

# Dwelling in performing as thinking

Giulia Vittori

Poetry does not fly above and surmount the earth  
in order to escape it and hover over it.  
Poetry is what first brings man onto the earth,  
making him belong to it, and thus brings him into dwelling.  
Martin Heidegger, *Poetically Man Dwells*

## 1. Preface

Heidegger doesn't include theatre in his *weltanschauung*, at least with respect to the body of writings thus far studied. Yet, I argue that several points in his philosophy touch upon concepts that are particularly helpful in meditating on the act of performing in our contemporary time. This is not the first time that Heidegger's thought has been connected to theatre by artists and scholars. In the theatre and dance history disciplines, for example, in the early seventies Richard Foreman mentions Heidegger to interpret Robert Wilson's "non-manipulative aesthetics"; in the late seventies Sally Banes reads Yvonne Rainer's "aesthetics of denial" through the world-earth dynamic of unconcealment that Heidegger describes as characteristic of the work of art. In 2009 Alice Rayner proposes a reading of Kantor's use of stage objects as Heideggerian "things" and "acts" that allow to "dwell". In the performance studies field, Heidegger provokes interest with regard to concepts such as space, technique, and phenomenology. With regard to phenomenology, for example, Daniel Johnston talks of a "phenomenology of consciousness" with regard to Stanislavski's work, reading it through Heidegger's *Being and Time*.<sup>1</sup> My contribution departs from these critical landscapes and offers an alternative way to interrogate the actor's experience. Merging Heidegger's thought with my analysis of the work of Théâtre du Radeau, a French company at the cutting edge of contemporary European experimental theatre, I envision this paper as a philosophical exercise. In describing my process of thinking about Radeau's work, I address the act of performing and the spectator's gaze on it. With this article I do

<sup>1</sup> See Richard Foreman, *L'impenetrabilità dell'oggetto scenico*, in *Il teatro di Robert Wilson*, a cura di Franco Quadri, Edizioni La Biennale di Venezia, Venezia 1976; Sally Banes, *Terpsichore in Sneakers. Post-Modern Dance*, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown 1987; Alice Rayner, *Presenting Objects, Presenting Things*, in *Staging Philosophy: Intersections of Theater, Performance, and Philosophy*, David Krasner, David Z. Saltz (eds.), University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 2006; Daniel Johnston, *Stanislavskian Acting as Phenomenology in Practice*, «Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism», 26, 1, 2011, pp. 65-84.

not pursue a philological reading of the philosopher, but aim to illuminate some of the ontological and ethical implications raised in the work of Radeau that constitute essential sides of the poetics of the theatre group. I believe that a profound sense of the actor's practice can be discovered by synthesizing Heidegger with the poetics of Radeau. I look at the actor as the thinker of a scene in a *po(i)etic* process. My contribution emphasizes the actor's experience in that process and the lexicon she uses to define that experience. I account for it from a perspective that is impacted by my double activity as a performer and a scholar who reciprocally engages theory and enactment in her research. If I may, I would like to set aside in this venue the scholarly debate around Heidegger and performance. My intention is to directly engage Heidegger's writings to find an open space for the actor's voice. Working closely in a triangle with myself, Radeau, and Heidegger, I propose with this piece a meditation on the work of the performer and the function of theatre in our contemporary time.

While reflecting on the practice of Radeau's actors, my study unfolds Radeau's work as a model of enacted *weltanschauung*. In this work, I take inspiration from Carlo Sini's invitation to exercise theory through seeking its genealogy as a way to prove the ethics of that theory.<sup>2</sup> My meditation in writing becomes an exercise that questions and expands my understanding of the theatrical event and the performer's experience; it is built out of a genealogy of my ten-year-long experience as a spectator of Radeau.<sup>3</sup> This reflection is dedicated to the work of that company. Yet, it also becomes a paradigm of thinking and analyzing theatre beyond the work of Radeau. I don't mean by that that the Radeau model should be applied to other artists' poetics. Rather, by choosing Radeau, I set this group at the cutting

<sup>2</sup> Carlo Sini, *Le arti dinamiche: filosofia e pedagogia*, Jaca Book, Milano 2004, p. 212. I draw on Sini's reflection on genealogy as providing a *forma mentis* for my written exercise on thinking and performing. In *Dynamic Arts*, he proposes to think of philosophy in terms of a «genealogical writing as the ethics of theory in exercise» (p. 213, my translation). In that book, Sini looks at the genealogy of Western philosophy to bring together philosophy and pedagogy. He understands the process of becoming human as a fundamental component of philosophy and education and, with respect to this aspiration, he emphasizes the importance of putting in conversation tropes among educational disciplines, such as philosophy, science, and performing arts. Sini offers a critique of encyclopedia as a model of representation of truth. He insists on the conception of the impermanence of truth and on the idea of truth as an individual embodied process.

<sup>3</sup> The concept of meditation informs my article. The meditative aspect characterizing both the type of thought that Heidegger develops and the meditative fruition of Théâtre du Radeau's works influence this work. Antonio Attisani proposes to look at Radeau's performances as a mandala on which exercising a meditative thought: «The scenic composition creates a unity out of a firmament of fragments. It configures a psychocosmosdrama to which the spectator responds with the attitude of the person who meditates: one meditates on a meditation per forms, as if in a sort of mandala». Antonio Attisani, *Trasumanar. La composizione scenica secondo il Théâtre du Radeau e François Tanguy*, EIP (edizioni in proprio), Torino 2008, p. 47.

edge of contemporary practice. I identify in their work a borderline indicating a position that contemporary theatre has reached. Such a position is not dead-ended, but suggests a direction from where the practice and thought on theatre could further proceed. Radeau centers a genealogy of theatre history, ethics, and aesthetics.

## 2. Heidegger's Lens

Heidegger's concepts such as, *artwork, unconcealment, earth versus world, thing, fourfold, poet, thinking, the most thought-provoking, moving into nearness, and dwelling* present fruitful connections when applied to the practice of performing, and I will use them in the paper. Yet, even more interestingly, Heidegger's philosophy sets up a way of thinking as process rather than as argumentation, and this constitutes my foundational point for enterprising what I like to call a meditation on the actor's work. When reading Heidegger I have the sensation of a very lively and direct phrasing. Heidegger seems to talk aloud and to write as if in his process of thinking, a performative approach that becomes more and more meditative in his late work. The spiral type of structure holding the main topic substitutes a linear argumentation of a thesis. Rather than exhausting his argument point after point, he progressively unfolds a theme by continuously going back to it, adding samples, perspectives, counterpoises, which each time make his concepts clearer as matters of reflection rather than argumentation. Thus, Heidegger's topics open terrains of discussion. I observe that this way of proceeding is different from the consequential and demonstrative logic of much of Western philosophy; it is closer to poetic, meditative, and mystical experiences of knowledge. His writing is a solid and structured thinking *in process*, unafraid of unsolved points or of contradictions, when those serve a later clarification. Keeping as a stable horizon the vast idea of Being, he reaches to it from different domains, by stretching, enriching, and more and more deepening repetitious basic concepts. He starts from there, and seems not to know where they will carry him. Heidegger's philosophy builds a wide-reaching reflection on the concept of Being, from different perspectives and in different fields. His concept of Being is indeed elusive on purpose: such quality allows him to attempt to define it without ever declaring the final word. To me, reading Heidegger is not a demonstrative system but an ongoing process of thinking. His thought is po(i)etic, concrete, created in the moment.

