

Pre/texts for an Emerging Dramaturgy

Reconceiving Models of Authorship in Text-based Performance

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What is it that determines creative agency in a performance-making process? Or, where is authorship situated? These are not quite analogous questions. They address the same concern, that is, the creative act, but from different points of view, informed perhaps by different principles. Both deal with an activity, however, while the latter hints at quite distinct and pro-active author/s, the former involves less clearly defined re-active agents, implying a more “passive” activity, a potentiality.

These concerns arose after years of attempts to formalise a doubt about the presupposed contradiction between text on one side, and improvisation and devising on the other; the bias, in these attempts, lay in my wish to safeguard the lone practice of writing for performance – and the life of the author – while allowing that writing to remain a material for the collective performance-making practice of an ensemble, rather than its *mastercopy*.

It might be a question of aesthetics of performance, or it might not be, but my interest in the theatre has always been associated with a fascination towards the art of the actor. Not considering myself one, to be able to work directly with actors is what makes theatre-making interesting to me. For this reason, writing performance texts seemed like a good *excuse* allowing me at best to be present in the process of rehearsal. At the same time, besides an initial lack of confidence motivating my refusal to direct, directing did not seem to fit the idea of collaboration I had in mind, which was to work alongside an ensemble of actors, almost as a performer myself, actively involved in, and relying on the process of making performance, that is, as part of a collective practice of scenic composition. Performance as process seemed more appropriate an idea than that of performance as final product, which a directorial approach perhaps most commonly entails. It meant to be surprised by new scenic material unexpectedly emerging rather than to achieve or recognise pre-imagined material as it eventually materialises onstage. Hence, I began to investigate writing practices that allow the development of texts that could be worked on collaboratively and collectively with an ensemble of actors; texts whose logic does not, in other words, predetermine the logic of their performance. It soon became clear that the issues at stake were at least two: what characteristics should a text feature to allow that to happen, and what should be the approach towards

those texts, alternative to a directorial one. This paper mostly deals with the first problem, outlining the first phase of a practice-as-research study titled *Pre/texts for an Emerging Dramaturgy - Reconceiving Models of Authorship in Text-based Performance*, run at the drama department of Liverpool John Moores University.

The study started by recognising formal features in contemporary texts for the stage that allow, or even require, additional creative interventions, or supplementing actions, on the part of the production team, in order to fill in the gaps left open by – or in – the text. These features have been identified as “openness”, “theatricality” and “performativity” and will be discussed in relation to a sample text in the second half of this essay. The practical investigations informed by these theorisations intervene in playwriting processes founded on the principle of transcendence as predetermination of meaning for representation; they explore ways of developing a dramaturgical practice that induces immanence instead.

If in *pure* immanence all meaning should emerge freely within a system – say in a fully spontaneous collective performance, or in certain ways of life – and in *pure* transcendence all meaning be organised from without – for example by an author or a god – this practice as research explores whether and how a theatre-making methodology based on a pre-existing, single-authored text, can still achieve high degrees of immanence in performance. That is, it experiments with ways of writing for performance that can stimulate spontaneity in performance. Spontaneity is therefore considered as the means towards immanent processes of performance self-organisation, specifically in relation to the compositional work of the actor on a pre-written text. There is a link in my view, between spontaneity and creative agency in this context. Creative agency refers to the affordances, the possibilities released (by the text) for an actor to *maintain* in order to create something new out of the given circumstances (of the text). Spontaneity similarly refers to the capacity to react to the moment and in the moment of the occurrence of an event, prioritizing impulse over reflection; as it will be argued later exploring the notion of performativity, the generative aspect of spontaneity springs from the impulsive side of creativity, bringing into play what is *not yet given* (at least to consciousness).

Once again, this research is instigated by an interest in text on the one hand, and collaborative processes of making performance on the other. Underlying these interests is the idea that the terms “script” and “improvisation” are not necessarily in contradiction with one another. The *Oxford Dictionary of English* defines “improvisation” as «something that is improvised, in particular a piece of music, drama, etc. created spontaneously or without preparation».¹ For the purposes of this research I will retain the “created spontaneously” part of the definition and

¹ Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson ed., *Oxford Dictionary of English*, second edition revised, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2005.

respectfully discard the rest (“or without preparation”). In order to give ground to this dismissal, here is a quote from the late director Jerzy Grotowski on the subject of spontaneity and improvisation: «[...] I want to advise you never in performance to seek for spontaneity without a score. In the exercises it is a different thing altogether. During a performance no real spontaneity is possible without a score. It would only be an imitation since you would destroy your spontaneity by chaos».² What I am trying to get to is the idea that improvisation does require preparation, not necessarily on the outcomes of a performance, but on the materials adopted in the process of making it (text included). In the context of this study therefore, improvisation is considered as that creative process through which the actor originates new non-textual material using the text as a score, in other words, as a detailed yet open enough framework of vocal actions within which to improvise. The way in which the actor can improvise around the text is by reacting spontaneously to it and the circumstances around its performance, which include the fellow actors’ reactions, the scenography, and the audience. This methodology entails the work of an ensemble whose members constantly work off each other and the given material circumstances. In this way, text becomes purely a material to work off from, or react to.

