Moving With(in) Language

Kinetic Textuality in Contemporary Performing Arts

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Dissertation submitted for the degree of
Doctor in Theater Studies and Intermediality
at the University of Antwerp to be defended by

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Supervised by Prof. dr. Timmy De Laet and Em. prof. dr. Luk Van den Dries
Faculty of Arts – Department of Literature

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For my father, Koen Lambert

whose encouragement for this project I’ve sensed since the beginning.

SUMMARY

Within the Western-based performing arts of the last decade, there has been an increasing tendency to investigate artistically the correlation between language and movement. Especially striking in these various explorations is the foregrounding of the intrinsic connection between language and movement as means of expression. In some cases, streams of words are presented as elements that immediately trigger various physical movements, while these movements in turn also function as direct prompts to utter specific words; in other cases, artists explore how textuality itself can incorporate compositional strategies that can be considered choreographic, because the phrases are arranged in such a way that they establish a movement sequence, albeit one made up of words.

This dissertation brings together the artistic strategies adopted to highlight the intrinsic parallels between text and movement under the term "kinetic textuality," and studies them on the basis of a corpus consisting of twelve performances created between 2011 and 2020 by Chloe Chignell, Hannah De Meyer, Mette Edvardsen, Bryana Fritz, Abke Haring, Daniel Linehan, Dounia Mahammed, and Alma Söderberg. The corpus is mainly considered through the actual performances and accompanying published texts, but it is also approached via interviews with the artists and through the broader discourse surrounding the performances, such as reviews or published interviews. The study of this corpus aims to achieve a better understanding of the use of kinetic textuality in the specific artistic context of the performances (formal, dramaturgical, and poetic choices), as well as in the light of broader trends in contemporary performing arts, and against the background of a longer artistic investigation into the affinity between text and movement.

To work towards these aims, medium-specific theoretical discussions on the relation between text and performance and accounts of late 20th and early 21st century dance are combined with historical comparisons between the selected contemporary corpus and a historical corpus of artists who also carried out artistic investigations into the relationship between text and movement, dance and speech, choreography and writing. This historical corpus includes the work of choreographers such as Trisha Brown, Bill T. Jones, and Pina Bausch, but also the writings on dance of poet Stéphane Mallarmé. A recurrent observation

throughout the comparisons with the work of these four artists is that kinetic textuality can be considered as a contemporary expression of an artistic exploration initiated earlier, but that the way in which it emerges today experiments more radically with how choreographic principles can be incorporated into the composition of the text itself.

The phenomenological reflections on the relationship between language and embodiment, especially of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, but also of postphenomenologists Don Ihde and Mark Coeckelbergh, provide the main theoretical framework through which this dissertation reads and looks at the selected corpus. The recurring assumption in the work of these philosophers that language needs to be studied through its relationship with embodiment provides a crucial perspective from which to trace how their correlation is explored artistically by kinetic textuality, precisely because this artistic form foregrounds the fundamental embodied condition of language by closely aligning it to choreographic movement. Moreover, the phenomenological framework is adopted as a methodological attitude throughout this dissertation: to uncover how kinetic textuality functions in the artistic contexts of the different performances, in which the relationship unfolding between kinetic textuality and the spectator encountering it constitutes a main point of departure.

The first two chapters of the dissertation outline the main angles and theoretical discussions that inform the concept of "kinetic textuality." The first chapter presents a definition of kinetic textuality by introducing several frameworks that support an understanding of text as something that can establish and produce movement. The second chapter considers the distinguishing formal characteristics of kinetic textuality discerned in the first chapter, in the light of the text-performance relationship in which kinetic textuality is rooted. The second part of the dissertation more specifically traces how kinetic textuality functions dramaturgically in various performances. The notions of "imagination," "theatricality," and "relationality" foregrounded in these chapters are used to further scrutinize the different uses of kinetic textuality in the selected corpus, from the perspective of the dramaturgical structures in which each specific performance is embedded. As an artistic strategy, kinetic textuality is characterized by the intertwinement of text and movement, and therefore provides insights into the intricate relationship between body and language. The five chapters will trace how this relationship is probed and presented in the course of the performances, in order to shed light on the specificity of this contemporary practice, as well as relating it to its broader and historical context.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

> There is no success in writing. There are only better degrees of failure. To write is to fail. An idea is a perfect thing. It comes to the writer in a breathless dream. The writer holds this idea in their mind, in their body; everything feeds it. They have spent their entire lifetime up until that point honing the skills to get this idea out of the ether and down through their useless hands, on to the page. But it will never be right. There is no way that a writer cannot injure that idea as they wrestle with it. By the time it has revealed itself to be finished, when the deadline can't be put off any longer, the exhausted writer has learned another lesson about their own restrictions that they promise themselves they will overcome next time. But next time comes, and they are faced with new restrictions, new limitations, new impossibilities. (Kae Tempest, *On Connection*, 76-77)

During the past five years, I have spent most of my time trying to understand ideas (artistic, philosophical, or my own), and searching for ways to present these ideas in the form of a written text. This has been an intense mental and physical process—as Kae Tempest accurately describes it—and an often confusing one, during which I struggled a lot, made pacts with myself that I would break time and again, and was only able to "finish" when the time had run out. Nevertheless, I look back at my thinking process over the past years, and my attempts to translate it into writing, with a feeling of great pleasure and joy. Being able to devote five years of my life mainly to writing and thinking has been an enormous privilege, one that I will be very grateful for, for the rest of my life. I want to thank BOF UAntwerpen and FWO Flanders for generously providing the funds needed to organize most of my life around these two activities. I am grateful to UAntwerpen (and Brain Embassy!) for the logistic and other supportive facilities provided to conduct this research, especially to the maintenance and administrative staff.

Throughout this process, I have learned that pleasure is vital, even indispensable, in order to be able to think and write, and I found out that the pleasure I experienced did not exclusively relate to the material I was engaging with, but also, fundamentally, to the connections with people around me. The different people supporting me in various ways are

the reason why I was able to experience something like "pleasure" during the sometimes bewildering process of PhD research. They helped me to foster this sense of pleasure and to avoid killing it with insecurity.

In the first place, I need to thank my two supervisors for helping me to keep the pleasure alive. Firstly, thanks to Luk, for teaching me a form of theater scholarship in which the artworks are the main characters, for recognizing my enthusiasm for research when I was too immersed in my own insecurity to notice it myself, and for suggesting the option of pursuing a PhD project. This suggestion perhaps changed my life. I am very grateful for your ongoing trust in me and in this project, for how you, throughout the research, drew my attention to missing links, always in an encouraging and non-directive way, always framing it as a proposition, an idea, a possibility. Your talent for keeping track of where I was heading in my thinking process—while I had not yet found the precise words for it—and for providing just the suggestion I needed to help me develop it further has been invaluable. To give only one of many examples: after our first conversation in September 2017 about some preliminary ideas for this project, you sent me Matt Cornish's article on "kinetic texts," and the introduction to Julia Jarcho's book. Both suggestions fundamentally influenced this project, as not only you but probably everyone who reads this dissertation will understand. Another one of your suggestions that turned out to influence the course of this project in a fundamental way was to involve Timmy. Thank you very much, Timmy, for how much of your time and energy you invested in this project. In one of our first conversations about my research, I brought in a paragraph that I wanted to share with you on a piece of paper. You immediately started editing it with a pen and asked me questions about this paragraph's underlying assumptions, which I had taken for granted. This detailed way of discussing my writing marked the start of a process in which you would continue to read the various drafts of this dissertation that I sent you in the same meticulous and rigorous way, even though they obviously contained much more than one paragraph. Although it was sometimes intense to receive your comments and edits, time and again it was enriching for both me and my text: it helped me to develop a critical filter, between a wealth of ideas and the elements necessary to present a solid argument. Your generous threads of comments also kept reminding me that I was not alone in this process, and this awareness is perhaps what I am most grateful to you for.

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my indebtedness to your book, but here I want to thank you explicitly for being so open to many forms of conversation we had after I had read it. They sparked my reflection process, especially because you always welcomed each (however preliminary) idea I brought to the table, even though you kept inviting me to look for more accurate words to formulate them. Our spontaneous meetings became more regular once you created the opportunity for me to visit TAPS at Brown University, first digitally through a six-month online research stay, and then physically through a short 10-day visit. I am very grateful for your hospitality, your generous way of thinking alongside me, for making it possible to participate in your graduate seminar and meet some graduate students at Brown, and for introducing me to forms of academic exchange and conversation that differ from my educational background.

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I dedicate this dissertation to my late father. His existence has taught me that language operates beyond what is empirically observable or rationally explicable, and that the realities it can create can feel more intense or real than what we see in front of us.

SUMMARY I

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Sometimes naming a thing—giving it a name or discovering its name—helps one to begin to understand it. Knowing the name of a thing *and* knowing what the thing is for gives me even more of a handle on it.

Lauren Olamina, in Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993, 87)

INTRODUCTION
Six Beginnings

"At some moment it begins… it has begun, and even when there is no real ending, at some point it is over and we speak a bit more normally together" (Edvardsen 2019, 93).

Choreographer Mette Edvardsen opens her performance *oslo* (2017) by walking towards the front of the stage and directly addressing the audience. After saying "good evening," she starts to talk about another performance she once did. She describes how, at the beginning of that performance, she was also talking about something that had happened in a previous performance, when she suddenly saw a man and a small child getting up to leave after only five minutes. She tells how the child lost a shoe while leaving the space. While she really wanted to let the father know, as he had not noticed that the shoe had fallen off, she felt as if she could not do that since she was performing on stage. Edvardsen had stumbled upon the distinction between the performance space in which she was delivering this talk and the real-life situation unfolding before her eyes: "this is the real performance I am doing, I cannot just say, 'excuse me, hey, you dropped a shoe!'" (2019, 94). She blacked out for a while and her thoughts were drifting off, before she finally retrieved the sentence that was the cue for another performer to walk in.

The way in which language appears in Edvardsen's anecdote about the man with the child walking out is different from how it functions in the rest of the performance. After this introduction, the performance is built around variations on the phrase "a man walks into a room." Each time, this phrase continues differently: "a man walks into a room and the room is empty" (97), "a man walks into a room and turns a page" (99), "a man walks into a room and hears voices" (103), or "a man walks into a room and each time it is the last time" (107). Sometimes the sentences deviate more from the starting line: "a man follows a dog into a room (97), "two men are walking into two rooms" (97), "a man feels uneasy in the room and walks out" (98), or "a tall man with glasses enters" (100). The movement

of a man endlessly walking into rooms is portrayed in different ways. Most sentences are spoken by Edvardsen, some sentences are projected by a neon light box while others are even sung by a choir seated in the audience. At first, the narrative structure consists of a continuous movement of beginning anew, but towards the end of the performance, this rather strict and rigid structure starts to break down. More and more connections appear between different sentences, as in the following phrases moving through the neon box: "a man is walking in the distance. / a woman is walking in the distance. / a train is passing in the distance ……. / a man looks out of the window at the trains passing in the distance …………" Gradually, longer plots are introduced, such as,

> A man walks into an empty room where he has lived for many years, a room he has walked in and out of unaccountably, but where he only notices now, from a certain angle, that there is no emptiness, but an absence. He also knows that, having passed through this empty space so many times, he is implicated in this absence, without knowing exactly how. (103)

The text continuously introduces and reshapes the beginning of the story: time and again, it restages the movement of a man walking into a room. This establishes a structure of re-beginnings, which comes most prominently to the surface in the sentence "a man walks into a room and is looking for a beginning" (100). Especially in the first section of the piece, the story refuses to unfold beyond the point of the introductory phrase: each time it is interrupted by a new introduction, and the moment it starts to go somewhere, it falters and stumbles again before it can move any further. Edvardsen's piece reminds me that a beginning is not necessarily singular but can instead be repeated over and over again. To begin this dissertation, I will take my cue from Edvardsen's performance and lay out six different ways into its main lines of inquiry, in order to outline the different approaches that will be taken to address them. These beginnings do not correspond directly to the different chapters of this dissertation, but, rather, show the evolving lines of thought which will be developed in more detail over the course of the entire dissertation.

First beginning: kinetic textuality in the selected corpus

In this dissertation, I will focus on the non-anecdotal, deliberately unnatural, and highly stylistic way of using language in combination with choreographic movement—the kind of language that Edvardsen embodies in *oslo* after the more casual and anecdotal opening section. This mode of using language is referred to in the dissertation as "kinetic textuality," which it defines as the incessant intertwining of two modes of expression: words and movements. In *oslo*, the adjustments to and re-compositions of the central phrase ("a man walks into a room") establish a rhythm of repetition and revision. The rhythmicity

evoked by this compositional strategy supports the movement described in the text—the movement of the man repeatedly walking into the room. Through these seemingly simple procedures, movement is incorporated into the text as a literary quality: on the one hand because the text describes movement, and on the other hand because the text is arranged using poetic procedures that provoke movement, mainly through the use of repetition and revision. Since 2011, language has begun to play a key role in Edvardsen's choreographies. In *Black* (2011), she stands on an empty stage and conjures up a universe of objects and actions by reciting each word eight times. In the subsequent piece *No Title* (2014), she experiments with the interplay between presence and absence: each statement, feeling, atmosphere, situation, or object that she introduces into the empty space is afterwards announced as "gone." In a joint interview she published with choreographer Mette Ingvartsen, Edvardsen comments on the role of language in her practice as a dancer and choreographer: "language offers certain capacities for me to work with when making my pieces. I work with language as material. I am not a writer, but I conceive of what I do as writing – writing in space and in time" (Edvardsen and Ingvartsen 2016, 96). Elsewhere, in a conference paper on "post-dance," Edvardsen further explains that she does not consider her strategy of using language in the field of dance as "a shift towards another discipline or art form (theatre, literature)," but rather, as a shift "within the field and practice of dance and choreography" (2017, 219).

This shift towards language emerges as a significant trend in the field of contemporary dance, one that is not only traceable in Edvardsen's oeuvre, but similarly emerges in the work of other contemporary dancers and choreographers. In *Poems and Other Emergencies* (2020), Chloe Chignell verbally describes the movements she is making: "lifting the arm, turning, stretching the leg." The performance alternates between these descriptions and the reciting of a poem that she wrote, which evokes strange figures consisting of parts of the body that are needed for producing language. In *Body of Work* (2019), Daniel Linehan talks about memories of his childhood and reactivates bodily memories from his career as a dancer to stage traces from his past choreographies. Language appears in several ways in this piece, pointing to the textual dimensions of bodily memory. In *Indispensible blue (offline)* (2017), Bryana Fritz performs a computer-based choreography, in which she experiments with words as graphical signs: flickering words and sentences are moved, replaced, highlighted, or enlarged and minimized. In *Submission Submission* (2019), Fritz performs portraits of medieval saints using the same digital aesthetic of projecting moving words onto a screen. Alma Söderberg also incorporates language into her dance performance *Entangled Phrases* (2019). She and two co-performers (Anja Muller and Angela Peris Alcantud) recite a poem, whose content is veiled by the a-synchronous way in which the

three performers deliver it. Together with the various arm movements they perform while speaking the text, the musicality and rhythmicity of the poem is emphasized.

Meanwhile, in a context which defines itself, rather, as theater and performance, similar artistic strategies are emerging which intermingle rhythmic texts and physical movements. A telling example is the performance *Platina* (2018), in which the character of performer Abke Haring suffers greatly from trying (but failing) to have a conversation with her dying husband. Haring performs quirky and uncanny movements while talking about simple things, such as the groceries or the crossword puzzle she is filling out. In *new skin* (2018), Hannah De Meyer takes the audience on an imaginary journey through various landscapes, using a compositional structure of repetition and variation as well as physical movements to evoke a rich story-world in the middle of the empty stage. In *waterwaswasser* (2017), Dounia Mahammed performs a text that functions as a stream of consciousness, in which she plays with homonyms, inner rhymes, and words in three different languages. Through her mode of performing, she creates the impression that she herself is often surprised by the trajectory of her texts. In her earlier piece *Salut Copain* (2016), Mahammed uses text in a more narrative-oriented way and alternates various reflections with absurd stories about an unknown man or situations of misunderstandings in public spaces. Likewise, the use of repetition and variation and a strong appeal to the spectator's imagination are prominent strategies within this piece.

These twelve performances, created between 2011 and 2020, make up the artistic corpus of this dissertation. This corpus is put together on the basis of a specific formal overlap I identified between the pieces: each work presents an intriguing interaction between words and movements, either because movement is incorporated, through compositional strategies, into the text itself, or because the text triggered physical movement and vice versa. In terms of its content, however, the corpus is more diverse. Its topics range from medieval saints to eco-feminism, from the question of the archive in dance, to the way in which technology determines our daily movements, the desire to connect with others, and so forth. Several prominent venues and festivals played a key role in the compilation of this corpus. At the Antwerp Toneelhuis and during the city's festival Love at First Sight, I encountered the work of De Meyer, Haring, and Mahammed. DE SINGEL, also located in Antwerp, introduced me to the work of Linehan. I had the opportunity to discover the work of Edvardsen in the Brussels Kaaitheater, and was introduced to pieces by Söderberg, Chignell, and Fritz in beurrschouwburg, also in Brussels. The first time I saw Fritz's work was in 2019 at the Performatik festival, co-organized by beursschouwburg and Kaaitheater. Chignell's work was performed at the 2020 Bâtard festival organized at beursschouwburg.

The fact that the corpus established to study kinetic textuality only consists of performances that I encountered in the context of either the Antwerp or the Brussels performing arts scene might create the impression that the phenomenon I am studying is exclusively Belgian. This is not the case: while some artists are indeed based in Belgium (or at least partly), it is not so for all the artists. Nevertheless, it was also in Belgium that I encountered the work of those based elsewhere, through the internationally-oriented programs of the institutions mentioned above. Moreover, two recent performing arts events that took place outside of Belgium illustrate the broader emergence of this trend.[1] In November 2019, for instance, Tanzquartier Wien (Austria) curated a multi-day event with a thematic focus called "word." They put together a program of talks, reflections, and performances devoted to the intersection between choreography and language. The main motivation for this event relates to the very trend foregrounded in this dissertation: "what is it that drives all these contemporary choreographers and performers to utilize text and language, to develop stage essays and to think about choreography in terms of poetry (or vice versa)?" (TQW, n.d.). De Meyer's *hi baubo,*, then still a work in progress, was included in the program.[2] In Stavanger (Norway), in December 2021, Mette Edvardsen curated the program "Moving Words," inviting several artists working on the crossover between dance and language, such as Chignell.

Kinetic textuality also appears in pieces not included in the corpus of this dissertation. In De Meyer's *hi baubo,* (2020) and *53 SUNS* (2022), for instance, rhythmic texts similarly appear in an intrinsic connection with physical movements. While *hi baubo,* centers on the archeological figure baubo, using kinetic textuality to portray and represent her, *53 SUNS* mixes movements with text fragments that reflect upon notions of rebirth, and practices to sense (and invoke) the presence of the dead. In choreographer Radouan Mriziga's *AKAL* (2021)—a dance performance in which Dorothée Munyaneza embodies the Ancient Egyptian goddess Neith—the physical movements correspond to text fragments that appear in the form of songs, rap music, or stories.[3] In *Shown and Told* (2016), a collaboration between dance artist Meg Stuart and theater artist Tim Etchells, a similar interest in the

1 Various publications also testify to a more widespread emergence of the use of text in relation to movement. Peter Boenisch, for instance, discusses the German dancer and choreographer Eszter Salamon's performances *And Then* (2007) and *Dance for Nothing* (2010), in which text is used, respectively, as a device for storytelling (2013, 120) and as a repeated stream of words that accompany choreographic movements (118). Daniela P. Domm (2017) considers the synesthetic and rhythmic dimensions activated by the text transmitted through microphones in *Walking Stories* (2013), by the English choreographer Charlotte Spencer. Other scholarly work focusing on performances that reveal how words can be "translated" into movements and vice versa also suggest that the tendency to use language kinetically is broader than the corpus selected for this dissertation (Collard-Stokes 2012; Alexandrowicz 2015; Thurston and Slee 2017; Longley 2017; McCormack 2018).

2 If the punctuation seems confusing here, it seems important to specify at this point that the title of the piece is *hi baubo,*—with a comma at the end.

3 Although *hi baubo,*, *53 SUNS*, and *AKAL* are not included in the corpus, I will nevertheless briefly return to them in the Conclusion, for they point to a possible approach to understanding kinetic textuality, in terms of a more spirituality-oriented dramaturgical context.

transition from text to movement can be observed: the text uttered by Etchells responds to Stuart's movements, while Stuart's moving body also reacts to Etchells' spoken words.[4] In Boris Charmatz's *infini* (2018), the dancers count the beats of the dance out loud, but instead of beginning anew after eight, they continue, while also counting down, shouting random numbers, or repeating the same number several times. In the less recent *All Good Spies Are My Age* (2003), Juan Dominguez shows cards with words, phrases, or sentences projected onto a screen behind him, and in so doing, inserts various reflections leading up to somewhat dispersed narratives. One of the cards contains the sentence "I wanted to show words on sheets of paper, giving them a visual rhythm, building up a choreography of words and texts." In other words, what I aim to capture by the term "kinetic textuality" is in fact a broader tendency within contemporary performing arts, and is not limited to the corpus selected.[5]

Second beginning: terminology

To be able to better introduce the different angles through which I will approach this corpus, some terminological clarifications are in order. The most pressing one at this point probably involves the main critical term of this dissertation: "kinetic textuality." In Chapter One (pgs. 51 and following), I will develop a more elaborate definition of what I call "kinetic textuality," through an in-depth analysis of De Meyer's *new skin*. However, as the corpus presented above already reveals, kinetic textuality refers to a way of using language that highlights its relation to movement. In some cases, words actively trigger physical movements and vice versa, while in other cases, movement resides *in* the text as a compositional quality, generated by compositional strategies such as rhythm, repetition, and variation, as well as by the specific scenes described in the text. In some performances, these two modes are used simultaneously, while other works are dominated by only one of the two. The reason why I am introducing a new critical term to frame the focus of this dissertation is that the term "kinetic textuality" makes it possible to draw a distinction between how text is more commonly used in relation to movement and dance, and the way in which this relation seems to be renegotiated in a narrower group of contemporary performances, of which the corpus offers an illustrative but not exhaustive selection. It can be argued that language always, to some extent, relates to movement (through the use of speech muscles, gestures, or by describing action). However, in kinetic textuality,

4 For instance, when Etchells at one point articulates how the room can be compared to a tiny house made of little toothpicks, Stuart's body matches her movements to these fragile surroundings: she cautiously trips through the room, trying to hold her arms as closely as possible.

5 Other examples of contemporary artists who incorporate a kinetic form of textuality into their pieces are Sarah Vanhee, Mette Ingvartsen, Michiel Vandevelde, Ligia Lewis, Ula Sickle, Anneleen Keppens, Louis Vanhaverbeke, Femke Gyselinck, tibaldus, and Jan Martens.

this relationship is explicitly highlighted and used as an "artistic strategy,"—a term that I will continue to use throughout this dissertation to foreground how the mechanisms through which language is constructed to generate an aesthetic effect. Although this effect, obviously, differs with each individual strategy, what characterizes kinetic textuality as an artistic strategy is that language is used as a material that can be arranged, adapted, or modified as a material substance, taking it away from its more everyday function. The more specific terms "compositional" or "formal" strategies and "dramaturgical" strategies will also appear frequently in the dissertation. While the former two seek to focus in on ways in which the text, or the choreographic movements it brings forth or arises out of, is made up on a formal and compositional level, the latter term will refer to the ways in which kinetic textuality is used to serve a dramaturgical function within the overall piece.

I began using the term "kinetic textuality" after reading the article by theater scholar Matt Cornish, "Kinetic Texts: From Performance to Poetry" (2015). In this article, Cornish coins the term "kinetic texts" to study the use of language in the German "freie Szene" of the early 21st century. While Cornish's notion informs my understanding of "kinetic textuality," what he studies and labels as "kinetic texts" are mainly aspects of specific playtexts, and in fact "consist of what is generally considered superfluous to a text: marginalia, commentary, interruptions" (2015, 302). By contrast, the artistic strategies that I assemble in this dissertation under the label "kinetic textuality" present a specific mode of writing and performing that instead of peripheral is central to the actual pieces. I use the term "kinetic" in a less general way than Cornish in order to emphasize the double-sided capacity of language to trigger *physical* movement and to produce movement through *textual* compositions. My approach to the term also differs from Cornish's on a more fundamental level. His notion of "kinetic text" is constructed alongside a somewhat rigid distinction between kinesis and *mimesis*, which is difficult to align with how mimesis functions within kinetic textuality.[6] As I will explain in more depth in Chapter One, I consider kinetic textuality as a form of using language where mimesis is not "abjure[d]" (305), but rather serves to draw the spectator sensorially into the piece.

Cornish's article reflects upon the challenges of printing kinetic texts as playtext, yet in many of the performances selected for this dissertation, kinetic textuality lends itself more easily to the format of print. This already reveals the hybrid "beginning" of kinetic

6 Cornish's notion draws directly from Joseph Roach's observation that "kinesis has become more important than mimesis in contemporary performance" (Cornish 2015, 305). Roach made this observation as a hypothesis in his editorial for a special issue of *Theater* in 2010, where he comments as follows on a research project he was conducting at the time ("The World Performance Project" at Yale): "our working hypothesis about contemporary performance is that kinesis is the new mimesis — that as the arts proliferate within the mediated and multicultural languages of transnational space, expressive movement is becoming a lingua franca, the basis of a newly experienced affective cognition and corporeal empathy. Mimesis, rooted in drama, imitates action; kinesis embodies it" (2010, 2).

textuality itself: it is both a form of textuality that emerges in speech on the stage as well as something that is rooted in a composition on the page. In the case of Mette Edvardsen's *oslo*, the text was printed in the booklet *Not Not Nothing* (Edvardsen 2019), together with the texts of her earlier pieces *Black* (2011), *No Title* (2014), and *We to Be* (2015). The printed text of *Black*, however, was already available to spectators, who could pick it up at the end of the performance. Söderberg did the same at the end of *Entangled Phrases*, and after Chignell's *Poems and Other Emergencies,* the audience also received Chignell's poem that was recited during the performance. De Meyer, Mahammed, and Haring, on the other hand, published the text of their performances in booklets a couple of months after their pieces premiered. Given the strong emphasis on the embodied, musical, and choreographed form of speech in these works, it is intriguing that these artists insist on the existence of their texts in print. Their motivation also appears to be different from more conventional playwriting, insofar as their texts are not (or at least not necessarily) published for further *use* in future performances by different directors and actors, choreographers and dancers. Why is it not sufficient to save these writings on their computers, and recite them during performances? Reading these printed texts during the train ride back home after the performances, I sometimes thought of them as archival traces of what I had just seen—as some sort of souvenir of my own experience as a spectator, an experience that was not simply confined to the theatrical time and space I shared with the performance, but which now could travel with me all the way back home. At other times, I thought of them as backward blueprints: a blueprint that was the result of a past performance instead of determining in advance how a future performance should be designed. Mostly, however, I think of these texts as dance performances in themselves—not as texts *for* performance, nor as reminders *of* performances. These publications seem to suggest that, since language is used as material that moves, this movement can also express itself on the page.[7]

Throughout the dissertation, I will frequently return to the written dimension of kinetic textuality, which all these publications and leaflets seem to highlight. Based on how these choreographers and theater artists explore the relationship between language and movement, kinetic textuality will not be considered as something that only takes place in performance. Instead, I will approach it as a distinct form of language that exposes its relation to movement, and as a form of movement that can be incorporated on a page. For that reason, terms such as language, text, writing, speech, and textuality will appear somewhat interchangeably throughout this dissertation to refer to roughly the same object, yet each term allows us to approach that object in a different way. Sometimes the word "language"

7 In Fritz's *Indispensible blue* and *Submission Submission*, the written dimension of kinetic textuality is explicitly highlighted. In these two pieces, kinetic textuality on the page is incorporated into the performance itself, by including text as a (moving) visual element on a projector screen.

feels more appropriate, especially in the context of philosophies of language or theoretical discussions about the status of language in performance. While "text" seems to refer more directly to something that consists of language, "speech," and "writing" draw attention to the specific ways in which a text is presented; a distinction that clearly matters in the context of kinetic textuality for it presents itself simultaneously as speech and as writing, as we will see in Chapter Two (pgs. 87 and following). Thus, my use of the term "textuality" should be understood as referring to the status of text as both speech and writing.

The hybrid status of the pieces I analyze in the course of this dissertation also emerges in my shifting focus between theater, dance, poetry, and performance. These terminological shifts seek to show how the selected performances are positioned at the intersection of these four realms, and I hope the reader can accept these terminological switches as essential to unveiling the plurality inherent to kinetic textuality. Finally, I chose to use the terms "dance" and "choreography" interchangeably, even though the difference between the two notions has been demonstrated within dance studies (e.g., Allsopp and Lepecki 2008; Spångberg 2017). The reason for this is that kinetic textuality itself subverts any neat distinction between dance on the one hand, and choreography (which etymologically stands for the "writing" of "movement") on the other. If writing is considered as something that can dance—as kinetic textuality suggests—it becomes ever more difficult (if not impossible) to draw a strict demarcation between the two terms. Moreover, since the artists examined in this dissertation often combine the roles of dancer and choreographer, it seems more productive to also maintain this intricate connection between dance and choreography in my writing.

Third beginning: kinetic textuality and late 20th and early 21st century dance

The interest in the alliance between words and movements as kinetic and expressive means ties in with broader artistic developments, which crystallized most explicitly at around the turn of the 21st century and which are often gathered under the labels "contemporary dance" or "expanded choreography."[8] According to André Lepecki, a recurrent strategy in these dance performances is that they "disidentify dance, make dance unrecognizable in relation to its expected formations, and therefore make dance truly foreign to itself" (2016, 6). As is demonstrated by the statements from Edvardsen about how she uses language as material

8 Although the term "contemporary dance" is more commonly used in the discourse on both sides of the Atlantic to refer to this most recent section of dance history, I prefer to adopt the term "late 20th- and early 21st-century dance," because it avoids confusion about the timeframe covered by the notion "contemporary," and because the notion risks becoming an empty signifier since any form of dance created today might as well be called "contemporary dance." A time marker (instead of more descriptive markers such as "exhausted dance" or "expanded choreography") also seems more apt for my purpose. For a detailed overview of the context in which the term "expanded choreography" emerged, see Leon 2022, 21-23.

in dance and choreography , we can trace a recurrent artistic exploration of how to present dance as something that does not necessarily take place through movement performed by a human body. Therefore, as dance scholars have frequently argued, this development is marked by a self-reflexive impulse (sometimes made explicit in the piece, sometimes not) to broaden the definition of the terms "dance" and "choreography." Following Frédéric Pouillaude, "anything can now be dance, including (perhaps especially) the most banal gesture, absent movement, or even immobility" (2017, 297). Similar arguments return in discussions by other scholars of late 20th and early 21st century dance. While Anna Leon, for instance, refers to "the contemporary choreographic field's open-ness to the re-definitions of choreography" (2022, 23), Efrosini Protopapa argues that "any choreographed piece that presents itself as dance potentially proposes a concept of dance by its very nature (of being dance)" (2013, 277). Rudi Laermans' account, in turn, explores the contingent nature of the difference between dance and non-dance (2015, 70).

The discourse surrounding these experiments reflects the expansion of dance in roughly two directions; Lepecki's *Exhausting Dance* (2006) and his more recent book *Singularities* (2016) can be considered exemplary of the two general strands within this discourse. On the one hand, the seemingly natural bond between body and movement in dance is ruptured, resulting in stillness, or a withdrawal from bodily movement (e.g., Lepecki 2006; Cvejić, 2015). On the other hand, "dance" increasingly refers to any arrangement of moving elements, including non-human elements (e.g., Lycouris 2009; Noeth 2011; Laermans 2015; Lepecki 2016). As Sophia Lycouris says to summarize the latter tendency, "through adopting the idea of choreography as a technique of movement composition which operates at a meta-systemic level in order to bring heterogeneous components to a coherent whole, it becomes possible to argue that the human body is not the only site in which […] the dance medium can manifest [itself]" (2009, 687).

Another remarkable aspect of this development is the frequent use of text. It probably comes as no surprise, then, that text also often appears in the discourse on expanded dance and choreography. Statements about "a choreographer whose expression happens to be literature" (Spångberg 2017, 363) in the context of discussions about "post-dance," or descriptions of performances that "situate the place of choreography in the materiality of language" (Noeth 2011, 248), suggest that the use of textuality on stage can be placed within this lineage of dances which turn to choreographic materials that allow them to transcend the art form's focus on the moving human body. Laermans provides an apt description of this development when he writes that "the expression 'contemporary dance' nowadays points to an unstable, constantly redefined experimental zone in which artists from various backgrounds cooperate and combine, in a seemingly boundless way, *text*,

physical movement, video technology, lighting, high and low musical genres” (2015, 229; emphasis added). Whilst acknowledging the affinity between kinetic textuality and key developments in late 20th and early 21st century dance, I will also critically assess, in the light of kinetic textuality, some recurrent assumptions in the discussion on these broader developments. In Chapter Three (pgs. 121 and following), for instance, I will move beyond the Deleuzian terminology, often used in this discourse, to capture how textuality can, through compositional strategies, mirror compositional strategies of dance. In Chapter Four, I will base myself on Fritz and Linehan’s use of technology to mediate their texts in light of the discourse on the role of non-human elements in late 20th and early 21st century dance (pgs. 163 and following). Even though it is generally acknowledged that text plays a key role in late 20th and early 21st century dance, the specific choreographic quality of the text itself is not always explicitly accounted for. Precisely because dance can now be almost anything and thus risks losing its specificity, it is important to trace the choreographic mechanisms operating behind the use of textuality in dance. This dissertation will unravel what those mechanisms can be with regard to the use of textuality: the kinetic perspective on language that I will develop seeks to indicate the various ways in which language draws attention to itself as a medium that can be choreographed, as well as how choreographic movement can be triggered by text.

Fourth beginning: kinetic textuality and postwar dance

Not only the term “contemporary dance” in itself, but also the discussions on the key developments in dance in the late 20th and early 21st century often create the impression that experimentation with other media is an exclusively contemporary phenomenon. As Anna Leon remarks in her transhistorical comparison between contemporary expanded choreography and early modern dance, the “discourse on expanded choreography tends to insist on its presentness and perspective towards the future” (2022, 28). To avoid this presentist perspective in the dissertation, I will also historicize kinetic textuality. When it comes to using spoken text as a strategy to expand dance towards other media, the experiments of the widely influential Judson Dance Theater in New York in the 1960s and 1970s bear witness to a tradition of talking dances that certainly transcends the timeframe of the selected corpus. Ramsay Burt, for instance, tells how Simone Forti brought a poem to a composition class given by Robert Dunn in 1961, “which Dunn insisted could not be considered dance, but Forti couldn’t see why not” (2006, 60). In *Ordinary Dance* (1962), Yvonne Rainer “talked about all the places she’d lived in, while performing an unconnected series of mundane and inartistic movements,” and Trisha Brown incorporated a monologue on a tape recording into her 1969 piece, *Skymap* (19). David Gordon frequently

used speech and movement to create a kind of choreographic stand-up comedy (Foster 2002, 172). Text also played a prominent role in Carolee Schneemann's *Interior Scroll* (1975, 1977), as a means to address the sexism of the art world via a recounted conversation with a film maker (Burt 2006, 114).

Judson Dance Theater, who dominate accounts of postwar American dance history, were a loosely assembled group of dancers, theater artists, visual artists and musicians who presented choreographies at the New York Judson Memorial Church in the 1960s. Their diverse range of works displayed affinities with the formal experiments of Merce Cunningham, John Cage, and the historical and neo-avant-garde (Burt 2006, 23–52). These dance experiments were often characterized by an emphasis on the form of the choreography, the use of non-trained dancers, a conceptual impetus, and the breakdown of the barrier between art and life (Banes 1998, 15, 1993, xvi; Burt 2006, 37, 63). It is widely accepted that the early Judson Dance Theater experiments of the 1960s strongly influenced the dance scene of the next two decades, on both sides of the Atlantic. Bill T. Jones and Ishmael Houston-Jones, two prominent dancers and choreographers in the New York dance scene of the 1970s and 1980s (and in the decades afterwards) testify to the continuing influence of Judson Dance Theater. In many of their performances, speech is completely embedded in the choreographic texture of the piece.[9] While Jones and Houston-Jones mostly included text to introduce a supporting narrative structure to their dance, the work of Belgian-based Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker demonstrates that text can also be used as a support or source of inspiration for highly structured and formalized choreographies. In her legendary *Fase* (1982), for instance, Steve Reich's song "Come Out"—essentially a recording of Reich reciting a text—structures the choreography of the "Come Out" phase. As Burt mentions, De Keersmaeker has also used texts of authors such as Peter Handke, Peter Weiss, and Tennessee Williams in some of her other performances (2006, 157).

In *Dances that Describe Themselves: The Improvised Choreography of Richard Bull* (2002), Susan Leigh Foster describes the talking dance in the 1970s New York dance scene as follows: it "offered a way to temper the self so that it would not indulge in excessive expressivity" (185-186). Pina Bausch's talking dance, by contrast, is marked precisely by this strategy of "indulging in excessive expressivity." This brings us to a different "beginning" of kinetic textuality, one that stems directly from the hybridization between the genres of theater and dance. As various scholars have noted, the artistic influences marking Bausch's Tanztheater are not only German Expressionism, Ausdruckstanz, and Brechtian theater, but also the

9 Houston-Jones explains how Brown's experiments were a direct impetus for his own talking pieces: "I started using texts with my dance around the time I saw Trisha Brown do her talking piece, *Accumulation with Talking plus Watermotor*. That's not something I would ever do, but I like seeing her keep two stories and two dances going at the same time, switching back and forth" (Robinson et al. 1987, 34).

1960s New York performing arts scene (Birringer 1991, 134; Servos 1998, 36-37; Climenhaga 2013, 9-10). The aesthetics that emerged out of these divergent influences is characterized by an atmosphere of surrealism or a dream-like universe of intensified emotionality and effects (Birringer 1991, 136; Kozel 1997, 106; Servos 1998, 41; Climenhaga 2013, 130; Van den Dries and De Laet 2021, 25). Bausch's choreographies place a strong focus on human experience, social existence, gender, and power relations (Kozel 1997, 107; Jowitt [1984] 2013, 140; Climenhaga 2013, 130).

Bausch's overt theatricality marks an important difference from the neutral or impersonal dances often associated with Judson Dance Theater, or the "coolness" of the talking dances studied by Foster. By juxtaposing the more recent corpus of this dissertation with both of these key moments, I aim to investigate how kinetic textuality is founded upon a combination of the seemingly opposing strategies represented by Bausch and Judson Dance Theater. The difference between the two became particularly apparent in 1985, when Bausch returned to New York to present some of her works at the Next Wave festival of the Brooklyn Academy of Music. The reception of Bausch's work in New York is often cited in postwar dance history because it highlights the radical distinction between two divergent aesthetic developments that structure this period. Apparently, many American spectators were "startled" by the aesthetic of Bausch's pieces, as it differed considerably from the "formalist aesthetic" that was *en vogue* in the New York dance scene at that time (Birringer 1991, 133). As Susan Kozel describes it, "according to the advocates of postmodern minimalism who reject theatricality and emotion, Bausch's work was regressive and indulgent" (1997, 101). Johannes Birringer similarly recounts how the event "turned out to be the site of a vociferous encounter between proponents of German Tanztheater and American postmodern dance. Both traditions share common roots but have gone in different directions" (1991, 141).[10] Burt's *Judson Dance Theater: Performative Traces*, on the other hand, challenges the narrative that views these two strands as "paradigmatic opposites" (2006, 1).[11] Burt's suggestion that "innovative dance artists on each side of the Atlantic over the last forty years have had more in common with one another than most existing dance literature about them to date has suggested" (2) serves as my cue to trace a lineage from kinetic textuality back to both Judson Dance Theater and its descendants and to Bausch's Tanztheater. Meanwhile, my attempt to place kinetic textuality's "beginnings" at the intersection between these two canonical strands of postwar dance is also highly indebted to Rudi Laermans' *Moving Together: Theorizing and Making Contemporary Dance* (2015).

10 Birringer mentions how the year before, in 1984, Bausch also presented her *Café Müller* (1978) and *Bluebeard* (1977) at the 1984 Olympic Arts Festival in Los Angeles (1991, 132).

11 A similar argument returns in Royd Climenhaga's account of Bausch's work, when he states that "Bausch took the same elements as those explored by American post-modern dancers of the time – collage techniques, pedestrian movement, repetition, and borrowing from other media" (Climenhaga 2009, 14).

In the course of the dissertation, I aim to further develop the lineage traced by Laermans in this study, between key Belgian-based choreographers and dancers on the one hand, and the two canonical figures of postwar dance on the other. While I will base some of my analysis on the notions foregrounded by Laermans, I will also demonstrate how kinetic textuality nevertheless marks a distinction from the specific segment of Belgian dance that Laermans focusses on.

Fifth beginning: kinetic textuality and modernist poetics

Although these canonical and influential figures of postwar dance history are important precursors of kinetic textuality, its "beginnings" cannot be located exclusively there. Around the turn of the 20th century, we can trace a similar artistic interest in the affinity between text and movement. Scholarship on the intersection between dance and literature reveals that modernist writers in particular have mused on dance in order to develop a language that suited their poetic aspirations (e.g., Fisher 1994; Fleisher 2007; Jones 2013; Karoblis 2015; Meglin and Brooks 2016; Lee 2016; Thurston and Slee 2017). Poets such as Théophile Gautier (1811-1872), Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), and Jacques Rivière (1886-1925) experienced and theorized dance as a poetic language (Lee 2016, Frankenbach 2016), while the playwright W.B. Yeats (1865-1939) often incorporates choreographic sequences into his plays (Fleisher 2007; Jones 2013). The poetry of Ezra Pound (1885-1972) shows a similar attempt to incorporate movement into the text. Susan Jones insightfully comments on Pound's interest in poetry as a dynamic and energetic form of language, which is articulated "especially in his discussions of imagism and vorticism in the 1910s where the transformation of kinaesthetic ideas about rhythm and movement into the texture of the written reveals a connection between the active body and the active component of language" (2013, 200). Gertrude Stein's (1874-1956) literary oeuvre can be placed in the same lineage, due to her sustained interest in how textual repetition can evoke different temporalities occurring at the same time (Schneider 2011; Jarcho 2017; Kartsaki 2017).[12]

Given the affinity between (early) modernist poetry and dance, it is no surprise that spoken text started to be included *within* dance performances. The French poet and choreographer Valentine de Saint-Point (1875-1953), for instance, introduced the recitation of text into her choreographic work (Brandstetter 2015, 305), while American dancer and choreographer Martha Graham experimented with the tradition of 19th century ballet, combining

12 Choreographers and scholars Daniella Aguiar and João Queiroz offer insightful readings of two performances in which Stein's text is used to create movement sequences—*Always Now Slowly* (2010) by Lars Dahl Pedersen and *,e [dez epis´odios sobre a prosa topovisual de gertrude stein]* (2008) by João Queiroz, Daniella Aguiar, and Rita Aquino. Looking at how Stein's textual movements can be translated into physical movement, they conclude that "the perception of the temporal flux is related to any phenomenon that involves perceptual activity in time; it is not a specificity of dance" (2015, 228).

choreographed movement with text, music, and dramatic content (Franko 2012, 10; Jones 2013, 42).[13] The modernist literary fascination with the overlap between language and movement arguably crystallizes in the poetic and critical work of Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898). Mallarmé's search for the ideal symbiosis between form and content was influenced by his fascination for dance: he was a keen dance spectator and was highly appreciative of ballet and the groundbreaking experiments of Loïe Fuller (1862-1928). He uses a rhetoric that is clearly inspired by dance to write about the Symbolist poet Georges Rodenbach—whose poetry "invokes Loïe Fuller" (Mallarmé [1897] 2007, 138). Rodenbach's writing operates "invisibly," he asserts, "in the pure movement and silence [...] with a significance other than personal" (139). Mallarmé poetically explored and theoretically reflected on different ways to bring poetry's mode of signification as close as possible to that of dance.

