Relaying the Arts

in Seventeenth-Century Italian Performance

and Eighteenth-Century French Theory

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»The language of action, of life representing itself« (Pasolini 2007: 41)

In addressing the simultaneous and/or sequential use of voice (song), text (speech), and movement (dance) in early seventeenth-century Italian court performance, this paper establishes relays with earlier protocols of my research in Baroque dance. In »*Dance as Text*«, a propos of the geometrical dances in *Le Balet comique de la royne* (1581), I discussed how »choreographic space offers an illustration of the principles of vocal harmony« (Franko 1993: 47).[1] I based that claim not only on the libretto of the *Balet comique*, but also on a reading of sixteenth-century Italian musical theorists. In this paper, I further develop the relationship between voice and body, but reverse the methodological procedure: the performance material is Italian and the theory is French. In addition, I stretch this relationship across the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: the interest in pantomime in the later eighteenth century is well known (see Rosenfeld 2001). That it could be considered a belated theory of Italian performance is a less common thesis.

Confronting the interdisciplinarity of early-modern performance is still a relatively new endeavor, and the interdisciplinarity is only compounded by the fact that the ideas presented here arose directly from a performance I worked on in spring 2007 – *Delizie di Posilipo Boscarecce, e Maritime (The Sylvan and Oceanic Delights of Posilipo)*.[2] The piece itself, originally produced

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1 | In Mark Franko, *Dance as Text: Ideologies of the Baroque Body* it was a question of how geometrical dance as an avowedly harmonious construct drew upon musical theory, and notably, on the analogy with the voice as a harmonic interval. A French edition is now available as *La danse comme texte* (Paris: Éditions Kargo, 2005) and an Italian edition is forthcoming at L'Epos. For a different and earlier reflection on voice and movement, see Franko 1987.

2 | *Le Delizie di Posilipo* was a collaboration of MusicSources, the Galileo Proj-

in Naples in 1620, deserves a discussion of its own. I present the following reflections as related to the creation of a work for the stage rather than primarily as an intellectual project. These are thus also relays between different sorts of research and, consequently, at the present stage my findings may appear to lack rigor for a variety of reasons. These thoughts, however, were originally presented alongside live performance and as a complement to live performance.[3] They remain to be refined and further developed.

I shall focus primarily on early-modern declamation as a hybrid practice – both vocal and physical – and the relationship of declamation to eighteenth-century French theory of the arts. I am less interested in national styles and boundaries and more in the rhetorical role the voice plays with respect to movement in early modern performance practice. Part of this phenomenon is a certain displacement or historical delay of the notion of medium. If we do not accept the view that a combination of genres within one theatrical work is the product of pre-critical naiveté preceding the historical inevitability of independently functioning performing arts, then how do we account for this hybridity? How do we take early modern generic hybridity seriously, and on its own terms?

Other prominent examples of early modern French and Italian performance where poetry, music, and dance alternate and coincide include the *Balet Comique de la Royne* (1581), the 1589 *Florentine Intermedi*, and some of Monteverdi's *Dramatic Madrigals*. Issues of the integration of dance and theater were later dealt with in Molière's comedy-ballet and thereafter in opera and musical theater.[4] There is something about placing opera, drama, and ballet side by side, however, that does not suggest the format of later musical theater as much as it keeps the performance genre uncertain each time a switch between genres occurs. This uncertainty has much to do with uses of the stage space necessary to accommodate the switch between modes of performance in a single piece. It is as though three separate works were in

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ect, and the Theater Arts Department and Music Department of the University of California, Santa Cruz. Performances took place at the Northbraie Community Church, Berkeley, on May 4, 2007, and at the Experimental Theater (UCSC) on May 26, 2007.

3 | In addition to the *Akte des Wissens* conference, lecture-demonstrations took place at the World Performance Project conference *Looking Back/Looking Forward*, Yale University, April 18, 2008, and as keynote address at the UC Davis Humanities Institute conference *Identity, Performance, Representation: New Modes of Interpretation in the Humanities*, May 16, 2008. There presentations were done with the participation of Alessandro Rumié, the performer who originated the Sebeto role.

