

## To Embody Words

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### **About two words: 'Lecture' and 'Performance'\***

The first connection that springs to my mind about Lecture-Performances has to do with the noun itself: Lecture-Performance. Lecture and performance; lecture as performance; lecture that is performance, performance in the form of a lecture. To turn two common nouns into a compound is to allow one to qualify the other in a specific way; two words performing a complex operation together. Aware of such a systemic connection, I get into a speech flow that begs me to repeat several times the two words, to get acquainted with the proposed term: Lecture-Performance, lectureperformance, performance intervening in the lecture, lecture/intervention, intervention that lectures. I become aware of the words but at the same time they become strange. I get intimate with the terms just as I gain distance from them. I operate in the terms a process of self-reflexiveness about the meanings I commonly assign to each word when they are detached from one another. A lecture is a form of cognition; the hyphen is a graphical device of connection, and performance is a disturbance. Would Lecture-Performance be a term endowed with an oxymoronic potency? A term that, at the same time as explains, makes the knowledge known and also disturbs its own formulation?

The composition of the term Lecture-Performance reveals this disturbance in the same parameters in which John Austin brings us the knowledge of words, of each and every word. Words, Austin tells us, are presented in their power to name and describe things and actions, and such description is further empowered the less we recognize the links with the context in which they exist. Words seem to indeed constitute, affirm and represent actions and things, but in fact they perform actions and things, networking, revealing, or even reifying power circuits. This is the performative potency of words.

Indeed, the word lecture has its power of cognition

\* Throughout this text the words performance and intervention will be used in similar ways. Given the original version of the text is in Portuguese, Lecture-Performance has been used as *palestra-intervenção*. The reasons why are explained later in the text.

disturbed by the word performance, to the extent that meanings are entangled productions that vary depending on the context. This variation is a challenge that goes against the ontological belief that the concept is something already given. A given presupposes a security prevention to guard the meaning, as if it were likely to fit or be contained within a particular signifier. Now, if we assume significance as built from interaction with the context, what we precisely need is significance not to fit "into" anything, not to be restrained from, but simply to be exposed to the context. Therefore, meanings are given by disruption and not by absence.

From such an interactive perspective, does the ontological question – What is Lecture-Performance – not sound too abstract? If we attempt to answer this question, is our answer not in danger of being necessarily transcendental to the very dynamics we investigate? Isn't here transcendence a paradox, in which while proposing to investigate an approach, we end up further promoting its distance? What could I affirm or uncover through asking such questions?

The performative capacity of words trope into different developments, but for now we are concerned only with how this dynamic resonates with the thinking of two other authors, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. In the work of those thinkers we mostly find strong parameters to the critique of ontology

*Sustenance: A Play for all Trans[ ]borders*, lecture-performance by the artist Electronic Disturbance Theater, with in-site participation of Flavia Meireles and Brian Whitener



as the given. For example, in respect to the regulatory norm of words to saying what something is, they rather define things through their usage. The question “what is it” is avoided on behalf of the question “how is it”, a change that performs, thus, the migration from ontology to materialism. Instead of recovering an essential meaning of the concepts, they understand them as circumstantial discourses that help in the functioning of things. That way, concepts are unfit meanings – as they don’t fit into anything – which, once used, reveal themselves as matter and duration.

This dynamic of the materialization of the signifier is understood in similarity to the own construction of subjectivity. The matter of the signifier has, undoubtedly, a productive feature of radiate meanings that are formed while in resonance and contagion with an environment. Established almost as an atomic flow, Deleuze and Guattari materialistically seize the very notion of ontology. Without denying its existence, they re-signify ontology as a dynamic always following on from resonance. Always in second place, and never in the origin, ontology is thus the production between conjunctions and disjunctions of flows whose repetitions establish one single dynamic. However, given it is proper of every dynamic to have its own duration, based on the disturbances it suffers and promotes, the ontology is a constant disturbance and, *par excellence*, mutant – and that overlaps that first radiating moment to this second moment of repetition. Due to this simultaneity, to call those first and second make them cardinal instead of ordinal denominations, according to Deleuze.<sup>1</sup>

We realize in the materialist trope of Deleuze and Guattari an agreement akin to significance through context proposed by Austin. While focusing their discussion on the functioning instead of on the essence of things, Deleuze and Guattari shift the thought of ontology; in what it concerns the power to name, Deleuze states that due to its mutant ability, every matter is enunciable; an object about which something can be said. Austin would certainly agree and, in his own terms, would clarify that the statement itself – provided with matter and duration – is also an enunciable. Since each enunciation is performative, it is thus perceived as an act, a

speech act that establishes a dynamic in the present moment it happens.

The consciousness of the performative power of words is the power of reifying a whole system of powers, by simply naming something or responding “yes” to a question. To say yes before a priest is to say yes to the priest, to the Church and to the whole system of beliefs and promises, which it shares. Austin makes this example in his first lecture, the collection of thirteen of which generates the book *How To Do Things With Words*. An ironically titled manual that teaches the how to do’s for anything. However, this manual is literally a do-it-yourself book, as it goes beyond creation through imitative step-by-step guides, and embodies many conceptual applications to be used as the reader wishes - Do it yourself, in fact! Given the performativity of the title, it could have been his lecture zero, whose hyperbolic name acts with an irony capable of weakening the constative power of words while strengthening them in their ability to create more life. A name that in its own existence performs a method.