A brief glance at Antonin Artaud's *The Theatre and its Double* (1938) also shows that kinetic textuality echoes some poetic explorations of the historical avant-garde. In his reflections on language, he reveals an interest in its relationship to movement similar to that of the artists in the corpus of this dissertation. Despite his notorious dismissal of playwrights and his disapproval of the abundant use of the representational function of language, words as such, in his view, should not necessarily be omitted from the stage. Instead, he writes:

> But if we were to return, however little, to the active, inspired, plastic well-springs of language, reuniting words with the physical moves from which they originated, the logical discursive side of words would disappear beneath their physical, affective side, that is to say instead of words being taken solely for what they mean grammatically, they would be understood from a sound angle or discerned in movements, these movements themselves being associated with other simple direct movements as occur in many circumstances in life but not sufficiently with actor on stage. Then this literary language is reconstituted, comes alive. (Artaud [1938] 1999, 92)

While Artaud, in this passage, traces an affinity between text and movement, his view raises various questions: what does language's "affective" and "physical" side refer to? What does it mean to let "words be heard in their sonority" and "to let them be perceived as movements"? Interestingly, Artaud's suggestive descriptions seem to find their concrete and somewhat retroactive manifestation in the use of kinetic textuality, as is seen in the corpus of this dissertation. In these cases too, language tends to be staged as an affective,

13 It is this more "poetic" use of text that for Susan Leigh Foster marks the difference with the talking dances she studies. In line with the critical narrative according to which postwar dance aimed at surpassing the idiom of modern dance, Foster demonstrates that the body's expressivity in the modern dance tradition is ironically placed in tension with the so-called neutrality of the voice (2002, 182). Consequently, Foster views the way in which speech is used in postwar American dance as diametrically opposed to its function in modern dance, where "the only kind of speech appropriate [...] was poetry" (181). Foster concludes that the status of speech changed from "poetry [that] achieved [...] the kinds of multivalent symbolism that analogizes to dance experience" to "the mundane casualness of the talking dancer" (182).

physical, sonorous, and kinetic being, which in turn interacts with the movements of the body. Without necessarily adhering to the aesthetics of Artaud's so-called theater of cruelty, the use of language in the performances which I include in the notion of "kinetic textuality" corresponds to some central features of Artaud's project.[14] However, while Artaud's vision for a theater might resonate with kinetic textuality, the performances included in this dissertation emphatically refuse to make "the discursive, logical aspect of speech disappear." In some cases, the "discursive side of words" eventually even evokes fictional characters. In *Black*, for example, Mette Edvardsen conjures up invisible objects in a room by repeating each word for them eight times, while moving in space ("table table table table table table table table chair chair chair chair chair chair chair lamp lamp lamp lamp lamp lamp lamp lamp" (13)). In the course of the piece, she seemingly turns into a strange, even lonely figure compulsively walking through the room, trying to control the scenery and fixating the various objects. The transformation into fictional characters takes place to varying extents in the rest of the corpus: in Hannah De Meyer's *new skin*, this happens more explicitly, as De Meyer becomes a critter in the world of animals, ancestors, and earthly memories that she is describing. In her hagiographic project *Submission, Submission* (2019), to give another example, Bryana Fritz is transformed into the saints whose life she is recounting. By performing ecstatic dances and singing songs of devotion, she embodies the various characters of the saints. As I will further clarify throughout this dissertation, the use of kinetic textuality in the twelve selected performances testifies to a strong reliance on mimesis.

A selection of these historical "beginnings" of kinetic textuality will continue to play a crucial role in the rest of the dissertation: in order to better grasp the mechanisms underlying kinetic textuality in the contemporary corpus, I will return to the work of Trisha Brown, Bill T. Jones, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Pina Bausch in the next chapters. In the work of these four artists, we can recognize an interest in exploring artistically the relationship between text and movement, which is similar to that reflected in the contemporary works. In Chapter Two, I will compare Chignell's *Poems and Other Emergencies* with Jones's *Floating the Tongue* (1978) and Brown's *Accumulation with Talking Plus Watermotor* (1979), to indicate how kinetic textuality both retrieves and reinvents some aspects of the tradition represented by Brown and Jones. While Mallarmé's poetic endeavors will allow me to trace the interest in the overlap between dance and movement back to the end of the 19th century, his critical reflections on dance and poetry will also provide the framework needed in Chapter Three to unravel how Dounia Mahammed and Mette Edvardsen's texts incorporate "dancerly" compositional structures. In Chapter Five (pgs. 203 and following), I will compare the

14 For insightful reflections on the parallels between the aesthetic explorations of Mallarmé and Artaud, see Gould 1993, 104; Shaw 1993, 69, 76-77; Fisher 1994; Pouillaude 2017.

use of kinetic textuality in Söderberg and Haring's work with the strategies characteristic of Bausch's choreography, and relate it to the different ways in which the three artists portray relational structures between the performers on stage.

By aligning the contemporary use of kinetic textuality with this historical corpus, I am not so much interested in tracing a direct line of "influence" from Mallarmé to the twelve contemporary pieces. Rather than proposing clearcut continuities between these different artists, the transhistorical comparisons I make aim at offering brief (and necessarily partial) glimpses into how similar artistic questions reappear in different forms and constellations across different times and spaces. That being said, certain lines of direct influence can be traced between the historical and contemporary corpus. For instance, there is a clear link between a section of the corpus and the work of Trisha Brown. Linehan, Fritz, and Chignell were trained at the Brussels dance school P.A.R.T.S., founded by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, who studied dance at the Tisch School of the Arts in New York in the early 1980s and who, as she puts it herself, "devoted – and continue[s] to devote – an intense admiration to her [Brown]" (2020, 71). To give other examples, in my interview with Alma Söderberg, she mentioned how she first became fascinated by Symbolist poetry during her dance training (Alma Söderberg, pers. interview); Bryana Fritz explained that she is inspired by the way in which Pina Bausch "often translates her performances based on where she would go"—a strategy that for Fritz was fundamental in the creation of *Submission Submission* (Bryana Fritz, pers. interview).

Sixth beginning: note on methodology

The relationship between the historical and contemporary corpus can perhaps better be formulated by clarifying an important part of the methodological framework for this dissertation—the transhistorical comparative method. The term "transhistorical" does not refer here to artworks allegedly transcending their own historical context because of their absolute and canonical aesthetic qualities. Rather, it describes how I consider together several artistic phenomena which, despite their historical and geographical differences, can be seen as partaking in similar artistic explorations. The overarching objective behind the transhistorical comparisons I draw throughout this dissertation is to understand the use of kinetic textuality in the selected pieces, against the background of artistic explorations in which text was similarly included alongside choreographic movement, or where choreographic principles were included in the composition of text—explorations that stretch from Mallarmé, via the talking dances of the postwar period in New York and Bausch's Tanztheater, until today. By tracing the echoes of these historical explorations of the relationship between dance (and movement) and text (and speech) in kinetic textuality, I

will discern the convergences and differences between these key 20th century artistic moments and the group of theater and dance performances that I have encountered during the past ten years in Brussels and Antwerp. These juxtapositions will enable me to both historicize kinetic textuality and to better grasp the specificity of how this older artistic exploration takes shape on stage today. One possible objection to this approach could be that the historical corpus is approached from the perspective of the present, potentially losing sight of the specific historical context of the works of Mallarmé, Brown, Jones, and Bausch. However, by reading the contemporary corpus in tandem with the works of a few 20th-century precursors, I am drawing from the approach adopted by Mieke Bal in her 1999 book *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History*. Insisting on the value of a non-linear perspective on time and aesthetic history, Bal proposes that the past be considered as something that continues to work through in the present. "This input from the present," she highlights, "is not to be taken as a flaw in our historical awareness or as a failure to distance ourselves from our own time [...] Rather it is to be taken as an absolutely inevitable proof of the presence of the cultural position of the analyst" (1999, 15). Similarly to Bal, I will "engag[e] the art of the past in its theoretical potential" (15).[15]

The second major component of the methodology used in this dissertation is philosophical in nature. The main philosophical influence is Maurice Merleau-Ponty, while other thinkers will obviously also be included, as I will explain in more detail below. The dialogue I will stage between kinetic textuality and philosophical thinking takes its cue from methodological discussions that have emerged under the umbrella of "Performance Philosophy." This field denies that philosophical discourse needs to be "applied" to performance in order to explain what a certain piece does, which would turn performance into a mere "illustration" of what is already present in philosophical discourse. Instead, Performance Philosophy regards performances as instances of philosophical thought in themselves: philosophical discourse helps scholars to render this thinking visible. In this respect, Laura Cull describes the dialogue between performance and philosophy as

> an embodied encounter with the resistant materiality of performance's thinking: its embodied-thinking, participatory-thinking, or durational-thinking

15 Anna Leon too uses Mieke Bal's notion of "preposterous history" in her study on what she calls "expanded choreography." Her method of combining several instances of comparable formal experiments over time aims at a deeper understanding of both contemporary phenomena and of their historical precursors. She assembles "historically-distant cases by embracing heterogeneity, and speculating on the generativity of considering them together" (31). As in Leon's approach, this transhistorical method is based on a non-linear understanding of temporality and recognizes the added value of looking at art history from this somewhat discontinuous perspective. To use Leon's formulation, "this trans-historical approach seeks relations with the past as manifestations of a ruptured linearity – and thus points to long-term connections as signs of the contemporary relevance of the past" (2022, 28).

> – encounters that generate new ideas of what thought is and where, when and how it occurs. (2012, 25)[16]

Recent edited volumes devoted to Performance Philosophy continue to discuss how to theorize the relation between theory and actual artworks (Street, Alliot, and Pauker 2017; Cull and Lagaay 2020). These works argue that performance produces a distinct form of knowledge, and study the specific epistemological status of the performing arts as a philosophical medium.[17] This emphasis on knowledge production often also leads to questions on the representation of (performance) thinking in (academic) writing: if we consider performance as a mode of philosophy, is writing the only way to represent the philosophical thinking already contained in the artwork? Does writing serve as a record, or as a legitimation? To what extent can language capture, evoke, or represent the embodied experience, which seems to surpass philosophy in its written form?[18]

However useful Performance Philosophy's proposal to consider performance as a form of "embodied-thinking" has been to this dissertation, it is important to note that this discourse, which tends to foreground performance as a distinct site of knowledge production, also slips easily into a distrust of text. Needless to say, this critical move is methodologically difficult to reconcile with my own aim to unravel the intertwining of text and embodiment as portrayed in kinetic textuality. To some extent, this objective rubs against Performance Philosophy's tendency to locate the thinking of performance in the scope of the non-textual. Although the debate is often more nuanced than that, Anna Street's description of Performance Philosophy does reveal the lingering anti-textual bias within this field. "In many ways," she writes, "what Performance Studies critiqued about the predominance of the text in Theater Studies is now being used in Performance Philosophy as a critique of the universal commodification of knowledge practices in general" (2017, 99). While I embrace the main methodological premise of Performance Philosophy, by considering kinetic textuality in terms of what it teaches us about language's fundamental relation to embodiment, this very perspective simultaneously subverts the assumption that the realm of the textual precludes the embodied form of knowledge foregrounded in Performance Philosophy.

16 In her Chapter "Performance Philosophy, Staging a New Field," Laura Cull outlines how "process philosophies" (such as those of Bergson or Deleuze) are particularly apt to uncover the philosophical thinking of performances (2014). In Chapter Three, I will briefly discuss a few strands of performance and dance theory that turn to Deleuze (pgs. 149 and following), in order to demonstrate that some of these contributions offer a clear incentive to refer back to Mallarmé in order to grasp the dancerly quality of Mahammed and Edvardsen's texts.

17 For an insightful take on the epistemological specificity of performance, see Corby 2019.

18 In the edited volume *Inter Views in Performance Philosophy: Crossings and Conversations* (Street, Eliot, and Paukner (eds.), 2017), these questions are raised, particularly in the contributions of Martin Puchner, Anna Street, and Laura Cull.

Complementing a certain blind spot within Performance Philosophy, Merleau-Ponty's reflections on language provide an instructive way to reveal the philosophical thought presented by kinetic textuality. Even though Merleau-Ponty is primarily known for (and sometimes reduced to) the strong emphasis on embodiment he introduced to continental philosophy, his writings also offer crucial insights into the corporeal intertwinement between the self and the world, the reciprocal relationship between language and embodiment, and inter-subjectivity. His reflections on these topics are examples of his broader attempt to defy dualist conceptions. As Don Ihde summarizes it, Merleau-Ponty's language theory "is part of the entire movement of phenomenology to counter the dualistic division of man and his world into matter and mind and instead to reassert the essential insertion of man within his world as incarnate being in a lifeworld" (1973, 173). Particularly in his often-cited work *The Phenomenology of Perception* ([1945] 2008), Merleau-Ponty demonstrates how an embodied subject is always already enmeshed within the environment which they perceive and upon which they reflect.[19] It has often been argued that Merleau-Ponty's thoughts on this enmeshment undergo a significant shift. Scott Churchill and Fred Evans, for instance, argue that we can still trace an ontology that draws a distinction between the embodied self and the surrounding world or between consciousness and the material environment in *The Phenomenology of Perception*, while towards Merleau-Ponty's later *The Visible and the Invisible* ([1964] 1968) this ontological distinction fades away, to be replaced by an ontology of the "flesh," where the self and the surrounding world of perception become more fundamentally intertwined (Churchill 2008; Evans 2008).

While drawing on Merleau-Ponty, I will, in this dissertation, be less concerned with the purely ontological and epistemological aspects of his thinking. Instead, my focus will be on the inherent embodied dimensions of language that his thought renders visible. Because his language philosophy focuses primarily on the analogies between language and the body, his ideas resonate strongly with the way in which language functions in relation to the body and movement in contemporary performances involving kinetic textuality. In fact, my main motivation to turn to Merleau-Ponty's thoughts in my study of kinetic textuality is that there are striking parallels between what Merleau-Ponty writes about language on the one hand, and the way in which language is presented in the form of kinetic textuality on the other. Both explore and reveal its fundamental embodied aspects, its fascinating correlation with gesture and movement, and the way in which it mediates our perception. In other words, both kinetic textuality and Merleau-Ponty's reflections on

19 One of the central objectives of Merleau-Ponty's work is to create a new philosophical method that refutes both empiricism and rationalism as the presumably only valid methodological approaches. Instead, he is convinced that both fail to acknowledge the bodily basis of perception, which he considers to be fundamental in the production of knowledge (e.g., Lewis 1966; Ihde 1973; Carman 2008; Morris 2008).

language provide access to an embodied, moving, and kinesthetic experience of language. For that reason, the key contentions of Merleau-Ponty's analysis of language are helpful to further conceptualize kinetic textuality, and to unravel how language can trigger or can become a medium of movement.

As I will discuss further in Chapter One, Merleau-Ponty's reflections on language are, in line with his overarching phenomenological perspective, rooted in an experience of language from the perspective of embodiment. Often engaging with the thoughts of Ferdinand de Saussure, Merleau-Ponty attempts to unravel how language structures our experience and perception of the world, and how meaning is produced.[20] I will mainly engage with his thoughts on language as expressed in the chapter "The Body as Expression, and Speech" in *The Phenomenology of Perception* ([1945] 2008), the essays in *The Prose of the World* ([1969] 1973) and *Signs* ([1960] 1964), and his unfinished and posthumously published *The Visible and the Invisible* ([1964] 1968).[21] The Merleau-Pontian thought discussed in this dissertation is a combination of the reflections in these four texts.[22] Despite the ontological shift that occurs in Merleau-Ponty's oeuvre, this particular focus provides a coherent body of thought: his later writings on this topic are a deeper exploration of how he conceptualizes the relationships between speech, experience, and embodiment in his earlier thought. As I focus mainly on what he writes about language, other (also fundamental) aspects of his thought will be less present in this dissertation. I will not attempt to provide an exhaustive account of his philosophy, since it is mainly his thinking on language that is most relevant to this dissertation. As I will further unpack in Chapter Two, approaching language through the notion of embodiment provides an insightful angle to conceptualize the interaction between text and performance. Even though many forms of textuality on stage involve an intrinsic connection between language and embodiment, kinetic textuality sheds new light

20 Towards the end of his essay "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence," included in *Signs*, Merleau-Ponty, for instance, argues that "Saussure may show that each act of expression becomes significant only as a modulation of a general system of expression and only insofar as it is differentiated from other linguistic gestures. The marvel is that before Saussure we did not know anything about this, and that we forget it again each time we speak—to begin with when we speak of Saussure's ideas. This proves that each partial act of expression, as an act common to the whole of the given language, is not limited to expending an expressive power accumulated in the language, but recreates both the power and the language by making us verify in the obviousness of given and received meaning the power that speaking subjects have of going beyond signs toward their meaning" ([1960] 1964, 81). In Chapter One (pgs. 62-63), I will delve deeper into how Merleau-Ponty articulated his thoughts on the production of meaning, against the background of a dialogue with Saussure.

21 Like *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty's *The Prose of the World* was published posthumously. This publication contains the essay "The Indirect Language," which he would rewrite as "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence" in *Signs*. Moreover, as the editor of this collection of essays clarifies, "the underlying thought in *The Visible and the Invisible* germinates in the first sketch of *The Prose of the World*" (Lefort 1973, xix). For both reasons, I have considered this collection an essential text for gaining an insight into the development of Merleau-Ponty's reflections on language and have therefore decided to include it as well, even though, according to the editor, "there is good reason to believe that the author deliberately abandoned it and that, had he lived, he would not have completed it, at least in the form that he first outlined" (xi).

22 For insightful readings on how Merleau-Ponty's embodied view on language interacts with other linguistic theories, see for instance, Ihde 1973; Adams 2008; Hayden 2018.

on how language and text interact with movement and embodiment, for text is presented as something that triggers movement while movement is likewise presented as something that triggers text.

While Merleau-Ponty is my main *compagnon de route* in this dissertation, I will also include postphenomenological thinking as a philosophical point of reference. This more recent development within phenomenology ties in with the earlier phenomenological reflections of Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty, but is more explicitly oriented towards uncovering the impact of technology on the perception and experience of the world. The main impetus behind the postphenomenological approach to technology is skepticism about the dominance of linguistic hermeneutics in studies about technology (e.g., Verbeek 2001, 141; Ihde 2003, 17). While Don Ihde was at the forefront of the development of this paradigm, numerous publications show the broad influence of his seminal insights and conceptual framework (e.g., Verbeek 2001; Selinger 2006; Rosenberger and Verbeek 2015). As Ihde explains in his introduction to *Bodies in Technology*, his "interest in science instrumentation has been a long one, originally springing from the phenomenologically based insight that bodily perceptions can be embodied through instruments" (2002, xvi). Ihde traces the different ways in which technology intervenes in our experience of the material world, and in so doing offers a detailed account of what he calls "mediation," i.e. the different ways in which technology shapes perception.[23] According to Yoni Vanden Eede, "technological mediation is not so much mediation of something, or between something, but an ontological condition of all things" (2011, 144). A key aspect of these mediations is that the specificity of the relationship depends both on the materiality of the instrument and on the way in which the user employs it. Related to this, another central term within postphenomenological discourse is "multistability," which refers to "the idea that any technology can be put to multiple purposes and can be meaningful in different ways to different users" (Rosenberger and Verbeek 2015, 25).

What this dissertation mainly borrows from postphenomenology's insights into mediation and multistability is the following idea: the imbrication between a user and their technological environment can take place and can be experienced *to different degrees*, and the way in which this intertwinement comes into being depends on the material qualities of the technology. Using this line of thinking to unravel the compositional and dramaturgical mechanisms at work in kinetic textuality, I am taking my cue from postphenomenological thinker Mark Coeckelbergh. Coeckelbergh has traced how postphenomenology's "nearly exclusive focus on the material artefact" has led to the unfortunate result that

23 He mainly traces four types of mediations between humans and technologies: "embodiment," "hermeneutic," "alterity relations," and "background relations." For a more detailed explanation of how these forms of mediations are structured, see Ihde 1990, 72–112.

"the question regarding language and, in particular, the question regarding the precise relationship between language and technology, is not addressed" (2017, 48). He argues, importantly, that if we approach language from a Wittgensteinian perspective of use, the postphenomenological insights into the relation between humans and technologies also apply to the relation between humans and language. Contending that "our existence is linguistic and technological at the same time," Coeckelbergh demonstrates how language and technology mediate in comparable ways both our perception and the way in which we relate to the world (173). In Chapters Two and Four, I will describe in more detail how these insights can be useful for the analysis of kinetic textuality.

In addition to Merleau-Ponty and postphenomenology, the thinking of Stéphane Mallarmé (Chapter Three), Roland Barthes, and Sara Ahmed (Chapter Five) provide insightful perspectives on the study of kinetic textuality. Like postphenomenology, these discourses offer instructive extensions to Merleau-Ponty's thoughts because they each take into account the body's participation in the production and reception of language. Barthes and Ahmed focus more straightforwardly on this intrinsic correlation between textual utterances and bodily responses. Yet, in Mallarmé's writings, the "embodied" perspective primarily focuses on how signification unfolds between the dancing body and the spectator. In Chapter Three, Mallarmé's thoughts on dance as a form of poetic expression will be of particular relevance to uncovering the dancerly quality of written texts. In Chapter Four, Barthes' reflections, in "The Grain of the Voice" (1972), on the interaction between the corporality of the voice and the language it utters, will allow me to trace the dynamic between signification, corporeality, and the materiality of words voiced on stage, while Sara Ahmed will provide insights into how emotions are portrayed and transmitted in kinetic textuality through the interplay between words and physical movements.

The choice of the theoretical frameworks undergirding this dissertation is, next to their direct relevance for exploring the fundamental intertwinement between text and movement as exposed in kinetic textuality, also motivated by the formal and dramaturgical strategies at work in the pieces that rely on kinetic textuality. As mentioned earlier in this Introduction, kinetic textuality can be considered as an example of broader artistic developments within dance, most notably the move away from a conception of dance as something that exclusively takes place through a human, moving body. When analyzing late 20th and early 21st century dance, scholars have often used network-based theories (e.g., Lepecki 2006; Sabisch 2011; Laermans 2015; Lepecki 2016) to capture how performative agency is distributed equally amongst human and non-human entities on stage. In the conclusion to Chapter Four (pgs. 201 and following), I will briefly discuss the differences between my perspective and the network-based view more usually adopted to capture

this development. At the same time, the current prominence of kinetic textuality in the performing arts also ties in with a broader shift in text-based theater that can be described as a turn away from the dramatic idiom. Just as the use of text in postdramatic theater is often theorized, kinetic textuality emphasizes the physical and musical dimensions of language on stage. Hans-Thies Lehmann, in his *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006), provides one of the most detailed and most often referred to overviews of this major development. He introduces a network-view for analyzing theater, in response to the various artistic experiments in which the dramatic text no longer functions as the core structural unit of the performance. Lehmann emphasizes that text does not disappear in postdramatic theater, but that it abandons its privileged position, to participate in a dynamic network with other theatrical elements.[24]

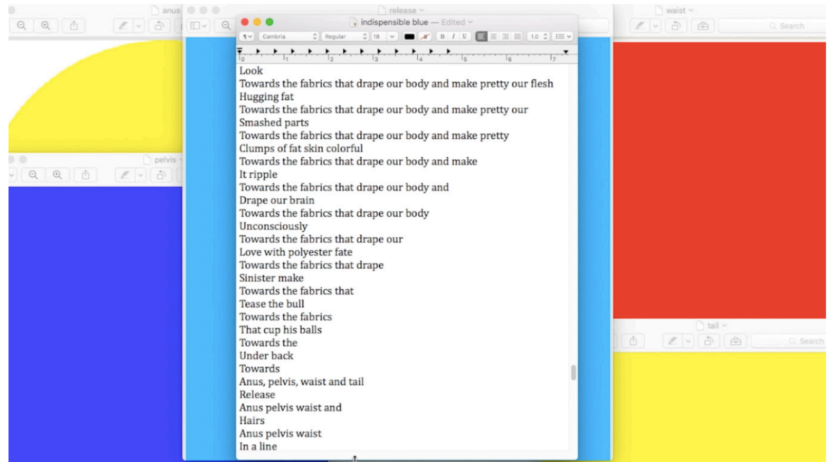
In Chapter Five, I will discuss in more detail how kinetic textuality, in addition to its similarities with postdramatic theater, also diverges fundamentally from it, primarily because the text is not positioned alongside other elements. One of the key characteristics of the pieces I study is that text and body remain the guiding principles within the work. Although kinetic textuality also unfolds through an interaction with space, sound, or other elements on stage, the dramaturgical structure of the performances is predominantly regulated by the text and the (moving) body pronouncing the (moving) text. Unlike some of the experiments in late 20th and early 21st century dance referred to above, corporeality does not disappear altogether in kinetic textuality; rather, it becomes a quality of language. It is this corporeal quality of language that the theoretical frameworks of Merleau-Ponty, Ihde, Coeckelbergh, Barthes, Mallarmé, and Ahmed help me to express. Despite their historically, geographically, and philosophically divergent positions within philosophy, these thinkers conceptualize language or textuality in a way that addresses the central position of kinetic textuality in the dramaturgical structure of the piece, as well as its fundamentally embodied nature. In other words, their thoughts are better suited than the dominant perspectives in the discourse on late 20th and early 21st dance and postdramatic theater to capturing the formal and dramaturgical mechanisms underlying kinetic textuality.

One last issue I wish to address in this section on methodology concerns the artist interviews I conducted as part of my research for this dissertation. As these interviews will be referenced frequently over the course of the next chapters, it is important to methodologically anchor their role within this study. For these interviews, I adopted an active “open

24 Rudi Laermans’ account of recent developments in dance (to choreograph media other than (only) the human body, see “Third beginning”) also acknowledges a parallel with the development towards postdrama. Laermans argues that his observations “partly overlap with the tendencies already mapped in 1999 by German theatre theorist Hans-Thies Lehmann” (2015, 237) but that his approach “suggest[s] an inclusive conceptual gesture that both generalizes, re-articulates and de-humanizes notions of dance and choreography, and, by implication, of performance and performativity” (237).

interview" format (e.g., Holstein and Gubrium, 1995; Boeije, 2010), with a two-fold objective: to better understand the context in which the texts and performances were created, and to grasp their status in relation to the artistic inquiries governing the pieces. Since the overarching aim of this study is to uncover where exactly the movements produced by kinetic textuality can be located and how they originated, insights into the writing process as well as the artistic questions that occupied the artists while creating their pieces proved to be highly useful for a close analysis of their works. Despite the inestimable value of these ongoing conversations with artists, I am aware that the recurrent references to these artist interviews might suggest that my discussions of the works are overly centered on the intentions of the artists. However, the findings gathered during these interviews mainly functioned as a starting point for my analysis, which I further developed by including my own observations, as well as observations from reviews, transhistorical comparisons, and broader theoretical reflections in performing arts scholarship going beyond the specific cases. Another question could be whether inclusion of the interviews might undermine a supposedly "objective" distance from the performances I am studying. However, from a phenomenological perspective, this objective distance is considered impossible in the first place, and fusion of the observer and the phenomenon under scrutiny is not only regarded as inevitable but as an essential feature of its methodological approach. Given the phenomenological orientation of this dissertation, it will be clear that I am similarly convinced that absorption into my research object allows me to better understand its mechanisms. I hope that in approaching the corpus and the use of kinetic textuality from these different angles, I will be able to reproduce at least a fraction of the enjoyment I have experienced while being immersed in them.

SLEEVE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Towards the fabrics that
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Towards the fabrics
That cup his balls
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Under back
Towards
Anus, pelvis, waist and tail
Release
Anus pelvis waist and
Hairs
Anus pelvis waist
In a line

walks into a ro
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Caption pictures (in order of appearance):

new skin, Hannah De Meyer 2018, © Dries Seghers.

Body of Work, Daniel Linehan 2019, © Danny Willems.

Poems and Other Emergencies, Chloe Chignell 2020, © Vladimir Strate Pezdirc.

Salut Copain, Dounia Mahammed 2016, © Inge Baes.

Indispensible blue (offline), Bryana Fritz 2017, © Bryana Fritz.

waterwaswasser, Dounia Mahammed 2017, © Erwin Penners.

Entangled Phrases, Alma Söderberg 2019, © Cillian O'Neill.

Submission Submission, Bryana Fritz 2019, © Michiel Devijver.

Platina, Abke Haring 2018, © Kurt Van der Elst.

No Title, Mette Edvardsen 2014, © Arya Dil.

Black, Mette Edvardsen 2011, © Justin Yockney.

oslo, Mette Edvardsen 2017, © Antero Hein.

CHAPTER ONE
Defining, Dissecting, and Encountering Kinetic Textuality

Introduction

In September 2018, *new skin* premiered in Antwerp at the theater festival Love at First Sight. The piece is written and performed by Hannah De Meyer, who graduated in 2015 from the performance program at Toneelacademie Maastricht. From 2018 until 2022, she was associated with Toneelhuis (Antwerp). According to the program notes, *new skin* is rooted in De Meyer's research into the work of anti-racist writers, climate activists and economists (Toneelhuis, n.d.). Referring to the indignation often expressed in this work, De Meyer mentions that it "can be a transformative power. I'm fascinated by how life-threatening situations provoke resilience and imagination" (n.d., cited in Toneelhuis, n.d.; my translation).[25] Rather than directly expressing indignation on stage, *new skin* instead constructs an imaginary world with a far-reaching sense of interdependency, by taking the spectators on a journey through various landscapes and memories. *new skin* describes geological phenomena and desolate landscapes, and intermingles these descriptions with more personal stories about her own birth or the death of her grandfather. The manner in which she addresses you is reminiscent of meditative practices, where an appeal to the imagination works to activate bodily sensations and to restore corporeal awareness. Yet, unlike in most meditative practices, you do not close your eyes: while imagining the various scenes that De Meyer describes, you simultaneously notice how De Meyer moves on stage. The text and movements work together to draw you into the world that is described, and to trigger your imagination, primarily by addressing you through the recurrent pronoun "you." For example, in the beginning, De Meyer asks you to picture absence, "absence with no face, absence with no name" (De Meyer 2019, 9). This absence becomes filled with a "tiny crumble

25 Original Dutch version: "kan een transformerende kracht zijn. Het fascineert me hoe in levensbedreigende situaties een enorme veerkracht en verbeelding wakker kunnen worden." (Throughout the dissertation, the translation of non-English quotes from reviews, personal interviews, and other texts will be included in the running text, with a reference to the original version in the footnote. However, for the references to the Dutch performance texts of Mahammed and Haring in Chapter Three and Chapter Five, I will refer to the original in the running text, and provide a translation in the footnote, as merely substituting their texts for an English translation of them would wrongly suggest that the material composition of the sentences is irrelevant, which runs counter to how I define kinetic textuality.)

of light," which "grows bigger and bigger" until "you can see water, land, fires burning the land, and waves rising and crashing and tumbling across each other." After a "bang," she tells you that "you're in a body now" (10–11). Once you are imaginatively reborn, and have an imagined world in which to live, she takes you on a journey through various imaginary landscapes. As described by De Meyer, you walk through forests, valleys, museums, and caves, until you arrive at a hole in the ground where you can rest for a while.

While you are sleeping, De Meyer depicts the dream you are having. First, she herself lies down on the stage, and keeps silent for a while, but when she starts talking about the dream, she stands up. She walks slowly towards the front of the stage. She describes it:

> You dream of a spaceship being
> Launched into the sky
> Into another world
> Into another galaxy
> And you see the astronaut in the cabin
> You see him looking back

She gazes towards the back of the stage, turns over her shoulder, and continues:

> over his shoulder at the earth he is leaving

She turns to the audience again.

> And for the first time
> He sees her as a whole
> He sees her completely

She looks over her shoulder again.

> A fully blue ball in space

> No borders
> All our ancestors
> Animals
> Plants
> Insects
> Oceans
> Deserts
> Fire
> Water
> Wind
> All mingled up into a tiny speck in space

By turning her upper body more towards the back of the stage, she stares towards the earth that she—as the astronaut—is looking at. Then slowly, she looks back at you. Her arms and upper body move as if she is walking, while her feet are motionless, so she remains standing still on the spot. Gradually, her body starts to shake bit by bit.

> And the astronaut moves away
> From her
> He moves away from the earth
> Majestically
> Heroically

Now her chin rises slightly while she bends her neck

> The astronaut is like a foetus
> Connected to the earth with an umbilical cord
> And the cord between them is
> Soft

While pronouncing “soft,” during a short interval, she interrupts the movement.

> Loose

Again, the movement is seemingly interrupted.

> Folded

Is it the text that makes you perceive the interruption in the movement, or is there an actual (yet slight) delay in the sequence of movements?

> Hanging in space

Her right arm starts to make circles while pronouncing the following words:

> Until at a certain moment
> One moment
> A sudden moment
> A split second in time
> The cord pulls

Quickly, she turns back to look at the back wall of the theater. Her back bends,

> Pulls hard
> Pulls tight

and with her back folded, she bounces to the rhythm of these two short sentences. Her arms go up, as if they are holding the imaginary umbilical cord.

> And in that moment the astronaut understands their relationship
> He knows: if she dies, I'm lost
> If I die, she

She starts making these same slow repetitive bouncing movements,

> She will live on with ease

and then she quickly turns back to face the audience again and makes the shape of a womb with her hands.

> And in a split second the astronaut
> Is like a foetus
> Tilting upside down
> Tilting inside the womb
> While muscles tighten around him
> And he's pushed back
> Pushed back into form
> Pushed back into the world
>
> (De Meyer 2019, 25–27)

In this excerpt, as well as in the rest of the performance, the stage remains empty of objects or décor. The primary theatrical means that De Meyer employs are text, her body, and light, which all move to the sound of a minimalist, electronic soundtrack. *new skin* uncompromisingly and forthrightly presents itself as text-based theater: it uses text both as a narrative structure and as something sonorous and corporeal. Lieze Roels, in theater journal *Etcetera*, describes how in *new skin*, "De Meyer invites us to discover and recreate our position in material reality through our sensorial imagination: several times she urges her spectators to touch the evoked landscape, to listen to it and to open themselves to the

vivid materiality present in it" (2019; my translation).[26] A similar observation is made in the review of the piece by Evelyne Coussens, who argues that *new skin* "makes us aware of the inseparable connection of the individual with his cosmic origin" (2019; my translation).[27] *new skin* enacts this invitation and presents this awareness to the audience with the help of kinetic textuality. De Meyer uses text in a manner that is both emphatically corporeal and sensorial, while it also clearly serves a narrative and sometimes even mimetic function.

As mentioned in the Introduction, the term "kinetic textuality" is intended to cover the wide variety of artistic strategies in which spoken words are staged in close collaboration with bodily movements, or in which texts are performed that produce a sense of movement through the description or literary composition themselves (pgs. 20 and following). In *new skin*, De Meyer uses both of these strategies to address her audience in a gentle, beseeching, yet elusive manner. On the one hand, physical movements are *triggered by* the words; when De Meyer pronounces certain sentences, bodily movements are interwoven with textual movements. For example, the astronaut sequence is spoken at a slower pace than the rest of the performance. Likewise, her movements in this sequence are less vivid and less intense than the majority of the movements that she makes in the rest of the performance. She does not literally mimic all the movements that the astronaut is making, but her gestures correspond to the rhythm and musicality of the text and thereby evoke the eerie, spacelike and slow-motion movements of the scenery that she is describing. Some specific movements, on the contrary, relate more literally to her text. For example, when she talks about how the umbilical cord "pulls, pulls hard, pulls tight," she bounces her bent back, as if she is the astronaut experiencing the pulling movements of the chord. These movements that mirror those described in the text diverge significantly from the more open and associative nature of the movements that correspond to the rhythmicity and musicality of the text. They sometimes create the impression that De Meyer is not only describing a creature's wandering movements through landscapes, but also embodies this creature. On the other hand, movements are brought about *in* the text; the rhythmic and musical composition of the text establishes a sense of movement in the language itself.

26 Original Dutch version: "nodigt De Meyer ons uit om onze positie in de materiële werkelijkheid via onze sensoriële verbeelding te ontdekken en te herscheppen: meermaals spoort ze haar toeschouwers aan om het geëvoceerde landschap aan te raken, ernaar te luisteren en zich open te stellen voor de levendige materialiteit die er aanwezig is."
27 Original Dutch version: "maakt ons bewust van de onlosmakelijke verbondenheid van het individu met zijn kosmische oorsprong."

Meanwhile, there are also several movements that are *described* in the text, which cause the spectator to imagine them while listening to the piece.[28]

In this chapter, I will continue to unravel the interactions between text and movement in *new skin,* in order to present a definition of kinetic textuality and to introduce the main perspectives through which I will approach its emergence. I will first consider other discourses in which variations on the term "kinetic textuality" have been used, to point to a wider recognition of the intrinsic affinity and connection between text and movement that transcends performing arts scholarship. To further refine my own understanding of the term, I will then briefly refer to some of Merleau-Ponty's thoughts about how meaning is produced in the interplay between language and embodiment. After demonstrating that my definition of kinetic textuality is rooted in a Merleau-Pontian view of language, I will outline how kinetic textuality functions on both a kinesthetic and a mimetic level. Afterwards, I will focus more closely on how the rhythm of the text and the soundscape that emanates from it can produce textual movement. Anchoring these observations in discussions about dance and literature, poetic strategies, as well as sound studies will allow me to be more specific about the "sense of movement" that I discern in the text itself. The rhythmicity of the text and the soundscape it generates not only allow me to capture the text's kineticism, but also provide insight into how meaning in the phrases that carry these rhythmic sounds. After somewhat artificially breaking down kinetic textuality into separate realms, I will reassemble the aspects of page, stage, kinesthesia, mimesis, rhythm, and sound, for, as we will see, kinetic textuality should be situated at the intersection of these various formal parameters. I hope that the reader will bear with me through the necessary but somewhat technical terminological explanation taking up most of this chapter. Moving beyond this microscopic view of the definition of kinetic textuality as well as the various formal strategies that underlie it, I will, towards the end of the chapter, unravel how kinetic textuality potentially establishes a specific connection with its audience. Continuing to use *new skin* as an exemplary case, I will discern how this connection emerges through the interplay between the corporeal and discursive aspects of kinetic textuality and through the kinesthetic and mimetic strategies that it brings forth.

28 One year after its premiere, in September 2019, *new skin* was included in the official selection for the Theaterfestival, which is considered as one of Flanders' most prestigious theater festivals. In the festival of that year, De Meyer's performance was programed alongside some of Belgium's most (internationally) renowned theater artists, including Milo Rau, Berlin, and tg STAN. A couple of months later, in November 2019, De Meyer was invited to Tanzquartier Wien—currently one of Europe's most influential dance centers—to a seven-day program with a thematic focus on "words and choreography" (see also Introduction, pg. 19).

Defining kinetic textuality

To create a definition of "kinetic textuality," we can start by considering the first part of the term. Probably "kinetic" immediately evokes associations with movement and, by extension, dance. The adjective derives from the root word *kinetikos* in Greek, itself formed from the word *kinetos*, meaning "move" (Etymonline, n.d.). The word "kinetic" is often used as a way to describe a phenomenon that possesses or expresses movement. For instance, when Maxine Sheets-Johnstone in her preface to the second edition of *The Phenomenology of Dance* uses the term "visual-kinetic forms" (Sheets-Johnstone 2015, xxxv), she primarily refers to visible and moving phenomena. André Lepecki's use of the term "kinetic" in his *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (2006), on late 20th and early 21st century dance, is slightly different. His understanding of the term is mainly informed by Peter Sloterdijk's observation that modernity is characteristically a kinetic time or experience, referring to an obsession with accelerated movement, progress, or "unstoppable motility" (Lepecki 2006, 3). Although this modernist fascination with movement is exemplified by the literary-poetic experiments that bear some fascinating similarities with kinetic textuality (see Introduction, pgs. 28 and following), my use of the term "kinetic" is not necessarily intended to evoke this connotation of modernist hyper-mobility. For me, the adjective "kinetic" more simply aims to draw attention to ways in which language carries and evokes movement. As already referred to in the Introduction, "textuality"—not "text," or "language"—is the main noun in my neologism, because the included pieces themselves transcend the distinction between speech and writing (and, secondarily, between listening and reading) (pgs. 20 and following). Towards the end of this chapter, I will specify why it is important to consider kinetic textuality both as a piece of writing and as something that is presented as speech on stage. Consequently, the term "kinetic textuality" is intended to cover artistic uses of language that produce movement through its interaction with voice and the moving body and by emphasizing compositional qualities, such as rhythm and musicality.

As mentioned in the Introduction, Matt Cornish's notion "kinetic texts" inspired me to start using the term "kinetic textuality" to capture (in the sense of both grasping and rendering visible) the way in which language is used in the selected corpus (pgs. 21-22). Other studies where the adjective kinetic has been used in combination with text(uality) or language have helped me to further refine this term, trace its historical echoes and formal specificity. To begin with, the combination of kineticism with textuality might be reminiscent of the "Kinetographie Laban" (or "Labanotation"), a form of dance notation established by dancer and choreographer Rudolph Laban (1879-1958), where the phenomenon of movement ("kineto-")

is directly inscribed into the notion of writing ("graphie"). As Susan Jones describes it: "voicing the very scepticism about language uttered by many literary modernists, Laban proposed an ideological solution that integrated linguistic and physical expression" (2013, 78). Laban's interest in the parallels between movement and language is significant, not only because it allows us to design (forms of) dance notation, but also because it opens up the possibility of the page rather than the stage as the container of dance. The question of whether movement or bodily activity in general can be captured (or analyzed) linguistically has also been a central concern for theater semioticians. It is therefore no coincidence, then, that D. Keith Peacock, in his 1984 essay "The Play-Text, Theatrical Dynamics and the Status Interaction," traces a direct line between Laban's system on the one hand, and Ray L. Birdwhistell (author of *Kinesics and Context: Essays on Body-Motion Communication,* 1971) and Edward T. Hall (author of *The Silent Language*, 1959) on the other hand, describing the work of the latter two as "beginnings of a systematic studies of *kinetics*, popularly known as 'body language', and *proxemics*, the study of the spatial and temporal aspects of communication" (Peacock 1984, 47; original emphasis). In Birdwhistell's understanding of "kinesics" as the study of non-verbal modes of communication, we can already trace an interest in the affinity of movement with language, even though it is here understood as a non-textual form of language.[29]

In literary studies, the term "kinetic" sometimes resurfaces in discussions that focus on the crossovers between poetry and movement. In his essay "'The Birds Swim through the Air at Top Speed': Kinetic Identification in Keats, Whitman, Stevens, and Dickinson (Notes toward a Poetics)" (2016), Tenney Nathanson investigates how the content and the composition of poems by the authors in his title trigger a sensation of movement within the reader (2016, 397). The term seems to appear most frequently in discussions about computer-based or computer-generated poems. In these poems, the text, with the help of technology, literally moves on screen (e.g., Pequeño Glazier 2002; Filreis 2006; Noland 2006; Perloff 2006; Simanowki 2011; Seiça 2017). The notion of movement is frequently foregrounded as a distinguishing feature of this genre: Loss Pequeño Glazier for instance refers to these poetic experiments as "choreographies with JavaScript" (2002, 30), and Marjorie Perloff, in her discussion of Brian Kim Stefans' *the dreamlife of letters* (1999), mentions that "the letters [...] *dance* around the screen in silence, producing new formations, splitting up, and regrouping" (2006, 146; emphasis added). The notion "kinetic text" has in a similar manner appeared in film theory, in, for instance, Kim Knowles' article "Performing Language, Animating Poetry: Kinetic Text in Experimental Cinema," where the author unravels the aesthetics of kinetic texts (on screen) in experimental film and

29 Birdwhistell's theory in particular has been taken up enthusiastically by theater semioticians. See for instance Pavis 1981.

traces them back to their genealogical roots in modernist and futurist art (Knowles 2015). In Leslie Kathleen Hankins' article "Virginia Woolf, Texting and Projecting in the 1920s: Kinetic Typography and Title Cards," the term is used in a similar manner (Hankins 2016). The visual, or rather, (typo)graphic textual movement that these scholars study constitutes an important branch of the experiments that are assembled under the term "kinetic textuality," to which I will return in more detail in Chapter Four (pgs. 179 and following).

What my definition of the term mainly derives from these various studies, is the contention that language and movement are intersecting, overlapping, and collaborating phenomena, and that this can be foregrounded in artistic contexts. In fact, kinetic textuality seeks to refer to a use of text in which we can trace a hyper-dialectical relationship between "kinetic" on the one hand and "textuality" on the other. Hyper-dialectics is a term I borrow from Merleau-Ponty, whose language theory significantly influences my definition of kinetic textuality. He describes a hyper-dialectical structure as follows:

> that which admits that each term is itself only by proceeding toward the opposed term, becomes what it is through the movement, that it is one and the same thing for each to pass into the other or to become itself, to leave itself or to retire into itself, that the centripetal movement and the centrifugal movement are one sole movement. (Merleau-Ponty [1964] 1968, 90-91)

Merleau-Ponty introduces this description of the hyper-dialectical in the context of his attempt to uncover "the flesh," or the ontology of being in the world. Although this is not the kind of philosophical question that this dissertation seeks to pursue, a similar understanding of textuality—that the term kinetic "is itself only by proceeding toward the opposed term," textuality—is at the heart of my definition of kinetic textuality. Moreover, "there is no dialectical reversal from one of these views to the other; we do not have to reassemble them into a synthesis: they are two aspects of the reversibility which is the ultimate truth" ([1964] 1968, 155). Because language's intertwinement with movement is to a large extent based on its embodied condition, kinetic textuality bears striking resemblances to Merleau-Ponty's language theory. Merleau-Ponty's language philosophy provides instructive insights and descriptions making it possible to better capture the hyper-dialectical relationship between (bodily) movement and language that the term "kinetic textuality" aims to foreground. As also mentioned in the Introduction (pgs. 31 and following), I recognize in kinetic textuality something that I also encounter in Merleau-Ponty's writings: an emphasis on the indispensable reciprocity between language, movement, and embodiment. In the next chapter, I will address the move I make from the universal observations of Merleau-Ponty (language always hinges upon embodiment, and all embodiment is constituted of language) to the observations that I make about

kinetic textuality on a particular level (which concerns a very specific and idiosyncratic *form of* language). At this point, I will mainly focus on how Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on embodiment in his theory of language contributes to my definition of kinetic textuality.