4 | Rhetorical theory is also important here: the voice and the text require the support of gestural delivery, just as the composition of the text implies movement. (see Franko 1986; Carruthers 2000). Rhetorical culture encourages a non-hierarchical vision of the arts as one adapts the means of the other. Condillac makes reference to ancient pantomime as that aspect of theater most acutely addressing the pre-history of language as the communication of thought.

progress simultaneously so that no idealized fusion accounts for the totality. They build something new by ›taking turns‹, but what they build is not their own unity. Hence, I shall argue that the goal of this kind of performance was not to integrate, unify, or fuse the arts. Keeping them separate while stringing them together, overlapping them, and occasionally incorporating them in one body created a situation in which dance, theater, and music were not strictly differentiated in the disciplinary sense. The theoretical term to account for this situation might be *relay*. I like this term because it indicates that to cede the place to the other is neither to function autonomously nor to fuse. This phenomenon has analogies with contemporary interdisciplinary performance.[5]

Eighteenth-century aesthetics subsequently assigned the fluctuating roles of these genres to discrete artistic media, which art historian Paul Oskar Kristeller has called the »system of the arts« (Kristeller 1980: 163ff.). Despite the disciplinary impulse of eighteenth-century aesthetics to render each art an independent aesthetic enclave, a counter-current where the influence of relays persists as a way to think each art in its independent, yet concerted, function surfaces in a number of influential French texts of the Enlightenment. I shall pay particular attention to Condillac's reflections on »original languages« and the way the »*Encyclopédie*« (1754) interprets the meaning of *declamation*. In so doing, I shall point to a discontinuity or contradiction within the discourse of eighteenth-century aesthetics whereby a theory of the particular arts alternates with the explanation of hybridity. It is the very survival of hybridity within a discursive milieu that would seem to eliminate it that drew my attention. As I move between seventeenth-century Italian performance and eighteenth-century French theory, I am following the vicissitudes of an unavowed interdisciplinary concept across national boundaries, centuries, and performative and discursive practices. The rigor I seek is of an interdisciplinary rather than a disciplinary order. It survives only in its discontinuity. We could consider this discontinuity, with Michel Foucault, as a site of the *dispersion* of »discursive events«, a dispersion that resists disciplinary closure (Foucault 1972: 27). Furthermore, one could say that an artistic discipline is the product of a discursive unity, whereas artistic interdisciplinarity arises on the grounds of historical discontinuity.[6] The concept of historical discontinuity dear to Foucault supports a view of the performing arts wherein aesthetic protocols do not so much evolve as disappear and return later in different guise.

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5 | A recent example one might point to is *Studie I zu Bildbeschreibung von Heiner Müller,* directed by Laurent Chétouane and performed by Frank Willens at the Sophiensaele in Berlin, February 1, 2008, which I saw during the conference *Akte des Wissens,* where I presented an earlier version of this paper. In this case, however, music played no role.

6 | This account of artistic and philosophical relay calls to mind the highly contemporary protocols of deferral and trace. But my intent is not to see in seventeenth-century performance a harbinger of post-structuralist theory.

Posilipo

First performed on Carnival Sunday, 1620, at the vice regal court in Naples, *Delizie di Posilipo* celebrates the return to health of Philip II of Austria, Don Pedro Giron, Viceroy of Naples. *Posilipo* consists of a string of scenes in which dance, speech, song, and instrumental music alternate, and thus vary the visual and rhythmic landscape of stage action. An opening and a closing monologue by Sebeto – a river deity – frame the piece, which progresses from darkness (the Viceroy's brush with death) to the joy (»delizia«) occasioned by his recovery and shared by the entire court. From that joy, which grows in intensity as the piece progresses, emerges the troubled realization that it is impossible to capture or to stay pleasure, to prolong its unique sensation indefinitely. This is the realization of the tragedy of language that cannot remain within an unmediated relation to its gesture. After joy come the signs of joy wherein memory replaces experience. This realization is given to Sebeto whose final gesture is a poetic meditation on pleasure's loss. What allows the separate arts to work so effectively together in this case is the unity, coherence, and power of the idea itself. This loss of joy is reminiscent of Shakespeare's »*A Midsummer Night's Dream*« as if performed without the plot. Sebeto morphs between Oberon and the lovers, and Cupid suggests Puck, while the court itself dances a three-part geometrical dance and a series of burlesque entries dominated by Venus and the three Sirens (*Donne mie care* and *A Voi famoso Eroe*).