The processual nature of my object of study influences my writing style in this work, which proposes materials and concepts without consuming and exhausting them in a Deleuzian *clinique*;<sup>4</sup> I rather let them lie down and resonate in the reader's mind, only to come back to them at a later time, and then at multiple times, hoping to unfold the sense of their use in my process of thinking while writing. Here,

<sup>4</sup> See Gilles Deleuze, *Critique et clinique*, Editions de Minuit, Paris 1993.

I aim to show a gradual development of thought rather than a demonstration of ideas. I hope that this exercise can be productive for further expansions on the ways to look at the act of performing as a process of thinking that reflects and enacts a *weltanschauung*. This exercise of writing that I pursue as a process of thinking engages another process of thinking (the actor's act of performing) and its encounter with Heidegger's thinking and writing.

Because of this processual nature of Heidegger's philosophy on the phenomenon of *being*, I find his thought particularly rich and close to the type of knowledge coming from the model of experience on which actors rely – doing as thinking, and vice versa. Heidegger's thinking as a process presents similarities with the *practice-based research* approach that much of experimental theatre in Southern Europe deploys.<sup>5</sup> The artists of Théâtre du Radeau rely on a creative practice in which thinking is produced while doing and doing is sustained with highly intellectual reflections. In their works, they enact their *weltanschauung* with a practice-based research perspective: it is the work done in the theatre space that strengthens and verifies the Radeau's vision of reality, along with its programmatic practice of discussing it in symposia that they organize. Not only does Radeau enact the idea of theatre as practical research in its theatre creation, but also, I find, Radeau's poetics and artistic language demonstrate several points of convergence specifically with Heidegger's process of thinking. Borrowing the terms of “dwelling” and “thinking” from Heidegger's *Dwelling, Building, Thinking* and from *What is Called Thinking*, I argue that in their performances, theatre becomes a place for dwelling, and performing a way to (poetic) thinking. What I aim to explore by reading Radeau's work through Heidegger is an idea of theatre as a location that makes the event of dwelling possible, bringing both spectator and actor in such a dwelling. Dwelling implies a process of time and a process of thinking. In these terms, the reality of theatre becomes the place where actors and directors enact a *weltanschauung*, to which spectators respond complexifying it. In establishing this connection, I hope to establish bridges across the two disciplines that can help to bring their reflections forward, toward interdisciplinary directions.

<sup>5</sup> The Italian and French words *teatro di ricerca* and théâtre du recherche (“research theatre”) are definitions that might be more appropriate to the work of Théâtre du Radeau, as they include various aesthetics, techniques, and approaches inclusive of but not limited to experimental theatre, performance-as-research, or devised theatre. The two definitions (*teatro di ricerca* and théâtre du recherché) serve to distinguish a certain type of practice from canonical dramatic productions. They designate a reality similar to that of devised theatre, in that the groups that call their work as théâtre du recherche usually deconstruct or modify the dramaturgical text, and lead a collective and interdisciplinary approach to creation. Groups that practice théâtre du recherche share the intention of realizing a performance usually within a long process of studying and re-thinking the sources and over a long rehearsal period; they also share an interest in deep reflection about the function of theatre and finding ways to constantly renew it to make it relevant to the contemporary moment.

### 3. *Towards a Theatre of Dwelling against Representation*

I believe that both Théâtre du Radeau and Heidegger provide a horizon of thought that overcomes the concept of representation and what it implies as a system of knowledge. They offer a *forma mentis* that carries theatre and Western thought forward, beyond representation, toward the act of doing and the idea of process. When it is the act of doing that processes the act of thinking, it disrupts a representational system that values the separation between mind and body and privileges a logical approach based on linguistics. I think that Radeau's theatre practice provides pragmatic thought with phenomenological and ontological outlooks. In performing, thinking is produced while doing; furthermore, performing gives the opportunity to enact the very ontology of the actor, and her identity, as performing explores human agency. I propose to think of the work of Radeau as a *weltanschauung* that enacts what Heidegger calls "unconcealment" (of truth, for example) and that Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht expands to the notion of "unconcealment of Being", focusing on the ability to produce presence as an epiphany event.<sup>6</sup> Heidegger himself does not provide a straightforward definition of the concept of unconcealment, which recurs throughout his work with respect to the idea of truth (*aletheia*). On my side, I use this concept of the event of unconcealment to illuminate the somatic experience during the performance event, primarily for the actor. Theatre and our reality are, yes, two worlds that connect. Yet, I say, not exclusively in a realistic and narrative way, horizontally, but especially in an *ontic* way, vertically. Thinking of my experience as both a performer and a spectator, I describe the unconcealment as a surge, that is, an *expansion of time and space* beyond our metrological and chronological perception all around the event. In the type of theatre event that I am delineating, here represented by Radeau, the micro-cosmos of theatre that the actors compose makes present what I would call a *surplus of being*, that is, an *expansion of (our ability to) being*. Such experience of an ontological surplus makes us get away from our daily utilitarian understanding of reality. It gives rise to a surge in perception that opens up senses and mind to a different listening to what occurs on the stage, and from there within and between the gathered community of actors and spectators. Thus, this *ontic* surplus is an event of communal dwelling: an ethical occasion to *inter esse* and know, instead of an occasion to detect what is "interesting" in the plot.<sup>7</sup> Such *ontic* unconcealment occurs in Radeau's performances, when, I suggest, the event that they create is able to "gather" in its happening the right "things" and when its actors "indicate" toward "the most thought-provoking," to use Heidegger's terminology.

<sup>6</sup> See Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2004.

<sup>7</sup> I draw the distinction between «interesting» and «inter esse» from Heidegger's *What is Called Thinking*, Harper Perennial, New York 1976, pp. 86-87.

Heidegger writes in *The Origin of the Work of Art*: «And the artwork is at work in its *setting-up*».<sup>8</sup> These words talk about process: setting up implies time and space, engaged in the becoming of the artwork. Theatre is the artwork in process *par excellence*, because of the temporality that characterizes its very happening in front of the spectators. Temporality is at the foundation of what Erika Fischer Lichte calls the *transformative* power of performance, and of its conception as *event* of transformation.<sup>9</sup> In this sense, theatre is an event where the state of being able to dwell in the transformation occurs during the performance time. However, whereas Fischer Lichte concentrates on the spectator's agency, I focus on the actor, who is the subject enacting the transformative process. I study the ways in which the performer's high artisanal competence in acting allows both the spectator and herself to dwell in the transformative event. My research directs the attention to how the performer's work is directed not exclusively to the spectator but also and equally to herself, that is, to the ontological and phenomenological experience that she gains in performing.