A quick look into *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) already provides an insightful entrance into his language theory. The phenomenological method that Merleau-Ponty proposes in this voluminous work takes the fundamentally intertwined relationship between embodied perception and the phenomena that he studies as its main epistemological basis. In the chapter "The Body as Expression, and Speech," he explores how language can be situated within this intertwinement. On the first page of this chapter, he writes: "in trying to describe the phenomenon of speech and the specific act of meaning, we shall have the opportunity to leave behind us, once and for all, the traditional subject-object dichotomy" ([1945] 2008, 202). Throughout the chapter, he unravels the interaction between body, speech, and meaning production. He for instance insists that "it cannot be said of speech either that it is an 'operation of intelligence,' or that it is a 'motor phenomenon:' it is wholly motility and wholly intelligence" (226). For him, our use of language is also very similar to the way we use our bodies: "I reach back for the word as my hand reaches towards the part of my body, which is being pricked; the word has a certain location in my linguistic world, and is part of my equipment" (210). Speech's "inherence in the body" (226) helps Merleau-Ponty to further unravel the embodied and situated nature of perception and experience. By prioritizing the concrete act of speech, Merleau-Ponty primarily approaches language as a fleshy, bodily being and not as an abstract medium that is distilled from its situated and embodied use.[30] Not only does speech demonstrate how language is always situated and tied to the context of its utterance, but it also carries within its very structure the fundamental embodied nature of experience and perception that Merleau-Ponty's ongoing philosophical project seeks to unravel. In his later studies as well, he continues to consider language from the perspective of embodiment, for instance when he writes about "that language-thing which counts as an arm" (Merleau-Ponty [1964] 1968, 126). In fact, the radical intertwinement between text and body will become more and more fundamental throughout his thinking. In his posthumously published *The Visible and the Invisible*, he writes that: "there is much more than a parallel or analogy here, there is solidarity and intertwining: […] speech prolongs into the invisible, extends unto the semantic operations, the belongingness of the body to being and the corporeal relevance of every being" ([1964] 1968, 118).

30 James Edie summarizes Merleau-Ponty's speech-oriented view on language as follows: "Merleau-Ponty's entire study of language is centered almost exclusively on *one* of the capital functions of speech, namely, the manner in which an act of expression enables the speaker to tear forth from a hitherto undifferentiated field of experience a new meaning and to fix it in the intersubjective mental space of his linguistic (and cultural) community as a common possession by giving it a name, by producing its word." (1976, 103-104).

From this embodied perspective on language, Merleau-Ponty argues that words do not convey their meaning by means of their function of representing reality as an uninvolved mediator, but that the spoken word *possesses* the meaning ([1945] 2008, 206). Especially in *The Prose of the World*, and *Signs*, Merleau-Ponty articulates his thoughts on meaning against the background of a dialogue with Ferdinand de Saussure. In *The Prose of the World*, he for instance argues that "it seems that *language never says anything; it invents a series of gestures, which between them present differences clear enough for the conduct of language, to the degree that it repeats* itself, recovers and affirms itself, and purveys to use the palpable flow and contours of a universe of meaning" ([1969] 1973, 32; original emphasis), suggesting that language signifies in terms of the differences between words. His essay "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence," included in *Signs*, opens with the following sentence and more explicitly acknowledges the influence of Saussure on his thought: "what we have learned from Saussure is that, taken singly, signs do not signify anything, and that each of them does not so much express a meaning as mark a divergence of meaning between itself and other signs" ([1960] 1964, 39). As John O'Neill puts it in his "Translator's Introduction" to *The Prose of the World*, "Merleau-Ponty's relation to Saussure's structural linguistics is typical of the way he treated all his 'sources.' He was concerned with the semantic and even more, as his own thought progressed, with the ontological implications of language" (1973, xxxv).[31]

Already in "The Body as Expression, and Speech," Merleau-Ponty seeks to uncover how the meaning of a word is located *in* the word, rather than operating as an abstract notion that exists separately from it. Or, as Don Ihde paraphrases it, "there is no metalanguage of disembodied meanings floating over and apart from actual languages" (Ihde 1973, 171-172). In Merleau-Ponty's language theory, words do not function as external entities that merely conceptualize or translate one's pre-existing thoughts. Instead, "the process of expression brings the meaning into being or makes it effective, and does not merely translate it" ([1945] 2008, 213). To uncover how "the meaning of the words must be finally induced by the words themselves" (208), he compares the operation of speech with the way in which nonverbal gestures produce signification. According to Merleau-Ponty, "the meaning of a gesture thus 'understood' is not *behind* it, it is *intermingled* with the structure of the world outlined by the gesture, and which I take up on my own account" (216; emphasis

31 In a working note included in *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty provides an example (although, a characteristically enigmatic one) of how he makes the shift from linguistics to ontological observations: "the Saussurean analysis of the relations between signifiers and the relations from signifier to signified and between the significations (as differences between significations) confirms and rediscovers the idea of perception as a *divergence (écart)* by relation to a *level*, that is, the idea of the primordial Being, of the Convention of conventions, of the speech before speech" ([1964] 1968, 201; original emphasis).

added). Speech, he argues, signifies in a similar manner: "syntactical forms and vocabulary carry their meaning within themselves" (217). As an important nuance, he adds, the function of the words "is to represent things not, as the naïve onomatopoeic theory had it, by reason of an objective resemblance, but because they extract, and literally express, their emotional essence" (217). By insisting that the word itself carries the meaning, he seems to suggest that the material qualities of the words themselves play an important role in how signification is produced. Towards the end of the chapter, Merleau-Ponty also describes how signification is produced through interplay between the text itself and the body that utters it:

> A contraction of the throat, a sibilant emission of air between the tongue and teeth, a certain way of bringing the body into play suddenly allows itself to be invested with a *figurative significance* which is conveyed outside us. This is neither more nor less miraculous than the emergence of love from desire, or that of gesture from the uncoordinated movements of infancy. For the miracle to come about, phonetic 'gesticulation' must use an alphabet of already acquired meanings, the word-gesture must be performed in a certain setting common to the speakers, just as the comprehension of other gestures presupposes a perceived world common to all, in which each one develops and spreads out its meaning. (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2008, 225-226)

By outlining how "phonetic 'gesticulation'" interacts with "an alphabet of acquired meanings," Merleau-Ponty highlights the role of corporeality and pronunciation in the production of signification. In the form of kinetic textuality, language is presented in a strikingly comparable way: as something that is intrinsically aligned with the body that produces it and where the material qualities of the text play a central role in the signification it aims to produce. Not only does Merleau-Ponty's view on language resonate with the inherent corporeal dimension of language that kinetic textuality brings to the fore. His understanding that meaning is produced *in* the word also falls squarely in line with how kinetic textuality produces signification through strategies of enunciation and compositional strategies of rhythm and musicality.

In De Meyer's performance, for instance, the rhythmic or musical qualities of the phrases affect the way we make sense of the movements, and how the movements themselves, as well as the way in which De Meyer pronounces the text, enhance the rhythmicity and musicality of the phrases. Together, these different dimensions contribute to the specific content that the text generates. *new skin* demonstrates how meaning arises in the interplay between words and gestures, rather than as the sum of their different parts. The emotional quality of the movements disappears if we discard the text through which they emerge, and neither does the text itself carry the same emotional complexity without the movements.

Importantly, the movements do not merely copy the connotation of the words, nor do the words "explain" the movements—this would imply a two-world conception that draws a distinction between language as the main producer of meaning, while movements merely function as a subordinate illustration of that meaning. In other words, since word and body are hyper-dialectically intermingled within kinetic textuality, the meaning needs to be sought in their interaction and cannot be accessed if we consider the "kinetics" independently from the "textuality." Merleau-Ponty's thoughts on language thus shape my definition of kinetic textuality in a fundamental way: the term aims to draw attention to both the text's origin in embodiment and the way in which the speaking of the text and its materiality contribute to its meaning, both of which are foregrounded in my understanding of kinetic textuality. The term "kinetic textuality" thus aims to bring the two poles of which it consists—language and movement—more closely together, not by mitigating their respective differences, but by considering their overlaps and the artistic effects that their interactions produce. Merleau-Ponty provides the necessary terminology and conceptual framework to describe these interactions.

Another aspect of Merleau-Ponty's thinking that is particularly relevant to this study is the way in which he theorizes the act of viewing as something that intersects with the act of touching. Throughout his writings, perception is always approached as a fundamentally embodied activity, and, as he writes in *The Visible and the Invisible*, "the look [...] envelops, palpates, espouses the visible things" ([1964] 1968, 133). In dance studies, this process is mostly captured by looking into how dance activates our sense of "kinesthesia."" The term kinesthesia is derived "from Greek kinein 'to set in motion; to move'" and "aisthēsis, 'perception'." (Etymonline, n.d.) The notion is often used to refer to a sensation of movement as experienced from within the body—both by the dancers themselves as well as by the spectators. As Deidre Sklar puts it, the term refers to "the proprioceptive sense of movement within our own bodies" (2008, 87). According to Jaida Kim Samudra, kinesthesia makes it possible to counter the "prevailing analytic habit of reading the body as text, that is, as something that can be seen but not felt" (2008, 673). The notion "kinesthetic empathy" captures that process by alluding to a bodily connection that can emerge between dancer and spectator. Susan Leigh Foster explains that "the dancing body in its kinesthetic specificity formulates an appeal to viewers to be apprehended and felt, encouraging them to participate collectively in discovering the communal basis of their experience" (2011, 218). Put differently, our kinesthetic capacities allow us to sense the movement we are looking at from within our own bodies. For that reason, Carrie Noland argues that "kinesthesia [...] implies an intimacy with the other that is sustained by an intimacy with the self" (2009, 14). The understanding of the watching of movement as a form of corporeal engagement,

foregrounded by studies on kinesthesia, resonates with Merleau-Ponty's take on perception. According to David Abram, "Merleau-Ponty's work [...] suggests that participation is a defining attribute of perception itself" ([1996] 2017, 57). For this reason, scholarship on kinesthesia and kinesthetic empathy often overlaps with phenomenological thinking, and more specifically with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology (e.g., Sklar 2008; Noland 2009; Reason and Reynolds 2010; Clark 2013; Garner 2018).[32]

In dance studies, this dynamic of kinesthetic empathy was already theorized in 1936 by John Martin, to explain how movement is not only accessed visually, but also kinesthetically (the terms Martin used were "inner mimicry" and "kinesthetic sympathy") (Foster 2011, 157). In the 1990s, neurological studies confirmed from a hard science perspective what dance studies had speculatively discovered decades before: through mirror neurons, a person watching movement is able to experience that movement internally, through their kinesthetic sensorial apparatus (e.g., Foster 2011, 2; Garner 2018, 2). At the same time, the embracing of kinesthesia as a way to understand the perception of movement also involves the risk of overlooking the corporeal, cultural, political, or historical differences between bodies. The tendency towards universalizing the experience of watching movement has been convincingly avoided in more recent studies on kinesthesia (Reason and Reynolds 2010; Foster 2011; Garner 2018). What this dissertation mainly borrows from these studies in kinesthesia, is that movement plays a key role in the relationship created between performer and spectator. Avoiding universalizing claims about how kinetic textuality is experienced, I will anchor my observations in my own experience of the piece, as well as linking them to specific artistic strategies which aim to evoke that immersion (see also Introduction, pgs. 31 and following).

Since movement in kinetic textuality not only resurfaces through the movements of the performer's body producing the text, but also through textual compositions and specific modes of enunciation, I will need to unravel how our kinesthetic sense is activated *through language*. With the exception of the work of Stanton B. Garner, this textual perspective is rare in studies on kinesthesia. As Garner has remarked, however, the more theater pieces "incorporate spoken language alongside physical movement, the more obviously they require an expanded and refined kinesthetic vocabulary" (2018, 6). To grasp how kinesthetic empathy can be activated through language, Garner offers an important clue. He outlines how "described action can be a powerful conveyer of kinetic and kinesthetic information, especially in discursive contexts" (204), and argues that "at times, verbalized action can register more powerfully and viscerally than the movements we observe on stage" (205).

32 Garner's description of "kinesthetic perception" as "an awareness of the body's responsive, meaningful movement within its environment" (2018, 39) is an example of how the phenomenological perspective and its assumptions play a key role in this discourse.

His kinesthetic perspective on language is based on the two-fold recognition that producing an utterance is in itself a kinetic/corporeal activity and that language is "saturated with virtual movement" (2018, 7). When returning to *new skin* with this in mind, we can see how kinesthesia is activated both visually as well as auditorily: on one level, the spectator's kinesthetic empathy is activated by watching the incessant quirky and alien-like movements of De Meyer's body on stage. Meanwhile, the fragment itself also describes a trajectory of movement, one in which we, as spectators, are invited to imaginatively participate. In the context of kinetic textuality, the fact that kinesthetic responses can also be activated through imagination is crucial, for it provides insight into one of the ways in which textual strategies appeal to our kinesthetic sense, namely, through descriptions of movement. My understanding of kinetic textuality as something that kinesthetically draws the audience into the text on both a corporeal as well as textual level is highly indebted to the perspective developed by Garner. Yet, I will in the rest of this chapter outline how kinesthesia is also activated on a textual level that Garner leaves more or less unaddressed, namely, through the specific poetic strategies that generate movement in the composition of the text.

However, before unraveling how movement can be generated through textual compositional strategies, I first want to reflect on the role of mimesis in kinetic textuality. As already mentioned in the Introduction in reference to Cornish's notion of "kinetic texts," I would contend that the specificity of kinetic textuality also has to do with the mimetic strategies that it employs (pgs. 21-22), which require further probing at this point. As Matthew Potolsky argues, "the theory of mimesis has so woven itself into the texture of Western thinking about representation that the first step in understanding the concept is recognizing that it is a concept, a map, as it were, of the relationship between art and nature, and not a perennial feature of the landscape" (2006, 11). It is of course impossible to do justice to the tremendous amount of critical thought devoted to this notion ever since Plato famously set the tone for an understanding of the notion, which mostly evolved around the recurring moral unease that mimesis produced.[33] I feel it is therefore more productive to focus on how mimesis will be understood in this dissertation. Prompted by the pieces assembled in this corpus, I mainly understand mimesis as something that works within the realm of representation, but that also has a visceral and sensorial effect on the audience. The way in which the corpus adopts mimetic strategies invites me to unravel how mimesis works together with the kinesthetic strategies brought forth by kinetic textuality, and to approach

33 In an account of the moral debate sparked by the cloned sheep Dolly, Rebecca Schneider, for instance, provides an insightful take on this: "the fear of mimesis as 'morally unacceptable' [...] is related to this becoming enigma, or this enigmatic becoming – the cultural fear of a first *explicitly* coming second – a challenge to the 'natural order' of things" (2001, 97; original emphasis). Especially in Chapter Four, Schneider's ongoing study about the relationship between copy and original, imitation and reproduction, time and theatricality is useful to better understand the dramaturgical function of kinetic textuality (pgs. 172-174).

it in terms of its "explicit address to or dependence upon an audience" (Potolsky 2006, 74).[34] In the fragment of *new skin*, for example, the text and the movements both represent the situation of the astronaut facing the earth, but both text and movement also appeal to our imagination on a sensorial level through the rhythmicity and musicality of the text. Together, the mimetic as well as kinesthetic dimensions of kinetic textuality lure us into the fictional reality that is described and enable us to experience corporeally what is represented on stage and through text. Actually, the conceptual intertwinement of mimesis and kinesthesia already resurfaces in Martin's use of the notion "inner mimicry" as a synonym for kinesthetic empathy (Foster 2011, 157).[35] Understanding mimesis from the perspective of kinesthesia also ties in with the approach of Garner, who similarly proposes "a more kinesthetically oriented, enactive way of understanding theatrical mimesis" (2018, 27).[36] I thus approach mimesis as "a representation *for* someone, and not only a representation *of* something else" (Potolsky 2006, 74; original emphasis). This might suggest that any form of mimesis functions kinesthetically, and that this is not an exclusive characteristic of kinetic textuality. However, it seems that in kinetic textuality, the contribution of kinesthesia to mimetic strategies is foregrounded and actively explored.

The hyper-dialectical relationship between mimesis and kinesthesia, which the term "kinetic textuality" is intended to capture, flirts somewhat with the realm of the spiritual.[37] This is clearly exemplified when we consider the similarities between the view of mimesis proposed here and the mechanisms of mimesis that Michael Taussig studies in his book *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (1993). Taussig provides an insight into the operation of mimesis that stretches beyond mere representation. He in fact takes

34 A kinesthetic understanding of mimesis has some parallels with the psychoanalytic understanding of the notion of mimesis as identification. As Elin Diamond argues, an identification process happens through mimesis: "identification is trespass, denying the other's difference by assimilating her behavior, taking her place, killing her off" and also explains how "to be the other *is* a loss of self, identification violates identity" (1997, 107; original emphasis). Mikkel Borch-Jakobsen traces a similar blurring between the object and the subject of the mimesis in *The Freudian Subject*. By looking into the various metaphors of theatricality that psychoanalysis presents in its theories on desire (26), Borch-Jakobsen helps to recognize how a mimesis that is governed by desire results in a "lack of distinction between self and other" ([1982] 1988, 40). Although this resonates with the kinesthetic understanding of mimesis that I adopt in this dissertation, with regard to the scope and focus of this research, this psychoanalytic framework seems too far removed from the artistic strategies that predominate in the selected corpus.

35 Jonathan Owen Clark similarly traces how mimesis intersects with kinesthesia in an insightful exploration of how dance produces signification. He defines kinesthesia as "a sense of mimesis [that] is not simply the projection of our own affective and other responses onto the dancers themselves, nor is it an attempt to mirror or duplicate the dancers' own internal experience" (2013, 207).

36 This perspective seeks to recognize that the mimetic impulse of theater does not necessarily preclude a kinesthetic connection with the spectator. Instead of positioning mimesis as the opposite of physicality, enmeshment, and immersion, a kinesthetic perspective on mimesis allows us to broaden the "representational bias by including the audience as co-enactors of dramatic and theatrical mimesis" (Garner 2018, 27).

37 That this brings us close to an understanding of the theater as a place of "ritual" is also demonstrated in the article "Kinesis as Mimesis: On the Application of Martial Arts to Dramaturgical Practice" (2014), by Michael Chemers and Adam Versényi. This article further reflects on Joseph Roach's suggestion that kinesis is the new mimesis (see also Introduction, pgs. 21-22) in the context of dramaturgy, empathy, and communal experience—something that is provided in theater as well as in martial arts.

his cue from Walter Benjamin's essay "Doctrine of the Similar" (1933), where Benjamin reflects upon how "the perceptual world [*Merkwelt*] of modern human beings seems to contain far fewer of those magical correspondences than did that of the ancients or even that of primitive peoples" ([1933] 1999, 695). Taussig, then, offers a rich account of what Benjamin has described as the "mimetic faculty" (694). He understands the term as "the faculty to copy, imitate, make models, explore difference, yield into and become Other" (Taussig 1993, xiii) as well as the faculty to *recognize* similarities (40). He also highlights the transformative aspect of this form of mimesis: "the wonder of mimesis," he argues, "lies in the copy drawing on the character and power of the original, to the point whereby the representation may even assume that character and that power" (xiii). It is of course impossible to argue that this kind of transformation also takes place with the help of kinetic textuality. However, Taussig's understanding of "the two-layered character of mimesis: copying, and the visceral quality of the percept uniting viewer with the viewed" (24) does resonate with the kinesthetic form of mimesis that can be discerned in kinetic textuality.[38] Placing kinetic textuality in a position straddling mimesis and kinesis, somewhat similarly to Taussig, allows me to trace a gesture of "copying or imitation, and a palpable, sensuous, connection between the very body of the perceiver and the perceived" (21).[39] Taking my cue from Taussig, I will in the third part of this chapter indicate that this kinesthetic understanding of mimesis also provides insight into how the spectator is dramaturgically included and activated in *new skin*.

Dissecting kinetic textuality

Movement through rhythm

Defining a performance's use of language as "kinetic textuality" is one thing, tracing the specific way in which it comes into being is another. As the discussion about *new skin* already makes tangible, kinetic textuality produces a sense of movement through the rhythmicity and musicality of the text. To better understand how movement can be produced with and within textuality, we consider studies which investigate the intersections between dance and literature. As mentioned in the Introduction (pgs. 28 and following),

38 In Merleau-Ponty's reflections on painting, we can trace a similar understanding of mimesis. In *The Prose of the World*, for instance, he writes that "the objectivist illusion is firmly established in us. We are convinced that the expressive act in its normal or fundamental form consists, given a signification, in the construction of a system of signs such that, for each element of the signified, there corresponds a signifying element—in other words, in *representation*" ([1969] 1973, 148; original emphasis). In *The Visible and Invisible*, he seems to suggest an alternative view to this objectivist illusion. In painting, he argues, "the accomplished work is [...] not the work which exists in itself like a thing, but the work which reaches its viewer and invites him to take up the gesture which created it" ([1960] 1964, 51). By describing how painting produces signification through the very process of affecting the viewer, he adopts a kinesthetic understanding of how mimesis functions in art.

39 Since Taussig, in his understanding of mimesis, foregrounds the bodily encounter with the spectator, it probably comes as no surprise that references to Taussig also appear in Garner's study of kinesthesia in language (2018, 28, 242, 245).

historically, the reciprocity between these two art forms flourished particularly at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. According to Jones, "as conventional forms of dance and ballet are relinquished in favour of a far broader and more inclusive category of 'movement,' writers engaged with radical innovations in physical practices such as Eurhythmics, nudity, expressionism, and 'Greek dance' that include an exploration of the medium of 'rhythm' as a basis for innovation in all art forms" (2013, 6–7). As Jones's observation already suggests, the notion of rhythm is often positioned at the intersection between the two art forms, for it is something created by both choreographers and literary writers. Between 2015 and 2017, dance studies journals *Dance Chronicle* and *Choreographic Practices* published three special issues focusing on the reciprocal relationship between literature and dance. Here as well, rhythm is frequently mentioned as that which demonstrates the affinity between these art forms. In their editorial, Joellen A. Meglin and Lynn Matluck Brooks, for instance, contend that,

> at the most basic level, these two mediums parallel one another in the sense of temporality that they communicate. They do so through rhythm, tempo, flow, and larger structure or sequencing of actions, events, moods, or ideas. At a subtler level, both literature and choreography imagine being in a body oriented and moving in space. (2016, 1)

In her discussion of poetic strategies in the work of Théophile Gautier and Charles Baudelaire, Amanda Lee also explains that both dance and poetry are art forms that produce movement, and that this happens primarily through rhythm: "inserting rhythms [...] into a larger verse structure, or interspersing different rhythms with one another, also achieves the sensations of 'movement'" (2016, 43–44).

Ying Zhu and Quynh Nhu Le in their "Body, Time, and Space: Poetry as Choreography in Southeast Asian American Literature," argue that "while literature and dance have traditionally been studied as separate and distinct mediums, the formal elements that structure their production of meaning [...] are inextricably intertwined. Both incorporate conscious designing of movement" (2016, 79). Zhu and Le propose to consider poetry as the choreographing of words, which "'move' through a specific version of time and space as choreographed by line structure, timing and rhythm, flow and sequencing of ideas, and syntax" (80). The notion that movement can be brought about in text through rhythm is taken up again in Daniela Perazzo Domm's "The 'making' of movement and words: A Po(i)etic reading of Charlotte Spencer's *Walking Stories*," where she contends that "parallels may be traced between the musical, rhythmic and synaesthetic principles of poetry and similar qualities of danced movement, both on a somatic and on an aesthetic level" (2017, 112).

While rhythm makes the affinity between dance and language tangible, choreographic movements are also often described with the help of linguistic terminology. The notion "phrase," which is often used to refer to a dance sequence, not only reveals that the act of dance has a lot in common with the act of writing (or producing language in general), but that the compositional construction of dance can be compared to a textual construction. For example, dance scholar Rudi Laermans' discussion of Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's *Rain* illustrates how a linguistic-inspired terminology is helpful to describe choreographic rhythms. He writes that "it is as if the different actions resemble singular words that are contingently arranged into a sentence, one after another and without any copula or syntax" (2015, 110), and "the choreography in *Rain* endlessly rewrites the basic dance sentence, which is reversed and mirrored, multiplied and divided, rhythmically inflected and spatially twisted." (111). That the structure of choreographic compositions can be unraveled as phrases is taken up as a key assumption in Foster's *Reading Choreography*. Throughout the book, Foster examines dance "as a system of codes and conventions that support its meaning" (1986, xviii) and uses such terms as "vocabulary" and "syntax" to unravel dance composition and the "internal coherence and structure" of dance (xviii). As these different approaches suggest, both poetry and choreography rely on textual-like compositional strategies. Since specifically rhythm can be understood as something that tilts poetry towards the realm of dance, it will be helpful to trace how movement is manifested in kinetic textuality in the text itself.

The idea that dance is a specific form of writing will be taken up more elaborately in Chapter Three, which provides relevant insights into how poetic-literary strategies approach the realm of dance (pgs. 121 and following). Given the somewhat enigmatic nature of a concept such as "rhythm," I here wish to contextualize how exactly the rhythm of kinetic textuality will be traced. In theoretical accounts of rhythm, there is a recurrent acknowledgment that while rhythm is sometimes understood as something structured that can be measured, it can also refer to something spontaneous that evades the same structures out of which it has arisen (e.g., Goodridge 1999, 41–42; Rutgeerts 2023, 22). This ambiguity can be traced back to the etymology of the word, which is derived "from Latin *rhythmus* 'movement in time,' from Greek *rhythmos* 'measured flow or movement, rhythm; proportion, symmetry; arrangement, order; form, shape, wise, manner; soul, disposition,' related to *rhein* 'to flow'" (Etymonline, n.d.). At first sight, the search for how rhythm emerges might seem a paradoxical attempt in itself—how can we trace a structure that exists precisely by virtue of escaping a structure? It seems that rhythm can be sought in the interplay between a pattern that initiates a predictable structure and the elements that push against and dismantle that pattern. In the context of a discussion about rhythm as one of the

key concepts of performance, Erika Fischer-Lichte also explains how rhythm primarily emerges through a structure of repetition and variation. “Rhythm,” she argues, “denotes an organizing principle that does not aim at symmetry but regularity. While symmetry fails to allow for divergence, regularity is a dynamic principle that works through repetition and divergence” (2014, 37). The structure of repetition and variation thus provides an instructive angle on uncovering the somewhat difficult-to-grasp emergence of rhythm.

From the perspective of literary studies, it is in the work of a New Critics scholar that we find an instructive understanding of how rhythm produces movement in a text. I.A. Richards, in his canonical *Principles of Literary Criticism*, writes:

> There can be little doubt that historically it [meter] has been closely associated with dancing, and that the connections of the two still hold. This is true at least of some ‘measures.’ Either motor images, images of the sensations of dancing, or, more probably, imaginal and incipient movements follow the syllables and make up their ‘movement.’ ([1924] 2004, 131-132)

The understanding that rhythm arises out of a measured pattern, but simultaneously exists by departing from the rigor of the emerging pattern, also returns in Richard’s conceptualization of textual rhythm: “rhythm and its specialized form, metre, depend upon repetition, and expectancy” (122). He explains how “the mind after reading a line or two of verse, or half a sentence of prose, prepares itself ahead for any one of a number of possible sequences, at the same time negatively incapacitating itself for others” (122). While the rhythm of a text can be discerned by looking into different sorts of patterns that are established and then disrupted, these quotes also suggest that rhythm to a large extent emerges in the interaction between reader and text. For Richards, a key element of rhythm is its reliance on “expectations, satisfactions, disappointments, surprisals” (125). Even though rhythm is based on specific formal structures of repetition and variation, it “is not due to our perceiving a pattern in something outside us, but to *our becoming patterned ourselves*” (127, emphasis added). In *Poetic Rhythm: An Introduction*, Derek Attridge in a similar manner reminds us of the somewhat slippery nature of the attempt to trace poetic rhythm. In a chapter entitled, not incidentally, “Dancing Language,” Attridge explains that “English meter depends on the perception of beats, and when beats are felt in a stretch of language, a meter is present” (1996, 44). Despite the acknowledgement that the text’s meter depends on *perception*, Attridge also suggests that the structure of syllables and beats provides a possible avenue to locate the rhythm in the text. This perspective of beats provides another angle through which we can locate the text’s rhythm and thus movement, even though the rhythm that emerges in kinetic textuality is not as strong or is not of the same complexity as the variation between stressed and unstressed syllables in the poetic texts

that Attridge studies. In tandem with the structure of repetition and variation, the beat structure allows us to trace how the rhythm (or movement, or dance) of the text emerges through textual compositional strategies.

Somewhat anachronistically, thus, we can take our cue from a New Critics-inspired model of literary analysis to unravel how rhythm emerges through textual compositional strategies in the text's meter, and the way in which the meter establishes a structure of repetition and variation. This ties in with a suggestion formulated by Foster, who in her elaborate discussion of talking dance in *Dances That Describe Themselves*, refers to how the text of Richard Bull's *Didactic Dalliance* (1979) adopts "the choreographic strategies of variation and contrast" (2002, 179). Returning to *new skin*, the rhythm in the astronaut fragment described above primarily emerges through repetition and revision of the words (i.e., "launched into the sky/ into another world/ into another galaxy," or "until at a certain moment/one moment/a sudden moment"). The alternating long and short sentences, and one- or two-syllable words (i.e., "soft/loose/folded/hanging in space," or "tilting upside down/tilting inside the womb") also contribute to the rhythmic structure of the sequence. The repetition and variation structure of *new skin* evokes the movement of something that is pushing forward but simultaneously pulling backwards, mirrored in the movements that the astronaut experiences through the umbilical cord. The rhythm of the text thus plays a significant role in the meaning that the text produces. As Richards also argues, it is "impossible [...] to consider rhythm or metre as though it were purely an affair of the sensory aspect of syllables and could be dissociated from their sense and from the emotional effects which come about through their sense" ([1924] 2004, 129-130). Written in a similar mode to this fragment, the entire text of *new skin* is carefully crafted as a collage of different rhythms. While rhythm in *new skin* only secondarily arises through the beat structure of the text, repetition and variation function as a recurrent compositional principle: "all our ancestors/mingled up/mingled together/you shake them up/you shake them up/making them speak/all our ancestors/mingled together in a web" (De Meyer 2019, 34). This rhythmic structure adds different cadences to the imaginary journey described by De Meyer: quicker rhythmic changes occur when accelerated movements are described, while a slower and more exploratory way of moving through the landscapes is supported by less frequent changes in the rhythmic pattern.

Uncovering the text's rhythm is not only helpful to better understand the choreographic strategies at work in textual compositions, it also helps to recognize how kinetic textuality relates to the performer's movements that it triggers. As Patrice Pavis has argued, "rhythm [...] functions as an intermediary element between word and gesture" (1981, 70). In the performance of *new skin*, the movements of De Meyer's neatly composed piece of writing

flourish: the rhythm emerging through repetition and variation collides with the specific way in which De Meyer pronounces the text and the pushing and pulling movements described in the text reappear in how she moves her body on stage. An interesting dialogue thus emerges when kinetic textuality is staged: the pace at which a performer delivers the text influences the musicality and the rhythm; it can slow it down, enhance it, or establish a sense of friction with the written rhythm. The fact that rhythm occupies a negotiating position between words and physical movement illustrates how difficult it is to maintain a strict division between the realm of the text and the realm of the performance in the case of kinetic textuality.[40] This is something that I briefly return to towards the end of this section, and in more detail in Chapter Two (pgs. 87 and following). In the following sections, I will first continue to outline how movements are produced textually by now looking more specifically into the dimension of musicality.

Movement through musicality

In his exploration of the expressive qualities of music in the context of dance, Noël Caroll argues that music shares some important features with dancing bodies, precisely because music can imitate the sound of the human voice (2013, 155) and because it also "moves through time" (154). This brings us to another crucial avenue through which we can dissect kinetic textuality, namely, the musicality it produces. To do so, we can take our cue from Fischer-Lichte's description of "tonality," which she foregrounds as a main dimension of the materiality of performance. She outlines how "sound creates spatiality. Likewise, vocality creates physicality. In the actor's voice, all three forms of materiality come into being: physicality, spatiality, and tonality" (Fischer-Lichte 2014, 35). This tripartite interaction between physicality, spatiality, and tonality also captures how kinetic textuality emerges through specific formal strategies. This conception of spatiality as a physical as well as auditory space allows me to address how the body and how sound emerge within this space, how they interact, and how *both* produce movement. As such, I aim to establish a perspective that allows me to consider both the "kinaesthetic component of speech" as well as "the interplay between the visual and the aural" (Vesty 2017, 4), two dimensions that Robert Vesty foregrounds in his reflections on the relationship between dance and words.

40 In that sense, the choice to take my cue from a New Critics scholar in this dissertation is perhaps not only anachronistic but also might come across as theoretically out of place. As W.B. Worthen concludes in his insightful overview of the position of the (drama) text in academic and educational contexts, for the New Critics, "the stage is finally not the place where the richest *experience* of the drama takes shape" (2010, 64; original emphasis). This clearly runs counter to my argument that the distinction between stage and page dissolves in kinetic textuality. Nevertheless, I will throughout this dissertation also make it clear that to understand the function of kinetic textuality, close textual reading is as necessary as unraveling the text's function on stage.

To further explain why the text's musicality can account for its kinetic quality, we can briefly turn to the critical discourse around the "sonic turn." Although it was only in 2012 that *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies* (eds.: Trevor Pinch and Karin Bijsterveld) and *The Sound Studies Readers* (ed.: Jonathan Sterne) were published and sound studies positioned itself as an established academic discipline, the current interest can be traced back to pioneering authors such as R. Murray Schafer, Ihde, or Walter Ong (Home-Cook 2015, 8).[41] Some sound scholars focus on the act of listening as such, others more explicitly on the voice, or music, while the phenomenon of sound in general is also sometimes taken as the focus of the study: "sound studies is a name for the interdisciplinary ferment in the human sciences that takes sound as its analytical point of departure or arrival" (Sterne 2012, 2). As Ihde's work on sound demonstrates, the phenomenological paradigm resonates particularly well with many of the perspectives taken up in sound studies: the positionality of the perceiving subject (or the uniqueness of the single voice) is often embraced as a central point of departure in sound studies (Cavarero [2003] 2005, 29; Ihde 2007; Sterne 2012, 4; Home-Cook 2015). What is instructive for kinetic textuality is that sound is theorized in these studies as something that is inherently in flux (e.g., Cavarero [2003] 2005, 37; LaBelle 2010, xxii) and that produces bodily vibrations (e.g., Cavarero [2003] 2005, 143; Ihde 2007; Pinch and Bijsterveld 2012). This physical dimension, that "the elementary phenomenology of the acoustic sphere always implies a relation between mouth and ear" (Cavarero [2003] 2005, 178) encourages Adriana Cavarero to emphasize the uniqueness and singularity of the human voice, as well the relational space that it constructs.[42] In a rather sharp manner, Cavarero contends that "the price for the elimination of the physicality of the voice is thus, first of all, the elimination of the other, or better, of others" (46).[43] These discourses often

41 We can also trace a growing interest in sound in recent years in theater, performance, and dance studies. To give a few examples, in 2010, *Performance Research* published an issue "On Listening" (ed. Catherine Laws), *Critical Stages/Scènes Critiques* devoted their Winter 2021 issue to "Aural/Oral Dramaturgies" (eds. Duška Radosavljević and Flora Pitrolo) and the 2021 special issue of *Theatre Research International* focused on "Sounding Corporeality" (eds. Aoife McGrath, Marcus Cheng Chye Tan, Prarthana Purkayastha and Tereza Havelková). Alongside these, several monographs have been published on the topic during the past ten years (e.g., Ovadija 2013; Curtin 2014; Home-Cook 2015; Ragnerstam 2016; Kendrick 2017).

42 In Chapter Five, I will indicate how Merleau-Ponty adopts a similar perspective on relationality as something that takes place in the intercorporeal connection which establishes itself in conversation and I will turn to how we can recognize this in the musicality produced in kinetic textuality (pgs. 237 and following).

43 A similar argument was voiced in Fred Moten's *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (2003), where he turns to black performance as a way to criticize the dominant Western tendency in philosophical thought to exclude sound and voice from linguistic analysis. In these performances, according to Moten, there occurs "a revaluation or reconstruction of value, one disruptive of the oppositions of speech and writing, and spirit and matter" (2003, 14).

emphasize the tendency of sound to create a relational space between the object producing the sound and the listener (Cavarero [2003] 2005; Ihde 2007, 83; LaBelle 2010).[44]

To uncover the movements produced with(in) textuality, the most useful suggestion that we can borrow from sound studies is the relationship between sound and spatiality (e.g., Ihde 2007; LaBelle 2010), an intrinsic connection elegantly captured by Pierre Schaeffer's term "soundscape" (1966). The spatial understanding of sound invites us to consider sound as something that moves, not only because this acoustic space is in constant flux, but also because experimentation with the positioning of sound in space can establish an auditory movement pattern in that space. As with rhythm, this brings us to a notion of movement that is not limited to the visual realm. As Ihde puts it, "our spatial orientation is not and never has been simply visual—yet we have often so interpreted it" (2007, 195). This perspective resonates with Leonie Persyn's analysis of the "auditory choreography" of the performance *Hear* (2016), from Belgian choreographer and musician Benjamin Vandewalle and Yoann Durant (2019). She discusses the choreographic nature of the piece by saying that its "choreography is about sound, its location and trajectory in space, rather than about a body's movement through a space" (Persyn 2019, 200). The evocation of movement through auditory space is also a strategy adopted in *new skin*. For instance, in the astronaut sequence, De Meyer constantly switches between gazing towards the back of the stage, and gazing towards the audience. By pronouncing different sentences in different positions on stage, her words move, in a rather subtle way, through the space. The close consideration of the way in which sounds are positioned in acoustic space provides another angle from which to analyze the kinetic dimension of words.[45]

The sonic quality produced by words is of course highly dependent on the voice delivering them. This is also something that is addressed in sound studies, where it is argued that the meaning of the word cannot be detached from the voice delivering it (e.g., Cavarero [2003] 2005; Ihde 2007; Dolar 2012). Ihde's project to uncover the ontology of listening via phenomenology, for instance, stems from the observation that the speaker is largely absent

44 Often, sound scholars define their investigations in contrast with the tendency of Western philosophy to focus mainly on the sense of vision (e.g.: Ihde 2007, 6; Sterne 2012, 7; Schafer 2012, 101; Braun 2017, 67) However, as Martin Jay outlines in his *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*, "a profound suspicion of vision and its hegemonic role in the modern era" (1993, 14) can be traced in French thought of the 20th century. He places Merleau-Ponty's argument about the interconnection of the senses, for instance, in that same tradition. As Merleau-Ponty theorizes it, the bodily experience of being in the world relies on the intercommunication of the senses (e.g., [1964] 1968, 133; see also Abram [1996] 2017, 59-62).

45 A careful examination of the discourse around the relationship between dance and *music* would lead us too far at this point. As a thought-provoking starting point to this discussion, I would refer the reader to Frédéric Pouillaude's chapter "A Space with No Place," included in his *Unworking Choreography: The Notion of the Work in Dance*. In this chapter, Pouillaude carefully analyzes Erwin Strauss's reflections on the relationship between dance and music, which are mainly anchored in the contention that there is "a *structure of shared experience* that subsumes music and dance under a single category, leaving open the question of their order of priority and their empirical connection [...] a structure to which both music and dance give access" (2017, 38). Paraphrasing Strauss, Pouillaude writes that like dance, "acoustic space, then, presents a spatiality without direction or place, a homogenized spatiality" (40).

from the philosophy of language while meaning is largely absent from the philosophy of sound (2007, 4). As Mladen Dolar puts it, “if signifiers form a chain, then the voice may well be what fastens them into a signifying chain” (2012, 546). In her book *For More Than One Voice*, Cavarero seeks to counter the assumption that the voice performs merely a “service role” in linguistic expression ([2003] 2005, 35). She approaches the voice “not so much as the medium of communication and oral transmissions, but as the register of an economy of drives that is bound to the rhythms of the body in a way that destabilizes the rational register on which the system of speech is built” (11). In the case of *new skin*, the sonority of the words and the specific enunciation mostly function to vocally represent the situation that is described. To give a brief example, the excerpt in which De Meyer talks about “branches (…) flung into the sky like weightless, like pieces of paper and then flung down in the lake below” (2019, 24) demonstrates how sound contributes to the communication of the meaning evoked by the sentence: the way in which De Meyer speaks the words contributes to the imagery they evoke. The first part of the sentence is spoken in a higher pitch, which evokes the flying image of the weightless branches. In the last part—when the branches fall down—her pitch also becomes lower. De Meyer’s careful pronunciation, which sometimes emphasizes the air needed to produce a word or instead accentuates alliterating consonants, together with the alternating pitches, establishes an eerie and fascinating atmosphere.

The text’s soundscape, as well as its rhythm, thus offer different but intersecting avenues to better grasp the ways in which it is ingrained with movement in kinetic textuality. However, as Schafer puts it, “we can isolate an acoustic environment as a field of study just as we can study the characteristics of a given landscape. However, it is less easy to formulate an exact impression of a soundscape than of a landscape” (2012, 99). As with rhythm, the text’s sonority most clearly comes to the surface when it is heard or read through our “inner ear” (Ihde 2007, 45). To avoid going into too much technical detail to capture the rhythmicity or musicality that kinetic textuality produces, I invite the reader to listen carefully to the included text fragments in this dissertation. In the following chapters, when identifying the strategies of kinetic textuality in the different pieces, I will not always describe in detail how the rhythm or sound of the text is composed, for I think the text fragments themselves are better at revealing these dimensions. For the sake of clarity, I have discussed rhythmicity and the textual soundscape as two separate realms, yet, as already suggested, this separation is difficult to maintain. In fact, the hyper-dialectical tension between “kinetic” and “textuality” implies that the realms of rhythmicity and musicality, and by extension, of textual movement and physical movement, fundamentally intersect: the sonorous movement of a voiced piece of writing is the direct consequence of

the rhythmicity of a text. The visual movements performed on stage foster the movements that are constructed in the imagination of the audience. When accessing the movement of the text's composition on the page, the reader's auditory imagination is activated. Or, when this rhythmic text is uttered in performance, the physical movements performed alongside it reinforce and emphasize the rhythm of the text.

Within the written text, kinetic textuality can be considered as a mode of textual composition, in which the text's rhythmic and musical dimension establish textual movement. Regarding performance, we can approach kinetic textuality as a mode of enunciation where the movement is located on stage, both visually, in the body of the performer, and auditorily, as the movements of the rhythmic textual soundscape through space. Although the physical and auditory movements produced by kinetic textuality take place in performance, it is important to keep track of the fact that they are anchored in the textual composition. Therefore, it is essential to consider kinetic textuality also as a mode of writing (and not only as something that materializes in the speaking of the text). In this light, it is significant that De Meyer chose to publish the text of *new skin*, one year after its premiere, in a booklet together with the text of *Levitations*, a performance that she created in 2017. In this publication, the specific typography of the texts immediately catches the eye of the reader. In the published text of *new skin*, for example, the font of the words gradually moves from small to bold to smaller to bold, to slightly smaller, to bold again, and the color of the words moves gradually through different tones of grey and even switches to white against a black background. This gradual change in color and in the boldness of the words mirrors the movement of the smoothly expanding organism that is being born at the beginning of the piece, and that wanders slowly and curiously throughout the rest of the text. The lay-out of the text, then, reminds us more of a poem than of the script of a play, since there are no stage directions or characters included and the text itself is not presented as direct speech. The frequent use of enjambments in print enhances the rhythmicity of the text when it is read.[46] By publishing both texts, De Meyer seems to suggest that her pieces can continue to exist on the page; this is at first sight somewhat surprising given the symbiotic relation between text and body portrayed in the performance. As Evelyne Coussens puts it, the piece's publication in print establishes a "maddening ambiguity: the text is radically bound to its author/performer and utterly independent at the same time" (2021; my translation).[47]

46 With regard to the historical lineage I am developing for kinetic textuality, we can already briefly trace a parallel here with the typographic poetic experiments of Mallarmé. As Jones has argued, "a modernist sensitivity to the way in which certain aspects of language are constituted by the experience of physical activity can also be seen in the experimentation with textual layout by poets from Mallarmé to Pound" (2013, 7–8). I will further elaborate on this parallel in Chapter Three (pgs. 121 and following), and in Chapter Four, I will consider how kinetic textuality also produces movement in the form of moving words projected onto a screen. (pgs. 179 and following).