Relay

Relay occurs when one medium alternates with or takes over for another – a switching of means that is also a continuation by other means. Song begins where dance stops; spoken word begins where song stops etc. Within such alternation, we also have an alternation of musical styles. The music contains both sixteenth-century polyphony and the monody that succeeded it.[7] While Sebeto's discourse introduces the poetic text as spoken word into this web of music and dance, it also brings the orality of song and the kinetic and choreographic dimension of movement into speech. There is even one moment in the first discourse where Sebeto sings. The role is itself emblematic of relay because poetry, movement, and orality are concentrated in one performer. This would properly be what was called declamation. Relay, then, need not only be about deferral and alternation; it can also be about combination and overlapping. It occasions either interruptive space or voluminous overlap. As we shall see with the notion of original language, declamation evokes different states of time that are relayed within overlapping modes, so that it

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7 | I thank Nina Treadwell for pointing this out to me. The music was composed collaboratively (the composers include Francesco Lambardi, Giacomo Spiardo, Andrea Ansalone, and Giovanni Maria Trabaci).

is never possible to avoid some form of sequencing. But sequencing is always looking back as well as forward.

Concentrated volume entails micro sequencing. For example, the »*Encyclopédie*« informs us of the temporal primacy of gesture over word:

»Gesture in the theater should always come before words. One feels gesture earlier than words can say; gesture travels more quickly than words; it takes a moment for the word to be formed and to strike the ear; gesture, rendered agile by sensibility, always moves« at the very moment that the soul receives it.« (Transl., Diderot/d'Alembert 1988, vol. 7: 652)[8]

The »*Encyclopédie*« theorizes that the velocity of gestural transmission exceeds that of sound, just as sound travels faster than the word. The role of the voice is split between a gestural and a semantic function, but movement contains no such split since, even if mimetically suggestive, movement has no semantic component. *The role of gesture in declamation is to render the movement of thought.* This is not a conventionally rhetorical function: it tends to endow thought with the quality of movement in the process of its becoming. The relation between vocal and bodily movement is underlined and, in fact, constitutes a powerful technical approach to this kind of performance. That all semantically connoted elements fold back into movement – understood as vocal and physical gesture – allows articulated language to exist simultaneously with its own initial impetus.

›Original‹ Languages

Relay's ontology is in glottogenetic theories of language. The theory of the origin of languages in gesture was originated by the Neapolitan philosopher Giambattista Vico.[9] Like Vico, Jean-Jacques Rousseau asserted that the evolution from the origin of language in gesture to instituted language passes through poetry: it begins with gesture (or the passions), moves on to figural language, and ends with denotation:

»As man's first motions for speaking were of the passions, his first expressions were tropes. Figurative language was the first to be born. Proper meaning was discovered last. One calls things by their true name only when one sees them in

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8 | »Le *geste* au théatre doit toûjours précéder la parole: on sent bien plûtôt que la parole ne peut le dire; & le *geste* est beaucoup plus preste qu'elle; il faut des momens à la parole pour se former & pour frapper l'oreille; le *geste* que la sensibilité rend agile, part toûjours au moment même où l'ame éprouve le sentiment.« This and the following excerpts from the »*Encyclopédie*« have been translated by the author.

9 | Rosenfeld maintains that Vico's influence on the French discourse is nil, since his »*Scienza nuova*« (1725) was unknown in France before the nineteenth century. Be this as it may, Italian performance was certainly not unknown in France.

their true form. At first only poetry was spoken; there was no hint of reasoning until much later.« (Rousseau 1966: 12)[10]

Etienne Bonnot de Condillac placed emphasis on vocal and physical gesture rather than on figurative language when he articulated these ideas influentially for the French eighteenth century in his »*Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*« (1746).