It’s been due to its usage that we preferred to translate Lecture-Performance from the English, the original language of the term, to Portuguese as *palestra-intervenção* [Lecture-Intervention]. We translated performance as intervention, as to prioritize the dynamic of disturbance instead of the very artistic circuit the term derives from\*. We are, however, aware that the circuit of Performance Art is an important connection to the Lecture-Performances.

In 1964, the minimalist artist Robert Morris live dubbed for ten minutes a videotaped lecture of art historian Erwin Panofsky. Morris insisted to the audience that this action constituted a dance, and it was so, at least by relying on the legitimacy of performing it on a stage in a theater. Those movements he made in the dance context are perceived as dance and therefore put dance in a new context. The dubbing he performed as well as his insistence in working on daily movements were, for Morris, as interesting as the modern dance movements. Morris reenacted Panofsky’s speech on the *Study of Iconol-*

\* The adoption of this term, doesn’t extinguish the tension with performance art as, in Brazil, many performance works are often called interventions.

ogy, and choreographed beforehand each interruption, sip of water or cough. 21.3, as the performance was called, directly brought to discussion the relationship between art and knowledge both in research and mediation, in language and in the act of talking about art. While reenacting this text, he himself made an iconological study of the act of uttering.<sup>2</sup> Not by chance, such a historic gesture of seeing a lecture as scenic intervention built a connection between the form and the minimalist aesthetic. Nevertheless, minimalism inspires stronger relationships in how it is defined by Hall Foster: as something that looks simple and yet brings an ambiguity that complicates things; a state of contiguity rather than of idealization, in which the audience is led to explore the perceptual consequences of a specific intervention in a given space.<sup>3</sup>

The 1990’s and 2000’s witnessed a strong return of Lecture-Performances in the fields of Dance and Performance. Artists such as Dan Graham, Jerome Bell, Xavier Le Roy, and Ary Fliakos created works that brought to stage recognizable forms of cognition, such as lecture, testimony, and step-by-step didacticism. These forms invested in a certain reflexivity, reversing its common usage, and making them less as mediators of information, than mediated forms of speech. From the speaker’s voice to the role of listener in the audience, as well as the use of technology, each and every element of cognition was problematized. For example Jerome Bell’s *Le dernier spectacle* (Une Conference) videotaped lecture performance is reenacted by Ari Fliakos from the Wooster Group, and this script of Bell’s gestures performed by Fliakos closely resembles Morris in 21.3.

In Brazil, specifically in Rio de Janeiro city, we witnessed throughout the 2000s the rise of Lecture-Performances in the context of contemporary dance. Denise Stutz performs *Três Solos em Um Tempo* (Three Solos at One Time) 2008, a work which joins the body and words in a personal re-reading of the Modern Dance history based on her autobiography, and currently *Justo uma Imagem* (Just an Image) is an investigative process and meditation on the relationship between movement and image. In 2010, playwright and director Theresa Rocha made *Três Mulheres e Um Café: uma conferência*

*dançada com o pensamento de Pina Baush* (Three Women and a Coffee: a danced conference on Pina Bausch’s thought) In this performance we witness the reenactment of excerpts from Café Müller, intertwined with speech to mingle the history and aesthetics of dance. It is, though, the Brazilian settled North-American artist, Ricky Seabra, who has generated an extensive body of work using the Lecture-Performance format to unite activism, memory and poetry in an aesthetic construction strongly mediated by image technologies. Three examples of Seabra’s works are *Airplanes & Skyscrapers!* (2002), *Empire, Love to Love You Baby!* (2006), and recently *Preambles* (2011) - in which the audience is prompted to write, as a group, the preamble of the Brazilian constitution. Indeed, the works of Ricky Seabra expose how the links of the Lecture-Performances to minimalism are by no means mandatory, as his performances lend and borrow much more from the excesses of pop art and aesthetics of trash culture, than from any pared down demonstration.

**About two other words: ‘video’ and ‘essay’.** Among the Lecture-Performance format exist mechanisms of self-reflexiveness and discursive formats which reveal structures of power. Within cinema its parallel could be considered the video-essay. Deriving from literature, essay is taken as a short