47 Original Dutch version: "gekmakende dubbelzinnigheid: de tekst is radicaal gebonden aan zijn auteur/performer en volstrekt onafhankelijk tegelijk."

I would contend that it is precisely this "maddening ambiguity" that is essential to kinetic textuality, and that it boils down to the hyper-dialectical movement it establishes between "kinetic" and "textuality," between language and body, between mimesis and kinesis, and thus also, between the stage and the page.

this burning, burning heart
how does it speak to us?
it speaks to us in moments like
flickering crumbles of light

moments
like the moment
I remember standing naked in
front of you
and you
you asked me what I wanted you to
do to me
and for a moment
one black moment
my whole body shut down
crumbled down
shut down
and I was unable to come up with
any utterable word
and it was like standing in front of a
mountain
a lifetime of unwillingness to

44

know what I want
to know what I wanted
and to claim it
to ask for it
and in this moment you waited
and I waited
and we waited
and when the words finally came,
they rose up like water
they ran through my mouth like
leopards
and they fell from my lips like an
incantation
to be born
right then and there
to be born
for the first time
as a woman with a mouth
a mouth that speaks

and then
then

45

fragment from *new skin* (De Meyer 2019, 44-45).

The assumption that kinetic textuality manifests itself at the intersection between page and stage already takes us to the heart of the main academic debate against which this dissertation is developed, namely, the text-performance debate. By insisting on kinetic textuality as a form of writing, this dissertation takes its cue from Julia Jarcho's *Writing and the Modern Stage: Theatre beyond Drama* (2017). Rejecting a critical discourse where there is disagreement "about the dramatic/postdramatic distinction," but where "a vision of theater as something that inherently eludes or exceeds writing" (2017, xiii) still prevails, Jarcho revisits some assumptions regarding playwriting and considers "the scene of writing as a worthy spectacle in its own right" (135). Jarcho mainly studies how writing articulates its relationship to performance on the page, while I will also scrutinize its effect when incorporated on the stage; the notion of writing in my dissertation still occupies a fundamentally different position from that in her treatise. Despite this difference, my attempt to read the compositional or literary strategies of kinetic textuality against the backdrop of the medial specificity of its existence on stage ties in with Jarcho's project.

This approach is also indebted to W.B. Worthen's perspective, namely, to study dramatic texts at the intersection "between poetry and performance" (2010), as well as Stanton B. Garner's approach to distilling performance-oriented dimensions such as embodiment and spatiality in written plays (1994). Since in kinetic textuality, movement can be located in both the words and the bodies that speak them out, their work offers important clues to tracing movement as a quality of the page, as I will further contextualize in the next chapter. By scrutinizing the written compositional characteristics of kinetic textuality, I am, in this chapter, already pursuing a line of thinking about textuality that takes its cue from their proposals as to how the page can be treated in theater studies.

Encountering kinetic textuality

In the rest of this chapter, I will explain why it is necessary to keep track of this navigation between the stage and the page in kinetic textuality. By examining their interplay in *new skin*, I will unravel what I consider to be one of the fundamental features of kinetic textuality, namely, the particular way in which it engages the audience. Although this contention is mostly rooted in my own personal experience of encountering kinetic textuality, its mechanisms can also be traced back to specific artistic strategies. Admittedly, these strategies can have different effects on different spectators, but I do think that the specific way in which the audience is addressed results from the tension that is established in each piece between stage and page. On a first level, the emphasis on physical movements that characterizes the way in which De Meyer utters her text already draws the spectator kinesthetically into the performance. Her quirky movements, somewhat difficult to categorize, help to establish the fictional universe which she constructs and into which she invites us through the recurrent use of the pronoun "you." When she, for instance, performs the movements of the astronaut, she seemingly embodies the astronaut's character. The spectators simultaneously imagine the movements of the astronaut described in the text, while watching De Meyer's movements on stage, which in turn influences how they imagine the specific quality of the movements of the astronaut. The impression that De Meyer's text and movements evoke some sort of character also appears in the reviews of the piece, where her movements have been described as reminiscent of a reptile (Coussens 2019; T'Jonck 2019), a cat (Coussens, 2019), or a combination of a human and an insect (Roels 2019). Taking our cue from studies in kinesthesia, we can argue that spectators grasp these different movements kinesthetically, through their muscular and sensorial system, activated when they watch bodily movements performed on stage. By looking at these movements that turn De Meyer into different creatures, the spectator potentially also becomes corporeally implied in this mimetic gesture. Together with the text that invites us

to reflect on the relationship between ourselves and the earth (an invitation which is most explicitly phrased in the astronaut fragment), her animal-like movements kinesthetically draw us into a corporeal experience that transcends the human body.

One specific movement sequence of De Meyer reappears on a regular basis throughout the performance: she shuffles restlessly with her feet, while her upper body moves from left to right, and her head crawls upward and downward. This recurrent, yet each time slightly adapted movement does not immediately represent something recognizable. Lieze Roels describes how in this movement sequence "body parts seemingly react to invisible impulses from outside" (2019; my translation).[48] In the interview I conducted with De Meyer, she provided insight into how these movements actually embody the intertextual traces of her text. She outlined how particular sentences of the text still hold the echoes of the emotions—predominantly pain, anger, and indignation—she experienced while reading the (eco-)feminist and critical race theory that instigated her to write and create this piece. She mentioned how "the texts I read are a kind of compost in which new images grow" (Hannah De Meyer, pers. interview; my translation).[49] The speaking out of certain words allows De Meyer to activate these emotional and physical memories in her body. The enigmatic and characteristic movement sequence in which De Meyer stumbles around on stage to abruptly and intensely straighten her back and look up to the ceiling, is thus provoked by the act of embodying or digesting her written text. These quirky movements are bodily and visceral echoes of the process of writing *new skin*. Both the emotions and the critical literature that gave rise to the text are thus incorporated in the entanglement of words and movement.[50] Alongside the quirky movements that evoke the pain, indignation, outrage, and resilience that fueled the creation of this piece, there are also movements that introduce a different emotional register. The movements that bounce to the rhythm of the text, for instance, or the sounds that add an eerie and joyful connotation to the words being spoken provoke the emotion of joy, wonder, and love for the surrounding world. The mix of pain and resilience, of terror and awe, are embodied in a quite literal way through kinetic textuality. Again, the specific emotional mix that this combination of movements brings forth potentially provokes a kinesthetic response in the spectator watching these movements. In my experience of the piece, it triggered a

48 Original Dutch version: "lichaamsdelen reageren schijnbaar op onzichtbare impulsen van buitenaf."

49 Original Dutch version: "de teksten die ik lees zijn een soort van compost en daar groeien dan nieuwe beelden op."

50 These visceral reactions to the uttered words correspond to Sara Ahmed's view of emotions presented in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. In this book, she traces how "emotions can work in practice by circulating through words and figures and by sticking to bodies" (2014, 217). Ahmed's account of how certain emotions can settle on words, and how these words, infused by an emotional value, have a specific effect on the body that pronounces them, offers an instructive angle on kinetic textuality as well. As we will see in Chapter Five (pgs. 203 and following), Ahmed's view will help us to better understand how kinetic textuality portrays emotions in Abke Haring's *Platina*.

huge array of emotions and corporeal sensations that I could not always clearly attribute to the meaning of the text alone.

As we have seen above, kinesthetic empathy can also be activated through movements described in text. These movements remain immaterial because they are taking place in the imagination of the audience. Broadly considered, the abovementioned scene from *new skin* describes two movements: the astronaut's trajectory away from the earth, and the resisting movements he experiences from the umbilical cord as he becomes more and more detached from the earth. We can furthermore identify two different perspectives on this situation: one describing the trajectory of the actual movement (e.g. "You dream of a spaceship being launched into the sky into another world"), and one zooming in and out between the description of the astronaut (e.g. "The astronaut/ Is like a foetus/ Tilting upside down/ Tilting inside the womb") and the description of what the astronaut sees—the Earth (e.g. "A fully blue ball in space/ No borders/ All our ancestors/ Animals/ Plants/ Insects/ Oceans/ Deserts/ Fire/ Water/ Wind"). The voices of two narrative points of view switch here: the point of view of the narrator describing the scene ("and in that moment the astronaut understands their relationship") and the point of view of the astronaut himself ("if she dies, I'm lost/ If I die, she/ she will live on with ease"). Finally, this is all embedded in a dream sequence that De Meyer describes in a monologue to the audience as part of a dream that the spectators themselves are having. The specific way in which this narration is crafted, by means of a constant switching of perspective, heightens the experience of movement in the text.

As we have seen, the text's rhythmic and musical composition also contributes to its kinetic quality, which potentially enhances the kinesthetic connection between audience and performer at the level of the text. In the final section of the astronaut sequence, for example, textual movement is induced by the rhythm that emerges through a pattern of repetition and variation of phrases containing the words "pushed back." Rhythm also emerges through the acceleration caused by the accumulation of four-beat, five-beat and six-beat sentences in "and he's pushed back, pushed back into form, pushed back into the world." The "p" and "sh" sounds that predominate here are emphasized and establish a textual soundscape which, together with the rhythm, support the movements described in the text. Because of the emphasis on the text's rhythmic and musical dimension, it communicates on both a corporeal as well as a discursive level. Coussens explains how *new skin* consists of many "layers of meaning that do not reveal themselves in reading the text; you have to feel them as a spectator. Language takes on a corporeal component, both in De Meyer's performance itself and in the way it enters the viewer's mind" (2021; my

translation).[51] As I experienced the piece, the manifold interactions between words and movements in *new skin* triggered a kinesthetic sensation that is simultaneously textual and physical, stimulated by auditory and visual inputs.[52] Although they remain seated, the audience's sense of kinesthesia is appealed to at different levels. These strategies all work to encourage the spectator to imaginatively move together with De Meyer on the trip that this performance describes. In so doing, a kinesthetic connection is developed between the spectator and De Meyer: as Roels puts it, *new skin* brings forth "a shared body [...] that seems to encompass both De Meyer and her audience" (2019; my translation).[53] This is also something that Coussens describes in her discussion of the piece: "the 'innovative' aspect of her use of text is situated in the space between viewer and performer, and I must admit: it therefore remains perhaps "unprovable," so much is it tied to the experience of the private viewer" (2021; my translation).[54] This "unprovability" has to do with how the spectator's body functions as the mediator in which the specificity of her "text-use" manifests itself most clearly.

However, the compositional qualities of the text (rhythm and musicality) that draw the spectator into the piece simultaneously continue to interfere with the seemingly univocal kinesthetic connection that they provoke. Here we arrive at the specific way in which kinetic textuality functions in dramaturgical terms, or regarding how it addresses its audience. The rhythmicity and musicality, as well as the carefully constructed narrative structure, clearly remind us of what Jarcho would call the text's "writtenness" (2017, xiv). As she writes about Mac Wellmann's piece *Girl Gone*, "for all its musical aurality, this speech felt, to me, like writing: a thing-like enigma whose verbal density wouldn't dissolve into the immediacy of the performance, because its logic was somewhere else, somewhere beyond us" (206). Something similar is at work in *new skin*: the text behaves as a piece of writing rather than natural speech. Its rhythmicity and musicality clearly highlight the words' materiality and together with its meandering narrative structure remind us of its composedness. This also impacts the extent to which we, as the audience, have access to the text. At some points, these compositional qualities somewhat obstruct our attempts

51 Original Dutch version: "betekenislagen die zich niet openbaren in het lezen van de tekst; je moet ze als toeschouwer voelen. De taal krijgt een lijfelijke component, zowel in de performance van De Meyer zelf als in de manier waarop die binnenkomt bij de kijker."

52 The collaboration of different senses is also something that is theorized in sound studies. Schafer, for instance, considers hearing as touching (2012, 102), and Ihde's account of listening frequently turns to the other senses as well: "the auditory dimension from the outset begins to display itself as a pervasive characteristic of bodily experience. Phenomenologically I do not merely hear with my ears, I hear with my whole body" (2007, 44). This also resonates with Fischer-Lichte's theorization of performance, where she outlines how bodily sounds tend to trigger an affective and corporeal response on the part of the audience (2008, 125).

53 Original Dutch version: "een gedeeld lichaam [...] dat zowel De Meyer als haar toeschouwers lijkt te omvatten"

54 Original Dutch version: "het 'vernieuwende' van haar tekstgebruik situeert zich in de ruimte tussen kijker en performer, en ik moet toegeven: het blijft derhalve misschien 'onbewijsbaar,' zozeer is het gebonden aan de ervaring van de particuliere kijker."

at keeping track of the content that is communicated. After the first time I saw *new skin*, I found it, for instance, very difficult to repeat what the text had been "about," even though I had been very focused on the piece throughout. The strategies that incorporate a sense of movement in her text, which draws us into De Meyer's story-world, are synchronously countering the trance-inducing feel of her performance. The fact that the text evades the grip of the spectator and remains a somewhat elusive entity counters the hypnotic effect established through the textual movement; the refusal of the textual movements to make the text straightforwardly accessible or easily absorbable also keep us awake.[55] Even though kinetic textuality establishes a rather mesmerizing kind of audience-participation in *new skin*, it equally installs a sense of elusiveness, by refusing to become fully accessible in the here and now. This is what strikes me as one of the most distinguishing features of kinetic textuality. In a truly hyper-dialectical manner, the kinetic textuality in *new skin* eludes its audience as much as it enchants them. De Meyer's *new skin* carefully navigates the ambivalent space between these two divergent dramaturgical effects.

Concluding thoughts

The simultaneously mesmerizing and elusive effect of kinetic textuality in *new skin* resonates in an interesting way with the narrative content of the piece. As we have seen earlier, and the scene of the astronaut with the umbilical cord makes tangible, *new skin* both recounts and explores the mutual relationship between species, plants, and other earthly elements across time and space. The artistic exploration of how to portray the human body as radically embedded in its material and spiritual environment is a recurring element in De Meyer's oeuvre. In our interview, De Meyer spoke elaborately about her past artistic research into theoretical frameworks that offer a fundamentally entangled view of human, animal, nature, and environment, into the structure of our nervous system, and into different practices to invoke immaterial presences or spiritual experiences.[56] Roels aptly describes how *new*

55 In her discussion about the work of Wellman, Jarcho also traces a similar sense of elusiveness: "there is no denying that Wellman's work is cognitively challenging; seeing or reading his plays can feel like an aerobic activity, […] But it is at least as essential to these speeches that they *elude* our attempts to make meaning. In so doing, they hold open the dimension of a content ungrasped and unrealized, a referent that refuses to materialize here and now, for us" (2017, 182; emphasis added).

56 After *new skin*, De Meyer became more and more interested in "the limits of thinking in terms of matter alone. This is also a thinking that allows us to destroy something without consequences because it allows us to think in terms of matter without a soul. If we think of matter as something that contains a soul, then destruction becomes something quite different" (Hannah De Meyer, pers. interview; my translation). (Original Dutch version: "de limieten van het denken in materie alleen. Dit is ook een denken dat mogelijk maakt dat we iets zonder gevolgen kunnen vernielen, omdat het toestaat om te denken in termen van materie zonder ziel. Als we denken aan materie als iets dat een ziel bevat, dan wordt vernieling plots iets heel anders." The dramaturgical questions raised in the two pieces that De Meyer created after *new skin*—*hi baubo,* and *53 SUNS*—thus differ slightly from those addressed in this earlier piece. Nevertheless, they continue to performatively explore how a human body can represent many other things, how it is entangled with its world but also with ancestors and people who are no longer alive (see Introduction, pgs. 19-20).

skin portrays these ideas on stage: the piece is "a real trip in which De Meyer takes this renewed and collective body through various imaginary landscapes and politically colored images. One of the recurring themes in this textual journey is the sensory relationship between this shared body and its material substrate" (2019; my translation).[57] Through its various strategies of aligning text with movement, kinetic textuality works to include the audience in this "shared body" and to take us with her on her imaginary journey. As we have seen, the entanglement that kinetic textuality establishes between De Meyer and her audience is structured through an oscillation between total enmeshment and a peculiar sense of inaccessibility. As a result of this oscillation, at least to me, it never felt as if she was forcingly luring me into the entanglement with the world she was portraying or pushing me to participate in this collective body. Yet at the same time, its mesmerizing effect continued to spark my fascination and my willingness to imaginatively engage with this world. Through the emphasis on physical and textual movement, the text itself was never fully graspable and made it clear that it was not entirely concerned with grasping me. Kinetic textuality thus allows De Meyer to present a form of entanglement that is radical, but at the same time continues to feel gentle and never constraining.

Now that I have defined kinetic textuality as something that operates at the intersection of not only text and movement but also of kinesthesia and mimesis, rhythm and musicality, stage and page, I will in the next chapter theoretically position kinetic textuality in the text-performance debate. This will allow me to further contextualize why I have chosen the frameworks of Garner and Jarcho to accompany my reflections, even though their arguments are rooted in theatrical works that differ considerably from the pieces that I study. It will also allow me to further explain the methodological perspective that I am taking in this dissertation and that already resurfaced in my discussion of *new skin*, namely, the somewhat odd combination of what we could call a New Critics-inspired careful textual close reading and a phenomenological perspective that stems from my own experience of the pieces. In the next chapters, I will give a close reading of the formal features of kinetic textuality and how they constitute an involving yet elusive relationship with the spectator, in light of the different topics that the pieces address. Although none of the pieces included involve overt political statements or seek to represent an ideological assertion, I approach the pieces from the conviction that they gravitate towards and arise out of an underlying assumption or a worldview. One objective of this dissertation is to illuminate how exactly kinetic textuality conveys that specific assumption. As I will make clear throughout the next chapters, the pieces assembled in this corpus are each conveying some sort of ethical

57 Original Dutch version: "een heuse trip waarin De Meyer dit hernieuwde en collectieve lichaam door verschillende imaginaire landschappen en politiek gekleurde beelden voert. Een van de terugkerende thema's in die talige reis is de zintuigelijke verhouding tussen dit gedeelde lichaam en zijn materiële ondergrond."

contention, yet they refuse to present these in a straightforward way. By outlining the formal and dramaturgical strategies that I group together under the denominator “kinetic textuality,” this chapter sought to provide a first description of how this effect comes into being.

CHAPTER TWO
Kinetic Textuality and Talking Dances

Introduction

The current chapter seeks to consider the specific features of kinetic textuality in the light of one of the most pressing debates in performing arts scholarship, namely, the concern with how to conceptualize the relation between text and performance. The analysis of *new skin* in the previous chapter indicated that my approach towards kinetic textuality takes its cue from two prominent arguments in the text-performance debate (pgs. 79 and following). Stanton B. Garner's kinesthetic approach towards writing and Julia Jarcho's argument about writing's foreignness to the stage come together in my understanding of kinetic textuality as something that both establishes a kinesthetic bond between performer and audience and continuously interferes with this bond. Working my way through the text-performance debate and the different theoretical questions it addresses will in this chapter allow me to theoretically ground the formal aspects of kinetic textuality outlined in the previous chapter. This will provide a broader conceptual background to the performance analyses in the upcoming chapters and the various historical examples or critical perspectives that will be interwoven through them. I will approach the debate with the help of a performance that introduces us quite explicitly to the main questions to be addressed in this context: *Poems and Other Emergencies* (2020) from Chloe Chignell.[58] In this performance, an investigation of the relationship between language and a body in movement functions as the dramaturgical starting point. From its very beginning, the setting reveals that this piece will self-consciously explore how text and performance work together to produce (choreographic) meaning. Many objects in the space are labeled: the word "door" is written on an emergency exit, the word "exit" on another, the word "pillar" on a pillar, the word "mic stand" (with some of its letters already erased) on the floor next to the mic stand. As the audience enters the attic of the Brussels Beursschouwburg, Chignell is

58 *Poems and Other Emergencies* premiered at Bâtard Festival in Brussels and was also included in the program of "Moving Words," a festival curated by Mette Edvardsen in Stavanger, Norway in December 2021 (see Introduction, pg. 19). In June 2022, Chignell performed this piece at a Parisian literature festival "La poésie n'est pas un luxe," organized by Littérature etc.

standing still on the stage, facing the audience and smiling slightly. When everyone has taken their seats, she says “standing.” She turns her head, simultaneously saying “turning the head.” She lifts her arm: “lifting an arm.” From now on, physical movements—which are apparently more difficult to label than, for instance, the door—are the main focus of this piece’s exploration of how meaning emerges. Chignell opens her hand and says, “opening the hand.” “Looking down.” She looks down. “Curling the fingertips.” We notice her curling her fingertips.[59]

As Chignell describes the movements that she is performing and performs the movements that she is describing, she expresses tangibly how visual and textual input work together to regulate our perception. By capturing in a very simple way how the (moving) body influences the interpretation of the text, the piece invites us to reflect on how we perceive movement and the mediating role that language plays in it.[60] The verbal descriptions, for instance, direct our gaze within the movements and divide an uninterrupted flow into different segments. When Chignell jumps, lands, and steps in one fluid movement, the description “jumping, landing, stepping” introduces cuts in this fluidity, and allows us to structure the visual input we are receiving into separate parts. The descriptions also tend to enlarge certain movements. When she mentions “breathing,” or “lifting and lowering an eyebrow,” she uses words to make visible something which is barely noticeable. When she takes off her T-shirt and says, “lifting the shirt, lifting both arms,” but ends up putting the T-shirt back on, she does not say “putting the shirt back on,” but instead says: “changing my mind.” Here, the description allows her to expose an invisible mental process. The phrase “silently counting to ten,” for instance, triggers me to look for movements that reveal this mental process. At the same time, the less literal the description of the movement becomes, the more Chignell appeals to my imagination, even though what she is describing is happening right in front of me. Movement descriptions such as “flicking,” “rippling the spine,” “melting,” or “floating the knee” encourage me to active my imagination while watching the movements.

Roughly fifteen minutes into the piece, Chignell gradually moves towards the front of the stage and sits down: “crawling, reaching, grasping, lifting the microphone, sitting down, placing the hand on the knee, closing the eyes.” After she has closed her eyes, her mode of

59 Since Chignell has not published the text from this performance, the quotes will appear in the running text without references to publication date or page numbers. Other quotes without references throughout this dissertation also refer to text fragments from performances with no published text. When a published text is available, reference details will be provided.

60 The influence of language on our perception of reality, and its capacity to direct our gaze towards an aspect of reality, is also a recurrent topic in Merleau-Ponty’s language philosophy, in which he often elaborates on how the affinity between perception and language can explain the very structure of our relationship with the world that surrounds us (for an overview, see for instance, Lewis 1966, 20; Ihde 1973, 163; Dreon 2016, 56). As Ihde summarizes it, for Merleau-Ponty, “it is through the question of perception that the question of language and expression is reached – but it is through the question of language that the enigmas of perception may also be seen” (1973, 163).

talking changes radically: with the help of the microphone, her sentences are now more softly pronounced, more smoothly delivered. Her text evokes peculiar and abstract images: "body surplus delay," "tongue fingering the air," "her lips stretched across her face." During the rest of the performance, Chignell interrupts the alternation between saying what she is doing and doing what she is saying three times. Each interruption marks a switch to more poetic sections in which she delivers text fragments. These sections stand in sharp contrast to the descriptive pieces of text that are uttered in the rest of the performance. At the end of the performance, Chignell uses text kinetically. She no longer describes the sequence of movements she is performing, but starts asking questions about the movements instead: "Is this fading out? Am I fading out? This is not fading out." She moves towards the door. "Is this touching? Am I touching? This is not touching. Is this leaving? Am I leaving? This is not leaving." The questions establish a clearly definable rhythm, created in the composition of the text, and enhanced in the enunciation. Finally, she opens the door labelled "exit," leaves the space, and finishes the performance. On leaving the performance space, the audience can collect a leaflet containing the printed text of the poetic sections.

The intersection between dance and poetry is at the heart of Chignell's practice. On her website, Chignell describes herself as "an artist working across text, choreography and publishing" (Chignell, n.d.). After receiving her Bachelor in Dance from the Victorian College of the Arts (Australia), she moved to P.A.R.T.S. in Brussels, from which she graduated in 2018. When I interviewed her, Chignell mentioned that in *Poems and Other Emergencies*, she was particularly interested in how text can be used to change the perception of the body: "if language is already like a constitutive element of the body, then it is also something we can kind of apply to reshape the body. [...] to change maybe the body's legibility." (Chloe Chignell, pers. interview). This interest in using language as a way to negotiate its relation to the body is portrayed in the performance in several ways. In the poetry section, recurrent images such as mouth, tongue, speaking, or phrases such as "in the beginning was the word, and the word was in the speaker, and the speaker was in the word" or "speaking like that, like that mouth, like this gray" quite literally address the fact that producing language is inevitably a corporeal activity.[61] In the sections where Chignell simultaneously moves and describes her movements, the relation between language and body is introduced in the form of a duet. This duet switches between moments when language takes control of the movements and vice versa. At the end of the performance, movement becomes incorporated into the text via the compositional strategy of repetition and revision, enhanced by the rhythmic enunciation.

61 As Chignell explained, this poetic text emerged through "a character that [she] was developing, called the girl with her tongue out," which marked for her "the beginning of thinking about embodied language and then using the figure of the tongue as you can see the speech and you can hear it" (Chloe Chignell, pers. interview).

Even though kinetic textuality only appears in the last five minutes of *Poems and Other Emergencies*, the piece as a whole offers an insightful angle from which to approach the text-performance debate in terms of the questions that are relevant to this particular research. Chignell's piece stages in a quite explicit and self-conscious way the intertwined relation between the speaking body and the body in movement, and therefore allows us to enter the debate from a practical and embodied perspective. In this chapter, I will move away slightly from the specific focus on kinetic textuality to a more general view on the use of text in dance. In this way, I will introduce the different ways in which the text-performance debate in theater studies can contribute to a better understanding of the mechanisms at work in so-called "talking dance." At the same time, this broader view will eventually enable me to present kinetic textuality *as a specific form* of talking dance. In the first part of the chapter, I will provide a brief overview of the text-performance debate and highlight the different cues I take from this discourse. In the second part of the chapter, I will introduce two historical performances into the discussion, namely, Bill T. Jones's *Floating the Tongue* (1978) and Trisha Brown's *Accumulation with Talking Plus Watermotor* (1979). Through a comparison between these two pieces and *Poems and Other Emergencies*, I will point to some of the ways in which spoken text can correlate to choreographic movement and vice versa. By turning to Jarcho's contention, articulated in *Writing and the Modern Stage: Theater Beyond Drama* (2017), that a text that emphasizes its status as writing permeates the here and now temporality of the performance, I will outline how the *staging* of such a piece of writing in the context of dance likewise produces friction with the temporality of the dance movements alongside which it emerges. This threefold comparison between the performances will furthermore illustrate how, in the context of talking dance, it is also vital to attend to the text's dimension of embodiment. Here, I will borrow from the perspective that Garner, in particular, introduced to the debate with his *Bodied Spaces: Phenomenology and Performance in Contemporary Drama* (1994). In the third section, I will return to kinetic textuality and describe how, in this specific form of talking dance, dance as a quality becomes incorporated into the text. After the theoretical discussion that preceded this section, I will be able to better specify the role of postphenomenology in this research. This recent line of phenomenological thinking is based on an understanding of embodiment that offers an important clue about how text is carried towards the realm of dance in kinetic textuality. In other words, I do not aim in this chapter at addressing the relation between text and performance in ontological terms, nor do I seek to provide an exhaustive overview of the debate. Instead, the argument that I will develop here is meant to reveal how the incessant intertwinement between text and performance comes specifically to the fore in kinetic textuality.

The text-performance debate: the issues

As the story often goes, the text-performance debate is rooted in the historical background to the establishment of the discipline of theater studies. In her article "Why Performance? Why Now? Textuality and the Rearticulation of Human Presence," where Julia Walker insightfully traces the text-performance debate back to historical divergences between scholarly fields focused on text and disciplines that focused on performance, she has poignantly argued that "it is important to recognize that their separate disciplinarity was founded upon an arbitrary distinction between words and the bodies that give them voice" (2003, 155).[62] In the specific Flemish context, however, as Bart Philipsen remarks, the often-constructed narrative that theater studies "went along with a separation within or even a departure from literary studies departments" (2017, 100) is an over-simplified view on the matter. Arguing that this view "tends to stress the separation of both disciplines while losing sight of their liaison," he proposes "to rethink the mutual positions and possible cross-connections between literary and theater studies" (101). It is from the American context that I take my cue to contribute to this project and to uncover the synergies between the two fields. As mentioned in the previous chapter (pgs. 79 and following), the text analyses by Jarcho, Garner, and W.B. Worthen, who approach the page through theatrical parameters, illustrate how productive this liaison between literary and theater studies can be. To contextualize their views, it is instructive to briefly situate the text-performance debate within the broader historical development of the academic discipline.[63] It seems that debates over the status of text and performance are currently less dominant and frequent than a few decades ago. However, recent publications in the *European Journal for Theater and Performance* Special Issue on language and performance (2021) illustrate that the question remains pertinent and continues to resurface in different forms and contexts (Sugiera, Vanhaesebrouck, and De Laet 2021). Laura Cull's article "Philosophy as Drama: Deleuze and Dramatization in the Context of Performance Philosophy" (2013), or the contributions on textuality in *InterViews in Performance Philosophy: Crossings and Conversations* (2017), indicate how the emerging paradigm of Performance Philosophy (to which I already briefly referred in the Introduction, pgs. 32-33) also needs to be defined in relation to these questions.

62 In her contribution to *Staging Philosophy: Intersections of Theater, Performance, and Philosophy*, Walker positions the text-performance debate in the context of the difference between analytic (represented in Walker's text by Bertrand Russell) and continental philosophy (represented by the phenomenology of Husserl) (2006, 39). To study theatrical language, she contends, it is necessary to combine the two approaches. A movement between experiential knowledge and analytical knowledge would allow us to grasp the phenomenon of text in its full complexity (38).

63 Because it would lead me too far, I am not including the contributions of authors such as Peter Szondi or Raymond Williams in this brief overview of how the debate unfolded. While their work also had a significant impact on the debate, I have decided to focus merely on the contributions of the late 20th century and those of the 21st century, as I believe these are more relevant to my study.

Worthen traces unproductive misconceptions about the position of the theatrical text to the rhetoric of Performance Studies, which can see itself as an innovative because less text-based discipline (e.g., 1995, 17–20, 1998, 1094–1095, 2010, 64–77). Worthen is not the only one recognizing this condescending attitude towards text: in her insightful overview of disciplinary developments *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity* (2004), Shannon Jackson similarly indicates that the concurrent development of Performance Studies, Cultural Studies, and canon wars have contributed to an undervaluation of dramatic literature as an object of study. She illustrates how drama became associated with the dominant and canonical, and performance with the marginal and anti-canonical, even though dramatic literature has always occupied a "marginal canonical status in the humanities" (Jackson 2004, 24).[64] In his "The Efficacy/Effeminacy Braid: Unpacking the Performance Studies/Theater Studies Dichotomy," Stephen J. Bottoms, like Jackson and Worthen, connects "our now almost reflexive suspicion toward textuality" (2003, 181) to an anti-theatrical prejudice in how Performance Studies as a discipline presented itself as the more cutting-edge discipline. Bottoms insightfully shows that this self-definition was based on a dichotomous understanding differentiating between art with an impact on real life and mere entertainment. This has not only resulted in a "limited and limiting definition of that which constitutes 'theatre'" (173) but also affected the status of playwriting as an object of study. Rebecca Schneider, for example, explains how the privileging of "the actual" by the scholarship of early Performance Studies has often slid into a rejection of the "tyranny of text" and "the cult of playwriting" (2011, 124). In her acute reading of Richard Schechner's seminal article "Actuals: A Look into Performance Theory" (1970), Schneider outlines how he "attempted […] to dismiss the way in which repetition may be a vital part of bringing an event or an act or a gesture indicated by a prior script or story or event to actuality (again) in the theater" (125-126).[65]

The use of speech in *dance* allows us to approach this debate from a somewhat more oblique angle. We can here take our cue from Susan Leigh Foster, who in *Dances that Describe Themselves: The Improvised Choreography of Richard Bull* (2002) offers one of the most detailed accounts of the use and function of spoken text in a selection of postwar American talking dances. Clustered around a discussion of the work of American dancer and choreographer Richard Bull, Foster studies Bull's pieces in tandem with analyses of selected works by Yvonne Rainer, David Gordon, Grand Union, Trisha Brown, Bill T. Jones,

64 At the outset of her study, Jackson suggests how the disciplinary confusion is perhaps symptomatic of the intangibility of our research object: "the imprecise boundaries of the theatrical event made it difficult to know where the research object ended and its relevant context began" (2004, 6).

65 Schneider also provides an insightful overview of how Schechner eventually reconsiders the category of the actual in his later work and starts to conceptualize it in more complex (temporal) terms through notions of liminality and betweenness, see 2011, 124-127.

and Ishmael Houston-Jones. Throughout this treatise, several questions that tend to appear more frequently in a theater-oriented context are explicitly addressed in the context of dance. She for instance explains how in Richard Bull's pieces, through the use of "repetition, accumulation, canon, unison, and alliteration," the same choreographic principles as to movement are applied to speech, so speech becomes "assimilated to choreographic purposes" (Foster 2002, 177). Foster's analyses provide an overview of the various dramaturgical and formal effects of including text in dance: speech can be used to describe movements, to situate actions as part of a story, or to provide (dramatic or meta) commentary (169). Speech is also often included in a way which emphasizes its musicality (176), or its physicality (179). Moreover, she outlines, some dancers take up several "roles" while talking, as performers, choreographers, characters, or critics (186). Foster unravels how the use of text in dance challenges the way in which dance signifies, for instance through strategies of repetition, or by juxtaposing text and movement to create fragmented narratives and to multiply meanings (189, 201, 205). Foster's detailed analysis not only demonstrates how the use of speech in dance is a widespread phenomenon, but it also reminds us that there are different ways in which speech can be incorporated into dance, and that this affects both the status of the performance and that of the text, in different ways. In so doing, her work provides a useful starting point to further explore talking dance through the specific text-performance interaction on which it is based.

As the title of Foster's study already reveals, there is a clear correspondence between *Poems and Other Emergencies* and some of the key features of talking dance that Foster describes in her overview. Chignell mentioned in our interview that, by making this piece, she was "trying to understand both the agency of the moving expressions and the spoken expressions and trying to balance where does one kind of override the other? Where can I keep that tension where we don't really know which one is producing which?" (Chloe Chignell, pers. interview). In the sections in which movements and words constantly refer to one another, she tangibly demonstrates the co-constitutive relation between text and performance. It is difficult to decide which element is leading the duet and which one is following, since the movements and their verbal counterparts are performed simultaneously. Sometimes, the verbal sections can be interpreted as descriptions of the physical gestures, which would suggest that the text is subordinate to the performance. It is made clear that the text also depends on the performance. Sentences such as "making half a circle, making a line, rotating," or "making a point, standing on that point" do not make much sense without the accompanying choreographic movements. Yet, when the description precedes the movements, the verbal sections seem to function more explicitly as instructions that Chignell is giving herself, reversing the hierarchy between text and

performance. In leaving the exact relation between text and performance ambivalent, Chignell's performance demonstrates how difficult it is to conceptualize their relationship in terms of hierarchy. In this case, neither an understanding of the text as the origin of the performance nor a conceptualization of the performance as the ultimate locus of the work would offer a productive angle on the relation between text and performance.

In pieces such as *Poems and Other Emergencies*, where the performer has written the text, the question about the "origin" of either the text or the performance probably feels in any case less pertinent.[66] The issue of the performance's "faithfulness," however, returns frequently within the text-performance debate, especially in the context of dramatic theater and playwriting. The notion of faithfulness clearly demonstrates what is at stake in the debate: when a performance is merely conceptualized as an interpretation of the play, the play is still considered as having authority over the performance and the performance is consequently mainly assessed in terms of whether it stays "true" to the text (Worthen 2010, 17). At the same time, when the concern with faithfulness is shaken off altogether to instead consider the text as merely a means towards an end (performance), there is a risk that the dichotomy becomes subverted and "makes actual enactment the locus of ultimate value" (Jarcho 2017, 22).[67] Since the last two decades of the 20th century, poststructuralist rhetoric and theory have helped to shake off the debate's obsession with faithfulness, with a shift to a focus on the interaction between text and performance. A deconstruction of the notion of "origin," or Jacques Derrida's reading of Antonin Artaud's writings (presence always implies representation) and his thoughts on the unavoidable appearance of writing in speech, have for instance provoked decisive shifts in how the relation between text and performance can be conceptualized. It has allowed scholars to demonstrate that text and performance are not antagonistic forces but rather complementing components. It has, for instance, contributed substantially to how Elinor Fuchs and Brian Richardson have considered the disappearance of coherence and instability in the dramatic character (Fuchs 1996; Richardson 1997); it has also proposed a model—the notion of the trace—for considering the activity of interpretation that is at work between text and performance (e.g., Hamilton 2009). The text-performance debate also intersects with the debate on performance's ontology of presentness and the tendency to privilege the here and now in the temporality of performance. As Fuchs argues, the artistic and scholarly emphasis on improvisation, audience participation, and presence that characterized the performative turn of the 1960s and 1970s "was staked on […] a corresponding suspicion of the text" (1985,

66 As Duska Radosavljević insightfully outlines throughout her *Theater-Making: Interplay Between Text and Performance in the 21st Century* (2013), the way in which the relation between text and performance is conceptualized also depends largely on conceptions about (changed) authorship in performance making.
67 For a more detailed overview of how the debate evolved around this notion, see Jarcho's section on "faithfulness" (2017, 112-130).

164). Here as well, poststructuralist thinking has helped to introduce more complexity to the role of textuality in relation to presence.[68]

Worthen's contribution to the text-performance debate is particularly exemplary of the shift that poststructuralist notions have helped to provoke. Especially in his earlier writings, his ideas played a key role in tackling the "conceptual crisis" (Worthen 1998, 1093) around notions relating to the text and performance, for they provided an ideal theoretical framework to reorient the debate away from questions about origin and fidelity towards considering their interaction. Most importantly, this helped him to destabilize the notion of text as the sole authority in performance, which not only served a theoretical need, but was also encouraged by artistic shifts taking place within the theatrical genre. Drawing on this, Worthen convincingly outlined how text shares some features with the ontology of performance, such as the inherent instability of its meaning, its dependence on an audience (reader), and its capacity to be influenced by the context in which it appears (Worthen 1995, 1998, 2005, 2007). In one of his earliest attempts to renegotiate the relation between text and performance, he for instance asked, "how can dramatic performance be conceived not as the performance *of* the text but as an act of iteration, an utterance, a surrogate standing in that positions, uses, signifies the text within the citational practices of performance?" (1998, 1102). In his later work, *Drama: Between Poetry and Performance* (2010), Worthen is still occupied with tracing a performative dimension in text, and even in the way we interact with texts: "reading itself is a mode of performance, a remaking of the text according to learned protocols of engagement, critique, interpretation" (2010, 20).[69] The fact that, almost two decades after his seminal contribution to *TDR* in 1995, Worthen continues to draw attention to this inherent overlap between text and performance in a gesture to "defend" the study of texts is probably symptomatic of how certain (in the worst cases, condescending) assumptions about the position of textuality vis-à-vis performance continue to persist in the discipline.[70]

68 Rebecca Schneider's 2001 *Performance Research* essay "Performance Remains" (later included in a "reperformed" version in her *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (2011)) is exemplary in this regard. With the help of Derrida, Schneider elegantly deconstructs persisting binaries between the live and the documented, between presence and absence, and ultimately, between text and performance. In the "reperformed" version, Schneider also draws attention to how a focus on disappearance "became a kind of intellectual kerosene fueling the flame through which more traditional theatre studies—studies focused on the dramatic script for example—seemed to struggle to signal" (2011, 95).

69 Worthen also traced a performative dimension in print (by drawing attention to the fact that the seeming fixity of print is only a recent phenomenon in the history of books). To theorize this, he turned, for instance, to Roland Barthes's distinction between text and work (Worthen 1995, Worthen 2005).

70 The contributions of Meisner and Mounsef (2011) and Kallenbah and Kuhlman (2018) further illustrate that this by now fairly widely accepted understanding of a mutual relation between text and performance is more productive because it introduces a view on how the text (imaginatively) engages with performative parameters such as spatiality and corporeality.

In this more recent attempt to re-negotiate the relation between text and performance, Worthen uses the notions "tool" and "technology" to better capture their intertwinement. While other "metaphors used to conceive text and performance [...] *polarize* poetry and performance" (Worthen 2010, 23; emphasis added), these two concepts allow him to conceptualize how drama can be located at the intersection between poetry and performance:

> *Tools and technologies* shifts our perspective on the question of dramatic performance, suggesting a mobile, reciprocal relationship between the work writing might perform as *symbolic action* and the scene of its affordance, as *equipment for living* in the changing technology of the stage. (23; original emphasis)

In *Drama*, Worthen thus slightly withdraws from the poststructuralist take on the text-performance debate, and instead moves towards notions such as spatiality, embodiment, and agency to conceptualize how a dramatic text is inevitably always positioned between its form as a written object and its capacity for existence in performance. In line with his earlier arguments about how "drama responds to the essential duplicity of writing: writing appears to fix a verbal object, but its signifying capacity alters with each new scene of performance" (xiv), he now conceptualizes dramatic writing as a tool, since dramatic writing is "writing for use, an instrument" (xviii). These notions allow him to "activate the range of extra-textual reading practices" (63) and at the same time reject a view of dramatic writing as something that contains potential meanings whose multi-layered complexity is inevitably reduced in the staging of the text (64). Worthen's suggestion that theatrical language should be conceptualized as a tool or technology strikes a similar chord to a postphenomenological perspective on human-technology relations, and more specifically, to Mark Coeckelbergh's contention that the postphenomenological framework can also uncover the relation between humans and language (see Introduction, pgs. 36-37). Towards the end of this chapter, when wrapping up the more general overview of the debate in relation to talking dance, I will take this parallel as a cue to conceptualize the relation between text and performance in kinetic textuality.

Worthen calls for an interactive perspective on the relation between text and performance, rather than a search for origin and faithfulness, and this also better captures the dynamic at work between text and performance in the description section of *Poems and Other Emergencies*. The dialogue between speaking and moving is sometimes presented as a carefully balanced duet, which reminds us that the relation between text and performance can take many forms. Chignell's piece also reminds us that this interactive view of the relation between text and performance does not imply that they become exchangeable or lose their medial specificity. The moments where the descriptions of the movement

do not completely coincide with the actual movements, for instance, remind us of how the two registers function differently in terms of timing and temporality. Although the text and the movements both communicate their "content" in a similar manner, verbal communication may take a while, while it sometimes only takes a second to communicate something physically. Throughout the longest section of the performance, Chignell talks and moves at the same pace, which means that, for instance, the movement of lifting two arms takes approximately as long as it takes to finish the sentence "lifting two arms." At one point, however, she falls and steps, gravity prevents her from being able to control (or in this case, expand) the duration of the movement, and the description inevitably lags behind: the words "falling, stepping" are delivered after the actual falling and stepping movements have taken place. At the same time, when Chignell says "going to lift an arm, going to turn the head, going to bend one knee," and then waits a few seconds to actually start lifting her arm, turning her head, or bending her knee, she reminds that is impossible to perform a movement as if it takes place in the future. By capturing the different ways in which text and performance interact, these descriptive sections continue to foreground how the body is positioned in the midst of this interaction.

By staging an interaction between physical movement and described movement, *Poems and Other Emergencies* quite explicitly points to the somewhat obvious contention that the mediation between text and performance largely takes place in the *body* uttering the text. In "The Text/Performance Split across the Analytic/Continental Divide," Julia Walker summarizes how the text-performance debate revolved around a "question of where exactly meaning lay: did it reside in words alone, or in the bodies that gave them voice?" (2006, 19).[71] There is a similar observation in Stanton B. Garner's *Bodied Spaces: Phenomenology and Performance in Contemporary Drama* (1994), which predates his more recent work on kinesthesia, to which I referred in Chapter One (pgs. 65-66).[72] According to Garner, however useful poststructuralism has been to capture the inherent intertwinement between text and performance, it also "risks losing the very livedness that theater so boldly puts into play" (1994, 18). Garner therefore proposes a phenomenological perspective on dramatic writing, aimed at "counterbalance[ing] the disembodiedness that has characterized the phenomenon of language in much current literary and performance theory" (121). I already mentioned in the previous chapter that language's unmistakable connection to

71 In her chapter "Theatricality's Proper Objects: Genealogies of Performance and Gender Theory" (2003), Shannon Jackson insightfully outlines how feminist theory faced a different, but related, challenge in the aftermath of poststructuralist thought. In the same way, notions of embodiment and experience had to be measured against poststructuralism's instability of the subject and the concept of subjective agency.

