

Nothing is what it seems

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“There is no document of culture which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.” – Walter Benjamin

Before to learn how to speak, we were children, in French *“enfants”* («qui ne parle pas») literally *“who does not speak”*. We might think that our first words are onomatopoeias, sounds that shape reality or “ideophones” that served to point out or to accuse. Phonological systems based on imitation are repetitive, sounds made of and for movements and bodies. A protolanguage established in an almost silent common. A language of signs prior to the society, our first form of communication. We learned sign language first, meanwhile we're dancing like kids. The posture belongs to the body, as the voice belongs to the imposture.

Words shape reality, creating the Other or the conditions of possibility for the difference. A prejudice is perpetuated that reproduce a position of power through language, which is only justified if otherness is defined as inferior, as disease. What is “natural”, what is “normal”, is what conforms to the stereotypes of the majority for confirmation of the enjoyment of privileges. As Jacques Derrida asked: *“Is phonocentricity deaf to the voice which it cannot hear — or is it simply covering its ears?”*. Some common questions that some hearing people ask usually when they look at deaf people talking to each other is: *“do they talk? are they mute? do they have a voice?”* Those questions are not casual, but an answer that follows an historic program of power and violence related to the phonocentrism. Sigmund Freud said that *civilization began the first moment in which an angry man threw a word instead of a rock.*

What does it mean to have a voice? Where is my voice as deaf? Is the translator my voice? Where is my voice when I talk? If my voice and what I want to say or even myself is translated, then is my voice *queer*? How acoustics is racialised, sexualised or gendered, positioning particular voices and persons in certain ways? Does my voice belong to the ear that is hearing or to myself? Where is located my voice? Am I only a voice? Are the deaf bodies invisible to the hearing society based in the common sound?

D/deaf people are often thought of as disabled. It is mechanically assumed that those who do not hear are at a disadvantage. In the common sense and sound mind of a “normal” listener, it is assumed that the D/deaf must be protected because they are victims of an illness. To resist every form of oppression it is not enough to say that it is not “natural”. It is essential to discover its historical quality, to reconstruct the basting of the natural and the social that occurs within it. Deaf oppression, as for other oppressed groups, is about the transformation of the different into the abnormal, the reduction of the different to the inferior.

“Disability exposes with great force the constraints imposed on bodies by social codes and norms.” – Tobin Siebers

DISLOCATED BODIES

Contemporary dance uses those dislocated bodies, bodies that are out of place, crooked, broken, taken out of context, that lose their composure, we like them or not because this is not a matter of taste. In the contingency of the confrontation with the bodies, visible or invisible, dislocated, there is secretly a condition of possibility that opens a world of possibilities towards a profound change in the perception of what we consider as an acceptable individual, “normal” society and even “good” taste. The conquest of an unsociability, of a freedom that nothing can invade or disturb, are the necessary conditions for the construction of a subject and its desire. This contingency is nothing more than an invitation to question ourselves, individually and socially, a quiet place against the capital noise of the production of normalized bodies.

In that sense, Aditu is a controlled encounter with discomfort, with the vulnerability of our minds and bodies to images and suggestions that opens us to unwilling transformations. There's almost nothing more than bodies and voices here.

Dislocated bodies and their voice(s) work as a contingency on different levels, just like a magician makes its trick. And the only truth is that, in a show, the body itself and its voice are unique and the only truth, the rest is just a delusion. Bodies, invisible or not, are exchanged and transfigured. One thing in the place of the other(s). This is what dancers do when they perform: they show their bodies and then make magic takes place. *“Hocus-pocus”*.

NOT ONLY ONE VOICE

From mythological sirens and the singing severed head of Orpheus, through divine revelations, inner speech and voice hearing, the source of voice production is hidden or not there at all. Before and beyond words, our voices say so much about us. This dance-sonic work is full of haunting, strange and beautiful sounds, encouraging unusual and exciting ways of thinking about both the physiology and the psychology of the human voice. The sonic voice is shapeless and immaterial. All our voices, sonorous or silent, is one of our key identifying features. We use it daily and spontaneously, however its nature is far more abstract, uncanny even. It originates within us, both bodily and inside our minds, but voices can also seemingly come from nowhere, making it a deeply absorbing topic for vocalists, anthropologists, artists, scientists and philosophers alike. Celebrating the aural and the oral and its absent and void. The source of our voices is reconstructed and/or produced by the listener, as it is already absent when the voice is perceived. When I say that *“I have a voice and a vote”* or also when I say that *“I give a voice to minorities”*, there is a double meaning that does not exist in sign language. This double meaning seems to belong to the hearing people, but nothing is as it seems. Any voice, exhibiting the dialogue between its individual and collectively aspired vocal bodies, is never a *“fait accompli”*. It's a work in progress.

“Nothing is ever as simple as it seems. At the edge of perception, weird things dance and howl.” — M.H. Boroson

DEAF AND LOUD

The body is a receptor of vibrational perception beyond the innate capabilities of the auditory system. The d/Deaf live in the same physical environment as the hearing, although the former live in a silent world and the latter in a noisy world. Noise needs us to exist, sound does not. Loudness doesn't mean anything more than a sonic normalization and regulation of the sonic in which again the d/Deaf are not taking into account. As Christine Sun Kim pointed out loudness is subjective: *"Not everyone's hearing starts at 0 dB (almost total silence), which is ironic because it actually indicates that everyone is "deaf" at different degrees and at their own calibrations."*

In the same way, Evelyn Glennie told us: *"Hearing is basically a specialized form of touch. With very low frequency vibration the ear starts becoming inefficient and the rest of the body's sense of touch starts to take over. We tend to make a distinction between hearing a sound and feeling a vibration, in reality they are the same thing. Deafness does not mean that you can't hear because even someone who is totally deaf can still hear/feel sounds."* Sound touches us, makes us feel, physically and emotionally. Hearing is not about perception, but negotiation. It's an endless dialogue with otherness and the world.

Physically spoken, for hearing people, hearing give us balance. When the hearing is not working as it supposed, when our hearing is being affected, we lose our balance, our verticality, our rectitude and our rigidity. Then our world is affected and we feel the gravity. Sound and dance collapses when our bodies are destabilized and we start feeling the gravity and the sound at the same time, on the sidelines of the perception of sound through our hearing, leaving apart of our ears, outside of our audition. In the same way that dance is about playing with gravity, sound as language is about listening to silences and not only to the sounds, otherwise would be just noise.

Aditu is more of an experiment in thought than a danced musical performance requiring performers and receivers together in a closed space for public dissemination. The idea becomes a machine that makes art.

No poem is intended for the reader, no picture for the beholder, no symphony for the audience.

*"Look into the darkness
Hear the silence there
There is nothing you are hearing
No image in your stare
Look into the darkness
Feel light upon your face
Feel your eyes that cry all night
Those tears that you can only taste"*

– Hellen Keller