Still photos of video-essays: *Até que Você me Esqueça, [Till You Forget Me]* by Denise Stutz, 9min – 2011



argumentative rhetoric about a certain theme. In the case of film and cinema, it is an essay composed on video. It is less of an essay in which images are captured or created by words but instead is an argument constructed through images, video-essays are a relationship of continuous negotiation between words and the events recorded. Usually short and specifically about a topic, these video-essays were notorious in their counterculture political use by movements in the 1950's and 1960's. probably this usage largely contributed to make it better known as video, even though it is sometimes shot on film. The video of pre-digital definition was rather marginal and, due to the low cost of recording, reproduction and copy became popular as media. Marginal and heroic, its revolutionary use in the counterculture was enhanced by the Situationists and by French filmmaker collectives such as the Medvekinne Groupe (headed by Chris Marker) and the Dziga Vertov Groupe (formed by Pierre Gorin and Jean-Luc Godard). Godard, in fact, distinguishes between his pre-and post-Maoist works. Despite leaving the Dziga Vertov Group, all of his films still maintain strong essay features, constantly addressing values of art, rhetoric and sociability, which are present in the *Histoires du Cinema*, *The Old Place*, *Je Vous Salud Sarajevo*, or even recent feature movies as *Our Music* (2003) and *Film Socialism* (2010), all co-directed with Anne-Marie Melville.

The works made during the partnership between Godard and Anne-Marie Melville stand out in the contemporary scene of video-essays, as well as the works of Brazilian Arthur Omar and the Germany based Czech artist Harun Farocki. Farocki is the author of a wide cinematography but Videograms of a Revolution is proof of the revolutionary potential of videos ability to distribute multiple insights and viewpoints. Videogram becomes the term that indicates the caption of plural images by a crowd. While a photogram is one frame in a second of cinematographic time, the videogram becomes a source of caption. In *Videograms of a Revolution* (a quasi pleonastic title) – the deposition of Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu is shot through the eyes of many cameras that record the transition to democracy from multiple angles and textures.

Given its historical usage, the video-essay has been

associated to revolution, in ways that proved to be a little too reductive. If there is a revolutionary feature in the video-essay, it certainly does not sit only within chosen themes. Revolutionary works become simply so through their clear ability to promote a re-evolution, the ability, in its literal sense, to promote a new turn in its performative elaboration. An elaboration which entitles rhetoric in self-reflexivity, political constitution in regard to context, and the deriving of materialistic ethics from the aesthetical production of the image. The critics of the video-essays usually refer to them as reductive, either due to their excessive passion for discourse, or to their focusing in a specific theme. But in fact, they are far from being reductive in the sense they are structures of thought that accept many flows, even odysseys, such as that in the structure of *Our Music*. Against image as metaphor, one can argue that video-essays raise thoughts through the usage and deconstruction of images, in as much as lecture-performances promote a metamorphosis in the field of perception. As Paul Virilio says, if it is this metamorphosis of perception what constitutes the history of battles, then in these four words relay something revolutionary.<sup>4</sup>

Over the decades, video-essays have been fundamental as an investigative platform that operates between the poetic and the political. Whilst image holds a strong indication of a happening, Video-Essays build a rhetorical dramaturgy that places image, and its production, as a thought. Rather conclusive, hypertextual, investigative, or reflective narratives rise both from the ever present gaze of the camera, and the cut of the shot as a gesture of command. Paradoxically, it is the well-constructed rhetoric that frees the images and lets them speak for themselves. All works that promote the “[shifting] of the written thing to the writing of the thing, from the narrative writing to the act of writing the narrative, from the written confession to the inscription of confession.”<sup>5</sup>

I do not propose here, in any way, to create an exclusive field neither for Lecture-Performances nor towards the Video-Essay and the major concern does not come from defining them, nor in ceasing potential definition(s), but in how to define them and always define them. Thus, an explicit perception of transdisciplinarity exists in its own pairing of

compositions (Lecture-Performances, Video-Essays). Lecture-Performances as well as Video-Essays are only other ways to present one same problem: the dramaturgical negotiation between text, body and image. Their development does not go into a constative apprehension of their meaning, even less to invoke identities. On the contrary, it intends to use its performativity and identify its insertion in the matrix of power relations and authority, the self-reflexivity of which promote context.

During the Atos de Fala festival, of which this catalog is part, we invited artists from three distinct areas – theater, dance and videoart – to develop their own video-essays responding to notions of ‘Documents and Intimacies’.

In *o deus no arroz-doce* (the god of rice pudding, both god and rice pudding deliberately lower-cased), Enrique Diaz faces his own family, and use archival images amidst many mixed others to build a net of significance, in which his biographical experiences provoke and contextualize image-based verses. From the beginning of the video-essay, the artist attempts to recreate, from his memory a photo taken during his childhood. Such image never gets fully pictured and becomes the movie's epiphany, in which it becomes a search through re-assemblages and bricolages. Those images from the family archive are detached from their original contexts, files are forged, and moving images, some of them from the rough material of the film, are projected on location and reshot, in a clear movement of an image carrying the other in itself. What also occurs during this montage is that the images because contiguous, connected in time and space and this elevates the images towards a symbolic nature. For example there is a moment when the Indigenous speech of Diaz's father resonates into the poetry of his wife, who compares the search of the Guarani tribes for a land without evil, to that of the travels which Diaz's family also endured. Presenting the viewer with images of their personal lives and the historicised Indigenous contexts, through the introduction of archival images in between which their children and nephews play cowboys battling against natives, places images which overtake their own naïve conjuncture of the playing, and become also a colonialist memory and history.