72 In Garner's more recent work, *Kinesthetic Spectatorship in the Theatre: Phenomenology, Cognition, Movement*, this embodied and spatial approach towards language is further developed in terms of its relation to movement and kinesthesia. He challenges "the disembodiment that characterized discussions of language in literary and performance theory in the early 1990s and continues to mark some discussions almost twenty-five years later" (2018, 65).

embodiment, or "the living use of language" (Merleau-Ponty [1960] 1964, 77) offers an instructive perspective on the intertwinement between text and body in kinetic textuality (pgs. 58 and following). Garner's readings show that he is also an instructive interlocutor when it comes to theorizing the text-performance relation in a more general way. He argues that a phenomenological perspective on the fundamental affinity between language and the body uttering the language offers a useful perspective to make sense of the interaction between text and performance: "phenomenology [...] can propose its experiential accounts as the inescapable other face of signification" (Garner 1994, 15).[73] Foregrounding spatiality and the human body as "two of drama's most essential and elusive elements" (1), he insists that a phenomenological reading of playtexts "uncovers a field of perceptual and corporeal activity that exists as a latency within the text" (7). Such a reading is meant to "reembody, materialize the text, draw out this latency—not simply as a teleological point of realization beyond the playscript, but as an intrinsic component of dramatic textuality itself" (7).

Garner's contribution to the debate not only provides a very detailed account of the bodily dimension of dramatic textuality, it also demonstrates how authors already engage with this in their writing. In a discussion on theatrical realism, he for instance argues that the materiality of stage objects, and the sensorial engagement with props, create a certain paradox between the fictional reality of the play and the here and now reality of the audience engaging with these props (Garner 1994, 87-119). Garner also insightfully unravels how Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on the fundamental relation between language and embodiment fits with the specific artistic strategies in which this embodiment is erased, made more complicated, or straightforwardly rejected. Garner incorporates Merleau-Ponty's thinking in such a way that it applies to artistic strategies in which embodied language can *present itself* as disembodied, or as less embodied. Garner reminds us that a never resolving oscillation between embodiment and a certain distance from that embodiment is

73 The plea has frequently been made to use phenomenology as a vital perspective in performing arts scholarship. Both theater studies and dance studies have a long-standing tradition of turning to phenomenological thinking (e.g., Sheets-Johnstone 1966; Wilshire 1982; O. States 1985; Fraleigh 1987; Garner 1994; Rayner 1994; Lepecki 2000; Kozel 2007), and more recent publications also illustrate its relevance in contemporary discussions on the discipline (e.g., Bleeker et al. 2015; Home-Cook 2015; Grant et al. 2019). As Maaike Bleeker, Jon Foley Sherman, and Eirini Nedelkopoulou put it in their *Introduction to Performance and Phenomenology: Traditions and Transformations*, both phenomenology and performance "are modes of thinking and embodied engagement with the world that invite ambiguity instead of identification, and that locate the stakes of grasping that world in our urgent and inconclusive contact with others" (2015, 1). In the particular context of dance studies, phenomenology offers an insightful framework to conceptualize the art form's relation to embodiment. As Ellen W. Goellner and Jacqueline Shea Murphy put it in their introduction to *Bodies of the Text*, "Maurice Merleau-Ponty countered the mind-body binary that structures much Western thinking by locating consciousness in the body. In so doing, he opened a way for us to understand bodies as capable of generating ideas in structures of movement as well as in habitual bodily being. [...] Reclaiming the body-subject, exploring the body's discursive meaning [...] is, in part, the work of dance studies" (1995, 10). Despite the vast amount of work done on phenomenology in theater and dance studies, it seems that currently, the paradigm is much less frequently used in the context of textuality, and that Garner's work still remains an exception to the rule. As he observes in his recent book, while his earlier work "challenged the disembodiment that characterized discussions of language in literary and performance theory in the early 1990s," it "continues to mark some discussions almost twenty-five years later" (2018, 65).

always at work in Merleau-Ponty's notion of embodiment. Because it is "directed toward a world of which it is inextricably and materially a part" (27), "this material grounding also works [...] to 'assail' or dispossess the subjectivity thereby embodied" (30). He clarifies that Merleau-Ponty's corporeality is fundamentally ambiguous; it is both object and subject to itself, and therefore provides space for an understanding of corporeality as presented or experienced in a disembodied form.[74]

Another question that has been central to the text-performance debate is the attempt to make sense of the artistic impulse (emerging in various forms throughout the course of the 20th century) to move beyond a dramatic structure of theater making. These shifts, most famously summarized in Hans-Thies Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theater* (2006), have encouraged scholars to conceptualize the relation between text and performance less from an ontological and more from an artistic point of view. Lehmann's book discusses artistic strategies that trade the coherence and unity of the dramatic text for a more fragmentary dramaturgy that may include text, but that is no longer governed by it. In a semiotic vein, Lehmann explains that postdramatic theater can mainly be characterized by a different use of theatrical signs, in which text no longer functions as the "master" sign regulating the other signs (as opposed to drama) (2006, 17). The simultaneity of different sign systems, experiments with the density of signs, an emphasis on musicality, visuality, and physicality, a dramaturgy governed by concepts rather than stories and structured by montage and fragmentation, or the use of different media are some of the main characteristics of this development foregrounded by Lehmann (87, 89, 91, 93, 95, 112, 114, 167). With this publication, Lehmann proposed a terminology and analytic framework to capture the various developments leading to a form of theater that no longer exclusively relies on texts but also on "bodies as its main signifying material" (162) and that "articulates not meaning but energy, it represents not illustrations but actions" (163).

Although, in postdramatic theater, the text is no longer the steering principle of the performance, in some of the examples that Lehmann provides, it continues to occupy a substantial position within it. As he repeatedly makes clear, the shift to postdrama does not imply that less text is used, it merely suggests that its status is radically altered. Language's changed status within postdrama, for instance, can be recognized in how it appears in "a quasi-mechanical manner" or is organized around "techniques that capture the gaze but frustrate the hunger for meaning" (Lehmann 2006, 114). Lehmann mainly focusses on the corporeality of textuality in terms of how postdrama tends to stage a *conflict* between text

74 Garner mentions, for instance, a similar ambiguity in the corporeality presented in Samuel Beckett's plays: "Beckett's drama explores the instability between a profound material inherence in the physical body and a corresponding alienation, and it dramatizes the subject's futile pursuit of any means for overcoming its own noncoincidence" (1994, 31).

and body (145).[75] He positions the dramatic structure within a more narrative-oriented dramaturgy, in a broader artistic development that can already be traced in epic theater (29–38), and also explains in an unmistakably Brechtian manner how a postepic impulse governs postdramatic theater: "the spectators are given the chance to feel their own presence, to reflect on it, and to contribute to the unfinished character themselves" (108). The idea that text continues to occupy a central position in postdrama is made most explicit by Lehmann's reference to playwrights as examples of the postdramatic paradigm: "retaining the dramatic dimension to different degrees, Werner Schwab, Elfriede Jelinek, Rainald Goetz, Sarah Kane and René Pollesch, for example, have all produced texts in which language appears not as the speech of characters – if there still are definable characters at all – but as an autonomous theatricality" (18). In Lehmann's conception of postdramatic theater, in other words, a performance in which text plays a prominent role can still be considered "postdramatic," as long as the text and its staging are to some extent detached from each other (see for instance his discussion on stage poetry: 59-60).

Lehmann's publication has received widespread critical response within the field (e.g.,: Barnett 2008; Tomlin 2009; Jürs-Munby, Carroll, and Giles 2013; Ilter 2015; Roberts 2015; Rodríguez 2016; Jarcho 2017; Boyle, Cornish, and Woolf 2019).[76] Publications that approach artists who were not initially included in Lehmann's book through the framework of postdrama prove the appeal and efficacy of this concept. The contributions to the volume *Het statuut van de tekst in het postdramatische theater* (Swyzen and Vanhoutte (eds.) 2011), for instance, demonstrate that Lehmann's paradigm offers helpful angles from which to describe the dramaturgies and poetics of some important theatrical developments in the Belgian context. Many examples can be found of studies pointing to similar tendencies that predate Lehmann's publication, or that do not use the notion of "postdramatic theater." Rather than illustrating that Lehmann is by no means the only author who has contemplated this shift, these contributions confirm the tendency itself. For instance, analyses of the shifted status of the character in drama, of the importance of novelization of the theater, forms of writing in an aesthetic of fragmentation, or the tendency to deconstruct classical texts by means of innovative directorial practices, all seek to address the changed status of text in theater (e.g., Fuchs 1996; Bradby 2007; Mounsef and Feral 2007; Ryngaert 2007; Boenisch 2008). Scholars who adopt the notion of postdrama to study the work of

75 In Chapter Five of this dissertation (pgs. 203 and following), I will discuss this negotiation at length, claiming that it is mainly based on an understanding of text as a "foreign body," and will demonstrate that this perspective is not congruent with kinetic textuality and the hyper-dialectically intertwined relation between text and body that I have identified as a key aspect of kinetic textuality.

76 Much of the consternation around Lehmann's book probably has to do with the fact that his theory needs to be understood in light of very specific theater practices and evolutions in the field. Unlike some other contributions to the text-performance debate, his approach did not consider the question of the status of the text in ontological or absolute terms—despite the somewhat universalizing rhetoric that resulted from it.

playwrights confirm that this framework does not necessarily preclude a focus on the (written) text. David Barnett's "When is a Play not a Drama? Two Examples of Postdramatic Theatre Texts" (2008) and Karen Jürs-Munby's "The Resistant Text in Postdramatic Theatre: Performing Elfriede Jelinek's *Sprachflächen*" (2009) are examples of this. Barnett's focus on limitations of representation (2008, 15), his contention that spontaneous speech has become suspect (18), and Jürs-Munby's observation about Jelinek's work that "the 'authorization' of the 'text' has become radically unstable and to a certain extent undecidable" (2009, 52) also indicate that postdramatic theater (either in its theorical form or in practice) has to a large extent been informed by the same poststructuralist views on text and writing as in Worthen's work. Taken together, these various studies illustrate that pieces that make the same move beyond drama identified by Lehmann reintroduce a critical assessment of the relationship between text and performance.

In her book *Writing and the Modern Stage: Theater Beyond Drama* (2017), Julia Jarcho also studies pieces that expose some sort of negotiation with a dramatic organization of the theater, more specifically in the theatrical writing of Henry James, Gertrude Stein, Samuel Beckett, Suzan-Lori Parks, and Mac Wellman. However, the way in which she assesses the text-performance relation in this shift differs greatly from Lehmann. Jarcho mainly examines how some compositional strategies in theatrical writing can produce friction within performance's here-and-now temporality (see also Chapter One, pgs. 79 and following).[77] This is different from the postdramatic approach, in which the notion of presence produced in performance is cherished as one of its distinguishing features. While Lehmann identified the notion of co-presence as a central characteristic of post-drama (2006, 134), Jarcho rather investigates the strategies whereby writing undermines these "shared energies" (Lehmann 2006, 150). This difference comes most prominently to the fore when we compare their respective arguments about monologues. Even though they both identify the monologue as a key factor in the shift beyond drama (e.g., Lehmann 2006, 125-129 and Jarcho 2017, 172-197), the monologues that Lehmann studies accentuate its function as speech addressed to an audience (2006, 127) while Jarcho's monologues present themselves "as a profoundly unsociable form [...] negating the community present in the theater" (2017, 176). Although Lehmann also explains that departing from the dramatic dramaturgy has resulted, among other things, in "a neo-lyrical theatre that understands the scene as a site of an 'écriture' in which all components of the theatre become letters in a poetic 'text'" (2006, 58), Jarcho, on the other hand, considers, more radically, how the surpassing of drama happens on the page, and not exclusively in the performance of the

77 In a comparable manner, Rebecca Schneider also studies the mechanisms of playwriting in order to lay bare the multi-layeredness of theatrical presence, specifically in the context of playtexts: Suzan-Lori Parks' *The America Play* (1994) and Linda Mussmann's *Cross Way Cross* (1987) (2011, 64-86).

text.[78] Jarcho's emphasis on the literary strategies of the writing restores to the text itself its status as a central force in the dramaturgy of the performance and differs from Lehmann's notion that "the theatrical means beyond language are positioned equally alongside the text and are *systematically thinkable without it*" (2006, 55; emphasis added).[79]

In Chapter One, I showed how my definition of kinetic textuality is indebted to both Jarcho and Ganer's positions in the text-performance debate. Their views enable me to grasp one of its key characteristics, namely, the way in which it addresses its audience through a peculiar oscillation between, on the one hand, kinesthetically drawing the spectator into the piece, and, on the other, a text which is not fully accessible in the moment of the performance. Jarcho's contention that specific compositional strategies in the text perforate the here and now of performance also provides an instructive angle on the broader context of speech, when used in the context of dance. Even though Jarcho focusses less directly on writing from the perspective of an actual staging, her argument that the text renounces the here and now of performance does provide insight into how it already negotiates its status in performance. Her assertion that the written text can deliver its theatricality on the page is consistent with Garner's argument that embodiment is already a quality of the page: "the dramatic text [...] is a valuable means of access to the stage in particular phenomenological configurations" (1994, 5). His approach is built upon a similar conception to Jarcho's, that is, writing for the stage always, in one way or another, negotiates its embeddedness within performance. Jarcho writes that the texts she studies "engage explicitly and extensively with theater *qua* theater: that there is reason to hypothesize from the outset that theater takes up space in each author's imagination, and hence in that of the work" (2017, 21). What I mainly borrow from Garner's phenomenological account of dramatexts is the contention that the "uniquely theatrical moment when writing stumbles, as it were, on the phenomenon of speech" (1994, 122) can already be articulated in the composition of the written text. I also adopt his reading of how Merleau-Ponty's inherent hyper-dialectical thinking and constant negotiation between two seemingly opposing positions fits well with the context of the performing arts, where constellations are always negotiated and appear in

78 Despite their differences, Lehmann and Jarcho both argue that this shift marks a growingly complex temporality. Lehmann's suggestion to conceptualize the "crisis" of drama in terms of a crisis of time (2006, 154) to some extent resonates with Jarcho, who mainly approaches writing's disruptive force in terms of how it challenges the temporality of performance's here and now.

79 Karen Jürs-Munby's "The Resistant Text in Postdramatic Theatre: Performing Elfriede Jelinek's *Sprachflächen*," resonates with some arguments put forward by Jarcho, as she points to the similarities between the artistic strategies studied by Jarcho and those recognized as exemplary for postdramatic theater. Jürs-Munby uses Lehmann's framework to study what she calls the "resistant force" in Elfriede Jelinek's writing; a resistance that she primarily defines in its refusal to comply with "conventional theatrical practice" (2009, 48). She locates the resistance of the text in its formal composition—its musicality and its wordplay (48, 49)—and in the effect it generates, that is, to "openly exhibit the conflict between text and performance" (48). Although Jürs-Munby seems to be more concerned with the kind of performance that results from the text, and less with the theatrical mechanisms on the page that foreshadow this conflict, she develops an argument similar to Jarcho's.

different forms. This provides an important cue to apply Merleau-Ponty's reflections on language, expressed on an ontological level, to the particular context of artistic strategies.

Despite the congruence of Jarcho and Garner's views, there are obviously differences between their approaches. Most specifically, Jarcho's readings are informed by a focus *away* from the present, as opposed to the fixation on phenomenal presence that Garner identifies as a key aspect of the study of dramatic texts. Jarcho aims to uncover "how the perception of theater's heightened phenomenal presence, or here-and-nowness, pushes writers to discover countervailing powers of negativity within the theatrical" (2017, 7). Garner's perspective, on the other hand, builds upon the contention that "if poststructuralism stresses textuality and the play of absence in its account of language, phenomenology shifts attention to the play of presence in the word-turned-speech" (1994, 136). One specific quote from *The Prose of the World* illustrates how the tendency of phenomenology to emphasize the present moment also resurfaces in Merleau-Ponty's language philosophy: "the distinct existence of systems of speech and of the significations which they intend *belongs to the order* of perception or *of the present*" (Merleau-Ponty [1969] 1973, 40; emphasis added). Given phenomenology's emphasis on the observing subject, it comes as no surprise that the present moment of perception is the central focus of the analysis. However, as a perspective on textuality within the performing arts, this seems difficult to align with a view on theatrical writing that works to draw attention to the moment beyond the co-presence between spectator and performance. One way of indicating that a phenomenological perspective on language as embodied is not necessarily a critical mismatch with a focus on the force of writing to undermine that condition, is to repeat that kinetic textuality is rooted in and reproduces the very confusing irreconcilability between these two effects. However, since I already made that point in the previous chapter, it seems more productive to demonstrate in a broader sense how the two perspectives, essentially oriented towards the page, can be used as instructive angles to address textuality on the dance stage.

Talking dances and the role of (embodied) writing

At first sight, the context of dance and choreography seems quite far removed from the playtext-oriented and dramatic context of Garner and Jarcho's views. However, the parameters through which they approach theatrical writing are also well suited to tracing the particularity of speech within dance. More specifically, Garner's view on the role of embodiment in textuality for the stage and Jarcho's take on the temporal mechanisms provoked by writing also enable us to approach the mechanisms of textuality from a dance angle. For Garner, the main arguments for adopting a phenomenological framework for text analysis are linked to the specific characteristics of the dramatext (its relation to

fictional space and embodied character); text's embeddedness within dance compels a similar theoretical perspective. The "moment when writing stumbles on the phenomenon of speech" (Garner 1994, 122) in dance, perhaps even more pressingly urges us to follow his now almost 30-year-old suggestion to adopt a phenomenological framework for the analysis of texts. This perspective can, perhaps somewhat dissonantly, be combined with some of Jarcho's contentions about "the theatrical work on the page" (2017, xiii), claiming that writing can inject a temporality into the performance that surpasses its existence in the here and now. The time perspective through which Jarcho studies compositional strategies in the text seems equally essential for grasping the status of the text in its relation to dance; the way in which text negotiates its relation to the passing of time seems crucial to an understanding of writing in relation to dance.

To further unravel how Jarcho and Garner's contentions about playwriting can be applied to talking dance, I will, in the following sections, compare *Poems and Other Emergencies* with two pieces that Susan Leigh Foster includes in her account of talking dances: Bill T. Jones's *Floating the Tongue* (1978) and Trisha Brown's *Accumulation with Talking plus Watermotor* (1979). The pieces of Jones and Brown in particular bear striking similarities with Chignell's self-conscious exploration of how language mediates the (perception of) the body. Jones's *Floating the Tongue* also alternates between an associative, poetic use of text, and a more detached way of describing the movements he is performing. As in Chignell's piece, he reflects on the relation between text and movement using different rhetorical registers. In Brown's piece, the text comprises two fragments which she intermingles just as she intermingles two recurring movement sequences—similarly to how Chignell alternates between the poetic and the descriptive sections in the course of her performance. In the self-conscious commentary describing what she is doing, in the alternation between two text fragments, and even in the casual sporty outfit that Chignell is wearing, *Poems and Other Emergencies* is reminiscent of *Floating the Tongue* and *Accumulation with Talking Plus Watermotor*. I will compare the three pieces in terms of the different textual strategies they adopt. By returning to the parameters foregrounded by Garner and Jarcho, I will reveal how the composition of the text intervenes in its embodied nature in performance. Looking at the way in which the written text announces both its embodiment as well as the temporal interplay that it provokes on stage in these three talking dances will help me to uncover, at the end of this chapter, the specific text-performance relationship upon which kinetic textuality is based.

As is well known, Trisha Brown played an important role in the development of Judson Dance Theater and created several pieces that adhere to the minimalist, humoristic, and "easygoing" aesthetics that are often associated with this group (see also Introduction, pgs.

25 and following). Similarly to the works of Brown's Judson colleagues, *Accumulation with Talking Plus Watermotor* also stems from a strong "need for new ways of moving" (Burt 2006, 3) that aims to distance itself from the modern dance idiom. The exploration of new modes of spectatorship is also a recurring feature in her oeuvre (4). For instance, "by troubling and subverting expectations of technical virtuosity and making new sorts of material that were closer to the sorts of movements and behavior found in everyday life, such works also undermined the hierarchical relationship between dancers and audiences" (109). This interest in experimenting with perception and perspective most explicitly resurfaces in Brown's site-specific pieces (Briginshaw 2001, 48). Like Brown, Bill T. Jones has also played a key role in the development of postwar American dance.[80] His choreographic signature combines a diverse range of artistic influences and genres and his oeuvre ranges from Broadway productions to pieces with a more experimental or improvisatory aesthetic.[81] As Sally Banes has put it, he "has crafted a synthesis of virtuosity and pedestrian movement, avant-gardism and populism, formal concerns and political outcry" (1998, 10). The combination of spoken text with choreographic physical movement has been a recurrent element throughout this oeuvre. *Floating the Tongue* is only one example of the many ways in which Jones used text in his choreographies.[82] By combining several divergent artistic influences and by developing artistic strategies to create pieces that were innovative in both dramaturgical as well as formal terms, Jones played an important role in the aesthetic evolutions of the previous century in the American dance scene. Since he "inhabit[s] interdisciplinary milieux that treat dancing as a full partner to the other arts" and celebrates "the hybrid nature of dance—its salutary impurity," as Banes explains, Jones has been "important not only to the field of dance, but far beyond it, to the worlds of music,

80 To some extent, the formal choices of Jones's early work bear similarities to the dance experiments conducted at the Judson Memorial Church. Some of the characteristics typically attributed to the Judson aesthetic—creating pieces that depend on the active role of the audience (Burt 2006, 28), detached compositional styles (29), an exploration of negativity and absence (33), and an interest in stillness and slow motion (36)—return in Jones's early choreographies. As Carl Paris puts it, Jones's works explored "postmodern concepts of the Judson Church dancers who challenged entrenched notions of high art and, more specifically, high modernism" (2005, 65). However, in Jones's aesthetics, the minimalist and sometimes rather cerebral aesthetics of the Judson generation were "reconfigured by a more humanistic 'neo-expressionism,' which included contact improvisation and increased infusions in the downtown scene of black aesthetics, multi-culturalism, personal narrative, and social commentary—as well as a return to physical virtuosity" (65-66). This "was in practice at odds with the 'no to spectacle,' 'no to virtuosity' minimalism of Yvonne Rainer and her postmodern adherents" (67). Jones's use of improvisation, in particular, points to a formal parallel between his oeuvre and Judson. Contact improvisation in particular, introduced to him by Lois Welk, played a key role in his early work (Paris 2005, 65). Many of Jones's pieces combine principles of contact improvisation and rather abstract movement with an explicit penchant for narrative, story, and maybe even theatricality. Allegedly, this peculiar combination is an example of a broader trend in New York dance at that time. As Sally Banes, for instance, has noticed, while the scene in the 1960s focused mainly on casualness and everydayness to counter the expressivity of modern dance, in the 1970s a shift could be noticed, marked by a return to narrative and virtuosity (1980, 18). This shift (or rather, Banes's terminology used to capture this shift) provoked a rather fierce debate between Banes and Susan Manning around the notions of modern and postmodern dance, see Chapter Four, footnote 150.

81 Bill T. Jones currently still works as the artistic director of his dance company Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company.

82 For an elaborate overview on the role of spoken text in Jones's oeuvre, see Paris 2005 and Dent 2005.

theater, film, video, computer imaging, and visual art—and to the discourse surrounding the arts" (15). Michelle Dent provides a helpful description of the various artistic strategies that have contributed to this wide-ranging influence: "he has been a frequent participant and forerunner in many of the other major political debates and aesthetic movements of our time, including multiculturalism, aesthetic formalism, and confessional-seeming solo performance art, to name only a few" (2005, 27).

Jones's eight-minute solo performance *Floating the Tongue* consists of four parts. In the first, Jones is dancing in silence. The second part corresponds most directly to Chignell's piece: here, he very meticulously describes the dance sequence he performed in the first part. While describing it, he simultaneously performs the sequence again but more slowly this time. He describes it by for instance saying "take the left leg in to hook behind, the right finger drops the wrist, the elbow, the shoulder, and everything is moving back to upstage left as one shifts one's hip onto the left leg, the left arm breaks over the head, the right leg comes in," etc. In the third part of the solo, he improvises and adds various verbal associations to the same set of movements, referencing personal as well as political themes and delivering sentences such as "I wasn't so sure about the third piece," "Mickey Mouse," "your mind, your mind, your hand, your little thing," "it is so good to have choreography," "throw it all open, throw it away," "we are on the verge of the last war in the world," "end, glorious end." In the fourth section, to use Barbara Browning's words, "he loosens text, tongue, muscle, and bone, and allows both language and movement to exceed their own bounds. His words swell and explode into groans and shouts, his movement bursting out of the set phrase into spasms, shivers, and convulsions" (2005, 89). The effect of intermingling spoken text with bodily movement is that he foregrounds his dancing body as a body to be looked at. According to Carl Paris, this is a characteristic feature of his early work, where he often composed a "voyeuristic construction of himself" (2005, 64). In this particular piece, text introduces different ways to approach this voyeuristic construction. As Foster describes it, "Jones generates multiple perspectives from which to view and interpret the dance" (2002, 195). The variety of perspectives emerge through the different textual registers that are added to the movement sequence, which each time introduce a different way of looking at the same movement.

A comparison between the description sections of *Floating the Tongue* with the description section of *Poems and Other Emergencies*, demonstrates how Chignell and Jones embody their text in radically different ways. This difference is of course rooted in the specific ways in which the text is spoken, but also relates to the ways in which their respective texts are composed. Whereas Chignell in her description sections consistently uses gerunds to name the movements ("taking three quick steps"), Jones mainly alternates between imperative

constructions to describe his movements ("drop the shoulders down, relax the breath down") and constructions where the subject of his sentence is either a body part ("the right hand with a pointed finger comes to the lips") or the general "one" ("as one shifts one's hip"). In so doing, he takes up the role of a choreographer or dance instructor, "using the kind of informal terminology that a choreographer or a teacher might invoke in demonstrating a movement sequence" (Foster 2002, 193). Through the mode of uttering the descriptions as well as through the structure of the compositions themselves, Jones seemingly distances himself from the movement he is performing. The text creates some distance between himself and the movement sequence, as if not he, but, indeed, simply his body parts are performing the movement. For that reason, it feels as if he embodies the text in a slightly disembodied way. This is distinct from Chignell's strategy, where the gerund construction of her text merges more symbiotically with the movements she is performing.

The third section of *Floating the Tongue*, in which Jones combines his dance sequence with free associations, resembles Chignell's poetry sections. As we have seen, in *Poems and Other Emergencies*, Chignell also inserts text fragments which introduce a sharp distinction from the more matter-of-fact sections where she describes the movements she is performing. Sentences such as "touch sliding through/breath-stained places/body still in delay/I was wondering if I could continue speaking" are clearly rooted in a different textual register. Other than the more straightforward description sections, the meaning of some phrases remains rather enigmatic: "one long slick emergency," "in fluorescent curiosity," "all these bodies adrift until the space between us asks/ how wide is this." While delivering these text fragments, Chignell not only stops moving, but also explicitly gazes away from the audience. During the first fragment, she sits upright with two knees bent and her eyes closed; during the second fragment, she lies down on her back with her legs spread, rests on her elbows, while one knee is bent and her head is tilted backwards; and during the third fragment, she is curled up into the shape of a ball against the back wall while her head faces the wall. Although the body remains emphatically present throughout the poetry sections, the text is embodied in a different way. The poetry is delivered without explicit accompanying physical movements, so our attention is directed more towards the text itself.

This marks an important difference with Jones's piece, since he not only keeps dancing while delivering his poetic associations, but also presents them as something more contingent upon the moment of delivery. Browning provides an insightful explanation of how the text operates in the section in which Jones freely associates with the movements he performs. She outlines how "each association is indelibly written in the seemingly fleeting

motion of the dance" (2005, 89).[83] The text in this associative section is mainly generated through improvisation: "in the third iteration of the dance, he allows himself to 'read' its choreographic text by improvisationally allowing the movement phrases to evoke myriad associations and memories" (89). The naturalness, spontaneity, and impromptu flair of Jones's use of text in these sections contributes to the impression that text emerges (and dissolves) in the here and now of its deliverance.[84] Jones's frequent hesitations or interruptions further confirm the impression that the text is being created during the moment of performance. In Chignell's poetry sections, by contrast, the text is presented as a carefully composed poetic piece of writing, reminding us that it was created *before* the moment of its performance, of what Jarcho calls "the elsewhere of its poetic composition" (2017, 11). Through the careful rhythmic composition of the sentences as well as the way in which Chignell embodies the text, the text injects another temporal layer into the performance. While Jones's poetic associations are more closely tied to the moment of performance, as his way of delivering the text suggests improvisation, Chignell's poem ultimately draws attention to the medial (temporal) difference between text and performance, as her text refuses to be (only) tied to the logic of the here and now.

Although the writing in *Poems and Other Emergencies* is delivered in the here and now of performance, the specific composition and embodiment of the text emphasizes that it was composed beyond the moment of this performance. Carefully thought out rhythmic sentences such as "bright winds / damp origins / bright winds / damp origins / bright winds / damp origins / touch sliding through / damp origins / touch sliding through / damp origins / touch sliding through / breath-stained places" differ from Jones's less structured and freely improvised text. Chignell thus embodies the text as a reader—an effect that is enhanced by her use of the microphone to deliver the text. At the end of the performance, a leaflet printed with only the text of the poetry sections is handed out to the audience; this act confirms that this is a piece of writing that indeed exists beyond the moment of the performance. While this gesture on the one hand seems rooted in a desire to invite the audience to prolong the existence of the performance, it also reminds us of the text's

83 Interestingly in this context, Browning's analysis of Jones's piece is embedded in a text devoted to Derrida, who at that time had only recently passed away. Browning aims to reflect "on what that particular loss might mean to both dance practitioners and scholars" (2005, 87). The Derridean reading that convincingly structures her analysis of *Floating the Tongue* is a good example of similar debate on how the text (the choreographic score) is related to the performance (the danced moment on stage) within dance studies. Here as well, scholars have frequently turned to poststructuralist conceptions of writing to unsettle unproductive binaries between the two modalities. In Chapter Three (pgs. 121 and following), I will further explore the nexus between dance and writing, through the work of Stéphane Mallarmé.

84 Browning insightfully explains that Jones's use of improvised speech also draws attention to how improvisation happens through pre-arranged structures, and that speech therefore always depends on a structure of writing: "While *Floating the Tongue* may appear to pass through layers of text and improvisation, it demonstrates the free play in the text, and the ways in which improvisation is predicated upon iterability. Body memory means that the body is a book scrawled with its past" (2005, 90).

existence as a piece of writing that transcends the moment of utterance in performance. Reading this text, for instance on our way home, we can take breaks, we can re-read, or better grasp the parallels developed in the lines—an experience of the text that remained largely unavailable during Chignell's performance. While in Jones's piece, we get the impression that the text is being created on the stage, in *Poems and Other Emergencies*, we understand that it materialized on the page.

The relation between choreographic movement and embodied text is also carefully explored in Brown's *Accumulation with Talking Plus Watermotor*. In this eleven-minute solo, Brown uses spoken text to directly address the audience, and talks about the dance that she is performing. Brown's piece is constructed as a juxtaposition between two of her earlier solos, *Primary Accumulation* (1972) and *Watermotor* (1978). Describing the trajectory of the former piece, Brown explains: "*Primary Accumulation* is a self-contained unit of movement, which I view as a stationary object. I went on to use that dance as material for making other dances. On May 16, 1973, it became a group dance that was no longer stationary" (1975, 29). This group dance was entitled *Group Primary Accumulation*, and in 1974, she created a version in boats on the lake Loring Lagoon in Minneapolis, which was called *Group Primary Accumulation—Raft Version* (31).[85] It was not until 1979 that Brown used this "self-contained unit of movement" in relation to spoken text. She opens *Accumulation with Talking Plus Watermotor* by saying "Start - started - starting to talk - while doing this dance." In the talking as well, juxtaposition is the guiding principle of her composition: she alternates between two stories, a story about receiving an alumnus award from her high school, and the story of creating this dance.[86] According to Foster, the piece "summons up an expression-filled self, only to direct its expressivity into the resolute matter-of-factness of moving and speaking" (Foster 2002, 192). Like many of Brown's pieces, repetition plays a major role in generating this effect. As Ramsay Burt explains, the effect of repetition in this particular piece is that the "personal or autobiographical material was rendered more impersonal, leading each to explore ways of minimizing performative presence" (2006, 67). Two key features of Brown's choreographic signature thus return in her mode of talking: an aesthetic of everydayness, presented through formal repetition.[87]

Like Jones, Brown generates much of the text of *Accumulation with Talking plus Watermotor* through improvisation: the stories she tells during a performance of the piece are not set but "improvised from a stock of stories" (Burt 2006, 147). Brown's use of improvisation to

85 For a more elaborate overview of the various stages in the creation of *Accumulation With Talking Plus Watermotor*, see Kartsaki 2017, 34-35.

86 A more detailed description of this solo can be found in Foster 2002, p. 190 or Burt 2006, p. 138-139, 142, 145.

87 Foster describes how the everyday aesthetic is evoked in the piece, despite the quite complex choreographic sequence she is performing: "the movement's difficultness, daunting in its complexity, is downplayed by Brown's economical and relaxed execution, thus alluding to virtuosity but refusing to deliver it" (Foster 2002, 192).

develop "ways of structuring material that an older generation of modern dancers took for granted" (69) is in this piece also used to generate text. As in Jones's piece, this gives the impression that what is being presented is being created and therefore tied to the present moment, or, to use Jarcho's words, their texts are presented as "a communion with what is happening here and now" (2017, 48). The text in *Accumulation with Talking Plus Watermotor* is not directly linked to the choreographic movements. This differs from Jones's piece, in which text and movement, throughout the four sections, always refer to one another in some way. As Foster puts it, "unlike Brown's treatment of talking and dancing as autonomous and separate activities, Jones's speech and movement reference and mutually define one another" (2002, 193). The way in which Brown embodies her text mainly emphasizes the cognitive effort it takes to execute a dance while talking, and presents talking and dancing as "two incommensurate activities" (193). During the piece itself, she addresses the difficulty of combining dance with speech: "start - started - starting - to talk - while doing this dance - is like - opening - a front loading - washing machine - while doing a load of typewrites," or "I liked the fact - that I could not - keep track - of my dancing - while talking - and vice versa."[88] The flow of her sentences is often brusquely interrupted by silent pauses because she has to focus on executing the movements, thus illustrating that talking while dancing requires a lot of concentration.[89]

By telling the audience an "everyday" anecdote in what Foster described as a "straightforward and consistently neutral" mode of talking (2002, 190), Brown seeks to renegotiate the relation between the dancer and their audience.[90] Like *Poems and Other Emergencies*, *Accumulation with Talking Plus Watermotor* also includes the audience in her reflection on choreography: as Peggy Phelan writes about the piece, "Brown invites the spectator to consider the composition of her speech act with the same rigor she asks us to consider the composition of her choreography" (2004, 18).[91] A similar argument returns in Erini Kartsaki's analysis of the piece: "the strategy of accumulation [...] drew the viewer's attention

88 Foster describes how the formal qualities of the text contrast with the formal composition of the movements: "the matter-of-factness of Brown's narration differs markedly from the ebullient physicality of *Watermotor*, and the progression, even though interrupted, through each of the stories contrasts the accumulating embellishments of *Accumulation*" (2002, 191–2).

89 By presenting her body as an instrument whose abilities are constrained by its material features, *Accumulation with Talking Plus Watermotor* ties in with a recurrent tendency in Brown's early works, namely, her strategy to draw attention to the corporeality of the dancing body (Briginshaw 2001, 139; Burt 2006, 2-3).

90 A self-conscious exploration of the relationship with the audience is regarded as one of Judson's legacies and is, in particular, a key characteristic of Brown's (later) oeuvre (Briginshaw 2001, 157; Burt 2006, 163;). Randy Martin explains how the use of speech in dance can be linked to the shift provoked by the Judson Dance experiments, from representation to participation (1995, 107). This also encouraged Burt to compare Brown's work with the pieces of Pina Bausch (to whom I will refer in Chapter Five)): "what I believe Bausch and Brown have in common is the way that they both, in effect, offer a similar challenge to the sorts of ideas about 'pure dance' that Kisselgoff articulated in 1985, by framing the materiality of the dancing body in ways that force the spectator to acknowledge the materiality of the bodies of their dancers. In so doing, they contradict conventional aesthetic expectations" (2006, 2-3).

91 In her "Trisha Brown's *Orfeo*: Two Takes on Double Endings," Peggy Phelan provides an interesting dramaturgical reading of this piece through concepts of loss and death (2004, 17-19).

towards its shape" (2017, 35) and "the simultaneous movement and speech, along with the dance's formal structure seemed difficult for an audience to follow completely. Such simultaneity [...] created tension between performer and audience" (35). The description sections of *Poems and Other Emergencies*, where a similar duet between language and physical movement takes place to explore the perception of movement, thus resonate with a central motif in *Accumulation with Talking Plus Watermotor*. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the dialogue between physical movement and verbal description also explores the dynamic of perceiving movement. The piece invites the spectator to reflect on how they approach what is happening on stage and how the act of spectating is always already mediated by language. As she mentioned in our interview, Chignell wanted to invite the audience into her reflections on how language changes the way we perceive the dancing body: "So, I think this allows an audience not to be necessarily in a space of interpretation, but in some kind of space of study, where they can look at the object and be like, what is this? And how is it doing that?" (Chloe Chignell, pers. interview). Both Brown and Chignell unmute dance in an attempt to invite the audience into the reflections on choreography presented in their pieces.

However, Chignell engages her audience in a fundamentally different way. While Brown's improvised text more clearly presents itself as a direct address to the audience, Chignell's text is less directly oriented towards the spectator. When Chignell is describing the movements she is performing, it remains unclear which medium is translating which (is she describing the movements so that she can execute them, or is she able to describe them because she is executing them?). Regardless, the sentences are presented as verbal tools used to memorize the choreographic movements, as if we are watching a dancer rehearsing for a dance. A somewhat solitary, private, and even hermetic atmosphere therefore runs through the description sections, where our presence as members of the audience is not explicitly acknowledged. Whether the sentences help her to remember the movements she is performing, or whether they act as records in order not to forget the movements, they seem to function as some sort of choreographic score, suggesting that what we are watching was created or will be stored elsewhere. For that reason, Chignell's text feels very *written*, which creates an interesting tension with the recurring use of the present continuous form in which the verbs are presented. As I also mentioned in the previous chapter regarding *new skin* (pgs. 79 and following), a text that reminds us of its writtenness not only injects a different temporality into the here and now of the performance, but also establishes a specific, somewhat evasive, engagement with the spectator. As Jarcho reminds us, monologues that emphatically present themselves as pieces of writing do not necessarily address the audience directly. Instead, they can generate the feeling that they

"shake off […] the requirement that performance present itself as a gesture *meant for us*" (2017, 175). In this case, the text seems to function the other way around: it is because the audience is dismissed slightly *that* the text feels written.

Navigating between embodiment and writing in kinetic textuality

As this comparison between Jones, Brown, and Chignell's performances sought to indicate, the perspectives on text's relation to embodiment and temporality proposed by Garner and Jarcho, are also relevant to talking dances. At this point, we can refocus on a very specific form of talking in the context of dance, namely, kinetic textuality. The ending of *Poems and Other Emergencies* provides a good starting point to unravel the specific text-performance relation on which kinetic textuality is based. As mentioned above, in the last three minutes, Chignell begins to utter text excerpts that more clearly function kinetically. This occurs after another poetry section in which she for the first time sings the phrase "body surplus delay," says "dancing," and then starts to (silently) perform an entire movement sequence which lasts almost three minutes. The silence feels quite intense, for it is the first time in the performance that we are watching physical movement without verbal descriptions. After three minutes of silently jumping, bending her knees, turning her head, making circles with her arms, she starts to speak again while dancing: "is this moving? Am I moving? This is not moving." No longer describing the movements she is making, she continues:

> Is this doing a series of shapes? Am I doing a series of shapes? This is not doing a series of shapes. Is this moving some lines? Am I moving some lines? This is not moving some lines. Is this drawing a circle? Am I drawing a circle? This is not drawing a circle. Is this turning around? Am I turning around? This is not turning around. Is this speaking? Am I speaking? This is not speaking. Is this slowing down? Am I slowing down? This is not slowing down. Is this catching my breath? Am I catching my breath? This is not catching my breath. Is this smiling? Am I smiling? This is not smiling. Is this turning the head? Am I turning the head? This is not turning the head. Is this walking? Am I walking? This is not walking. Is this doing something? Am I doing something? This is not doing something. Is this lifting an arm? Am I lifting an arm? This is not lifting an arm.

The textual movement is established through the repetitive structure, in which the first part of the sentence "is this, am I, this is not" recurs again and again, and is altered by the specific movement she is performing. However, apart from this structure of repetition and revision, the primary sense of rhythm is due to the beat-structure.[92] After a while, the beat pattern from "Is this X? Am I X?" to "This is not X" becomes more and more traceable,

92 In Jarcho's work, the compositional strategy of repetition and revision is also studied in terms of how it points to the text's writtenness, to which I will return in Chapter Four (pgs. 177-178).

because the only changes in the beat pattern take place in the last part of the phrase, through the different verbs that are added to the main structure.

In combination with the repetition and revision, this beat structure creates a sense of rhythm, a circling movement, suggesting an impression of endlessness, of being doomed to continuous repetition. Moreover, the text is spoken in an almost mechanical manner and Chignell's tone of voice explicitly draws our attention to the piece of writing and its rhythmicity. The ending of *Poems and Other Emergencies* once more renegotiates the relation between language and embodiment, as expressed in the rest of the piece. In this section, text is presented in such a way that it draws attention to both this embodied nature and the written quality of the text. Put differently, the text both situates itself in the here and now, since it relies on the embodied utterance, as well as reminding us of its continued existence elsewhere in a space and time that stretch beyond the moment of its performance. Both aspects draw attention to the kinetic force that drives this piece of writing forwards. During the concluding minutes of Chignell's exploration of the relation between language and bodily movement, language is presented as something that can evoke movement in the texture of its composition, reinforced by the mode of its performance. In so doing, Chignell's piece demonstrates how kinetic textuality is rooted in an incessant negotiation between its being-writing and the inherent corporeality of speech.

The part in which Chignell starts to talk kinetically marks not only an important distinction from the rest of her performance, but also from a larger group of talking dances. To uncover this, we can briefly return to Foster. Her in-depth analysis of speech in *Dances that Describe Themselves* (2002) ties in with a central impetus of her earlier work *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance* (1986). In this study, she aims to move beyond theoretical tendencies to conceptualize the body "as a physical instrument for an interior subjectivity" and to assume that dance's "immediate appeal can never be captured in words" (Foster 1986, xvi).[93] In the textual strategies that Foster identifies in, amongst others, Brown and Jones, she recognizes an attempt similar to her own project, that is, the effort to demonstrate that dance is not only "merely" physical, but also operates on a cognitive and discursive level. She, for instance, frames the use of speech in Jones's *Floating the Tongue* from this perspective: "the talking gestures towards the dance's

93 Foster demonstrates that talking dances also challenge the assumption about "dance […] as an outlet for intuitive or unconscious feelings inaccessible to verbal (intellectual) expression. Based on this model, dancers often cultivate a sanctimonious mutism, denying what is verbal, logical, and discursive in order to champion the physical and the sensate" (Foster 1986, xiv-xv). This assumption is based on a binary understanding of the affective and discursive dimensions of dance, which, according to Foster, talking dance helps to deconstruct. As Timmy De Laet has argued in the context of dance re-enactments, Merleau-Ponty's chiasmatic (or hyper-dialectical) understanding of the structure of experience helps to reconceptualize the relation between affect and knowledge: "the chiasm provides a figure of thought that goes beyond the traditional dichotomies between body and world, mind and matter, or subject and object, since it embodies a mode of reasoning that acknowledges the deep encroachment and mutual impact of these seemingly opposite poles, while also maintaining a certain distance between them" (2017, 50).

boundless polysemanticity" (2002, 196). A similar observation is made by Burt, who in his discussion of Jones's *Holzer Duet.. Truisms* (1985) writes about "the tension between dance and words," where "each demands a different kind of attention, but combining speaking and dancing reminds us that the body produces the voice and that dance movements can flesh out meanings" (2009, 17). In *Accumulation…*, as we have seen above, Brown highlights the physical and cognitive difficulties of executing the piece. Elizabeth Dempster, for instance, reads Brown's piece in terms of how it presents the body "as an instrument concerned simply with physical articulation, but at the same time it also alludes to other discourse" (1998, 228). As a result, her dance also undermines "ideas about the inferior status of dance as a non-verbal form in relation to the other arts" (Burt 2006, 18).

Since the very gesture of starting talking while dancing used to come across as "unruly" (Burt 2006, 19), it is no surprise that a dancer's decision to start talking has been perceived as something that shifted conceptions about the status of dance as an art form. In January 2020, however, when Chignell delivered her kinetic piece of writing at the end of *Poems and Other Emergencies*, something different struck me: I realized that dance, something that until then was presented alongside the text, now nestled itself *in* the text. By holding on to a rhythmic structure of repetition of revision, and through Chignell's mode of speaking, dance is no longer something that only takes place in the dancer's body—rather, it becomes incorporated into the text as a quality of that text. With the parameters borrowed from Garner and Jarcho—the text's negotiation with the temporality of performance and the specific mode of embodiment it requires—it becomes possible to understand how the text gravitates towards a choreographic composition. Not coincidentally, temporality and embodiment can be regarded as characteristic features of what constitutes dance as an art form. The intersection between temporality and embodiment provides a more appropriate perspective on performances in which speech is no longer occupied with pointing to the textual aspect of dance, but rather moves towards the text as a medium through which to express itself. Scrutinizing how these two parameters work together thus provides insights into how text is composed according to choreographic principles.

