its experiences, calls for some type of resurrection, a vain hope to restore a 'full' meaning. The retrieval of meaning emerges through the implication of audiences in the event, as if the stage produces the deconstructive work that can be related to the language of the audiences and their entrapment in a world of representations. This difficult relation makes Castellucci's theatre stress to the limit the ability of the image to suppress the order of rational commentary and that of the traditional hermeneutic interpretation, both of them being correlated with the mimetic forms.

The very centring of the image on the broken and disarticulated body that appears onstage, the almost delirious logic of the stage, which happens seemingly without consideration for its audiences, creates a certain impression of being displaced, ignored, and also provoked. I would like to suggest that challenging the spectators is a necessary aim and effect of Castellucci's dramaturgy – as with all postdramatic dramaturgies – insofar as they resist the logocentric order, based on a repression of the body, and manifest in a dismissive discourse of the body. To attempt to create a discourse on the

body is possible only through a series of reformulations, interruptions, suspensions, inversions and operations, through which this dramaturgy ultimately points to the construction of presence of and in the theatrical image. Through the presencing of the image, the body emerges – comes to the 'surface'. 'Skins, hoods, sacks, gloves, placentas and ski-masks extend the body into an ulterior dimension' (Claudia Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 67). Evading the logocentric discourse, with its emphasis on the prohibiting of contradiction, Castellucci's theatre questions the possibilities of theatre and emphasizes the stage as event; transformation, becoming or stillness evoke the complexity of that which escapes rational language. Dismissing 'the classical concept of competence', which 'supposes that one can rigorously dissociate knowledge (in its act or in its position) from the event one is dealing with' (Derrida in Derrida and Kamuf 1991: 580), Castellucci's work disrupts the logocentric appeal to totalities and idealities and reworks the relationship between stage and audience.

The act of writing, in its being both active and passive, is a reminder in Castellucci's theatre of the inconclusiveness and irreversibility of its operation, its reliance on difference and deferral; in this theatre, body, the very rejected residue of logocentric thinking, collapses, allowing for a different construction of its presence. If, from the traditional point of view, the body is representation of a subject, in Castellucci's theatre body is seen as the other of reason, but as the archive of thought, emotions, language, as the conveyor of excess and also as the very potential for engaging in acts of meaning. This theatre reframes theatre itself as a machinery that, by taking in the 'anonymous', the 'impersonal', the body, enhances the necessity of disruption (of the logocentric need for reassurance), proposing the occasion of responsibility towards meaning. Instead of the mimetic vocabulary structured by logocentrism, Castellucci proposes the universal language of form, with its mutability, metamorphic possibilities and its propensity towards bringing to the fore the marginal body as an occasion to address latent meanings. The frustration of meaning, the awakening of an associative state, and the distancing of

the spectator from the stage are intrinsic to a dramaturgy based on the shifts between body and image, a dramaturgy of traces and differences.

A movement of temporization permanently displaces and supplements meaning, and effectively uses Derrida's idea that there is no simple and originary present; by playing with different temporal dimensions, the goal of Castellucci's theatre is to construct the presence of the image. In the attempt to approach the material of the stage, the body and violence, Castellucci creates a singular dramaturgy that attempts to signal new perspectives. This dramaturgy aims to retrieve through its literality the possibility of creating a discourse which is profoundly theatrical and untranslatable into the language informed by logocentric thinking. Castellucci's work is programmatically resistant to any representational approach, establishing the stage as the possibility to engage with the debased, the marginal, the apparent in a new way. This theatre can rather be described with the 'ideas' of differentiations, deferrals, traces. Emphasizing the idea that 'the structure of sensations that reveal something about the human condition… does not belong to this world, to this reality' (Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 30), Societas Rafaello Sanzio is interested in retrieving the power of the image to vacate a perception numbed by logic and to locate 'a living transformation' (Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 32). Moreover, this approach is consistently derived from a rejection of the tradition that separates the ignoble from the beautiful, the minor from the major, being a project that aims at a radical reconsideration of the place and spacing of the body. Such an approach changes the nature of the economy traditionally structuring the relation between stage and auditorium, enhancing the body not as instrument but as support for different economies – linguistic, affective, historical – that shape the individual's 'orientated reality' (Claudia Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 61). It is the tension between the pre-expressive means used to construct the image and this body's insistence on a poignant reality of its own, closed in on itself and reluctant to appropriation, that advances a theatrical discourse dismissive of mimetic reading. Through progressive

deterritorializations of the stage, the actors and figures aim at restoring the living quality of time, and an awareness as regards the theatrical image. I advance the idea that the staging no longer exploits the ability to signify, but is structured ethically by the propensity to hope for an understanding.

A dramaturgy of pure visibility that envelops the body and portrays its inconclusive status, its drama as a figure standing onstage beyond any attempt to rationally structure and order the world, stands in the stark shadow of traditional theatre, haunting the rational visibility as conceived by Plato, which condemned Homer's poetry as irreverent. The problem of impersonation is reframed in this theatre of the body; the spectator has to struggle in order to attach meaning to strange figures populating the stage. This dramaturgy attempts to retrieve the marks of singularity against a culture that tends to homogenize and police the experience. Using anonymity as a way to escape the tyranny of the personal with its surrounding discourses regarding value, Castellucci recuperates the impersonal as the linking of the intimate with the habitual or the obnoxious, Derrida's *restance*, the minimum unit of meaning, with the notion of trace, articulation of paradoxical temporalities. The desire to escape the traditional discourse that posits the repression of the body as the condition of discourse informs the theatrical work that, by positing itself/theatre as a subject of possibility, by attempting to discover the language of the stage, by dismissing the derivative nature of images in the mimetic theatre, and by playing with temporality and image, discovers the possibility of an alternate contingent theatrical logic. Furthermore, Castellucci's attempt is also directed against the general order of production of simulacral images, as this theatre reacts to the idea of image as commodity. By inscribing in the theatrical event the frustration of the mimetic logic of the stage and by deferring the responsibility for creating the overall meaning to the spectator, this theatre is based on a reader who attempts to break a cipher of what is left outside interpretation. The theatrical image dismisses both the logocentric topology based on homology and the distinction between centre and periphery, making theatre act against

its basic dramatic principles, as a machine. The theatrical images produced propose a flickering detail, which signals, through the interstices left unoccupied by the hierarchical oppositions that frame meaning and traditional theatre, the existence of something else.

It is the literality of the action onstage that is both enigmatic and clear. Mobilizing a play between the representative logic/spectatorial expectation and the associative logic, what comes to the fore, in the end, is the presence and clarity of the image, in its literal sense, opening a new type of access to meaning. And what this theatre finally communicates is nothing. What Castellucci stages is the condition of the visibility of and in the image, a restoring of a vision of reality and the body that goes against the mediations imposed by articulated language.

2.2. Castellucci's Dramaturgy and Mimesis

There are two dimensions of mimesis analysed by Derrida in 'The Double Session'. The first dimension deals with the codes that refer the image back to a reality through the relationship of adequatio, which is based on norm, order and law. In respect to this aspect, Castellucci's work is to be understood as a programmatic destabilizing of the appeal to the prevalent aesthetic and representational norms. This case study will argue that his dramaturgies attempt to progressively establish the urgency in the image without referring it back to a simple referent. By constantly frustrating the rational principles of articulating the stage, as well as the practice of spectatorial reading, the work distances itself permanently from theatrical mimesis, proposing instead of reason a meaning based in the excess of the body. Instead of a plot, Castellucci's work relies on creating explorations of mimicry and theatrical tension. Crescita, 'the transversal structure of an action that can surprise with its intensity and brilliance' (Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 162), is based on what Derrida would call the trace and its ability to evoke complex temporalities. The possibility of a 'transversal' reworking of meaning is mediated by

traces and differences. Refusing the reduction to the categories of logos, the troubling detail, the strange gestures, and the tensions evoked by the stage figures attempt to recuperate a practice of reversibility, segmentation, resonance, surface; ultimately this theatre denies notions of 'essence', the practice of totalities and the assumption of a 'meaning' or 'fullness' of representation. Apparently arbitrary, it appears as such only from the mimetic perspective; conversely, this theatre refuses to settle into the arbitrary structure of reason and attempts to overpower it by signalling the role of the body on the stage. While forwarding the clash and the impossibility of reading the elements in the image, this tension signals, through the scarce communicative signposting of this theatre, towards the existence of a beyond-linear interpretation: the innervated reality of experience. This gesture, a fundamental reworking of theatrical thinking and its relation to the real, disrupts mimesis through its excess, the emergence of the body. As the image refuses to communicate rationally, its meaning rests upon its indecipherability, deferral and difference. The disruption of mimesis advances the theatricality of the intriguing detail that engages the spectator into the structure of the work, and into participating in its dramaturgy. An infant left on the stage in the Brussels episode of *Tragedia Endogonidia* (2002-2004), totally disrupted from its artificial environment, perplexes and stimulates an affective reaction which cannot be solved rationally but only initiate a reading of the stage as participation, witnessing, following.

A second dimension of the mimesis to which Derrida refers is the potential of 'the theatrical mask' to articulate meaning in the symbolic economy of the stage and representation; this mask 'reveals as much as it hides' (Derrida in Kamuf and Derrida 1991: 179). I will argue that, in Castellucci's work, the destruction of mimesis as adequatio, fundamentally resorting to reason in order to explain and to the secondarity of the image in order to convey rational clarity, is supplemented by the theatrical emphasis on the figure's mimetism. This mimetism subordinates image to the desires and flows of association of the stage figure; setting the coordinates of experience, this theatre attempts

to rescue the complex play of meaning and unreason, dream and prohibition, desire and muteness. As such, Castellucci's work problematizes a notion of the real which has prevented an understanding of the body as an experience of being crossed by forces in the 'real', such as by language and prescriptive representations. By enhancing the solitary gesture of the figure in its resistance and its defiance of the classic notion of representation, the theatrical mask conveys the presence of playful and painful limits of representation; the relation between the remains of a language used to connect to the exterior and the body as expressing the means of communicating a subjection to the world becomes a question regarding the relation of body with subjectivity itself. It is paradoxically within this tension between the repressing of intimate experiences of meaning and the impersonal status of participating in language and culture that Castellucci's theatrical discourse is inscribed. The theatrical mimesis of mask also becomes the means for engaging with the metamorphoses that supplement and undo the notion of a rational reality, adhering to the idea of substitute, opening the space of the stage to a different apprehension of the body's framing of the relationship between the real and theatre. The gradual clarification of the meaning of a staging implies sudden acts of recognition effected through the gaps and interruptions between the theatrical images; this recognition is based on the resonances between images and their common participation in a dramaturgy resistant to rational appropriation. As such, through a theatricalization of its figures, this theatre forbids the traditional rational identification between character and audience member; it confronts its audiences with images that only gradually become clear and self-evident. I argue that this emphasis on the figures that both advance an impulse to interpretation and effect their resistance to interpretation undoes the duplicity of theatre by enhancing the limited economy of the rational, its inability to frame the field of the real; the problem of clarity in Castellucci's theatre is thus dependent upon its distancing from the problematic of reason, the hierarchical oppositions created by logocentric discourse which rely on understanding the relation

between subject and object, reason and accident, exclusively as dialectical synthesis.

2.3. Theatrical Image, Rhythm and Spectatorship

The complications of the conditions of spectatorship in media-saturated culture are yet to be discovered, and Romeo Castellucci's insistence that 'the future of the theatre belongs to the spectator' (Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 259) frames theatre as a critical and necessary tool for restoring a (demystifying) discourse on the real. Castellucci's theatre embraces the realness of the production of theatrical images, engaging with the difficulties emerging from destabilizing the economy of the rational, which informs both the traditional exchange between stage and audience, and the traditional emphasis on mediation; Castellucci's theatre is incomplete without its audience; the traditional separation is turned into a liminal threshold over which meaning is negotiated. The attempt to subtract the image from the subordination to the rational is effected through disruptions, interruptions and resonances, through a carefully crafted dramaturgy which aims at the restoring of the relation between vision and the real. If the performance starts with a woman cleaning the stage, we might wonder whether we are in the right place or not, whether we are present at the same time or not; we might question the poor aesthetic of the stage, until we understand that it is our very way of engaging with both theatre and the real which is at stake in this theatre. It is only in the end that we will be able to make sense of the figure cleaning the stage, which was perceived first as interfering with our expectations and desire to be enchanted; as such, the dramaturgy of Castellucci's theatre is the structuring of the journey of a spectator who is forced to become aware of images that escape and flee, frustrate expectations, introduce a movement of dispersion, in order to finally stage the appearance of the image that restores in its presence the intelligibility of the aesthetic gesture. The literality of the action of cleaning, the ghostly nature of that figure, becomes a clear image only retrospectively and through a scene of the savage and

bloody violence of a few policemen; as such, this theatre should not be thought as performing, in a prescriptive sense, an ethical or aesthetical framing of the theatre. Rather, it just offers its image and renders visible the ephemeral, the residual, the accidental, and the forgotten.

The medium that has traditionally been attacked due to its untruthfulness becomes in Societas Rafaello Sanzio the place of an exposure; its figures bring to the fore notions of vulnerability, precariousness, the accidental, which are made into contents of the theatrical work. Romeo Castellucci advances a new theatrical enquiry along a path which acknowledges the necessity of discussing both the political condition of the spectator in the new, technologically mediated environment and the impact of these technologies on the very constitution of imagery and even consciousness. By putting the spectator at the centre of the work, the theatre attempts to resituate him and thereby enhances the responsibility of engaging with images. Against the ceaseless streams of advertisement, fashion and television images, Castellucci sets a theatrical enterprise that attempts to lead to the apprehension of the real through the use of images that divert, subvert, echo and permanently endanger and challenge the constitution of meaning as attempted by the logocentric project, and its derivative form – the dramatic representation; this project attempts to engage with the marginal in order to restore the relation between theatre and the real, against its rational simplification. There is a paradox at the core of this theatre: 'The unexceptional… haunts this exceptional-looking and exceptional-sounding theatre' (Kelleher in Kelleher 2007: 129).

Among the very many variants of theatres situating the spectator at the centre of the theatrical work, Nicholas Ridout identifies one that demands of its audience what he terms the regard instead of the gaze – insisting thereby more on the positive and enhancing quality of the act of seeing rather than on the evaluation implied by the gaze. Considering that 'the gaze is integral to systems of power and ideas about knowledge'

(Sturken 2009: 94), the recuperation of the power of the theatre to disrupt the mimetic through the excess in the image leads to a suspension of the prevalent cultural reading of the image, with its privilege and notions of value. The emphasis on the gesture establishes a radical work on the nature of vision. This vision, attempting to restore the perception of the real, is directed against the prevalent order of intelligibility inherent in the simulacral images created, reproduced and disseminated by new technologies. By enhancing the necessity of a radical deconstruction of the relation between meaning and vision, the singular and the accidental become part of a new theatrical discourse. By trying to subtract the individual from the repressive discourse of reason and logocentric meaning, the individual's relation with it is reframed as excess or lack, as a source of various impulses that refuse to settle into a clear understanding until the very end. This theatrical work operates through a frustration of the relation between image and the rational will, exposing overtly its resistance to the tradition of truth as reason and its subordinating of images to the constraints of logocentric topology. The image is advanced as the nexus of tensions which are only understood in relation to other images.

As image itself is offered as an impenetrable object, both inviting and repellent of a definitive reading, the dramaturgy of images based on the interruptions and resonances established through the suspension of meaning disturbs the very order which makes the image secondary to reality. By engaging the spectator in the act of seeing, the image that is used as an act without referent emphasizes the drama in the act of seeing itself as 'a clash between two realities' (Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 256). This drama creates points of tension, liberates the detail from the image, allows the very search for the latency of meaning, the possibility to make image event, to make it slowly permeate the membrane which separates auditorium and stage or to let the violence invade the stage and perplex the reader; the dramaturgy of the inconclusive and urgent meaning of the images is created as 'a symphony' (Chiara Guidi in Kelleher 2007: 137). Doing away with the mimetic image in an iconoclastic drive to destroy the politics of representation and

subjection of the body to the constraints of reason, Castellucci's theatre orchestrates the nocturnal and anonymous matter that is constituted by the strange inflections of the 'proper'; doing away with the analogical model of mimesis, he destabilizes the clarity of the rational model, and turns the stage into an environment inhabited by figures displaced from the city and history, and the spectator into a follower, forced to confront his shadows and desires. The theatrical images, chained as a series of apparently disconnected sequences, prepare for emotional, catalytic leaps which restructure meaning and advance the possibility of a reconsidering of the ethical beyond the determinations of the mimetic.

Castellucci's theatre, described by Kelleher as 'chameleonic', raises the problem of the 'sovereignty of representation and the limits of its domain, the way it does and doesn't include things, which is as concrete and terrible a problem as you could imagine' (Kelleher in Kelleher 2007: 40). By going against a cultural tendency to exploit the spectacular dimension of the existing language, with its categories and representations, the images in Castellucci's theatre are resistant to interpretation and point to the necessity of a different regime of involvement on the part of the spectator; the spectator has to attend the image in its unfolding, through all the anxieties deriving from acts of interruption and suspension, in an act of apprehension that enhances the associative nature of emotionality. Through an unsettling denial of rational mediation, Castellucci's theatrical images point to 'the precise site of what can never be seen, towards which a certain type of theatre might forever be seducing its spectators' regard' (Ridout 2014: 432). This theatre is fundamentally linked with the promises of committing to memory the uncertain and troubling presence of that which is hidden in plain sight, the body. Obliterated, erased and subdued in the Platonic tradition, this body will become a locus for reanimating 'a fallen material' (Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 233).

The rhythm of the performance is retrieved from the play between elements,

established by visual patterns which frame troubling relationships. The silent abandoning of representation enhances the possibility of mapping the real outside the constrictive framework of representation and evaluation; through emphasizing excess and lack, the first scenes of *Purgatorio* (2008) show a mother washing the dishes, giving her child a pill for a headache, and asking her son, who watches TV, to get out of his room and get into the living room. The boy's world is made real when, on entering the living room, he finds a big replica of his robot toy. A big robot occupies the stage, testifying to a world greater than reality, where play and meaning are possibilities supplementing the lack of possibilities in the real. The father's return home is emphasized by the sound of the car and the barking of dogs. As 'a sense of stiff and disturbing artificiality can be observed in the relationships between these characters' (Laera 2010: 10), the father's return home leads to five minutes of sexual abuse, made present 'sonically' through its very absence from the stage. The lived and experiential character of the stage figures subtends a responsibility towards an image that points to the limits of representations, their exclusion of the irrational. The audience hears the suffering offstage, the dialogue between father and son, while the silence of the living room points to the unoccupied place. The domestic framing of the action, its picturing in the first scenes of random acts of domesticity, points to the horrors of a reality of sexual abuse that exceeds representation and demands our consideration. The trilogy emphasizes 'intimate spaces and mental states, not physical places' (Castellucci in Laera 2010: 3–4). Conjuring audiences to live the experience, Castellucci frames the void and suffering; *Purgatorio* advances both a disrupting of domestic narrative and leads to a horrifying conclusion; domestic acts of everyday living create possibilities for imagining the unrepresentable. The authority and the representation are nothing but a masking of the truth, allowing violence onto the stage. Castellucci's work emphasizes the unrepresentable by pointing to the relation between what is imagined and what was already there on the stage; marking the space of a shift, he emphasizes the relation between violence and representation: 'This

is not decorative violence, it's not media violence, it's an intimate, individual kind of violence' (Castellucci in Laera 2010: 11). 'The working dramaturgy has the task of finding the pulse of the body, the task of giving it breath, of giving life to this otherwise entirely imaginary figure, and for that it must form a kind of housing, a temporal and rhythmical structure whose dynamic is composed of volumes and cavities' (Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 214). The rhythmic quality of the sequences is made into a primary mode of articulating the meaning of what the stage attempts to rescue from forgetting; shaping and organizing the anonymous matter rescued from obscurity; the image, whose meaning is not immediately clear, opens through a familial transgression the possibility of asserting meaning into a poetical structure. The last scene in *Purgatorio* pictures the father having some sort of epileptic fit, while the son is supplemented by an adult actor dressed like him, suggesting a reversal in the situation of power and roles. Castellucci's use of rhythm creates an order which is affective not rational. The 'return to the originary rhythmic structure' (Chiara Guidi in Kelleher 2007: 233) is used to structure the meaning of the figure in the image, as image itself has a cadence and as such evokes a particular temporality. Moreover, the rhythm structures the progressive entering of the spectator into the state of an affective participation in the unfolding of the adventures of the image, causing the play on the stage to be supplemented by the work of the spectator; the work makes possible the retrieval of specific details and the emergence of the understanding of the relations between sequences which are set during the course of the performance. It is the meaning precipitated into a central image that seldom rearticulates the role of the dramaturgical progression. The carefully crafted dramaturgy advances through leaps determined by the rhythmic structure, which is apparently invisible in the temporal (dis)order of the sequences. It is the complexity of an image that is tensed and yet eloquent, dramatic in its very essence, suddenly made clear and evident, which makes possible the retrieval of occurrences that seemed enigmatic or trivial, in a series of associations which prompt a meaning that is not rational. 'A circular dramatic action, a

rotating push that produces concentric ripples' (Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 162) allows for the reconstituting of the show, making possible the recuperation of the images' belonging to the same temporal horizon. In the aftershow, the experience of suddenly grasping the meaning of an image that seemed in the moment uncertain and unexplained can occur by an apparent operation of chance.

Moreover, the rhythm of the image is the formal aspect that establishes affect as the real basis of the relationship between audience and scene. In *On the Face of God* the rhythm of the son's supplementation of the incontinence of the father retrieves the possibility of reframing accident through a theatrical and disturbing situation. The tension between the representational frame and the act of bringing into focus its repressed, the body, and even the attack on the symbolic order brought to the fore by the excrement and decay of the body, are developed as a disturbing act of witnessing. The spectator, inserted at the core of the work, deals with an uncertainty resulting from the overlapping of the awareness regarding its being a theatrical act and the urgency of the presence of the image: its intense solicitation and reference to the possible. In fact, the stage's repeatedly being stained with excrement will nevertheless make possible the engagement of the spectator in a sort of Sisyphean act of not letting the 'proper' disappear, which is also a metaphor for living. The preventing of the unclean from becoming the rule, and the very use of the stage to describe what might be a fundamental threat to language and meaning, situates the spectator in a space of possibility where the link between the marginal and the 'central' might be retrieved. Moreover, the performance points to the illusion that human existence is fixed, stable and clear. As such, the figures onstage are recuperated as ethical beings, but on a stage that undoes the facilities of psychological framing: the father's assertion that he is 'sorry' is theatrical and undoes and subverts the traditional mimetic economy of the theatre. The interaction between the characters suggests the idea that language is not available for describing that which menaces the logocentric order, while pointing to the possibility of a new engagement with the real, to

the necessity of a new theatrical language; Castellucci's stagings thus bring to the fore the ethical as work as well as the inefficiency of representation. The rhythm of the son's wiping away the stains of excrement re-establishes the attempt at meaning beyond the coordinates of traditional theatre: 'Theatre and art exist in the very fact of being contradicted as forms, they exist in the moment in which language is pushed to the extreme limits of its possibilities, beyond which there is silence or the omnipotence of the word' (Novati 2009: 52).

It is in the very moments of uncertainty, when the image shifts the very coordinates of a spectator's attempt at reading, that the rhythm of Castellucci's theatre articulates the possibility of a meaning that overcomes both rational interpretation and the strange literality of the action that occupies the stage. If not for the stillness and muteness of two silhouettes, a man and a woman, at the beginning of the Paris episode of *Tragedia Endogonidia* (2003), their secondary silence, correlated with the loud noise made by three cars that fall onto the stage from above, would not be understood as a gesture that connects vulnerability and resilience, danger and escape, surprise and indifference; because of their keeping their silence and their secret, the stage is startling, provoking a moment of sudden recognition and understanding. The scene represents the preparation for the theatrical appearance of Jesus, who is assigned the number five and enters the theatre as a criminal, 'breaking open a window at the back of the stage, using a crowbar to do it' (Kelleher in Kelleher 2007: 131). An overlapping between Oedipus and Jesus is prepared through the appearance of a Sphinx downstage, suggesting the tension between the human as shaped by logocentrism, oblivious to tragedy, and the all too human act of suffering. This association creates an uncertain relation between the representation of suffering and the act of keeping silent. A police action depicting a forensic test suspends for a moment the apprehension of the criminal Jesus; the police leave the stage, suggesting a split or division between the fictional and the real, the believable and the truth, grasped as proof. Jesus imitates his actions, reworks, repeats through various

contexts his 'essence', saying nothing; taking up the pose of the crucifixion on the central car, where he will be driven to the back of the stage. He represents the framing of the history of endless suffering and the attempt at redemption. A man dressed in red will take his body from its pose on the car and put him on the front seat of another car, like a random crash victim. Alluding to Joseph's act of burial, this moment shifts towards the apprehension of the tragic, made possible by the gap between the idea of Jesus and the frailty of human life (when in cars); in other words, cars that become metaphors for the individual's journey. As such, we can recuperate the image of the cars falling onto the stage as the image of failure to which we are consigned. Through this moment, resonances between the first silhouettes and the figure of Jesus occur; they all portray a suffering which is solitary and demanding, real and obsolete. It is the very conception of the idea of sacrifice, its prescription, its overwhelming of the figure with associations and meaning, which brings to the fore the problem of representation and the human's entrapment in representations and symbolism. Hope is not part of the image brought to the fore, insofar as the staging resists the mimetic artifice of the happy ending. The representations (of accidents and tragedies) befall man like cars falling from above, indifferent to meaning and hope. In this context, Jesus's entrance from outside can be related to a breaking of the logic of the 'real' that structured the previous sequence; nevertheless, at least during this performance, the poise of his acts and their meaning is what overwhelms his inertia and silence. The representation is challenged with Jesus's appearance; the stage can only capture the figural, and associate him, again, with the tragedies that happen every day. He structures once again the field of the real, by having the car removed from centre stage. Nevertheless, what this episode advances is the suggestion of a crisis that appears in the relation between representation and the real; the immobility of the figures will be related to Jesus's silence, their muteness will emphasize both tragedy and the unavailability of a response. Moreover, as the representation of Jesus shows, it is the lack that is conveyed in the theatrical image, and the lack of resurrection within the structure of the events that

relate the accident and the human. The mimetic is the violence which obscures this numbing of affect and the lack of response to a destiny that befalls the man who has to answer the question of the Sphinx but fails; muteness becomes a lack of response to the accident, as opposed to compassionate silence. The resurrection is to be performed, insofar as its representation already exists, and the need for its repetition, both desired and impossible, points to the crisis of representation in its traditional teleological hypostasis. Enacted by audiences, in spite of its absence, Castellucci's stage points to the idea that the mimetic is violent and that theatre should oppose the simple insertion of the spectator and figure into the symbolic, the simplistic reduction of suffering and lived experience to rational meaning. The endangerment of meaning is played out on the stage, the lack being transformed into the excess of the image that refutes the hierarchical oppositions and exposes the limited comforts associated with the dialectical reduction of accidents. The body as the accidental troubles the traditional reading of presence on the stage; if it directs attention to the stage through its uncertain 'presence' it is because it appears as the cryptic remains of a silence as determined by traditional metaphysics. The wound and the depersonalization of the body point to a loss that activates the stage practice; the series of indecipherable images, inasmuch as they don't have a 'message', coagulates progressively the attempt at an alternative to speech and its role in theatre as a vehicle of communication. Denying the privilege of words in structuring reality, Castellucci's theatre wrings out of representational form the inefficacy and incompleteness of the body. Functioning like a machine that reframes representational practices, Castellucci's work presents its audiences with a solicitation to undo the logocentric distinctions in the attempt to grasp the meaning of the 'real' through pointing at the body's excess. The body's function is recuperated against the logic of appropriation and representation, pointing to the gap between reason and meaning, experience and the 'history of truth' (Derrida 2016: 21). Like so many other artworks, it seems as if the focus is on the slaughter of innocents and the lack of innocence, the accidental, the pervasive

conditions for accidents. In Castellucci's theatre the resonances are rescued and meaning can emerge only through the prevention of a clear-cut and fixed meaning. The representation of resurrection is impossible in theatre, because no one really dies in theatre. As such, the representation of myth is questioned. Insofar as it communicates without clarifying and without solving anything, the rhythmic pattern of the work establishes relations between images that permanently supplant and frustrate attempts at a linear reading. The audience is suspended in expectation by the deferral of meaning – by images that formalize contradictions without explaining them. The reaction to the dropping of the cars from above also evokes the possibility of being smashed – a collision between the notion of the proper place and the accident that destroys all property. The figures onstage are silhouettes, structured forms of experience, patterns of thought and action that challenge traditional ideas of a rational intentionality, emphasize their divergence from the disorder of a general commentary. These figures not only give a sense of historicity, of how the tragic fact happens, of its correlation with the 'everyday traffic, mere vehicles, mere commodities' (Kelleher in Kelleher 2007: 129), but point, also, to the overwhelming powers of associations which the spectator will engage as a reader enduring this tragic image. It is the muteness of the figures in the Paris episode that supplements the event and makes the theatrical destiny of its figures unreasonable. The rhythm is given by this enigmatic immobility of the figures that endure the lack of representation and endangering of meaning. The figures and the stage, their relation to the enigma of the Sphinx, comment on the sadness and closeness of disaster and offer the spectators the image of danger that comes from nowhere, from the sky or perhaps just from the stage. The very immobility and inconclusiveness of the figures locates the spectator in a horizon of expectation. It is in the tension between the inanimate object that falls and the animate that stays still and mute that a notion of tragedy is advanced. It is in the rhythms based on this apparent synchronicity, this concurrence of forces traversing the image, that various meanings are liberated. The interference between the

temporality of the accident and the delayed anticipatory time of expectation is what moves the action. 'Dramaturgy, in essence, is an economy of figures and time and of rhythm' (Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 213).