If the bricolage as used by Enrique Diaz is a device of endless completion, in the Video-Essay from the dancer and choreographer Denise Stutz in the work *Até que Você me Esqueça* ('Till You Forget Me), it is this same device which allows for a dissipation to happen. Body scores and constructions of emotional states are experienced from a found letter in the writings of Denise's mother. Her reading of the letter is deconstructed, in lapses, with repetitions and a gradual spatialization of voice, mixed with ambient sound and subtle accompaniment from the sound of strings, this transforms the reading into a song. Among reflections and refracted images, Denise dances inasmuch as is the rhythmic elaboration between jump cuts and sequence plans. Her scores of movement derives from the elliptical jump cuts found in the body movements, which also reveal different locations from one shot to another. At times this migrates from the bucolic relationship within nature to the tension of an unbalance framing that, between glass layers, refracts the performer against the passing of cars in the background. Image and text create a symbiotic relationship of narrative negotiation and mutual empowerment. Thus, when the letter is complete, the image is gone. What was felt as past becomes present and the present, seems to be past. This ambiguous drive of memory builds the foundations for *Até que Você me Esqueça*...

These two different examples, under the aegis of the Video-Essay, point towards the multiplicity of formats and even artistic readings about what is an argument and how it does become an essay. The Video-Essay of Milena Travassos, *Sortilégio* (Charming), portrays the self-reflexive nature of the term. The video artist has a set of work organized primarily through the silence of the word. Construction of meanings happens predominantly through image, and this construction lingers in *Sortilégio*, a video which also came about from the invitation to make a video-essay. In direct relation to her videography, the artist places the camera in a position of surveillance in her bedroom, where she performs the ritual. The temporality of the video reflects the temporality of the ritual, which is organized through translucent shadows of glass reflected on walls, tin the water from the glasses she bathes herself. Moving in a spiral, Milena grabs each giant glass bottle and, after bathing with its water, lays it on the ground. The



D.C., lecture-performance by Yuri Firmeza

highly pitched sound of flasks creates an acute musicality that instills tone and charm, an inexplicable fascination, seemingly sourceless but indeed there. The last of the flasks holds wine, with which the artist performs the same ritual of drinking and bathing.

**About acts spilling speeches.** From this desire for self-reflexivity, and the creation and the strengthening of a context in which meanings are produced, that the Atos de Fala festival urged, an energy machine that empowers flows of operation of lectures-performances and video-essays and is fed back by them. In the pleasure of making one word slip over another, we also created the sculpture-archives, a sculptural work over which the traces of each Lecture-Performance presented could be displayed.

At a certain point, Austin deliberately makes discourse and act indistinguishable. Given the trope he followed to come up to such a statement, we understand through his text that this lack of distinction does not equal an action to its description, but the contrary. In the same way an action generates discourses that promise to describe it, the very promise of a description is in itself an act. Austin makes this statement due to the systemic perception between an act and a discourse - in the sense that one invariably becomes the other.

This relationship is built as a complex system that rather focus on a cyclical movement as its origin, even though it still holds text as one of its actors. One

could argue that to name a festival after Speech Acts is at least to maintain such an emphasis on text. But if we emphasize it it's due to the conviction – even if as a conviction it is just a promise – that we wish to contribute further to other usages of words which flow in the ability of creating, reframing or spilling definitions through the contexts in which they are brought up and thus generate. Jacques Derrida, although embryonic in Austin, much further develops this ambiguity between context and discourse. Surely context allows for certain discourses to happen and may as well interdict them. But if there is a context with such power over discourse, it occurs exactly because there is a legitimization of a given context by another discourse. If we understand that the yes said in church by a couple makes them husband and wife, it is so because many other have been said in the same circumstances and the one we hear now is genuinely a quotation. Therefore, what formulates contexts are the utterances and their inherent production of difference. “The Performative produces or transforms a situation, it effectuates.”<sup>6</sup> In this sense we think that, in its own way, each work of art is able to modify previous statutes and to recreate meanings in our vocabulary.

It's like in D.C., Lecture-Performance in three parts by Yuri Firmeza, taken by repetitions either empowered by interdictions, simultaneities or contiguity. Firmeza juxtaposes a video of his grandmother to his re-reading of a text by another author and the immediate construction of a cacophonous poem performed by ten artists-collaborators\*. This is a Lecture-Performance connecting oblivion, reenactment and cacophony, going from a physiological condition of one aged body to the appropriation of this repetitive dynamic in many other bodies. It offers presence that gradually broadens our spectrum and reveals more and more spaces, simultaneities and stories; a presence that engenders emotional states and which empowers repetition even further.