When I started my reasoning, I mentioned time and space. Theatre is an art of process, through which time builds an event in the shared space, a space for dwelling. At the base of my comparison between Heidegger and Radeau there is a common will to bypass representation as a *forma mentis* and strategy, in philosophy and theatre. Temporality is a crucial dimension that both Heidegger and Radeau use to intervene against representation. Although building time in the process of the event is constitutional of performance, Western modern theatre (at its apex with bourgeois theatre) traditionally established a very specific type of temporality, one that depends on plots. Such temporality limits the somatic experience of the *timespace* process under specific types of time and space, the symbolic, abstract, narrative ones, based on the suspension of disbelief, and conventionally planned; it is an experience of the timespace that limits its somatic side.<sup>10</sup> This is because one adapts her imagination to the story that is being told. Via symbolization, the temporality that is experienced during the performance is abstracted from her somatic sense of the timespace and relies primarily on her imagination and concentration. Imagination and concentration are helped to do that by the imitation of reality that narration requires. Through this reduction of the spatial and temporal process to its symbolization, the potential somatic experience that belongs to the

<sup>8</sup> M. Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Harper Perennial, New York 2001, p. 134.

<sup>9</sup> Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: a New Aesthetics*, trans. by Saskya Iris Jain, Routledge, London 2008.

<sup>10</sup> By somatic I mean a holistic experience of time dimension affecting the bodymind and not exclusively relying on the conceptual and emotional logic of narrations and self-identification.

theatrical event – of witnessing a temporal process of construction in space and time that exceeds narrative structure – gets reduced, if not eliminated.

It is at this point that Heidegger's reflections on the work of art as ontology rather than temporal narrations come back, nurturing my desire of re-thinking (Western) theatre out of the narrative conventions of modern theatre. Following the impulse to a re-foundation of the origins of theatre proposed by the avant-garde, Radeau's practice intervenes in transforming theatre temporality from a narrative tool into somatic enactment. I have started this conversation with Heidegger by noticing that the philosopher thinks of art as process and event. I propose to include theatre as part of his idea of art, in spite of Heidegger's disregard towards it. What type of art is, indeed, an event more than a theatre performance? Particularly, I argue, theatre performances that, getting rid of realistic representation and imitation dwell in temporality and open up a timespace for the event. I continue by following his ideas of art as one of the ways to the "unconcealment" of truth and Radeau's work as an epistemology to better understand the quality of human agency in the existence. But *what* event? I propose to identify the event with what Heidegger calls "the unconcealment" and which Gumbrecht re-proposes as "unconcealment of Being".

In order to illustrate this set of thoughts – that in the works by Radeau, theatre becomes a place for dwelling and performing a way to thinking and that these two actions constitute an event of unconcealment – I will intertwine Heidegger's terminology with the description of the Radeau's work, placing his lexicon within a theatrical context. Toward the second half of the article, I will look at Laurence Chable, actress and co-founder of Théâtre du Radeau. By analyzing Chable's description of her work as a performer with the director Francois Tanguy, I define what are a theatre event and an actor to this company, showing how they can be put into conversation with Heidegger's philosophy. However, before that, in order to introduce my reader to the Radeau's landscape, I will share some of my experience as a spectator to their performances.

#### 4. *The Tent*

When I enter the space where the Théâtre du Radeau performs its creation, I enter a big white tent. It is not round, but rectangular, and it hosts up to two hundred and fifty spectators. The material the tent is made of was carefully chosen to emphasize sound and light. I sit in wooden benches that look at the stage, a big profound room, longer than wider, at the same level as the floor (stage dimensions are about twenty-five by fifteen meters). Thanks to the material, color, and design, which are continuous in the whole space, the tent connects spectators and scene in one whole gathering place. This is a very important physical aspect to enable the spectator to feel part of the event and to experience it as a somatic time and space process. The company uses and reuses from one show to the next a personal aesthetic, easily identifiable in the materials and type of set design chosen, and in the objects



and costumes employed. Main samples of objects are: simply designed post-war industrial chairs and tables; movable screens of different sizes built in plastic, cloth, or canvas materials; lamps. Costumes generally range from old Western theatrical dresses of late nineteenth/early twentieth century to clerk suits and man hats, to a few examples of linear modern style *prêt-à-porter* dresses. Sometimes men wear long dresses over their suits along with triangular paper hats, playing with androgyny. The actors move the screens throughout the performance, thus keeping the scene's layout and perspective in constant modification and generating a specific rhythm that alternates slow to fast tempos. Classical music, ranging from canonical repertoire to contemporary experimentation, directs or emphasizes the whole movement of the performance. The compositions of different layers and plans that derive from such global movement in turn affect the actors' actions and speeches. Actors often perform fragments of pre-existing texts. Uttered with a particular attention to the quality and rhythm of the voice, these texts are excerpts from literary, poetic and philosophical Western works that attach to each other around a main theme that every single show proposes.<sup>11</sup>

These lights, music, fragments of texts, groups of actions, and space metamorphosis create an event with varying rhythms, contributing to the effect of a whole dynamic that is musical, and of a quality of image that is pictorial and cinematographic (even though videos are usually not employed). The general idea I always end up facing when I witness a show by Radeau is that of an enchanted shop, from which actors come out to leave an urgent trace of their presence and then disappear. These figures act as *objets trouvés*, for no narrative line supports their presence on the stage. Their "out of place" location makes them archetypes populating an oneiric zone of my perception. They aren't characters. They are archetypal figures; they have no name. They are provided with the ability of speaking, of interconnecting, of moving. They come and go, don't stay long, don't argue. They dwell in the space as they build that same space up, as they explore it, as they let it be – through words, voice, gaze, gesture, stillness. They come and leave, dwelling exclusively for the time conceded, that is, the time necessary to start indicating – an issue, a direc-

<sup>11</sup> For examples, these are the authors of the texts and music fragments in the order in which they are presented in *Ricerca* (2008). Writers: Carlo Emilio Gadda, François Villon, Dante Alighieri, Carlo Michelstaedter, Ezra Pound, Dino Campana, Lucretius, Robert Walser, Luigi Pirandello, Federico Fellini, Danielle Collobert, Nadejda Mandelstam, Giacomo Leopardi, Franz Kafka, Georg Büchner. Musicians: André Boucourechliev, Alban Berg, Giuseppe Verdi, Wolfgang Rihm, Viktor Ullmann, Bedrich Smetana, Igor Stravinsky, Bohuslav Martinu, Ludwig Van Beethoven, Luciano Berio, Hanns Eisler, Jean Sibelius, Nicolaus A. Huber, Domenico Scarlatti, György Kurtag, Dohnanyi, Witold Lutoslawski, Dmitri Shostakovitch, Sergiu Celibidache, Friedrich Cerha. Such richness gives an idea of the intricate web of voices that the director François Tanguy waives around Théâtre du Radeau's performances. This complexity might also help to understand how the goal of Radeau's works is to show a process of thinking and seeking a sense, instead of narrating stories or arguing for a thesis.



tion, a moment of beauty, a moment of existential abyss. They move around a self-metamorphosing space that, being extraneous to any specific situation, can also adapt to issues recognizable by the individual spectator. Those costumes they wear, elegant, old, are remote from daily life as well as from the space they are in. Only if I think of Radeau's performances as the allegory of the space of theatre, can I see how actors inhabit it properly. Their faces, often made up in white, have gazes that look far away, pointing to what is not yet catchable from the situation given and can therefore only be indicated as a direction for interrogation.