2.4. The Body

The overcoming of the mimetic through the body's excess is fundamental to Castellucci's theatre. Paradoxically, this perspective brings onto the stage a perplexing ability to disturb the coordinates of the theatrical mimesis as the symbolic articulation of the world; and using the body's intensity interrupts, as Nicholas Ridout puts it, a mere 'frivolous-serious play work [...] caught up in all sorts of discomforting confusions' (Ridout 2006: 67). Labelled by its creators as a 'practice of impersonality' (Castellucci in Kellher 2007: 8), this embodied perspective aims 'to establish a realm of the imaginary and a ritual praxis which allows no involvement of the phenomenological reality' (Valentini 1997: 58). Castellucci's antibiotic theatre cancels the resort to psychologies and dramatic framing, which are based in a reductive logic of rationality; as such, it attempts to rescue, against the propensity of the stage to represent, the primal elements that 'move' the spectator, a work on and with affects. Against the repressive apparatus of representation that has prevented hitherto the intrusion of the real onto the theatre stage, Castellucci adopts both a stance and a strategy: the solution of returning the gaze to the pre-tragic and the pre-linguistic (Valentini 1997: 58) through the emphasis on abnormal bodies. The focus on the theatrical body is supplemented by iconoclastic attempts at dismissing icons and practices associated both with logocentric representation and normative value. At the nexus of the work is an intersection between different and seldom divergent representational practices, which were predicated on the equivalence of theatrical representation with the production of rational meaning. Castellucci's treatment of the culturally significant myths of *Hamlet*, the *Oresteia* and *Julius Caesar* might open

the discussion regarding the condition of the actor in this theatre and his relation to myth. In this theatre the body escapes economic control, in its fundamental unfaithfulness, and in its being 'incoercible by the binary system of our tradition'; as such, the actor's body is 'a priori the very body of theatre' (Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 43). The experiment, reshaping Hamlet as an autistic tragic hero, assimilated by Valentini to performance art, produces 'a strong realm of the imaginary around the power of the body, the sole source of truth and consciousness' (Valentini 1997: 59). This fundamental contradiction perpetrated by the body against the economy of representation makes Castellucci's work a reconfiguration of theatrical 'truth'.

The body is subtracted from the mimetic, and also economical, ordering in order to assert its position as the source and outcome of a fragmentary existence. Masked in the cultural speculation that articulates practice and theoretical thinking, the body is exposed by Castellucci as emerging from an alienating condition. The dissonant urge created by Castellucci's mise en scènes is correlated with the exposing of the condition of the body within the systems of representation. Both active and passive, it is that which is expressed through the interruption between meaning and action; 'words and actions live separately from one another' (Valentini 1997: 59), and 'mythopoetic thought and ritualistic practice' are employed in the attempt 'to found a "necessary theatre" whose materialistic basis is in the first place the actor' (Valentini 1997: 59). Refusing the utopia of reason and the mimetic heritage of theatre, Castellucci sets as his first and most important task the introduction of the body's insubordination, the refusal to represent; its activation within the specific event is based on the fundamental enhancement of 'animalistic pre-expressiveness' (Valentini 1997: 60), characterized by immobility and muteness. The body standing in front of its audience would be able to silence 'the Babel of voices and restore a condition of listening to and pronouncement of the world after its purification' (Valentini 1997: 60). The actor participates in a symbolic ritual; he is 'the victim required to celebrate the ritual of degradation and regeneration of the performance-event'

(Valentini 1997: 59). The silencing is the very condition that allows for theatricality to emerge, as the silent and troubling transformation of the practice of muteness into something other, through the very maturation of the excess held together by this body betrayed by words. The dualist traditional perspective is questioned from the point of view of polarities that shape and manifest the being of the body.

2.4. A. *On the Concept of Face* (2011)

On the Concept of Face shows an adult son taking care of an incontinent father in a repetitive act of wiping away the father's excrement; the event is visually enhanced by the staining of the stylish beige contemporary interior of a living room and supplemented by the realistic smell of excrement, which puts the spectator in a situation of proximity to the abject body, subverting the very principles of distancing behind the reading of theatrical representation. A large-scale portrait of Christ stands at the back of the stage. Horrifyingly pointing to an interruption and subversion of the linear social narrative, the stage turns the spectator into a witness of the attack on the symbolic order. I would like to argue that the staining of the stage is a supplement to the bodily accident and its disrupting of the representational frame, and that the persistence of the father's incontinence gradually constructs the object of attention as the term against which a new participatory practice is enhanced, one that resorts to the ethical in framing the relationships between stage and audience, father and son. The son and the auditorium share the same situation of contemplating, and being nauseated by, the very decaying of the body, which sits at the centre of a stage it silently marks with its excrement. Kristeva's idea of 'practice as critique of discourse' (Barrett 2011: 33), focusing on 'subjective mechanisms and processes that lead to the disruption of language' (Barrett 2011: 33), draws attention to the fact that desire and, as such, subjectivity are heterogenous; 'that what counts as knowledge and meaning is structured by the repressive imposition of the

rules of discourses' (Barrett 2011: 43). The act of the son can be read and structured through the categorical imperative of Kant, which would assign to the behaviour of the son onstage the value of obeying the absolute law; nevertheless, such reading dismisses the very impossibility of a fixing of the spectator into a stable position. The very act of centring attention on the son, a supplement, betrays the structure of the problematic of the abject and diverts attention from the opportunity to witness the gap between excitability and thought, and the fact that 'thrown over this abyss [...] is the bridge of language' (Kristeva in Barrett 2011: 127). Adhering to pre-existing language involves becoming blind to the brute fact of the excrement itself and of the situations of the subjects involved in the repetitive performance of the decaying body, the denial of the very experiential value for which the performance is brought to the stage. Marking the boundary between 'I' and the 'non-I', the abject for Kristeva 'lies at the limits of representation and meaning' (Barrett 2011: 95). It is the contradiction between the paternal law and the prohibiting of the unclean that makes Castellucci's staging a play about the 'ambiguous border' (Barrett 2011: 98) that abjection itself alludes to. Moreover, as 'abjection falls away once the meaning takes hold' (Barrett 2011: 99), Castellucci structures the space and possibility of an experience. From the perspective of the auditorium, as its members sit transfixed in their chairs, deprived of possibilities for rectifying action, what is presented is not only an intimate act of caring for an elderly father, but a transgression of a social taboo and violation they are supposed to share almost with their very bodies, as their senses are overwhelmed; as the stage presents them also with the contemplation of the de-virilization and limit of the subject, the awareness of the very fake nature of the situation, which is in fact implied by the theatrical situation, advances the whole theatrical event as a meditation on the limits of the subject. This topic refers both to the perspective of the son, as his actions are mute, and to the experiential quality of the father's decaying body, which builds a prosthesis out of his own son. The excrement has the function of a vertigo that relativizes, rather than merely opposing, the

structures originated in rationality. The body as subverting 'truth' and totalities takes the place of the stage, while the status of the son is somewhere between spectator, detached from the senses, and witness, participating in the reality of the father. I will advance the idea that it is this transformation of spectator into witness that the piece attempts to create, suspending the traditional emotional distance of the spectator from the action that occurs with the help of the horrific smell pervading the auditorium.

The reversal of the logocentric understanding of the hierarchy between body and mind brings to the fore not a new analytical approach, but a perplexing situation that refers to a fundamental contradiction but also an interdiction: 'as a rule, it goes without saying that any human animal will turn aside without a word from certain situations, from certain acts, certain substances: "We believe that an evacuation disgusts us because of its stench. But would it stink if first of all it had not become the object of our disgust?"' (Bataille in Sollers in Botting 1998: 86). Bypassing the rational reading of the body, Castellucci points to the blurring of the boundaries between affect and meaning; 'fear and the object proceed together until the one represses the other' (Kristeva in Barrett 2011: 100). As the body expresses the decaying of its logic, the reader's perplexed attitude is motivated by his reliance on systematic, rational attempts to erase it. The undoing of the logocentric perspective introduces the audience to a state of uncertainty, as the very visibility of the body seems to be extracted against the reassurances of discourse. Affect as 'internal representation', 'fluctuating energy cathexes insufficiently stabilized to coalesce as verbal or other signs' (Kristeva 1987: 21), grounds the spectator in an oscillation between the intensity of the repulsion and the very idea of the (re)constitution of subjectivity. Situated at the limit of language, the body questions the value of the speaking subject. The very existence of an 'elsewhere', the stage, which is not the unconscious, points to a tension between the symbolic and the social order. Within *On the Concept of Face*, the very problem of situating the ethical subject comes to the fore through a meditation regarding a material act of incontinence that disturbs the conditions

ensuring the readability of the body, its subjection to notions of 'truth'. The passivation of both son and audience, described by Kristeva as a *phasis* in the construction of the subject, ultimately directs to the recuperation of the troubling bodily proximity into the symbolic structure; Levinas's rescuing of the ethical in relation to the Other's face is alluded to through the portrait of Christ. By directing attention to the hidden preconditions that assert the body as object into the order of 'truth', Castellucci points both to the discontinuity and disruption of aesthetic practices of complicity between audience and stage; the body emerges against its pervasive representations, as a lack and an excess, as a means to provoke a new type of awareness through a recuperation of ethical meaning at the limits of representation, in confronting the limit of representation.

Insisting on the opposition between objective consciousness and inner experience, Bataille gives the example of eroticism as an irreducible contradiction of symbolic furore and real delicacy, which points to the imbrication of body into praxis; 'as a hidden "mise en scène"', 'must be excluded from a social system based on the identity and conjuring away of the opposites' (Sollers in Botting 1998: 87). The theatrical status of the 'matrix' of the body, invisible in traditional theatre, which relies on hierarchical oppositions, is (re)inscribed onto the stage through its invocation of the universality of the prohibition as limit. The limit that separates the proper from the unproper, the social from abject materiality, is questioned through a relationship between father and son. The very limits of a language relying on a distancing from the non-discrimination of the abject are reframed by the ethical demand. Abjection as that which 'does not respect borders, positions and rules' (Barrett 2011: 102) can be associated not with the socially structured space but with a 'psychic reality, where different objects may occupy the same space as in condensation in dreams, where subject and object may collapse into each other' (Barrett 2011: 103).

Bataille's interrogation of the relationship between high and low passes through

the idea of 'opening the body', described by Sollers as 'a redoubled tearing where thought intervenes as the trace of the tear itself' (Sollers in Botting 1998: 86). The wounding and the ethical come to the fore as problematizing body and accident, retrieving expressive possibilities against the restrictive ruling of reason. Respect as 'detour of violence, on the one hand organises the milieu where violence is prohibited, and on the other, it provides violence with the possibility of an incongruous eruption into domains where it is no longer permitted' (Bataille in Botting 1998: 89). Sollers advances the idea that the dualities emphasized by Bataille enhance the possibility of the 'putting to death' of knowledge, with its separation of the sign, by non-knowledge; this non-knowledge can be understood as eroticism's 'development of signs' and lived relationship with an object, which is fundamentally as involuntary experience. Moreover, this sign-producing activity is an opening towards what 'thought cannot conceive' (Bataille in Botting 1998: 91). As the very idea of language is based on denying violence a voice, the difficulties in Castellucci's practice are genuine and raise legitimate questions regarding representability. The experience is not complete without its readers' insertion into the fabric of the work, which is communicable through their being impressed upon by the image.

Castellucci's work represents an attempt to restore the conditions for experience, and body is seen as a reservoir of potentiality that diverges from a simplistic assimilation to reason and its mimetic instruments. Sovereign experience involves the idea of a play as 'the contradictory disposition for work and transgression, the ability to employ a doubled language that, instead of believing it understands itself, will multiply, renew, reverse and negate itself' (Sollers in Botting 1998: 95). By disrupting the continuity of the figures onstage, by undoing the social and mimetic narrative that surrounds them, this theatre ultimately recuperates the role of the figure in constructing an ethical discourse: the unsettling fact/event of the body questions the exclusivity of the privilege of reason in ordering the field of the real. As such, it sustains the idea of a deeper engagement with the real and the body; an enhancing of the idea of the repressive order of discourse, in which

discipline is the very condition on which powerlessness is asserted. Language 'alone, at its limits, reveals the sovereign moment when it no longer rules' (Bataille in Botting 1998: 97).

The contradiction between experience and a transparent language passes through the body, shaped by interdictions that regulate 'excretion and appropriation' (Bataille 1985: 94). An 'effort at total identification' (Bataille 1985: 5) is counteracted by the possibility of transgression which establishes the violent expelling from the ordering of the social milieu. By emphasizing the limit in its relation to the body and the condition of its readability, Castellucci enhances a dialogue with his audiences that passes through the endangerment of meaning. Bataille advances the suspension of the hierarchies and the overcoming of a 'proper' body through transgression as an establishing of the sovereign experience, emphasizing that the proper is a fiction existing only in the normative social space and through the idea of a language completely separated by violence. Pointing to the inherence of excess in sovereign experience, Bataille resituates the signifying process in a relation with the play, which resists the idea of self-identity as proposed by reason. Transgression inaugurates a space that, although apparently void, testifies to the disappearance of the link between surface and 'content', its emptiness being articulated through a relation to the field of meaning/language, which is both negative and affirmative. 'We are discontinuous beings, individuals who perish in isolation amidst an incomprehensible adventure, but we yearn for our lost continuity' (Bataille 1986: 15). As such, the yearning for the reading of a fictional whole, prevented whenever the body takes the centre of an action, is a correlative to the endangering of a fictional ordering manifested in language. Forwarding the resistance to theatrical representation, Castellucci advances an attempt to resist the (ordinary) language by appealing to the prohibition; the piercing of the (apparently) aleatory event of an accident into the fabric of the theatrical event both menaces and reformulates (the role of) the structures of meaning.

The performance puts at its centre the enigma of a situation that repeats itself without rest or closure; the mechanical aspect of the performed situation of wiping out the excrement overwhelms the ability of the reader to engage with the will behind the performance, as this theatrical will seems to impose the idea that 'identity fails and the subject does not emerge' (Barrett 2011: 104). The very function/ability of prohibition to keep the foreign at a distance is materialized in what Kristeva calls 'the language of fear'; it is this language which is undone by the possibility of foregrounding solicitation and the possibility of the ethical recuperation of the Other. The excrement stands for the unassimilable traces in the memory, the divergence from the order of 'truth'. Nevertheless, by taking the form of the reoccurring traumatic image, Castellucci's work in fact opposes the language of 'separation and trauma' (Barrett 2011: 104). By exposing this unassimilable trace, the divergence, the rest, the drama as the place of inconclusivity, doubling, interference, this theatre creates new theatrical meanings. The haunting nature of the stage image is based on the irresolvable tensions it brings to the fore. The durational quality of the piece is predicated upon the spectator's misusing the time of the experience to reject and put a distance between him and the non-event of incontinence. The excrement not only does away with the idea of rationality but states its original dependence on a violent suppression of 'nature'; assimilated into the system as opposition to the body, the clarity of rationality and the legitimacy of repression are questioned throughout the piece. Abjection is made into a supplement of rationality: 'immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady: a terror that dissembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter, instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you…' (Kristeva 1982: 4). What the stage presents us with is the reframing of theatre as a possibility of managing crises near 'the risky borders of abjection while maintaining a hold on identity' (Barrett 2011: 104).

The discussion around excrement, representation and the status of the subject passes through an endangerment of the symbolic order. The recuperation of the ethical

position occurs against these theatrical coordinates; both distant and present, the theatrical image makes present a solicitation, an attempt to reinscribe into language the brokenness of the image/body available only to the suffering/witnessing spectator. It is once again a proof that Castellucci's work exists in a post-cataclysmic dimension, where bodies are the archives of experiences and words are secondary, violent and ineffective, where the ethical is difficult to articulate while not altogether impossible.

Second, the piece raises the enigma of adopting the rational principle of action as sole determining force; reason leaves aside the stupor of having reversed the role, with the father without a proper framing, explanation; although rational, the accomplishing of the act of caring is not characterized by pure agency. In a way, it supposes the son to take a detour from the role of the agent to a position of caring at the same time the father is deprived by his virility. It is the very lack of transparency of meaning and the ambivalence of affect which structures this approach to the accidental, while the accident threatens to go into/open up a whole new network of meanings. The subversive nature of the event is based on the ambivalent relation between value and accident, meaning and muteness, decay and agency. The temporality and ephemerality of theatre makes possible a new type of 'organism', constituted around the possibility of losing control of the orifices and reasonability altogether. Shock and danger are present within the piece without being singled out in 'dramatic' moments; rather, they are manifest throughout the theatre, becoming an alternative to it, in its traditional hypostasis; endangering the rational edifice for a second, relativizing it for a flickering moment, in the form of a haunting image: this is the very substance, or, to put it better, surface, that Castellucci works with in destabilizing a traditional logic of 'plenitude' and meaning.

Menninghaus emphasizes in his discussion of Durkheim's work the idea that the body is seen through elementary prohibitions of proximity, contact and consumption (Menninghaus 2003: 349). It is only to the extent that a mind has been led to recognize

the fundamental identity between the taboo marking impure things and the purest forms of the sacred that it is able to become conscious of the violent repulsions constituting the specificity of the general movements that created human community' (Bataille in Menninghaus 2003: 349). Moreover, the relation between morality and the excremental is represented by the opposition between the holy and the excrement – between axiology and scatology, shit and the political, legal and economic institutions; the '"heterology" applies to tragedy', which 'produces a strong tonic sense, an intense affective cathexis of both social and individual existence' (Menninghaus 2003: 350). The possibility of sublimating the work for the decaying body into a moral condition is made possible by transgression itself: 'The core of a settlement is the place where the left-hand holy is transformed into a right hand holy, the object of repulsion into an object of attraction, and depression into stimulation' (Bataille in Menninghaus 2003: 350). The son's gesture opens the possibility of morality itself, to the extent to which it opens the problem of sacrifice, which is indexed to the scenic image by the background figure of Christ.

A transmutation of the repetitive incontinence into acceptance and openness is made possible by suspending the economic principle governing the perception of audiences and the strict economy of acceptance and refusal. The bodily representation as well as hierarchical positioning of a subject into a structure that allows for an appropriation of action in the world, as an agent, rely on the establishing of the opposition between cleanness and dirtiness in practices that establish the subject as such. Positioning the body at the core of a theatre piece can therefore be regarded as an iconoclastic attack that replaces the lived experience of a repressed body with the enforcement of a presumption of contiguity between body and mind. The theatricality of the body is represented in the inexhaustibility of its repetitions, which undoes and contradicts its reliance on representations. The relations it establishes with the non-linear and the desire to overcome the repetitive secretly aim for the status of discovering the possibility of its transfiguring as body, as autonomous element, by ritual or a ritual-like structure.

Supplemented by words and intentions that don't matter, the body is torn between a defective appeal to self or others and that which keeps it away from them, the repressed, the unknown intuitions, the irrational intentions or the body's excrement itself. As such, it is the dimension of affect that is interrogated, both in audiences and the son; the very absence of the son's emotionality in the sense of traditional psychological codification, relying on the opposition between a status quo and the accident, creates him as a support for the emotional responses of the audience. It is in this perplexing presence of the body and its muteness, accommodating both the sacred and the profane, that the reading is first suspended within the piece; while it is through the repetition of incontinence that the coordinates of the ultimate ethical reading of the event are prepared. The inability of the audience member to escape from the smell of excrement mirrors the inescapability from such relations in real life. It alludes to the ethical principle and marks the appeal to the ethical being as opposed to the theatrical social mask, understanding the ethical as a way of living values and not just the subordination of the subject to a reified conception of duty. The profane reading of the event misses the very lack of availability of such a theory to advance the human value to the decaying subject. Moreover, the ethical is tested at the extreme, where rational responses fail. The relation between the epidermal and body passes through the ethical conception of face.

The precariousness of the father's state might attribute to the son a socially recognizable role within a social framing, if only to be able to avoid looking in the direction of the stage and its lack or resolution or pacification. The theatrical perspective fundamentally troubles the idea and perception of the old man as rational agent, considering his lack of agency as regards his own body, inferred on the basis of the contradictoriness of his action, his words and his incontinent performance; ultimately he is the theatrical enigma on the stage, introducing both danger and shock in the explosive production of an unhinged body. The body appears on the stage due to the void created around it, the annihilation of social action and the fulgurant threat of a menace to the

institutions, aesthetic, economic and juridic alike; it is this leaving behind of rationality and also drama which ultimately puts body at the 'centre' of the stage. The tragic is contained in a form that is troubling in its linearity – a linearity whose particularity is constrictive. The multiplicity of threads is enclosed in the enigmatic, tensed gestures, in the repetitive 'sorry' of the father, in the appropriation between routine and excrement, free time and duty, rationality and dirt; this scene, as an act of loving, as Castellucci affirms in an interview, is a presentation of the possibilities of the contraries that coexist in and through love and also a realistic appropriation on the stage of the very thing the theatre was supposed to promote: mimesis. In a very strange manner, the incidents onstage, in their precariousness, correspond to and deny at the same time Aristotle's insistence on rationality: the difficult matter of the excremental throws the situation into a question of endangering Aristotle's mimesis, just as it questions its underlying principle – rationality, thus the limits of human agency. As such, Castellucci's work is once again post-cataclysmic. The scene starts to be suggestive of the human condition as a whole, in its discussing of the precariousness and overcoming of the idea of subject. Two topics arrive by the same movement: the limits of the subject imposed by age and illness, and the insufficiency of the notion of the subject to testify to the complex realities and experiences in the contemporary globalized capitalist world. Between the two acceptations, danger becomes part of the very webs of meaning created in Castellucci's theatre.

The theatrical stage allows, first of all, for transformations and becomings in Castellucci's case. In *On the Concept of Face* the fact of incontinence permeates the stage in order to destabilize different modes of reading and the expectation of an action consistent with the rationality made present by the décor of a living room. As such, he subverts the very idea of the psychological theatre, whose setting is the communal space. He also relativizes the association between living room, entertainment and free time. The piece reveals a tension between the rationally consistent attempt at preserving, on the one

hand, the value of the old man through an action that – on the other – apparently fails in its continuous attempt to reach an understanding of what is in fact revealed in the striking image of a man who is 'represented' only by his body; in the (space of) horror that is opened up, theatricality regards the framing of the intersection between the stained, beige living room and the obviously fictitious portrait of Christ. The ambiguity introduced by this uncertain presence shapes the dynamic of the regard, which is permanently sliding from front stage to background, causing the refusal to acknowledge its presence to be permanently and involuntarily reinforced through the repeated gesture of the gaze looming over the stage from the background. As support of the action, the immaterial presence is there and absent at the same time, much in the same way that the religious perspective allows for the paradoxical assertion of the presence of God. The conflict between the two planes is the conflict between two possibilities of conceiving the action: as a development that consists of the very same repetition, or as crucifixion and redemption concentrated in the immaterial gaze of Christ. As such, the juxtaposition is a theatrical means of acting upon the sensibility of the audience member, which impresses the contradiction itself on his sensibility just as much as the smell of the shit. Between these two extremes, the audience is called into paying attention and into engaging in a meaning that cannot obscure the diremption that exists between the two extreme terms by which it is structured: the quotidian and fate, the profane and the sacred, failure and redemption, decay and reason. These polar values are articulated around affectively contrasting stimuli. Moreover, an ideal reading of an audience member would recuperate the intrinsic link between transgression and nausea.

If the loss of security regarding the 'metaphysical reference' of stage representation and the 'certainty about the origin and goal of human development' (Gebauer 1995: 305) finds itself reflected in the postdramatic programmatic caesura instituted by the questioning of the big stories, Castellucci's work puts at the empty centre of the stage an anonymous struggle: the struggle between the figure and the theatrical event as a mere

'empty shell'. The attempt to question the play of surfaces becomes enigmatically relevant in a perspective in which philosophers speculate on the disappearance of content itself (Baudrillard, Derrida, Debord). In this context it might be paradoxical to affirm that Castellucci's work represents the attempt at an appeal to moral consciousness, which, in Levinas's conception, is 'not an experience of values, "but an access to exterior being"' (Critchley 1992: 5). An overcoming of mimesis as a proper regulating principle of the stage action introduces a crisis that is solved by Castellucci through a reinterpretation of the concepts of acting, of the tragic and the role of the iconoclastic destructions of icons onstage. Denying the fundamental conception of traditional Western philosophy that objects can be grasped through an adequate representation, here we have a conception which has been transmuted into the conception of the stage as secondary reality, in which Levinas advances the notion of 'face' as that which exceeds 'the idea of other in me' and opens the possibility of taking 'possession of entities through the activity of labor' (Critchley 2014: 6). I would like to suggest that Castellucci's emphasis on the ability of the figures he employs to structure new affective approaches to the post-cataclysmic and pre-expressive suspends the field of intelligibility, interrupting the 'hallucinatory self portrayals in which we hide our freedom from ourselves' (Kelleher 2015: 115); the condition of proximity of actors to one another and to audiences is enhanced in contrast to that of mediation, diverting attention from the fall into the phallocentric articulation, to 'the abysmal back of the stage', which is 'a sort of sexual mud, sensitive and uncertain' (Castellucci 2007: 45). The affective side of images in Castellucci's theatre, often considered by researchers to be the main aspect of the work, is what is advanced by this almost solitary work that sits against the facilities of representations' relying on recognition; the resistant aspect of body made available in the theatrical experience aims to contribute to an act of remembering that surpasses rational mediation. What Castellucci depicts can be read, in consistency with Levinas's ethics, as a primacy of the interhuman relationships which constitute 'an irreducible structure upon which all the

other structures rest' (Levinas in Critchley 1992: 9). Therefore, the simultaneous incompleteness and multiplicity of the staged event/image is a structure inviting the audience to perform an ethical reading instead of a mimetic one. As such, it represents a radical questioning of the ethical, and of the relationship between individual spontaneity and the presence of the Other; of the possibility of its being rescued from the simple, pervasive 'invasions of our intimacy' (Kelleher 2002: 134), and developed into the 'reciprocity in which someone shows something (such as themselves) to someone else' (Ridout 2014: 427).

The 'ethics of reading' advance the necessity of a betrayal of the literality of the means employed in writing in order to rescue the value of the law that subtends discourse. The silence of the stage in *On the Concept of Face* involves the recovery of the ethical demand: 'the strange and difficult notion that reading is subject not to the text as its law, but to the law to which the text is subject. The law forces the reader to betray the text or deviate from it in the act of reading, in the name of a higher demand that can yet be reached only by the way of the text' (Miller in Critchley 2014: 46). As such, I read Castellucci's staging as a questioning of the structures of representation, with their assumption regarding rationality and the morality of their subjects.

2.5. Theatricality, Photography and Castellucci's Discourse on/of the Surface

As Castellucci's theatrical work contradicts the basic requirements of mimetic theatre, the unities of time and action, it also challenges the traditional relation of theatre with its audiences. I have argued that, by enhancing the destabilizing realness of bodies in the stage event, Castellucci's theatre programmatically perplexes the expectation of a linear reading and uses it as a way of entering the work. His dramaturgical gesture is to resituate theatre as the locus of a combat and negotiation between the order of fiction and the 'real'. Advancing through interruptions and gaps, as a series of sequences resistant to

a rational reading, the unity of the work is recoverable through a detachment from the mimetic order and the disposition of the audience for association and for discovering the affective resonances latent in its images. These images emphasize the resistance to reading bodies and advance the idea that a fundamental defying of the rational is at work. The spectators of this theatre are exposed to the multiplicity of significations in a manner that reminds us of the inconclusiveness of photographs, where the enhancing of an apparently inconsequential detail disturbs the perception of the whole. Forced into a witnessing of the body in the image and participating in the gradual discovery of the patterns that restructure meaning within the show, Castellucci's spectators are required to supplement the dramaturgical schema behind the display of theatrical images with the performance of their own reading. The reading advanced by Castellucci's theatre is fundamentally based on affect, which is correlated with the images of the body, defying the prescriptive values which posit it as a mere articulation and instrument of the mind. As I have suggested above, the mimetic erasure of the body, effected through its fundamental subordination to reason, is undone within the work. The body at the centre of this work emphasizes the possibility of its own resurgence against the prescriptive use of language and rationalization; its presence is not a simple and transparent act, but the establishing of a possibility of transgressing the limits of language, of going past its prescriptions and its pretended transparency, in order to retrieve the idea of what is essentially accidental: grief, death, violence, suffering. Marginalizing the mimetic, the stage gets occupied by the actor who figures the escape from words and language, by grasping the form which no longer explicates anything, but creates a theatrical rhetoric that supports the retrieval of singularity and the experiences of the flesh.

The private and the public are the two dimensions that are negotiated in this theatre, which rescues the body from its condition as an instrument and enhances the experiential nature of the flesh. The practice of impersonality makes the stage the locus of emergence for anonymous figures, rescuing them from what Bataille calls 'the

formless', allowing them to express and retrieve an existential suffering, an inconclusive relation to the world. Warhol's taking pictures in *Inferno* marks the idea that 'with Warhol in a sense, History ends' (Laera 2010: 9). Through Warhol's presence, Castellucci alludes to the series of representations that engulf the reader. The iconoclastic strategy presents theatre with the task of retrieving the poetical through the accidental, marginal, the singular. Moreover, as 'the poet is inside its own fictional representation (Laera 2010: 7–8), the work offers the possibility of a distancing from representation, from the traditional coordinates ensuring visibility and meaning: 'the Artist stops working and looks into the spectator's eye' (Laera 2010: 7–8). This theatre emphasizes an idea that can be associated with the practice of photography, which recuperates the value of the ordinary and reformulates the idea of subject. I relate Castellucci's work to photography because his theatre, too, is 'a species of alchemy', as Roland Barthes puts it when describing the photograph (Barthes 1993: 81). A type of photographic sensibility shapes the visibility of figures that seem to be intruding and playing around with the dynamic difference, remarked by Roland Barthes, between punctum and studium. For Barthes, the studium is 'the order of liking, [...] it is the same sort of vague, slippery, irresponsible interest one takes in the people, the entertainments, the book, the clothes one finds "all right"', while the punctum is the disturbing, 'the accident that pricks me' (Barthes 1993: 27). The appearance of Castellucci's figures, their gestures, points to a similar inconclusivity. For example, Mussolini's appearance on the stage in the Rome episode of *Tragedia Endogonidia*, white on white, points to the historical in ways that emphasize a progression without will; it creates an emotional uncertainty and the potential for restoring the factual against a temporary suspension of rational meaning. The stage appears to promise the accident that restores meaning and explains its own conclusions, ideas, discourse. The overall atmosphere waits to be 'pierced' by the gesture that provokes meaning, the accident that restores the intelligibility of the stage. As such, the stage frames a figure, like a photographic take which points to the irretrievable mystery of

presence, which is also subject of the ability to transform. Nevertheless, on the stage this mystery threatens to disappear without being inserted within the logic of action. As action is not mimetically structured, it is based on contrasts, transformations and moments of suspending. The misbalance on which fascism predicated its actions is pictured in relation to a basketball game in which novice priests get their ball 'stuck above the hoop' (Kelleher in Kelleher 2007: 142). The very interruption of the game and its progression is punctuated by Mussolini's appearance, or rather emergence. What the stage pictures is a relation between signs and the distribution of power. 'Even as the signs of life are spattered about the stage, however, those signs continue to be organized into a pattern' (Kelleher 2007: 143). The photographic-like framing of the stage both mobilizes and magnifies a question regarding the opposition between the priests and Mussolini, through the visual composition that emphasizes the black and white costumes, which at the same time are covers that prevent the manifestation of subjective will through the imposition of uniforms. It is the contrast between a certain impersonality of force and function that is restored by this photographic take on reality; the surface. As such, Castellucci's work replaces the mimetic with a new teleology of the stage, engaging in acts of negotiation of meaning on behalf of an intimate suffering that posits the body as the locus of the drama. It is this reformulation of the stage figure that turns the body into the possibility of questioning the economy of representation, an economy whose constructions are correlated with and condensed in the association between self-sufficient mediation and the traditional firm line traced by mimetic theatre between stage and auditorium. By making its figures stare into the auditorium, this theatre frustrates the idea of the existence of theatrical meaning outside its relation with audiences. The photographic sensibility destabilizes the symbolical order of logos and contributes to the disturbing of theatre's mimetic coordinates; as the figures onstage openly refuse categorizations while trying to suspend, with a secret knowledge, the audience's desire for simplification. The audience ultimately engages with the affective memory associated with the polyphony of

the stage; this polyphony and instability of the stage image institutes, through the apparently unelaborated stage logic, an enhancing of the detail and the marginal, what is fundamentally unclear because of its traditional theatrical repression.