In the beginning, a video. In the video, Yuri's grandmother repeats for several minutes the same poem formed by verses from the initials of her name: Juci-

\* Carol Limia, Eduardo Bastos, Guilherme Terrari, Leandro Rabello, Leandro Romano, Lucimar Ferreira, Marcelo Asth, Rany Carneiro, Renata Sampaio.

neide. Mrs. Jucineide has Alzheimer and repeats that same poem that forms her name, sitting in a hospital room, framed in a fixed video shot. Then, we watch silent super 8 images transferred from an old archive, in which Jucineide walks on the beach. This video projection pulsates fragments of memory in the gallery. In this gallery, the video, which requires spectatorship, superimposes a space occupied by two desks arranged in “V”. Around the desks, eleven seats, one of them occupied by Ceara artist Yuri Firmeza. Firmeza – Firmness, as in his family name – re-enacts the reading of a text by Lisette Lagnado as his own. In this gallery, there are ten artist-collaborators and many other participant-spectators. As they are seated at the desk, the collaborators begin to communicate by whispering in each other's ear. Just like in this children's game, the joke on D.C. is the noise of communication. But what we call noise here is not the semantic transformation of what was originally said by the interlocutor, but rather the revelation of the word in its materiality - the words revealed as phonetic groupings. The repetition of this game marks the third part of this Lecture-Performance and is the mechanism by which words are deconstructed. Repetition in order to unfix and to detach significant particles from the meanings, and through this action also create many others; repetition to endure a primal relationship with words. Repeat, to surprise oneself with meanings. This phonetic flurry, at times signifies towards other signifiers, and makes the uttering sensual, as much as about hearing. We watch and listen to a lecture that doesn't make itself understandable, a lecture that otherwise implies the understanding of the gallery where it occurs. Repetition, repetition, and repetition. Repetition that works on what is left off, repetition that re-enacts, and repetition on the cacophony of creation. Every action emits rays that are added to other actions, increasing their power, spreading, forming flows of mobile links, formed by several forces that bind, unbind, and whose field of energy we call D.C. A field formed through procedures that allows us to listen to a voice carrying the recent memory of another, carry one voice into another, let one interdict the other, let them overlap, and in between cacophony and oblivion, apprehend meanings.

As a matter of fact, apprehension has a dynamic

that the very title, D.C., already indicates when it derives from a musical acronym which stands for Da Cappo, meaning repetition from the head, from a start tag. Just as in music scores, the uttering of the phonemes structure their own system of notation, requesting a primal aesthetic apprehension rather than cognitive learning. Aesthetic apprehension always as a form of relating to life, is, however, so subtle, that often smothered by the constant symbolization of events. In D.C., this relationship happens through restoration, through a direct deconstruction of the symbolic, a lapse of the code that reveals anew the signified matter of words, allowing for new constructions of new meanings that derive not only from the established word, but from the dynamic transversed in this cloud of sounds, intonations, and bodily states generated by its vocalizations.

In D.C., words are said to disrupt with the coherence of the speech. This disruption is caused by a use that cares for the semantic weakening of the discourse, not in what it weakens, but mainly through how it strengthens the speech's power to generate further life. The cacophony, the interruptions of forgetfulness, the disruptions in the discourse come to us as eroticized forces, as pure flows of life, as friction between flesh and air\* producing desire.

\* see Pablo Assumpção's text on page 64.

Plateia como Documento, [Audience as Document] lecture-performance by Zecora Ura in partnership with Jade Persis-Maravala and Joseph Dunne, in which the archiving of a previous performance happens through the individual memories of audience members





**About experience and fixation.** This production of desire due to illocutionary de-structure happens, in another way, through the liminality of a speech built between two idioms. In Audience as Document – Lecture-Performance by English company Zecora Ura in partnership with Jade Persis-Maravala and Joseph Dunne – we listen to the variation from the fluent Portuguese to the accent in English of director Jorge Lopes Ramos, while he leads us in the first procedures of the happening. Jorge makes use of a deliberately exacerbated Brazilian accent in English, and makes it a technology of approach between the two cultures. The hyperbole built by the accents, sets the tone of the game that aims to create a live archive from Hotel Medea, the company's previous theater work, which happened one year ago in Rio de Janeiro city. Through direct mail, ads on social networks and word-of-mouth among people, 15 people who were at the original work, were invited to return to the building where the itinerant play was staged and, once in the space, recall their experiences. This audience is, then, taken to a new space where they find akin spots that relate to what they will to tell their audience about. Their positioning is mapped so the audience of this Lecture-Performance can trace its own cartography while building non-linear narratives of the play.

While referring to the archive Derrida states: "Let's not start from the beginning, nor even from the archive. But from the word archive (...). Arkhê, let's re-

*Palavrando, [Wording] lecture-performance by André Lepecki & Eleonora Fabião: the circumstances and specificities of each presentation guide the choice of the words and actions performed*



member, refers both to beginning and command."<sup>7</sup> These words sound like an epiphany to Audience as Document. The live archive to which Jorge refers to is an inapprehensible, anonymous, latent, inaccurate archive, ever multiplying. The archive is live and changes each time it is exposed, each time it is performed in an illocution. In fact, wouldn't it be Jorge's accent an archivist? While highlighting the mnemonic character of the document (calling the audience a document), the creators call into our attention this constant beginning of the archive, one that as such is also a command from which the other narratives erupt. There is no search for what is static, fixed or attested, there is instead unfolding of speeches.