Before I launch into performance analyses of the rest of the corpus, I should comment on the phenomenological perspective I adopt in this dissertation. While the previous chapters have already demonstrated the strong contribution of Merleau-Ponty's thoughts on language to my approach to kinetic textuality, I still need to examine further the fundamental contribution of the materiality of language to this interaction, which the current chapter sought to highlight. According to Merleau-Ponty, "the theory of language must gain access to the experience of speaking subjects" (Merleau-Ponty [1969] 1973, 15). However, as Chignell's ending illustrates, in the context of kinetic textuality, it is also important not to

lose track of the opposite dynamic between language and embodiment, and to also focus on how the text *itself* influences the way in which it will be embodied. The materiality of the language already imposes a certain way of enunciating the text, so the way in which the text will be embodied is announced in its composition. In other words, the specific way in which the text is embodied is already to some degree determined in the writing. The rhythmicity of Chignell's "is this catching my breath? Am I catching my breath? This is not catching my breath. Is this smiling? Am I smiling? This is not smiling. Is this turning the head? Am I turning the head? This is not turning the head," requires a rhythmic, almost mechanical embodiment of the text. The text is governed by a compositional logic that via the embodiment, reminds us of its writtenness.

To expand on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological perspective on language's relation to embodiment regarding this mechanism, we can consider *post*phenomenological discourse, which approaches embodiment not only from the perspective of the human but also from the perspective of the materiality of the technological tool in question.[94] As mentioned in the Introduction of this dissertation, postphenomenology studies the different forms of interaction between humans and technologies in order to re-address phenomenological questions about embodiment or perception. In this framework of how technologies compel different embodiment relations with users, a central contention is that the scope of possible embodiments is restricted both by the corporeality of the human user *as well as* by the materiality of the technology in question. The postphenomenological approach to technology is based on the assumption that the user can embody the technology in different ways, but that they do not fully control their interaction with a technology, since the material outlook of the technology also regulates the form of the interaction (e.g., Ihde 1990, 2002). As mentioned in the Introduction (pgs. 36-37), Mark Coeckelbergh has attempted to align the postphenomenological framework with various linguistic theories, primarily drawing on the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, who approaches language through the framework of language in use. Although Coeckelbergh mainly takes a Wittgensteinian perspective, his conceptual framework, which focusses on perception and experience, also draws from Merleau-Ponty's reflections on embodiment (2017, 243–5). More specifically, Coeckelbergh argues that language, to some extent, also functions as a technology that humans use,

94 Although this lies beyond the scope of this dissertation, many parallels can be traced between how Merleau-Ponty approaches tools and the postphenomenological framework on technology. Thomas Busch for instance summarizes Merleau-Ponty's conceptualization of tools as follows: "while the tool in its 'character as a technique' may not be noticed in lived experience of its usage, its character does not disappear altogether. If one habitually uses a hammer, one's hand can become calloused; constant labour over a machine can warp one's posture. The body is the point of exchange between subjective and objective, or is rather a 'third genus of being'" (2008, 42–43). It can also be argued that in Merleau-Ponty's view on language, there is already a tendency to conceptualize language as an embodied tool (see for instance, Lewis 1966; Ihde 1973; Dreon 2016; Hayden 2018). As James Edie puts it, Merleau-Ponty never questioned the "fundamental Wittgentsteinian presupposition that the center of study in the philosophy of language was the "act of usage," the speech-act itself" (1976, xi).

and, from this observation, he adopts a postphenomenological perspective to theorize the different structures through which humans, technologies, and language interact. He offers several possibilities of how the framework of mediation and the notion of multistability can be used to capture how language behaves as, and in relation to, a technological tool. In the context of the text-performance debate, Coeckelbergh's incentive to use the postphenomenological terminology in the context of language is particularly helpful with regard to the notion of "multistability." This notion, as Robert Rosenberger describes it, "highlights two points: (1) multiple relations to a technology are always possible, and (2) this potential is at the same time limited by the technology's materiality, i.e., the particularities of its physical composition" (2014, 377). Considering language as a multistable tool therefore implies that humans can embody the tool (language) in different ways, and that the nature of this embodiment relates to the way in which the language is composed.

While this perhaps sounds a bit odd in the context of everyday uses of language, the performing arts context in particular highlights how language can operate as a "multistable" tool. With regard to kinetic textuality, the notion offers a fruitful perspective on the relation between text and the performance it generates.[95] Its multistability implies that the text itself does not prescribe how it needs to be used (performed) but, rather, allows for different forms of embodiment in performance. However, the range of possible ways of embodying the text is still based on the materiality of the text itself: these different interactions are, in other words, not unlimited but rather dependent on the composition of the text. With regard to "mediation," the postphenomenological insight that the specific mediation between a technology and a human body is already expressed in the materiality of the tool provides another important cue. If we consider writing for the theater as a tool, postphenomenology invites us to not only consider writing as fundamentally embodied and to discern how this embodiment can take many forms. It also shows us how its form on stage relates to the materiality of the writing on the page.[96] Postphenomenological

95 Coeckelbergh also argues that the performing arts can function as an instructive interlocutor in postphenomenological discourse. At the end of *Using Words and Things*, he argues that the performing arts are a more suitable medium than philosophical writing to make sense of the intersection between humans, language, and(/as) technology: they "may reveal our use of words and tools as performance and process, and help us rethink, reembody, move, remove, and redirect what we are doing" (2017, 285). For that reason, they "may well be a necessary complement to scientific and philosophical approaches to the question concerning technology" (285). This contention is further elaborated in his latest book, *Moved by Machines: Performance Metaphors and Philosophy of Technology* (2019), where he draws upon insights and aspects of the performing arts to argue that choreography, dance, theater, music, and stage magic provide relevant insights into the functioning of technology.

96 By proposing to consider textuality from a postphenomenological perspective, I seek to contribute to the ongoing project of recognizing postphenomenology as an instructive discourse within performing arts scholarship. Ihde's reflections have often appeared in the many recent publications devoted to sound in theater scholarship (e.g., Ovadija 2013; Home-Cook 2015; Garner 2018; Behrens 2019; Persyn 2019; Wenn 2019). Meanwhile, the postphenomenological framework has been used to unravel how lived experience and presence are structured by body-technology interactions in a stage context, and performances have also been studied as ways to critically engage with and expand this discourse (e.g., Sobchack 2005; Vanhoutte and Wynants 2011; Paulus 2013; Merx 2013; Merx 2015; O'Brien 2017).

thinking provides a framework to capture the text-performance relation expressed in kinetic textuality: the assumption that the material composition of a tool already compels a specific mode of embodiment, and that because of this embodied relation the tool can still be used in different ways, resembles the oscillating dynamic between stage and page in kinetic textuality. By focusing on the form of interaction (rather than on the form of the specific elements within the interaction), the postphenomenological perspective makes it possible to conceptualize how neither the text nor the performance function as the privileged medium of the theatrical or choreographic work. It acknowledges that there are different degrees of embodiment, and, most importantly, that this degree depends on *both* the materiality and design of the technology itself and on how the body interacts with it. To me, this reads as a methodological prompt for tackling the text-performance relationship in the pieces I selected for this dissertation: it argues for a close reading of the compositional mechanisms underlying a text *as well as* a careful analysis of how the body behaves on stage, and reminds us to pay specific attention to how the one strategy feeds into the other. To a certain extent, postphenomenology offers a perspective that hitherto seems to be absent in the text-performance debate, but that turns out to be highly necessary to study kinetic textuality. While my dissertation does not delve further into the quite technical postphenomenological terminology, its more general epistemological and methodological claim will continue to structure the analysis of the selected pieces.[97]

Concluding thoughts

Considering kinetic textuality in terms of a framework mainly devoted to technology takes us back to some recent arguments in the text-performance debate, most specifically the argument put forward in W.B. Worthen's *Drama: Between Poetry and Performance* (2010), that theatrical writing should be considered as a tool or technology.[98] Beyond the specific case of kinetic textuality, postphenomenology can contribute to Worthen's ongoing project to position writing for the stage at the intersection between poetry and performance. Although Worthen considers the body at length in this book, his take on embodiment is still heavily reliant on characterization, on the fictional body, and less on the phenomenological body in which an interaction between the text and the vocal membranes or

97 As I will argue in Chapter Four (pgs. 163 and following), the framework of different degrees of mediation and the notion of multistability remain useful to consider how language mediated by technologies operates on the stage. When it comes to the study of text itself, it does not make much sense to transpose these notions into a grid to analyze different forms of embodiment.

98 My use of a postphenomenological understanding of language to uncover kinetic textuality also takes its cue from Julia Walker's suggestion in "Why Performance? Why Now? Textuality and the Rearticulation of Human Presence" that the study of textuality might benefit from a Wittgensteinian perspective on language in use (2003, 167), and with Natalie Meinser and Donia Mounsef, who argue for a network-based perspective on language, combining "the fragmentary nature of textuality, the corporeal aspects of writing, its cross-cultural hybridity, and the disjointed spatiality of intermedial discourses" (2011, 96).

other body parts is taking place. Postphenomenology's more corporeal understanding and more specific research into *actual* technologies can offer an insightful addition in this regard. This framework may also help to further develop Worthen's proposal to consider theatrical writing in terms of its instrumentality, or his contention that the interaction needs to be accessed in use (2010, 27) (see also above, pgs. 91 and following).[99] Passages in which Worthen mentions that "the Wooster Group's *Hamlet* foregrounds the film as its text, stressing less the authorizing stability of this 'writing' than its *instrumentality* in their performance" (135; emphasis added) might create the impression that the conceptualization of text as a technology continues to theorize text as something whose ultimately value lies in its performance and not "as a worthy spectacle in its own right" (Jarcho 2017, 135). The postphenomenological insight that the technology itself demarcates the scope of different embodiments, on the contrary, can contribute to a view on the instrumentality of text without positioning this text in a subordinate position to performance.

Before wrapping up this chapter and moving from the more theoretical part of the dissertation to the three chapters focusing more on case-studies, it seems necessary to connect the arguments from the first two chapters, as a way to consider the role of phenomenology in this research project. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Merleau-Ponty's thinking aims at uncovering the incessant oscillation between the text's meaning and its relation to embodiment. According to Merleau-Ponty, this oscillation is not only articulated on the level of perception, or on the level of meaning production, but also appears in the very ontological condition of being, where the embodied being in the world is always pregnant with meaning: "I point to a world around me which already speaks, just as I point my finger toward an object already in the visual field of others" (Merleau-Ponty [1969] 1973, 7). While Merleau-Ponty's reflections on language's fundamental connection to embodiment enables us to conceptualize the relation between text and performance in kinetic textuality as an incessant oscillation steered by the body uttering the text, postphenomenological thinking helps to more clearly identify how the different degrees of embodiment are already present in the materiality of the writing. Taken together, these frameworks explain how kinetic textuality in performance draws attention both to its relation to embodiment as well as to its condition as a piece of writing that exists beyond this embodied condition. In the next chapter, I will further scrutinize compositional strategies that carry kinetic textuality towards the realm of dance, with the help of Stéphane Mallarmé. The fourth and

99 In this conceptualization, Worthen ties in with the approach of Garner, who, in Worthen's words, "resists a logocentric role for the text in performance and also resists […] the application of […] 'textuality' to embodied culture. For Garner, too, is impatient with the abstraction of 'the body' such textualization implies" (2010, 80). It thus seems that Worthen's later work moves more in a phenomenological direction. His notion of tools and technologies, however, is mainly inspired by the work of Kenneth Burke (see p. 22-34), and not so much by actual phenomenological theory.

fifth chapters will also help to further position kinetic textuality via-à-vis a larger group of talking dance. While (post)phenomenological thinking will somewhat disappear into the background in these sections (popping up in only a few paragraphs), the analyses of the different performances are thoroughly steeped in this line of thought: I will continue to look at kinetic textuality in light of the negotiation between its embodiment and the materiality of the text, which it presents. I trust that the past two chapters have explained why this perspective is indispensable.

CHAPTER THREE

Kinetic Textuality and Imagination

Introduction

Kinetic textuality, as I said at the end of the previous chapter, incorporates compositional strategies that carry language into the realm of dance. To further unravel how this mechanism operates, I will in this chapter zoom in on a selection of pieces by Dounia Mahammed and Mette Edvardsen. A useful starting point to trace the dancerly quality of their writings is to have a look at the form of both Mahammed and Edvardsen's texts in print.

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaammmmmaaaaaaaaaaaaannnnnnwwwwwaaaaaaa
aaallllllllllllllkkkkkkkkkksssssssssssssiiiiiiiiinnnnnnttttttoooo
ooooaaaaaaaaaaaaaaarrrrrrooooooooooooooooooooooommmm
aaaaaaaannnnnnnddddddtttttthhhhhhhhheeeeeeeeeennnnnnhhhh
hheeeeeeeeeewwwwwaaaaaaaalllllllllllllllllllllkkkkkkkkssssssssoo
ooooouuuuuuutttttttttaaaaaaaaggggggggggggaaaaaaaaaaaaiiiiiiiiiiiii
nnnnnnnnsssssssoooooooootttttthhhhhhhhhhaaaaaaaaaattttttttthhhh
hhhheeeeeeeeeecccaaaaaaaaaaaaannnnwwwwwwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaalllllllllll
lllllkkkkkkkkkkkkkiiiiiiiinnnnnnaaaaggggggaaaaaaaaaaaaaaiiiiiiiiiiiii
nnnnnnn

"a man walks into a room and then he walks out again so that he can walk in again."
fragment from *oslo* (Edvardsen 2019, 102).

table table table table table table table table chair chair chair chair chair
chair chair chair lamp lamp lamp lamp lamp lamp lamp lamp shade shade
shade shade shade shade shade shade light light light light light light light
light floor floor floor floor floor floor floor floor there there there there
there there there there here here here here here here here here one one
one one one one one one two two two two two two two two three three
three three three three three three steps steps steps steps steps steps steps
steps plant plant plant plant plant plant plant plant here here here here
here here here here there there there there there there there there water
water water water water water water water stand stand stand stand stand
stand stand stand table table table table table table table table bottle bottle
bottle bottle bottle bottle bottle bottle half half half half half half half half
full full full full full full full full wet wet wet wet wet wet wet wet spot
spot spot spot spot spot spot spot there there there there there there there
there plant plant plant plant plant plant plant plant bottle bottle bottle
bottle bottle bottle bottle bottle wet wet wet wet wet wet wet wet spot
spot spot spot spot spot spot spot knock knock knock knock knock knock
knock knock door door door door door door door door ignore ignore
ignore ignore ignore ignore ignore ignore bottle bottle bottle bottle bottle
bottle bottle bottle roll roll roll roll roll roll roll roll slow slow slow slow
slow slow slow slow down down down down down down down down stop
stop stop stop stop stop stop stop foot foot foot foot foot foot foot foot
wood wood wood wood wood wood wood wood leg leg leg leg leg leg leg
leg short short short short short short short short long long long long
long long long long side side side side side side side side table table table
table table table table table chair chair chair chair chair chair chair chair
sit sit sit sit sit sit sit sit no no no no no no no no stand stand stand stand
stand stand stand stand first first first first first first first first second
second second second second second second second chair chair chair
chair chair chair chair chair face face face face face face face face wall
wall wall wall wall wall wall wall back back back back back back back back
bump bump bump bump bump bump bump bump table table table table
table table table table push push push push push push push push move
move move move move move move move there there there there there
there there there better better better better better better better better
small small small small small small small small plant plant plant plant
plant plant plant plant corner corner corner corner corner corner corner
corner leaves leaves leaves leaves leaves leaves leaves leaves fall fall fall fall

fragment from *Black* (Edvardsen 2019, 13).

i am only water in water filled with water

filled with fish fish

fischers fischen fischen
fischen fischen fischers
vissers vissen vissen
vissen vissen vissers
fishers fish fish
fish fish fisherman

lying water

half of it is the sky

i mean like a lake like a lake

i wanted to take my time

but i didn't know what time was mine to take

38 WATERWASWASSER

i wanted to sit and eat eat

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~
~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~
~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~
~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

i eat my boat on the sand
i eat my boat on the shore
i eat i eat i eat
my boa te ram at sea

wings are fantastic
but they won't help you swim

no

that's why birds don't live in sea
i want to be more flexible
fish don't live in trees no they don't
i want to be more flexible

39

fragment from *waterwaswasser* (Mahammed 2019, 38-39).

Both artists published their texts in booklets after the pieces premiered. Mahammed published the texts of *Salut Copain* (2016) and *waterwaswasser* (2017) as part of De Nieuwe Toneelbibliotheek's collection of printed theater texts. Edvardsen handed out the text of *Black* (2011) on a leaflet straight after the performance, but in 2019, she published this text together with the texts of *No Title* (2014), *We to be* (2015), and *oslo* (2017), in a book entitled *Not Not Nothing*.[100] The movements that their texts evoked and generated in performance are translated into the medium of the page with the help of the specific layout and positioning of the words on the page. In the published version of Edvardsen's 25-minute performance *Black*, for instance, all the words are squeezed together on only seven pages, without any blanks or interruptions. This mirrors the heightened pace of the stream of words in the

100 After the performance of *Black*, Edvardsen handed out the list of words that were recited in the piece, but she did not hand out a leaflet with the text after the prequel, *No Title*. In our interview she explained that this had to do with the compositional difference between the two pieces of writing. While *Black* contains simply of a list of words, *No Title* is more clearly a piece of writing: "there was always a booklet given out after *Black*, and when I came to *No Title*, I thought I shouldn't do that because it was so easy for this to become this gesture of, you know, this is the poem. This is the text" (Mette Edvardsen, pers. interview).

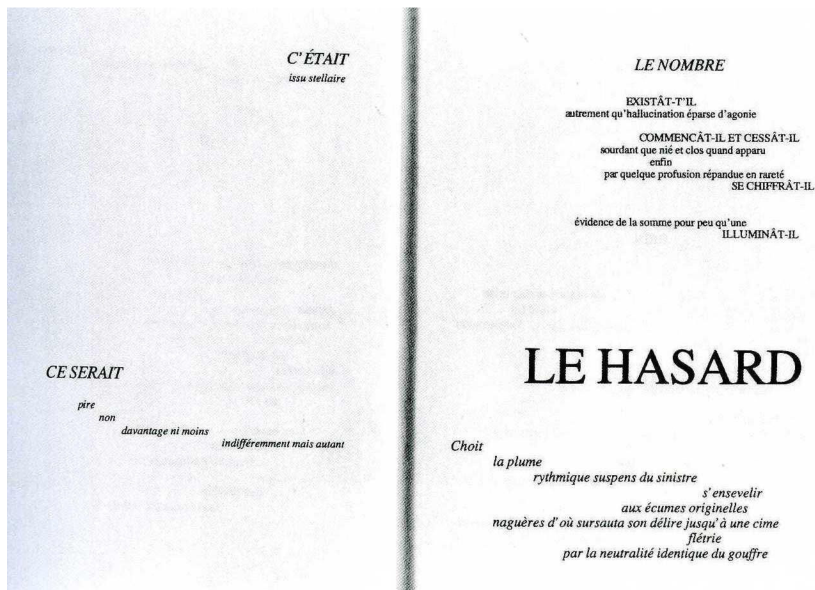
performance. In the text of *oslo*, the typographic equivalent of slow motion is established by removing the spaces between the words from the sentence "a man walks into a room and then he walks out again so that he can walk in again," and by typing each letter twelve times. In Mahammed's printed version of the piece *waterwaswasser*, she experiments with different font sizes and blank spaces in between the lines. Whereas in the performance itself, the kinetic quality of the text is emphasized via the auditory realm, in the printed text movement clearly manifests itself in the typographical and therefore visual realm. Yet especially in sections that place words with graphic similarities closely together—such as "fischers fischen fischen / fischen fischen fischers / vissers vissen vissen / vissen vissen vissers / fishers fish fish / fish fish fisherman"—the text in print also appeals to our inner ear, which ensures that the auditory movement of the text to some extent remains present on the page. In other words, Mahammed and Edvardsen's printed texts not only demonstrate that movement (or dance) can materialize via writing. They simultaneously draw our attention to the fact that movement (or dance) can also take place on a page.

In Edvardsen's publication, there are no stage directions; Mahammed only includes a few, and neither of them includes information about the setting of the staged piece. As the lack of any direct references to a performance situation in the published texts already suggests, these published texts behave more *as* a performance than as texts *for* a performance, or as records of it. The "mise-en-page" (Worthen 2005, 11) of these five pieces is less that of a play; rather, it transforms the page itself into a site of performance. Both the typography suggesting a specific pace as well as the auditory resonances that appear between different words placed together incorporate a performance dimension into the text. As Edvardsen explains, "if it was only the writing, it of course, it wouldn't need to be on stage. There is also a relationship to a voice, there's a time, there's a sense of being in the space" (Mette Edvardsen, pers. interview). The text's relationship to the voice also resurfaces in the printed version of the texts, since the texts present themselves as written (and once performed) by Edvardsen and Mahammed. I, for one, keep hearing Edvardsen's and Mahammed's voices while reading these published texts. In our interview, Mahammed said the following about the process of designing the print of these texts: "there is a lot of space between the sentences that is intended to indicate silence, and that text is a bit stretched out in the booklet, whereas in the performance I still go over it fairly quickly… but that might give room for your thoughts" (Dounia Mahammed, pers. interview; my translation).[101] The various compositional strategies incorporated in the text show awareness of an audience

101 Original Dutch version: "er is veel ruimte tussen de zinnen, en die ruimtes willen stilte aangeven. De tekst is wat uitgerokken in dat boekje, terwijl ik er in de voorstelling nog redelijk snel overga… maar dat geeft misschien ruimte voor je gedachten."

who are eventually going to read the text. In this way, a performance dimension resurfaces in the print.

The way in which Mahammed and Edvardsen transpose the kinetic quality of their texts in performance to the medium of the page brings the work of Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) to mind. As Mahammed's explanation of why she incorporated whitespaces into the print of the text suggests, Mahammed and Edvardsen's printed texts bear similarities with his probably most famous poem, *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (1897).



C' ÉTAIT
issu stellaire

CE SERAIT
pire
non
davantage ni moins
indifféremment mais autant

LE NOMBRE

EXISTÂT-T'IL
autrement qu'hallucination éparse d'agonie

COMMENCÂT-IL ET CESSÂT-IL
sourdant que nié et clos quand apparu
enfin
par quelque profusion répandue en rareté
SE CHIFFRÂT-IL

évidence de la somme pour peu qu'une
ILLUMINÂT-IL

LE HASARD

Choit
la plume
rythmique suspens du sinistre
s' ensevelir
aux écumes originelles
naguères d' où sursauta son délire jusqu' à une cime
flétrie
par la neutralité identique du gouffre

fragment from « Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard » (Mallarmé, 1897)

This poem, written one year before his death, functions as a poetic record of Mallarmé's long-held fascination with dance. It offers a pivotal example of how the mechanisms of dance can be translated into the practice of writing. According to Deidre Priddin, the poem "pre-existed for him in the ballet" (1952, 63). Since it can be read horizontally as well as vertically, this poem evokes the similarities between dance and drawing.[102] Like the dance pieces Mallarmé enjoyed as a spectator, the poem produces meaning in a suggestive and

102 For insightful analyses of how the relationship between dance and drawing raises questions about dance's status on the page, see Noland 2009, 130-169 or Lepecki 2006, 68-76. With regard to Mallarmé's poem, Shaw even says that the poem can be interpreted as a sort of instruction for a performance: "since Mallarmé presents the typographical position of his poem as a pattern that must be realized kinetically, or set into motion, its function is analogous to that of a choreographic score; that is, the pattern is not an embodiment but, rather, a record and set of instructions for performance" (1993, 178). A more detailed analysis of this discourse is beyond the scope of this chapter, but insightful studies that turn to dance notation in order to reflect on the extent to which dance can be considered as something textual can be found in Jeschke 1999; Brandstetter 2000; Foster 2011; Franko 2011, 2015; Pouillaude 2017).

indirect way. This establishes a specific mode of (dancerly) signification, which seems to refuse to reach stable meanings but is instead constantly adrift. As Mary Lewis Shaw captures it, "all that appears disappears by virtue of a verbal strategy of syntactical imprecision and self-dissolution" (1993, 173). Most importantly, the poem is composed using a key dimension of Mallarmé's poetic practice, namely, the evocation of silence through the inclusion of whitespaces. This is one of the reasons why Mallarmé was drawn to dance, for dance, in his view, excels at producing meaning through silence. When discussing the work of Symbolist poet Georges Rodenbach, he compares his poetic strategies with those of a dance that operates "invisibly, in the pure movement and silence [...] with a significance other than personal" (139). Silence in *Un coup de dés* is evoked through the insertion of blank spaces. Somewhat counter-intuitively, silence also appears by incorporating strategies that emphasize the musicality of the text. The resonance between for instance "existât-il" and "commencât-il et cassât-il" establishes a musicality that remains silent on the page but reaches the audience's inner ear. Not unlike the excerpts from *oslo* and *waterwaswasser* included above (see Fig. 1-3), this poem produces "a silent music that could be seen, though not heard, through the non-linear layout of the sentence" (Fisher 1994, xiii). According to Susan Jones, "Mallarmé's experiment anticipated a long line of modernist innovations in the relationship between the textual, the visual, and the embodiment of the reader in the reading process" (2013, 26). Browsing through the published texts of Mahammed and Edvardsen, it seems that "this long line of modernist innovations" today reappears in the context of the performing arts itself. For that reason, Mallarmé's reflections on the affinity between dance and poetry provide an instructive perspective on the written dimension of kinetic textuality.

If anything, Mallarmé's writings on dance and his poetic endeavors illustrate how performance-oriented literary explorations can be. As mentioned in the Introduction, (pgs. 28 and following), Mallarmé's poetic practice is typical of a larger group of (mainly modernist) writers who ventured towards the performing arts, and especially dance, as a source of inspiration for their own literary explorations. In this chapter, I will turn to Mallarmé's poetic and critical work, and some critical interpretations thereof, to scrutinize how the kinetic textuality that emerges in Mahammed and Edvardsen's works can be considered as choreographic writing. It at first sight might seem that Mallarmé's admiration for dance as a silent and impersonal form of language, and his fascination with exploring the visual realm of poetry, have nothing to do with the talkative and auditory dances studied in this dissertation. However, Mallarmé's interpretation of dance as a form of writing that is constantly adrift and always unfolds within the gaze of the audience helps to illuminate the way in which writing functions in and as dance in the pieces of Mahammed and Edvardsen.

Below, I will first focus on Mahammed's *Salut Copain* and Edvardsen's *oslo* as an introduction to the poetics of the two artists. I will indicate how their writings are rooted in compositional strategies that generate an indirect and constantly drifting form of signification that appeals to the imagination of the audience. Afterwards, I will focus more closely on similar compositional strategies in Edvardsen's *Black* and Mahammed's *waterwaswasser*, and compare them with Mallarmé's poetry and writings on dance. This will allow me to show that the central attributes of their works—the appeal to the imagination and the indirect and fluctuating significations they produce—are key to understanding the dancerly quality of their writings. In a final section, I will turn to Edvardsen's *No Title* to consider how the play of negation in this piece resonates with Mallarmé's fascination for nothingness and silence. I will also argue that Mallarmé for that reason can be an insightful interlocutor within the current discourse on Edvardsen's work. With the help of *No Title*, I will indicate how his thoughts on dance as a form of poetry encourage us to recognize features often observed in 21st century dance in Edvardsen's textual compositions. Although I will mainly focus on Mahammed and Edvardsen's works as pieces of writing, I will occasionally also refer to their appearances in performance. If this confuses the reader, I hope that the ending of the previous chapter, where I unraveled how kinetic textuality in the written text already announces its embodiment, can provide a convincing explanation for this shifting perspective (pgs. 112 and following).[103]

Absurdism in *oslo* and *Salut Copain*

Before delving into Mallarmé's poetic ambitions and his writings on dance, let me first further introduce the performances of Mahammed and Edvardsen and trace how kinetic textuality operates in their pieces. Mahammed graduated from KASK school of arts (Ghent, Belgium) in 2015 and won the SABAM Youth Playwriting Prize (2016) with her graduation piece *Salut Copain*, which I will discuss in this chapter. Apart from her piece *waterwaswasser*, to which I will also turn here, Mahammed also created the performance *Panic and Other Attacks* in 2020 with Roos Nieboer, and the piece *GNAB◊RRENT¡* with Alan Van Rompuy in 2021. She has also performed in the work of other theater artists, for instance in *Operette* (2021) by theater collective tibaldus, and wrote the libretto for *Ophelia* (2021), an opera directed by Inne Goris. Her works are characterized by a fascination with language's rhythmic and musical dimensions, and its pictorial capacity to generate

103 By discussing Mahammed's and Edvardsen's works through the writings of Mallarmé, I wish to trace how a modernist aesthetic impetus also resurfaces in the use of kinetic textuality. By tracing parallels between modernist and contemporary artistic strategies, I aim to reassess the dominant historiographic narrative that the emergence of late 20th and early 21st century dance can be traced back to the aesthetic of Judson Dance, an aesthetic that, in turn is often understood in terms of resistance to the modernist aesthetic project of which Mallarmé's work is an example (see also Introduction, pgs. 25 and following and Chapter Four, pgs. 163 and following).

a multiplicity of the most diverse images in the theater space. The formal and dramaturgical aspects of Mahammed's work have a lot in common with the characteristic features of the oeuvre of the Brussels- and Oslo-based Edvardsen. The use of writing as a musical and sensorial element to appeal to the audience's imagination is also at the heart of her choreography. After working as a dancer in Alain Platel's Les Ballets C de la B, she started to create, choreograph, and perform her own pieces. Whereas her earlier works are mainly choreographies with objects, since 2011, language has been a central element in her pieces. In some of these latter performances she talks a lot more than she moves. However, as she mentioned in our interview, it is important for her to "still frame [her work] in the context of dance" (Mette Edvardsen, pers. interview). Through my readings of Edvardsen and Mahammed's work, I will point to traces of this "context of dance" in their writings, for it is through this context that we can better grasp the specific way in which these pieces function dramaturgically.

The text of *oslo* first tells the story of a man who is walking into a room. Each time he walks into that room, something different happens, yet the man himself remains a somewhat vague and generic character throughout the piece. As I have already described in the Introduction (pgs. 15-16), this piece continuously circles around the phrase "a man walks into a room, X," followed by different endings, so that the main phrase is adjusted and recomposed each time. The sentence "a man walks into a room" becomes a point of orientation for the spectator in the non-linear narrative structure. Longer sections, such as "a man walks into a room and we see it is highly problematic, but that in no way implies we can do something about it" (Edvardsen 2019, 98), cause a delay, whereas the narrative accelerates in shorter sequences, such as "a man walks into a room and does something new" (99). The changes in narrative tempo introduce a rhythmic texture into this story which constantly seems to rewrite itself. These endless introductory statements generate a process of signification that is constantly modified: Edvardsen uses a mode of expression that never comes to rest upon one clear meaning or message. She merely presents the story's contours and invites the audience to fill in its details as they wish. By repeatedly re-beginning and adding different sequels to the introductory phrase, Edvardsen renders the latter's referential meaning variable as well. The text introduces various invisible objects, situations, and actions into the theater space. As a result of these variations and endless re-beginnings, a quite absurd and at times very funny storyline unfolds.

At other times, the absurd and peculiar images evoked by the text of *oslo* establish an uncanny and somewhat desolate atmosphere. This most clearly appears in phrases such as "a man walks into a room full of people and the fire alarm goes off. A man walks into a room and switches the lights off. A room is in the dark. A house is in the dark. A man is

fumbling in the dark. A man walks into a room and nothing is possible any longer" (98), "a man walks into a room and is looking for a beginning" (100) or "a man walks into a room offering something completely different and persuading us that we are better off that way" (99). These sentences remain somewhat ambiguous in semantical terms because the context needed to understand them is lacking. These descriptions, that seem to take place in a vacuum, give the impression that we are dealing with a very lonely man walking into a very unpleasant room:

> A man walks into a room and suddenly notices an absence, which he, in spite of having spent several years in this room, only notices now. He knows that absence of course has nothing to do with emptiness; that an empty room can be without absence; that by moving a piece of furniture we do not create an authentic absence, we create nothing at all. (103)

The motif of absence around which this passage is constructed is an example of the somewhat nebulous and ambiguous nature of the storyline. It contributes to the generic character of the text as a whole and further compels the audience to activate their imagination (what does an absence that has nothing to do with emptiness look like, smell like, or feel like? How is this something that you can notice when you walk into a room?). Halfway into the piece, the appeal to the audience's imagination becomes even more emphatically auditorial. Suddenly, a choir sitting in the audience starts to sing: "a man walks into a room and the room is full of people, a man walks into a room and the room is full of voices, a man walks into a room and knows he's not alone. A man has already walked into a room before many times." In our interview, Edvardsen explains that she wanted to work with the operatic voice "because of the scale and the physicality of it […] and the kind of emotional space that opens with the voice in harmony as well" (Mette Edvardsen, pers. interview). The musical quality of the ever-returning main clause—which was already an earworm in itself—is here emphasized, as it is literally put to music. The fact that the music was created by singers sitting amongst the audience members evoked a sense of collectivity.[104]

It is remarkable how much Edvardsen's *oslo* and Mahammed's *Salut Copain* have in common. *Salut Copain* also tells an absurd story about an undefined man ("copain") who remains a rather vague character throughout the performance. While Edvardsen's strategy of always beginning again somewhat prevents the storyline from actually happening, Mahammed's text has a more narrative-oriented structure, although a shattered and fluctuating one, in which the story about copain is often merged with other reflections that seemingly have nothing to do with it. A few minutes into *Salut Copain*, Mahammed says: "ik wou – om te

104 Bojana Cvejić traces how in *oslo*, the imagination is primarily activated through the auditory space: "while the sense of vision is connoted with clarity, with lucidity, with the total grasp and control of space, the activity of listening entails temporalization and an attitude of reception" (2018).

beginnnen wou ik beginnen; nee, om te beginnen wou ik beginnen met een vraag" (2017, 7).[105] As mentioned in the Introduction, in the beginning of *oslo*, Edvardsen also addresses the audience and talks about how difficult it is to begin a performance. Once she has begun, Mahammed describes different stories in which a nameless and unknown man appears. She for instance recounts: "er is een man zoek. Hij wordt gezocht. De man was zelf op zoek toen hij verdween" (7)[106], "droeg de man een rode regenjas? Nee, de man droeg geen rode regenjas" (8),[107] or "de man keek naar het papier. Hij had al eens papier gezien, de man. Hij had zelfs papieren verzameld, alle soorten en formaten" (13).[108] Like the man in *oslo*, this man is portrayed in a rather generic or impersonal manner:

> De man is geurloos, smaakloos, klankloos.
> De man is hopeloos,
> radeloos,
> dakloos,
> zielloos.
> wezenloos.
> zorgeloos, is hij
> (Mahammed 2016, 23)[109]

The vaguely familiar yet bizarre images that these descriptions evoke are similar to the situations being described in *oslo*. Mahammed also creates an absurd story with various characters, and by immersing herself within the story through the I-perspective and delivering the text as though she is recounting an anecdote, she portrays herself as one of the characters participating in this story. Mahammed is more explicit than Edvardsen about the influence of absurdist literature on her writing practice—in the published version of the piece, absurdist writers such as Paul Austin and Daniil Charms are mentioned as important sources of inspiration.[110]

Every now and then, while delivering this text in performance, Mahammed talks in such a way that it seems as if the text is taking control over her, as if she is genuinely surprised by what she hears herself saying. In doing so, she makes tangible what has struck Merleau-Ponty as a fascinating aspect of language, namely, that "words have power to arouse

105 Translation: "I wanted – to begin with I wanted to begin; no, to begin with I wanted to begin with a question." (As mentioned in footnote 25, for the references to the performance texts of Mahammed and Haring, I will refer to the original in the running text, and provide a translation in the footnote, as merely substituting their texts for an English translation of them would wrongly suggest that the material composition of the sentences is irrelevant, which runs counter to how I define kinetic textuality.)

106 Translation: "A man is missing. He is wanted. The man himself was looking for something when he disappeared."

107 Translation: "Was the man wearing a red raincoat? No, the man was not wearing a red raincoat."

108 Translation: "The man looked at the paper. He had seen paper before, the man. He had even collected papers, all shapes and sizes."

109 Translation: "The man is odorless, tasteless, soundless / The man is hopeless / desperate / homeless / soulless / lifeless / carefree, he is."

110 It is worth mentioning in this context that Paul Auster was the translator of Stéphane Mallarmé's unfinished poem *Pour un tombeau d'Anatole* (1961) into the English *For Anatole's Tomb* (1983).

thoughts and implant henceforth inalienable dimensions of thought; and that they put responses on our lips we did not know we were capable of" ([1960] 1964, 17) or that "my spoken words surprise me myself and teach me my thought" (88). This enhances the impression that the things she describes are also happening to her. The central movement of this text consists of the meandering trajectory of her narrative. It frequently returns to previous passages to then suddenly jump to another (and back). The structure of repetition and variation mainly exists in this piece in the narrative: for instance, each time she returns to a scene in the subway where she saw a man crying, the situation gets more and more out of hand. Towards the end, the text gradually begins to describe an almost dystopian situation filled with madness, chaos, the disappearance of time, fear, and overall confusion among people. At the end she takes us back to the reality of the performance setting, asks us how we are doing and proposes not to end the piece, but to let it begin.

Like *oslo*, *Salut Copain* emphatically depends on the imagination of the audience. Both performers stand on an empty stage which they fill with absurd and difficult-to-grasp images, counting on the audience's participation to fill the contours of their somewhat generic storylines. The interest in language's capacity to create various invisible images is a fascination shared by the two artists. Edvardsen, for instance, spoke in our interview about how the use of language offered her many more possibilities than working with objects: "once I started with language, I realized I could do anything. I could just say it and it would be there. And so there was a moment that I, you know, I felt like I could go really wild. But then I also went kind of back to a place where the point for me was not so much how crazy the image I could tell was, but more the fact that you as an audience could actually believe it and project it into the space" (Mette Edvardsen, pers. interview). Mahammed explained something similar in our interview: "*Salut Copain* somewhat accidentally became a text performance. I was thinking very much in images in the beginning. And then, At some point I felt that if I installed any more images myself in that space, I would take something away from the imagination. Now sometimes we just see things in an empty space, rather than illustrating things." (Dounia Mahammed, pers. Interview; my translation).[111] Both Mahammed and Edvardsen, in other words, rely on language's capacity to generate various images in an empty theater space, as this enables the text to invoke unlimited possibilities in the imagination of the audience.

oslo and *Salut Copain* also frequently draw attention to the limits of this capacity. The difficulty of observing inner states of feeling is for instance thematized in both performances.

111 Original Dutch version: "*Salut Copain* is een beetje per ongeluk een tekst voorstelling geworden. Ik dacht heel erg in beelden in het begin. En dan, Op een bepaald moment had ik het gevoel dat als ik zelf nog beelden zou installeren in die ruimte, dat ik iets zou wegnemen van de verbeelding. Nu zien we soms gewoon dingen in een lege ruimte, eerder dan dat ik de dingen zou gaan illustreren"

oslo does this by describing things that are impossible to know from an outside perspective, such as "a man with relevant knowledge walks out" (Edvardsen 2019, 98), or "a man walks into a room on purpose" (100), leaving us wondering how the narrator (who clearly has no interactions with the man) can know this kind of information. In *Salut Copain*, there is a section in which Mahammed attributes all kinds of characteristics to a man, which turn out to be wrong: "ik dacht: hij voelt zich misschien eenzaam, maar hij voelde zich niet eenzaam. Ik dacht: misschien zoekt hij iets, maar hij zocht niemand. Ik dacht: het is misschien geen betrouwbare man, maar het was wel een betrouwbare man" (2017, 25).[112] By frequently describing the story in terms of negation, taking the position of the all-knowing storyteller while at the same time not concealing her own ignorance, Mahammed reminds us that language may not always be able to offer a reliable portrayal of a situation. In both pieces, the meaning of the words never comes to rest, but instead meanders and is constantly modified. In *oslo*, this effect is mainly produced by the repetitive structure, in which Edvardsen always returns to the (more or less) same main clause, to each time modify what follows from it. In *Salut Copain*, a similar meandering structure is created by different storylines that come together and that are oriented towards a clear outcome. A narrator is used who constantly corrects themself and adjusts their perspective; this resonates in an interesting way with the story Mahammed recounts about people who are gathered around a man "who looks like he has a suspicious plan," even though he does not have a suspicious plan. The misunderstandings resulting from this situation portray in a somewhat grotesque way how things can get out of hand when people hold on to overly rigid interpretations or draw hasty conclusions.

In his review of *Salut Copain*, Jan Dertaelen praises the absurdist dimension of the piece as follows: "with her alienating stories and anecdotes, she succeeds in shedding a pure light on reality. By stripping the world of its everyday meanings and obviousness, something else becomes visible: the fragility, the arbitrariness and perhaps even the ridiculousness of all our systems and conventions" (2016; my translation).[113] Dertaelen's interpretation of how *Salut Copain* evokes the absurdity of our *condition humaine* is an often-rehearsed conception about the dramaturgical function of the absurd. Martin Esslin's *The Theatre of the Absurd* ([1961] 1968) is probably the best-known analysis of how the theatrical absurdist genre seeks to confront us with the senselessness and pointlessness of our lives. However, below the surface of the absurd storylines of Mahammed and Edvardsen runs

112 Translation: "I thought: he might feel lonely, but he didn't feel lonely. I thought: maybe he's looking for something, but he wasn't looking for anybody. I thought: he may not be a reliable man, but he was a reliable man."

113 Original Dutch version: "met haar bevreemdende verhalen en anekdotes slaagt ze erin een zuiver licht te werpen op de werkelijkheid. Door de wereld te ontdoen van zijn alledaagse betekenissen en vanzelfsprekendheden, wordt er iets anders zichtbaar: de kwetsbaarheid, de willekeur en misschien zelfs de bespottelijkheid van al onze systemen en conventies."

a different artistic exploration. By delivering texts that explicitly rely on the active sensorial imagination of the audience, presented by a narrator who continuously adjusts their storyline, they encourage the spectator to play a decisive and perhaps even essential role in their pieces. As a result, their pieces do not so much draw attention to the pointlessness of things, but rather highlight language's capacity to generate a connection between listener and speaker. If we look carefully at the way in which the meaning of their somewhat generic and abstract texts constantly shifts and depends on the imagination of the audience, it seems that Mahammed and Edvardsen's use of the genre of the absurd is less rooted in making "the randomness" of systems and conventions visible.[114] The potential sense of "togetherness" between audience and spectator upon which their dramaturgies very much rely, is in sharp contrast to the feeling of loneliness and at some points very bitter views of reality that their stories produce. In the following sections, I will use Mallarmé's writings on dance to further unravel how the two aspects that contribute to this dramaturgical focus—the shifting significations and the appeal to the imagination in a collective space—bring their writings close to the mechanisms of dance. To demonstrate why Mallarmé's writings, more than a century old now, are an essential guide to help us trace what is happening within contemporary dance, the choreographic writing practice of Edvardsen provides an instructive entry point.

Writing as dance in *Black* and dance as writing in Mallarmé

The pieces of writing that are used in Edvardsen's performances demonstrate close consideration of the rhythmic and melodic qualities of language, and also generate textual movement through repetition, variation and narrative structure. As already briefly referred to in the Introduction (pgs. 16 and following), in published interviews and in reflections about her artistic practice, Edvardsen frequently insists that her strategy of using language within the field of dance should not be understood as "a shift towards another discipline or art form (theater, literature)," but as a shift "within the field and practice of dance and choreography" (Edvardsen 2017, 219). The use of language in a choreographic way is also something that returns frequently in the academic discourse on her work. As Jonas

114 I am taking my cue here from Julia Jarcho's reading of *Waiting for Godot* (1953), where she encourages us to consider the mechanism of the absurd not only in the content that the text produces, but also in terms of the friction that is created between the two mediums of writing and the stage. Jarcho contends that *Waiting for Godot* requires the space and time of the theatrical stage to present reading "as an experience of refusing the actual" (Jarcho 2017, 76). In its "undecidable alternation between what is written […] and what is happening before us" (Jarcho 2017: 89), Beckett's writing not unfrequently exposes the crisis of language. In Jarcho's reading of the play, the presence of the audience is crucial as well, for the staged play confronts us with "the crisis of our co-presence" (97). As a result, writing "becomes a process by which language makes itself distressingly present: makes itself the very scene, or 'situation,' that it must then try to write itself out of" (105). In a similar way, I would contend that it is important to read the absurdist motif in Mahammed's and Edvardsen's pieces in the light of the specific compositional strategies by which the writing is composed, in order to uncover its dramaturgical function.