The reading of the stage is effected through gaps, which ultimately lead to the possibility of a final and clear theatrical image. The images engage with the possibilities of meaning through acts of association, detachment and projection, bringing to the fore the spectacular nature of an inconclusivity of meaning. As the figures populating the stage prove resilient to interpretation, as they seem to be on the stage as if displaced from their surroundings, having their very presence intensified, the very reading of the stage is the reading of the evanescent contours of ephemerality. As such, reading is also the progressive shifting of the line between audience and stage, its transforming into what Castellucci calls a 'membrane'; part of the tissue, this metaphor emphasizes the idea that this type of theatre aims at a type of intimacy which makes the audience reclaim the stage as a 'reinvention of narration' (Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 148). The stage becomes the locus of substitutions that would eventually coalesce into the full clarity of an image, which, having the body at its centre, reorganizes the whole dramaturgical material into the literal and clear image. This theatre rearticulates in silence a meaning which escapes representational thinking, with its emphasis on the subordination and accidental quality of the body. Bypassing the representative status of the body in theatre, Castellucci's stagings show either the event that plunges the theatrical in anonymity, or the flickering aspect of the dysfunction which disturbs the perception of the whole. Yet, rather than understanding the use of the image in the pictorial aspect of Castellucci's theatre, I would like to propose an analysis of this theatrical work in relation to the intimacy of the theatrical and photographic in this practice. Unlike the pictorial perspective, the photographic perspective does away with the notion of structuring the field of vision itself, while focusing on the enigma of the subject and enhancing the temporality of seeing. The photographic sensibility in Castellucci's theatre is a way of purifying the vision of its

mimetic baggage, while also opening the possibility of a new type of discourse on body and meaning. Both the theatrical and the photographic concur in the composing of the image of the irretrievability of old truths, following the collapse of representation as manifestations of reason.

Within Castellucci's theatrical work, the lifelike quality of the images of the quotidian is transpersed with the suggestion that the accident is about to happen; it is the eventuality of what is accidental that will acquire a fundamental expressive status in Societas Rafaello Sanzio's theatre. The accident in photography, the punctum, its 'being revealed only after the fact, when the photography is no longer in front of me and I think back on it' (Barthes 1993: 53), points to the idea that accident exists in relationship to the body. In Castellucci's theatre the photographic accident mobilizes the work of the spectator, which is supposed to integrate meaning by also dealing with his own fantasy subtending the representation of the marginal. Unsettled in a (mimetic) structure, the accident of the gesture imprints on the retina the accidental occurrence of meaning through the body. The associations that overwhelm the marginal point to a structure of bodily sensibility which is repressed in traditional theatre; the sensitivity's sliding between opposites is reframed and finds its grounding through the accident, which finally settles for a meaning by opening it. Dismissing an understanding that relates univocally to language, the baggage of the theatrical figure is both unsettling and framed as the task traditional theatre refused to take on. A certain discernibility of a new content is prepared by this photographic oscillation between suggestion, desire and attempt at meaning. The traces of the body, captured in an image that refuses the univocity of language and its repression of the body into/through fixed structures of interpretation, elicit a paradoxical relation to the stage, an attending of the image refusing to fully materialize from the beginning; a relation which has a model in the relation between the seer and the photograph: 'absolute subjectivity is achieved only in a state, an effort, of silence (shutting your eyes is to make the image speak in silence)' (Barthes 1993: 55). Sliding between

meaning and silence, the body comes to be used in reconstructing meaning. Standing against the discourse that oppresses the body, the theatrical imagery depicts the marginal status of the exceptional, constructing a new topology of the stage. *Divina Commedia* focuses on 'creating new worlds that don't actually exist' (Castellucci in Laera 2010: 4); the shift proposed by the work is its sliding from the representational towards the disruption of meaning, the presencing in the image. The human element is wrung from logocentric discourse – revealed as excess and as entrapped by a general order of reason. The haunting nature of Castellucci's theatre results from both the mystery of its figures and the progressive accumulation of details retrievable through the work of affect only after the end of the show. The interruptions point to the fundamental oblivion that emerges from the traditional subordination of the vision to thinking; the real and the body are the uncertain terms that emerge against the mimetic's reluctance to embrace anything that does not fit into the linear logic of explication. Castellucci's theatre characterizes the life of a citizen in contemporary cities. Moreover, this theatre plays with notions of temporality, oscillating between the contingent time of the real performance, cryptic signs of historical time and its violence, and the suspension of time in evoking dreamlike actions. His space is a metonymic enhancing of the city.

Emphasizing the composite nature of the photographic image, Joel Anderson analyses in his book *Theatre & Photography* a street performance which took place during the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 1996. The street event, which was coordinated, structured and intensified by a clown, was centred on involving members of the audience in a performance that would later evolve into the production of a (fake) family portrait. The anxious responses of the audience to the first invitation from the clown to join him in the spotlight point to the existence of a distinction between quotidian and civil behaviour on the one hand, and the codes related to theatrical exposure on the other. While the production of a photograph might be considered a quotidian act, the performance raised the problem of a tension that emerges between theatrical mimesis and the real; it

suggested that the type of visibility associated with theatre seems more dangerous and evaluative than that of taking a mere photograph. The reluctance of the audience members to join the clown, the avoidance of eye contact, and so on, illuminated a certain discomfort; theatre's association with the exceptional, the spectacular, with role-playing or the model of behaviour – all might have played their part in inspiring stage fright. As the clown's intentions become more specific – requesting participants from a certain age group – the idea of the game eventually entertained the audiences and made them feel more engaged; and the playfulness of the clown helped them deal in a more positive manner with the anxiety of the stage. 'From uneasy beginnings, everybody watching ultimately recognized the final tableau of the show, arrived at progressively via a few unnerving moments of audience participation' (Anderson 2015: 6). It was only after the process of selecting certain members of the audience, two children, a 'mother', a 'father' and a 'grandmother', and after the clown's acts of directing or even manoeuvring the participants who joined him on 'stage', that the intention behind the invitation appeared evident; as the participants were asked to smile, the idea of the family portrait emerged naturally and in spite of the fundamentally accidental and staged quality of their encounter. The staged and the photographic overlapped in a spectacular moment of convergence; in a strange overturning, it is the photography that becomes fake, while theatre itself is real and questions our relation with language, memory, desire, as well as our touristic or consumerist engagement with the real. The emergence of the photograph pointed to the difference between the economy of the real and the symbolic economy of the mimetic. The presumed neutral nature of the photographic image, its indexing the real event, its pointing to the existence of 'real' persons and to a 'real' moment in a 'true' event, as origin and basis of its existence, is undone with the means of performance. The performance points to the iterability and resistance of the photograph to any 'real' reading. As such, it ultimately enhances Sontag's idea that 'we expect photographs (more than, say, paintings) to supply real likeness' (Anderson 2015: 55), and as such the

photograph accommodates the economy of desire, making possible the relation between photographs and their viewers and the subjective structuring of their meaning. Furthermore, the photograph's indexing the 'having been' of an event, as well as its capturing of the random moment, allows us to raise questions regarding the reading practices that are based on destabilizing the idea of the rational subject; and it is precisely this oscillatory movement between punctum and studium that is embedded in Castellucci's work and images.

Roland Barthes posits that mimesis, the symbolic structuring of the world, which is reflected in attitudes and language, lies at the very basis of our ability to structure photographic meaning. What is involved here is a kind of performance: it occurs as difference – as the punctum, 'the accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)' (Barthes 1993: 27), relates to the studium, grasped as a representation of what the seer already intuits about the world. The studium belongs to 'the same sort of vague, slippery, irresponsible interest one takes in the people, the entertainments, the books, the clothes one finds "all right"' (Barthes 1993: 27). While the stage figures embody a subjective and intimate engagement with the world, in Castellucci's theatre what is recuperated occurs through the destruction of mimesis and the revelation of the vulnerability of the subject. Jesus's presence in our world is framed by his 'letting in all of that ordinary, marvelous, everyday daylight' (Kelleher in Kelleher 2007: 131), through his entering the stage by 'climbing into the theatre from the street outside, like a burglar' (Kelleher in Kelleher 2007: 131). As such, the studium of the image is his being positioned like an outsider in the overall economy of theatre and its distance from its audiences. His distance from the artifacts on the stage, his being both a presence and a representation, his entering the world of tragedy by answering to the question of the Sphinx, his being the subject of a police forensic test, are counterbalanced by images of suffering represented by three cars already crushed onto the stage before Jesus's appearance. Mutely accusing an 'outside' that decides this order of accidents, they are supplemented by Jesus's own

silence. It is this silence which is undone in the economy of theatre by Jesus's taking the pose of crucifixion, pointing to a beyond. As a punctum, this silence of the 'criminal' will restore the idea of a link between the accidental and the 'real'; the crucifixion points to Jesus being both the one who endures representations without closure and the bearer of a new choice. If the negotiation of meaning in photography for Barthes results in a 'certificate of presence' (Barthes 1993: 87), for Derrida 'what adheres in the photograph is perhaps less the referent itself, in the effectiveness of its reality, than the implication of its having-been-unique' (Derrida in Hobson 1998: 122). This singularity is eventually what is recuperated into the image that defies mimetic expectations. As Anderson's analysis showed, the real nature of the 'presence' captured by the camera can be unavailable to the reader, because presence is subsumed into a construction dependent upon codes; the picturesque background of the city of Edinburgh and the composition of the picture suggest a touristic and amateurish family photo. The affect elicited by the photo will be sentimental and nostalgic, being the expression of a particular engagement with the idea of temporality and ephemerality. As such, the interpretation of the photograph is the result of assumptions regarding presence and realness that are based on desire and bypass the existence of more complex contingent relations between the photographic image and reality. As such, Derrida enhances the idea that the photograph cannot give access to the referent, yet at the same time does not suspend this idea; on one side gesturing towards me as the seer, on the other, to my entrapment in the order of discourse. Photographic framing as the literality of resemblance and simulacrum makes representation 'exceed' theatrical mimesis (Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 222). Theatricality as a language of the surface and appearance is constructed with the help of a photographic sensibility. In other words, for Castellucci, the photographic vision establishes a new and interesting way of problematizing the relation between the seer and the theatrical image.

The uncertain photographic reference to the real onstage creates the possibility of

associating the figure and the necessity of understanding with a sense of urgency. 'In the theatre, there is movement, but for the figure to be seen, it must be isolated in an image, a fixed image like a photo; but you can only isolate the image if the context is clean, which is why for us theatre is often not just about movement but also stasis' (Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 256). This intertwining of theatricality and photographic sensibility informs the complex adventures of the stage image, its shifting emphasis from distancing to closeness, its geometrical perfection of sets and an intensive and conscious use of light. This photography-inspired aesthetic aims at and succeeds in preserving the enigma (of presence) through the gaps that both interrupt and restructure the meaning of the sequences in the episodes, proposing acts of reading based on oblique references and resonances. The conflicts between the elements of the image point to the impossible attempt of the spectator to grasp the 'real' meaning of the stage. They suspend the possibility of a simple distancing and of contemplation, supporting the idea that the content of the stage gets its meaning and achieves its aesthetic purpose by awakening in the spectator an associative impulse and state. The impulse comes from the stage to suspend disbelief, demanding the spectator witness the adventures proposed by the theatre, its transformations. The dramatic is embedded at the core of the theatrical enterprise: 'The punctuation marks create a hierarchy between two positions, and this syntactic function creates the dramatic node' (Chiara Guidi in Kelleher 2007: 84). The dramatic is used to suspend rationality, to emphasize the contradiction between seeing and understanding; the stage images in Castellucci's theatre enhance the irrational remains of a rationality which has been proven resistant to the truth of tragedy. The very use of text in *Tragedia Endogonidia*, its being transformed into a blind spot that obscures its meaning while being advanced as pure violence or the pure place of a wreckage, points to what exists beyond this rational meaning: 'This is not theatre as mirror to the world, but theatre as oven, where scraps and traces of human imagining (call these language, or legend, or idea) are cooked up until they discover themselves altered, right down to their

molecular structure' (Kelleher in Kelleher 2007: 41). What Castellucci advances in the play and metamorphosis of forms onstage is the futility of a reason which led to death camps and the necessity to overcome representation; his work is an attempt to rescue ideas regarding existence from and against their appropriation by rational discourse, and advance the pure possibility and existence of spasms, leaps, and discontinuity inherent in the anonymity of tragedy.

The construction of the golden cube in the first episode of *Tragedia Endogonidia* is not only an attempt to do away with the mimetic stage, by enhancing the cube's lack of backstage extensions and its giving up of theatrical trickery – it is also the means for establishing the explosion of the geometric perspective, through 'a confusion of reflections' (Claudia Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 63); the gold is deprived of its association with the solar, offering instead the idea of its being carved out against the darkness, 'cut out of the universal darkness and… pulled towards itself by its own gravity' (Claudia Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 64). Against this background of reflection that disturbs geometry through the many projections of shadows of the body, 'it seems as if the body might coagulate in its finitude, into a single photogram of the simultaneity of forms' (Claudia Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 64). Enhancing Pavel Florensky's idea that gold is not a colour, Claudia Castellucci emphasizes its ability to isolate. As such, the first episode of *Tragedia Endogonidia* both isolates the stage figures, depicting 'the tragedy of the gold of the I' (Claudia Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 63), and, through the means of this violent use of the stage as the fleeting advance of an event, the passing of a trace, which bypasses mimetic and hierarchical distinctions, makes the gold act 'like a gigantic eyelid sinking over every retina' (Claudia Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 65). This photographic vision is inspired by the idea that 'reality is a vision without will' (Claudia Castellucci in Kelleher 2007: 61). I would like to argue that this dis-anthropomorphizing of the stage is operated with the aid of a photographic glance, which both opens the possibility of recuperating the fleeting moment, and also of capturing – monumentalizing

– what seems to be aleatory from the point of view of reason and theatrical mimesis.

The marble cube in the fourth episode of *Tragedia Endogonidia* constitutes another example of the space without rest and without escape that is conjured to speak in Castellucci's theatre. Separated by long intervals of darkness, the sequences evoke figures that perform minuscule and apparently insignificant gestures. As previously noted, a young woman cleans the stage with a mop in the first sequence, making the spectator question the role of his or her own presence, whether they are simply ignored or whether they have arrived too early or too late for the performance. It is a matter of timing and a matter of anonymity that is laid out in the open, in the separation between the spectator's sense of self-importance and the annoying idea of its all being a waste of time, which makes the spectator become self-reflexive, engaging with questions regarding entitlement in 'art'. This can only be a preamble or perhaps a pretext for questioning the sense of 'entering' from 'backstage' into the matter of the work of art. The anonymity of cleaning, the repetitiveness of labour, the exhausting quality of the act, is correlative with the impulse to question its very appearance on the stage, which is also a way of engaging the spectator; the spectator does not yet feel entitled to raise the problem, creating the impression of living in a time that is distinct from that which is presented on the stage; the spectator is waiting for the right timing for entering the work, just as the very problematization of temporality and theatre takes place. 'The room is both imaginable and impossible', as there is 'no way in or out except through the mouth of the stage where it gives on to the auditorium' (Kelleher in Kelleher 2007: 95). It is in this suspension between the unreality of the room and the presence of the figures that populate it that the affect appears, disquieting the spectator. The room itself – in its coldness and lack of particularity, in its denial of the traditional emphasis on the dramatic incident, in its excluding the mimicking of a door – seems to gesture towards the lack of a deus ex machina; what happens here is exactly what seems to be happening, and nothing more. As the curtain opens for a second time, an infant appears onstage, suggesting the idea of

its being displaced from its surroundings and having been planted there, gesturing towards the tension between life and the siege that seems to be evoked by the surrounding space; like 'some lump of actual humanity caught in the gob of the theatre's storytelling machinery' (Kelleher in Kelleher 2007: 96), the infant evokes, for the spectator, the archetypal stories the child's presence reluctantly dismisses, in the particularity of its being present and its exteriority to language. The spectator's attention is focused on this presence that refutes the order of representation, while the infant's entrapment on the stage, its attention focused on some toys, signals an image which exceeds in its potentiality its literal content, evoking a strange, overwhelming empathy that blurs the very act of reading. The curtain closes 'adamant as a blade, casting back at us a glare of white light and a blast of white noise, as if all our concern, our empathy, our interest were become a mess of gaze and interference, so much fractured and incoherent broadcast' (Kelleher in Kelleher 2007: 96). The impersonality of the marble room or cube will also emphasize, later, during the Brussels episode, the reality of the sequence of a violent beating, the bursting onto the stage of violence with an unusual degree of realism, to the point that there is no other sign that points to the mimetic faking of the act, save perhaps the consciousness of our being in a theatre. Just as in the first episode, it is the realism of the sequences that make the spectator enter a difficult relationship with the temporality of spectatorship; nevertheless, this type of spectatorship is fundamentally challenged by the aesthetic options made by the authors of the show, which rely on the theatricality of the photographic detail. It is the discovery of one detail of violence after the other that theatrically constructs the meaning of the episode, and finally points to violence as such. It is only after the theatrical event that the spectator is able to understand the veracity of the representation and thus able to challenge his own assumptions regarding the theatre event.

It is paradoxically the artificiality of theatre which brings to the fore the sense of realness of the image of violence. It is the artificial blood which constitutes the

theatricality of the violence of a beating; the entering in this sequence is progressive and subtle. An old man with a strange costume, a 'floral bikini and sandals with pink roses on the toe' (Kelleher in Kelleher 2007: 98), shows up on the stage and acts 'as if testing the fact of those walls' (Kelleher in Kelleher 2007: 98). He dresses up onstage, first putting on a prophet's robe, 'bright white aprons and gowns' (Kelleher in Kelleher 2007: 98). After this, he puts on the uniform of a policeman. He is frail and unsteady, but nevertheless, as a pair of gymnastic rings descends from above the stage, he holds them with both hands. The ridiculousness of the image silently develops into an apprehension, which refers perhaps to the limits of the body, and the relation between function and sign, decay and desire. While this image persists, another figure enters the stage, another policeman. He pours artificial blood from a plastic bottle and lays out letter cards around the pool of blood. As two other policemen enter, one of them undresses, becoming – or playing – the victim in a reconstruction of a crime. It is the ambivalence of the figures that is unsettling, however. By participating in an act of reconstruction, the figures act on the stage as if the event has been scheduled to take place; the premeditation, the desire to recreate the event as literally as possible, reveals a collapse between the theatrical logic of representation and the police's mimetic framing of the violence, with all its verisimilitude. As the police use theatrical techniques for the reconstruction, and 'the event will follow faithfully upon its representation' (Kelleher in Kelleher 2007: 100), what occurs is a certain overlapping of the simulation of reality and theatricality, which makes the event appear before us as real at the same time as it makes the audience question the nature of theatrical reality. The lack of interest in signposting the reconstruction, which both takes and will take place, derives from the casual manner in which the policeman sets the coordinates for the following (violent) scene. The gesture alludes to the manner in which the backstage aids enter the stage under the convention of a suspension of the fictive temporality of the performance. As the coordinates of the representation on the stage are arranged in full sight of the spectator, a complicity is established between the stage and

the audience; nevertheless, this provisional theatrical setup turns out to be charged with the full menacing power invested in the image of the police. The codes of reality and stage overpower one another in a moment that enhances both the idea of its being simulated in a theatre setting and of its being a reiteration of a real event happening elsewhere. Moreover, the beating as simulation is supplemented by 'what sounds like an amplified thrash at a snare drum, accelerating into a nauseous crescendo mixed with interference, as if the white noise that accompanied the closing of the curtain between the earlier scene was already anticipating this' (Kelleher in Kelleher 2007: 100). The artificial and the sign reveal a complicity with regard to the production of meaning on the stage, pointing in a shocking manner towards the reality of the image, and beyond it – to the effect of violence in the real. What is left is the body's swollen face, testifying to the destruction of the ethical. As more blood is poured over the head of the victim, who sits on a chair after the beating, the elements add further traces that increasingly depersonalize the figure of the victim. He is sealed up in a black bag, and a microphone 'is brought on and angled down to where his head should be' (Kelleher in Kelleher 2007: 100). The last resort of the victim, the idea of telling the story, has nevertheless already been enacted in this reconstruction, its testimony taking the form of his muteness. The beating, represented as the objective fact that is reconstituted, is supplemented by a narrative of the victim. It is in the impersonality of the stage sequence that the horror is enacted as an act of the world. The beating is an event and an excess that in itself is questioned, rather than conceived as just an element in the progression of a reasonable action, justified or unjustified in a certain mimetic context. By iterating the violence of a beating with a plasticity of means unusual for theatre, although frequently employed in film, and by following in theatre the careful reconstruction of the visual signs of violence, the theatre seems to propose an encounter with the real through the excess of the mimetic. Moreover, this reconstruction of violence in the theatre presents a reconstruction that takes place during a police action, which violently speaks about the 'liveness' of suffering, whether past, present or future. The

sequence allows for the recuperation of resonances between the sequences of the episode: the woman who cleaned the stage in the first scene will be referred to this violent beating, as erasing the traces of the blood; she will reappear in a full black dress along with other characters in the episode, a child and a bald woman, who perhaps allude to the loss of femininity. A series of baroque actions begins, among which is the pulling of an animal heart from a black bag; this heart is 'dragged across the stage as if it were the heart of the young man himself, who wriggles and screams now in his own body bag as a siren starts up' (Kelleher in Kelleher 2007: 101). There are complex intersections between the sequences, which bypass the linear mode of reading the stage. The beating episode seems to picture the unjust use of violence during a police investigation, their use of excessive force against a defenceless suspect; and their employing what first seems to be a theatrical technique proves to be nevertheless born out of the real itself. The desire to document is different in theatre, in the real and in the police protocol. The apparent theatrical aspect is just the preamble to a possibly unjustified act of violence, a beating resulting in the appearance of the victim, his face swollen so badly that he is unable to speak. As such, the theatrical event advances its modes of questioning in the overlapping that is staged between theatricality and the real. In perplexing the viewers who assimilate a beating place to a random and casual act of theatrical illusion, Castellucci raises the problem of the efficacy of theatre – of the way it advances the irrevocable nature of suffering, inscribed in the idea of the body, the Other, and the repressed.

Chapter Three

Forced Entertainment and the Role of the Theatrical in Reconfiguring Agency: Technique and Desire

3.1. Forced Entertainment – *The Thrill of It All* (2010)

In this case study I want to foreground the idea that the almost paradoxical emergence of theatricality in the context of a dramaturgy openly refusing the spectacular dramatic framework is correlative to a new enquiry regarding the subject, its representability and its responsibility for the theatrical situation. The attempt to rewrite the situation of communication in theatre is a project directed against both the postmodern excess, 'an endless era of play without consequence' (Tomlin 2008: 357), and the logic of capitalism, which has 'irrevocably diminished the possibilities of the individual' (Gritzner 2008: 330). The necessity behind the reworking of the subject is correlative with the thinking on the 'real', which for poststructuralist theory is no longer representable as a self-sufficient totality, but as a writing field traversed by forces. As such, the very attempt to deal with the self in theatre requires an engagement with the practices allowed by language/writing, involving a deconstruction of notions of character and mimetic practice: 'The concept of self continues to be decentered and re-imagined on the contemporary stage where it functions like a residual reminder of the unrealized (utopian) promise that was once central to the categories of subjectivity and modernity – namely, the promise of freedom' (Gritzner 2008: 330). By undoing the facilities of mimetic language and the traditional power structure that frames traditional theatrical communication, and by exposing the emptiness of the mimetic form, Forced Entertainment propose an anarchic poetics of the stage, that aims to restore subjectivity.

Upsetting the binary distinctions, a theatre that relies on, as Karoline Gritzner puts it, 'the juxtaposition, blurring and ultimate collapse of the distinction between illusion and reality, dramatic fiction and "real" action on the stage' (Gritzner 2008: 339) represents both the postdramatic aesthetic and an attempt to formulate a solution to the modern problem of 'the possibilities of subjective expression'. Postmodernism, understood as 'a phase when the subject is capitulating before the alienated predominance of things' (Adorno in Gritzner 2008: 334), is a circumstance on which Forced Entertainment's approach to theatrical work is based, and their live critiquing of the contractual relation between stage, things and audiences impacts on the performative event as such, as they attempt to subtract theatre from the order of commodities, consumerism and passive spectatorship. Within their aesthetic, the frustration of spectatorial expectation constitutes a reactive tension and the possibility of disengaging with the notion of traditional theatrical form and voyeuristic spectatorship. I will argue, later on, that the theatricality of their work emerges whenever failure achieves the status of a transgressive gesture. Sara Jane Bailes understands this failure in relation to an act of refusal – as she puts it: 'The apparent incompetence as story telling and as performance' stands at the basis of 'a kind of impasse' that associates the 'refusing to perform to standard' to an act of invention of 'an alternative aesthetics' (Bailes 2011: 56).

Informed by the undoing of the traditional dynamic between spectator and stage, a problematizing of theatrical mediation itself and an emphasis on the communicational aspect of theatre, this theatre attempts to restore the subject. I will argue that, by theatrically emphasizing the role of failure, by making the accident part of the aesthetic, Forced Entertainment advance the possibility of a deconstruction of mimetic theatre, which leads to a problematizing and a reconsidering of the relation between representation, subjectivity and mimesis. As the spectacular nature of theatrical representation is exposed as an artifact whose function is to entertain, Forced Entertainment will opt for a reducing of the 'theatrical' elements within their work and

manifest an interest in creating new stage forms that incorporate into the stage acts the very processes traditionally hidden in theatre. Under the disguise of an apparent improvisation, the Sheffield-based group effects a critique of traditional forms, problematizing the notion of 'success' and exposing the mainstream aesthetic as self-indulgent. In the attempt to construct communicational situations, their work focuses on the developing of new aesthetic strategies of breaking and renegotiating the contract between performers and spectators. The apparent scarcity of theatrical means employed in their stagings, their use of signposts containing a direct and critical reference to the means employed in the entertainment industry, the lack of impressive sets, the almost blank delivery in the performance of the text, the intrusion of the page into the structure of the theatrical event, are interpreted in this case study as a means for discussing notions of agency. They use the means of quotation available to the subject/individual trapped within the order of a general field of writing, as emphasized by Derrida and Lacan, in order to retrieve an attempt at meaning. A minimalist aesthetic is correlative in recent performances such as *The Notebook* or *Seeping Through* with an activation of the role of memory in constructing the theatrical event, pointing to the emergence of theatre as a correlative of subjectivity; the affective landscapes are evoked by traces, which construct a complex aesthetic with minimalistic means, and point to the desire for a sovereign position of the subject. This sovereignty, mostly poetic, is itself correlated with the possibility of playing around with the opposition between consciousness and the unconscious, authenticity and text, work and excess. As their 'work about the illusory nature of humanist subjectivity' (Gorman 2014: 27) is unfolded, it points to a reformulation of the theatrical and its relation to ephemeral conditions: to a concern with theatricality as constitutive of the new contexts for the disclosure of the subject. As the performances also raise the problem of the individual's subjugation to an order created by and through representation and their relation to writing in Derrida's sense, they also, at the same time, signal the possibility of events that enhance a dynamic and meaningful

recuperation of the 'real' through the theatrical stage.

As with my previous case studies, Forced Entertainment's radical reworking of traditional representation will be analysed here through the lens of deconstruction. For Forced Entertainment, however, this becomes a discourse that reframes the mimetic functionality of the stage as inconsequential and at the same time enhances the agency of the performer who is no longer involved in a general universal project of logocentrism or of referencing a rational action. Thus the deconstruction performs within the theatrical event an operation aimed at restoring the conditions for (theatrical) communication. Exposed as the locus of tensions created by the cleavages between the performer, role, participant, entertainer, their stage will point to the problematic of representation and unavailability of fixed meanings. Their work is a deconstruction that stages the failure of the traditional mimetic form, which was traditionally based on the association between the spectacular and the meaningful. The accidental is recuperated in the dramaturgy of the work, and as such this 'poetics' of failure has aesthetic consequences, insofar as this form has been traditionally correlated with dialectics and refused the operations of chance. By using the artifice of amateurish practice, this practice enhances and radicalizes the desire for event and meaning. Nevertheless, by enhancing the 'real' conditions of discursivity, the reliance of the communicational act on desire, the very 'amateurish' act of questioning the authoritative constraints of mimesis becomes a legitimate task of opening the possibility for the emergence of 'meaning'. Establishing at the core of the work the tensions between rational mimesis and the 'real', technical command and failure, desire and stage fright, this work attempts to restore the conditions for a recuperation of the 'I' of the audience and the performer. By adopting the artifice of an apparent general state of improvisation, whose necessity is determined by the feigned lack of 'proper' understanding and lack of command of technique of the performers onstage, by erasing the signs that make the subject/performer different from his stage persona, the staged events become an opportunity for deconstructing the artificial and the 'natural'.