The uncanniness of the place does not come from clichés of spectacularity (colors, for example, are carefully and rarely used, upon a general tone around grayish-whitish main tonalities); it rather comes from the functions of archetypes the actors cover, from the dynamic that they generate interacting among themselves, with the settings; it comes from their anti-utilitarian work with the objects. Actors seem to deal with the props as if they were Heideggerian *beings*, giving them back their status of the "thing".<sup>12</sup> Great care is put in any minute detail of the performance. Every action shows to be composed not only with the most precise visual coherence, but also with the most thoughtful reasoning about the tradition of theatre history, for these actors deconstruct, recite, and re-propose fragments of that tradition under different contexts. As archetypes, the figures that they enact throw the audience's comprehension into a dream-like dimension, which asks of the spectator, on the one hand, a total adhesion to the view, but, on the other hand, invites her to recognize the citations, to detect the analogical and poetic composition holding the structure of the performance, and thus to get inside of its mechanism. Far from being an escape into imagination, Radeau's performances constitute a microcosmos that refers to concrete situations and wants to rewrite them anew, to give them another possibility. Using in unprecedented ways canons of Western literature and artistic traditions, the artists of Radeau aim to change, dismantle, or assert through theatre the value of situations that recall historical facts, philosophical principles, and social habits. Without following any plot, Radeau unfolds a different possibility to think about theatre today. Starting with a long intellectual

<sup>12</sup> To Heidegger, things are those rare objects that conjure the "fourfold" and allow beings to dwell. I think that Heidegger helps us to bring back to the theatre event a value similar to that inherent in rituals. I propose to consider the fourfold as a secular ritual that re-establishes a lost connection between the human being, the thing, and their (visible and invisible) surroundings. In this way, I am pushing further what David Cole calls the «illud tempus» that «presencing rituals» are able to make present rather than imitating their subject. David Cole, *The Theatrical Event: a Mythos, a Vocabulary, a Perspective*, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown 1975, p. 39. Presencing performances have strong links to rituals and yet they still rely on stories, whereas the type of performance I am referring to, such as Théâtre du Radeau's, gets completely rid of narration. My model emphasizes instead the building of the theatrical spacetime itself as the artwork's event. By dwelling organically between Heidegger's earth and world, theatre allows the realization of a secular version of the fourfold.

preparation on the themes of the performance, passing through a long period dedicated to staging it, and discussing it with its audience during the tours, Radeau enacts its *weltanschauung*. The vision of reality that they project through their performances is in constant process rather than being plunged from pre-existing theories. It is an *enacted weltanschauung*.<sup>13</sup> I will end my description of Radeau's work with a fragment from the notes that Florinda Cambria wrote after seeing *Onzième* in 2011. They suggest how to account for the type of actions that spectators witness at Radeau:

All'inizio era la geometria: una metrica tellurica, in effetti, inaugura il suolo, lo fa accadere come residuo, il residuo poetico di una danza aerea. La gestazione dello spazio è il ribollire di uno sgretolamento continuo e ogni nuova prospettiva è un taglio di luce che incide nell'anima. Ed ecco, si animano davvero i fantasmi: è una Spoon River senza pianto, una Spoon River luminosa, di struggente saggezza, che, tramontando, non smette di guardare a oriente. «Io vidi quello esercito gentile / tacito poscia riguardare in sue, / quasi aspettando, palido e umile; / e vidi uscir de l'alto e scender giùe / due angeli con due spade affocate, / tronche e private de le punte sue» (Pg., VIII, 22-27). [...] L'architettura compone nuclei di senso in incorporazioni mostruose: la grazia di quei corpi, la loro eleganza pudica nei vestiti di festa attrae, disorienta. Ma è un raffinato gioco di maschera, che non cela le orbite oscure, anzi le svela, le sottolinea. Ogni parvenza ostenta il suo doppio: il tragico e il grottesco intrecciano un madrigale e, con cadenze inattese, aprono varchi di silenziosa luce bianchissima. Proprio come i chiaroscuri di una cattedrale nella luce del tramonto: è allora che i mostri rivelano, nel pianto e nel ghigno, il segreto della loro plastica sapienza, della loro simbolica potenza.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Bruno Tackels defines the director Francois Tanguy as an «*ecrivain de la scene*», meaning that the «*texte provient de la scène, et non du livre*». Bruno Tackels, *Francois Tanguy et le Théâtre du Radeau*, Les Solitaires Intempestifs, Besançon 2005, p. 10. Since the group does not stage plays, but enacts stage writing, Tackels observes that Tanguy constructs new scenic syntaxes from the stage, dismantling linguistic narration (cfr. *ivi*, p. 12). Théâtre du Radeau not only creates on the stage a text that is not mainly linguistic, but also builds on the stage an alternative process of thinking. Radeau shapes its *weltanschauung* on the stage with elements from the scene, instead of uttering it through narrations. In this way, I believe, Radeau enacts a version of the meaning that Antonio Attisani attributes to the theatre actor, according to which the performer gains knowledge through her experience. Referring to the etymology of *gnosis* and emphasizing the pragmatic aspect that characterizes the performer's attendance to knowledge, Attisani inserts theatre in the domain of *secular gnosis*. Theatre is a gnostic way to knowledge, and is constituted particularly in the act of the performer. See Antonio Attisani, *L'invenzione del teatro*, Bulzoni, Roma 2003.

<sup>14</sup> «In the beginning there was geometry: indeed, a telluric metrics inaugurates the soil, it makes it happen as a residue, the poetic residue of an aerial dance. The gestation of space is the boiling of a continuous deterioration, and every new perspective is a sliver of light cutting into the soul. And then, ghosts do come alive: it is a Spoon River without tears, a Spoon River illuminated, of heart-rending wisdom that, setting down, doesn't stop to look toward east. "I saw that army of the gentle-born / gazing on high in silence after this, / as if in expectation, pale and meek; / and, issuing from above, and coming down, / two Angels with two fiery swords I saw, / which, broken off, were of their points deprived" (Pg., VIII, 22-27). [...] Architecture composes nucleus of sense in monstrous incorporations: the grace of those bodies, their modest elegance in their feast outfits is attractive and disorient-

5. *The Poets in the Tent*

Incessantly building and modifying in different tempos the form of the space on the scene, the actors of Théâtre du Radeau provide an excellent example of what could be an event of experiencing *spacetime* in process within a theatre venue. Radeau's use of theatrical elements builds an allegory of the essence and potential of what is theatre *per se*, which becomes the foreground reflection in all of their performances. By making explicit the theatrical means and how they work to build an event rather than using them for representing narrations, the director Francois Tanguy brings attention to the process of making performance. The artists of Radeau work by subtracting all elements from utilitarian and hierarchical relationships with respect to the narrative text. There is no cause-effect logic, nor any narrative that supports their works. Their performances are structures that lead a reflection on theatre and its function in the present time. Those deconstructive structures cannot be read exclusively through a rational approach, but ask for a comprehension of the event that is somatic adhesion and happens over time. The result is often an organic understanding of theatre as an aesthetic, ethical, and political event. They include spectators in an experience of oneness that overwhelms usual perception. The aim is to dismantle the expectation of a linear reading of the performance, and to welcome instead the concept and experience of presence in the event.