Rutgeerts argues, "rather than being a radical rupture, the shift to language should thus be understood as a change of material. Edvardsen approaches language in a choreographic way" (2023, 164). "Could it be," André Lepecki therefore asks in a discussion of darkness in Edvardsen's *No Title*, "that dance opts to give something other than its habitual image, to view and offer the eye another kind of vision, another substance for its appearing?" (2016, 55). While Lepecki still uses the terminology of visuality to describe the experience of dance in Edvardsen's work, Edvardsen's pieces actually indicate that dance can also be manifested in the auditory realm. In her contribution to *Post-Dance*, she argues, "I think dance is not primarily a visual art form. It is also about other senses, and how the senses are working together. Seeing, listening, feeling, but also remembering, imagining and thinking. I think of choreography as writing, which doesn't mean that it needs to be language, but also not an opposite to language, and maybe not as visual" (2017, 217). With her performances *Black* (2011), *No Title* (2014), and *oslo* (2017), but also *Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine* (2010 -), *we to be* (2015), and *Penelope Sleeps* (2019), Edvardsen invites us to redefine dance as something that takes place *in* a text.[115]

Which strategies does Edvardsen employ to transform language as a medium for dance? In the beginning of *Black*, for example, Edvardsen utters: "table table table table table table table table chair chair chair chair chair chair chair chair lamp lamp lamp lamp lamp lamp lamp lamp." Meanwhile she walks, not unlike a mime artist, through the room and places her arms to position these objects in space, which allows her to go back to certain objects and to place them again in space ("here here here here here here here here there there there there there there there there"). The entire text is made up of a long stream of words in which just about each word is repeated eight times. This repetitive structure mirrors the common eight-beat rhythm of dance. The words themselves evoke a conglomerate of invisible objects on stage that establish a spatial composition through which Edvardsen moves. The first time she pronounces the words "table," or "chair," Edvardsen clearly situates these objects within the space by making gestures that clearly mark the contours of the furniture. Throughout the piece, she introduces various objects into the empty room in which she is standing (plate, knife, coffee) but also adds actions such as "ignore," "push," "move" to the scenery, or makes observations about some of the objects in longer sentences, such as "there there there there there there there there lies lies lies lies lies lies lies lies the bottle bottle bottle bottle bottle bottle bottle bottle empty empty empty empty empty

115 *Time has fallen asleep in the afternoon sunshine* is structured as a library of living books embodied by a group of performers. Each performer has memorized one specific book. When you attend the performance, you can "borrow" one of these living books, and they will walk you to a quiet place in the library to let you "read" the book by listening to them. (For a insightful discussions of this piece, see for instance Thomson 2017; Browning 2018).

empty empty empty." Because the repetition creates a sense of slowing down, it also invites us to focus more attentively on the words and objects that are introduced into the space.

Erini Kartsaki writes that, "repetition renders words and phrases familiar, only to make them feel foreign again through repetition" (2017, 29). *Black* clearly incorporates this paradoxical mechanism of repetition: the more the quite familiar objects are repeated, the more they start to feel abnormal. As Rutgeerts describes it, the repetitions of the words mean that "the everyday temporality […] is replaced by a temporality that turns on itself" (2023, 120). Through the changes in rhythm that occur throughout the text, a feeling of suspense is created in this fairly predictable structure. The alternation between two-syllable words (for instance, table) and one-syllable words (for instance, chair or lamp) adds rhythmic variation to the repetition, which is at one point again abruptly disrupted by a three-syllable word ("particle"). Meanwhile, in sentences where the words are syntactically connected because they are part of one longer sentence (such as in: "i i i i i i i i never never never never never never never never saw saw saw saw saw saw saw saw it it it it it it it it before fore fore fore fore fore fore fore"), the semantic connection also establishes a slightly different rhythmic texture to the repetition of separate words. By means of these rhythmic changes, a sense of movement is incorporated into the text.

Another strategy through which the mechanism of dance is smuggled into her language pieces is that "a sense of physicality is always present in her work" (Protopapa 2016, 174). This physicality is emphasized through pronunciation or via the physical movements that accompany and guide her speech. In that sense, Edvardsen emphasizes what we by now have already encountered several times, namely the ontological link between embodiment and language, which Merleau-Ponty foregrounds in his thoughts on language. His description of how, while speaking, his "whole bodily system concentrates on finding and saying the word, in the same way that my hand moves toward what is offered to me" (Merleau-Ponty [1969] 1973,19) is accentuated in Edvardsen's piece. The rather quick pace in which she repeats words which are sometimes difficult to combine, such as "bottle, bottle, bottle, bottle, bottle, bottle, bottle, bottle," highlights the articulatory effort of the piece. A review of her piece *No Title* beautifully describes how the text is fully entangled with Edvardsen's body: "Edvardsen's voice does not simply pronounce words but expresses its own muscular quality" (Minns and Albano 2020). The same strategy is used in *Black*: her rather slow and careful pronunciation emphasizes speech as a bodily action and enhances the auditorial resonance in space. The soundscape that emerges out of this rhythmic text is rigorously consistent: the eighth word in the row is almost always pronounced in a higher pitch, so for instance the final "table" in "table table table table table table table table" rises slightly. At some points, this mode of pronunciation reflects the content of

the sentence: Edvardsen's pronunciation of "full full full full full full full full" during the watering of her invisible plant, for example, evokes the sound of sloshing water pouring out of a full water bottle. The conscious play with the sonorous qualities of the words, as well as the careful rhythmic composition of the text, contrasts sharply with the more everyday, anecdotal, or improvisatory mode of talking dances such as Bill T. Jones's *Floating the Tongue* or Trisha Brown's *Accumulation with Talking Plus Watermotor* (1979), discussed in the previous chapter.

The understanding that a piece of writing can incorporate compositional aspects of dance is the main reason for considering Mallarmé's poetic and critical oeuvre in light of this contemporary practice. Mallarmé, not unlike Edvardsen, sought to incorporate the mechanism of dance into his poetic writing practice, and, similarly, his "writing about dance [is] designed to break down the boundaries between dancer and spectator, reader and writer, words and actions" (Frankenbach 2015, 147). More specifically, his writings also offer a framework to discern how fluctuating significations stimulate the imagination of the audience and produce, in the moment of performance, a sense of collectivity. Mallarmé's attraction to dance must first be situated in the specific historical context of his Symbolist and metaphysical poetic work. More specifically, he pursued a form of writing that operated according to the logic of the symbol, where the sign presents what it aims to signify in an immediate and unmediated manner. With this mode of writing, he aimed to evoke "the Idea"—something that remains rather mysterious throughout his writings, but that seems to refer to a kind of fundamental, absolute truth of being and experience. Mallarmé aspired to, as Megan Varvir Coe puts it, "connect readers with the mystical world of the *Idée* (Idea), a world immune to conscious contemplation and inaccessible through invocation or description that relied on the semantic abilities of language as traditionally understood" (2017, 27). In a passage about Maurice Maeterlinck, he for instance writes about how the language is modulated in such a way that it gives access to some sort of ultimate truth: that "anything preparatory or mechanical has been rejected so that the essential […] can appear" (Mallarmé [1897] 2007, 162).

In dance, and more specifically in the various ballets he saw in the Parisian Eden-Théâtre at the end of the 19th century and in the innovative dances of Loïe Fuller, Mallarmé recognized a form of signification that satisfied his Symbolist and metaphysical yearnings. According to Deidre Priddin, Mallarmé searches "for an expression which is no longer contingent on circumstances and chance but exists, unique, in its own right and enjoys a fundamental intrinsic value—that is, the absolute" (1952, 55). From that perspective, it at first sight seems quite odd that this poet should be so deeply inspired by dance, a very concrete and material art form, and very much "contingent on circumstances and chance."

However, deeply moved by how ballet generates meaning, Mallarmé considers it as the "theatrical form of poetry par excellence" ([1897] 2007, 135-136).[116] In his essay "Ballets," he for instance praises ballerina Rosita Mauri, "an unparalleled virtuoso, who sums up, with her incomparable divination, an animality both earthy and pure, always designating unfinished allusions, [...] and simulates an impatience of plumes toward the idea" (132). When he encountered the veiled dances of Fuller, to whom he devoted the essay "Another Study of Dance, The Fundamentals of Ballet, According to a Recent Indication" (135–7), he seems to have been even more overwhelmed by how dance silently produces signification. An important reason for his fascination for dance and particularly for Fuller, was the way in which it produced signification silently. About the latter, he writes "here we find given back to Ballet the atmosphere or nothingness, visions no sooner known than scattered, just their limpid evocation. The stage *is freed for any* fiction, cleared and instated by the play of a veil with attitudes and gestures" (136-137; emphasis added). As we have already seen in the context of *Un coup de dés*, Mallarmé approached dance in his poetic writing by focusing on the poems' visual aspects, or by including silence through whitespaces and establishing a form of musicality on the page.

Mallarmé's interest in the blanks of typography, or his approach to the dancer as "an allegory of the perfect poem (mute and gestural)" (Fisher 1994, 66) strike a similar chord to Merleau-Ponty's reflections on language, most specifically those included in *Prose of the World* and in "Indirect Language and the Voice of Silence" in *Signs*. Although in a somewhat different vein, Mallarmé's fascination with silence is echoed in Merleau-Ponty's reflections on how "all language is indirect or allusive—that it is, if you wish, silence" ([1960] 1964, 43). In *The Prose of the World*, he for instance contends that "language is expressive as much through what is *between* the words as through the words themselves, and through what it does not say as much as what it says; just as the painter paints as much by what he traces, by the blanks he leaves, or by the brush marks that he does not make" ([1969] 1973, 43; original emphasis).[117] After a discussion of signification in the paintings of Henri Matisse, Merleau-Ponty for instance concludes that "it is no different in the case of truly expressive speech" (45) and "we should be sensitive to the thread of silence from which the tissue of speech is woven" (46). This comparison between visual blanks and silence within speech clearly resonates with Mallarmé's fascination for silence, as produced in the blank or empty page. In a direct reference to Mallarmé in *Signs*, Merleau-Ponty writes

116 For a more detailed account of the specific historical dance performances that Mallarmé attended, see Pouillaude 2017, 69-92.

117 Ihde summarizes the way in which Merleau-Ponty thought of the process of signification as follows: "there is, in Merleau-Ponty, the movement from silence to speech, but that is not a movement from non-meaning to meaning, it is rather a movement from the implicit to the explicit, from ambiguity already *pregnant* with significance to the expressed significance of speech" (1973, 173).

that he "was well aware that nothing would fall from his pen if he remained absolutely faithful to his vow to say everything without leaving anything unsaid" ([1960] 1964, 82).[118] Although this chapter mainly focuses on Mallarmé, and Merleau-Ponty will recede to the background, the way in which both thinkers consider silence as a key aspect of signification also suggests that Mahammed and Edvardsen's use of kinetic textuality again foregrounds an aspect of Merleau-Ponty's view on language.[119]

Mallarmé's main artistic exploration thus centers on the specific way in which meaning and signification can be generated. It is clear that he does not want to present the Idea in a straightforward way—the kind of meaning that he seeks to evoke has to be produced suggestively, or in a "veiled" manner. Key to understanding Mallarmé's fascination with the veiled form of signification produced by dance is the continuous appeal it makes to the audience. He states that "the ballet gives but little: it is an imaginative genre" ([1897] 2007, 120). It is worth quoting at length a passage from his essay "Ballets," for it explains how Mallarmé conceptualizes the indirect meaning produced by dance as an invitation to the audience's imagination:

> The only imaginative training consists, during the ordinary hours of attending Dance without any particular aim, in patiently and passively asking oneself about each step [...] "What could this mean?" or, even better, from inspiration, to read it. For sure, one would operate fully in the midst of reverie, but appropriate; vaporous, clear, and ample, or restricted, so long as it is similar to the one enclosed in her spins or transported in a fugue by the unlettered ballerina lending herself to the play of her profession. [...] so long as you submissively place at the feet of this unconscious revealer [...] first the Flower of *your poetic instinct*, expecting nothing buy the display, in its proper light, of the thousands of latent imaginations; then, [...] she hastily delivers up, through the ultimate veil that always remains, the nudity of your concepts, and writes your vision silently like a Sign, which she is. (133-134)

In dance, Mallarmé found an example of an indirect form of signification that is never finished, and whose meaning for precisely that reason needs to be located in the juncture between the dance and the spectator watching the dance. Mallarmé experienced the dancer as a "catalyst" (McCarren 1995, 222) who helps the audience to let their unfinished thoughts

118 This indirect expression of meaning is also what Merleau-Ponty admires in, for instance, Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir*. In his view, the topic of the novel is revealed in-between the words, "in the hollows of space, time, and signification they mark out, as movement at the cinema is between the immobile images which follow one another" ([1960] 1964, 76).

119 Like Mallarmé, Merleau-Ponty does not consider this (poetic) silence as a lack of meaning. As Hugh Silverman summarizes Merleau-Ponty's view on it, "poetry does not convey signification by effacing itself – not because it has no signification or meaning, but because it has more than one signification. This multiplicity of meaning accounts for its richness and vitality" (2008, 105).

materialize. Shaw interpretates Mallarmé's critical and poetic oeuvre in a similar manner: for Mallarmé, she argues, "the reader/spectator of the poetic or balletic art work always already carries within, as it were, the art work's other half" (1993, 56). Clearly the audience's position is central to how dance produces meaning. Mallarmé's fascination with dance stems, on the one hand, from its specific way of producing meaning, but at the same time also needs to be understood in terms of how dance takes place in front of an audience.

Before further unraveling how that indirect signification, with its appeal to the audience, can also take place on the page and in poetic writing, I will first briefly position Mallarmé in the text-performance debate discussed in the previous chapter. Throughout Mallarmé's poems, prose, theater, and critical writings, the distinction between writing and performing or dancing is continuously challenged. As *Un coup de dés* exemplifies, the incorporation of aspects of performance onto the page provides an insightful perspective on the intersection between text and performance. Hans-Thiess Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theater*, to begin with, includes various references to Mallarmé. He compares the "ceremonial character" and the musicality of his writings and his theater, and that of Maeterlinck—an author whom, as we have seen, Mallarmé admired—with postdrama (2006, 58, 64).[120] Dominique Fisher traces similar aspects in Mallarmé's writings on and for the theater, and indicates how Mallarmé establishes an analogy between "poetic language and scenic language" (1994, 41). A similar argument returns in Shaw's interpretation of his work: in his own theater writings, Shaw argues, "the literary representations of performance [...] point to the same reciprocally authenticating, supplementary text-performance relationship described throughout Mallarmé's critical prose" (1993, 101).[121] Apparently, Mallarmé appreciated the same sense of "writtenness" in performance that I have introduced via Julia Jarcho in the previous chapter. When writing about watching a performance by playwright Henry Becque, for instance, he says that "the sentences may espouse the voices [...] nevertheless, I perceive them written, in the immortality of a brochure" (Mallarmé, ([1897] 2007, 145). In his praise for Maeterlinck, he discusses the opposite movement. When he writes that the latter is an author "who also inserts theater into the book" (161), he recognizes the stage as a quality of the page. Despite his insightful comments on how the relationship between text and performance can be conceptualized, and his promising reflections on

120 Lehmann describes Symbolist theater as one of postdrama's historical precedents, and argues that "Stéphane Mallarmé focuses on an idea of Hamlet according to which this play actually only has a single hero who lets all other figures recede to the rank of 'extras'. From here may be traced a line to the way in which Klaus-Michael Grüber stages Faust or Robert Wilson Hamlet: as a neo-lyrical theatre that understands the scene as a site of an 'écriture' in which all components of the theatre become letters in a poetic 'text'" (2006, 57-58).

121 In her reading of how Mallarmé conceptualizes the relation between speech and writing, Shaw writes that "the function of speech as a 'mode de presentation extérieur,' is thus to reflect the presence of writing elsewhere—that is, on the page" (1993, 9). Strikingly, Shaw's phrasing here is almost identical to that of Jarcho, whose argument about the theatricality of writing is phrased in terms of writing's presence as taking place "somewhere else, somewhere beyond us" (2017, 206).

how writing as composition can incorporate the logic of performance, it seems that Mallarmé has largely remained under the radar of the text-performance debate in theater and performance studies.

As one of the first authors to treat dance seriously as an object of study,[122] Mallarmé unsurprisingly quite often makes an appearance in dance studies scholarship, most particularly with regard to dance's ontology as writing. Mallarmé's writings are helpful to unravel how dance does not entirely belong to the realm of the non-verbal, but in fact constitutes a complex signifying system that nevertheless differs from purely linguistic signification. Often, as in the text-performance debate in theater studies, this question about dance's ontology as a text has been tackled with the help of poststructuralist thinking, of which the following quote from Lepecki in his editorial for a *Performance Research* issue "On Choreography" is representative:

> Movement and writing, fused into one word, have reflected and refracted each other in an endless game of mirrors where each term is a mis-en-abime of the other. Writing is that which captures movement – but only after entering into an endless self-displacement (the self-deferment and generative force of any mark). And movement is that which releases writing from any representational hopes, from any illusion of its subserviently serving a fixed, 'conscious presence of full intention' of anyone who produces a mark. (Allsopp and Lepecki 2008, 2)

The inherent instability of writing, which poststructuralist thinking has helped us recognize, offers an important stepping stone to define choreography in terms of the fleeting, yet written, nature of dance.[123] Although convincing in terms of the instability of the signifying process, an important risk here is that the corporeality and audience-performer dynamic

122 As Shaw for instance puts it, "though his dance essays constitute no more than a few pages, he has come to be considered an important theorist of dance" (1993, 51). Priddin's reference to Mallarmé in her assessment of the relation between dance and literature is for instance expressed against the backdrop of a broader argument about the philosophical "value" of dance (instead of considering dance as mere entertainment). Another insightful take on this matter can be found in Pouillaude's discussion of Mallarmé, see 2017, 65-92.

123 In his "Inscribing Dance," Lepecki critically assesses how Derrida's notion of the trace needs to be interpreted in the context of dance's alleged ephemerality. It also provides an insightful take on dance's ontology as writing (2004b). Two more examples further illustrate the influence of poststructuralist thinking on dance studies. In her chapter "Women Writing the Body: Let's Watch a Little How She Dances," Elizabeth Dempster writes, "if postmodern dance is a 'writing' of the body, it is a writing which is conditional, circumstantial and above all transitory; it is a writing which erases itself in the act of being written" (1998, 229). In Gabrielle Brandstetter's "Choreography as Cenotaph: The Memory of Movement," the definition of choreography more explicitly reveals the poststructuralist paradigm underlying her thinking. She writes that "choreography is a form of writing along the boundary between presence and no longer being there: an inscription of the memory of that moving body whose presence cannot otherwise be maintained. Choreography is an attempt to retain as a graph that which cannot be held: movement" (2000, 104).

that are also key dimensions of the "dancerly" quality of writing tend to be overlooked.[124] Mark Franko's reading of Mallarmé in his essay "Mimique" (2008) clearly demonstrates why Mallarmé is an instructive interlocutor in this ontological debate. As we have seen, Mallarmé considers dance as a model for poetic writing, because it produces a modulating signification but also because it takes place in front of an audience. As Franko outlines, his emphasis on the relationship between dance and its spectator offers an insightful avenue to consider dance as a form of writing. More precisely, Franko has turned to Mallarmé's essay "Mimique" to "acknowledge the importance" as well as "to signal the inherent drawbacks of deconstruction for dance theory" (2008, 241).[125] While Jacques Derrida's notion that "lack of stability and fixity characterized all written language […] was what brought writing into the dancing fold" (242), this view simultaneously "left the dancing body in a bloodless state" (243). Mallarmé's writings, as Franko argues, point to the "inscriptive force of gesture" (252), which "calls social space into being" (251).[126] A similar argument returns in Frédéric Pouillaude's interpretation of Mallarmé: "Mallarmé insists on the purely relational character of gestural signification, always caught in between a dynamic image and an interpreting gaze" (2017, 92). These readings of Mallarmé's conceptualization of dance as writing also offer an important clue for understanding writing as dance. Although this chapter does not seek to intervene in this debate on an ontological level, I do take my cue from Franko and Pouillaude by insisting that the text's status as a dance can be traced in the mechanisms it incorporates to address the audience. This encourages me to recognize compositional strategies that emphatically rely on writing's dependence on the corporeal engagement of its audience as something that brings text to the realm of dance.

Saving the "social dimension" that Franko highlights in this audience address for the discussion of *No Title* below, I first wish to return to *Black*. Mallarmé's thoughts on dance and its specific appeal to the imagination of the spectator allow us to trace a final strategy through which the text of *Black* approaches the realm of dance. The effect of the rhythmic, repetitive, and almost hypnotic text, in combination with the meticulously placed movements, is that the scenery that Edvardsen describes is almost literally present in front

124 Rather as in the text-performance debate that I studied in the previous chapter, a poststructuralist perspective on dance inevitably brings with it some blind spots. The following two examples of quite explicitly voiced frustrations about the dominance of poststructuralist thinking in dance criticism at the turn of the century indicate that the phenomenological body (of both dancer and spectator) tends to disappear from view. Roger Copeland for instance argues in his "Between Description and Deconstruction" that "'dance theory' should examine the ideas that are generated when one reflects systematically upon the *sensory experience* of dance; it shouldn't bury dance beneath ready-made notions purchased from the mail-order catalogues of Derrida, Foucault and Company" (1998, 106–7; emphasis added). In her "Dance Analysis in a Postmodern Age," Bonnie Rowell refers to "the affective quality of the movement" as "a component that […] is possible to neglect under post-structuralist models" (2009, 292).

125 Franko's argument is ultimately oriented towards a better understanding of the memory of dance, and he argues that the "indicative function of the trace" in dance should be understood not as "emptied space 'between' two virtualities" but as "forceful action taken on behalf of what is not" (2008, 253).

126 A similar argument returns in Felicia McCarren's reading of Mallarmé: "theater brings the "idée" to light, not by presenting it onstage but by causing it to be present in this social ordering" (1995, 220).

of us on stage. Objects, actions, and situations are introduced invisibly via the repetitive language of the piece. In the interview I conducted with Edvardsen, she explained that while creating this piece she discovered that repetition is essential to make the objects really present on stage. She does not simply want the audience to *think* of a table, she wants them to actually *see* the table on stage: "the repetition was for me about making it physical so that it's not only cognitive," and the repetition of the words enable the audience "to kind of try and to enter it as a, as a, you know, game of evocation and to make it last a little bit longer that you have the time as a spectator then to project it into the space" (Mette Edvardsen, pers. interview). The audience's imagination is thus activated in a rather radical way: *Black* uses language which not only describes but that also aims to create or summon the reality it describes. Jeroen Peeters provides a striking description of how he experienced this mechanism in *Black*: "the steady repetition and staccato rhythm of the words scattered the promise of narrative, time and again creating a focus on singular things. Yet as vehicles of attention, their traces would linger in the space and run against one another in my mind. To sometimes appear out of the blue and, in a performative rather than descriptive act, colour the situation with their detached existence" (2019, 20).[127] That the objects seem to appear almost in front of us is not only the effect of the repetition. This effect is also produced because Edvardsen mainly uses very generic terms (such as "table," "chair," or "lamp") to describe the scenery. This has the effect of offering the spectators only the contours of the objects, so that they can each decide what exactly the tables, chairs, and lamps will look like, so that they are immersed as co-creators into the scenery. Perhaps the very straightforward way of referencing tables and lamps seems to be diametrically opposed to the abstract symbolism and the indirect way of presenting meaning in Mallarmé's own poetic writings. Nevertheless, Edvardsen's use of generic categories does invoke, to use Pouillaude's phrasing, "the purely emblematic and impersonal character of the dancer" (2017, 87) that Mallarmé admired.

With regard to the topic of this dissertation, what I mainly borrow from Mallarmé is the way in which he conceptualizes dance as a form of writing whose mechanisms can also be approached on the page. As the readings of the absurdism in *Salut Copain* and *oslo* already suggest, the metaphysical questions which form the backdrop to Mallarmé's thoughts are quite far removed from the dramaturgical impetus behind the contemporary works. The parallels between their artistic explorations, such as the interest in fluctuating significations, as well as the French writer's thoughts on the contribution of space and audience to the process of signification, nevertheless suggest that Mallarmé's reflections on poetry remain relevant in the contemporary context of Mahammed and Edvardsen's artistic strategies.

127 Efrosini Protopapa describes a similar experience, "*Black* becomes an extraordinary practice of describing, demonstrating, and in this way helping us imagine, a space or a dance that remains largely immaterial" (2016, 174).

Drifting meanings in *waterwaswasser*

The way in which Mallarmé refers to dance to discuss poetry—for instance when he writes of Georges Rodenbach's poetry that it "invokes Loïe Fuller" ([1897] 2007, 138)—demonstrates his conviction that writing can adopt the same aspects that he admired in dance. Providing an example of how a writer can imitate the dynamics of choreographic signification, he writes: "one portion sways in a rhythm or movement of thought, another opposes it: both of them swirl around, where there intervenes, emerging like a mermaid whose tail is taken for foliage or the curlicues of an arabesque, a figure, which the idea remains" (160). The swirling, suggestive, instantaneous, and moving nature of the signification produced by the dances he admired is also characteristic of his own writings, which often consist of, to use Fisher's words, "a permanent restructuring process" (1994, 15). Mallarmé's writings thus contain insightful reflections on the specific mechanisms through which texts can incorporate the signifying structures of dance. As mentioned above, his *Un coup de dés* in particular is an example of how his own poetic endeavors are marked by the attempt to incorporate a dancerly logic. As Susan Jones argues, the poem "illustrates his sense of the bodily movement of the text, and of the movement of the writer in the text who simultaneously operates through the disciplined reserve of impersonality, crafting the disposition of signs and space on the page, but evading authorial direction that might compel meanings to emerge in a single way" (2013, 26). It is in this light that we can interpret the nebulousness of his poems and critical writing, the shifting meanings amongst words and phrases, and the multiple layers of connotation that they evoke. They are not necessarily, as his critics often assume, a proof of Mallarmé's elitism, but can also be understood as an attempt to involve the audience in the poem (Gould 1993, 99).

It is precisely the effort not to let "meanings [...] emerge in a single way" (Jones 2013, 26) that characterizes Mahammed's *waterwaswasser*. The piece is constructed around poetic strategies through which its signification constantly evolves and is renewed. In *waterwaswasser*, a white square made from cornstarch and water is positioned in the middle of the stage. During the course of the performance, Mahammed sometimes sits on it, stands next to it, or walks through it. On her left, composer and musician Alan Van Rompuy sits behind his piano keyboard and performs a fascinating soundscape that dialogues with the rhythm and musicality of Mahammed's text. Like the cornstarch, the text that Mahammed delivers is both highly flexible and at the same time very coherent.

> Perdu pardon pourtant partant
> je pars partout
> le temps partou(t)jours partout

en tout cas je pars tout a coups
comme tout le monde
comme tout le monde
come everything the world
kom altijd
wacht
(Mahammed 2019, 49)

do you hear the sea in my ear
doe jij hoor de zie in mijn oor
do you hear the sea in my ear
fait tu entend la mer dans mon oreille
feit jij hoor de zee in mijn oor
tatsache sie hören die meer in meinen ohr
meer hoor jij in mijn oor
(16)

Mahammed uses the fluidity and plasticity of language to convey a meaning that endlessly shifts and reproduces itself. As a consequence, form and content elegantly work together in this piece: the fluid form of Mahammed's writing ties in with the text's frequent references to the fluidity of our insides, which consist primarily of water. In an interview with *Bruzz*, Mahammed said that "it's nice to explore how many meanings or experiences there are in one word. At the same time, I feel about many things that I will never get to the final meaning, that it will remain an approximation" (Zonderman 2021; my translation).[128] The different meanings of a word are primarily unraveled in *waterwaswasser* by shifts from Dutch to English, to French, and German. This excerpt also illustrates how Mahammed's text operates in the space between these different languages. Often, the pun is situated in the prosodic resemblance between and semantic transitions that occur when placing words in (different or the same) languages together. Interestingly, the text itself, as a result, becomes untranslatable, which is the reason why it felt somewhat inappropriate to translate the Dutch parts of the texts in the footnotes below. Words which sound the same in different languages are repeated ("comme, come, kom" or "fait, feit"), and each time the word is transferred to another language, the meaning shifts. When she translates words literally, after each translation, they make less and less grammatical or semantic sense ("do you hear, doe jij hoor, do you hear, fait tu entend"). Language itself seems to be the main character of the piece. The central act around which this piece evolves is the

128 Original Dutch version: "het is fijn om te onderzoeken hoeveel betekenissen of belevingen er in één woord zitten. Tegelijk heb ik over veel dingen het idee dat ik nooit bij de definitieve betekenis zal komen, dat het een benadering blijft."

endless dissection of words in order to dig through their various layers of meaning and to discover sonorous and musical resonances between the words across various languages.

Throughout the text of *waterwaswasser*, the meanings of words endlessly shift, are questioned, and are placed in various (linguistic) contexts to lose their stability—"was me wash me I was myself ik was mij I was ich war mir ik was mier ich wasche mir ich war wasche ik was was mier I were in the war" (Mahammed 2019, 53). While the form of the white square frequently changes but always returns to its original shape, Mahammed's sentences repeatedly wander off, but eventually always turn back to the text's main topics, such as water, fluidity, and the inside of our bodies. The fluctuating kind of signification that Mallarmé admired in dance, can thus also be traced in Mahammed's text:

> Als ik mij verloren voel
> if I me lost feel
> quand je me sens perdu
> waar bevind ik me dan
> vind ik me dan
> find i me than dan
> find me
> or flee
> (Mahammed 2019, 15)

The rhythm of the text furthermore reinforces this feeling of instability and contributes to the impression that signification is forever unstable and continuously in flux. Mahammed uses floating and suggestive language to talk about the fluidity of our bodies. Her formal play with approaching (but never reaching) the words' full meaning in *waterwaswasser* supports a text that points to the inevitability that things will always be fluid.

> Niets valt niet in het water
> en niets mist
> iets
>
> mist
> is op de grond gevallen
> wolk
> wolk
> is zwevend water
>
> eau qui flotte flotte flotte
> eau qui flotte flotte flotte

when you say water what do you mean
when you see your reflection in water
do you recognize the water in you

(Mahammed 2019, 26)

The signification of certain words and phrases becomes as fluid as the water to which her text refers. As Lieze Roels summarizes it in her review of the piece in *Etcetera*, "the unpredictable way in which thoughts are continually reframed and transferred to different (linguistic) registers not only installs an intriguing tension between sign and meaning, but also seems to mercilessly dismantle any possibility of arriving at stable content" (2017; my translation).[129] The constant destabilization of the meaning of the words does not imply that there is no production of meaning whatsoever, or that the piece ultimately ends up producing a formal language game and nothing more. Although the meaning of the words constantly accumulates, it does not exhaust the capacity of words to signify; the range of meanings that a word can produce is constantly multiplied. In so doing, she invites her audience to approach language from that same space of curiosity as she does. In a similar way to *new skin* (Chapter One, pgs. 51-55), through a recurrent use of the pronoun you, the audience is involved in this linguistic game—"you know now no?" (Mahammed 2019, 43). In her gesture of not fixing the words' meanings but rather letting them accumulate, Mahammed invites the audience to participate in the exploration of these meanings.[130] This invitation is most clearly expressed in the recurring phrase "when you say water what do you mean?" (Mahammed 2019, 26, 40, 55).

Evidently, Mahammed's piece is not rooted in the same idealist aspiration as that of Mallarmé, and neither does she seek to reactivate the divine function of art. Nevertheless, from a formal perspective, it can be argued that her text functions in a Mallarméan manner. For Mallarmé, according to Chantal Frankenbach, "the multivalent possibilities for a word's meaning became its most important attribute, one that transformed not only writing, but reading as well, moving each from a focus on "meaning" to one on "process"" (2015, 138). Or, as Evelyn Gould describes it, in Mallarmé's writings, "sentences dance on, puffing themselves up with relative clauses, that the relatives become more captivating than the sense of the whole they mobilize and detail in fractions, infinitely" (1993, 98). A good

129 Original Dutch version: "de onvoorspelbare wijze waarop gedachten steeds opnieuw geframed en overgeheveld worden naar verschillende (talige) registers, installeert niet alleen een intrigerende spanning tussen teken en betekenis, maar schijnt ook elke mogelijkheid om tot standvastige inhoud te komen genadeloos te ontmantelen."

130 The emphasis on musicality that characterizes Mahammed's text is reminiscent of how Hans-Thies Lehmann identified the strategy of experimenting with the use of language as sound, as music, or as materiality as a key aspect of postdrama. Often, this use of language as sound results in "a multiplicity of voices, a 'polylogue,' a deconstruction of fixed meaning" (1997, 57), so that "language undergoes a process of de-semanticization" (57). Although we can discern "a certain musicalization of the human voice tending towards sound-patterns" in Mahammed's piece, there is definitely no "fading of meaning" (59). In Mahammed's work, on the contrary, words' capacity to generate meanings (in accumulation) is as important as their sonorous and rhythmic qualities.

example of this accumulation of details without any clear coherent center of meaning, is his sonnet *Une dentelle s'aboit*.

> Une dentelle s'abolit
> Dans le doute du Jeu suprême
> A n'netr'ouvrir comme un blasphème
> Qu'absence éternelle de lit
>
> Cet unanime blanc conflit
> D'une guirlande avec la même
> Enfui contra la vitre blême
> Flotte plus qu'il n'ensevelit
>
> Mais chez qui du rêve se dore
> Tristement dort une mandore
> Au creux néant musicien
>
> Telle que vers quelque fenêtre
> Selon nul ventre que le sien,
> Filial on aurait pu naître
>
> (Mallarmé 1887, cited in Noulet 1961, 154)

Here as well, the process of signification (or narration) seems to be constantly delayed: again and again, new images are introduced into the text, which at first sight seem to have very little to do with what came before and appear only to be connected to each other by means of sonorous and musical resonances. In, for instance, the phrase "qui du rêve se dore tristement dort une mandore," Mallarmé uses the same poetic procedure as Mahammed's "you see sea, sure shore" (2019, 41): the words are placed together due to the sonorous echoes that can be evoked between them, which renders the meaning of the phrase as a whole somewhat obscure.[131] Although a more detailed and elaborate poetic analysis of Mallarmé's sonnet would lead me too far at this point, a comparison between Mahammed's and Mallarmé's writings helps to identify drifting signification as a strategy that carries text towards the realm of dance. Both their writings indicate that the process of "peeling away of multiple layers around a nudity, enlarged by ordered or tempestuous contradictory flights, circling, magnifies it until dissolution" ([1897] 2007, 137) that Mallarmé admired in Fuller may equally take place on the page. Like dance, a piece of writing can produce drifting meanings, which are created and produced, erased and rewritten over and over again.

131 Although this sonnet feels less radical than *Un Coup de dés,* it does have some similarities with it. As Jones has argued about the latter poem, "its word clusters draw the reader constantly towards the teleological expectations of rhyme and metre, but then seductively frustrate those expectations, so that the reader becomes engaged in a continuous unfolding, and folding in of meanings" (2013, 24–25). A similar gesture of producing a "continuous unfolding, and folding in of meaning" is also at work in *Une dentelle s'abolit.*

This process of accumulating different meanings also affects the way in which Mahammed positions herself as the author of the text. With her drifting text, she avoids the position of a writer (and performer) who wishes to be in control of their audience. As she explained in our interview, during her writing process, she herself also experienced the somewhat unpredictable or almost accidental way in which language produces signification: "I find that my performances only take on meaning as I go along. I write based on observations or moments that I experienced in my life that eventually came together a bit and started to tell their own story. And then I began to filter from that. And so I began to feel a connection between the different pieces" (Dounia Mahammed, pers. interview; my translation).[132] In the performance, the idea that Mahammed is not fully in control of her text is suggested by the specific way in which she delivers her writing: as in *Salut Copain*, she continues to be surprised about what she hears herself saying. A striking parallel can be traced with Mallarmé's point about "obey[ing] the ancient genius of verse" ([1897] 2007, 166), as a way in which the author can surrender themselves to their writing process: "you might—before the invitation of the rhyme [...] once [...] have had an idea of the concept to treat, but undeniably in order to forget it in its ordinary sense, and to give yourself wholly to the dialectic of Verse" (166). What Jones refers to as Mallarmé's strategy of "evading authorial direction that might compel meanings to emerge in a single way" (2013, 23) seems to resonate with the compositional strategies adopted by Mahammed. By multiplying and dissecting various meanings, she tries to control as little as possible the many associations that her drifting writing may evoke in the imagination of the audience.

Like Mallarmé, Mahammed creates a "space for the playing out of doubts and fears, a space where an argument can be simultaneously put forth and withdrawn" (Williams 2001, 310). The meandering signification establishes an interesting resonance with the central motif of her text—water. By talking about water through a mode of writing whose signification is continuously produced anew in changing constellations, linguistic confusion is presented in the piece as an almost logical consequence. If we are fluid and consist of so much water, it seems inevitable that opinions, statements, or points of view will never be coherent, steady, and unchangeable. In our interview, Mahammed explained that she wants to embrace confusion and ambiguity in her work: "in some way, I'm trying to say that that confusion is okay or something, and then that I'm there too and that maybe we should just, yes, embrace that too or something [...]. There is also something in me that wants to protect the possibility of things being unclear, that people are allowed to

132 Original Dutch version: "ik merk dat mijn voorstellingen pas betekenis krijgen gaandeweg. Ik schrijf op basis van observaties of momenten die ik meemaakte in mijn leven en die op den duur wat bij elkaar kwamen en een eigen verhaal begonnen vertellen. En dan begon ik daaruit te filteren. En zo een connectie begon te voelen tussen de verschillende stukjes."

be unclear and unpredictable, and that they are just that" (Dounia Mahammed, pers. interview; my translation).[133] Importantly, however, this inevitable confusion is presented as something potentially enjoyable, most specifically through literal (and therefore ungrammatical) translations that elegantly follow on from each other to evoke musical and rhythmic compositions. Mistranslations or less correct uses of language are not presented in order to draw attention to some sort of linguistic failure, but are rather welcomed as potentially funny and fascinating phenomena. In my case, I experienced the translations which, in *waterwaswasser* stumble over themselves and sometimes dissolve as a funny and pleasurable celebration of the confusion that inevitably results from translations. By dissecting the words' immediate meaning and translating them in terms of their musical rather than semantic similarities, Mahammed embraces the fact that statements can become messy, unclear, or dizzying. Because she presents (semantical) confusion as a site for enjoyment, she seems to suggest that miscommunication does not necessarily have to result in a sense of frustration or confusion. When this happens, Mahammed recommends that we: "don't panic" (2019, 28). Especially in the Belgian multilingual context, it felt significant that Mahammed creates a space where the messiness of semantic instability does not unavoidably lead to conflict, but can also be something to potentially enjoy.

Activating nothingness in *No Title*

A central dramaturgical mechanism of Edvardsen's sequel to *Black*, *No Title*, is again to stimulate the audience's imagination, this time via strategies of negation. As in *Black*, *No Title* takes place on an empty stage. At the outset of the performance, Edvardsen has her eyes closed and says: "the beginning—is gone, the space is empty—and gone, the prompter has turned off his reading lamp—and gone" (Edvardsen 2019, 25). After a while, a pattern emerges in the text, whereby Edvardsen makes every object, action, or situation that she has introduced disappear again, by claiming that they are "gone." Whereas *Black* investigates how specific objects and situations can appear through language, *No Title* explores how much more abstract things can be evoked through their disappearance, such as "going straight to the point" (30), "the beginning of time" (33), or "unshaped openness" (34). The piece opens by referring to the actual theater space in which Edvardsen is delivering her text, but she increasingly zooms out from that one particular place:

> The time capsule filled with selected information about the earth and humanity, also animals, containing samples of sound recordings of a bus, classical music, texts in different languages about our civilization, poems,

133 Original Dutch version: "ergens probeer ik mee te geven dat die verwarring oké is of zo, en dan dat ik daar ook ben en dat we dat misschien gewoon ook ja moeten omarmen of zo […]. Er is ook iets in mij dat wil beschermen dat dingen onduidelijk mogen zijn, dat mensen onduidelijk en onvoorspelbaar mogen zijn en dat ze dat gewoon zijn."

> images – including instructions of how to read the material – set into space, predicted with the possibility to reach another planet in another light age about 40.000 years from now – is gone. (36)

The text moves elegantly through different settings and scenery, centuries, and affective registers. In the course of the performance, Edvardsen sometimes adds variations to the X-gone structure—“things we must not see are gone – will be gone – will have been gone” (28), and midway through the piece, she changes the structure of negation from “gone” to “not”:

> Not doing doing
> not not doing doing
> not not doing doing doing
> not not doing not doing doing
> doing not not doing doing doing
> doing doing not not doing doing doing doing
> doing not not doing doing doing not doing doing doing
> not not not doing doing not not doing doing
> not not not not doing not doing doing
> not not not not doing not not doing doing doing (31)

The repetition of words and phrases establishes a sense of movement and rhythm in the text, whose musicality is most explicitly foregrounded in the “not doing doing” fragment. The carefully constructed sentences, a narrative build-up, and a more heterogeneous rhythmic structure of repetition and variation also mark an important difference with the text of *Black*, which consists more simply of a list of words.

Peculiarly, all the elements that are “gone,” nevertheless continue to linger in the space: apparently, “it is not enough to say that something is gone in order to make it disappear” (Edvardsen and Ingvartsen 2016, 97).[134] Once something is named, it is instilled in the imagination of the audience: even though the performer then claims that it is gone, its removal feels somewhat incomplete. As a result, towards the end of the piece, what remains is the accumulation of the things she mentioned, despite the writing’s constant attempt at eradication. At some points, *No Title* relies again on rather generic categories (“visions are gone / image is gone / outlines are gone / colours are gone / reflections are gone / emission is gone” (29)) to activate the imagination of the audience. Bojana Cvejić describes this as follows: “*No Titl*e does not give orders to its audience to form images. There is something powerful about the indifference of the generic, and the economy of bare contours rather than colorful and rich images” (2018). By negating what she seeks to evoke, Edvardsen

134 Somewhere in the middle of the piece, Edvardsen, with her eyes closed, starts to draw a line and writes the word “line.” Her failure to later fully wipe away this line corresponds to the way in which the things which have been introduced still remain vaguely present in the space.

explores how language can transcend the limits of the visual and introduce a space that extends far beyond the space in which this performance takes place. This emptiness, of both the space and the negated situations, stimulates our imagination and embodies how language can summon up various realities, even by negating them. Jonas Rutgeerts observes something similar about the piece: “when Edvardsen states that Columbus and his boats are gone, […] we are not thinking about nothing. Rather, we are thinking about all the possible worlds that are conjured up by this negation” (2023, 109). As in *oslo* and *Black*, the richness of this imaginary space is in sharp contrast with the bare and empty physical stage. The negation structure itself only renders the distinction between these two spaces more ambiguous.

It is striking that in the different critical readings of Edvardsen’s *No Title*, Gilles Deleuze returns as a key philosophical interlocutor. On the one hand, this is an example of a broader tendency within the discourse on early 21st century dance to borrow from Deleuze’s (and Felix Guattari’s) philosophy in order to describe dance pieces. Their work is often used to critically assess the signifying capacity of the dancing body’s corporeality in movement, or to unravel the choreographic quality of dances that go beyond the portrayal of bodily movement (see also Introduction, pgs. 23 and following) (Colebrook 2005; Rothfield 2011; Sabisch 2011; Protopapa 2013; Apostolou-Hölscher 2014; Laermans 2015; Lepecki 2016). On the other hand, the fact that Deleuze pops up in the context of Edvardsen also has to do with the particularity of her work. To describe how, despite the withdrawal from bodily movement, a choreographic logic can be traced in the way she activates the imagination of the audience via nothingness, the Deleuzian terminology of possibilities, potentialities, exhaustion, or notions such as the actual and the virtual has frequently been used (e.g., Lepecki 2016; Petrović Lotina 2016; Protopapa 2016; Cvejić 2018; Rutgeerts 2023). Rutgeerts, to begin with, insightfully uses Deleuzian terminology to trace how the choreographic mechanism of repetition disavows any overarching (virtual) structure that holds the words together: “Edvardsen’s repetitive utterances do not […] flatten out the meaning of the actual instantiation by embedding it into a larger virtual horizon and unveiling the structural logic […] Instead, the repetition draws attention to the particular dynamics of the concrete instantiation, thus destabilizing the relation between the actual movement and the virtual subtext” (2023, 115-16). Efrosini Protopapa, on the other hand, uses Deleuze’s notions of exhaustion and possibilizing to explain that “choreographers such as […] Edvardsen, ask us to think beyond the question of the kind of (dance) movement we see (or do not see) in their work; they point towards the possibility of dance, even when (or precisely as) they

withdraw the dancing, replacing it with new kinds of relations between bodies, objects, words, images, and movements yet to be imagined" (2016, 181).[135]

Deleuzian thinking is also frequently used to unearth the political potential of early 21st century dance. As David Rittershaus put it, referencing Deleuze, "at stake [...] is the creative potential of the dancing body to be aesthetically as well as politically productive" (2021, 489). In discussions on *No Title*, Deleuze is also often used politically. In his chapter on Edvardsen's *No Title* in *Singularities*, André Lepecki very briefly takes up the essay of Deleuze also referenced by Protopapa—"The Exhausted" (1997)—to introduce an understanding of darkness as "another name for full potentiality" (2016, 55). Essential to Lepecki's understanding of this potentiality is how it contributes to early 21st century dance's political project: he describes *No Title* as belonging to a group of "particularly timely choreopolitical acts—acts that go beyond a mere aesthetic play with visual perception, but that indeed open up, through darkness, and build, as darkness, a much needed space of potentiality for our times of constrained (possible) choices" (58). For that reason, Lepecki traces a sense of freedom in Edvardsen's piece: by using darkness (closing her eyes and gradually introducing a fading out of the performance), she establishes "movements of thought [...] freed from the limitations of what it means to think" (64).[136]

Like Lepecki, Cvejić recognizes a form of freedom in Edvardsen's work and its visual refusal of clarity. She also reproduces a clearly Deleuzian-inspired terminology to capture this dynamic: "imagination opens the realm of possibility," and a couple of paragraphs later, "the performance has environed us, enveloped us with its worlds holding our ears and eyes in abundance" (2018).[137] In his analysis of *No Title*, Goran Petrović Lotina withdraws slightly from the Deleuzian perspective on this interplay, contending that it does not allow him to fully capture the political aspect of Edvardsen's work. "Borrowing Deleuze's vocabulary," Petrović Lotina argues, "some dance scholars [...] support an ontology based

135 Protopapa's article mainly focusses on a reinterpretation of Lepecki's notion of "exhausting dance" (2006), to consider developments in late 20th and early 21st century dance "not as an endpoint, but rather as an opening out of new possibilities in / for dance" (2016, 168). In fact, Protopapa's (Deleuzian) critique of Lepecki's notion already announces the move towards a more explicitly Deleuzian discourse that will inform Lepecki's *Singularities* (2016), a follow-up to many of the arguments about dance's political potential introduced in *Exhausting Dance*.