To use spontaneity in this sense also allows the bypassing of representation, which can be considered as a kind of search for a pre-existing identity or meaning that one wishes to identify with in retrospection or forethought. A quest activity of this kind involves in fact a primarily reflective mode of dealing with the occurring events, a mode that actively engages the intellect through reflective memory, often causing a delay or a premature haste in the decisive reaction. The danger with representation is to fail to attend to the present moment, either because one takes time to re-elaborate the past or because one preconceives the moment, preparing too much for it. It could be said that representation corresponds with the linguistic tenses of simple past and future: it speaks in the modes of “I was” and “I will be”, which invoke other distinct dimensions, and imply a sort of reflective distance from the present. Spontaneity on the other hand, speaks more in the present perfect of “I have been” or in the future perfect of “I will have been”, producing a sense of continuous affect, of self in process, of becoming. This approach to presence is the mark of my readings of Gilles Deleuze, who suggested that «a scar is the sign not of a past wound but of the present fact of having been wounded».³ My research’s focus on spontaneity is an attempt to be faithful to this condition of continuous present.

² Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba (ed.), *Towards a Poor Theatre*, Methuen Drama, London 1975, p. 192.

³ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, Bloomsbury Revelations, London 2014, p. 102.

Thus, the study proposes that we can perhaps move away from the idea of re-presenting a text, that is, from the idea that by having a pre-authored text all performers and directors can do is to look for the most truthful interpretation and staging of it. This move can be made by simply opening up to a more spontaneous way of reacting to the pre-written material, one that still engages memory and intellect – the actors still need to remember the lines – but somewhat more passively, e.g. without preinterpretation, and through an enhanced sensibility towards the effects of the text on the performer in the moment of utterance and reception, allowing more impulsive and imaginative reactions. In this way, one can freely draw differences from repetition, and repetition is no longer synonymous with representation. This experimental methodology then is in the service of a kind of theatre that might be called immanent. A theatre that assertively creates the circumstances of its existence in the moment and place of manifestation, instead of listlessly identify with supposed realities existing elsewhere.

Immanent theatre is a term I have borrowed from Dr Laura Cull and her *Theatres of Immanence: Deleuze and the Ethics of Performance*. Published in 2012, this critical collection of case studies focuses primarily on practices of directing and devising, without considering practices of writing for performance as such. In the conclusion of her study however, Dr Cull calls for more research on the subject of immanence: «What remains for us to do now is to go and experiment with what else might provoke this ethical feeling today in our particular contexts».⁴ In the contexts of playwriting and scenic writing practices, my research hopes to contribute by exploring how texts can be composed and approached with the aim of provoking immanent performance.

In an important essay from 2004 titled *Beyond Drama: Writing for Post dramatic Theatre*, Małgorzata Sugiera had already introduced the principle of “immanent theatricality” to qualify contemporary texts for the stage, which is worth quoting at length:

[...] when the language of drama breaks free from its formerly primary function of representing the speech of the stage characters, then it becomes the proper substance of a text for theatre. It no longer represents logically organized stories, but rather attempts to stimulate particular perceptual and cognitive processes. Instead of recognizing oneself in the Others, which is becoming more and more difficult in a disintegrating and alienating world, the spectators themselves turn into the characters of their own acts of perception, consciousness and truth recognition. Nowadays, the basic structural principle of texts written for theatre increasingly often turns out to be their immanent theatricality, which is, however, no longer understood as a reflection upon theatre as a domain of arti-

⁴ Laura Cull, *Theatres of Immanence: Deleuze and the Ethics of Performance*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2012, p. 238. For a more specific analysis of the ethical implications of immanence see in particular the concluding chapter of the monograph.

stic activity or as an extensive metaphor of human life, but rather as a means of inducing the audience to watch themselves as subjects which perceive, acquire knowledge and partly create the objects of their cognition.⁵

Going back to my own practice-as-research, on the one hand I wonder whether there's a certain way of writing that facilitates spontaneity and immanence in performance, and on the other, I wonder whether that's enough, or whether it's rather a question of *ways of approaching the text* in the transition to performance, that is, in the ways of performing a text. So the research looks at both, that is, at a theatre-making methodology involving writing for performance and "dramaturgy", where "dramaturgy" is concerned with *the facilitation* of collaborative ways of making performance based on text (alternative to a directorial – perhaps more transcendental – approach). The aim is to allow the structure and significance of the performance to emerge from the collective work of the performers on a pre-written text, or score. The text is regarded as a *pretext* - for spontaneity, textual material useful for improvisation.