Condillac argues that all ideas derive from sensations, and he sketches a scenario for the development of language from the gestures of the body and the voice. Both bodily and vocal movements are considered gestural, and Condillac posits the pre-existence of *gesture* to speech as the primal scene of language, making of this very narrative of origins a theatrical scene in its own right. According to Condillac, linguistic signs developed gradually from the long interpretive effort to grasp pre-linguistic expressive bodily movement. He calls these bodily signs the »language of action«. These uncodified movements are all passionate, as they are generated by intense sensations. Prior to the institution of conventional signs that ultimately replace action, the expressive value of these movement practices is high. The »*Encyclopédie*« breaks action down into »song« and »gesture«. Once a conventional sign system (›instituted language‹) is developed, such action is no longer necessary, and its expressive intensity diminishes. The intensity continues, however, to circulate in art practices. »[T]he language of action is the seed of the languages and of all the arts that can be used to express our thoughts.« (Condillac 2001: 194)

Condillac's principle metaphor for perception and consciousness is theater: the whole notion of attention is based on »the illusion that is created in the theater« (ibid.: 21). Condillac moves from attention to perception to idea: »The cries of the passions contributed to the development of the operations of the mind by naturally originating the language of action, a language which in its early stages [...] consisted of mere contortions and agitated bodily movements.« (Ibid.: 115) The raw materials of physical and vocal gesture are the original scene of communication through ›natural‹ signs, which over the course of time become recognizable, and are eventually ›instituted‹ by convention as conventional signs.[11]

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10 | Marcel Danesi comments: »Rousseau proposed what certainly must have been a radical idea for his era—that metaphor was not a mere stylistic variant for a more basic literal mode of expression, but rather a cognitive remnant of a previous, and hence more fundamental, stage in the evolution of the rational, logical mind.« (Danesi 1993: 11)

11 | In Vico's »*The New Science*« this transition from emotional gesture to intelligible language is itself poetic. »Poetry, he says, begins with the first, crude men describing the exterior world in terms of their own body.« (Schaeffer 1990: 85) Gesture is fundamentally metaphorical, which also means that a tradition of oral rhetoric still dominates chirographic meaning. »The metaphorical translation thus effected allows men to make sense out of their sensations, to objectify them in ways that both

Whenever passions are on view, Condillac's account of the origin of language can be read back into a kind of spectatorship. From his conjectures about the development of signs to his account of ancient pantomime as an early stage of these signs, Condillac ›stages‹ perception and cognition in his writing as proto-theatrical action. When Condillac says that all ideas are based on sensation, he means that every meaning is modeled on a vocal or physical action. The expressivity of action gets deposited in the linguistic sign, yet the link between sensation and idea becomes phenomenal only when the sign is integrated into a theatrical representation. This means that the original scene of communicable ideas exists *in* theater as if in an always already retrospective scene that theater displays in its very presentness. The origin of language is as if preserved in the gestural necessity of the theatrical act.

The vocal and physical gestures of performance, therefore, provide us with direct access to the idea: *theatrical performance contains the language of action as the instituted sign's historical choreography*. Condillac narrates the origin of human knowledge as theater – and here he joins company with Cahusac, Noverre, and Diderot, among others – while he calls upon theater to rediscover the values of this language of action. Hence: »the intimate relation of the arts to their birth« (ibid.: 151). Action and language open onto a scene of their own origination, and this is why and how they are, and remain, expressive. Michel Foucault alludes to »an original language from which all others derive, and of which all others carry within themselves a sometimes decipherable memory« (Foucault 1972: 64). *The narrative to which theater is given is the performative genealogy of its own decipherable memory as original language.*[12]

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constellate a meaningful interpretation of external reality and generate a level of self-consciousness of sensation itself«. (Ibid.: 90)