The apparent disorder of the stage, its constantly being mirrored by 'effects', reactions to a failure of mimetic rhetoric, as well as the pressure to perform an entertaining number – what it enacts is the crisis of communication and meaning, while pointing to the fakeness, limits and intrusions of self-indulgent representations that shape the contemporary spectatorial condition. The challenge enacted by this theatre is related, also, I would suggest, to the ability to understand the Other. Mobilizing a series of critiques of the stage, for instance, in the guise of a fight between two characters, this theatre never just points to the silly and inconclusive debate of characters onstage; it also seems to allude to the role of the theatrical metaphors circulating in daily life, with their emphasis on 'performing well' and representing the unproblematic. Nevertheless, this pervasive state of non-communication is based on reconsidering the traditional project of the rational subject. The staging of failure, then, is not only a perplexing circumstance that creates the need for a new theatrical experience, but an existential position from which traditional claims related to theatre representation should be reconsidered. By feigning the failure of the dramatic, this theatre alludes to a theatrical tradition which is undone, problematized and reformulated. In Forced Entertainment's work failure is also existential.

Allowing for new possibilities of using a stage, the reading of the theatrical event in Forced Entertainment's acts passes through the idea of incommensurability between the rational, the dramatic and theatre itself. The very act of reading is conflictual: refusing to settle into a fixed structure, this theatre attempts to capture the tragic solitary aura of the repressed, and the search for the unstable moment of truth. 'What we are trying to do here is to communicate with people,' says one of the male characters in *The Thrill of It All*. This communication is forever desired, programmed, undone, prepared and doomed to fail; exposed in its forever postponed and accidental ideality, the desire for communication is framed by discussion about the overall aesthetic that makes communication possible in theatre – making the audiences aware of the pre-programmed

structure of our communicative acts, and also of the authoritative acts that inform interpretation: 'You said you want to communicate with people. What's the story? What's the context?' (*The Thrill of It All*). A general structure of mediation and premeditation, exposed by Derrida as embedded in the very structure of writing, with its deferral and difference, is at work within the piece, which not only problematizes communication in theatre but also problematizes the subject as unstable, constructed in an unrelenting desire for a meaning which does not exist prior to his quest.

The theatrical (parodical) mediation is, in *The Thrill of It All*, informed by both the failure to represent the glamour of the stage – as when the characters onstage are dressed in cheap imitations of luxurious costumes – and the reference to the contamination of the practices of identity and subjectivity by mainstream culture with its gendered representations. The use of the stage marks the perplexing act of both attending to a repetition and undoing mimesis. Through the use of a microphone that distorts voices, and through an emphasis on strong male and female stereotypes found in mainstream culture, this theatre critiques, while at the same time making the general system of representations part of the task of theatre. Forced Entertainment make active the residual nature of cultural representations onstage and engage their audiences with the problematic lying behind the simple assumption of meaning and presence generated by the generalized 'writing' of 'culture': the violence of inscriptions regarding gender, theatre or reason. The stereotyped mode of presentation of the male and female characters is undone in acts that expose the stage cruelty of the feminine desire for gratification, and the depression of a male character. It is with the help of a theatrical background, a general precarious aesthetic that both 'centres' and destabilizes perception with the help of a few fake palm trees, a comment on the artificiality of theatre, that the group sets the coordinates for a performance that attempts to rescue 'the small facts, little things', and feeds apparently on the lack of skills of the performers. While premeditation is necessary in theatre, instituting the structure of the power relations between stage and audience,

this somehow improvised attempt at doing things onstage without properly having a script (or at least a linear one) brings to the fore the matter of theatre. The theatrical attempt at meaning, which is furthermore limited by the (feigned) lack of skill of the performers, solicits a new type of participation on the part of audiences of the apparently anarchic series of failed events. The questioning of the relation between technique and meaning is radically deconstructed in the performance. It is the very question regarding the authenticity of the apparent unpreparedness which activates the content of the work, opening the possibility that its audiences will follow the deconstructing of the basic premises of traditional theatre. Without this artifice – of undoing the desire for theatrical form via the means of an apparent lack of skills – the recuperation of the value of their work is impossible. In Forced Entertainment's work it is the very awareness of this precarious theatrical attempt at form that creates the context of mediation which is necessary for theatre's functioning.

The play of desire, the attempt to build 'big' (dramatic) stories is embedded theatrically in this project of deconstruction of the stage; nevertheless, this idea of dramatic enactment is rejected by the leading performer in the show. Moreover, the differences of opinion over its aesthetics evolve into a stage fight, as the undecidable appears when one male performer insists on disobeying the rules of another performer who presents himself as an impromptu director. This conflict is supplemented further by the female performers who dance to a Japanese pop song as it unfolds. This theatrical intervention expresses the return of the logic of mimesis and entertainment, which continues to haunt theatre as long as it is not carefully deconstructed. The blurring of the very distinctions between high and low culture, desire for expression and theatrical form, reason and accident, is an attempt to rescue vulnerability and its value, value which is irretrievable from the perspective of the mimetic with its emphasis on purity and clarity of (rational) form. The dance intermezzo of the female performers in fact attempts to shift the attention of the audience from this 'unforgivable' act of fighting onstage towards

regarding performance as mere entertainment, while nevertheless pointing to the clash in which expectations are played out against experiences. This entertainment might be eclectic and meaningless, the Sheffield group might say, but its effectiveness should be taken seriously. Moreover, the stage fight reiterates in theatre an object that stirs a general interest in violence in movies, but whose repetition in theatre fails to be viewed as anything other than an accidental and annoying occurrence. As such, Forced Entertainment propose a dense and complex aesthetics in order to rework a tradition that developed by marginalizing the communicative role of theatre.

Let me now introduce some ideas regarding the role of the accidental in the dramaturgical practices of Forced Entertainment by looking at the performance of *The Thrill of It All* in a little more detail. I would like to emphasize the idea that failure represents a limit situation in which a reconsidering of the 'real' takes place. Its adoption in a medium that seems, through its constructedness, ultimately 'unreal' opens up the possibility for a questioning of the relationship between the theatrical failure, as that which is 'real' and embarrassing, and the failure of the mimetic to represent a 'meaningful' meaning, to be subtracted from the order of rationality in order to accept a new engagement with the 'real'. As such, theatrical failure conflates and also problematizes the relation between the 'staged' and 'real' technical failure and the idea that this failure is in fact inconsequential; what lies behind it is, of course, the critique of the mimetic form whose project has historically failed. While this project has failed, it is nevertheless within its very limits that this theatre emerges: the very reformulation of the instruments of theatre does not happen in a void, but by inventing new aesthetics which have to reformulate both the ethos and meaning of theatrical form. The polyvalence of Forced Entertainment's accidents is based, in other words, on a dramaturgical structure which problematizes that which has traditionally been repressed and excluded from the stage; it is a very complex structure that identifies the accidental as the possibility of an event that stages the ephemeral, the inconclusive, and the marginal.

Unlike the male performers, who appear to enact the excessive idea of responsibility and seriousness in this piece, the female characters, whose voices are distorted by the microphones in order to appear more 'feminine', capricious and pleasing, seem instead to be more engaged with their audiences' expectations. Their interventions seem to seek to compensate for the lack of attention of the male characters – and the feelings of depression that seem to have been elicited in them by their being in a show. One female character, for instance, attempts to enliven the atmosphere and even encourages the audience to cheer the attempt of a male character, Tom, to talk about 'the small things', subverting as such his very attempt at making meaning. Moreover, the disturbing quality of this perplexing emotional leap she seeks to elicit from the audience is exacerbated further when Tom still insists that he is experiencing a really bad depression. Framed as attention-seeking, it will contribute to a further questioning of the spectacular content of contemporary lives, which situates the disseverance of the depressive character as a self-indulgent act. The expression of depression is linked with the representation, as something both serious that might interfere with the performer's presence in the show, and as an attempt to gain attention from the audience. The stage act is therefore both perplexing and interesting, and provides an opening towards another topic: the need to communicate experience 'as it is', and to create a form that can undo the marginalizing of marginal 'practices'. Tom's commitment to talking about depression makes the other male figures on the stage get closer to him – some try to comfort him, others to calm him down, while one of the female characters, who flirts with the audience, dismisses the value of discussing the topic of depression altogether. She plays the role as if she is both annoyed and anticipating the embarrassment that will result from this moment. The performer who attempts to talk about his feelings and his depressed mood is driven from the centre of the stage. The artificial enhancing of our dramas and feelings, the desire to communicate our emotions, is enacted as a failed act; the intention behind it is seen as just annoying, and the depressive male character is labelled 'selfish'. The

calculated gesture behind the dramaturgy of this theatrical moment draws upon the distinction between story and feelings; a female performer dismisses the moment by saying that the story about depression is 'not convincing', while the depressed figure of Tom, at the back of the stage, still shouts 'I can't find meaning, I don't see the funny side'. What this 'dramatic' moment ironically points to is the (broken) relation between representation and the real.

The pressure to perform happiness through an inane smile is, according to a female performer, a basic requirement: to 'be like everybody else'. Forced to come back on the stage in spite of his depression, which led him to quit, the depressed Tom now appears on the floor like some kind of a hunting trophy for the other male characters, such as Jerry, who force him down to his knees. Meanwhile, the voice of the female character iterates the previous discourse about his being a disappointment; this discourse also evokes the type of self-discouraging thoughts that make depression difficult to bear, punctuating the scene and amplifying the aesthetic of the disturbance. In the end, in having been condescendingly allowed his moment of depression, Tom will be pictured as not interesting enough, not strong enough, not clever enough. The sequence will emphasize the distance between the dramatic imperative to entertain and the subject who bears an ambivalent relationship with both performing and drama. The reasons for depression are trivialized – 'it happens every day' – and laughed at – 'l lost my sense of direction' / 'Get a map'; the dismissing of the real causes of his depression prompts the male character to search for and invent things that would seem acceptable motives for his state. Nevertheless, the strangeness of the sequence emerges mainly from putting a male character into this discourse of despair and loss of meaning, which situates the performer against discourses supported by cultural stereotypes and the 'political' framing of theatre as consequential and representative. The talk about depression points to the strangeness of bringing the 'outside' into the structure of the theatrical work, relating the desire for spectacular form with the impotence of complying with regulations. As such, the

statement of depression becomes another means of questioning the relevance of a continuous social performing and repetition of dramatic cultural tropes. The considerations regarding depression that are refused by the apparent structure of the show, the search for an aesthetics, for subjects that matter, are supplemented by the fact that the performer is put into a vulnerable physical situation, being forced by the other male performers to stay on the floor of the stage; as if the only way to present a depressive is to force him to participate in the stage event in order to assess voyeuristically a repressed emotional content, that which refuses to adhere to a 'proper' form. Furthermore, the stereotypical representation of gender is pursued further through a moment of infatuation, when one of the female performers expresses her interest in Jerry, the performer who deployed physical force to keep Tom down. The comic situation emerges through the development of further male stereotypes. Jerry's shyness is evident when he is flattered for his use of physical force – he looks as if he is surprised and pleased when interviewed by the lead female performer. Exposing the role of violence in the constructions of masculinity, the piece furthermore emphasizes the idea that there is no one to help in difficult, bullying situations. (As the scene of sexual flirtation is developed throughout the interview of Jerry, Tom is still forced to stay down.) What this scene recalls, of course, is the banality of television dramas. Indeed, it is precisely the general 'anaesthetics' doled out by television and the mass media to their audience that is being commented upon. Moreover, the dialogue borders on indecency, through random discussions of the nature of sexual relationships associated with stereotyped masculinity. Returning to the physically and psychologically impaired Tom, the male depressive figure is described as an expression of 'tragedy'. In a reflection of the pervasive cultural understanding of violence, physical impairment is considered more important than psychological limiting. An intermezzo of dance to Japanese music follows. The performers dance with the fake palm trees.

The following sequence starts with the soft intonations of a female voice that

recounts almost fantastical accidents in her becoming, telling lies as a way of getting attention and compassion. Recollecting childhood memories, she tells the fantastic story of her parents discovering she had a very, very big ear while the other ear was missing. The desire to be believed emerges strongly through the contrasting lies presented along with her 'dream' to be onstage – which she shares with the audience. Her easygoing voice and discourse are punctuated by hysterical moments when other stage figures touch her. Testifying to the ability of the stage to present both the illusory and the impossible, this sequence also exposes the hysterical nature of the idea of 'believing in your dream'; as such, the sequence also alludes to narratives of success that are based on the dramatic model, and thus picture the dream of success as spectacular, dramatic and entertaining. In contrast, the depressed Tom, forced to 'say something funny', will expose the constructed nature of 'offering' something to the audience and will testify briefly to the nature of power relations, exposing the arbitrariness of the rules and of the work of rehearsal that mainly aims at producing effects rather than a consistent theatrical discourse. The 'not funny' repeats, comments upon and introduces the pressure against which the pleasure of being onstage is recuperated, almost randomly.

3.2. Dramaturgical Deconstructions in Forced Entertainment

The accident that was repressed by the dramatic model of mimetic theatre is exposed as a matter of communication, emerging necessarily with the attempt at meaning. Because of this, Forced Entertainment's works contribute to the creation of a stage vocabulary which is not merely a rhetorical exercise but should be understood as a quest for recuperating subjectivity against a general background constituted by the prestige of the mimetic form and its traditional aesthetic policing. In the attempt to critique the pervasive models of representation, the theatre group brings to the fore what was repressed as inconsequential, ephemeral, ridiculous, improper or uncertain. They

perform with the help of a broken rhetoric, precarious materials a pretended failure to reach a sufficient standard; by thoroughly rejecting the reassuring overlapping between character and actor, by creating troubling links between the stage persona and failure of the staging, they effect a subversion of the traditional rational rhetoric of theatre. Their work points towards the relation between representation and the 'real,' which is fundamental for the construction of the subject. Moreover, it introduces a different kind of fictionality at the core of the theatre, a fictionality associated with the subject. This aspect can be correlated with Derrida's idea that the I is not a concrete source of knowledge but that 'the access to writing is the constitution of a free subject in a violent movement of its own effacement and its own bondage' (Derrida in Hobson 1998: 31); moreover, this theatre, which does not privilege a 'main' 'character', also advances a participatory aesthetics, engaging with the difficulty of engaging its audiences in new and more profound ways of looking at the subject and its relation to both language and the 'real'. As such, the theatre of Forced Entertainment advances against the idea that theatre's legitimacy is secondary and derivative, placing the decentred aesthetics of the accident and its inconclusive relation to the mimetic tradition, instead, at the 'centre' of its stage. The accident prevents the establishing of the mimetic order and forces audiences to do away with a simple framework that requires of them only an ability to follow a linear plot – to distance themselves from the stage. The dramaturgy of Forced Entertainment is based on dealing with the limits imposed by mimesis on acts of verbal expression, a rejection and reconsideration of theatre's eclecticism of means and forms, which is no longer subordinated to the unitary principle of reason. Forced Entertainment engage in a critique of traditional means as an attempt to reconstruct meaning in the theatrical situation; nevertheless, this progress can only be based on a first exposure of the violent inscriptions that have prevented subjectivity from being a matter of theatre. The accident is recovered as problematic by undoing the very traditional structure that asserted a fundamental subordination of the accidental to the economy of the dramatic. A theatrical

reconsidering of the distinction between private and public stands at the basis of this aesthetic problematic, which does away with the beauty of sets and the cosmeticizing of reality in order to foreground a discourse on the availability of meaning. By bringing to the fore the damaged, the used, the precarious, the fake, the substitute, Forced Entertainment performs the existence of a gap between the traditional logocentric discourse that informed theatre and its understanding of theatrical representation, and the new, immanent possibility to (re)build a framework that sets a new destiny for theatrical signs in the attempt to map the real. No longer informed by an authoritative logic, this theatre turns against the facilities surrounding the general practice of spectatorship, which seems at odds with a proper act of pertinent reading. It is through the precarity of these elements that Forced Entertainment's stage performs a critique of the necessity of big, spectacular means in order to build an effective theatrical aesthetic. Since at the core of the work is the subject itself, the role of the props is to take part in setting the coordinates for a new possibility of meaning, based on a reformulation of mimesis. I would furthermore suggest that the sets are just as important as the performers, and that this theatre portrays a deconstruction which aims at restoring the possibility of an intelligibility of the world. Exposing the desire for representation as both rational and irrational, this theatre engages with the possibility of recuperating a place for authentic encounters within a culture that values commodities over experience. The sets and the costumes in themselves embed a critique, in other words, which is irrecuperable from the outset by the audiences of Forced Entertainment's performances. Difference is built into the very 'presence' of signs and occurs through the contribution the sets, performers, texts make to the show. The accidental is both a reproduction of a theatrical logic which associates the stage with failure, stage fright and embarrassment, and the possibility of dealing with the 'outside' of traditional theatre, with its emphasis on drama. As such it questions not only pervasive cultural dramas, but also the instruments and legitimate uses of impersonation, text and (non)representation. The sets represent

something which is not truly there, not even from the point of view of the theatre and its audiences. To take our earlier example, in *The Thrill of It All* the sets quote the mimetic, the glamour of the theatre, as they create a critical theatrical discourse. This is why the theatre of Forced Entertainment demands that their audiences confront the problematic act of indulgence – as a supplement to the desire to be entertained. This entertainment is an economy of exchange which is radically reworked and reframed by Forced Entertainment: frustration of expectation and uncertain slippages from theatre to life and the real are performed. Moreover, the precarious nature of the sets employed by the staging seems to allude to the idea that this substitution of the 'real' set with a 'pretension' that the 'real' is there might be financially rather than aesthetically motivated. Nevertheless, this circumstance makes the work even more radical, and will contribute to a recuperation of the relation between the political mapping of reality and the aesthetic breakdown of representation and consumption. It is within this tension that the work is inscribed, as a permanent to and fro between reality and 'fiction': as a theatrical problematizing of the theatre as a scene of entertainment.

In Forced Entertainment's work, it is the drama that is correlated with solitude, misunderstanding and an amateurish inability to grasp the proper way to frame desire. Drama – understood as the desire to articulate in a meaningful and expressive way the contents of the real and of the stage – results in phoney, exaggerated and ridiculous moments that disrupt the pretence of logic of meaning of the stage. This is further developed with the help of the figures that take on the responsibility of entertaining their audiences, but who seem oblivious of the general rules of theatre-making, such as the fact that pretending to be glamorous, successful, happy and beautiful is no longer an option in a theatre that only mimics the conditions of representation. Nevertheless, it is the very gap between reality and the act of representation that this theatre attempts to address, representing a critique that aims at restoring the subject against the traditional rhetoric that confined it to the limits of reason. Bataille's claim that we are 'discontinuous beings,

individuals who perish in isolation amidst an incomprehensible adventure, but we yearn for our lost continuity' (Bataille 1986: 15) would seem to capture the spirit at play in the work of deconstruction found in Forced Entertainment. The precarious materials are signs that produce the possibility of a shift between different registers, the high and the low, the law and the exception, and a questioning of the pretentions to authenticity in the structures that have motivated the theatrical in its mimetic hypostasis. An inner movement, the possibility of performing shifts between the precarious reality of the stage, its reference to the contemporary low aesthetics of television, tabloids and mass media, is inherent in this unstable dramaturgy of failure. I argue that failure permits shifts between registers of theatrical expression and a problematizing of the 'real', its hierarchical and oppositional distinctions. The instability of meaning is embedded in the very structure of staged acts in Forced Entertainment's work, which aims at a restoration of subjectivity by bringing to the fore the traditional conception of theatrical representation as the very obstacle against which this theatre asserts its communicative project. This subjectivity was prevented from appearing and occurring in the structure of the work, because of Aristotle's emphasis on character as secondary to the rationality of the plot. As such, drama is the very object of deconstruction in this theatre, which emphasizes its presence as theatre, along with the idea of a recuperation of the difference between reason and reality.

It is by enhancing failure that this theatre advances the possibility of engaging in a subjective and personal act; the crisis of theatre, the crisis of communication, make Forced Entertainment's stage the problematic place of exposure of a very personal anguish. A subject whose theatricality is both troubling and somehow embarrassing is asserted against the idea of theatre as inconsequential spectacle. The disconnection of character from a theatre/language/writing that effaces subjectivity can be recuperated as a contemporary variant of misfortune, turning somehow the performers into tragic figures, sitting amidst the ruins of an inexpressible loneliness. It is important in this

regard to note that Derrida's dismissal of the idea of a hierarchical opposition between nature and culture offers a lens for understanding the distinction between amateurish and professional as non-oppositional. Apparently alluding to the amateurish as a 'natural' state, in Forced Entertainment's work the clash between the two practices, technique and its undoing through desire, allows for a radical questioning of theatrical value which nevertheless does not offer amateurism as 'presence', since this would require us to go back to the logocentric discourse of presence, but instead refers to the limit of meaning. The amateur indicates both the existential condition of the performer and the possibility of disengaging with technique and notions of competence – by refusing technical competence and in embracing the ethos of the 'amateur', Forced Entertainment advance their critique as immanent to the work itself. Moreover, this 'amateurish' attitude can be related to the playful nature of Derrida's deconstructive critique. By re-examining the relevance of traditional notions of stage technique in their purported attempt to describe the real, by exposing the divergence between the actor's (and the spectator's) technical command and its correlation with notions of responsibility, and by developing theatrical events in which the work of mimesis is made visible, questionable and subject to a series of accidents, Forced Entertainment propose a new relationship of the theatre with the 'real': the real is no longer that which is endlessly displaced through the referentiality of representation but the context in which representations occur. An aesthetic based on disturbance aims to criticize the simplistic appropriation and assigning of meaning in the traditional plot, undoing the relation between desire and representation, impulse and technique; as such, Forced Entertainment's approach outlines the interference between context and text, and the value of the inconclusive, of the accidental, and of aesthetic disruption. The deconstruction of the mimetic devices emphasizes the importance of the 'real' in overturning the reading of the stage event; what is undone in their work is 'the priority and the power of Logos' (Lehmann 1997: 56).

The relation between Forced Entertainment's work and deconstruction has already

been acknowledged by scholars such as Liz Tomlin, who argues that this relationship is not superficial, insofar as both share the same project of undoing the logic of totalities and idealities, and the Sheffield-based theatre group's 'skepticism of metaphysic certainties is well documented' (Tomlin 2008: 358). Tomlin relates formal traits, consistently developed in their theatrical experimentation, with Derrida's idea that there is no simple positivity and ideality of meaning, but that meaning emerges as an effect of a series; as such, Tomlin emphasizes those aspects of Forced Entertainment's work where there appears a 'dislocation of the sign-referent relationship between actor and character and the disruption of conventional narrative frameworks and representational theatre practice' (Tomlin 2008: 358). Moreover, she acknowledges the creation of 'a sophisticated theatrical vocabulary' (Tomlin 2008: 359) that sustains the unavailability of a simple presence or of the 'real'. Nevertheless, this case study will suggest that, while doing away with hierarchical distinctions is part of Forced Entertainment's theatrical project, the scepticism towards mimesis is not so straightforward – rather, it has a dramaturgical function. Thus, for Forced Entertainment, I would suggest, that mimesis is not rejected, but becomes the obstacle against which meaning and authenticity are to be recuperated. Their complex and perplexing aesthetics aims at making audiences aware of the negative aspect of the presumed neutrality of mimetic form, as well as enhancing the emptiness of (dramatic) cultural representations, their relation to elaboration, effect and consumerism. Tim Etchells' performances blur the distinction between feigned amateurism and real mimetic failure, produced as interruption. And it is interruption that problematizes the very construction of traditional theatre, its audiences, and even the stage personas themselves. This dramaturgical act is performed in order to problematize once again, through failure, what traditional theatre really misses: notions of fragility, vulnerability, guilt, desire and the very codification of theatrical exposure. It is through the troubling status of failure, its distinct negative status within capitalist society, that Forced Entertainment engage in fact in a critique of mainstream representations. With

the apparent means of criticizing mimesis, they also critique the relation between consumers and the general order of entertainment and its simulacra. Establishing aesthetic interest in working at the limits of theatre, this theatrical labour is concerned with its own possibility of dealing with the entrapment of theatre in discourse. In order to establish authentic communication within the theatre, mimesis has to be deconstructed. The very deconstructive gesture of this theatre is to make an event out of a failure that is undecidable and as such – in its very undecidability – theatrical. As such, this theatre engages with the failure to represent when there is nothing to be represented, the failure to represent when representation is faked, the faking of the failure to represent, or the representation of the failing to represent.

Against the pervasive postmodernist debates which argue that the 'category of self' has become 'redundant' (Gritzner 2008: 329), and which contest the modernist conception of the 'I', Karoline Gritzner recuperates the importance of the Derridean idea that the deconstructive project is concerned not with the act of destruction, but with the resituating of the subject. Gritzner's problematizing of the contemporary construction of subjectivity refers us to what she terms Adorno's notion of 'regressive subjectivity – that is, forms of subjectivity that have internalized the reifying structures of a capitalist commodity ideology which "impresses the same stamp on everything"'(Gritzner 2008: 330). 'Regressive subjectivity' develops the idea of the subject as being located in a profoundly troubling position, being haunted by the crisis of representation itself which (from a theatrical point of view) generates the multiplicity of approaches to meaning that can be found in the postdramatic. The difficulties emerging from a diminishing possibility for individual experience can be traced in the contradiction that emerges between the Enlightenment's ideological proclamation of universality and rationality and the event of the Holocaust, grasped as an event that defies every attempt at representational closure – history becomes non-representational occurrence. Arguing against the disappearance of a concept whose idea is essential for theatre and performance art, Gritzner emphasizes

that modernity itself understood the subject through the staging of its crisis. From this perspective, Forced Entertainment's work as the inheritor of the postmodern state of crisis, which opens up the possibility of deconstructing the basic codes and principles of the stage, results in a new image of the tension between technique and desire, which can contribute to a positioning of the subject; their theatre – considered by Gritzner as an expression of 'continued interest in explorations of the structures of subjectivity through the medium of theatre' (Gritzner 2008: 337) – can be read, as such, as a contemporary attempt to resist mainstream stereotypical reductions and the politics of representation.

Gritzner argues that in Forced Entertainment's work 'the emphasis on subjectivity (subjective experience) remains central, even though it is no longer exclusively linked to the principle of narrative illusion, but becomes increasingly articulated in moments of self-reflectivity experienced by individual audience members' (Gritzner 2008: 337). The direct interaction with audience members is seen by Gritzner as an act of empowering audiences, transforming them from passive observers into witnesses. However, I argue that the very nature of theatrical experience as proposed by Forced Entertainment is based on a continuous frustrating of and distancing from the expectations associated with the mimetic as a form that subdues character, by subsuming it under the demands of the whole – as a project that emphasizes the rationality of reality. Mimetic theatre's principles are mocked in a subversive gesture that endangers representation itself. This reconsidering of the role of the stage in criticizing traditional representation is effected with the help of some bruising encounters, an accidental trait, a misleading key, with happenstance and chance – a nexus of effects that create the opportunity for the emergence of a new desire that wills failure, not success. The brokenness of the theatre is not only a formal principle of the work but also emblematic of an attempt to deal with danger, stage fright, loss of meaning, even guilt. These circumstances contribute to a disturbance of 'the spectrum of ambition, accomplishment and activity' (Hutchison and Feist in Bailes 2011: 105), destabilizing the holistic and mimetic project while pointing to

the operations of investment of desire. Failure becomes important only in the context of a desiring subject. While, as Gritzner remarks, this theatre never does away completely with theatrical sets or the traditional relationship between audiences and performers, I would suggest they provide the means, instruments and signs that set the premises of a deconstruction of the theatre. In this theatre the successful communication is always prevented by an accident; it comes always a little too late or is too random; occurs on a stage disturbed by noise; or in a context where the set is always too flashy or too poor, and the performers always too indifferent or too randomly related to one another. In this regard, I would argue that this apparently anarchic theatre, which uses apparently inadequate instruments, disturbs the sense of order of the scenes, and mixes genres and registers, is ultimately a subversive attempt to represent the problematic disturbance of the order of representation. More fundamentally, perhaps, its fragmentary aesthetics is correlated with a cultural shift that allows for a reconsidering of intimacy and the subverting of a general cultural machine that produces representations. But, ultimately, the work of Forced Entertainment is only possible as an acknowledgement of the unstable nature of contemporary subjectivity itself.

Andrew Quick argues that Forced Entertainment's work points to the unrepresentable and therefore its involvement with the very questioning of theatre structure is part of a dramaturgy of the sublime. Quick argues that the traditional locating of the meaning of theatre in character, fictional time or narrative effaces 'other energies, forces, eddies, intensities, singularities that are in contestation because they refuse reduction to an origin, to a narratable and thus knowable point' (Quick 1994: 28). The traditional dynamic of the stage is involved and staged in their frustration of representation. The interest in a real as 'the absent origin of a representation' (Readings 1991: 96), embedded in the structure of theatrical form, is constant throughout their work, the company attempting to retrieve the very status of the real, often to produce catastrophic or comic effects; the real is the undecidable term which, turned into the

theatricalized representation, is correlated with a structure informed by aesthetic and political implications. It is in relation to this that I think one can speak of the 'iconoclasm' involved in the work of Forced Entertainment.

The idea of iconoclasm as a 'generalized parody of the transgression' (Belhaj Kacem 2010: 112) raises the very problem of the specificity and status of the theatrical sign. Nevertheless, the possibility of a critical discourse on representation has to acknowledge the accumulation of the capital that becomes – as Guy Debord once argued – pure image or spectacle. The peculiar representations on the stage enhance the idea of ambivalent participation on the part of an audience involved in both irrelevant and distracting presentations. The circumstance of spectacular liveness becomes a means of critique, allowing for an exposing of the contingency of failure; the characters/performers are both monstrous and all too familiar. These ambivalences of the capitalist order of consumption are exploited in Forced Entertainment's work, a group that favours the attempt at undoing the traditional linear dramaturgy, reducing it to a mere pretext, in order to create theatrical meditations on the play of surfaces that constitutes the singularity of the theatrical event, and the broken mirror of subjectivity. On the one hand, the extracting of representations from the real, the reframing of their irrelevance, and the exploring of their rhetorical development and limits, directs attention to what is now no longer the representative function of the representational sign; the very articulation of meaning and failure, process and desire, intention and response mobilizes a different dynamic of stage and auditorium.