The way to approach texts of this kind is the focus of the current phase of the research, and will be treated more in detail in a later essay; however, it might be useful to include here another relevant quotation from Grotowski who, discussing his approach to improvisation in the same interview cited above, notably added: «During the exercises the score consists of fixed details and I would advise you [...] to improvise only within this framework of details».⁶ So I took his advice, and considered the text itself as a score, replacing the physical actions, which were the fixed details Grotowski initially worked with, with phonetic actions, that is, lines of speech. Within this framework provided by a sequence of speech acts, the actors can improvise through gesture, movement and intonation, generating different performance material and meanings.

To be a *pretext* for improvisation, the score should therefore incorporate potential for action without indicating intent. That is, it should be mostly undetermined in terms of meaning and staging requirements, creating an ambiguous yet coherent sequence of events, and adopting a mix of theatrical devices and language experimentation in order to defamiliarise and inspire at the same time, providing the actors with different performing choices, and requiring them and the audience to fill in the gaps. It is in these gaps, in the undecided *mise-en-scène*, in the unclear meaning, that new life may manifest and representation recede.⁷

⁵ Małgorzata Sugiera, *Beyond Drama: Writing for Post dramatic Theatre*, «Theatre Research International», xxix, 1 (2004), pp. 16-28.

⁶ Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre* cit., p. 192.

⁷ With this research, I am not claiming to discover the best or only way to achieve spontaneity in perfor-

As a result of the investigations so far, “openness”, “theatricality” and “performativity” are the three main characteristics of a performance text that have been identified as able to endanger authorship and engender immanence. These critical investigations looked at texts and performances based on texts by authors such as Carmelo Bene, Bertolt Brecht, Samuel Beckett, Steven Berkoff, Caryl Churchill, Martin Crimp, Jon Fosse, Ewald Palmetshofer, Gertrude Stein, Roland Shimmelpfennig, and many others. These artists have all very different aesthetics of course, but from each of them I could identify at least some of the devices useful to a theatre of immanence, which were “authoritatively” grouped in the three blurred and overlapping characteristics, or principles, previously mentioned. I then attempted to apply these devices to my own writing practice.

What follows is an example extract from a work-in-progress piece that I shall use as a case study to better outline these principles.

This text involves three performers always onstage, a man and two women; the lines are not allocated, so the choice of who's speaking which line is ideally made on the spot; the actors are required to learn all the lines. Dashes indicate potential change of speaker. The punctuation within each line has no fixed interpretation. [This section appears half way through the play]

- She sits. Takes a book from her bag. It's a French book.
- She's beautiful... she's... just unique. And elegant. I bet she's French. She's oh look not too tall not at all and yes, look, I knew it! No doubt about it! - glancing at the book on her lap. And those legs, ah those smooth shifty legs. A model! Might be, and that face, no... that's too rude... visage, ce visage! Buried underneath those capricious stylish hair... shading that brow thou brow thou cheeks thou lips where shall I... there's a seat there and there and there's one here... not too brash... could have- sat there... but you know... still makes sense... I'm not looking for... yet if it comes... not many seats available not so many anyway... I'm not desperate... I'm reading a book...
That's when with the corner of my eyes I sense the corner of her eyes the gentle movement of her hand long thin fingers through her hair... disclose her profile... the sweet spike of her nose falling softly... the shaded groove the upper border of her lip... what would I do what would I to climb up there... I give up! Oh yet if I were a minuscule... an invisible... mouth... a spy... there's a secret... I need to whisper... not to her ear no... oh I'm in pain! In short: her profile: a reveal
- Oh look it's a play.
- She glances at the book on his lap

mance of course. It is rather a paradoxical way to show how a text can demystify its own authority by itself, with no need for political, economic or anti-conventional drives.