12 | One historiographic consequence is the necessity to reevaluate the emphasis put on narrative discussions of Jean-Georges Noverre's balletic reforms, which he called *ballet en action*. Noverre wanted to change ballet from a technical to an expressive medium, and this is often associated with the introduction of plot into choreography. When Noverre's »*Lettres sur la danse*« are re-read in light of Condillac's »langage d'action«, however, it becomes clear that his reform is of gesture itself: the re-positioning of gesture as expressive because *pre-linguistic* rather than linear and narrative. Noverre's rejection of technique in favor of »natural« gesture is not primarily concerned with narrative composition per se. Certainly, the question of imitation was paramount, but imitation and narrative are not exactly the same thing, just as the frequently invoked trope of pictoriality in Noverre does not mean that theater becomes painting.

GesamtNATURwerk

The »*Encyclopédie's*« theorization of hybridity occurs in cross-referencing definitions of movement.[13] The relevant entries present voice and movement not in self-sufficient definitions, but as if traveling across a dense semantic field where the media of spoken word, dance, and song *relay* essential qualities of movement amongst themselves. This performative aspect of the »*Encyclopédie*« acts as a theoretical counterpart to the practices of artistic relay that characterized earlier modes of performance. The entries cross-reference each other as *danse, geste, déclamation, voix, son, corps, corpuscule, onde, ondulation, vibration, chant, sensibilité, sensations, ballet, opera, and pantomime etc*. These entries lead us through a maze in which the meaning of body and voice are never stabilized, but always in a process of becoming that is also a looking back. Within the »*Encyclopédie's*« semantic field, there is a sustained discourse of the historicity of sensation à la Condillac, which is essential to the expressive potential of the idea expressed *in*, and *as*, the imaginary origin of performance. Each such definition relays the ultimate comprehension of a key term to another rubric, another term, another modality of performance.[14] It is this particular form of relay between the present and the past that is most salient in the relation between gesture and speech that emerges in declamation. We should understand layers in this context *not* as sedimented, but as at the surface of simultaneous oral and physical materiality. It is as though every performance encodes its own imaginary origin prior to the birth of language alongside its deployment of the communicative use *of* language in the present. Every moment of performance demands a double consciousness.

Let us look more closely at some of these cross-references. As with Condillac, both movement and the voice as ›primitive‹ entities are comprised within the category of gesture. Dance is related back to gesture in the same way that singing is related back to the voice. Both *chant* and *danse*, prior to the origin of languages, are *geste*. The voice, however, is associated with a scene of expression where what is *felt* is what is *meant: the voice operates before or around words*.[15] Dance, on the other hand, is more directly related to the

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13 | Louis de Cahusac and Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote most of the dance and music entries.

14 | There is, in other terms, a distinction between the idea and the linguistic sign in the context of which the meaningful de-semanticization of movement is to be understood.

15 | The primacy of voice and/or movement in gesture is, however, in dispute. The »*Encyclopédie*« makes movement secondary to voice, whereas Condillac does the reverse. »So singing, which was the expression of a feeling, gave birth to a second expression that was named dance. These are the two primitive principles.« (Condillac 2001: 120) »[A]insi le chant qui étoit l'expression d'un sentiment (*Voyez* CHANT) a fait developer *une seconde expression qui étoit nommée danse*. Et voilà ces deux principes primitives« (my emphasis). In this instance, dance is positioned as secondary, or put

image, the pictorial, and, hence, to imitation: »Sensations are first expressed by different physical movements of the body and the face. Pleasure and pain, when the soul feels them, give the body movements which paint these different impressions: that is what we call gesture. *Voyez* ›GESTE‹.« (Transl., Diderot/d'Alembert 1988, vol. 4: 623)[16]

Although expressive potential is possible throughout the body, its privileged locus is the face. The discourse on facial expression (as explicitly opposed to masks) extends to the actor. Facial expression is called the work of nature rather than of art. Within the idiolect of this discourse, nature refers to the primitive scene of the origin of languages. »Gesture is for the actor, when gesture is true, the sublime work of art because it seems the very image of nature; but art by itself and without nature cannot do anything with the human physiognomy.« (Transl., Diderot/d'Alembert 1988, vol. 7: 652)[17]