As a document, there is in the audience an operation of repetition, of citing a previous work. As citation, there is in the audience a mnemonic operation. As mnemonic operation, there operates the creation of fables. Audience as Document is, thus, a call for co-authorship, where the citation exposes its fable making feature. A co-authorship that, in the words of Derrida, brings difference in the core of citation.

Notice that there is not an abandonment of the object – in this case, the previous play, the start/command Hotel Medea –, but an empowerment of the singular perceptions related to it. This potent difference operates a perceptive and temporal change on the discourse and on it as a document; the report and not its veracity is mostly valued or, in other words, there is an operation of legitimacy in its presence instead of its accordance to a past event. Present time is very important to Austin when he defines a speech act "To say/to do something" is real in itself, a happening in present time and, therefore, perceived as a happening, questionings of true or false no longer apply to the discourse. Independently of what is said, the event of saying already is something! It already makes it present. We must deal with its resonances and understand it within a whole network of political negotiations, from which developments occur.

We can, in this regard, think of the audience's illocution. Once the series of personal discourses performed by the audience of Hotel Medea gets an authorization as document, how can we think of

this network so called Audience as Document? Later in the performance, new roles are made up. The documents-participants of Hotel Medea give way to volunteers in the audience, who turn themselves as living archive of the Lecture-Performance they were just watching and that develops further through their discourses. At the same time archival producers and agents in that project archive themselves, those participants create a fold in this citational move. Citations of citations, they consolidate the proposed dynamic and virtually extend it, creating a proper field of culture.

**On several words.** In a text titled To Embody Words, the presence of Palavrando (Wording) calls ones attention. Palavrando is a Lecture-Performance by Eleonora Fabião and André Lepecki, whose text is meant to be heard and has, until now, not been available for reading – a text dense in words and even in the illocutionary speed through which it deals with our synapses as daily actions. The emphasis in the voice, par excellence a technology of disembodiment, problematizes the promise of the text as an archive of the speech acts. "The words, by their simple wording, state their own sovereignty"<sup>\*</sup>, speaks Lepecki, and so, to make them available in writing would further strengthen their oppressive ability to define meanings. It is, therefore, an attempt to make them dynamic rather than fix them, placing them in a flow that furnish their meanings with insecurity, interceding on their regulatory power by disturbing their apprehension by the audience. Emphasizing that insecurity in two complementary actions, Lepecki quotes Austin on speech acts, and Fabião creates what she calls hearing acts.

Standing against the understanding of spontaneity in the listening, which makes it commonly a reaction to the speech, the duo seem to tell us that listening is also a work, an action in the most affirmative and propositional terms, and an instrument of power that indeed sounds to me as embedded in counter-culture. Hearing is an act of understanding many linked words which sometimes perform chained coherence as fiction, and other times hypertextually. In Palavrando, the hearing act makes words vola-

<sup>\*</sup> André Lepecki during Palavrando [Wording] sep. 10th.



*Palavrando, [Wording] lecture-performance by André Lepecki & Eleonora Fabião: an investigation about the speech acts and the acts of listening*

tile in meaning which in turn are restored by recent memory. Restoration not dissimilar to what I perform while writing this text: an insecure text relying on the memory of an event; a writing that fixates this insecurity.

This oral/auditory procedure has verses in the epilogue, when Lepecki refers to the voice, to our ability to holler, as a multitude in the mouth.<sup>\*\*</sup> Every speech, every performative speech, is a quotation of many others, it is a reordered learning, a structure that evokes many absences, it is always a crowd, always a system of culture, and of different cultures. "Every wording always defines the contours of who is and who isn't here now."<sup>\*\*\*</sup>

The gallery space in which his words resonate is also reorganized sculpturally. The artists sit at two tables facing each other, each in one corner of the gallery, creating a diagonal line across them. Two large speakers, one behind each artist, amplify their voices. In between the tables, microphone wires lay on the floor which overlap gradually traces of actions emerging from the hypertextual narrative. The notion of space is also reconstructed by the amplified voice. Given its evolution in waves, the voice system is a spacial measure, through which it reverberates. This measure however loses its organic association between the voice resonance and the

<sup>\*\*</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> *ibid.*

space limitation when it is artificially amplified, therefore sounding artificial, and nullifying the accuracy of the measure. Between distance and proximity, the voice is embodied in a volume dimmer. And I mention this in particular about the work, because the speakers are an explicit part of the sculpture, enabling us to apprehend it as a constituent of performance and not simply a choice of listening comfort. It is also the space that provides new links to actions and discourses of Wording, varying according to where it happens, what is the context, the politics involved, the historical forces of space and cultural relations, among others things.