Dealing with precarious resources and exposing the precarious nature of (mimetic) theatre itself, Forced Entertainment do away with the requirement of the spectacular and the impressive. The critique of mimetic illusion(s) and the liveness of the theatrical event contribute in Forced Entertainment's work to a reformulation of the stage and its relation to audiences. Nevertheless, this liveness, which appears improvisational and overly

emphatic, also problematizes the structure of communication, its reliance on effects, and the disappearance of a firm distinction between stage fiction and reality effects. This theatre points towards the palimpsestic nature of contemporary experience, its lack of structure and resolution; the present of accident, constructed as failure, serves as a lever for deconstructing a theatrical tradition based on the privileging of form over content, and mind over body. The ideas of competence and technique, their frustration through failure, contribute to the problematizing of a general equation of the notion of the subject with his performative practices, structured by the ideas of success and failure. By dealing with failure, Forced Entertainment contribute to a critique of both theatre and dramatic representations. As such, they bring to the fore the ambiguities inherent in the dichotomies that enable us to distinguish between high and low culture, the play of chance and adherence to principles and rules, and between mere performing and being authentic. Their work can be understood as the initiating of a play between the activation of the contents of archives, the already available meaning, and liveness as an opportunity to express a resistance to violent inscriptions of authority over the stage. At the centre of their spectacular collapse of the unified order of 'truth', the spectacular staging of the figure of the amateur functions not as a precarious figure, but as a principle that undoes this rational order. This particular paradoxical character of the amateur, inscribing difference and the different into the structure of stage discourse, ultimately points to its instability, its inability to subtend the order of mimesis, and to the possibility of a deconstruction of the additional theatrical situation. By being a supplement for the dramatic and mimetic stage, this theatre emphasized the coordinates of new possibilities. I would suggest that Forced Entertainment's work relies fundamentally on this blurring and problematizing of the relation of theatre to the real with the help of the in-between figure of the amateur – the idea that the amateur can be understood as a function and a figure, and that, by having the possibility of activating different statuses within the labour of performance, it constitutes a reassembling of the discourse of modernity regarding

theatre. The project of an enlightened rationality is inherently criticized, and the new situation supposes the possibility of enquiry rather than reliance on old forms and responses; the paradoxical figure of the amateur thus allows for the emergence of new theatrical situations. His problematic ontology makes him the primary theatrical force in Forced Entertainment's work.

In their work, the stage is not erased as a device, but rather, it is criticized, reframed, parodied, disrupted, emptied, and filled as part of the process of creating (theatrical) meanings. Theatrical meaning here emerges against the impossibility of conceiving theatre as a gesture of simply referring the stage to a reality existing in itself beyond the theatrical work. The traditional mimetic structure relies, of course, on a particular understanding of three elements: structure, order and telos, as Lehmann has pointed out. Indeed, the apparent transparency of the form is in fact the product of work: 'Logos signified a particular mixture of god, order, logic, causality, origin, father-image and the world' (Lehmann 1997: 56). Moreover, the traditional privileging of dramatic text in the mimetic theatre is asserted on the basis that 'only to the degree to which a text is considered as the privileged place of a certain architecture [can it be] assigned the highest place in theatre' (Lehmann 1997: 56). Against this, the act of deconstructing the stage event, with its various aspects of mimetic stage practice and aesthetics, amounts to shifting, in a fundamental way, the dynamic of the relationships established between various theatrical elements. Where, at first, Forced Entertainment engaged in a mere exploitation of the theatrical effect, emerging out of a resistance to traditional aesthetics – with early pieces, such as *Club of No Regrets* (1992), presenting a kind of commentary on the representative nature of mimetic representations – in their latest works, *The Notebook* and *Seeping Through*, Forced Entertainment reframe the very concept of theatricality and its relation to the subject. It is as if their texts now become the humiliated content of their stagings – used in order to elucidate the fragmentary approach of beings whose life is to be trapped in an order of language. This state of an inconclusive and

undecidable relation between text and subjectivity corresponds to Lehmann's description of their approach to mimesis: 'we often find attempts to alienate it, to twist or distort it, to perforate and dismember it, to degrade and humiliate it' (Lehmann 1997: 57). What, I would suggest, is so startling about their latest work, is precisely that their involvement in determining the proper place of the text onstage owes everything to this radical sense of theatricality that treats the authority of the text as something to be fundamentally dismantled.

The intrusion of the page, the pretended physical support of the script, into Forced Entertainment's later works acts as a metonymical instrument that poetically and theatrically reproduces the state of theatre's submission to the text, as well as pointing to the overwhelming of the individual in a world of writing/language and the loneliness of the performer addressing his solitary meditation to the audiences who are themselves trapped in the order of Derrida's 'il n'y a pas de hors-texte'. The stage event is constituted through the displacing of the traditional role of text and its reframing by putting at the centre of the work the page itself, as a reservoir of memory of uncertain provenance, whose translation from the signs on the page to its theatrical delivery is mediated by the performer who, in turn, represents an instance of cultural memory. As it involves the notion of responsibility, the page is used as a frame for discussing and reframing theatricality. It is the transitory nature of the act of reading and the ephemeral participation of audiences that is emphasized in the theatrical situation.

As the central place of dramaturgical mimesis is dismissed, three main effects occur, according to Lehmann: a change of the communication process, which now involves dialogue with the audiences; a change in the process behind aesthetic construction, and an appeal to audiences 'to synthesize the elements presented' (Lehmann 1997: 57). Alex Mermikides emphasizes the idea that, in spite of Forced Entertainment's desire to reject the 'theatrical', 'its work never quite seems to let it go'

(Mermikides in Harvie and Lavender 2010: 104). But I would suggest thinking this in an alternative way: rather than as a desire to dispel the theatrical, Forced Entertainment insist on the theatrical construction of desire. Thus, the reconsidering of the relation between performing and quotidian behaviour, with its apparent lack of theatricality, results in the staging of the clash between the representational and the will to communicate; theatre becomes both the means and the obstacle to communication that is both looked at and reframed by the stage. In order to portray the ineffectuality of the mimetic form, this theatre has to 'reload' the theatrical – to quote and reframe its relation to the significations purported by traditional form; the stagey becomes a means to stage a representation of failure and the failure of representation. Only in this way can it deal with the repressed relation between theatre and desire. The desire for a show is supplemented by the inability of the mimetic stage to picture the real; or conversely, the disappearance of the reassurances of the mimetic evoke the nostalgia for a closed fictive world, whose representation was thought to be related to the world.

An attempt to 'reduce' somehow the theatrical situation to a meaningful one is pointed at through the very adoption of flashy costumes, props and sets and the setting of conditions for the failing of the rhetoric of traditional theatrical speech on the stage. An apparently loose theatrical structure, which no longer portrays a dense and cohesive world, but merely subversively and ironically comments on the theatrical situation, accommodates on the other hand, and under the appearance of an improvisation, the image of a broken, unitary world and a powerful critique of mimesis. Breaking down theatre's relation to its own rules, the mimetic stage is exposed in its ineffectuality, exhibitionism, falsehood and authoritative pretences. A questioning of the obviously 'wrong' manner of doing things onstage is set onstage in order to raise problems regarding the communicational aspect of theatre. It is in this blurring of the distinction between professional and amateurish that the value of Forced Entertainment's work emerges; playing around and with the expectation of meaning, the performers often supplement

their acts and words with commentary or confessions – with the promise of truth, which belongs to the deceptions of the stage itself. Nevertheless, this is but one strategy to play upon the expectation of the spectator to attend psychological acts rather than properly engaging with the problematic of illusion and its relation to the real in the theatrical works. I would suggest here the idea that the very pretence revealed in the act of confession spoken by the performer – a confessional situation faked in theatre or at least deliberately contaminated by its theatricality – is a comment on the general order of confessions that are related to a testifying of presence. Moreover, this notion of the authenticity of the confession is related to the 'baggage' of bourgeois theatre with its emphasis on affirmative culture and values.

Therefore, I suggest that Forced Entertainment's theatre is not a theatre of confessions and authenticity – of an anti-theatricality – but one of vulnerability, which theatricality reveals: the performers deal with the ambivalence of the theatrical and mimetic situation, which erupts once the assumed overlapping between actor and role is thrown into question. This theatre boldly raises the problem of the effective theatrical gesture. In the promise of liveness, with its claim to being authentic, 'real' and more honest, precarity and accidentality are contrasted with the purported truth of theatre without establishing priorities or hierarchies. In fact, it is the spectator's role to understand the role of procrastinations, interruptions, desires and failure, and the constant movement towards undoing what is theatrically 'interesting'. As Derrida notes, hesitation is part of the act of communication. Nevertheless, no hierarchical opposition can contribute to the reading of this problematic and programmatic fragmentary form. Undoing the firm distinction between spectacular and boring, reason and accident, technical command and desire to perform, this theatre stages the clash between the representation and the will to communicate. The improbability of an accomplishment of sovereignty in Bataille's sense is evident in their entrapment in a traditional logic of representation that prevents, as an epistemological obstacle, the retrieving of the meaning

of the 'real'. Subjectivity is transformed into a theatrical discourse that brings into play desire, guilt and other private emotions. Creating a theatre of intensities and excesses, Forced Entertainment focus on affect; distancing themselves from the logic of the traditional stage through an apparent lack of command and qualification, they intend to create new possibilities for communicating the anxiety, the uncertainty, and the brokenness that rests on former possibilities. It is the binding of human life to representations and language that is staged as a tragic condition. And as 'tragic', the work deals with the repressed contents of our cultural unconscious: the accident, the precarious, the ruins and the remains – all that resists a simple linear logic and the hierarchical structuring becomes a matter of and for discourse. Text fails and, with it, the stage itself is recuperated as the possibility of the resilience of meaning.

Let me summarize some of these dramaturgical innovations at play in the work of Forced Entertainment, before finally examining their deployment in a few case studies: creating an aesthetical distance, the feigning of impotence becomes a means of resignifying the body's belonging to the symbolic order – emphasizing the dissonance between the personal and the reductionist aesthetic of mimesis. A critique of traditional theatre, whose communicational abilities have been reduced by its submitting to the logic of rationality, is done by the rejection of technique. Exposing the stage's subordination to the domination of rational rules, and portraying their failure to achieve a sufficient standard, the performers introduce audiences to a perplexing theatrical situation: the failing of the representation, the failure of trained actors and the opening of the stage to accidents pertaining to the 'real'. Eliciting either laughter or pity, the performers hand over to their audiences a difficult emotional situation, their dealing with embarrassment, ridicule, fear. The persistent use of failure exposes the audience in Forced Entertainment's work to a reconsidering of the role of affect within the economy of theatrical expectation. Playing around with the failing of mimetic desire, which is confined to the limits of what is rational, the performances stage consistently the failure

of expectations, the permanent destabilizing of the will to form. These, I would suggest, are the key dramaturgical tactics that can be found in Forced Entertainment's critical deconstruction of the stage.

What it produces, I have argued, is a type of theatre that exposes and critiques traditional theatre, which is described by Derrida as a representative structure relying on the prompter. For Forced Entertainment, what remains of the theatre appears in its very questioning of the status of theatrical text and its relation with technique – it is this that allows for a new exploration of theatrical agency and subjectivity. Forced Entertainment's interest in recuperating the material repressed by the traditional (non-contradictory) conception of character in theatre, the exposing of the gratuitousness and ineffectuality of the mimetic form, the necessity of deconstruction as a preliminary step for making new meanings emerge, creates a new dramaturgy that problematizes the endangerment of meaning. The divergence between desire and technique in reshaping the theatrical situation, and the lack of affinity between the mimetic form and contemporary reality is emphasized. Finally, by undoing the traditional architecture of the mimetic, which privileges the text, Forced Entertainment aim at shaking the mimetic totality and opening the problem of staging authenticity and the conditions that allow this communication to emerge. If within their work the 'real' is framed by the theatrical emergence of the embarrassing mistake, and if authenticity is claimed in the form of a self-reflexive confession that apparently puts audiences and performers on the same page, the reciprocal reliance of fiction and fact, their belonging to the structure of a general writing in Derrida's understanding of the term, involves a new dramaturgy. This dramaturgical intervention shifts the understanding of the theatrical from being a self-sufficient mimetic reproduction to a gesture that reframes human agency in a world made by writing and allows for the recuperation of the aesthetic value of this underspectacular form through the act of reflection. As desire is also a deconstructive device, its emergence and adventures are at the same time equivalent to the overcoming of theatre's subordination

to the mimetic condition, an attempt at recuperating agency, at dismissing the voyeuristic attitude of audiences. However, Forced Entertainment's conception of stage action, supplementary to reframing the problem of the prompter and offering an image of our entrapment in the order of representations, raises the problem of the mimetic form in undoing its own ineffectuality, emptiness, irrelevance, and even repressive function; the criticizing of the mimetic, characterized by both centre and linearity, will result in a decentred text.

3.3. Case Studies

I have argued that Forced Entertainment's work plays with the registers of mimetic technique and faked amateurish theatre behaviour in order to expose the context of reducing the subject to a rational, non-contradictory and self-present construct. By blurring the lines between theatrical reality, which represents a series of failures to conform to the mimetic rules and codes, and the subjective enactment of desire, pointing to interruptions and gaps, it disturbs the coordinates of traditional logocentric thinking. What I would now like to show is how, in employing the means of theatrical failure, Forced Entertainment are able to question the traditional association between technique and (rational) telos – producing a theatre that is able to disassociate desire from its association with reason. By creating the appearance of amateurish or civil behaviour onstage, as the ensuing case studies indicate, they create the opportunity for deconstructing the space of traditional theatre discourse, demonstrating the persistence of the theatrical in spite of the marginalization of the spectacular, and at the same time exposing the limits inherent in the conception of the subject supported by the dramatic model.

3.3. A. *Showtime* (1996)

The performance of *Showtime* begins with the appearance onstage of the performer Richard Lowden who has strapped a time bomb around his chest, whose effect is to emphasize the passing of real time. The first moments of the play become a kind of preface for what is about to happen – Lowden's monologue intones the commandments of the stage: that the actor should establish a rapport with the audience in the first 30 seconds and get the audience on their side by making themself memorable. The pressure of entertaining is highlighted by the presence of the bomb, which confronts the audience with the possibility of Lowden's 'theatrical' exploding, while nevertheless making them feel reassured by the theatrical contract that ('in reality') no harm will be done to him. The audience's initial curiosity is nevertheless betrayed, as nothing happens besides this non-theatrical and unnecessary exposition of the aesthetic calculus behind the 'magic' of representation. It is the very structure of theatrical communication that this (fake?) performer disrupts, shaking the confidence of the audience in the order of representation and perhaps articulating that which should never be exposed: the secret tricks of theatre professionals, for in mimetic theatre the audiences aim at taking the voyeuristic privilege permitted by illusion for granted. By separating words and action, participating in an image that does not really fit into the expectations of the audience in the theatre, this event creates a disturbing new logic, which is nevertheless unstable, enabling the accidental to take the place of the Aristotelian 'probability' that orders conventional dramatic action. A marginal disappointment is correlated with Lowden's exposing himself in a manner that is not permitted in traditional theatre, as his words have made the audience aware of his failure. This failing transforms the spectator's act of interested seeing into a distanced glance; the precarity of the moment makes the audience question the reasoning behind this blunt exhibition of theatre's lack – what is supposed to be kept hidden from audiences comes to the fore in the form of both a speaking and an acting practice that dismantles the illusion. In dismantling the illusion, the audiences

themselves seem misplaced. Nevertheless, the palimpsestic nature and multiplicity of the performative registers that make the show will be based on revealing the anxieties of 'being' in the theatre. The threat to which the actor who lacks lines, or at least good lines, is exposed is the exposure of the performer's 'self'. Ineffectuality and disappointment will shape the theatre which, in his being there in front of the audience, he tries to commit to them in a representation that does away with the comfort of mimesis, and represents the concurrence and intersection between many sorts of failures. The performer's task is to fail – and this failure is part of the communicative dramaturgy that explores the opportunity opened up by the refusal of mimetic escapism. Failing his audiences in his attempt to commit to memory an act of real communication, Lowden supplements his (apparently staged) stage fright, which is an essential part of theatre. The real, vulnerable condition of being onstage is radicalized by this dramaturgy.

Lowden's performance of stage fright is nevertheless interrupted by a clever technical trick: some of his attempts to focus on his performance are rendered laughable by the intrusion on the stage of a pantomime dog and two pantomime trees, 'which attempt to change the scenery inconspicuously behind him, but fall into a slapstick routine as they trip over their costumes and begin to fight with each other' (Tomlin 2008: 359). The farce introduces a moment of relief in the otherwise tense expectation created by Lowden's initial moment of failure, of which the performers themselves are aware: the farce offers a reassurance that the 'show' will continue, and this allows the audience to overcome the affect that forced them to confront (and identify with) the embarrassing failure of the performer. It is uncertain, of course, whether this really is an introduction to a 'show', a preface or a clever artifice, but by this very overlapping of different theatrical means, instruments and rhetoric, the opening moments point ultimately to the necessity of working with and through the emotions and expectations of the audience. The apparent disorganization of the performance is in fact constructed by a carefully crafted defiance of mimetic meaning. If the performance achieves its goal by failing, Tim Etchells' group

exposes its audience to the limits of a general economy of self-gratification. In short, if Lowden elicits a kind of terrible and unfortunate attention by failing, in so doing he reminds us that, for Forced Entertainment, the emphasis on the accidental – as the fundamental occurrence of the stage event – is also the way to question the totalities and idealities that originated with mimesis. In order to establish the possibility of a true connection with their audiences, Forced Entertainment's theatre has to do away with the 'screen' that permits the mimetic recuperation of the 'real' in the structure of the dramaturgy. Their theatre, instead, exposes the idea that, behind the carefully crafted mimetic construction of a fictional universe, technique provides the means of diminishing the responsibility of the performer with regard to the acts that are represented. What Forced Entertainment seem to imply is that the responsibility of the performer as regards the reproducing of theatrical form onstage has to be reframed, and subjected to a new kind of responsibility. Such circumstances are based in acknowledging the possibility of failing – its necessity and the act of failing itself. Furthermore, this theatre problematizes failure, as the failing of the mimetic form proves to be felicitous for advancing new relationships between texts and performers. Throughout the continuous development of Forced Entertainment, and their conception of theatre, the failure of the moment of mimetic performance is extended to encompass the failure of the mimetic structure as such.

3.3. B. *Speak Bitterness* (1994)

But what are the relationships between performative text, impersonation and the effects of bringing into the structure of the stage event the repressed materiality of the performance (the page, the technique, the absence)? I will suggest – in attempting to answer this question – that the integration of the traditionally repressed material of hesitation and detour at the level of theatrical content, as well as the page itself into the

structure of the stage event, constitutes Forced Entertainment's novel approach to the problem of subjectivity, which I would like to grasp here through the sense of Bataille's notion of sovereignty. I will emphasize the fact that authenticity is, in their work, in fact adopted from bourgeois theatre and represents a non-deconstructed theatrical value. As such, it prevents the full deconstruction of the theatrical event, even if this is the desired outcome of the deconstructive process at play in their work.

The ambivalence of traditional mimetic form is brought before an analytical deconstructive tool in Forced Entertainment's theatrical pieces. Their project represents an attempt to liberate theatre from the requirement to represent in art the interests behind the power distribution in society as a whole. Moreover, this situation is complicated by the general surplus of representations circulating in the 'infotainment' world. In an attempt to undo the formalism associated with purified forms that led to the autonomizing of the aesthetic rule, Forced Entertainment seek to outline the ambivalence of the mimetic dramaturgy, which is hidden beyond the apparent clarity and well-made mimetic constructions that dominate the stage, even today. What they propose is the intrusion on the stage of rough forms. The passivity of the consumer is countered in their work by the proposal of open structures that are incomplete and perplexing, relying on cognitive dissonance and presupposing the active participation and work of the spectator. The audience member is involved in an operation of having to make sense of the dissonances between the expectations and experiences proposed on Forced Entertainment's stage, which also presuppose a dissonance in the relation of the performer with the stage material.

According to Bataille, prohibition is 'quite the opposite of the world of discourse that science derives from' (Bataille in Sollers in Botting 1998: 79). The correlation of labour and consciousness is therefore predicated upon the existence of the inviolable rule that constitutes the basis of rationality, making 'the world of discourse… prohibition's

mode of being' (Botting 1998: 79); as such, language permanently points to the prohibition of the signifier itself. We might extrapolate this idea to the constitution of the scientific discourse on theatre in Aristotle's *Poetics*, and see theatre in relation to the permanent menace of transgression as a dissolution of form; subjectivity is imposed as the rule from the outside, and excess seems a parody or a moment to be suppressed in a world dominated by reason. Botting explains the paradoxical situation of language pointing to the prohibition by emphasizing Freud's idea of the unconscious, which makes 'the meaning of discourse… exterior' (Botting 1998: 80) to the discourse itself. Nevertheless, the discourse is a detour of the forbidden, a constitution of a movement through which the human is constructed in opposition to the animal; as such, dealing with the repressed involves transgression. As transgression is not a suppressing of the prohibition but a completion of it, the play within it determines and results in man's 'birth, development, expenditure and death' (Botting 1998: 76). Transgression and law are, in the social economy, 'the empty "compartments" of what we might call the symbolic organ' (Botting 1998: 76). In this context, the pseudo-transgression of the capitalist era, the non-differentiation that suggests the lifting of the prohibition on desire and the attempts to marginalize work by celebrating the individual's 'liberation', directs attention to a new agreement in 'indifferentiation': having thrown man into an order of repetition that levels desire and expression, humanity and obscenity, apparent discourse and silence, the transgression of the semantic register of the signifier as the source of theatre is to be sought in the non-agreement between the modernist project and the new attempts at sovereign expression. It is, says Botting, as 'if the absence of resistance made it impossible to anchor thought, abandoned it to a shapeless and contemptible gratuitousness, incapable of understanding itself in its own movement' (Botting 1998: 77).

The durational piece *Speak Bitterness* involves a long series of confessions permitted by the syntactical structure of what 'we' did. Several performers sit in front of a long table filled with the pages that constitute the blueprint of the performance. They

confront the audience with a permanent toing and froing of the accidental as well as the emotional memory of a wrongdoing. Their presence mediates between the material they are supposed to convey and a culture that, by denying transgression, seems to naturalize – in the form of confession – the troubling content of the interdiction; as such, the guilt that belongs to the private space of intimacy is put into a form of parenthesis by being uncertainly brought into question, tamed in a syntactical, predictable structure and a feeling of restlessness, masked in the performance by the apparent self-assuredness of the performers. The tension between the self-command requested from the performers and the uncertain position of error or moral mistake is questioned in the structure of the staged event. Becoming a theatrical device for questioning the relation between discourse and being, guilt and denial, the wrongness is exploited and the durational aspect of the piece annuls the programmatic rational stand against transgression. Moreover, the transference of guilt and its sharing between the performers, the audience and the society as a whole creates a multilayered performance, activating the problem of meaning, failure and completion. Considering psychoanalysis as a framework that shapes contemporary culture, the event can also trigger the idea of a permanent deferral of guilt, to the point that it becomes unlocalizable. By acknowledging this, mistake becomes the impulse beyond an attempt to localize the proper response to ethical fault; the very evanescence of responsibility in contemporary society transforms guilt into a topic to be reconsidered in the event of producing meaning. The durational aspect of the piece, then, is an attempt to undo the pervasive rejection of mistake as the opposite of rational agency, in an attempt to create a possibility for new meaning.

The impulse that points beyond the improvisation directs us to the possibility of taking over the position of the other – when the crime is not committed by anyone in particular, and therefore the meaning and consequence remain anonymous – and also to the possibility of the confessional moment itself. The ignoring of the consequence, which is reduced to an echo that is permanently supplemented by other confessions,

nevertheless aims to bring into the present the idea of an effect, or reaction. The very content of the stage is permanently destabilized by the perpetual change of point of interest. Accidental mistakes blend into a fabric of performance that destabilizes the perception of the spectator, who is not offered the opportunity to respond in real time to the challenge proposed by the stage. As such, the spectator searching for his own place in the event is made to witness an infernal machinery that advances against the desire for completion, and as such prepares the spectator, in the tiredness or respites of irruption, to be touched by the excess of the theatre; the stage functions like machinery that both proposes the predictability of the theatre and overexposure to the events associated with guilt, in order to prepare its audience members for being touched and confronted with the particular instances of guilt that overwhelm us emotionally. The structural use of repetition creates a sense of predictability that is constantly frustrated by the emotional commitment of the performer who insists on confessing, despite being relativized by another moment in the series of confessions.

The challenging of the relation between performers and stage, as well as the confrontational aspect of the stage discourse, is made possible by the duality between work and the repressed association between guilt and punishment, resulting in numbness and irresponsibility. The lack of consideration of the performers with regard to the confession that has just taken place, which is articulated with a steady voice, both contributes to a disturbing realization that the confession is displaced from its proper place, as the origin of a problem, and to the permanent supplementing of confessions and their accumulation; the very absence of the time of the response emphasizes the troubling condition of anonymity of guilt, its presence in the space of its being omitted. Here, the stage represents a contract of expectations against which a different truth is asserted.

3.3. C. *The Notebook* (2014)

The Notebook is derived from a bildungsroman novel; the theatrical event is based on the narrative, which describes the process of becoming amoral in the context of the general historical violence and famine during World War Two. The story – taking as a setting a small village in Hungary near the border with Germany – presents the audience with unsettling material, based on the story of two twins who are abandoned by their mother into the care of their grandmother. The tension between the traditional economy of theatrical representation and the rendering present of the past, exposing the succession of facts that lead to the transformation of two loving boys into monsters, stands at the basis of the intriguing attention that this work stirs in us: the process of the kids' maturing exposes the stages and anatomy of a situation that results in their willing themselves to become insensitive to the violence of the world, proposing an unsettling meditation through the means of theatre on the nature of subjectivity. Alarming and perplexing, inconclusive and much too cruel, the narrative enacted by the twins, decades after this process has finished, enhances the perversions of subjectivity and their relation to disturbing situations. Performing the ethical dilemma at the heart of the story, the staged event nevertheless somehow problematizes the ambivalent relation among representation, violence and the unavailability of pertinent discourses on the story's amoral subjects – the twins' reading, their sense of complicity and the conspiratorial nature of their evolution into monsters problematizes reality and its relation to theatre. As the twins now belong to the world, and seem to have been displaced from it for only a brief time, in order to frame their story and provoke an attempt at meaning, theatre becomes for a short while a mode of enquiry into the nature of the real. What it demonstrates is that theatricality stands not in the spectacular deployment of sets, but instead on the tension that emerges between the scarcity of representational means and the ethically problematic event. As the stage creates the memory of the past, it also refers it to the present moment and to the necessity of recuperating an understanding of the

inhuman; the stage reproduces a visually and emotionally acute narrative of the general overturning of the humanist system of values in the context of the Second World War.

The story, which is seen through the eyes of two boys displaced from the city and abandoned by their mother into the care of a grandmother they didn't even know they had, testifies to the reality of war in a discourse that ambivalently links together amorality and innocence. As the horrors of the war surround them, they actively abandon all resort to the loving memory of their mother through submitting one another to beatings; the aim is to get emotionally numb, which is a quality necessary, they suppose, in order to survive. Searching for their security and the basic things in life like good shoes, they choose to replace the memories of their mother's kindness with vivid images of war, and a preparedness to survive at all costs – even in a general state of disarray. Their development is marked by the acknowledgement of the horror of war as an everyday occurrence; thus deprived by the task of trying to survive, they gradually develop a general insensitivity towards humanity in acquiring the skills necessary to do this. The emotionally nourishing memory of the past is replaced and reframed through the war. The two well-behaved boys discover the harsh realities of having to do manual labour in the countryside in order to eat; they have to premeditate and make plans in order to get new shoes for which they don't have enough money. They find out they cannot depend on anyone but themselves. In exposing themselves to ritual beatings – and to the realities of war – the boys attempt to become immune to pain and, in this way, impose on themselves the duty to forget humanity – represented by their loving mother. Cruelty shapes the world around them – their own grandmother is suspected among the locals of having poisoned her husband. She is a terrifying figure on whom they cannot rely. A bath they are promised at some point by the local priest is corrupted when the priest's maid sexually abuses the twins, while the priest himself offers financial support to a seemingly promiscuous teenage girl in exchange for sexual favours. The story ends with the twins sacrificing their own father, who is attempting to cross the border to escape to another

country. The father who had deserted them blindly trusts the two boys, not knowing that the war has shaped them into amoral beings, capable of displaying emotions for their own purposes. Both victims and perpetrators, the twins have now adjusted to the broken order, and have turned into survival machines. It is fatality that drives their actions. The troubling aspect of the story emerges from the way they supplement each other in testifying to the most horrendous acts. Their desired emotional numbing, adapting them to the harsh reality of both war and abomination, becomes in time the incapacity to feel. They are self-aware, disillusioned yet incapable of judging the world; their behaviour raises the question of the similarity between forgiveness and compromise, irresponsibility and amorality.

The story told through the eyes of the boys seems at times a marvelous, vivid story of survival amidst a grandmother and other locals who perform the most graphic and at times monstrous acts. However, this is a story about performing obedience, which brings to the fore the very question of responsibility. The horrifying side of the story is emphasized by the mundane delivery of the speech of the two performers, two middle-aged men, which demonstrates a sense of command and a certain respect towards their audience. Their presence, from their first entrance onto the stage, and their way of reading, involves the idea that they did survive. As such, Forced Entertainment employ a postdramatic strategy of making the end the beginning, and directing the audience's attention not towards the plot, but to the transformation of the stage into a place of deliberation. Through their very testimony, the performers become the proof that the grotesque and anecdotal overlap, and in this manner they deny their audiences the role of passive contemplator. They moderate the effects of the audience rather than just simply relating to them a brutal story of survival. The story offers the picture of a world that offers no comfort or even acknowledgement of the tragedy that perverted the sense of belonging of the two boys to humanity. The gesture of the performers, raising their eyes from the page in order to look at one another, the almost machinic and calculated aspect of their

reading and of their interruptions, evoke not just a realistic staging but the very collaborative state that shaped the story's existence. It is as if, outside themselves, there is another world, and the two worlds are not reducible to one another. Their poise and unenthusiastic tone; the lack of affected theatricality; their permanent reliance on the pages they hold – all point precisely to both an enhancement of and a counterpoint to our received sense of what reality is supposed to look like. The anti-mimetic and theatrical quality of the staging is present in reproducing an experience, its rereading made possible by shifting the focus towards a reconsidering of the responsibility of the audience; the stage's constant use of the page enhances the presence of the document that reconfigures around it representations and values. The two performers representing the twin boys bring to the fore both the repression of subjectivity during the state of war and the problem of responsibility.