Up until now we have been considering the separate, if related, properties of sound and movement in the theory of historical performance. With the term *déclamation*, the vocal and physical protocols begin to relay each other within a single action. Declamation, says the »*Encyclopédie*«, is the art of delivering discourse (»c'est l'art de rendre le discours«). Declamation includes within itself the amalgamation of movement, sound, and words: the composite theatrical entity par excellence. Yet, like gesture rather than dance or sound rather than song, declamation has its roots in a primitive state of nature: »Natural declamation gave birth to Music, Music to Poetry, and Music and Poetry in their turn made an art of declamation.« (Transl., Diderot/d'Alembert 1988, vol. 4: 680)[18] Although amalgamated of various elements, declamation is originary and secondary – both ›natural‹ and ›theatrical‹ – because it is pre-linguistic *even in its linguistic reincarnation*. The reasons for this may be that language here is actually poetry and that this poetry was born of music. In some sense, declamation bypasses the instituted sign as figural language.

The text of Sebeto's second discourse, in the Deanna Shemek translation below, is mannerist. Its intensely figural language serves to convey the desire for infinite sensation, creating closure for the work as pleasure's end, and substituting poetic language for the encomium of the first discourse:

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differently, vocal movement is positioned as prior to physical movement. »DANSE,f.f. (Art & Hist.) mouvemens reglés du corps, sauts, & pas mesurés, faits au son des instrumens ou de la voix.« (Diderot/d'Alembert 1988, vol. 4: 623)

16 | »Les sensations ont été d'abord exprimées par les différens mouvemens du corps & du visage. Le plaisir & la douleur en se faisant sentir à l'ame, ont donné au corps de mouvemens qui peignoient au-dehors ces différentes impression : c'est ce qu'on a nommé geste.«

17 | »[I]ls [gestures] sont en effet dans l'acteur, lorsqu'ils sont vrais, l'ouvrage sublime de l'art, parce qu'ils paroissent l'image vivante de la nature: mais l'art seul & sans elle, ne peut rien sur cette partie de la figure humaine; [...].«

18 | »La *déclamation* naturelle donna naissance à la Musique, la Musique à la Poésie, la Musique & la Poésie à leur tour firent un art de la *déclamation*.«

Concluding Dedicatory Poem to the Ladies

From the rich splendor of your eyes
Let the sky turn to sapphire, oh beautiful Ladies

And let this shining sea become a Heaven of stars.
Let the grass turn to emeralds and the flowers to gold.

Let this beautiful mountain and this pleasant shore
Fill the arena with tiny diamonds.

Here are shade and breezes to delight you at every hour,
Cooled by the jealousy of rival lovers,
Filled with perfume and dancing with the song of birds.

Love inspires even the sea cliffs, dressed in agate,
To give you precious stones
Stately thrones of jasper and ruby.

The sea undone [in breaking waves] into pearls on these rich shores,
The sea shows itself to you, loving,
And consumes itself in bitter tears of crystalline foam.

Thence the lover confounds the waters with the sea,
Weeping for the mountain; and to the eye these appear as
Liquid silver mixed with delicate pearls.

The fish regard themselves amid such treasure,
Their scales enameled and their heads
Adorned with coral among the moving crystals [i.e. the waves].

They pursue the golden nets of your tresses,
Darting [like] lovers, and where Venus was born
They warm the waters without diminishing their [own] ardor.

While all is thus beautified and ignited
In the sunlight of your lovely eyes, the Sun dims,
Surrendering to them the restraint of its light.

And my beautiful Sun, which shines among you now, also subsides.

PARTHENOPE [e.g. Posilipo] the beautiful [pledges] to the greater light
Of your eyes, its own.

I cite the text here in its entirety to underline the radical change in diction
that occurs between the beginning and the end of the work. This change is

also part of the work's hybridity, and it transforms the previous relays between genre into a sort of poetic necessity.