My perception as a spectator to Radeau's performances is that of being a witness to the surge of the *surplus of being*. I previously mentioned such expression defining it as an *expansion of (our ability to) being*. I can further describe such an ontological surplus as the *necessity* for a strong link to *life*, thinking of these terms in its Artaudian existential quality, as well as the thirst for a somatic type of knowledge experienced in the process of unconcealment. There is no argument that Radeau's performances make; rather, there is a direction toward a *horizon of sense*, and I do mean a horizon of sense rather than a sense. Radeau accepts the notion that contemporary theatre cannot provide existential sense, for this sense has been lost in the abyss of the history of human oppression and cannot be rescued.<sup>15</sup> The spectators'

ing. But it is a refined mask play, which does not hide the dark orbits but rather unveil, underscore them. Every appearance shows its double off: the tragic and the grotesque bride a madrigal and, with unexpected cadenzas, open ways through a silent very white light. Precisely as the *chiaroscuro* in a cathedral in the light of sunset: it is then that monsters reveal, in cry and sneer, the secret of their plastic wisdom, of their symbolic power». Florinda Cambria, *Appunti sull'Onzième del Théâtre du Radeau*, «Mimesis Journal», 1, 1, 2012, p. 84 (my translation).

<sup>15</sup> Antonio Attisani observes: «The disappearance of sense is the dazzling intuition (to be intended as *more* than intelligence) that Radeau has reached over the last years, an arrival point to which concurred not only artistic events, but also the human and political events, as the inferno of Sarajevo deadly besieged». A. Attisani, *Trasumanar...* cit., pp. 47-48 (my translation). The direction that Théâtre du Radeau took is that of holding on the value of life and action itself as a counterpoise to nihilism. As Florinda Cambria observes in her account for *Onzième* (2011), the actions of Radeau rotate around the

role is that of detecting such horizon, of searching it out of these artists' indications toward enacted thinking. Both spectators and actors engage an active search of a sense that is not there yet. In this way, the work that Radeau presents is a building, a preparation for a collective sense rebuilt anew in the process of making art and enacting thinking. This search for a sense enacts a process of thinking that follows, I argue, a path similar to those that Heidegger identifies as domains of the thinker and the poet. The thinker and the poet, respectively, point toward what has not been thought enough yet and turn us toward the Open, as he describes in *What are Poets for?* and *What is Called Thinking*. The aspiration for the human being to be in the Open requires surpassing representation as a system that separates object and subject in order to being able to be, to inhabit the Open.<sup>16</sup> Such existential and ontological tension, which Heidegger describes as a domain of poetic language, combines to the effort of the thinker, who indicates towards what needs to be thought.

«The most thought-provoking thing in our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking»,<sup>17</sup> says Heidegger. He claims that science and philosophy don't think, because they have not been directed yet toward what is most thought-provoking. They fail in the moment in which they represent the Open, objectifying it instead of being in it.<sup>18</sup> To Heidegger, science could think only through a jump, a *caesura*, which poetry helps cover through composition. Heidegger thinks that poetry and thought are complementary sides of human agency. «His [man's] essential nature lies in being such a pointer» Heidegger writes in *What is Called*

slippery border between essential and inessential: «Dietro il proliferare delle figure e delle forme, nella scansione della loro presenza che si inchioda alla scena, come un monito riecheggiano le parole sibilate da un corpo di accartocciata bellezza: "L'essentiel, c'est qu'il ne faut pas que j'oublie l'essentiel. Je vous en prie, rappelez-le moi vous-même dès que je m'écarterai, dites-moi: – Et l'essentiel?" Come toccare l'essenziale? Come essere fedeli a quel monito? Tutto *Onzième* sembra protendersi verso la presa. Ma è l'esercizio che conta e l'essenziale non si afferra. Non c'è afferramento possibile nella torsione delle carni stilizzate e i dialoghi sono fiumi in piena, si rivelano soliloqui tentacolari, fino alla dismisura». [Behind the proliferation of figures and forms, in the scan of their presence nailed down onto the scene, words echo as a warning, hissed by a body of shriveled beauty: "L'essentiel, c'est qu'il ne faut pas que j'oublie l'essentiel. Je vous en prie, rappelez-le moi vous-même dès que je m'écarterai, dites-moi: – Et l'essentiel?" ("The essential, it's that I must not forget the essential. I pray you, remind me you yourselves, when I'll step aside, tell me: and the essential?") How to touch the essential? How to be faithful to that warning? All *Onzième* seems to stretch out toward the grab. But it is the exercise that matters, and the essential is not catchable. There is no possible seizing in the torsion of stylized flesh, and dialogues are rivers in flood; they reveal to be tentacular soliloquys, reaching the excess]. F. Cambria, *Op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>16</sup> Heidegger talks of Rainer Maria Rilke's use of the term Open in the *Duino Elegies* as «something that does not block off», without bounds. M. Heidegger, *What are Poets for*, in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Harper Perennial, New York 2001, p. 104. The artists of Théâtre du Radeau are very familiar with poems from *Duino Elegies*; they used them for example in *Les Cantates*, 2001.

<sup>17</sup> M. Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking*, cit., p. 7.

<sup>18</sup> M. Heidegger, *What are Poets for*, cit., p. 108.

*Thinking*.<sup>19</sup> The thinker should be after «what is not yet catchable» and «the most thought-provoking»<sup>20</sup> and, for doing so, he can follow the poet's indication. Poetry is necessary to the human being to start the act of thinking, as the human being accomplishes her nature when she starts thinking. Thus, poetry constitutes a bridge to her very ontological nature, and enacts human agency to its fullness. The way in which actors act and *compose* their actions on the stage of Radeau makes me think of the *actor/poet as indicator* toward such unknown. Therefore, I envision the actor as a thinker of *differance*. To do so, she acts *poetically*. Through jumps made to avoid logical narrations, Radeau's actors perform a poem, that is, a direction towards the unknown where to start the process of thinking. The actor as the thinker in her full human essence and agency, I argue, her who makes the thinking process unconcealed, is the active subject in Radeau's enacted *weltanschauung*.

To Heidegger, the poet uses words to open existence in its very presence, rather than revealing or explaining something. «The song of these singers is neither solicitation nor trade. [...] To sing the song means to be present in what is present itself. It means: *Dasein*, existence».<sup>21</sup> At Radeau, I believe, *actors/poets indicate* instead of arguing or telling stories. They indicate not only through words, but also through a whole embodied system of signs, such as voice timbre, rhythm of words, gestural quality, interaction with props, lack of psychological interpretation. What do they point to? To that which is left to be thought, I say, echoing Heidegger's expressions. These actors draw their object from what now belongs to tradition but has not been detected yet, precisely how Heidegger suggests in *What is Called Thinking*. Making a type of theatre that is neodramatic, Théâtre du Radeau engages tradition by subverting and re-composing it in a poetic (non-narrative) way.<sup>22</sup> In Radeau's work subverting tradition means to make it anew through a leap into *differance*, questioning its essence according to the historicity of the present time, and in this way pointing to what has not been extrapolated yet from this tradition.