Mimesis Journal

- It's Racine
- But could be anything. Yet that has an effect.
- Talk to her! No! Come on! I'm shy! You're a shame! She'll just laugh at me! I don't want to hear you complain anymore! loser! you deserve it! peeping tom! Shame on you!
- And she might be thinking perhaps she's thinking:
- Lift up your head come on look at me.
- I could try with a smile.
- I smile
- She's smiled
- What are you reading?
- He shows her the book he's reading:
- Do you know it
- Yes
- Are you French?
- Yes
Are you an actor?
- Oh no. I just I like...
- Are you a man of the theatre? A writer?
- Ehm Yes actually kind of
- You look like one
-
- Ehm I'm sorry... it's my stop
- He stands up
Gets off
Shakes his head
Stands motionless
Stares at the train that's leaving the platform
-
- Then stares at another
-
- And another
-
- It wasn't even the thought of his girlfriend that stopped him.

The first identified principle of “openness” refers to the degree of autonomy in the interpretation and usage of the text by a reader, which in this case will be the cast and creatives in rehearsal.⁸ One of the devices adopted to maintain openness in this text is the disuse of stage directions, or their embedding within the lines of speech, which in turn are not allocated to any one character. Because the performers are requested to master the whole text, as if it were a single piece of narrative, it is harder for them to predetermine intention and characterisation. In performance, this may imply a narrative mode⁹ of delivery overlapping with the more conventional mimetic mode of the theatre. Furthermore, the shifts between narration, internal commentary and direct or reported speech are not clearly demarcated, with the result that the performer seems to be running after thoughts by voicing them out. Also, the lines’ syntax is broken, and there’s a strange punctuation. Finally, there is a certain ambiguity around the context of the scene, its location, the actual events happening, and most of all, the subjects of the drama’s relationships to the speakers. All these are areas that may need further clarification/interpretation in performance; they call for the performers’ own creative choices, which may be the result of both reflection and impulse.

Yet, the notion of an open text might not be sufficient to investigate immanence because an ambiguous or undetermined text can still be blocked during rehearsals, therefore becoming pre-determined in view of the performance. Hence, I prefer terms such as “open or emerging dramaturgy” to refer to the ongoing process of making performance, which includes the actual performance event as well, in front of an audience. Indeed this event implies the interpretative choices of both the actors and the audience; the extent to which these are allowed to affect each other will eventually determine the overall (yet singly perceived) performance’s dramaturgy. Performance then becomes the occasion of a self-differentiating encounter between actors and audiences, where cognitive, kinetic, emotional – in one word – *creative* exchanges connect the stage with the auditorium.¹⁰

⁸ For a more accurate study of the poetics of the open work see in particular Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1989 and Id., *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the semiotics of texts*, Hutchinson, London 1981.

⁹ The performative affordances of the use of narration in drama would require a full treatment on its own which would exceed the scope of this article.

¹⁰ It is a self-differentiating encounter because, despite the fact that the same text is repeated each time, the performance is necessarily always different, but unintentionally so; it is different because the context in which the text is repeated changes, for example because of a different audience, or a different atmosphere, and ultimately because of the different performers’ reactions to the text and its context of utterance. This is true of any text, of course, but a methodology which welcomes these differences instead of resisting the dislocation they may cause to the directorial plan, acknowledges and foregrounds an aspect which is already immanent in representation anyway, that is: the impossibility to ever meet the origin or match the original. For a closer study on the feedback-loop between stage

“Theatricality” and “performativity” are the other two characteristics that in my view can allow the performance of a text to remain open to new emerging dramaturgies. They are coherently ambiguous terms, just as an open text is, and strictly related to each other, just as the terms theatre and performance are.

“Theatricality” refers to the capacity of a text to exploit the liveliness and materiality of the performance situation, where each object, sound or being is – for the simple fact of being on stage – a sign subject to interpretation, and replacement by another. Theatrical signs in fact, may not have a coded meaning, or may be used in a way that dissociates them from the meanings conventionally attributed to them. But theatricality also refers to a certain awareness performers and audiences have of this process of reality construction and of themselves actively involved in it, as if what’s presented onstage were not the fictional world as such, but the collective activity of creating and perceiving it – which takes us back to Sugiera’s reference to “immanent theatricality” previously quoted.