Edging the words by invented meanings, the duo turns the constative power of scientific and theoretical discourses into storytelling. The materialism of Wording is developed through a narrative of the physiology of the body. The mouth contains the tongue that is formed as an extension of the tail; the ear, divided in three parts, gives us "six ears", the examination of its anatomy generates technologies like the telephone – a device that has special meaning in the Lecture-Performance since it is presented in a telecommunications cultural center –, the perception of life emerges from embryology and from the contiguity of an organ to another during fetal life, which makes from brain and heart linked, for example. The speech acts – developed by the context of its festival namesake – engender through acts of listening, the power of speech to rule over the body, and the body to reset the speech.

As part of this hypertext dynamic, words and stories generate actions that, at first, carry with them previous meanings, but soon create dissociations that weaken the understanding by direct analogy between act and text. Fabião talks about the development of the embryo. Motivated by the theme, the artist pours a tube of green aniline in a pot two thirds full of water. The contagion of the aniline with the water creates forms that evolve as the green is diffused, connecting to the speech about the embryo. But as soon as the plasticity of the action is apprehended, the metaphoric connection of meanings weakens and a hyperbolic meaning is built between them. As the stories refresh words, the materials – many of them common ones, like straws, bucket, water, laundry soap, plastic bag, desk,

speaker, microphone, wire, copper wire, glass jar, colored ribbons, chair and portable sound – are reviewed by their aesthetic power and sculptural properties.

"I danced to transform memory into actuality. Actuality in imagination, memory in imagination, imagination in actuality, actuality in memory, imagination in memory"\*. In this hyperbolic production of senses, I listen to this speech of Eleonora as if once again she spoke about the embryo. It seems that this is the method that encompasses all the work in respect to the power of illocution: to create embryos of signification, whose radiative potency and its inevitable disruption create the senses.

The voice is used here, as a means of disturbance of the discourse, and interdiction of its archivist or even normative patriarchal power, proposes embryonic constitutions and works, as an anti-Oedipal device. In agreement to the terms of Deleuze and Guattari, the words take the dynamics of the Body without Organs (BwO)<sup>8</sup>: at the same time a limit but also pure flow of intensities.

Thought upon Antonin Artaud to whom, after years under the effect of ECT, the trial of God was not the law, but the pain itself<sup>9</sup>, the body without organs is configured at the same time as desire for transcendence and pure immanence. Deleuze and Guattari make a beautiful reinterpretation of the Artaudian body without organs, identifying in it disgust for the organism, the organic organization. Now, isn't this organic organization that crystallizes repetitive flows, fixing them in a meaning, for instance? Isn't this the fixing that Wording challenges when it transforms definitions in stories and coherence in hypertext? The words of Wording, between spoken fictions and hyperboles, challenge the organizing strata that makes certain flows natural, and moves into the production and testing of new flows. As the body is the enemy of the BwO, so are the subjectivity and the meaning in the same imprisoning character, tell us Deleuze and Guattari. Faced with the paradox of making the body without organs exist as a libertarian limit, Deleuze departs in an erotic search with the term, defining it in relation to many

\* Eleonora Fabião in "Palavrando" [Wording] sep. 10th.

other words. It is this erotic drive that also brings to life Wording's many words. In many of Deleuze's books, the BwO appears as an embryo of meanings between flows, images, nouns, contexts, adjectives, movements... The radiation of these words together gives us a powerful semantic context that, in contiguity to the embryology of the meanings of Wording, I present in list form to be read aloud:

The Body without Organs is ...

BwO,  
one or many,  
you cannot desire without doing it,  
it is an exercise,  
an inevitable experiment,  
fallible,  
not desire,  
but also desire,  
it is not notion,  
it is a set of practices,  
it is a limit,  
it is where we sleep,  
we mourn,  
we fight,  
we are won,  
we find happiness and falls,  
we penetrate and are penetrated,  
we love,  
it is loss  
it is full of joy,  
of ecstasy,  
of dance,  
immanence,  
simple thing,  
entity  
full body,  
motionless travel,  
anorexia,  
cutaneous vision,  
yoga  
Krishna,  
love,  
experimentation,  
the undoing of self,  
oblivion  
it is not a ghost, it is a program  
something about which circulates  
repetition,

it is of several types,  
several fabrications that are related by synthesis a priori and infinite analysis  
body whose production is already part of the body,  
multitude of passages,  
divisions and subdivisions,  
not stagnation,  
creation by the choice of place,  
power,  
and collective  
(and there is always a collective even if you're alone)  
populated by intensities  
it is not scene, not even support,  
it makes intensities pass,  
it is matter,  
it is not space,  
it is intensive,  
intense and unformed matter,  
not stratified  
intensive matrix,  
zero intensity,  
matter as energy,  
entire egg before the extension of the organism,  
overflowing with all the opposition of one and multiple,  
continuum of intensities,  
immanent limit,  
field of immanence of desire,  
the plan of consistency,  
singularities that cannot be considered personal  
assembled by very different agencies  
perverse, artistic, scientific, mystical, political,  
built piece by piece,  
places,  
conditions,  
techniques, without reducing one to the other,  
movement of widespread de-territorialization,  
made of plateaus,  
it is us  
against the enemies presents its smooth, slippery,  
opaque, tense surface,  
it is amorphous,  
indifferentiated fluid  
inarticulate sounds  
repulsion to the desiring machines,  
it is unproductive  
it is unsuitable,  
it is connection of desires,

conjunction of flows,  
 there is no 'my' BwO, but 'I' on it.  
 it is indeterminate organ,  
 defined by the temporary presence of certain organs.  
 contemporaneity of the body.  
 becoming,  
 it is the egg.