The »*Encyclopédie*« pictures declamation as the synthesis of all the un-adulterated, ›natural‹ elements: a sort of GesamtNATURwerk. *Déclamation théâtrale* points to a more potent action than any particular art form could represent alone because in declamation there is no hierarchy of the arts. Declamation is identical to itself at both ends of the historical spectrum. It is temporally hybrid: primitive and synthetic, simultaneously looking forward and looking back. When it comes to declamation, in other terms, medium does not serve as a means of differentiation. Declamation is nothing other than the re-naturalization of the instituted sign.

Sonorous Bodies

There is no principle of physical movement in the eighteenth century that is theoretically distinct from the voice. To understand how movement was thought to operate one is obliged to follow a set of terms that take us from *son* and *voix* to *onde, ondulation, vibration,* and, ultimately, *corpuscule.* The voice, in order to travel, requires miniature bodies that prolong it in the air after its initial percussive emergence. They relay each other.

Sound is theorized as a »movement of vibration in the air«. The body is implicated in the description of vocal movement: »[...] to produce sound there must be movement in the sonorous body«. (Transl., Diderot/d'Alembert 1988, vol. 15: 343)[19] The movement of sonorous bodies occurs through relay in, and of, the air:

»This movement is communicated to the air, or produces a similar movement in the air or in as many of its parts as can receive and relay it [...] *The movement of* bodies at a distance *cannot reach our senses without the mediation of other bodies that receive these movements of the sonorous bodies* and communicate them.« (Transl., Diderot/d'Alembert 1988, vol. 15: 343, emph. author)[20]

There is no singular body of sound, but only plural sonorous bodies relayed on the air through trembling, waves, or vibrations (indicating the oscillating, waving, or back and forth directionality) that bring us the sensations of sound. The production of sound is the result of movement and so the result of bodies. Hence the idea of *corpuscules* is invoked: »Every body is compo-

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19 | »[...] pour produire le son, il faut nécessairement du mouvement dans le corps sonore.«

20 | »Que ce mouvement se communique à l'air, ou produit un mouvement semblable dans l'air ou dans autant de ses parties qu'il y en a de capables de le recevoir & de le perpétuer; d'autant plus que *le mouvement* des corps qui sont à quelque distance, *ne peut point affecter nos sens sans la médiation d'autres corps qui reçoivent ces mouvemens du corps sonore,* & les communiquent immédiatement à l'organe.«

sed of a prodigious quantity of corpuscles. These corpuscles are themselves bodies and are composed of smaller bodies so that the elements of bodies are always bodies (see ›CORPS & CONFIGURATION‹).« (Transl., Diderot/ d'Alembert 1988, vol. 4: 270)[21]

Ultimately, the »*Encyclopédie's*« little bodies, or »corpuscles«, are like Leibniz's monads, self-sufficient miniature, but complete, entities that constitute the world. The body is divisible, but also irreducible. The voice produces corporeal relay. But physical movement is modeled on the movement of the voice. Only sound, and particularly the sound of the voice, seems capable of containing within itself the original sensation that caused it and is thus able to transmit that sensation elsewhere as movement.

Through the concept of the vibration of sonorous bodies, sensation itself is considered as a kind of movement. It seems impossible to isolate the specificity of action when each element of action is isomorphic with its anterior cause. Nevertheless, movement itself seems closest to its own originary nature when it is described in terms of sound.[22] Nature is the raw material of art, but raw material is always presented as inherently more powerful than art itself. Here we glimpse another rationale for the aesthetics of relay. Relay is a principle of composition and combination of the raw. It embodies movement as the voyage of sensation toward us.