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

Finally and perhaps most importantly, “performativity” refers to the capacity of a text to suggest supplementing creative actions - physical or intellectual - to actors and spectators, as interactions potentially deviating from aprioristic linguistic conditions. It is the power of a text - or of a sign in general - to act. It refers to its capacity to do rather than mean. So how does a text do? On the one hand, Austen and speech-act theorists believed that words can do, bring about acts or facts, other than merely ascertain or describe them – provided that there’s a pre-existing stable identity speaking, and intending to have an intention (that is, intending to do something specific with that speech). It’s the classic: “I pronounce you man and wife”, said by the priest in front of the weds-to-be, possibly by the altar inside a church. But in my experience I have found that sometimes the pure reporting or description of an event or situation on stage, besides its supposed parasitic or

and auditorium see Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance. A new aesthetics*, Routledge, Oxon 2008.

etiolating state, can be just as performative as its actual enacted speech, performed by the adequate speaker/character. In this respect, taking the cue from Derrida's critique of Austen's theory, J. Hillis Miller writes: «the performative is seen as a response made to a demand made on me by the wholly other, a response that, far from depending on preexisting rules or laws, on a preexisting ego, I, or self, or on pre-existing circumstances or "context," creates the self, the context, and new rules or laws». ¹¹ Which I take to mean an impulsive and spontaneous reaction to speech. Some kind of affirmative and generous yet sovereign response.

Jacques Derrida considers iterability as the fundamental feature of performativity: that is, the capacity of a speech act to do, create and perform in whatever context, with whatever intention and through whatever subject it is uttered. So that the reality is necessarily created *in the reaction to* the speech act, and is no longer *represented by* it. This also brings into play the physicality of words in the voice - their sound, rhythm, pitch etc. - and through the voice, their affective power on the bodies of both the speaker-actor and the listener- audience and other actors on stage. It's as if the semantic process of making meaning were subjected to a prior process of apprehension through the senses. In other words, when the object of cognition, the text in this case, is not entirely recognisable in the fleeting moment of perception, which is the moment of reading or recollecting the text, it can only be sensed.

Hence the aim of a performative text is to enable the performer to react to the sensations that the speaking of the text would trigger in him. These triggers are embedded in the text's collapsing syntax, in the use of repetition and stuttering, in the long lines without punctuation, in the unclear relationships between speaker and the literal speech-act (the undefined context of utterance), and the ambiguous and shifting modes of discourse (shifting, for example, between narration, reported speech, free indirect discourse, internal commentary and direct address). These linguistic experimentations aim at obstructing the attempts to rationally preconceive or illustrate the words or the intention of each line. They may also produce physical effects on the performer voicing the text, such as, for example, a sense of struggle to keep up with the pace of the mental events, the breathing etc. These devices require the performer to make impulsive choices about the mode of delivery of each line, eventually affecting both characterisation and the scene's dramaturgy.

To conclude, if we consider immanent performance as a self-organised and spontaneously-created living reality, then its text's:

- "openness" contributes to it by allowing the initial creative engagement of

¹¹ J. Hillis Miller, *Performativity as Performance / Performativity as Speech Act: Derrida's Special Theory of Performativity*, «South Atlantic Quarterly», cvi, 2 (2007), p. 231.

the actors as collective authors of the performance material inspired by the ambiguities in the text;

- “theatricality” contributes by exploiting the materiality of the stage and the liveliness of the performance situation, both acknowledged as such or permitted to be acknowledged as such by a text that does not call for the representation of another dramatic situation;
- “performativity” contributes whenever the text instigates the performer’s imagination to produce a supplementing creative action, which could be a physical gesture and/or a certain mode of delivery of the line. These creative actions, resulting from improvised reactions to the text and the circumstances around its performance, contribute to the definition of new fictional words and realities, conjure up unacquainted beings, invisible objects and unpredicted emotional states.

The creation of the performance’s context and dramaturgy in the moment of performance, that is, through the mere repetition of the text without premeditation, is what may allow text-based theatre to bypass representation and approach immanence.

Macbettu at mortu su sonnu

Giulia Muroi

C'è attualmente in circolazione un'opera teatrale in grado di restituire preziosa originalità al *Macbeth*: si tratta di *Macbettu* di Alessandro Serra, della compagnia Teatropersona, prodotto da Sardegna Teatro.

Lo spettacolo s'incunea in un crocevia: l'aspra vicenda del *Macbeth* di Shakespeare – immersa nella Scozia medievale – incrocia l'ispirazione del regista di fronte al Carnevale barbaricino, per plasmare una sostanza composita, sapida e tetra. Della trama scespiriana si recupera l'universalità di tensioni umane, millimetricamente sul punto di deflagrare; mentre i carnevali sardi regalano l'allucinata immagine di uomini a viso aperto che, imbrancando uomini in maschere scure, cadenzano all'unisono lo stridore dei sonagli che portano addosso.