<sup>19</sup> M. Heidegger, *What is Called...* cit., pp. 5, 9.

<sup>20</sup> Ivi, p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> M. Heidegger, *What are Poets...* cit., p. 135.

<sup>22</sup> In a recent article, Antonio Attisani, referring to Pierluigi Donini's critical and philological revision of Aristotle's *Poetics*, revises the meaning of Aristotelian *mimesis*, proposing to think of it in terms of composition instead of imitation. Through the idea of *mimesis* as composition, Attisani establishes a lineage that goes from the ancient understanding of theatre, to the avant-gardes, and arrives at some of contemporary theatre practices. The desire of these subjects to re-found theatre against the imitative and realistic aesthetics of modern and bourgeois theatre, brought them to invent compositional strategies that, Attisani argues, find affinities with Aristotle's description of poetry and tragedy. Attisani defines these strategies as *neodramatic* in order to emphasize the link instead of the *caesura* with the ancient foundation of Western theatre. In this context, he proposes *neodramatic* as an alternative to Lehmann's definition of anti-Aristotelian *postdramatic*. See Antonio Attisani, *Attori del divinare: Aristotele e i nuovi profili della mimesi*, «Nóema», 4-2, 2013 and Aristotele, *Poetica*, a cura di Pierluigi Donini, Einaudi, Torino 2008.

Here, to subvert is to think anew, as if for the first time, by remembering: «Memory is the gathering and convergence of thought upon what everywhere demands to be thought about first of all. Memory is the gathering of recollection, thinking back».<sup>23</sup> Subversion is strictly connected to tradition; it is not a rejection but a means of re-thinking beyond its past understandings and misunderstandings. In Radeau's performances, the past is cited through its detritus. Detritus become relics, used to compose performances: costumes, theatrical situations, dramatic texts, music, and objects that come from Western European tradition. Derived from its close or distant repertoires, these signs specifically reference a Western European common basin of values and memories, ranging from history to cultural identities. Through working with tradition in an environment that makes it alien – that is, that doesn't support, narrate, or embody it – the actors of Radeau practice a recollection of that past and an indication for its future. This use of tradition talks to an essential part of their *weltanschauung*, as their works seek a sense precisely by tracing such a temporal trajectory of culture. «This pointing is a fundamental trait of thought»,<sup>24</sup> says Heidegger in *What is Called Thinking*. By pointing when performing, they enact a reflection on time that starts with the present, draws from the past, and extends to the future.

Through their actions, encased in specific frames, actors pose questions, and so *indicate* directions of thinking. They do so not only through language, but also and especially through their ways of composing and recomposing the space within the stage. That is, the sense of the event is to be read much beyond the meaning of the spoken texts, through the structure of the performance and the actions of the elements on the scene. The sense emerges out of their combinations. The composition of separated elements on a shared space alienates logic and narration in order to bring the spectator to detect these issues with analogical and counterpointed approaches. Through disorientation, a *tabula rasa* in the methodology of thinking and perceiving arises; in other words, by disorienting canons and stage habits, origins are called back, re-created, and traditions made contemporary. This event is somatic, imaginary, and intellectual all together. It is because of its holistic, organic approach to the event that theatre can constitute a surplus of being, offering the actor and the spectator an ontic experience.

To Heidegger, poets demonstrate a specific type of thinking, an unfinished one, one in process. Together with their director, the actors of Radeau throw the foundations of a *poetic* thinking from the theatre, a place in which they dust pieces of memories, past, traditions. They interact with these fragments in order to point toward some directions. Their performances pose questions of three kinds that are important to Radeau's vision of the world: about the role of our histories, about existence,

<sup>23</sup> M. Heidegger, *What is Called...* cit., p. 11.

<sup>24</sup> Ivi, p. 9.



about communication and representation and our agency within them. But, one more time, their questions are not direct, don't follow a consequential logic, nor provide answers. Actors hint towards them in and through the alienating space they create – by alienating I mean that any element populating it is made extraneous from daily reality to be thrown on a philosophical horizon that reflects broadly on existence, and specifically on the sense of the gesture to be performed.

Gesture stands at the foundation of the actor's craft, as word does at the poet's. At Radeau's, all gestures and actions are indications, questions for the here and now. These actors, *objets trouvés* themselves thrown in this space, seek «le juste geste», as Tanguy calls them.<sup>25</sup> *Juste* is a meaningful word in this context, as it has multiples nuances: *juste* meaning right, simple, exclusively, and precise all together. It refers to the neat performative *quality* of any movement, action, or gesture the actor engages, a quality that means care, attention, awareness. The actors put their gestures at play with objets trouvés/props: ultimately “things”. Props, lights, sounds, and texts work similarly to what Heidegger calls “things”, being able to conjure the fourfold and open an event of unconcealment. Like *new* “poets” and human beings in their full potential agency of thinking, these actors indicate the “most thought-provoking” out of what happens by *being* there among the stage “things”. All these *things* become the words of the new poets. Their poems are made of materiality, of somatic perceptions, of physical temporality. Organic poems happen in the “fourfold” gathered in the tent – the event. Composing these concrete “words” with their actions, the actors build a common poem as a cathedral of gestures that from tradition points its pinnacles toward the unknown.

When I speak of actors as new poets, I am thinking of the actor as an archetype of human being in her full potential of acquiring knowledge about her ontic agency. «As he is pointing that way, main *is* the pointer».<sup>26</sup> In this context, I propose to read as such the role that Heidegger attributes to the human being/thinker and the poet, emphasizing their complementarity. The poet knows how to be in the surplus of being. The actor is a human being able to find the right words/actions to point a direction in her “poem”. She is a human being able to dwell in a space that she has been trained to build and rebuild, able as well to adapt in time to the modifications that others (poets, actors) provide to that space. The actor is a human being capable to indicate the trajectory of knowledge *because* she is able to dwell and build. A human being who treats objects as *things*, and acts and speaks to hold them in order for the performance to become an event of unconcealment.

<sup>25</sup> Personal interview with the director Francois Tanguy held in Marseille, June 2002.

<sup>26</sup> M. Heidegger, *What is Called...* cit., p. 9.