3.3. D. *Seeping Through* (2015)

The idea of a resonance between the different layers of the theatrical event is advanced through a different conception of the relation between text and performer, where – in *Seeping Through* – the meaning of the text overwhelms the possibility of interpretation. The performance consists in Tim Etchells' picking up a random card from a stash that represents ideas which were abandoned in previous theatrical projects. In advancing an underperformed, minimalist attempt at restoring the meaning of text, in bringing onstage the image of the search usually performed in rehearsals, it is the polyvalence of the text that comes to the fore – not its unitary meaning as a 'work'. By bringing improvisation onto the stage, the text itself and its relation to representation and affect is questioned. A series of repeated attempts to restore the remains of theatre and to play with its meaning is what constitutes the performative event, which opens text as if it were related to an uncertain wound; the performer adapts to the logic of the text in order

to express himself, his repressed emotions, contradicting the traditional understanding which posits text as the primary and authoritative principle. The relation between text and subject is undone, explored and inverted. Nevertheless, as the text refuses categorical thinking, appearing impervious to a final meaning, it is transformed into the possibility of play itself. Pointing to a traditionally invisible work that informs the representation, the stage also points to a history and to the possibility of making meaning out of an event; the performance emphasizes the idea that theatre is not merely a craft, but a play with meaning that can be related to danger. By engaging with the erratic act of signifying, Tim Etchells points to the inconclusive relation between text and subjectivity, affect and representation. While he performs this search for an enigmatic clarity, which both exposes and hides, a violinist accompanies his efforts – amplifying the emotional quality of this attempt to go beyond a state of dispersion. Pointing to the polyvalence of meanings of the same enigmatic utterance, which is reworked in repetitions that emphasize the inconclusivity of text itself, the text is revealed to be decipherable only through the work of affect. Multiple emotional reformulations emphasize the relational aspect of all communication, which makes textual meaning not only informational, but also resonant, able to elicit certain affects, to overwhelm its own understanding as a conveyor of a rational message, to play around with its own excess; the differences between the utterances of the same bit of text evoke both an obsession with the 'right' meaning and the repression of that which explodes all meaningful limits. Nevertheless, as Etchells' performance makes clear, the definitive reading and thus writing is an impossibility. The component of theatrical improvisation is thus used as a means of interrogating the authenticity of the relation between affect and text. For this reason, I would suggest that the play on the stage can be described through Derrida's notion of trace and his idea of intensity. 'The text is not conceivable in an originary or modified mode of presence. The unconscious text is already a weave of pure traces, differences in which meaning and force inscribe themselves – a text nowhere present, consisting of archives which are always

already transcriptions' (Derrida in Hobson 1998: 22).

Coming after an apprehension of general dissolution of form and totalities, the event stages the return of the repressed affect, the residual element that marginalizes and overpowers the structure of rational communication, staging through its own problematic disruption the relation between reason and repression. The violin that exposes its materiality and dissonant aesthetic points to the disruptive processes happening 'offstage', both in theatre and in life; beyond the carefully framed image and the simple acts of designation and illustration, the enigmatic text of the unconscious, waiting to be articulated and understood, points to the limits and realities of representational thinking, its being shaped by violence against the ineffable. Beyond mimesis, affect and memory are set into play, in a piece that fundamentally adopts disruption as its dramaturgical principle and attempts to restore resonance as the possibility of engaging with meaning. Pointing to an uncertain intrusion of the repressed, which according to Lacan is related to language, Etchells explores the resonances that constitute the relation between surface and depth. A demystification of the traditional subject, its being surrounded by information, lines from old movies, the memory of a certain light and absence, all reducible to traces, is replicated in this theatrical piece; the subject as trapped in the order of words, seeking understanding or expression which nevertheless will fail him again as an attempt to address the violent inscription of representation. It is in the in-between of performer and written card, audience and noise, desire and impotence, that a durational tableau of contemporary subjectivity emerges. By exposing the cards on which suggestions are made, the economy of theatrical meaning is turned upside down, in an act that fundamentally acknowledges the circumstance associated with our entrapment in language. The problem of responsibility emerges in the uncertain web of relations between the different bits and pieces, alternations of music, word and the random act of wandering around the room. The surface of the text and its enigma is preserved in the act of the performer, Tim Etchells, who improvises repeatedly around bits of text found on

the cards, which represent the remains of other projects and remnants of other intentional acts. Rhythmically punctuating the emotional action, the page emerges as a representative of the not yet meaningful word. Without formal rules the cards and the performer picture a theatre deprived of and disconnected from the authority of traditional mimesis. By openly placing work on the stage and letting it permeate the liminal boundary between psychic and physical image, text, subject, improvisation are reconfigured in a refunctioning of theatrical meaning. This operation of exposing the work of performance links subjectivity with theatrical improvisation rather than with a mimetic aesthetic. The audiences are involved in dealing with the turbulent rests of a memory, in the persistence of an image whose meaning appears strange and familiar at the same time; standing in opposition to their early emphasis on the dead letter, *Seeping Through* presents the letter in relation to the spirited. Emotion and text are brought to live audiences in their divergence, the effect being the recuperation (through theatrical labour) of an unsettling desire and of different choices. Nevertheless, even if this work is situated outside any reliance on mimesis, the 'truth' of the utterance, inscribed in the possibility of a certain relation between things, haunts the stage in this troubling examination of the irreducibility of desire to formal presentation.

Chapter Four

Rimini Protokoll: Dramaturgies of Mediation and Remediation

4.1. Postdramatic Theatre and the Problem of Representation

Insofar as the postdramatic is fundamentally a disruption of the pretence of the mimetic form and its claims to transparency and universality, its dramaturgies outline and question the divide between representation and its repressed, which also has consequences in terms of dramaturgical form. The experimental nature of postdramatic dramaturgy outlines and reflects a cultural reconsideration of the status of the subject on the stage, whose fictional status is reworked, stressed, taken to the limits, as the character is no longer subjugated to the authority of the text, but becomes an entity making demands in the 'formation of the theatrical situation, of the role of the spectator within it, and on the mode of its communicative processes' (Lehmann 2006: 85). Proposing a new 'type of sign usage in theatre that turns… levels of theatre upside down through the structurally changed quality of the performance text', the postdramatic necessarily (re)addresses the problem of representation. Text and performativity are balanced against a realness of the world which no longer exists for and in itself, as Derrida helped us understand, but through the very distancing between fictiousness and fact, the gratuitous and the practical, the political and the formless.

By making visible the political and historical constraints that structure the mimetic as universal, theatre also directs attention to both the repressed and to acts of dispossession. Becoming involved in a retrieval of the discourses on the marginal as resulting from acts of social (mis)representation, theatre contributes to the shaping of the social spaces of society. Enhancing the conditions that exclude marginal positions and

restricting them from participation in the public sphere, postdramatic theatre points to the necessity of reconfiguring the field of the real and its representations, by establishing the means for critical reflection on its conditions of visibility. By foregrounding the study of the relation between politics and representation, theatre points to the politics of perception. Formal experiments into frustration of the representation associated with politics result in a troubling of the political. The opening up of 'possibilities for modes of life which have no intelligible place in the heteronormative structures of kinship' (Athanasiou 2013: 59) is made possible through the search for new imaginative and theatrical possibilities that were eluded in the traditional mimetic dramaturgies. Due to their repressed presence and also restricted access to the representational, the Other has to 'come into being, and can only come into being, on the occasion of relations with others, and so it is "located" precisely in and as the relation itself' (Butler 2013: 122). As such, presence is an effect of text, which has to break the patterns and habitual formulas of the theatre in order to generate this emergence within the general field of representations constituted through writing. The violence of theatre's inscription and the remediating practice of solicitation are restructuring the space of the encounter, making it more ethical and democratic.

The very (re)distribution of the sensible through theatre can be approached in two different manners: through Rancière's notion of emancipation, which can be related to Barthes's idea that a (psycho)analysis of paradigms and institutions can lead to empowerment, or Bourdieu's idea that 'social structures cannot be changed by the exchange of knowledge of wisdom, but only through the accretion of bodily experiences' (Eldeman 2012: 27). The theatrical reappropriation of the problem of representation impacts on the elaboration of theatrical form, the raising of a socially relevant matter, the questioning of politics and the highlighting of a cultural change emerging from a reshaping of reality through the emergence of new structures of production, knowledge and communication. The intertextuality, the hybridity of forms, the irruption of the 'real'

onstage are not merely means to frustrate representation, but new ways of participating in the world which impact on the very constitution of the theatrical. I will try to foreground the idea that by transgressing, exposing and questioning the pertinence of rules determining the distribution of the sensible, the political becomes a theatrical matter.

The desire for an authentic representation of the world and an understanding of the processes of participation in a globalized order is disturbed in a media-dominated society by the continuous production of the sensational; this production of spectacles extends into the private sphere of experience, shifting the coordinates of the relation between collective and personal experience.

Nevertheless, I will try to argue in this case study that the aesthetic dismissal of the order of mimesis is supplemented by a more fundamental reworking of the relation between the real and representation, which is underway with the emergence of representations mediated by the emergence of new technologies: producing representations that have an uncertain status in relation to the real. As simulacra and simulations constitute the content and interfaces through which the world as such is depicted and dissimulated in the same gesture, theatre assumes an uncertain position in the economy of symbols and representation. It is the indeterminacy of the images that restructures our relationships to the reality that stands at the basis of the contemporary obsession with the real, a term that seems to paradoxically evade any attempt to grasp its meaning, whose understanding is forever postponed, reminiscent of Derrida's warning about presence as a mere effect and impossible occurrence. The urgency of readdressing the problem of representation is imposed by a cultural shift foregrounded by the availability of new technologies that alter and marginalize their symbolic relation to the real referent. Inasmuch as being a social individual implies being involved in the production of content over – for instance – iPads and applications, representation ceases

to be the reproducing of a structure of 'real' things; instead it becomes an articulation of, and vehicle for, lines of force and desire, proposing other types of relations than those available before the apparition of 'infotainment'. When software allows increasingly for operations of chance, representation takes the form of a joint operation: it reworks the conception of the consumer as an individual involved in a general interactivity with the real; the new reality formed through mediatic modes of representation brings to the fore the alteration and blurring of the lines that once distinguished content and form. As such, it enhances a new model, where the subject as participant is determined by the network of choices that both mediate his relation to the world and privilege notions like modulation, intensities, becoming. I will foreground the idea that this reconsideration of representation is involved in and indeed provides the very means for creating a new distribution of the sensible.

As a new interest in the category of the 'real' is paralleled by the transformation of the world into data, a new 'theatre of the real' – as Carol Martin (2010) terms it – is forced into recuperating the aesthetic and political values behind acts of mediation, representation and interaction. As representation, a term with a highly charged meaning in theatre, is contested along with the history of this traditional medium, its inherently inconclusive relationship with a reality it was supposed to represent is brought to the fore as the main destabilizing theme to be theatrically developed in the documentary space of theatre; as such, the documentary theatre embraces the deconstruction of real 'documents' in order to frustrate mainstream representations – that is to say, representations that resemble journalistic research. Nevertheless, an unavoidable ambiguity stands at the basis of this approach, as the propensity of the stage to theatricalize its subject matter risks pretensions of authenticity. For this reason, theatrical documentary, unlike film documentary using real subjects, and unlike docudrama on television, is menaced by the spectre of moral ambivalence and the misrepresentation of 'characters'. Martin proposes the idea that at the basis of this theatre there are two

dramaturgical constraints: 'the questioning of the relationship between facts and truth' and 'the acknowledgement of the contradictions of staging the real within the frame of the fictional' (Martin 2010: 3).

Moreover, the reconsideration of representation, in its ability to subtend interactivity, leads to the questioning of the reality of representation itself, in order to testify to new types of social relationships that emerge with the globalized market where different times and spaces interfere with one another, creating successful or unsuccessful events. For this reason, a different conception of representation emerges through new technologies that blur the lines between fictionality and the real to the extent that reality becomes multiple, based on simultaneities, operations of chance, and so on. Moreover, the pervasive use of new technology points to a relation of supplementarity between the body and representations, and to an extension of the individual through interactive platforms that marginalize and reconfigure the relations between the individual and the world. In response to this technological transformation, through its reshaping of the relation between individual and 'truth' and 'world', new documentary theatre begins to mobilize research into the coordinates that are made possible by the new paradigm of instant communication. This new theatre gives up its pretence at universality, once associated with the act of representing, in order to become a privileged place for the questioning of the contextual and quotidian; it becomes a theatre of facts, and even statistics.

Contemporary theatre finds itself in the position of (re)considering its own (out-of-date mimetic) heritage and, through the documentary turn, engages in a critique of its own means of representation as part of a new project that aims to reflect a task made urgent by the process of globalization, at the centre of which is the question of democratic access to representation. As part of this most urgent task, the very modalities of developing fictive theatrical discourse – plot, character, text – are reframed in a

perspective that favours the intrusion of documents, proofs and new ways of describing the world, deriving from the journalistic perspective, from which they borrow, while marginalizing fictive tropes. A new emphasis on the objective value of the theatre suggests a breakthrough allowed by the fragmentation of the work and the displacing of the subject from its traditional, unquestioned, privileged central place. The new theatrical aesthetic founded on notions of embodiment and participation is theatrical inasmuch as it questions the relation between representation and representation's repressed; this attempt to represent new types of participation in the real involves an engagement with what Rancière describes as the problem of the partage: 'what is made common, but also what draws the line between and separates the two sides of what is seeable and invisible, audible and inaudible, possible and impossible' (Rancière 2011: 10). As representation is exposed as a product of historical tensions and conflicts, besides its being an aesthetic construct, the attempt to recuperate the real in theatre involves the recuperation of the theatricality of the marginal condition, evoking interesting tensions between the 'real' and the fabricated.

Contemporary documentary theatre investigates the very instruments of representation in an attempt that reformulates 'theatre as an act of positive consequence' (Martin 2010: 4). As the cultural capital of social representations becomes the central term in this conflict, the undoing of the logic behind cultural accumulation becomes the principle on which the value of procedures is asserted. This leads to a difficulty related to exposing how the mimetic instruments, borrowed from theatre, serve a different purpose in the field of the real – a difficulty that stands at the basis of the adoption, in documentary theatre, of the formal strategies of postdramatic theatre practice. Nevertheless, unlike theatres that 'strive for an experience of the real' (Lehmann 2006: 134) under the influence of performance art, documentary theatre exemplifies the resistance to every undue reliance on 'truth' as purported by reality shows, media reporting or docudramas. By directing attention towards the structures of mediation, this type of theatrical

investigation fundamentally relies on the ability of theatre to circumvent a facile negotiation between facts, truth and meaning. The troubling, the undoing and the subversion of the assumptions of the mimetic stage, revealed through the doubling of the referent, as well as populating the stage with documents, represents a fundamental part of the new aesthetic strategy. These strategies are theatrically centred on the discrepancy between accident and task, rhetoric and document, referent and performer.

Martin emphasizes the fact that the creative task of reinventing the means of a theatre of the real involves 'multiple histories, aesthetic legacies, artistic forms and sociopolitical purposes' (Martin 2010: 2). The theatrical strategies are informed by an acknowledgement that 'truth is contextual, multiple and subject to manipulations' and 'things occur by chance' (Martin 2010: 3).

The authentic as an attempt to recuperate a hidden layer behind reality as we know it raises the question of who writes history; an inherent subversion is expressed in transitory and ephemeral configurations which reshape the understanding of history and point to the problematic aspect on which the theatre of the real is both made relevant and can be built. As such, documentary theatre work investigates and refers to our limited awareness as regards the representation of the very figures and numbers that inform our late capitalist world. This type of investigation can be seen as a theatrical account of the limits of the mimetic model, which critiques traditional notions of subject, plot, dramatic structure, while favouring the troubling detail, the accidental, the liminal; surveying the world of relations of production as such is a mere pretext for a work that aims at destabilizing the late capitalist attitude, proposing the survey as a means of transgression, and outlining our reliance on outmoded ways of producing 'truth'.

The problem of the archive derives from its presupposing a set of criteria of selection which are relevant to a particular conception of power, and the violence of inscription, as described by Derrida, is thus a fundamental dimension of the archive; the

emphasis on data activates the problem of design and modes of presentation.

Rimini Protokoll are a German theatre group whose practice departs from already existing realities in order to draw attention to both the invisibility of the marginal in social contexts and the dramaturgies of public spaces in the city and globalized market. Creating contexts of proximity between marginal subjects and middle-class audiences, the directorial team creates opportunities for empowerment and stimulates social sharing. Taking a position against mainstream representation, their work theatrically configures opportunities for participation and exchange, mapping the city through truck journeys, audio tours, or walking practices. Nevertheless, it is their use of technology for mapping those who are deprived of social recognition/representation that stands at the basis of a theatrical reframing of the real in relation to the shift in the conditions of experiencing and perception.

In concluding this section: Rimini Protokoll's emphasizing authenticity becomes a strategic means of directing attention towards unheard-of voices, which challenges the idea that the production of contemporary history as discourse is accessible to all subjects equally. The liminal status of the subjects brought onstage is allowed by the formal freedom of postdramatic theatre, but instead of a formal testifying to the dissolution of the subjective, their testimonies contribute to a destabilizing of official accounts of history; by bringing to the stage the relevance of philosophical discourses such as Marx's *Capital* or the discourse of cargo drivers, they challenge official histories and aim to bring into focus the relation between the violence of omission in official discourse and alternative histories.

4.2. Rimini Protokoll and the Theatre of Experts

Rimini Protokoll are perhaps the best representatives of this new interest in the

dramaturgies of the real, emerging from a reconsideration of the aesthetic status of data, statistics, manuals, interviews or long-distance calls, as well as from the problematizing of the migrating, liminal or marginal subject, situated uncomfortably in the in-between of identities and places. In spite of their interest in depicting the real, in Rimini Protokoll's work 'facts cannot be separated from fiction' (Malzacher in Martin 2010: 82). They bring onto their stage experts of the everyday, whose real stories are reframed and edited in a way that testifies to an unambiguous and committed attention to the troubling content of the real. Moreover, their theatrical work revolves around the attempt to reframe methodologies of researching and presenting, in an attempt to grasp new theatrical forms to testify for the real. The company's strategies of devising the material in such a way as to protect the non-trained, non-'professional' performers, to frame relevant detail and mediate a comprehensive image of the chosen topic, focus on the recuperation of authenticity into the fabric of the theatrical event. Accidents made unavoidable by the very use of non-trained performers, such as encouraging error through the speed of delivering a spoken line, contribute to the overall effect of the 'appearance of honesty' (Malzacher in Martin 2010: 84). Offering personal accounts of stories deprived of visibility by mainstream media, the experts become the bearers of a transgressive gesture of recuperating both subjectivity and authenticity. 'Insecurity and fragility' (Malzacher in Martin 2010: 84) are integral parts of a discussion of the liminal, and the order of chance to which the performers belong through their very lack of acting skills.

First, an all-accommodating 'logic of the journal', seldom relying on objective data, informs the thematic interest in the authenticity of the expert's testimonies at the expense of their performative skills. Second, the dramaturgical structure developed around personal accounts of real people aims at facilitating the subjective implication of the expert into the testimonial act, while at the same time protecting the non-trained performers. Third, an important part of the process of creating Rimini Protokoll's work is the constitution of the very framework in which the revealing detail can be emphasized

and preserved. As such, the biographical data, actual script and rehearsal process constitute three series of processes that inform the actual presentation.

The interference of expertise and dramaturgical skills in the production of Rimini Protokoll's theatre work also advances a challenge to the pervasive adoption of theatrical metaphors in sociological discourse in order to describe the diversity and multiplicity of contemporary cultural practice. The theatricality of the stage is a platform that, along with its specific strategies, serves to 'stake a claim for the particular, concrete person and against the politically generalised' (Malzacher in Martin 2010: 80); as such, their dramaturgical work is meant to explore individuation and to preserve the values informing personal lived discourse, which reflects the context as shaped by general issues, conditions and influences. As the dramaturgies employed attend both to the problem of the cultural context and the condition of the individual, Rimini Protokoll 'make theatre political rather than political theatre' (Malzacher in Martin 2010: 81).

The theatrical research of Rimini Protokoll can be understood as a permanent reflection on the impact of ideologies, social mechanisms and labour in shaping individual life; the abstract topic is addressed by privileging and constructing a methodology which seems invisible in the mode of presentation. The processes underlying the selection of subjects are only elusive in the final product, and suggest a theatricality of the subject as such, inasmuch as his troubling story resonates with other stories that make the fabric of the event. The active participation of the dramaturgs is effected in different ways over the three stages of their work, remaining silent in the form of the provocations they seek to construct: the casting of subjects, the listening to their story in view of editing the raw material, and the rehearsing of the piece are all informed by a musical dramaturgical principle, but also by an interest in the theatricality of the politically repressed.

4.3. The Place of the Marginal Subject in Rimini Protokoll's Work/Precarious Subjects and Dramaturgies

To draw attention onstage to the extreme horror happening to real people in the presence of the bearers of this suffering is to emphasize and deconstruct the limits of the stage. Brodar (2014) emphasizes the idea that such an approach to the real overwhelms the possibilities of theatre and that the act of being onstage and presenting suffering can only occur through employing the frame and instruments of conceptual art. As such, a basic design advances the stance that 'the ethical prevails over its aesthetic counterpart' (Brodar 2014: 209). The audience is first of all solicited to become aware of the real nature of the stories and the very transformation of the audience into witnesses introduces a challenge into the relation between audience and stage. The nature of the event does not privilege a fictive and passive approach but a real-time encounter between individuals, mediated by a curiosity that can seldom become mere voyeuristic interest, but also by a display of knowledge and expertise in regard to the main topic. The multiperspectival approach is built within the structure of the event. The forging of a real relationship with the audiences is seldom mediated by a meta-text in which the experts briefly represent the story of their engagement with the spectatorial team, the stages and processes that transformed them from everyday individuals to performers of their own stories. An informal legerity is supplemented by accidental discomfort at being seen, which is acknowledged and inbuilt through what the directorial team calls 'the dramaturgy of care'. Nevertheless, the vulnerability of the performers is challenged when the experts bring to the fore associations that generate a general discomfort in the spectator when it comes to acknowledging certain real manifestations – as we shall soon see.

Rimini Protokoll's theatre is 'an intermediate and therefore impure space between the dramatic form and the documentary' (Arfara 2009: 113). Arfara considers that their

emphasis on constructing theatre practice from the document reveals the 'inadequacy of reductive binary oppositions such as the fictional and the pragmatic, imagination and empirical truth, information and affective value' (Arfara 2009: 113). The in-betweenness 'excludes any dogmatism or authoritarian presence of objectivity' (Arfara 2009: 114), seeking instead to redefine 'the theatrical event as a social practice' (Arfara 2009: 115). By dismissing dramatic framing and eschewing character-like representation, Rimini Protokoll aim at reinfusing the stage with an ethical recuperation of the marginal subject. Characterized by a particular type of invisible labour, mapping his own invisible journey into the urban spaces the documentary stage inhabits, his figure supports ethical demands on the part of the audience. The use of marginal subjects as experts and the framing of their real expertise on everyday activities within the context of the stage practice directs attention to the lack of visibility and political representation of such individuals. The very question of the relation between identity and representation is therefore raised. As such, Rimini Protokoll's privileging of the marginal can be related to a conceptual perspective, within which the 'anti-artistic, often un-artistic idiom anchored on an amateuristic attitude… privileges the idea rather than the material and experience rather than contemplation' (Arfara 2009: 115). The conceptual base involves the possibility of a rupture with the representational context and sets a provocation into the very structure of the event. The goals of this practice are the displacing of the marginal from his invisible situation, the framing of the ethical solicitation of the audience member through a dramaturgy constructed around real proximity and distancing effects, and the emergence of 'an energetic spectatorship' (Arfara 2009: 115).

The desire to stimulate awareness is mediated by the use of documents and procedures that inform social and labour practices. While the speech of the experts seldom seems unrehearsed due to their lack of voice training, the overall framing of their presence is dramaturgically articulated. This mixing of informal and formal approaches puts the spectator into an active position, within which he is responsible for synthesizing

and reconnecting 'temporal and spatial differences in order to access the information – objectivity is not a simple matter' (Arfara 2009: 117). Moreover, the recuperation of difference as singularity challenges the representational politics of traditional theatre.

'The gazes are by no means contained within the fictitious walls of the story; they open out to the audience' (Brodar 2014: 211). Unusual dramaturgical formats in Rimini Protokoll's theatre pieces attempt to work against the desideratum of a complete and finite whole offered for consumption, subjugating theatrical constructions to a different desire: that of enhancing the feeling of realness of the piece and framing the urgency of addressing certain ethico-political tasks. The aesthetic tropes used in structuring this type of staged event, which departs from pre-existing stories, enhance the controversial nature of some subjects and, in particular, the horrific nature of topics such as the war (*Situation Rooms*). Moreover, they document a link between this exclusion from the public space of difficult subjects and their being represented in a dramatic manner in mass media news programmes. Many Rimini Protokoll theatre works, such as *Breaking News* (2007) or *Situation Rooms* (2013) , are 'urging for a critical reflection on the mass media' (Arfara 2009: 115). The performances directing attention to the underprivileged and marginal advance a formal design that defies the dramatic model, seeking to simultaneously offer the possibility of an interaction between the privileged insider and the outsider, the immersion into a distinct experience of temporality and the possibility of a social critique.

The interweaving of formal and informal strategies is activated by the conceptual approach, the theatre of the experts, which enhances the urgency of addressing the controversial nature of the practices and topics surveyed by the directorial team. A minimalist use of technology in *Call Cutta* (2005) allows a spectacular experience of the city in a surprisingly interesting dialogue, activating the possibility of cancelling objective distance and reconsidering the production of desire. As the underprivileged interlocutor, the call centre operator, whose presence in the piece is prepared by research and work

frames the experience of his/her interlocutor, the piece draws attention to the hidden misbalances of economic power and their role in shaping the worldwide economy. Even though the operator in *Call Cutta* shares her own stories, mapping a historical and subjective context, the details are probably previously determined as part of the script used by the company. The production of subjectivity is but an effect, as Derrida warned. Because of this, a troubling question regarding privacy, anonymity and subjectivity emerges through the very participation (of the 'real' expert) in such a performative event; while gratifying the participant with a recognition of his background and even his immediate surroundings, pointing to the objective detail as a means of creating awareness of the immediate surroundings, this spectacular experience of the tele cinematic directing of attention raises the problem of surveillance technology and the scripting of our desires for the use of lucrative economy. At the same time, the event also acknowledges the erasing of the inequality of status into the age of democratic access to knowledge; the call centre operator is not allowed to complain about taking shifts at night in order to direct and make pleasurable the promenade of some unknown person in Berlin.

4.4. The Conceptual Dimension of the Theatre of the Experts

Rimini Protokoll's theatrical work revolves around creating dramaturgies that enable the self-presentation of individuals lacking theatre experience and social exposure, who are put in the centre of theatrical pieces as experts on everyday life. The main modality of presentation emerges from the attempt at tracing their everyday trajectories and activities, in a mode that points to certain realities obscured by representations of both mass media and political discourse. Their performances offer a glimpse into the unspectacular conditions and relations of production emerging from the changing of the labour market in the context of globalization, stimulating, through a meditation on the condition of the marginal, a critical distance from the dominant economic representation

of life. Their work can be assimilated to a kind of theatrical journalism that reports on the real conditions of the marginal, considered as such due to its peripheral and particular position in the labour market. Framing a particular socially relevant or intriguing situation such as bankruptcy or political defeat, or the consequences for the worker of an impairment – either through a permanent or temporary condition such as aging or disability – Rimini Protokoll's projects 'take on the character of a social experiment, a social utopia, a theatre in which every individual is interesting and valuable in their own way' (Eva Behrendt 2007: 72–3). Moreover, their pragmatic combination of technology, unskilled performers and documentary models draws attention to theatricality as a means to enhance social participation. Daniel Wetzel succinctly formulates the role of theatricality in their work: 'We are exploring theatre as a model for experience instead of representation' (Wetzel in O'Rourke 2013: 93).

By dismissing the black box and organizing preplanned tours of the busy spaces and locations of the city, Rimini Protokoll's theatre maps a subjective cartography of the city, restoring a sense of participation in an increasingly dispersed world. One of the main problems exposed by their work is that of the conditions of labour of underprivileged workers, testifying to an attempt to redefine the actual realities of the working market. Apart from the city's marginal figures, Rimini Protokoll are interested in the migratory subjects that evoke the invisible work associated with the globalizing of the labour market. By putting at the centre of the theatrical work evidence obtained about realities that invisibly sustain the city, the German theatre group emphasizes the participation of their audiences in hidden structures of power, chains of production and consumption, considering them as witnesses rather than passive spectators. In the context in which representation has itself become a commodity and exchange value, the German theatre group deconstructs the representations of the privileged in order to enhance proximity and relations of power that shape the contemporary, highly technologized world. Moreover, the very idea of proximity is theatrical inasmuch as it proposes displacement

in order to enhance the confinement of the marginal into a series of uncritical assumptions that generate his or her social and political invisibility. The very act of representing the marginal supposes an activation of the premises on which such a marginalizing is possible, therefore contributing to the idea of a more just world. As such, theatricality is retrieved as an ethical attempt to recreate the face of the Other, and the act of the encounter prepared by Rimini Protokoll envelops an act of solicitation. The theatrical situation is advanced with the purpose of creating the relation between the regular audience member and the other.