Il regista erige una stilizzazione scenica rigorosa in cui gli attori – un *ensemble* virile, come da tradizione elisabettiana e traduzione del *balente*, soggetto del codice barbaricino – articolano una sofisticata partitura di movimento e suono. Alle nitide traiettorie coreografiche fa da contrappunto una fibra acustica complessa: il testo originale, stringato e riscritto, è tradotto in *limba* sarda da Giovanni Carroni, per divenire una traccia di sonorità pura. Affrancata dal giogo dei significati, di questa lingua spigolosa viene magnificata l'intelaiatura di senso: dalla trama degli eventi affiora chiaramente, *mutatis mutandis*, la narrazione di efferata brama di potere e belluina ambizione.

La Sardegna si fa espediente di slanci immaginifici, terreno di archetipi e orizzonte di pulsioni dionisiache, dove ferro, sughero, terra, pietra, carasau sono materie eloquenti. L'armonia livida delle pietre sonore di Pinuccio Sciola imprime ferocia a quadri disincantati e claustrofobici, in cui il banchetto delle guardie diviene una porcilaia terrosa, orchestrata da un'irsuta Lady Macbeth. Nell'oscurità della notte, durante la quale i commensali gonfi di vino dormono all'aperto e sulla pietra come i pastori, avviene il truculento omicidio del Re Duncan.

Le streghe rivestono un importante ruolo di controcanto sardonico: prefiche di paese dalle movenze sincopate, laide e sboccate, smorzano la gravità dell'atmosfera. Le scene sono avvolte in sfaccettate tinte di grigio, dove la luce si spande tra nuvole di polvere e frammenti di pane. Un riferimento del regista sembra essere *Still Life*, la rilettura del mito di Sisifo a opera del greco Dimitris Papaioannou: allo stesso modo in *Macbettu*, come anche nei quadri della follia di Van Gogh, le sfumature cupe variano d'intensità e gradiente, merito di un uso espressivo di tagli di luce in dialogo costante con una materia che è soggetto scenico. Piani inclinati

e verticali capeggiano il palcoscenico e fanno da sfondo a un'articolata e mobile composizione di pietre, polvere, legno. Si assiste allo schianto di tre enormi lastre perpendicolari: è un mondo che precipita alle spalle del protagonista.

Il sonnambulismo e il suicidio di Lady Macbeth si riversano in un dipinto silente. Come in uno scatto prego di nostalgia plumbea di Francesca Woodman, il corpo dalle linee femminili di Accogli si inerpicca e si appende a un'altezza sul fondale. Il monologo finale del protagonista – affidato all'intensa presenza di Leonardo Capuano – è un condensato delirante di amarezza e angoscia. Seduto su un piccolo trono dinnanzi a un nuraghe: Macbetto è un sovrano che ha nutrito il suo regno col sangue e qui, dopo essersi misurato con la divinità, cede al severo confronto con se stesso.

Alessandro Serra propone una originale rivisitazione del capolavoro di Shakespeare, spogliandolo da barocchismi, e riuscendo – attraverso l'uso di forme primeve – a tratteggiare uno spaccato formale di trascendenza umana. Avvalendosi delle categorie dell'antropologia teatrale, ciò che affiora sono segni universali, affondati nelle radici rituali delle civiltà. La regia, che sembra assumere l'incipit artaudiano, per cui «il valore del teatro risiede esclusivamente in un rapporto magico e atroce con la realtà e con il pericolo»¹, disegna scorci inediti e puntuali e struttura lungo un'ascisse portante di evocazioni la propria forza drammaturgica.

Senza incappare in degenerazioni folkloriche o in grovigli di «invenzione della tradizione»² – pericolo incombente per chi si confronta con modelli culturali spesso guardati con esotismo – *Macbetto* riesce nell'ardito compito di parlare di Macbeth, riuscendo a trarne linfa e, allo stesso tempo, a raccontarne il cuore più profondo con tinte di spiccata originalità e maestria.

¹ A. Artaud, *Il teatro e il suo doppio*, a cura di G.R. Morteo e G. Neri, Einaudi, Torino 2008, p. 204.

² Cfr. E. Hobsbawn-T. Ranger (a cura di), *L'invenzione della tradizione*, trad. di E. Basaglia, Einaudi, Torino 2002.

La porta aperta

Rammemorazione di un viaggio

Michela Torri

Come si ricomincia un ricordo? Imparando a dimenticare.

Forse il viaggio che sto per raccontarvi non ripercorrerà letteralmente la sequenza delle vicende che mi colpirono nei giorni del 31 gennaio e 1 febbraio scorsi; ma per vivere è necessario tradirsi.

E tu, Filosofia, lo sai meglio di chiunque altro; attraversi l'accadere del mondo per perderti in esso, sacrifichi i tuoi discorsi per un lavoro dinamico che rammemora, raccoglie, desidera e attende. Tu vuoi incontrare l'altro per ritornare a te stessa. Qual è il tuo inizio? Da dove parli? Chi parla in te, cara Amica, se non la vita che accade nella sua crudele tragedia?