6. *Thinkers who Poetically Act*

Rejecting representation as an illustrative model and structure to work with, Théâtre du Radeau enacts its *weltanschauung* by disposing of theatrical tools as elements that allow an alternative way of thinking and informing actions. Heidegger writes: «The first step toward such vigilance [awareness of being] is the step back from the thinking that merely represents – that is, explains – to the thinking that responds and recalls». <sup>27</sup> The actors of Radeau don't represent, but *respond and recall* by retaining, holding, and opening in order to enact an unconcealment on the ontological level. The words of Laurence Chable, co-founder and actor for Théâtre du Radeau, suggest an event of unconcealment in an ontic perspective. Such unconcealment of Being points towards what is unknown and most thought-provoking in her theatre practice with regard to the ontic experience. <sup>28</sup>

In 2009, during an interview, Ann Longuet Marx asked Chable to describe and comment on her work with François Tanguy at Radeau. Deploying a lexicon chosen with great care, Chable engaged some of the main themes at the foundation of the group's poetics. Revealing how their poetics enacts a *weltanschauung*, her observations touch upon topics that, starting with acting theories, pass through ethics of work, and arrive at representation and enacted knowledge. Questioned about how conscience is involved in the actor's work, Chable specifies that it is not a question of subjectivity, or of self-expression; it is rather about getting rid of one's ego, in order to remain empty and act from there. She explains: «Cette conscience-là quand tu es au travail, elle ne te sert pas à grand chose au sens où ça n'est pas une affaire de soi, de sentiment, de sensation, de ce qu'on appelle l'intériorité de l'acteur. Ce n'est pas du tout cette affaire-là; c'est beaucoup plus concrète et physique que ça». <sup>29</sup> At Radeau, actors don't express themselves, but learn to interact with objects in spite of their utilitarian function, treating them as things that open horizons of unknown possibilities. «Et la chance dans le travail avec François, c'est aussi une affaire de contrainte, comment un costume, la ligne de la table, la lumière, ils sont des contraintes vivants et conduisent une approche possible dans le lien toujours, et dans quelque chose de l'air, du dehors...». <sup>30</sup> *Contrainte* (constraint) is a key term here: by putting obstacles to their normal bodymind

<sup>27</sup> M. Heidegger, *The Thing*, in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, cit., p. 179.

<sup>28</sup> Anne Longuet Marx, *Entretien avec Laurence Chable*, in *Théâtre et Danse. Un Croisement Moderne et Contemporain*, «Études Théâtrales», I, 47-48, juin 2010, Centre d'études théâtrales-Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve 2010. I refer to pp. 1-7 of a manuscript the actress gave me.

<sup>29</sup> «This conscience is not very useful when you are working, in the sense that it is not a matter of self, of feeling, of sensation, of what we call the actor's interiority. It's not really that. It's much more concrete and physical than that». Ivi, p. 7 (my translation).

<sup>30</sup> «In Francois' work is also a question of constraint, such as a costume, the line of a table, the light: they are living constraints and lead you to an approach that is always possible in the linking, and in something in the air, in the props...». *Ibid.*

behaviors, actors limit the expansion of their egos and make room to disregarded reactions and relations. They act out of the physical space that the objects create all around and in between them. They build a dwelling and a thinking out of this relation with objects and space.

Chable reports Tanguy's words: «Vous n'êtes pas là pour occuper l'espace, mais pour libérer de l'espace».<sup>31</sup> By remaining empty, these actors make room to the void, they «free the space», to repeat Tanguy's words. Their gestures make free what is usually constrained, hidden, exploited. Similarly, in *Body and Space* Heidegger gives a definition of space according to which «to make space means to strip away, to make free, to set free something which has been freed and opened».<sup>32</sup> Performances by Radeau, I argue, work in a way that is similar to the dynamic of “world” and “earth” in Heidegger: their artworks/events form a world that allows a surplus of Being to surge from the earth, without any pretension to catch and exploit it, but allowing it to be – partially – known in its withdrawing, obscure nature. There is a profound ethics of respect and *care* in Chable's words. The ethics resides, I argue, in the attempt to restore the agency of Being for both the thing and the human being, outside of the possibility of utilization. In this context, Chable's vision echoes Heidegger's ontological difference between being and Being. She continues: «Il ne s'agit pas d'occuper, comme il ne s'agit pas de précéder la perception du spectateur, d'assigner un sens, mais de *tenir* tout ensemble, relier, “restituer”».<sup>33</sup> *Caring* – a key term in *Gelassenheit* – is also fundamental to Heidegger's thought, with regard to both the unconcealment of Being and his idea of dwelling. The tool that the actors of Radeau use to make the stage a place for dwelling, is listening: «Alors il faut écouter beaucoup».<sup>34</sup> Indeed, in order to let props be *things* and to be able to  *dwell* in a space, the attitude of listening is crucial in its demonstration of care and reciprocal respect, as listening to someone or something is caring for someone or something. Chable explains: «[Le corps] est lui-même en écoute de ce qui ne lui appartient pas. Et comment ce qui apparaît, c'est une tension, une relation entre l'équilibre du corps se tenant et la perception».<sup>35</sup> Listening is essential to dwelling and lets the unconcealment arrive and be perceived. But how does an actor dwell? I think that one possible answer resides in her way of performing. According to Chable, an actor retains, holds a pose, a gesture, a word,

<sup>31</sup> «You aren't here to occupy the space, but to free some space». Ivi, p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> M. Heidegger, *Corpo e Spazio. Osservazioni su arte – scultura – spazio*, Il Melangolo, Genova 1996, p. 33 (my translation).

<sup>33</sup> «It's not about occupying, as it's not about preceding the spectator's perception, about bestowing a sense, but it's a matter of *holding* everything together, connecting, “restituting”». Anne Longuet Marx, *Entretien avec Laurence...* cit., pp. 2-3 (my emphasis).

<sup>34</sup> «Then, we need to listen a lot». Ivi, p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> «The body is itself in an act of listening to what doesn't belong to it. And, as what appears, it's a tension, a relation between the balance of the body which is holding itself and perception». Ivi, p. 1.

an object, a position in the space; while doing so, the actor seeks a relation to the others in the space (actors and things). Chable says: «François aide beaucoup à retenir par exemple, à “arrêter avant” [...] rester au seuil».<sup>36</sup> *Seuil*, or threshold, is this idea of keeping oneself there, on the edge; this concept of unbalance is fundamental to the aesthetics of Radeau. It is this act of *resistance*, this holding on the border between meaning and lack of final shape that makes the forms they create prisms for the passage of thinking and sense. Tanguy calls the act of performing on the threshold «a *phreatic* space». By holding in a situation of unbalance, Radeau’s actors attempt to expand the timespace of the phreatic instant allowing the unconcealment to emerge; similarly, Heidegger’s artwork lets “earth” appear. Both movements are oxymoronic: Chable’s balance is precarious while holding and expanding; Heidegger’s “earth” appears while withdrawing. Talking of holding or retaining (*tenir*; *retenir*), Chable specifies that *retenir* is not *se retenir*: to retain is not to retain oneself. Retaining expresses a choice of renunciation to self-expression and egocentrism. Yet, this does not mean renouncing. Retaining is not a retreat, but the action of waiting with care, in attention, with one’s bodymind in full attention for something to arrive: «Se retenir non, retenir oui; c’est laisser la place, si tu restes là, au seuil, quelque chose d’autre se déploie, entre l’acte et la perception, et œuvre au lieu de remplir l’espace».<sup>37</sup> Retaining turns out to be a surge of earth, of Being. Chable specifies that holding is not immobility, lack of choice, surrender: «Mais rester n’est pas figer. [...] Tenir ailleurs, parce que la question n’est pas là. [...] Encore une fois, c’est n’est pas retrait, c’est retenir».<sup>38</sup> Such an act of holding is like a poisoning, a conscious discipline of *passivity*, which allows the actor to let *differance* emerge. Holding is a practice of tension and attention, of dwelling in full listening.