Rimini Protokoll's investigation of the space of the city is informed by a subjective approach. Activating a hitherto unknown, unseen space of the city, a space that is usually taken for granted, has several dimensions: awareness of the specific details and context, practices, and their reconfiguring through events that reframe temporality, allowing for a contemplative distance. In the case of the pieces that involve touring, the city landscape becomes a scenography. Specific methods of framing and montage draw attention to the experiential nature of social exclusion or marginalization, which is first identified and thoroughly researched by the directorial team. The intriguing nature of subjects that lack a proper mode of representation, such as aging, conditions of precarious labour, imposed early retirement, and so on, informs a first stage of the project, the casting of the subject-experts. 'The work really starts from detachment, from an interest in strangers: doing something with a Conservative politician or a police man' (Haug in Mumford 2013: 154). The dramaturgical decisions that inform the piece are made on the basis of the objective firsthand experiences the subjects are able and willing to share, which are decided by the degree of complicity and trust established between real-life figures and the directorial team. As such, an ethical 'protocol' is at work even before the work activates its proposal and enters into a spectatorial situation. The space of the stage becomes an extension of the space of activity of the other, functioning as both the enabler of their participation in the theatre event and as a means to reframe our perception of reality. The particular

interest Rimini Protokoll have in presenting the real surroundings and contexts of the marginal, the documentary as well as aesthetic practice that informs the framing of the event, is supplemented by the creation of a particular experience of time. It is in this framing of the city as a spatial and temporal event that Rimini Protokoll reproduce a theatrical framework departing from the city and the real expert. The use of space points to Lefebvre's understanding of social space as 'a (social) product… the space thus produced also serves as a tool for thought and action; that in addition to being a means of production, it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power' (Lefevbre in Brezjek in Birgfeld 2015: 60). I would like to suggest that Rimini Protokoll's use of space is framed critically while the shaping of temporality, rhythm, pacing contributes to the aesthetic dimensions of their pieces.

The works that are developed and which depart from the experience as seen through the eyes of the experts offer a shifting and troubling image of the testimony that seeks to both retrieve the focus on significant detail and frame the presentation for the viewer. The task of presenting otherness demands an imaginative use of theatrical strategies and expressive means which are supposed to secretly support and enhance the sense of 'realness' built into the encounter with mainstream audiences. Against a pervasive notion of theatricality as artificiality, theatricality for Rimini Protokoll restores the possibility of presence to the invisible and thus lends pertinence to the marginal. The shaping of the temporalities into multilayered and complex theatrical events envelops and highlights the embedding of the subject of research into the same macrostructures occupied by the audience member, while highlighting the underprivileged's confinement to marginal positions. Protected by a 'dramaturgy of care' that affords the subjects the possibility of failing, of losing the pace of their emotional journey, of forgetting the line or missing a cue onstage, the subjects are furthermore framed as presences, and enhanced as such by the ethical approach to the sensitive material of the directors. The directorial team is concerned not only with framing relevant clues but also with recognizing in these

real individuals a particularly pleasing quality related to their voice or body and thus working to enhance it. As such, the dramaturgical framing is both based on an economic principle of making communication effective at the expense of the unity of the fiction, offering their audiences a fragmented and ambiguous image of the real, and on the attempt to enhance the expressivity of a certain aural quality. The experts 'embody a certain part of society, a certain profession, or a certain competence, which has moulded them, which informs their thinking, and even the way they look' (Boenisch 2008 http://www.rimini-protokoll.de/website/en/article_2824.html). Sitting in front of the audience, the performers turn invisible projects into stories and representations, their assumed marginality into an empowering situation, reversing the objective misinterpretation of mainstream representations – and the marginalizing and exclusion from the public sphere of particular subjects relating to invisible work, migration, disability, and so on.

4.5. Case Studies: Intercultural Theatre

Rimini Protokoll 'invents performative formats and space-making strategies that provoke the experiencing and the practising of the city' (Brejzek in Birgfeld 2015: 60). Without the particular walking practices used by Rimini Protokoll for inserting the spectator into hidden urban places, most of the subjects would seem to be impossible to imagine. Their work focuses on the '"camera obscura" of the capitalist mode of production', bypassing the social and economic distance between middle-class audiences with their expectations and the wage workers who 'enter into contractual relations as a free legal subject in order to become the object of exploitation in the sphere of production' (Milohnic 2012: 78). Moreover, the work bypasses the usual approach of artists to social and political reality. Milohnic emphasizes the idea that, by making use of amateurish and circumstantial performers, they advance a practice related to 'non-acting', to Brecht's idea

of 'proletarian acting' as opposed to dilettantism, and they construct a practice as 'artivists' (Milohnic 2012: 76). This type of artistic work involves extensive research on current realities derived from 'insecure and irregular work' (Milohnic 2012: 78), resulting in discoveries such as that of the 'crude despotism of the factory', a reality which is obscured by 'the illusionary freedom of the market' (Milohnic 2012: 78).

4.5. A. *Cargo Sofia-X* (2006): The Mapping of Space

Cargo Sofia-X is one of the most relevant examples of this kind of work. The piece is framed as a cargo experience during which the spectators experience the transformation of the cartography of the transit routes in Europe into subjective accounts of the social and economic conditions that inform their travel paths through the continent. As such they map inequality and offer the image of a space in the making, constituted by the very act of attending and the reframing of the experts' usual acts, interactions and surroundings. The idea that 'the social space [is] not an empty arena within which we conduct our lives' but 'rather… something we construct and which others construct about us' is supplemented by the enhancing of the idea that 'space is mobile, always changing, always open to revision and potentially fragile' (Massey in Brejzek in Birgfeld 2015: 61–2). The space of European cargo routes is doubled by the encounter of the social performers with their audiences, which they occupy along with the cargo. Moreover, the audience's position in the cargo zone allows for different approaches to the performers. On some occasions the black box (of the shipping container) replicates the experiential conditions and structures of a black box theatre studio; in other situations a window that separates them from the drivers allows for a cinematic framing, the projection of documentary material makes the audience avid consumers of documentary practices, while the accidental interactions of the drivers with the others in gas stations offers details of personal and social interactions.

The drivers of the cargo trucks in *Cargo Sofia-X* transport goods across Europe on a tight schedule, without ever having the time to be interested in seeing the tourist attractions or shop in the big cities through which they travel. Confined to the space of the truck for the length of their European tour made of long highways, border crossings and countless parking lots, the Bulgarian truck drivers Vento and Nedjalko testify to a different way of experiencing Europe. The truck is the scenography for evoking the drivers' daily lives and the poor working conditions related to the changing of the trade practices and labour market in the context of globalization. They secondarily perform their own Bulgarian identities and marginal political status; the long hours of labour, their uneventful journey and depersonalizing work are juxtaposed with personal memories. 'But that does not even interest me. I only think about my family,' says one of the experts. The drivers' talk evokes the long hours of work, or the hours waiting in long queues at borders, or reports on the illegal practices of the transportation firms, or the bribing of politicians, evoking a kind of spectral Europe and an unprivileged participation in hidden circuits of production and consumption. The theatricality in this particular piece is determined by the unsettling portrayal of strangers in a way that activates 'the viewer as urban and social researcher' (Brejzek in Birgfeld 2015: 62); the strangeness of the performers is determined through the impersonality of their experiences, by their being determined by macro and microstructures. The 'commitment to an artistic material practice that strives to show what it is' (Brejzek in Birgfeld 2015: 59), the piece evokes the ethical demand to accept the other by transforming our understanding of him and grasping his otherness while rejecting his fixation 'as an alien being that exists prior to the encounter' (Ahmed in Mumford 2013: 162). Unlike other pieces where Rimini Protokoll aim to provoke the inclusion of the marginal, in *Cargo Sofia-X* his preservation as the other seems necessary in order to evoke the ghostly presence of a hidden double of the daily economy that circulates in the physical form of transit around the world. With the help of different media such as 'short documentary films about the organizational and

operational methods of various international transport and logistics companies' (Dreysse 2008: 91), as well as private accounts of the circuits and networks of globalization, the spectators are put into different relations with the realities surrounding their presence in the cargo transport. The audience member is requested to become aware of the fact that he can 'only get a small insight into, and not a full knowledge of, what it is like to live in this foreign world' (Mumford 2013: 163). As such, the piece proposes the doubling of 'factual accounts of the political, social and economic structures of globalisation' (Dreysse 2008: 92) with the living image of a shared intimacy of the drivers with the precarious conditions of work. A meditative stance emerges out of the troubling portrayal of the two strangers, who point at the realities of the global economy.

In spite of its emphasis on the desire to appropriately depict the Other, Rimini Protokoll's *Cargo Sofia-X* reveals 'social antagonism and the revelation of the audience's complicity in exclusive practices' (Mumford 2013: 161). The denying of the confines of the illusory representation of the 'as if' in favour of expert presence allows the raising of the problem of the politics of representation. Rimini Protokoll raises the problem of adequate criteria for researching and exploring a real professional practice under the conditions of that practice's being determined by different social and economically particular conditions than the one of the audience or dramaturgs. In the case of intercultural practice and migrant workers, the presentation of experts whose narrative practices are generated as based on other cultural norms might incorporate accidental misappropriations. The integration of a meta-text in Rimini Protokoll's pieces represents the process of negotiating meaning, which is especially relevant in intercultural theatre practice. Menacing the dramaturgy of the piece, the figure of the stranger demands processes of negotiation, and a mediation of accessibility, the correlation between vulnerability and empowerment, exposure on the stage and disclosure through the performance space and text. Mumford analyses the experts' narratives in *Cargo Sofia-X* through the idea that the division of the space and labour is a necessary dramaturgical

tool through which the audience experience a privileged glimpse into the lives of the truck drivers, while not altering in any way the experiencing of the experts as strangers. Owing to this, the audiences experience 'a short and social "pleasure" ride', while, in contrast, the experts are defined by 'a high degree of confinement, social isolation and exclusion' (Mumford 2013: 161). As a consequence, the dramaturgy of the piece is a multilayered event during which the supplementation of the testimonies of the drivers with unspectacular images from all over the city offers an overview of a hidden and highly structured reality of commerce. Nevertheless, the dramaturgy of the piece can also be understood as a portrayal of the darker side of historical and economical processes whose novelty and reliance on exploitation prevents them from having a proper representation in the cultural space of the theatre. The permanent shifting of perspective between fact, comment and documentation attempts to allude to a mapping of the problematic aspects of globalization.

The possibility of 'ethical communication' with cultural strangers is described by Sara Ahmed as 'about a certain way of holding proximity and distance together' in such a way that the 'impossibility of pure proximity can be put to work' (Ahmed 2000:157). I would argue that the very structure of the encounter with the Other is a task that has to overcome both the relativism and the relations of domination predicated on the basis of the pretentions of hegemony. The presence of the stranger is an event – in Badiou's terms, 'a supplement that is hazardous, unpredictable, disappearing as it appears' (Badiou in Neveux 2013: 126) – and as an event it is incapable of representing. As the contrary of a theatre which 'represents the representation' (Badiou in Neveux 2013: 126), the theatre of the event is the only one that can surprise through the novelty of the emerging situation. Moreover, Badiou emphasizes the idea that 'the sole principle of the contemporary art is to not be "Occidental"' (Badiou in Neveux 2013: 128), in the sense explained by Neveux – democracy as a Western concept, understood as the Occidental idea of freedom, as communication and circulation (Neveux 2013: 128). As such, the emergence of the

stranger is made against the prejudice, the mass media stereotype, or popular derision; for Badiou the problem is 'the problem of their capacity, in the world as it is, and this capacity is after all their language, their possibility to name their desire, to point out their enemies, to deceive them by a superior intelligence' (Badiou 2010: 15).

Moreover, the spectatorial position in the postdramatic theatre of Rimini Protokoll is an inflational one. As the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben points out, 'the condition of Raphael without hands is in a certain sense the normal spiritual condition of any spectator who actually cares about the work of art, and the experience of art can only be the experience of an absolute split' (Agamben 1999: 47).

Paradoxically, it is the theatrical administration of space – in Rimini Protokoll – that reframes the experiential nature of the social subjects whose position is rendered marginal in and by the system that puts them to work. The acts of attending the assemblage of experts' stories, testimonies regarding marginality, are structured dramaturgically in such a way as to allow for both the participation and critical distancing of the audience. The theatrical pieces incorporate in the dramaturgy of the piece the meta-text that represents in front of the spectator the act of negotiating meaning in different stages of the rehearsal process. Unlike traditional theatre, which keeps invisible the work behind the perfect form and relies on convention and technique, the directorial team here is involved in acts of negotiating significant detail and framing the experience of the Other.

4.5. B. *Mr Dagacar* (2010) : The Ethnographic and the Aesthetic

Mr Dagacar is a theatrical piece about the trash collectors and recyclers in Istanbul. Apart from the insight offered into the nature of their everyday realities, the group of experts also agreed to the inclusion of a dance performance, which they created,

that offered an optimistic tone. In spite of this not constituting an aesthetic decision by the directorial team, the embedding of the experts' dance into the stage event contributed to the expressivity of the piece. It has resulted in 'a portrayal of the trash collectors that challenged an abject image of downtrodden eyesores with a counter-image of an energized and creative collective' (Mumford 2013: 163). In this particular piece the Kurdish dance can be read as a counterpoint to the oppression of this ethnic group within the wider Turkish culture. As such, representation of culture reveals its problematic status, being reflected in a simultaneous distancing allowed by the difference in ethnic background, and a spatial proximity rendered aesthetically pleasurable by the choreography. Distance and proximity are orchestrated in Rimini Protokoll's pieces, which aim to decipher through acts of self-presentation and documentation the inscription of the social order onto the body.

The supplementation of theatrical strategies of framing the real with suggestive moments serves in 'acknowledging the partiality of any insight into foreign worlds' (Mumford 2013: 166). Their pieces' formats challenge in ambiguous ways the hegemony of representation, and this is reflected in their general 'mode of operation', determined by the desire 'to refuse closure, make offers, show excerpts, stimulate' (Mumford 2013: 163). Therefore, both ethnographic and aesthetic approaches to the documentation used in the piece interweave in the construction of an unstable theatrical play that attempts to grasp the 'reality' of the subject. Fictionality and documentation concur with the fabrication of the theatrical event, conjuring a state of uncertainty in the spectator. The city is both material and stage (Brejzek in Birgfeld 2015), and its theatricality is appropriately activated by the presentation of the confrontation and interaction between the marginal subject and the city they inhabit. Moreover, what is represented is the result of an 'axial division of labor' that 'divides production into core and peripheral production processes' (Milohnic 2012: 73). Within this context, the practice of the marginal is not only an ephemeral act of self-presentation but also an empowering moment – a reframing of

experience mediated by theatrical means, aimed at contributing to social change. As Deleuze writes: 'You will be a subject, nailed down as one, a subject of the enunciation recoiled into a subject of the statement – otherwise you're just a tramp' (Deleuze 2004: 177). These encounters with marginal subjects are meetings which 'reopen the prior histories of encounter that violate and fix others in regimes of difference' (Mumford 2013: 161).

4.6. Formal Strategies: The Use of Technology and the Critique of Mass Media Representation

Theatricality as the modality of undoing mainstream representation advanced by the entertainment industry informs Rimini Protokoll's work. The reality effect, mediated by a mimetic tradition which emphasizes focusing on the fictive display of psychologies when confronted with dramatic obstacles, is criticized in its territorializing of theatre as a bourgeois activity. The lack of (unbiased) representation of the marginal is part of a greater problem of legitimacy and authorship. Stereotyped daytime television that fails to acknowledge the vulnerability of the marginal subject, or displaces him from real circumstances and relocates him into a dramaturgically falsifying drama, is questioned by Rimini Protokoll with theatrical means.

In *Sabenation. Go Home and Follow the News* (2003), a piece about the bankruptcy of a Belgian airline, Rimini Protokoll 'explicitly confront the methods of representation used by the media' (Dreysse 2008: 88). The theatrical recuperation of the vulnerable is projected against the cliché exploited by the mass media. Myriam Reitanos's overnight transformation into a marketable figure is an example of this practice that exploits personal suffering, creating stereotyped images of individuals for the purpose of gaining audiences. Followed by television everywhere, Reitanos stirred the interest of the mass media as a victim of unemployment resulting from the bankruptcy of the airline.

Being a single mother whose real desperation at not being able to feed her five-year-old child was caught by a news reporter, her image became annexed to the emotional narratives exploited by TV programmes. Becoming a subject of further media attention, the melodramatic framing of her situation advanced Reitanos as a victim, while obscuring the discussion of the real economical and social aspects involved in the bankruptcy. As such, the theatrical reframing of the event was a means 'to reclaim her role as a subject of… biography' (Dreysse 2008: 89). Moreover, the piece *Sabenation* foregrounds the uneventful reality of the lack of employment, constituted by fear, anxiety, tiredness. This uneventful reality is fictionalized onstage and draws attention to the emotional difficulties resulting from macroscale events. Kris Depoorter, another unemployed expert, explains: 'At home, I walk up and down the rooms. I can't stand still.' Using tape, he recreates onstage his apartment. We are allowed to see how this in-between situation of unemployment strains to the limit the state of impossibility, of not having anything to do. The emptiness is illustrated in a way that testifies to the experience of confinement but also the accomplishment of the individual through belonging to a social reality.

Walter Benjamin's idea of 'text as a forest in which the reader is the hunter' appropriately describes the spectatorial experience here, according to Brejzek (Brejzek in Birgfeld 2015: 63). The mediation devices, the exposure gained only through field trips, or the displacing of the disabled from their usual surroundings and empowering them onstage, contribute to space-making strategies. The city is activated as an urban scenography, populated by traces of the past, passers-by, faceless drivers and economic migrants. The framing of the city as a network allowing for a variety of trajectories and as a place of segregation informs the theatricality of turning the unspectacular into an expressive and/or informative documentary piece. By expanding the experience of space in a variety of ways, they expose places rendered hidden by ideology, mainstream imagery or disability. Rimini Protokoll 'activate the interstitial spaces in and between nodes of urban consumption and mobility, along transnational transportation routes, on rooftops

and in factory halls' (Brejzek in Birgfeld 2015: 59).

4.6. A. *Call Cutta in a Box* (2008)

The 'intercontinental phone play' (Cornish 2010: 46) *Call Cutta in a Box*, a piece performed originally in Berlin, offers a radical theatrical questioning of mediation and immediacy, the blending of the cross-cultural and local in new types of representations, which mediate the possibility of long-distance relationships and the ephemeral effects of identification in a globalized world. The theatrical piece perplexes and intrigues by resituating value in the context of global exchange, serving as a lens for reconsidering the relation of the individual to technologies, resituating him at the centre of a world made by data and impulses, in which the communicational aspect proposes puzzling questions referring to the worldwide order and the ways in which it destabilizes the local and traditional understanding of place and time. The piece relies on a puzzle based on the possibility of intercrossing between data and events, archive data and interaction, personal detail and a carefully preplanned dramaturgy of an interview. It also enhances the personalization of the call centre service, which, in order to offer better service to new customers, attempts approaches that blur the distinction between intimacy and business ethics. Moreover, the piece stimulates a redistribution of power through the democratic medium of long-distance communication, as such offering an alternative to mainstream politics that erases from its discourse problems like the exploitation of workers in Third World countries. I suggest that the theatricality of the piece emerges from this questioning of the political and authentic within the piece.

The allowing of the emergence of a creative detail in the dramaturgy of the piece is programmatic, and depends partly on the success of the relationship constructed by a telephone operator – the expert in the piece – with the help not only of personal questions but also her considerate attitude and communicational skills. From the very beginning, a

blurring of the line between personal and official is performed with the aid of apparently random questions that engage the respondent; by referring to personal beliefs about reincarnation, attitudes towards religion, or travel, the discussion appears broad enough for both to be considered a brief introduction into the problem of the 'play'. The team 'combined the aesthetics of radio play, city tour and globalized economics' (Cornish 2010: 47) to create a dramaturgy where the aesthetic of the accident is privileged. The conversation of the participant with a call centre operator living 3,000 kilometers away is designed to simulate the blending of personal interests with stories that circumscribe the other's belonging to Indian culture; the confessional content of the operator in the piece allows for both the possibility of a dangerous and ephemeral complicity with the respondent, with questions like 'Have you ever fallen in love over the phone?', or for indifferent omission of troubling detail. Because of this, moral ambiguity is built into the piece.

As with the other plays, the written dramaturgy allows for the intrusion of accidental detail and, as such, contributes to the feeling of spontaneity, which contributes in turn to the intensity of the experience. The preplanned interview offers the possibility of engaging the participant in imaginative acts. For example, when Cornish participated in the piece, he was asked by an operator called Daz to think of a scene related to her after she had sung for him in Bengali, and at the end of the interview, he was asked to do things for pure amusement. As such, the piece advances as a critique against the simplistic association of technology with artificiality and the dehumanizing potential of new forms of alienated labour made possible by globalization. As Rancière writes, 'It is only in a name of a superficial discourse on contemporary "anaesthesia", the triumph of the "spectacle", of the media etc., that you can oppose technological apparatuses to sensible subjectivity' (Rancière 2011: 18); the technological 'digitization suppresses nothing of the subjectivity of the gaze or of the affect' (Rancière 2011: 18).

The very problem that this technology brings into the piece is that its prosthetic nature allows for an extension and delocalizing of communication; the shift into the nature of experience which is no longer recoverable through the hierarchical set of oppositions, bringing to the fore interference, segmentation, supplementation. Calcutta and Berlin are references on a map, the distance between them being annihilated by new technologies; in their turn, these technologies exploit the particularly local rhetoric of intimacy in an attempt to reach new customers. Using Rancière's formula, the main topic of this 'intercontinental phone play' is this redistribution of value when absence is involved, an act which is problematic insofar as value has traditionally been conceived in relation to the logocentric emphasis on presence. It is this very absence of the visual content, dictated from the very structure of the event, that allows for its startling insertion into the play act. As an operator describes the content of the participant's sight, the question of the nature and possibilities of technology raises questions regarding being. As Cornish remarks, 'in the absence of any other physical body, you yearn for the other's presence and become more aware of your own body' (Cornish 2009: 48). The transforming of data into event, the discovery of ways to relate, is the event at the very centre of the piece.

The global economy, the call centres and the museum space constitute general functions in a space deprived of centre, which circulates capital and information. The signification of the event emerges out of the clash between representation and absence, as well as from the clash of functions; the information transformed into image, and images turned into data, travel across media which preserve the quality and timbre of the voice, creating the troubling impression of emotional content in the absence of a 'real' presence. The use of simple devices such as media screens is built into the structure of the event – the mise en scène being structured as a network based on a play of surfaces and traces, absence and presence. It is the 'lustre' in Derrida's thinking.

The reliance on absence stands behind the act described by psychology as projection. The transformation of the relation customer-service provider, with the idea of participant, is one of the intriguing suggestions of the piece.

4.6. B. *Call Cutta* (2005)

The mise en scène of *Call Cutta* is centred around the recasting of a respondent to a phone call into a participant in the globalized culture; its materials are the city of Berlin and a long-distance phone call that seems to cancel the distance by constituting the source of unexpectedly felicitous instructions and suggestions. The interactive structure of the piece allows for a blending of emotional content and documents, and also for startling recognitions of the surprising possibilities made available by technology, which contribute to the facilitation of the spectatorial involvement in the piece; this dramaturgy of engaging the respondent is afterwards populated with a heterogeneity of facts, both historical and familial, emerging from the discourse of the call centre operator. This type of structure works by blurring the lines between real, in the sense of authentic, and preplanned, in order to advance questions relating history and fiction, archive data and image.

A series of photographs of the call centre operator with her grandfather are introduced following a brief presentation of India's alliance with Hitler in an attempt to free the country from British colonial rule. An Indian voice frames the discovery of actual photographic documents in Berlin through a story regarding the operator's grandfather, who worked in Berlin as a broadcaster for a Nazi-sponsored radio station. This radio station supported the political activity of an important Indian nationalist leader named Bose, who recruited a Nazi-affiliated Indian army to fight for Indian independence. Growing disillusioned with Hitler's lack of interest in India's independence, Bose left the country in a Nazi submarine. Following the narrative, the participant is invited to study

six black and white photographs picturing Bose and the operator's grandfather. The document invites associations based on personal experience, stimulating associations based on the participant's worldview. The very fact that the photographs are found by the participant with the help of the narrator's voice, over the phone, in historically relevant places in Berlin, frames the discovery as an important step in the piece. The very act of wandering through the city, attentive to the passers-by, the light, the wind, and so on, provides a counterpoint in the punctual and objectual nature of the discovery.

This disruption of narratives by the element of chance provides a dramaturgical framing that allows for a questioning of the similarities and differences that structure personal worldviews. I would suggest that at the centre of the piece stands the uneasiness of historical guilt, the transmission over generations of responsibility and the reluctance of cultural memory to accommodate historical trauma and residual guilt. As such, the performance is based on a certain risk, which confers on the apparently random act of responding to questions, tasks and historical accounts the quality of an ethical act that aims at the raising of the participant's conscience. Moreover, the very topic of Nazi politics in the context of globalization points to the difference between the limitless irrational spreading of dangerous ideas and an order of pluralist inclusivity. In fact, I would suggest that the operator's script is based on an act of solicitation, and aims to lend human signification to persons and events taking place elsewhere.

The gradual development of the mise en scène is based on challenging the very idea of being here and now with the help of technology and the advancing of the idea of the individual's integration into a network of services designed to gratify his most diverse needs. The expanding of this network gradually integrates conviviality, and erases the line between private and professional address. The uncertainty regarding the status of the operator is built into the performance. Moreover, it is based on a story that relates the two cities on the basis of a worldwide event constituting the fall of humanist ideology; World

War Two appears in its vestiges, and supplementary to directing attention to how different sides of the world developed in its aftermath, suggesting that reality is shaped by competing versions of events. Within the piece, the very history of the Indian people is made visible through personal archive images that are spread over various locations in Berlin. Moreover, the theatrical potential of the piece is enhanced by this supplementary relation allowed by technology, which blurs the lines between agency and passivity, outlining the logic of chance and privileging, as a consequence, the sensation of veracity.

As such, the piece deals with a troubling mixture of photographic documents, repressed histories, cultural and familial heritage, and their displacement from their original historical context into the cosmopolitan and historically and culturally difficult context of twenty-first-century Berlin. As a dramaturgical principle, the narrative and the photographic documents that archive the history at the centre of the piece are rendered disjointed, allowing for a personal encounter with the data to shape the understanding in open-ended ways; their presentation is fragmented and thus allows for an alternation and interference between personal and historical understandings of – as Gade suggests – 'me and the other, now and then, colonialism, Nazism and globalization' (Gade 2013: 390). In an attempt to anticipate the possible articulation of the different contents, the voice of the operator compels the participant to 'take part in a phenomenological and affective re-enactment of history' (Gade 2013: 390).

The performing of the archive takes place through photographs that attempt not only to offer a sensible addendum to the histories recalled by the operator, and engage the participant in an imaginative act, but also to ground the performance in its own historicity through a wider web of relations. As some of the documented circumstances that have shaped the present, such as the familial and historical past, become active, the type of relation the participant has with his own reality changes, too; Gade enhances the idea that, in the context of these cultural narratives, his own body is resituated: 'at one

and the same time hosted me and someone else, now and then, presence and absence' (Gade 2013: 392). I would suggest, however, that the idea here has its basis in the fragmented nature of self, which is furthermore supplemented by the coexistence of simultaneous narrative structures due to the development of new technologies. It is an act of solicitation, opened by the structure of putting into communication two individuals whose encounter would have been unlikely without the mediation of the long-distance call; as such, the piece deals with both the uniformity made possible by the dramaturgy and a privileging of the interactive context which relies on the dramatic detail.

The problematic association of this piece with mimetic theatre is revealed in several ways: the stories are real and the problematic brought to the fore is not the historical act as such, but the consequences and the ambiguous – perhaps even ambivalent – rules behind this archiving; as such, it activates a problematic that surrounds representation, document and history. Moreover, the problem of authenticity is also framed through its punctuating the promenade in the city by participants. The piece represents the limit at which the 'globalized' subject fails: it brings into question a political organization that denies the principles of humanist thought and troubles notions of responsibility. The troubling association between politics, history, culture on one hand and the inclusive order of diversity and free circulation on the other emerges as a destabilizing thought; for this reason, the performance not only articulates a historical event, but represents a reasserting of an engagement to be mapped by the participant.

4.7. Case Study on the Document: *50 Kilometers of Files* (2011)

50 Kilometers of Files is a performance conceived as an audio tour, being based on the audiodocuments from the database of the Stasi, the Ministry of State Security. The documents are activated as readings of archive materials that were initially created by covert informers to report on the suspect practices of various individuals. The piece

frames the encounter between real subjects and the files compiled about their activities. The participants in the piece witness a reactivation of a recent historical past with the help of new technology. The walkers, equipped with headphones, smartphones and maps, witness the stories of victims of the practice of surveillance during the Cold War; most of the recordings represent a reading of the dossiers that are, at first sight, part of real archives. The theatrical piece attempts to offer an image of 'the extent to which State Security Service, since its creation in 1950, had infiltrated almost every aspect and place in the city and the life of its inhabitants' (Hahn 2014: 33). Offering a glimpse into surveillance activities motivated by an 'unswerving enthusiasm… to manufacture enemies of the State' (Barnett in Birgfeld 2015: 96), the piece is seldom unspectacular as regards the real content of the reports; what comes to the fore is the degree of infiltration of the informers and the politicization of every aspect of life, its manufacturing of relations between the detailed observation and background of 'political and military tensions between the Western and the Eastern blocks after War World II' (Hahn 2014: 28). The personal and seldom unspectacular experience of individuals is seen framed and controlled by the protocols of the surveillance system, being secondarily reframed through the participation of the individual in the audio tour. The tension between the surveying of the historical past and the account of the surveillance practices that strip individuals of basic rights, such as the right to speak, contributes to the theatricality of the audio piece. Within this layering of the past and the present, the activation of histories of real individuals triggers interesting questions regarding memory and freedom that bypass the strict distinction between Cold War practices and the informational era of the internet. As the tour starts in central Berlin, at Alexanderplatz, the Berliner Ensemble and Checkpoint Charlie, 'a space once bisected by the border between East Germany and West Germany' (Hahn 2014: 29), a desire to investigate the past is supplemented by a certain touristic approach.