Postscript on the Voice and Writing

The theorization of postmodern dance has been influenced by post-structural aesthetics to be against expression, against presence, and against the voice. This also created a context within which Dance Studies of the 1980s situated postmodern dance philosophically. Writing was the model of preference for both dance and choreography, and this for several reasons. From the early modern perspective it was noted that the suffix *graphie* signified writing as a primordial choreographic procedure; that Baroque dance itself was as though written by the dancer on the floor as a pathway miming the notation from which it derived; and furthermore that Baroque dance was a pre-Enlightenment art, which, like most baroque art and thought, had important resonances with postmodernism, particularly with respect to allegory (cf. Owens 1980). The relation of dance to writing assured a mediation of dance knowledge that was inscribed, as it were, within dance itself. With the

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21 | »Tout corps est composé d'une quantité prodigieuse de corpuscules. Ces corpuscules eux – mêmes sont des corps, & sont composés par la même raison d'autres corpuscules plus petits, ensorte que les élemens d'un corps ne paroissent être autre chose que des corps. Mais quels sont les élemens primitifs de la matiere? c'est ce qu'il est difficile de savoir. Voyez les articles Corps & Configuration.«

22 | Gina Bloom puts emphasis on the materiality of the voice in her study of early modern English sources in Bloom 2007.

trope of dance as writing, dance mediated itself as knowledge.[23] Continental post-structuralist aesthetics thus had a decisive influence on contemporary Anglo-American dance theory.

As writing became an influential theoretical construct, choreography suggested an alternative form of writing, and corporeality gained precedence as a model for communication. Post-structuralism, however, also lent itself to an anti-Enlightenment stance on the disciplines, and thus helped to foster an experimental creative climate in which hybridity, including vocality, entered into contemporary performance practices. In brief, and contrary to all aesthetic dictates deriving from the eighteenth century and developed in the nineteenth century, dancers on stage now speak. So the historical question of how the voice relays movement, or movement, the voice, becomes a theoretical one for post-structuralist thought. More largely, it becomes the question of *how dance, literature, philosophy, and history mediate each other in the discursive formation of choreography*. The place of the voice in the scene of dance as writing is ›multi-vocal‹: when considered philosophically in relation to writing, the voice evokes only ›truth‹ and totality; but when considered from the perspective of dance history, the voice betokens discontinuity and dispersion.

This is the place to mention how incongruous it may seem to make the voice a vehicle of generic relays in a postmodern context. Certainly within a post-structural context, the voice and writing are two antithetical models for danced movement. One thinks immediately of writing as notation and of the voice as the expressive entity whose absence determines the disciplinary identity of dance in modernity. Both writing and notation are silent.

I began to choreograph in the early 1980s while researching late Renaissance and early Baroque choreography, which led to the founding of *NovAntiqua* in New York in 1985. My position on choreography as a practice was cross-disciplinary and cross-historical: experimental performance work generates scholarship, which in turn generates further performance. I was privileged to be able to engage with both activities in tandem. Thus, my choreography worked implicitly against the mutually exclusive status of practice and theory. I was interested in how the theoretical analysis of historical performance might engender – *construct* – new choreographic ideas with relevance to contemporary sensibilities. I posited the notion of *construction* as opposed to *reconstruction*. Implicit in the term *construction* was a critique of reconstruction, and the implication of a possible deconstructive analysis. I wrote:

»To ›deconstruct‹ historical dance is to get at its root sources through an analysis of the choreography's theoretical underpinnings [...] The move from reconstruc-

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23 | In Franko 1993, I associated this tendency to make of dance a self-mediated knowledge to the even earlier phenomenon of geometrical dance in the late Renaissance.

tion to construction is also a move toward the creation of choreography that actively rethinks historical sources.« (Franko 1993: 137)

I was interested in forms of knowledge that could be mediated by theoretical analysis, then directly transferred into physical terms. I thought of this as a mediation of knowledge, albeit of one that proceeds by discontinuities rather than continuities, theoretical reflection rather than prescriptive texts, and the constellating of influences rather than a concept of periodization.

In this spirit, I created for *Akte des Wissens* a dance for Juliet Neidish. The dance's project is to embody sound and hence to relay it through movement. As a dance for a silent dancer, it is meant to think through how the body and sound might be taken as relays without entering into the textual area of words.[24] Without declamation, movement exists *within* sound in this piece, rather than to sound. This is a different way of thinking through the problematic described earlier a propos of the Sebeto discourses. I see *Follia* and the Sebeto discourses as two answers to the same question.

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24 | *Follia,* a solo for Juliet Neidish, was premiered at the conference on February 1, 2008.

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