The implications of the aesthetic act of holding, which I have just defined above as passivity, are deeply ethical. Rather than encouraging a lack of agency, this holding, which is fully trained, attentive, and tense, shares the horizon of thought of the “non-violence” approach, which is a constitutive part of Radeau’s *weltanschauung*. To make an aesthetic out of the idea of holding – of creating in order to hold, instead of proposing and producing – forms an attitude against exploitative production. Heidegger’s primary thought in *The Question Concerning Technology*, that art does not exploit as technique does, and that art’s action is rather that of letting emerge,

<sup>36</sup> «François helps a lot to hold for example, to stop in advance». Ivi, p. 4.

<sup>37</sup> «Retaining oneself no, retaining yes; it’s about letting your place go; if you remain there on the threshold, something else deploys, between act and perception, and opens the space instead of filling it». *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> «But remaining is not freezing. [...] It’s about holding elsewhere, for the question is not there. [...] Once more, it’s not withdrawal, it’s retaining». Ivi, pp. 4-5.

reflects the ethics of Radeau's work. Indeed: «Retenir pour ne pas *intervenir*»<sup>39</sup> Chable explains. This idea of *retenir* makes me think of the *Ankibasie*, «moving into nearness»,<sup>40</sup> a concept of which Heidegger speaks in *The Discourse on Thinking*. Instead of going towards something or staying still and inert, moving into nearness creates closeness. This movement is allowed by the ability to practice *releasement* (the English translation for Heidegger's *gelassenheit*): a passive attitude of waiting that is not passivity in its negative sense of lack of agency, but rather an opening that brings one fully present in that opening action, able to capture, signalize, poise for the event of unconcealment to occur. Moving into nearness is close to the idea of being on the threshold of which Chable and Tanguy speak. By training to remain on the threshold, performers retain their egos. By holding themselves in specific movements and shapes around things rather than *going toward* things, the actors of Radeau withdraw from intentions in order to listen and move into nearness with respect to the things that surround them. Avoiding self-expression and aiming at a state of void, of transparency, they prepare the space for the event. Together on the threshold, they conjure the event.

These ideas of *holding* and of moving into nearness sustain a release from intention and intentional action, bringing about the question of agency and passivity. As previously said, for Chable *retenir* (retaining) is a matter of *tenir* (holding), that is, a very different case from *se retenir* (retaining one self: withdrawing). Similarly, for Heidegger: «*releasement* lies – if we may use the word lie – beyond the distinction between activity and passivity».<sup>41</sup> In an attitude of vigilance, the actors of Radeau hold the space to the opening of the event of unconcealment. It is difficult to crystalize in words an image that could give an idea of how these actors enact such a vigilance. I will try to provide an example from a monologue performed in *Les Cantates* (2001). Almost completely still, seated at a table, in a diagonal, in silence, the actor Frode Bjørnstad utters an excerpt from Kirkegaard's *The Seducer's Diary*. The actor talks very slowly, paying attention to his own words, their sound, and their rhythm. He seems to talk as if discovering them in the very moment of uttering them, as if trying to enliven the props around and move the space through these words and his body's vibrant immobility. Another actor, at a remote distance, sits and listens. He is there to hold the situation, making it stronger just by witnessing its process and compensating the space composition. When Bjørnstad leaves, the other actor starts another scene with other actors, disconnected from the previous one, yet fed by the act of witnessing and holding just occurred. The technique of Radeau's

<sup>39</sup> «To retain in order not to intervene». Ivi, p. 5.

<sup>40</sup> M. Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, Harper & Row, New York 1966, p. 89.

<sup>41</sup> Ivi, p. 61 (my emphasis).

actors enables a type of care and listening in their actions: «Attention, pulsation de seconde qui veille, non surveille. C'est ce qui fait frayer, passer à travers. Tenir le rythme d'une attention».<sup>42</sup> In the theatrical space, Radeau's actors seem to participate with the "things" in the action of holding Heidegger's "fourfold": in a mirror-play of reciprocal sustainment, while dwelling and staying they both give and get back. They indicate a horizon of sense but withdraw from a meaning. Their agency is that of listening in order to understand what is the *juste geste* that they can do to conjure the event of unconcealment on the stage. Listening requires restraining from expressing one's ego, in order to be able to hear outside of it.

### 7. *In the Process of Dwelling*

Théâtre du Radeau enacts a radical practice of theatre and philosophy in its enacted dismantlement of the ideas of representation and (self)-expression, the two columns on which Western theatre tradition has been built since the emergence of realistic drama, and which still today inform performance structure and motivation. By dwelling in Radeau's events, both props and actors subtract their status to the role of objects (literally: props as objects in the hands of actors; figuratively: actors as objects in the directions of a director) and share with the spectators an ontic experience. This anti-representational type of performance brings near ontological concepts such as essence and the unknown. To the people of Radeau, doing theatre is a crucial issue in their contemporaneity about how to go, about *being*, and therefore acting, in this world. Making theatre is a way to enact a *weltanschauung*, to connect doing and thinking as parts of a reciprocal organic process. It is a matter both of ontology – of being – and of epistemology – of thinking – a matter engaged with a po(i)etic approach to pragmatism. This type of performance takes care of its spacetime and of the process in which it is built and continually transformed. It gathers "poets" and "things". And it "exacts the open" for the spectators involved. *Exacting the open* is another interesting concept showing the fertility of Heidegger's idea of the work of art when applied to performance:

But the artwork does not represent anything – and this for the simple and sole reason that there is nothing that it is supposed to represent. Since the work, in the contestation of the conflict between world and earth, opens each of these in their own way, it first *exacts the open*: the clearing in whose light we encounter beings as such, as if on the first day or – if they have already become everyday beings – in a changed manner.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> «Attention, pulsation of the instant that watches instead of overseeing. It is this that makes clear, passes through. Holding, keeping the rhythm of a tension». Chable reporting Tanguy's words in Anne Longuet Marx, *Entretien avec Laurence...* cit., p. 8.

<sup>43</sup> M. Heidegger, *The Origin of the Work...* cit, p. 140 (my emphasis).

In our context, exacting the open means to make the Being surge, to dwell in the event of a surplus of (our ability to) being – in its *spacetime*, that is, in the process of performance.

The performances of Théâtre du Radeau are Heideggerian major works of art. This can be seen first of all in their surplus/abyss of beauty that they create as well as in the directions their questions indicate. Additionally, this is evident in the way of dismantling habits of perception and reflection, which provides materials for considering the aesthetic micro-cosmos of theatre as an epistemological event; in their way of letting the essence of the *objects trouvés* and memories emerge anew from tradition, connected to their essence. Finally, this is tangible in the extreme existential care that they put in the process of building the aesthetic work.

«But the basic character of dwelling is to spare, to preserve»,<sup>44</sup> intonates Heidegger. The *careful, retained*, fully listening way of building the performance of Radeau informs its artists' and spectators' approach to thinking and affects their actions. The moment of the performance becomes a place for dwelling and thinking, in front of props that become *things* and of actors who become *poets*. With their manner of dwelling in the spacetime that they build on the stage, they *exact its open*.

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