Parlerò a voi, a te, come a me stessa di questo incontro con la carne di un uomo che non c'è più, ma vive e opera ancora: Jerzy Grotowski. Questo viaggio fu un congiungersi silente e battente come la pioggia che ci investì lungo la via percorsa, appannato e clamoroso come il nostro vociare, il nostro scambiarsi discorsi. Forse proprio incontrando il Workcenter mi resi conto davvero che anche i discorsi battono come i piedi e le mani della danza. Questo viaggio voleva commisurare la vita alla conoscenza, nella vita e nella conoscenza che io posso incarnare insieme agli altri. Così mi continuavo a chiedere: «Come si canta insieme? Si può?». E senza accorgermi già risuonavo con i ragazzi del Workcenter.

Se mai questo lavoro comune si risolverà in parole, mi dicevo, la mia presenza qui non avrà avuto alcuna efficacia. Mi illudevo di fare corpo con i testi studiati; Grotowski affermava che la sua prassi vivente non avrebbe semplicemente attuato discorsi, ma allargato l'isola di libertà che portava, ossia avrebbe aperto tutte quelle porte che prima di lui erano rimaste chiuse a doppia mandata.

Il tuo mazzo di chiavi è solo il germogliare di queste domande. Allora chiediti perché sei arrivato fin qui.

Giunti al casale di Pontedera, trovammo una porta aperta in cima a una rampa consunta di scale, o scalata dalla consunzione. Parve subito di trovarsi in un luogo antico nell'astrazione umida del paesaggio toscano con i suoi rumori troppo innovativi da sopportare il peso del cielo. Era un tempio, quello che si trovava in cima alla scala dell'esercizio del tempo. Un passo alla volta ci riconoscemmo tutti. I nostri volti erano un visibile cardiogramma d'impazienza. Noi e loro eravamo il desiderio tangibile di un incontro.

Eccoci seduti davanti alla scena, senza più la tentazione di fare lo scienziato con i suoi vetrini. Il luogo ci respirava, tutti sconnessi da noi stessi, in un silenzio che si faceva tatto.

Thomas Richards ci accolse tutti, sfidandoci con un sorriso. Si trattava della prova di un corpo all'opera, quella della presenza. Come si sta nella presenza dell'altro? E fu subito un gesto.

Cécile, con il suo corpo spicchio di luna, fece un primo buco nella visione e fummo tutti il suo movimento e la sua voce. Cos'è "corpo" per la voce? Un segno? Come si toccano le voci che ci abitano? E quelle che ci attraversano? Siamo ancora un segno, una proiezione azzurrastra sulla parete. Cécile danza alla luna: diveniamo lunari. Tutti al buio nelle gestualità compenstrate di pianto e riso, usurate di tempo nel fuori tempo, il ritmo dei tacchi sul parquet. Ogni battito è una scossa. Allora insegnami ad abitare le macerie e, quando tutto è caduto, ritorna nell'assenza che c'è. Cécile tinse di sé il brulicare di voci che l'attraversavano – forse le nostre – e si elevavano nell'isteria. È difficile stare attenti, è difficile sconnettersi da sé.

L'atto di rivoluzione è nelle mani di un contrarsi silenzioso. Cécile resta sospesa, si trasforma in fessura di mondo, ancora e ancora una volta. Risuoniamo ancora, insieme. Si ripete il fraintendimento del passaggio, l'ambiguità della decisione, la pericolosità della soglia. Dove sono io e dove non più io? L'ora in fuga messa in scena è il racconto di un incontro che è inevitabilmente il sacrificio, il ritornare permanente e impermanente della vita che accade nella mia singolarità, in quel corpo danzante, frastagliato, terremotato e poetico.

Dove va la voce quando accade il silenzio? Come accade il mondo quando si arresta? Il gesto che evoca l'altro, custodisce il suo segreto nel fluire del canto. Tornammo improvvisamente luminosi nello sguardo degli altri, vibrarono le distanze, fummo tutti profondità. Ci alzammo e, come al termine della sacra messa, morbidi di fiato e di passi, ci avviammo oltre la porta.

È di nuovo giorno, senza sole. Piove ancora. Il ricadere della pioggia è una risposta alla mancanza di sole. Cosa manca nel modo di vivere la Vita? Grotowski, anche il giorno successivo, m'investì di affermazioni. Gli artisti mediocri parlano di rivolta, i veri artisti fanno la rivolta. Come ogni gesto è rivoluzione? E tu, Filosofia, come ti fai rivolta? Trastullandoti di parole? Parli e straparli, scrivi e riscrivi e poi ammutolisci. Non sai come sponderti, continui a pensare. Solo gli Amici sono veri rivali e questa rivalità anche oggi si gioca in me. Arte e Filosofia. Noi e loro. Ancora una distanza. E ancora di nuovo incontro.