The practice of walking attempts to map the city of Berlin in a sort of

defamiliarizing manner, by pointing to and framing the particular historical value of certain sites and traces. Rimini Protokoll make the city's historicity (Hahn 2014: 31) the centre of the piece, remediating what is taken for granted in the urban landscape. The very possibility of free movement and crossing the border between East and West is rendered as strange when projected against the difficult historical background of the period. It is through the practice of walking and crossing the lines between East and West that the participant should frame their performance of experiencing the city and raise questions of autonomy and surveillance practices. The very possibility of choosing their own path and building their own narratives of the past provides a counterpoint to the restrictive documented practices. Nevertheless, the piece exists through this ambiguous supplementation of the practice of derive, 'a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances' (Debord in Hahn 2014: 33) with no particular end in mind, and the distancing allowed by both the use of technology and mediation. The relatively autonomous status of the walker enhances the value of change in the conditions for experiencing state control of private acts of communication. The walker is made into a witness. As such, *50 Kilometers* is merely a piece that aims to create the disposition for questioning the recent past, creating 'opportunities, directions, encounters' (Hahn 2014: 33) for the acknowledgement of the 'city as historically shaped environment' (Hahn 2014: 33).

It is the very unrepresentability of history as macrostructure that stands at the basis of the theatrical research in Rimini Protokoll's work. The documents used in *50 Kilometers* are reports on demonstrations, distribution of pamphlets, censorship, operational planning, 'disturbing personal accounts about persistent surveillance, oppression, psychological abuse and detention' (Hahn 2014: 34). Emerging from the availability to the public of surveillance notes, the audio tour emphasizes the invasion of privacy and disturbing crossing of the boundaries separating the public and the private, the political and the personal, mediated by ideology. Rimini Protokoll point to the necessity of interrogating the practice consisting in 'the feeling of being watched

whenever you crossed a street and of being overheard whenever you made a phone call' (Darnton in Wise 2016: 60). As such, they also address the politics of perception, the amplifications and distortions made possible in the creation of the document. I would suggest here the idea that the very sense of historical distance explored within the piece results from this shift in the politics of perception.

Rimini Protokoll's pieces in fact offer a different experience of time, resulting from both the slow pace of walking and the use of technology. Moreover, the two are joined in an effort to foreground the necessity of witnessing and rethinking the uncanniness of reactivating the archive in order to represent a different historical order. Within the piece the directorial team designs an almost compulsory emergence of a historical past, a bursting of the past into the frame of the present whenever audio files are automatically activated because the participant reaches some important spot in Cold War Berlin. The layering onto the structure of the city of the past and present induces a troubling emotional state associated with a type of ghostliness. As walking can 'engender new modes of perception, that would illuminate the relationship between space, time, and the body' (Hahn 2014: 30), the piece creates 'a space ghosted by memories and associations' (Hahn 2014: 37). It is by 'moving away from conventionalized conceptions of display, representation and enactment' (Hahn 2014: 31) embodied in the present city landscape that the piece addresses the problem of the politics of representation. This political dimension is evoked through its ability to obscure certain realities in the very production of the document. In this piece the document's interrogation documents the practice. The distinction between fiction and document is somehow challenged throughout *50 Kilometers*. The document acts as a 'catalyst' for thinking about documentation, the participant enters into the frame of the event as a witness, the expert as agent attempting to recover his sovereign status, and the directorial approach is 'an attempt to stimulate critical perception' (Arfara 2009: 112). As such, the practice is remedial, interrogative and demanding.

I would suggest that the representation of history stands at the basis of this theatrical exploration of the urban space that has been transformed into the symbol of a political and cultural messianic overcoming of the separation of West and East. The relating of the past and present is made only through audio recordings that capture the raw emotions of the subjects reading the files compiled about them. Nevertheless, the piece obscures the possibility of a further discussion of the distinction between democratic and totalitarian practices, therefore allowing for and constructing the walker as a reader whose dominant position is not challenged. The distance between the surveillance practices of the Stasi and the situation of the walker who is monitored as a result of his very own participation in the piece is only alluded to, and not formally explored within the theatrical work. The differences between the two political contexts are insufficiently formalized within the piece. For example, disconnection and collectivity are important topics framed differently by Cold War politics and the contemporary highly technologized social environments. The difference between the two historical moments, the past and the present, relies on the distinction between the restrictive and repetitive discourses of the Cold War and the open access to information made possible through the internet. It is the democratic structuring of the collective space that allows for access to Stasi files and the critical intention behind the piece, while at the same time preventing the proper reorganizing of the audio material in such a way as to draw attention to the consequences of surveillance practices. In the case of this audio installation, technology is the mediator of history and its activator, while also pointing to a dissimilarity of contexts and structures of experiencing. The walker is separated from the testimonials due to a fundamental shift in the conditions of participation in reality. This perspective makes inevitable the sense of distancing, which would create the critical perspective, and restricts the empathic identification with the reader. As the walker witnesses the real place where at other moments historical surveillance took place, he finds himself displaced. Within this piece theatricality emerges through the ephemeral bypassing of the

distinction between past and present, which facilitates the engaging of the walker in an act of reading that requests subjective apprehension of the different.

Moreover, the tour points to the 'ambivalence about the politics of turning lives into documents' (Mumford 2013: 159), enhancing the difference between living beings and the reports made about them. The recovering of the past and the desire to address the difficult memories associated with it is conveyed in and through the emotional discomfort evident in the discourse of the expert. The disappearance of the past is supplemented by the ephemerality made possible by new technologies. Given this, the piece proposes a temporary intervention in 'the living city' (Hahn 2014: 31), punctuated by the activation of the archive and emotional accounts on surveillance. The walker enters the space of the encounter with the past of the city as in a noir fiction. The context of the general paranoid surveillance regime is revealed in one particular event, as the sighting of a heart-shaped balloon that becomes the topic of a serious investigative task. The activity of the Stasi, resulting in detailed accounts of daily conversations, most of them utterly uninteresting, punctuating the degree of infiltration of the Ims, is presented from a distance. The detailed reporting style of the records raises problems of privacy and the politics of representation.

Revealing how the public and private spaces in Berlin were surveilled during the Cold War, Rimini Protokoll offers the possibility of an audio walking experience that reconnects particular spaces, buildings, streets in Berlin with a past history that enables 'listeners to eavesdrop on the workings of the secret police and the invasion of privacy through data gathering' (Hahn 2014: 34). The temporality of walking advances the desideratum of an interaction with recordings creating a past city. The walkers sit still in certain spaces and their relation with their surroundings is destabilized. A complicity and act of solicitation emerges through the means of technology. The possibility of direct contact is nevertheless not part of the work. A disconnection of the audience member

from the real presence of the experts aims at provoking, rather than making, the walker take responsibility in the production of the narrative. The setup of the experience conveys distance, which aims to stimulate a critical perspective; instead of this, the walker enters a foreign space. The participants have at their disposal headphones disconnecting them from any sort of direct relation to present urban environments, a map that signals important sites in central Berlin, and a smartphone with a tracking system that automatically plays audio files each time the participant arrives at an important spot. The participants in the tour have the possibility of configuring their own trajectory through central Berlin, creating their own performance.

Unlike other pieces that supplement the subjective approach and detailed discourse of the expert-speakers with the use of documents, in *50 Kilometers of Files* the presence of the document is the piece. The format raises questions regarding the political ideology and practice of surveillance, the participatory practice behind the methods of observation, the aspects and consequences of living within a world highly shaped by an official ideology. Demanding from its participants a reaction to the politicization of the private aspects of life, the piece has a certain troubling and unsettling quality. The practice of listening to the 125 files is conceived as an immersive experience whose aim was 'turning walkers into "insiders"', as stated in their programme brochure. This aspect is amplified by the lack of total control of the participant within this particular piece, as audio files automatically activate themselves when the audience member passes by an important location. The change of the landscape of the city plays a role in the piece, as history can only be retrieved by these ephemeral testimonies.

Moreover, the notion of authorship is challenged within the piece, as the documents reflect a particular participatory observation which has a certain presumed objectivity that seems to marginalize responsibility and subjectivity. As such, the very construction of a theatre piece based on experts becomes problematic. They react

emotionally to the documents that are supposed to condemn them. The degree of self-reflection as regards a traumatic history of surveillance is complicated by the distance between the then and now, between the old and the new; the layering of past and present into the piece, the interference between report and its emotional activation, is made possible by a change in technology, equipment and new hybrid types of participation in the social. The obstacle that prevents the walker from retrieving the state of fear and its reframing in the piece emerges from the historical distance and the type of interaction allowed by the tablets the participants hold in their hands; political freedom as well as the availability of technological means allows the audience the recollection of historical details as they map their way into a living museum of the urban space of the city, constructed as such by the desire to investigate. Nevertheless, it is the ambivalence of the surveillance framework, or its transformation through the emergence of new technologies, that prevents the audience from grasping the theatrical meaning in the piece. It is the very account of the suppression of subjectivity, and the impossibility of properly framing its relation with the overcoming of the politics of Cold War, that structures and disperses at the same time the urban/historical space of the encounter. The free practice of acts of speech, the subjective accounts of participating in the history of the event, are still plagued by a lack of research and perspective on the disjunction between different ways of addressing history. Thus, what the piece aims to do is stimulate an openness to reconsidering the past; the authenticity of the experts is a testimony to practices that have been dismissed and erased. The problem of authorship is a question raised in the 'in-between' space of documents and the task of emotional retrieval, in the difference between the theatrical piece and the real urban space, in the discrepancy established between the historic testimony and the ephemeral act of listening to it.

Hahn interprets the piece as a 'dynamic interaction with the city' mediated by technology (Hahn 2014: 33). She suggests that the performance 'seeks to alter the participants' appreciation of the city and the archive as public spaces' (Hahn 2014: 33).

Unlike traditional theatre, the performances are readable because of the effects of authenticity that punctuate the emotional position of the reader/object in the document through a series of representational 'mistakes'. The 'mistakes' supplement the realness of the piece and direct attention to the subjective quality of the textual material, which stands in a tense position to other real testimonies of complete strangers. The credibility is supplemented by pertinence, the use of the mistake with the desire for meaning; the presence of hesitation with the constructedness of the frame that allows the aesthetic event to cohere altogether. The frame both allows for the emergence of subjectivity and the protecting of the expert. Theatre becomes a medium of transmission of firsthand experience and a confrontation between macro and micro-histories, allowing for a permanent going to and from details to subjective doubt, reframings, reworkings. Advancing theatricality as the medium for an encounter is in this case the proposing of the possibility of letting personal networks emerge through the accounts of the audio stories. The text, introducing the relations of the observed with the wider world, frames the testimonial subject, shaped by tensions with the large-scale narratives of production, labour and supervision techniques. Shifting the perspective from the political to the personal lives shaped by macro-events, Rimini Protokoll invent a theatre where textuality loses its marginal status due to its ability to offer fresh insights into the relation between subject and material conditions. The experts provide, through lived details and traces of experiences, an account of the persistence of the past and the desideratum of understanding it. Moreover, the theatrical event illuminates the possibility of an emergence of a retrieval of meaning, made possible through the shift from material production to a world of dematerialized relations.

50 Kilometers of Files can be related to Lehmann's notion of the 'irruption of the real', as Barnett suggests (Barnett in Birgfeld 2015). Framing the authentic quality of testimonies of a disappeared historical regime, the piece evidences the difficulties emerging from the disintegration of the material conditions from which it has emerged.

The piece advances its task, a reconsideration of the political practice of extensive and controlling surveillance, as a serious enterprise. The work invites its participants to try to occupy a place/position which no longer exists, questioning as such the very disappearance of the past and the necessity of constructing a practice of reconsidering history. The distance between Cold War political practice and the contemporary hybrid world based on new technologies allows for the recreation of the past as if it were a fiction. The troubling aspect is that the speakers 'are positioning their responses within an existing discourse of the Stasi' (Barnett in Birgfeld 2015: 102), and the very intertwining of their narratives points to macro structures. The notes on the surveillance practice overwhelm and make the audience question the realness of an encounter that attempts to cross divisions between past and present. The reliance of the speaker's interpretation on a discourse informed by the ideological and practical task of picturing the deviant is troubling; their representing particular cases seems to be blurred by the normative aspects of interpretation put into the document and each case seems to contribute to a picture of the highly articulated superstructure of observation to which they belong. This horrifying picture of the political regime is made possible through an act of imagination on the part of the participants. The individuals seem characters who have been assigned roles in a general drama evoked by ideology: enemy of the state or informer/performer in line with the official political dramaturgy. The strangeness makes people question the oversimplifications in both totalitarian practices and historical memory. As such, the multilayered dramaturgies of Rimini Protokoll seem to invoke the presumption that theatre should be involved in a multiperspectival approach to reality. As Ulrike Gardes notes, 'while Rimini Protokoll are also interested in politics… their approach appears much more personal, individualized and often less obvious; it is intrinsically linked to the right to speak' (Gardes in Barnett in Birgfeld 2015: 105).

Miriam Dreysse points to the fact that 'the assembly of individual elements is for the most part abrupt, preventing the formation of an illusionary whole and creating space

for subjective points of entry' (Dreysse in Barnett in Birgfeld 2015: 104). However, within the associative logic of the stage, Rimini Protokoll operate by advancing their own framework: experienced (emotionally) activated text as divergence from the spectacular notion of theatre, objective text as a means of questioning the structure that determines facts as (political) events and embeds into its fabric the dramatic logic of political opposition, and subjectivity as a remediating practice, emerging from both the retrieval of the events and the intervention into their structure. Unfortunately, it is the desire to offer the opening of a discussion on a historical subject/practice that has been publicly condemned that limits, from the beginning, the exhaustiveness of Rimini Protokoll's project, as the theatre group were not able to access experts who had been actively involved in the excesses of the Stasi. Because of this, the question of responsibility is merely evoked in the audio conversations the participants hear, where the Stasi is addressed 'as if the latter were an autonomous or self-sufficient category' (Barnett 2015: 106).

Barnett suggests that the visibility acquired by the marginal is not sufficient and that theatre is not merely a means of representing but of refunctioning real material. The use of direct speech is therefore efficient not in itself, but through the ability of the directorial team to use the reframing and reworking of documentary evidence in advancing the theatricality of the topic in question; their attempt to convey a more personal account of history is directed against the more objective possibilities of mass media. Thus, the theatricality of their pieces correlates with the discovery of subjects who offer the complex mapping of the subject, which is the found material itself, and which will support the dramaturgical interventions of the team. In Daniel Wetzel's terms, a 'disorientation' is the political element in Rimini Protokoll's work. I suggest that the use of disorientation provides the theatrical point of departure that frustrates the compartmentation of testimonies into a dramatic structure, which is meant to resolve itself in a political message. Instead of a closed universe, they present what Deleuze would

call a 'chaosmos'. The subjective reactions incorporated in the piece picture individual positions and experiences of being monitored by the Stasi, and also personal reactions to other broader topics, such as the relating of socialism with extensive surveillance. Barnett supports the position that the use of interrogation is not achieved in this particular piece, which fails as the walker becomes merely a consumer of historical records and 'not an interrogator' (Barnett in Birgfeld 2015: 108). I would like to propose that, even though the piece appeals to the possibility of imaginary investment, which usually activates the desire for consumption in the audience member, it also triggers an emotional response and advances a questioning regarding the place of uncomfortable histories in the all-consuming leisure industry that attempts to erase or oversimplify difficult historical topics. In this case the erasing of a relatively recent history can shed light on the effects of technologically mediated experiences, and the inability to connect to serious issues.

The very incorporation of technologies within this particular piece both mediates and distances the audience member. The compulsively present/activated technology aims to confront the audience with issues that are otherwise dismissed and eluded in the common shared spaces of the media. Ultimately, the restructuring of the relations between Western and Eastern Europe in the aftermath of the Cold War is still not properly surveyed and the possibilities for informal accounts of the reconfiguration of Europe, a financial and not political union, are still to be explored. The nature of the operations directed by the Stasi and other intelligence agencies in the Eastern communist bloc bewilder Western audiences who cannot picture the magnitude of the surveillance of the individual and the degree of infiltration of the informers who did not use contemporary technological means. Barnett's objection to the lack of historical detail in the piece emerges from the lack of subjective accounts of the Stasi agents who betrayed friends, colleagues or relatives. The limits of the theatrical project emerge from the sensitive nature of the material, as well as from the exposure the experts get in this type of theatrical practice. The shifting of focus from dramatic models to everyday experts results in a

pulverizing of the grand dichotomies in a toing and froing, from detail to document, while making sensible the results and multiplicity of reactions to the institutional practice as an objective set of rules. This particular relation of obedience to authority and the ability of common individuals to perpetrate harm on their neighbours has been studied by Stanley Milgram. The unspectacular nature of cruelty has also been treated by Hannah Arendt, in the idea of the everyday banality of evil. As Barnett writes: 'In an age in which the individual is overshadowed by larger formations, be they commercial, political, social or cultural, the emphasis on the individual can help redress the balance. Specificity and particularity offer counterpoints to generalizing discourses' (Barnett in Birgfeld 2015: 106).

Conclusions:

The Postdramatic as Deconstructive Theatre

Postdramatic is the generic name for a range of theatrical phenomena that problematize and attempt to undo the reassurances of mimetic theatre, bringing to the fore the inconclusive, that which is resistant to interpretation, the suspension of meaning by breaking the traditional aesthetic structures on which the legitimacy of theatre was based. Understood as a new type of aesthetic derived from a new type of engagement with the real, this multifarious theatre is related by Lehmann to a new type of engagement with the political, which, by de-emphasizing the priority once afforded to drama, advances a critical notion of representation. Pointing to the exhaustion of the principle of drama and its fictionalizations, and also to the new interest in 'the trivial and banal, the simplicity of an encounter, a look or a shared situation' (Lehmann 2006: 181), Lehmann motivates the overturning of theatre's dramatic destiny in the necessity of a theatre responding to a world of (dramatic) 'artificial formulas of intensification' (Lehmann 2006: 181). By enhancing this political task nevertheless, theatre is also directed towards a critique of its own (dramatic) history – 'in political terms: what is at stake is also the fate of the errors of the dramatic imagination' (Lehmann 2006: 181). As such, many other themes come to the fore in postdramatic discourse: the nature of theatrical illusion, the dialectics of reason and accident, the historicity of the stage, the principle of the exclusion of the real, the idea of beautiful proportions, the act of impersonation, the logocentric topology, the idea of an intact kernel and ultimately the deconstruction of subjectivity.

This research has argued that the postdramatic's dismissal of authority, established through a negation, a historical caesura and a violent transgression of the

principles of the Western theatrical tradition, has ultimately prepared the way for the emergence of a deconstructive gesture, which, both anarchic and excessive, enhances the impossibility of (a pure and uncomplicated) overcoming of the old theatrical language and the rhetoric of the stage; this rhetoric is challenged by/in Derrida's work and exposed as the result of a series of hierarchical oppositions established by metaphysics, which determine the operations performed through language. The annexing of experience, which 'remains governed by the theme of presence', to a 'scientific objectivism' masking its imbrication in metaphysical assumptions, and the aesthetic formalism that constructed its objects based on a 'naïve objectivism' and established 'the law of this resemblance' (Derrida 1997: 61), are undone in postdramatic theatre. They are undone through a gesture that, by lifting the traditional sense of dramatic closure and permitting the appearance on the stage of that which it has traditionally repressed, transforms the theatre and makes theatrical spectacle the locus of solicitation of the spectator. Moreover, these postdramatic theatres can be related to the idea that 'the phonic substance lost its privilege' (Derrida 1997: 60), and with it the trace, the difference, recuperated as the very 'condition of [such] plenitude' (Derrida 1997: 60). Derrida emphasizes the idea that language itself is already writing, and as such 'notation' is possible; as a consequence, altering the traditional structures associated in theatre with text, body, audience expectation and representative practices brings to the fore a chain of reactions that emphasizes the impossibility of locating the source of authority outside of writing and its violent traditional (mimetic) inscriptions. The tearing apart of the traditional stage is an apparent issue that reveals a more important problem: that of opposing what contaminates and imposes theatrical form without taking responsibility for it, in the pure reiteration of a model that betrays the repressed, the body – the urgency of a solitary claim made in the name of something forgotten, left aside. A reconsideration of the meaning of this new theatre is made available, I have argued, through Derrida's trace, which is 'not more ideal than real, not more intelligible than sensible, not more a transparent

signification than an opaque energy and no concept of metaphysics can describe it' (Derrida 1997: 65).

As the postdramatic advances a new series of theatrical occurrences against mimetic expectations, the 'idea' of a difference undoes the possibility of the appeal to 'pure' concepts, 'pure' vision and 'pure' meaning, and theatre's project of (re)presentation has to be (re)constructed again as not merely a frustration of traditional aesthetic rules, but as a project that aims at rewriting the project of theatre and, as such, in proposing new theatrical concepts. The reinscription of the body into the theatrical stage is one of the major shifts influencing a rethinking of the stage; the dramaturgies of Sarah Kane, Castellucci and Forced Entertainment emphasize the disturbance introduced by thinking with and in regard to the body. Moreover, the emphasis on a collective and frequently political order of commentary, the intrusion of the marginal, the work with precarious aesthetic means, the exposing of the participatory condition of the spectator in theatre, the developing of the theatrical form as a mix of constructedness and improvisation, work and destruction – all are read as attempts to redraw the theatrical space as the space of a consequential experience. Kane's plays expose the consequences of cultural violence, Castellucci creates a rhetoric that disrupts the possibility of a fixed spectatorial position, Forced Entertainment advance through the apparent detours of the marginal commentary and failure, Rimini Protokoll creates for its viewers experiences of marginal Others. At the centre of this theatre is a retrieving of experience against its mimetic reductions.

Moreover, through pointing to the deceptive nature of any attempt to suppose and engage with reason as 'presence', I have attempted to show that Derrida's deconstruction is particularly relevant for theatre, which traditionally represses the presentation of 'nature'; by exposing the idea that nature is merely an instituted trace necessary for the establishing of traditional dialectical hierarchies, Derrida opens up the possibility of a

theatrical engagement with this peculiar term. Theatre as a supplement is an engagement with meaning by (and through) exposing the operations located behind its (violent) inscriptions; a deconstructive theatre advances the possibility of thinking the theatrical stage beyond normative classifications and the strategic and dialectic use of play; it enhances the idea that the 'secondarity' of theatre has been misconstrued by traditional aesthetics. This thesis has thus argued that Derrida's critique of notions of univocity and transparency of meaning, as well as his destabilizing of the notions of totality and centre, can offer a new perspective for problematizing and restructuring the discourse of postdramatic theatre. I have tried to show how his terms offer the possibility of thinking about the traditional aesthetics of the theatre through the questioning of mimesis and in deconstructing the reassurances offered by the recourse to ideas of objectivism. Moreover, the task of such a deconstructive theatre is to disrupt theatre's discourse; to release it from the paralysis created by the discourse of reason which has historically annexed representation and created a blind spot regarding the unavailability of a simple origin, presence and ideality. As Derrida writes: 'supplements that are dangerous when they are not useless, superfluous when they are not disastrous' (Derrida on Rousseau 2013: 203). I have argued that the very exclusion of the term of difference in metaphysical thinking made impossible the recovery of art as a meaningful activity. This research has argued that deconstruction offers the possibility for engaging with the ethical in a different manner than expected in traditional theatre, which depicts the hero as capable of following the constraints of reason. By deconstructing the basic premises of traditional theatre, by emphasizing the contradictions and presumptions inherent in impersonation and mimesis, postdramatic theatres engage with the problem of meaning. Through emphasizing the supplementarity of theatre's actions, doubly determined, as on one hand 'the supplement adds itself, is a surplus, a plenitude enriching other plenitude, the fullest measure of presence' (Derrida 2013: 144), while on the other 'it adds only to replace' (Derrida 2013: 145), theatre aims at developing its own language by tearing down the

'body' of the theatre. The very idea that 'language is neither prohibition nor transgression, it couples the two endlessly' (Derrida 2013: 266) opens the possibility of grasping the relations between theatrical institutions, experiences and language, so as to retrieve the violence of traditional inscriptions and testify to the contradictory operations made possible by language, its excesses and the possibility of misunderstanding.

Pointing to an economy of writing and being/presence, the main objective of the thesis was to show how Derrida's discourse can help retrieve and deconstruct the traditional theatrical language, derived from the relations between traditional philosophy and the traditionally derivative idea of theatre, theatre as mimesis. By frustrating the economy of the traditional exchange between audience and (mimetic) representation, I have shown how the postdramatic engages with the crisis of communication and signification within a seemingly autocratic mimetic paradigm, while at the same time pointing to newly emerging possibilities, hitherto typically understood as mere negations of the established historical model. This research attempted to suggest that the crisis introduced by bringing onto the stage the repressed in Kane's playtexts, the excess of the body in Castellucci's stagings, the failure of the theatre in Forced Entertainment's work, and the erasure of marginal subjects in Rimini Protokoll's work constitute an interrogation of traditional instruments and an attempt to remediate the hedonistic enjoyment of theatre as a place marked by illusion. The dramaturgical intervention of Kane points to the fakeness of the reassurances of the mimetic form, with its keeping the repressed at a distance, as a possibility of its own existence; Forced Entertainment advances a work on the vacuity of the mimetic and technical perfection of traditional theatre; Rimini Protokoll exposes the relation between power structures and access to representation. Overtly adopting a position of critically questioning the possibilities of the stage, these new dramaturgies propose a fundamental aesthetic shift that engages in a self-aware manner with the temporality of the act of staging and in so doing pushes the limits of representability. This thesis has argued that a fundamental shift in

problematizing 'reality' is an effect of the new theatrical discourse: an interrogation of the (theatrical) field and meaning. Nevertheless, this shift requires the coining of new concepts and a reconsidering of theatre as a machine rather than a pacifying of traces and differences, a disruption of the accident and the body from the traditional dialectical and disengaged play. It is the play that emerges against the authority of the prescriptions, the formless against the suppression of body, excess, affect, the Other; disrupting the dialectical submission of the accidental event to the 'history of truth', the postdramatic is an engagement with the very economy of discourse at work behind the production of meaning.

The difficulties resulting from the generalization of representation have been acknowledged by cultural critics, of course: while Baudrillard emphasized the idea that simulacra ultimately empty the image of its content and make the real irretrievable, Guy Debord directed attention to the mutations, contaminations and confusions of meaning effected by the interweaving of the order of 'the real' and the extension of the order of 'the spectacle'. The classical ontology seems finally overwhelmed and no longer capable of organizing the 'real' in the context of the mutations made possible by the new technologies that reshape it by perplexing the classical ideas of time and space. As 'the practical is a relation of consciousness' (Hegel in Derrida in Kamuf and Derrida 1991: 332), new notions of time and space emerge through the postdramatic, whether or not these dramaturgies overtly engage with the shift in communicative processes allowed by the general state of connectivity.

This research also attempted to advance the idea that, by employing deconstruction in order to analyse the field of theatre, the understanding of the term 'postdramatic' might be shifted from its negative understanding as a 'non' and 'post' (traditional) approach towards the recuperation of the positivity of the new encounters with audiences on which this new theatre is based. By disinvesting theatre from both the

subordinate relation to reason imposed on it by the philosophical tradition and the fascination exerted by illusion and the idea of spectacle, theatre might be recuperated as an activity that can be related to thought. Disrupted from its relation to logocentric notions of presence, meaning and truth, from its derivativeness and its ambivalent subjection to an ethics whose relation to reason has historically failed – as Adorno was the first to point out, referring to the Nazi death camps – undoing and exposing illusion, this new theatre can be thought of as an attempt at recuperating desire. Following Derrida's idea that 'the present is always the present of a pleasure; and pleasure is always a receiving of presence. What dislocates presence introduces difference and delay, spacing between desire and pleasure' (Derrida 2013: 280), this new theatre discomforts and disquiets its audiences. I have argued that the very problem of the gap between ethics and reason, unsettling as it is, nevertheless brings to the fore ideas of discontinuity, eruption, of the play of outside and inside, policing and despair. Kane's project of remediating the economy of spectatorial distance by making real violence burst onto the stage, Castellucci's emphasis on the repressed excess of the body, Forced Entertainment's accusing audiences of purely voyeuristic involvement in theatre, Rimini Protokoll's emphasis on the relation between power and representation – they all point to a shift in the conception of theatre. The postdramatic is not only an 'after' supposing the idea of an 'end', but a rethinking of temporality, of claims of originality/derivativeness, of attempts to mislead and assert 'presence' instead of desire, a questioning of pretentions to universality, originality, interpretation and mediation. Compensating for the former blind spots of theatre, in the first instance, the postdramatic advances the idea that the work of recuperating truth is still necessary.

This research is aimed at enhancing the idea that the postdramatic is neither an 'after' that should nostalgically aim for (dramatic) presence in the midst of a general disarray, nor a moment of emancipation that should restore the thematization of the singular in political terms. I have argued instead that the postdramatic is a moment in

which a new understanding of theatre can be retrieved, by problematizing theatre in relation to its subjection to what Derrida calls writing; as such, postdramatic theatre is an engagement with both its inherent possibilities and its traditions, a play that might be better understood as 'neither'/'nor'. The very possibility of disrupting theatre from its subjection to logocentric discourse, which correlates the legitimation and analysis of theatre with the necessity of repressing some of its possibilities and manifestations, is a transgressive necessity constitutive of the postdramatic regime. The recuperation of the anarchic horizon of the deconstructive difference in relation to the analysis of theatre enhances the idea that the correlation of ideas of subversion and repression is constitutive of the discourse on (postdramatic) theatre. The current incoherence of the term 'postdramatic' might be correlated with our logocentrism, which still associates the dramatic with the idea of a theatrical model. Nevertheless, the contestation of this model emerged for the first time in the discourses of visionary theatre artists at the beginning of the twentieth century, among whom notable figures are Artaud, Craig and Appia.

The dramaturgies I have analysed in this thesis represent both a questioning of traditional form and a correlative attempt at establishing new types of coherence, which are no longer based on the association between reason and representation, but a questioning of the very dynamics of stage and audience, and, as such, a questioning of the relation between theatre and the real. The interruption of this tradition establishes the necessity to question: the principles of the totality of the fiction, correlative of the principle of exclusion of elements that do not contribute to the whole and the construction of the theatrical action as drama; the desiderata of beautiful proportions, which brings to the fore the idea that the accidental has to be properly framed, and also the sublimation of the accidental in the dialectical thinking that subtends mimetic theatre; the theatrical mediation as derived from the more dignified activity of pure thought and reason. This research has attempted to advance the idea that, by employing deconstruction in order to disorder and analyse the field of theatre, the understanding of the term 'postdramatic' has

to be correlated with the production of new dramaturgical terms.

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