Wording presents one more spatial rupture. Court-  
 ed by the audience, the table and the glass jar of  
 water and green, are taken from the gallery, down  
 the stairs of the cultural center and across the General  
 Osorio square in Ipanema and reach the beach.  
 The table is surrounded by waves and the water is  
 returned to the sea.

**About revolution of singularities.** This flow of intensities, of challenges to the establishment of fixed meanings and subjectivity, finds a unique character today in the political decentralization. All around the globe, energy outbreaks emerge against dictatorial forces, against the imperative of speech, against the very diction through which the dictator appears. These flows are also "crowd in the mouth" flows, borrowing the term from Lepecki: exercises of performative speech that discover and uncover the fragile foundations of power. There is also revolutionary potential in the act of listening, of no longer listening to the power, of failing to obey it. If the word names his speaker, disobedience is the counterculture weapon. Historically, revolutions were marked by the replacement of power. What we have seen now are revolutionaries who don't fight to take this central place of power, but to destitute this place. Emptiness – or emptying – motivated by the lack of leaders heading the demonstrations, and even by the criticized (but potent) lack of focus of the claims, this wave gained power in the Arab world, moved to Spain, New York, and several other U.S. states, even has shy versions in Brazil, and follows the oedipal countercurrent of the Return of the Oppressed.

Marked by the freudian civilizatory thought, the oppressed reifies the leadership role; when they dismiss the sovereign, just to become the new oppressor. The actors dance, but the legitimization of that same power circuit is maintained. The events of the

crowd, otherwise, have made power itself unsafe. The dictators – be those from the state; the market; or even the corrupt; the human rights abuses; the self-beneficial laws – all lose the assertive power of their promises and see their orders exploded. This explosion is inserted as an act of listening\* that reveals the performative aspect of what is categorical, even if it tries to impose itself under the massive load of violence and power demonstration. At the price of blood and imprisonment, what we see is the organized power, be it state or market organisms, fighting against the symbolic void, against a strong field of intensities, a Body with Order, whose presence even raises questions about the ability to last or even make the actions and camps be relevant in the future. This powerful character of uncertainty, this chaotic proposal, makes the power even more uncertain, leaving its organisms in pain.

The destabilizing forces take prudent control. In fact, this is an interesting subversion of a military technology – the Internet – used as a tool for grouping singularities and its manifestations, in a pop excess manner. A profusion of profiles, avatars, development and artistic, theoretical, intimate, archivist, activist, storied disseminations are some common procedures of the worldwide web. Acting in the opposite way of the morality that takes this technology as a device of solitude, many singularities meet. Their sharing vary from the common exhaustion of political models, to the enjoyment of Brazilian forró, tecnobrega, funk balls and musics, as well as mediated games, and all forms of decentralized information.

This context is strengthened by the activism of the Electronic Disturbance Theater group. Currently formed by Ricardo Dominguez, Brett Stalbaum and Amy Sarah Carroll, the group acts based on the simplicity of available technologies, therefore using the network as a digital stage where the performance array can be reworked. Examples range from FloodNet, a device that multiplies access to web pages interrupting its operation by overuse, to TBT, Anglo-Saxon acronym for trans-borders tool, that can communicate through GPS-enabled mobile phones to Mexican immigrants crossing the North-

\* I borrow Eleonora Fabião's term to make my own use.

American border and desert, informing them where there is water, and refers to the vast meanings of living. Providing a safe system of personal navigation to Mexican immigrants, the EDT use water and poetry to reconfigure the understanding about what humanitarian aid can be (and they do so with U.S. government money). As TBT is academic research, developed in partnership with two different Universities, the same government that has a combat policy towards foreign civilians, supports escaping actions that disturb their own policy and threaten its power to dictate rules. This action, which connects the inhospitable desert to the discursive excesses of the network - TBT is an application to be downloaded to the phone – also occupies the place of art as Lecture-Performance Sustenance: the play for all trans[ ]borders. A poetic manifesto that resonates between the presences projected in the network and collaborators in attendance\*, Sustenance deals with archives as cartographic verses that can generate even more cartographies. It also directly addresses the insecurity of the drift when it becomes life-threatening, thus reminding us that not every no-

\* in the case of the presentation at Atos de Fala, the performer Flavia Meireles, from Rio de Janeiro, and North-American poet Brian Whitener were present.

Sculpture-archive, at the same time the trace from the previous evening's happening (archive) and a present work-of-art (sculpture)



mad is a flaneur.

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**An ellipse in thought.** Deleuze states that philosophy is to create concepts, and through Austin we can also think that philosophy is to create contexts. It is in these two senses that the first edition of the Atos de Fala festival is outlined.

Notes:

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