Sono una dilettante, non so guardarmi guardare. I segni non danzano? I discorsi sono canti che vibrano, scalano equilibri sottili e ripiombano nella domanda che li ha tracciati. L'emergenza che ha reso possibile questo continuare ad accadere è variazione del medesimo ritornare. Filosofia, sei il medesimo movimento di questi corpi.

Questa *kinesis* è un gioco di attenzione. Come si rintraccia la propria presenza? Io sono qui.

Qui dove? Mi ritrovo attenta nel ricordare la sessione di canto di quella mattina. Quella dinamica preziosa tra gli allievi e il maestro, che insegna, intaglia sui loro corpi il segno del passaggio a presenza, come emergenza della singolarità e perdita dell'individualità. Se credevo bastasse farsi cassa di risonanza dell'altro per imparare a cantare mi sbagliavo. La voce ritorna alla sua scaturigine, e la riconosce solo facendosi attraversamento di alterità. Celebrare il presente è una vera e propria pratica coreutica. Io accado come accadere di una singolarità vibrante, ossia imparo a fare corpo con il mondo. Questo corpo comune è l'attraversamento comune, l'impigliarsi nello scontro, cedervi e sciogliersi nella sensazione, nella polarità che dapprima resiste e poi insiste e pulsa. Lo spazio venne pervaso di luoghi.

La punta delle dita di ogni arto danzante, pareva il ditirambo di fili d'erba rapiti dallo stesso vento.

Un corpo solo, una vita.

Questo viaggio si prospettava il sogno delle soglie, e anche sul finire di esso un nuovo varco ci attendeva. La bocca di una terra ribollente, infiammata di corpi transitanti, elettrici. Il nostro improvviso quanto atteso arrivo nella dimora dalle mille provenienze si prospettò subito come uno scandaloso ricongiungimento. Quando Mario Biagini ci accolse, prima che le sue membra, furono i suoi occhi a danzare su di noi. Ci mutammo tutti in un intenso grumo di sguardi irreprensibili. Nessuno posava lo sguardo, ma non poteva fare a meno di guardare dappertutto. Questa estraneità consonante si accompagnava alle "emozioni della prima volta"; qui (in modo più sentito che con il gruppo di lavoro di Thomas, con il quale già avevamo avuto occasione di conoscerci e assaporarci ognuno dall'orizzonte della propria pratica), sentimmo la stretta della curiosità, da noi per primi malintesa: quella che muove l'analisi speculativa. Fummo presi in contropiede, ci presero in un altro non luogo di tutti luoghi e si aprì vorticosamente nella loro voce la possibilità di scivolare in loro per conoscerli meglio.

Chi si ricordava di essere corpo? Almeno per me, fu scioccante scoprirne le fibre tese e rinsecchite dal contegno. Il contegno che è un velare antico: la paura di essere se stessi.

Le parole erano sonorità vibranti scatenate dagli arti, dai passi. Pareva di germogliare in coro, di emergere insieme dalla terra come frutti simili e indivisi. Gli sguardi si cercavano, si armonizzavano spontaneamente senza stranezza. Eravamo famigliari, comuni senza scarto.

Ma quanto può durare l'incanto? Il tempo di ritornare nelle proprie scarpe.

Di ritorno dal sacro incontro, ciascuno perse l'altro e insozzò l'Armonia di spietata e distratta individualità. Come si ha cura di un altro? Come si ha cura di un momento? Dove si attua l'esercizio di attenzione, dove si traccia? Non nell'azione, ma nell'interruzione, nei «tra» dei battiti che ci facevano risonanti. Quando il canto

si arresta, prosegue, continua a percuotere quelle fibre tese, anche a bocca chiusa ci fa archi, conche di mondo e di alterità. Mario diceva che è proprio questa l'oggettività del canto, la sua corporeità vibrante e anonima. Il canto non rende stranieri, ma è la terra che fa di ciascuno un apolide e per questo appartenente originariamente all'altro, senza la superstizione del confine dell'egoità.

Questo viaggio si rifrange ritmicamente nelle mie ricerche, come il ritornello che riconduce a casa: la verità del mondo che canta ogni incontro nella sua differenza. L'incontro tra l'allievo e il suo maestro.

(7 aprile 2017)