136 In his discussion of *No Title*, Lepecki juxtaposes Edvardsen's use of darkness with aesthetic modernism, where "the subordination of dance to light," prevailed, something that Lepecki argues "was perhaps most famously expressed by Stéphane Mallarmé" (2016, 64). As he explained in *Exhausting Dance*, a rejection of the modernist movement is crucial to Lepecki's understanding of dance's political potential (2006, 12–13). A more elaborate comparison between the dominant discourse on the political potential of dance and how kinetic textuality produces strategies of resistance will be the topic of Chapter Four. Nevertheless, by using Mallarmé as a key interlocutor to unravel the dancing quality of the writings of Mahammed and Edvardsen, I aim to slightly disentangle the binary assumption between modernist aesthetics and late 20th and early 21st century dance upon which Lepecki's claim is based.

137 In Cvejić's insightful analysis of Edvardsen's radical appeal to the imagination, the political potential of the piece is less abstract than Lepecki's reading. According to her, Edvardsen's piece resists an important imperative of the dance market: "to leave the audience alone, trusting it is capable of participating in an imaginary, seems so difficult, at odds with the current curatorial care" (2018).

on the life-philosophical belief in positivity, or never-receding abundance, out of which the discourse on absolute democracy unfolds" (2016, 37).[138] In the embrace of potentiality and abundance, he argues, "the role of art is reduced to the infinite potential field of virtualities – to an impersonal mechanic intensity of concepts beyond meaning" (38; emphasis added). He argues instead that "the specificity of the political dimension of art lies in the possibility to (re)constitute the audience and, more generally, the public in plural terms" (40). Similarly, I would argue that the political dimension of Edvardsen's piece cannot exclusively be attributed to the images of potentiality produced by her negation structures, but that it also needs to be located in the relationship she establishes with the audience. Stepping back from the Deleuzian approach and turning to Mallarmé will allow me to unravel how that process takes place *in the text*.

As we have seen, dance's dependence on an audience is one important reason why Mallarmé appreciates it so much. For Mallarmé, as I have also pointed out above through Mark Franko's reading of his work, the interaction between dancer and spectator is fundamental to the functioning of dance: "there appears […] the furious dancer […]. The décor is lying about, latent in the orchestra, treasure of the imagination; to come out […] according to the views dispensed by the dancer, now and then gives the audience the Idea on stage" ([1897] 2007, 136). This relationship between the dancer and the audience is also interpreted in terms of the potential feeling of collectivity that dance produces. As he wrote in "Of Genre and the Moderns," for instance, "the stage is the obvious focus of pleasures taken *in common*, so, all things considered, it is also the majestic opening to the mystery whose grandeur one is in the world to envisage, the same thing that a citizen, having an inkling of it, expects from the State: to *compensate him for his social diminishment*" (144; emphasis added). In fact, in a (typically) veiled way, he seems to trace a certain political aspect in the way dance establishes a sense of collectivity.[139] Moreover, this collective relation between audience and dancer encouraged Mallarmé to think of dance as a modern ceremony or ritual. As Mary Lewis Shaw and Frédéric Pouillaude, for instance, have interpreted his reflections, a fundamental aspect of why Mallarmé loved dance is that the production of

138 Petrović Lotina, on the contrary, argues that "it is by challenging existing antagonisms and articulating social relations […] that art may mobilise the public to construct different realities and, thus, invigorate democracy" (2016, 40). He therefore proposes to consider Edvardsen's pieces in terms of how the audience is confronted with the paradoxical way in which social space comes into being: "through this linguistic play between presence and absence of object […], Edvardsen mobilizes intelligence, imagination and participation and thus impels the audience to recognize that disagreements and antagonisms are constitutive of any social construction" (34-35). According to Petrović Lotina, *Black* and *No Title* "increase the awareness that each object is historical and of partial construction, brought to presence in relation to the context of its particular use" (39).

139 As Stark summarizes it elegantly, for Mallarmé "language was the ground securing the existence of human sociability and community as such; and yet it was also fundamentally groundless, a structure of arbitrary marks and empty sounds imputed with meaning only through the aleatory flux of social convention. […] it nourished a utopian hope that modern poetry's historical task might be to construct aesthetic forms appropriate to this vacated ontological and linguistic condition" (2020, 6).

gestural meaning takes place in an environment of ritual collectivity which produces a form of modern spiritual celebration (Shaw 1993, 64; Pouillaude 2017, 79).[140] This aspect appears in his description of how Maeterlinck "awakens, in writing, the Master of Ceremonies of everyone's private feast day; or, if he convokes the public, he shows it the authenticity of his intimate munificence, which blazes forth with charm" ([1897] 2007, 163). Mallarmé here demonstrates how the collective and almost ritualistic experience of dance can be recognized and thus incorporated into poetic writing.

With regard to the social space constructed by dancerly writing, another parallel can be drawn between Edvardsen's discourse on her own work and Mallarmé's reflections. As she mentioned in our interview: "I'm trying to propose other spaces and trying to open other spaces and this whole relationship to, you know, where we can go in the imagination. I think it's such a powerful capacity […] Trying to find this place where we can reach something or get closer to something in what we're experiencing there together" (Mette Edvardsen, pers. interview). As in her other two pieces, Edvardsen, in *No Title*, wishes to establish a sense of collectivity by activating the imagination of the audience. The fact that Edvardsen closes her eyes and gradually starts moving through the space while speaking enhances this sense of collectivity. Her movements reinforce the feeling that we are navigating together through the imaginary space that Edvardsen constructs, while neither we nor she can actually "see" this space. In fact, Edvardsen occupies a position in space that is not unlike the functioning of the stage in Mallarmé's writings: to use Pouillaude's words, "the stage space gathers together multiple individuals and unites them around the focal point of the pleasures it proffers. A politics (of the stage) re-emerges in the very place that seemed to offer only compensatory escape" (2017, 79). At the same time, Edvardsen's dancing text ultimately aims at "call[ing] social space into being" (Franko 2008, 251). She for instance explained in our interview that she is also "trying to find this place where we can reach something or get closer to something in what we're experiencing there together. I don't want to control, and I cannot control it anyway. As an audience, I don't like to be told what to think" (Mette Edvardsen, pers. interview).

However, the parallels between Edvardsen and Mallarmé are not limited to the analogies we can trace in their discourse, but can be more convincingly argued by focusing in on the textual strategies that Edvardsen incorporates in her writings. When trying to align dance with writing, taking my cue from Franko, Mallarmé mainly reminds us to keep track of the parameters of the stage that are incorporated into that writing, to avoid leaving dancing

140 Pouillaude explains how, for Mallarmé, ballet functions as a "model for" a "scriptural ritual" (2017, 84). "The ritual of the Idea," writes Pouillaude, envisages "the instantaneous juxtaposition of a factual form and a suggested figure; the precarious assemblage effaced as soon as it is effected, of a *symbol* or *metaphor* that links the gaze and the visible, escaping both" (86).

"in a bloodless state" (2008, 243). As the previous readings of *Black* and *waterwaswasser* demonstrated, emphatically corporeal writing, which functions suggestively and consists of a constantly recomposing form of signification ultimately geared towards the inclusion of the audience, carries text towards the realm of dance. Similar strategies are at work in *No Title*. Because of its dependence on the imagination of the audience, the piece potentially establishes a sense of collectivity *in* the writing. The generic and abstract images that her text alludes to also seek to maintain individual differences between the audience members, since they will obviously imagine the images that the words allude to in different ways. With regard to the particular textual focus in *No Title* on nothingness, negation, and emptiness, Mallarmé's theoretical reflections on dance offer an important addition to the Deleuzian-influenced scholarship on contemporary dance. While he approaches this idea of nothingness more radically from the perspective of the audience, Mallarmé helps us recognize that this interplay between nothingness and the imagination of the audience is rooted in the page.[141]

The element of space, to begin with, is a central compositional strategy of Edvardsen's writing. Apparently, as Edvardsen explains in our interview, the space played a crucial role in the writing process. She did not write the text on her desk or on her computer screen, but in the studio space:

> the writing is not taking place at the desk or on the screen. So [...] the space is what gives me feedback, not the page, not the screen [...] for me, working in the studio is a way to have a certain concentration. First of all, in being able to have that focus and concentration in space. I think it's kind of fundamental to how the writing evolves. [...] the writing is constructed in space. And so it's more like I'm the medium through which it the writing is passing [...] and all of a sudden, the relationship to the text had other questions that I didn't have before. It's not about the text, it is about how I'm constructing this in space so that this has its own dramaturgy. (Mette Edvardsen, pers. interview)

This strikes a similar chord to Mallarmé, for whom the notion of space occupies an important position in his understanding of the affinity between dance and poetry. He explains how, for him, "the function of space in their stanzas should suggest some analogy between leaps on the stage and verse on the page" ([1897] 2007, 139). As we have seen, a typical

141 That Deleuze's terminology operates in ways similar to Mallarmé is illustrated by, for example, Jones' description of Mallarmé's poetics as a "poetics of potentiality" (2013, 16) and her argument that "Mallarmé refers to an action not yet completed, one that more distinctly aligns itself with the notion of process, of passage, a gesturing towards, a '*becoming*'" (2013, 15; emphasis added). Similarly, McCarren's insightful comment on how absence functions in Mallarmé's work suggests a conceptual and theoretical resonance between the Deleuzian discourse on contemporary dance and Mallarmé's writings: "he generally goes to the theater to see what is not there, that is, to 'see' both what is missing ('the contemporary emptiness behind') and what cannot be seen in the first place, an emptiness which is *not a lack but rather the full potential* of ideal theater" (1995, 220; emphasis added).

Mallarméan way of treating the space is the use of blanks and emptiness, which activate the potential of nothingness and include the audience. Silence, blanks, and nothingness, as Stark puts it, "implicat[e] the reader in the poetic quest to produce and share meaning" (2020, 27). This space of nothingness is therefore not marked by an absence of language, but "contains an infinity of possibilities" (Priddin 1952, 69). The potential fulness of the (Mallarméan) blank page is activated in Edvardsen's work by means of the "empty" stage. In the text, the compositional structure of *No Title* is typically Mallarméan—the use of empty space to provoke endless meanings in the contact with the audience. While this is clearly similar to the way in which the abovementioned scholars capture *No Title* in terms of Deleuzian "potentialities," the dance in *No Title*, however, manifests itself in the interaction with the audience *via a text*.[142] The text that Edvardsen delivers both refers to the actual performance space (it corresponds to the emptiness of the space by evoking nothingness through negation), and at the same time negates the actual performance situation ("state funded arts – gone / performer on stage – gone / theatre – gone / audience – gone / going home – gone" (2019, 35)). Edvardsen's use of language as choreographic material can thus be understood in this sense: the text is incorporated as a material presence into the performance, and at the same time presents that performance space as an absence that makes possible the various spaces that it denies by negation.[143]

In *Un Coup de dés*, for instance, it can be argued that the composition of the poem also gestures towards a corporeal interaction with its audience, perhaps another artistic strategy in which Mallarmé is influenced by dance. As Jones, for instance, describes it, in "*Un Coup de dés* […] Mallarmé most distinctively suggests the movement of the swirling dancer, where the disrupted poetic line alludes to the physical disposition of textual markers and encourages the 'bodily' engagement of the reader in the reading process" (2013, 23). Moreover, "their typographical disruptions generate visually a corporeal response much closer to that of viewing (or perhaps even participating in) a cluster of movements" (25). Deidre Reynolds offers a similar argument: "the overall visual layout of the text invites kinaesthetic empathy by appealing to our sense of spatial position, gravity and balance, producing movement sensations" (2000, 42). These readings suggest that the kinesthetic

142 The importance of not neglecting compositional strategies in the text can be illustrated by Rutgeerts' analysis of the role of the audience in Edvardsen's work. By focusing on repetition, Rutgeerts is at first sight not so explicitly concerned with tracing the political potential of her pieces. However, in a concluding remark on Edvardsen's use of repetition, he claims that "we are active because we cannot simply immerse ourselves in the temporal movement of the piece, letting ourselves get carried away by its flow, but we are not activated, as the piece does not give us anything to develop or to direct our attention to. Confronted with the exhaustive repetition of the piece we become an 'amnesiac witness' who experiences time passing but is not able to make this passing temporality their own" (2023, 128). It seems to me that Rutgeerts here overlooks the extent to which the content and the composition of the text itself do seek to evoke a more "active" participation of the spectator.

143 Through the text's rhythm and structure of repetition and variation, it also establishes a soundscape in the space, the musicality of which most clearly appears in the "not not doing, not not not doing,…" section.

engagement between reader and audience (which I identified in Chapter One as a key aspect of kinetic textuality), can also be established on the page.

Crucially, the space through which performer and spectator navigate together in *No Title* exists not only in the cognitive realm of our imagination. The various negations also appeal to the sensorial dimension of the imagination. In a similar way to how *Un Coup de dés* approaches the realm of dance, Edvardsen's text thus also appeals to the kinesthetic imagination of its audience and evokes a bodily involvement. This is because Edvardsen often invites us to imagine things that are impossible to imagine in visual terms—such as: "the distinction between thinking and doing is gone" (2019, 28) or "orientation is gone" (29). That which Cvejić refers to as the "thin images" (2018) of *No Title* invite the reader to use their imagination as a sense; visually (although invisible), auditorily ("silence / deep trembling sound / my breath, surprisingly loud, and heartbeats – gone") and through touch ("not not feeling"). Our kinesthetic imagination is activated through the various movements that Edvardsen's descriptions invite us to imagine—on the one hand via actual movements (such as "falling, floating, flying"), but on the other hand via the movements through the various narrative spaces (moving from the theater space to the universe, to historical moments, and back). To be able to imagine "warmth is gone" (Edvardsen 2019, 29) for instance, you need to rely on your kinesthetic imagination.[144] As Deidre Sklar argues in an article about kinesthesia and language, "we humans have the capacity to […] pierc[e] through the conventionality of language to an awareness of the multi-sensory and world-building miraculousness of the language process itself" (2009, 156–57). It is precisely these "multi-sensory" and "world-building" aspects of language which are activated by Edvardsen's *No Title*. The spatial, participatory, and sensorial aspects by which her dancing writing is governed are rooted in the interplay between presence and absence.

The marks of a Mallarméan aesthetic that we can trace in Edvardsen's work enable us to understand the text *as* a dance. In keeping with her assertion that her use of language does not mark "a shift towards another discipline or art form" but rather a shift "within the field and practice of dance and choreography" (Edvardsen 2017, 219), it can be argued, perhaps somewhat more radically than the predominant approaches to Edvardsen's dances, that these textual strategies constitute the dancerly quality of her writings. This is conveyed through the corporeal interaction between performer and spectator generated by the text in space. The relational and spatial dimension of dance is produced in the text by appealing to the corporeal imagination of the audience, which is activated via generic and impersonal categories and addressed from an empty stage. Thanks to Mallarmé, we can thus trace

144 In our interview, Edvardsen also explained that she wanted to use imagination in terms of how it is "connected with the nervous system, with how your body is kind of incorporating this information" (Mette Edvardsen, pers. interview).

how the "political potential of imagination" (Lepecki 2016, 17) is activated via writing. Building upon the suggestion made by Petrović Lotina, it seems to me that this political potential of the piece is only secondarily rooted in the potentiality of the abundant images evoked by the text; it relates on a perhaps more fundamental level to the way in which the compositional strategies of the text activate the audience's contribution to the piece.[145]

Concluding thoughts

In the five pieces we have studied in this chapter, the various compositional strategies activate the imagination of the audience and potentially establish a sense of collectivity amongst performers and spectators. In *Salut Copain* and *oslo*, this is evoked by sketching only the outline of an absurd storyline, whose narrative structure does not follow a linear trajectory, inviting the audience to fill in the details. While *Black* activates the audience's imagination by using generic categories to describe the performance's scenery, *waterwaswasser* does so by using a drifting form of signification that constantly changes and is modified. *No Title*, then, produces a collective engagement by consolidating an interplay between presence and absence in the text. In all five pieces, the musicality and rhythmicity of the text emphasize the kinesthetic dimension of this collectivity. Even though the concrete materiality of the theater space and the presence of other spectators are necessary to evoke that sense of collectivity, Mallarmé helps us recognize how this effect is nevertheless ingrained in compositional strategies in the writing. With Mallarmé, we can also interpret these elements as strategies that bring these writings into the realm of dance. Perhaps the reader starts to wonder at this point how to interpret these observations in light of some of the features referred to in the previous chapters as the main aspects of kinetic textuality. Before completing, I will briefly reflect on how the two aspects of kinetic textuality that maybe seem most difficult to align with Mallarmé can nevertheless also be traced in his reflections.

A first apparent inconsistency relates to the emphasis on the engagement of the audience. How can we understand kinetic textuality's tendency to escape the grasp of the spectator in the light of Mallarmé's attempt to locate the poem's signification in the meeting with the audience? While the previous chapter already engaged with this paradox on a more theoretical level, Edvardsen's *No Title* can help to further clarify this. At the beginning, Edvardsen removes the actual theatrical setting of the space in which she delivers her text: "the prompter has turned off his reading lamp – and gone […] lamps and speakers / hanging shadows moving in silence – gone […] power supply, black-out, green emergency

145 The interplay between audience and writer as a key aspect of Mallarmé's poetics explains why Mallarmé also often appeared in Jacques Rancière's philosophical reflections, see for instance his *Mallarmé: The Politics of the Siren* ([1996] 2011) or *Mute Speech: Literature, Critical Theory, and Politics* ([1998] 2011).

exit lights – gone" (2019, 25), or "layers of paint / holes in the wall and marks on the floor / what this space has told you already – gone / a fire extinguisher / people sitting in the dark / and the sound of rain – gone [...] microphone stand – gone / the backdrop and the curtains are gone" (26). Meanwhile, Edvardsen's removal of the space also includes a removal of herself. This removal partly results from the detached way in which she delivers her text, reinforced by her gesture of closing her eyes. In our interview, she told me how she found this necessary in order to avoid an authoritarian stance vis-a-vis the audience: "removing me as a figure" brings her closer to the audience, it "actually makes this connection stronger [...] I think there is a relationship there that is being addressed differently" (Mette Edvardsen, pers. interview). A similar "removing of herself as a figure" can be traced in Mahammed's work: as she is the first one to be surprised by what her own text is doing, it can be argued that she sometimes behaves as the audience of her own text. These moments in any case create the impression that she does not want to fully control what her text conveys. The compositional strategies of these texts also affect the presence of these performers on stage and contribute to this impression. The imagination that is so central to how their pieces evolve means that the performer is not in full control of what the audience sees (or feels, hears, smells, tastes). Although probably no performance artist is ever able to fully control their audience's perceptions, the compositional strategies that Mahammed and Edvardsen incorporate in their writing enable them to more explicitly avoid this position. The way in which they deliver the texts foreground the text rather than themselves as performers, as if they are merely "serving" the text. Their presence on stage as performers seems to be reduced, as a result of how they (through compositional strategies as well as performance strategies) mainly orient our focus away from themselves and more towards the text they are delivering.[146]

It is probably no coincidence that the idea of the dancer as somewhat "removed as a figure" is also given as a reason for Mallarmé's fascination with the art form. In his most often cited quote about dance, he writes "*the dancer is not a woman dancing*" ([1897] 2007, 130; emphasis in original).[147] While this passage provoked an elaborate discussion on dance's ontological being as a form of corporeal writing, I am at this point mostly interested in this

146 Another parallel with Mallarmé emerges here, when he writes that "what is specific about the attitude of our time is never to speak before deciding, which is quite different from the earlier habit of letting the emotions of indecision furnish our beloved raw material" ([1897] 2007, 151). This sense of indecision covers an important aspect of Mahammed and Edvardsen's texts: they leave the content of their texts undecided, both by removing themselves by means of performance strategies, but also by composing writings whose signification constantly shifts and changes.

147 The full quote reads as follows: "*the dancer is not a woman dancing*, for these juxtaposed reasons: that *she is not a woman,* but a metaphor summing up one of the elementary aspects of our form: knife, goblet, flower, etc., and that *she is not dancing*, but suggesting, through the miracle of bends and leaps, a kind of corporeal writing, what it would take pages of prose, dialogue, and description to express, if it were transcribed: a poem independent of any scribal apparatus" ([1897] 2007, 130).

passage as an example of "his ongoing preoccupation with poetic impersonality" (Jones 2013, 22). "For dance," Mallarmé writes,

> in its ceaseless ubiquity, is a moving synthesis of the attitudes of each group; just as each group is only a fraction, detailing the whole, of the infinite. There results a reciprocity producing the *un*-individual, both in the star and in the chorus, the dancer being only an emblem, never Someone." ([1897] 2007, 130)

Mary Fleisher summarizes this interest in the dancer as an emblem, "for Mallarmé the dancer must transcend the natural, particular body in order to become something impersonal and metaphorical" (2007, 6). Felicia McCarren goes further and contends that "for the dancer to operate as poetry par excellence, she herself must remain outside of language, unable to manipulate it, and unconscious of the revelations she brings to the poet watching her" (1995, 217), and "the best dancer is one whose personality, sex, and humanity disappear during the performance [...] but as an artist, or work of art, she is 'Sign'" (222). As problematic (and downright impossible) as this disappearance may sound to our contemporary ears, I do think that Mallarmé here points to an important aspect of Mahammed and Edvardsen's texts: when presented on stage, their writings evoke a certain withdrawal from the author's (or performer's) self. Beside the emphasis on compositional strategies, this mode of delivering the text reminds us more clearly of its status as a written object. This sense of impersonality that their texts evoke thus creates the same feeling of elusiveness that I traced in the previous chapters: despite the dependence on the audience's imagination, which is clearly a main feature in both their works, their texts and the way in which they perform them continue to remind us of their writtenness and point to a certain inaccessibility within the here-and-now of their deliverance.

On a final note, the Mallarméan form of signification that I traced in this chapter probably needs to be seen in light of the importance of mimesis in kinetic textuality. As McCarren insightfully summarizes it, a specific distaste for "mere" representation in the theater can be traced in Mallarmé's work. Based on the Platonic understanding of mimesis, she paraphrases how, for Mallarmé, "the theater is not a place for watching a representation but for envisioning a mystery [...]. Representation is a shadow or screen obscuring 'the things themselves,' preventing the viewer from 'seeing' them" (1995, 220). She also suggests that for Mallarmé, representation is an impediment to the imagination: "the dance comes closer to the Mallarméan poetics of an ideal theater by making-present, rather than visually representing, 'idee.'" (221). Despite his unmistakable dislike for "mere" representation, it also seems fair to argue that Mallarmé is not necessarily against the principle of mimesis as such. In several passages where he refers to "fiction," he seems to appreciate an, again,

indirect form of representation. In the passages on Loïe Fuller referenced above, Mallarmé for instance writes: "here we find given back to Ballet the atmosphere or nothingness, visions no sooner known than scattered, just their limpid evocation. The stage *is freed for any* fiction, cleared and instated by the play of a veil with attitudes and gestures" ([1897] 2007, 136-137; emphasis added). We can trace a similar admiration for some sort of "undefined" fiction in his essay "Mimesis." Admiring the mime artist Paul Margueritte, he writes that his "act is confined to a perpetual allusion without breaking the ice or the mirror: he thus sets up a medium, a pure medium, of fiction" (140). Even though this is not a sufficiently thorough explanation of Mallarmé's position regarding mimesis in general, the references to fiction in "Scribbled at the Theater," and the various allusions to a form of drifting signification that he admires in dance, encourage me to suspect that a veiled, suggestive, and relational mimesis would be appreciated by Mallarmé.

Perhaps *Black* can serve as an illustration of how this actually approaches the kinesthetic mimesis I identified as a main feature of kinetic textuality. In *Black*, Edvardsen's removal of herself is perhaps more radical than in her two other pieces, because she is transformed into some sort of character. As already briefly mentioned in the Introduction (pg. 30), the effect of presenting this repeated stream of words on stage is that a fictional situation of some kind emerges: after a while, it seems that Edvardsen gradually becomes a character who is walking in her house and who is losing her mind. Both the movements of the text and the movements which Edvardsen performs on stage enhance a kinesthetic connection between audience and character. However, this character remains somewhat emblematic as it is not fully worked out: her psychological concerns or the motivations behind her actions are left to the audience to imagine. Although, to use Edvardsen's words "you can say that there is a narration [in *Black*], there's a person in the room constructing, you know, her environment and something is happening or like you could, I guess, come to some kind of story about that," the piece was not created with that story in mind. The story, rather, emerged "through creating the space and the objects" (Mette Edvardsen, pers. interview). While the dramaturgy of the piece is not geared to portraying a lonely woman in a room, the repetitive stream of words and the movements that Edvardsen performs while delivering them, do sketch out some sort of "fictional" situation. Perhaps we can think of these strategies as the mimetic equivalent of the allusive form of signification that Mallarmé praised throughout his writings on dance. With this in mind, I will now examine kinetic textuality in terms of the "theatricality" (probably the ultimate strategy of removing oneself) it produces.

CHAPTER FOUR
Kinetic Textuality and Theatricality

Introduction

In early 2001, performance venue The Kitchen in New York curated a dance program "Talking Dance" to reflect on what the curators perceived as a substantial trend in dance and choreography at that time—the use of spoken text. The program was divided into two parts: on the first night, pieces from choreographers such as Bill T. Jones, David Gordon, and Yvonne Rainer, and a film screening of Trisha Brown's *Accumulation with Talking Plus Watermotor* (1979), were presented, while the second part of the program featured more recent works, such as pieces from, amongst others, Elevator Repair Service, Foofwa d'Imobilité, and Cynthia Oliver (Kourlas 2001). As mentioned in the second chapter of this dissertation, the way in which the performances in the 1960s and 1970s "addressed the audience and used speech within their dances" was perceived as "unruly" (Burt 2006, 19). In 2001, when this strategy of talking while dancing had already become fairly mainstream, the two programs, in tandem, sought to spark reflections comparing the more recent works with the pioneering works of the 1960s and 1970s. In her review of the event, *New York Times* dance critic Jennifer Dunning wrote that, in the second set of pieces, "the weave of text and dance was achieved less traditionally, with words serving as both text and aural accompaniment" (2001). A statement by curator and choreographer Dean Moss may reveal what is meant by "traditionally" in this context: "the thing that the younger choreographers seem to be doing is throwing away the framework of *theater* so that they're free and very light" (n.d., cited in Kourlas 2001; emphasis added). In the works under scrutiny in this dissertation, as I will indicate in this chapter, this framework of the theater seems to be taken up again. The way in which kinetic textuality produces a sense of theatricality is thus significantly different from some influential tendencies in dance of, say, twenty years earlier. Admittedly, as a point of reference for drawing such distinctions, the discourse around this one performance festival might be too anecdotal. As we will see below, and in more detail towards the end of the chapter, however, key voices in the discourse on 20th

century and early 21st century dance reveal that the "throwing away" of the "framework of the theater" can be considered as a more widespread trend.

In this chapter, I wish to draw attention to theatricality, because it will help me to unearth the "resistant" gesture of kinetic textuality. The notion of "resistance" will not be understood in terms of explicit political statements or overtly subversive aesthetic strategies. Rather, resistance will be understood as something that is expressed more implicitly and that resurfaces in specific compositional, kinesthetic, or mimetic strategies. Often, the dancer's decision to start talking has been recognized as a resistant gesture in itself, for it demonstrates the intellectual capacities of (making) dance. About Bill T. Jones's *Floating the Tongue* (1978) (see also Chapter Two, pgs. 103 and following), Barbara Browning for instance argued that Jones uses spoken text "to dispel the notion that dancers didn't think" (Browning 2005, 89). Susan Leigh Foster makes a similar observation about *The Dance that Describes Itself* (Bull, 1977), when she writes that it "exposed and contested the presumption of dance as merely physical rather than intellectual" (2002, 11). By now, however, many dance audiences have grown accustomed to the idea that dance is rooted in both physical as well as intellectual activity. In her article "The Signifying Body: Reaction and Resistance in Postmodern Dance," (1985), on the work of Grand Union and Meredith Monk, in which talking and dancing are combined in many ways, Foster traces a sense of resistance in the different self-reflexive strategies of these works, and at the end she similarly wonders whether these techniques still "imping[e] upon our consciousness with the force it once had," or whether "the conventions of resistance defined here belong to a historical moment whose time may be past" (1985, 64).[148] Taking my cue from the more optimistic note with which Foster ends her article—"the resistive value of a self-reflexive dance, whatever the conventions which support it, has yet to be played out" (64)—I will in this chapter argue that the resistant force of talking dances continues to resurface in the case of kinetic textuality, but that it emerges through compositional strategies that reflect a re-embracing of theatricality.

Theatricality in accounts of dance history

Moss's recourse to "the framework of theater" as a way to demarcate differences among choreographers is in fact typical of how discussions on the history of 20th century dance have time and again revolved around the notion of theatricality. The somewhat odd corollary

148 Foster's question about dance's capacity for resistance is itself symptomatic of how dance scholars, including myself, love to think of dance as that which offers resistance. According to Bojana Kunst, this probably has to do with "the intrinsic relationship between movement and freedom," an idea that gained momentum during the dance innovations of the early 20th century (2014, 101). I will return to the discourse on resistance in dance in more detail in the discussion of *Indispensible blue (offline)*.

that Moss draws between the refusal of theater and freedom reveals how theatricality has often suffered from a somewhat bad reputation within modernist art discourse. Since it is impossible to do justice to the rich and complex paper trail devoted to theatricality in performing arts scholarship, I will, to contextualize my approach to the term, just briefly focus on its position in influential accounts of Judson Dance Theater and late 20th and early 21st century dance. Since it is often assumed that Judson Dance Theater and postmodern dance of the 1980s played a key role in the development of late 20th and early 21st century dance, it seems legitimate to focus on the, if not infamous, then at least ambivalent status of the notion of theatricality in this specific section of dance history.[149] Michael Fried's "Art and Objecthood" (1967), in which Fried uses the notion of theatricality to express his aversion to minimalist art (which he called literalist art) provides a key starting point. He used the notion of theatricality to explain his distaste for minimalist art in terms of its dependence on temporality and on the confrontation with the beholder ([1967] 1968, 125, 144). Despite his explicit dislike for the theater, it is somewhat surprising, as Philip Auslander points out, that Fried's essay "had the same agenda-setting influence over critical discourse on performance merging in the late 1970s and early 1980s" (1997, 54).

Early on in the discussion on Judson Dance Theater, their use of the "minimalist" aesthetic that Fried refuted led scholars to reflect on the relation between theatricality and Judson Dance Theater. Sally Banes, for instance, noted that their dances, "while also focusing on the spectator's perceptions and shifting points of view, seemed to contradict Fried's argument by both repressing the theatrically expressive elements of the form and thrusting it closer, to an objective identity" (1980, 10).[150] Ramsay Burt, throughout his insightful analyses of some key pieces from Judson Dance Theater, disagrees with Banes on the "repressed theatricality," and instead uses Fried's notion in positive terms to capture

149 Elements that are often associated with Judson Dance Theater—such as the incorporation of everyday movements, improvisation, and medial hybridity—have continued to leave their mark on dance stages far beyond the early experiments at Judson Memorial Church (Burt 2006, 170; Laermans 2015, 205, 211; Protopapa 2016, 274-75). Burt for instance contends that "one of the legacies of Judson Dance Theater has been a rejection of the idea that a dancer is someone whose specialized training and rarefied artistic sensibilities separate them from ordinary life" (2006, 170). He gives Brussels- and Berlin-based American dancer and choreographer Meg Stuart as an example of how this aesthetic permeates contemporary work (170). Rudi Laermans similarly draws attention to how the "return to the American postmodern dance of the 1960s and 1970s" (2015, 210) in mostly French dance after the 1980s contributes to the legendary status of Judson Dance. He argues that the "delayed re-performance of some of the central stakes of Judson has a genuine performative effect of that movement's status" (211).

150 The debate between Sally Banes and Susan Manning in *TDR* about where to locate the development from modern dance to postmodern dance also revolved precisely around the notion of theatricality (Manning 1988; Banes 1989; Banes and Manning 1989). While the 1960s Judson Dance Theater pieces were considered as experiments that are "repressing the theatrically expressive elements of the form and thrusting it closer, to an objective identity" (Banes 1980, 10), pieces created in the late 1970s were marked "by a revival of *theatricality* and musicality and by a preoccupation with autobiography, content, and meaning" (Manning 1988, 33; emphasis added). Although Banes and Manning both identified a remarkable shift from anti-virtuosity to theatricality between the early Judson Dance Theater choreographies and works produced in the late 1970s, for Manning, this emergence of theatricality implied that dance history had arrived in its "postmodern" stage, while Banes had already considered the early Judson Dance Theater pieces as instances of postmodern dance.

Judson Dance Theater's characteristic aesthetic strategies: while it "created situations that draw the spectator's attention to the materiality of their dancing bodies, it did so in ways which, in Fried's terms, were 'theatrical'" (2006, 13). Rudi Laermans discusses the works of Meg Stuart and Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker from a similar understanding of theatricality, which he defines as "the reflexive loop between doing and being watched" (2015, 153). He discusses the ways in which Stuart generates a "*politics of spectatorship*," that "supplements the 'written body text' with an implied readership" (153), and outlines how De Keersmaeker adopts choreographic strategies where "the dancers [...] slightly theatricalize their dancing identities," or where they "accentuat[e] the dance's public character" (127).[151] Burt and Laermans thus elegantly overturn Fried's disapproval of theatricality due to its dependence on the beholder, by foregrounding this mechanism as a distinguishing feature of the choreographic structures they reveal.

However, the adherence to the presence of a beholder is only one of many ways to define theatricality. As Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait begin their introduction to *Theatricality*, "the idea of theatricality has achieved an extraordinary range of meanings, making it everything from an act to an attitude, a style to a semiotic system, a medium to a message" (2003, 1). Besides being reliant on an observer, theatricality can also refer to that which is illusory or artificial, to that which is detached from the "real" world. Often, this understanding of theatricality is placed in opposition to its counterpart, performativity. Rebecca Schneider captures the often-presumed binary difference between these two terms as follows: "theatricality plays in the sometimes infelicitous realms of the not exactly real. It can be distinguished from performativity where saying something [...] is doing something" (2011, 43). Davis and Postlewait indicate that anti-theatrical criticism precisely centers on this aversion to the "illusory, deceptive, exaggerated, artificial, or affected" (2003, 4). The aversion to theatricality as a representational art form probably runs deeper than an aversion to a lack of self-sufficiency and a dependence on the spectator, as in Fried's definition. As Jonas Barish has famously outlined, we can trace "a prejudice against the theater that goes back as far in European history as the theater itself can be traced" (1981, 1), mainly objecting to theater's use of imitation, and its illusionary character. Both the way in which Performance Studies positioned itself as a discipline in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the genre of performance that it studies, show a similar condescending

151 For both Burt and Laermans, the work of Pina Bausch is another example of this use of theatricality in dance (e.g., Burt 2006, 13; Laermans 2015, 146). In Chapter Five (pgs. 203 and following), I will consider kinetic textuality from the perspective of relationality (which is central to how Burt and Laermans define theatricality). Throughout, I will consider this strategy in the light of Bausch's work.

attitude towards theatricality-as-representation (see also Chapter Two, pg. 92).[152] Governed by the anti-theatrical bias of the linguistic theory of performativity, the same dismissal of theatricality sometimes also shows up in performance theory: "bad theater as commonly understood [...] is imitative theatre. Bad theatre postures and feigns and therefore cannot generate the original and uniquely primal act of a performer" (Schneider 2011, 116). The notion of performance, as Janette Reinelt argues, "tak[es] its meanings from a rejection of aspects of traditional theater practice that emphasized plot, character, and referentiality: in short, Aristotelian principles of construction and Platonic notions of mimesis" (2002, 202).

The dislike for the theater's representational impulse seems also to have influenced the historization of Judson Dance Theater. Burt points out that the presumed binary between abstraction and representation often resulted in a certain predisposition concerning what counted as the truly innovative pieces within Judson Dance Theater: "works that included dramatic and representational elements were less advanced than ones that were purely abstract or in which any representational elements were abstracted or minimized" (2006, 88). Burt outlines how artists such as David Gordon or Fred Herko—whose work was characterized by dramatic and representational elements (89)—have received far less critical acclaim for their innovations than the more widely known Yvonne Rainer or Trisha Brown (94, 104). The history of Judson Dance Theater is often written from the perspective of visual arts—a tendency that Banes', Burt's, and Laermans' turn to Fried's discourse already exemplifies. In addition to conceptual and minimal art, Judson Dance Theater's association with readymade art or avant-garde music appears frequently in overviews of their work (e.g., Banes 1980, 1-19; Burt 2006, 26-51; Laermans 2015, 65-68). This visual arts focus conforms to the historical artistic conditions of Judson Dance Theater: they shared their performance space with the Judson Gallery at Judson Memorial Church, and undoubtedly, they were strongly inspired by the thriving visual art scene happening at that time in New York City (Crespy 2003). However, the Judson Memorial Church also housed the more theater- and playwrights-oriented collective Judson Poets' Theater, which was part of an equally blossoming literary and theater scene in New York Village and with whom members of Judson Dance Theater sometimes collaborated. This historical fact is, unlike their affinity with the visual arts, often reduced to a mere footnote in the history of Judson Dance Theater (Crespy 2003; Bottoms 2006). In discussions on 20th and 21st century dance, the understanding of theatricality in terms of representation often appears *via*

152 For detailed accounts on the looming anti-theatrical sentiment in performance studies, see Bottoms 2003 or Worthen 2010. Stephen J. Bottoms traces a homophobic discourse in this condescending attitude towards theatricality (2003, 177), while Jackson outlines how this can be linked to an anti-feminist attitude (2004, 168-169). As Rebecca Schneider for instance outlines, "theatricality, like masquerade, is also commonly feminized – a matter of the debased copy, the woman or clown at the mirror making herself into an image, the vapid chicanery of the "second sex," the aping other, the off-kilter queer" (2011, 68).

negativa as something that these experiments refrain from (Lepecki 2004a; Sabisch 2011; Cvejic 2015). As we will see towards the conceptual impulse in dance, which has been recognized as resurfacing in Europe in the 1980s and 1990s, and which is often characterized by a critique of representation (see below). As I have already indicated in Chapter One (pgs. 66-68), kinetic textuality is characterized by strategies of kinesthetic mimesis very different from this antirepresentational impulse. Precisely due to its adherence to this form of theatricality-as-representation, it is more difficult to align kinetic textuality with this conceptual impulse.

As I have been insisting throughout this dissertation, kinetic textuality does not refer to the use of speech within dance in general terms, but rather to the practice of dancers and theater artists talking in a very specific way. Besides offering an insight into the underlying resistant gesture of kinetic textuality, theatricality also provides one way of further uncovering this specificity. The more casual and anecdotal mode of talking that typifies the talking dances of the 1960s and 1970s, where language takes the form of self-conscious commentary upon the piece as a whole, runs diametrically counter to the theatricality that resurfaces in kinetic textuality. Like many others before me, I will thus employ dance's relation to the theater as a way to draw distinctions between different chapters in dance history; however, while I am definitely mimicking this critical move, I also hope to reverse it by viewing theatricality as innovative. By foregrounding theatricality as a site of resistance, I seek to deconstruct a distinction between theater as something traditional and the "oppositional edge in nonreproductivity" that is often associated exclusively with performance (Reinelt 2002, 201). Moreover, the notion of theatricality also allows me to approach dance's capacity for resistance from a slightly more oblique angle. Often, dance's capacity for resistance is approached through its indebtedness to writing (e.g., Lepecki and Allsopp 2008; Brandstetter 2011). Choreography can be considered as the commanding force, while dance is an instance where an individual subject can potentially resist this score by embodying it. In other words, resistance is often understood as an instance of *escaping* the text.[153] A theatrical perspective on kinetic textuality, on the other hand, shows us that resistance can also take place *within* a text.

In the following sections, I will reveal theatrical strategies in the performances *Body of Work* (Linehan, 2019), *Indispensible blue (offline)* (Fritz, 2017), and *Submission Submission*

153 When we consider dance as that which is both rooted in but also resists choreography, dance's ontological relation to textuality becomes the site where dance's potential for resistance is located. Gabrielle Brandstetter, for instance, considers "the inscribing motion of the body as a gesture of protest, as an act of resistance against political violence" (2011, 126). Lepecki, on the other hand, insightfully traces how "choreography was invented in order to structure a system of command to which bodies have to subject themselves [...] into the system's wills and whims [...] Choreography is thus akin to an apparatus of capture [...]. No wonder then that 'choreography' initiates, immediately and alongside its project, all sorts of resistances and counter-moves" (2008, 2).

(Fritz, 2019). While in the previous chapter, I approached the medial hybridity of kinetic textuality from the perspective of compositional parallels between dance and poetry, in this chapter I will consider the intersection between dance and the theater. In *Body of Work*, Daniel Linehan stages fragments from his own choreographic archive; the theatricality I will trace in this work relates to the specific multilinear temporality of his staged archive, and to the perception of the spectator, upon which this temporality is based. I will trace how that specific temporality also manifests itself in the text, through a structure of repetition and revision which fractures and splinters linear time. A quite different understanding of theatricality will be foregrounded in my reading of Bryana Fritz's *Indispensible blue (offline)*. In this performance, I will trace the effect of Fritz's gesture of staging poetry through the digital computer screen, which theatricalizes the often-concealed movements of computer work. In the first two pieces, the characters performed by Linehan and Fritz are still quite close to themselves (they take up the role of, respectively, the dancer and the writer of the piece); in *Submission Submission*, on the other hand, Fritz embodies the roles of medieval women saints. In this performance, I will thus understand theatricality in terms of the illusional reality it evokes. Although I have already focused on kinesthetic mimesis in Chapter One, in the discussion of this particular piece, I will look more closely into how the audience is drawn into the piece through the incompleteness of the mimetic operation.

Since Linehan's and Fritz's works rely to a large extent on technological mediation to activate this theatricality, both are examples of the medial hybridity that characterizes late 20th and early 21st century dance and the critical discourse thereon. As mentioned in the Introduction (pgs. 23 and following), key features often foregrounded in that discourse are slowness and the artistic exploration seeking to re-define dance beyond the human moving body, both of which return in the performances of Linehan and Fritz. For that reason, I will throughout my readings of the performances often turn to this discourse, which helps us to uncover the resistance at work in the pieces. What the three different understandings of theatricality have in common is that they allow me to shed light on a resistant force at work in the dramaturgies, even though resistance is at first sight not the main thematic or dramaturgical concern of the performance. I will start by unraveling a quite moderate form of resistance in *Body of Work*, tracing how the non-linear sense of temporality produced by textual strategies withstands the here-and-now temporality of performance. In *Indispensible blue (offline)*, I will unravel a strategy of kinesthetic resistance that mainly took place in the creative process, and which is reproduced in the staged context. It is only in the last section that resistance will become somewhat more explicit, when I examine how Fritz embodies resistant religious figures in *Submission Submission*.

Perhaps at first sight, the most obvious theoretical companion for developing an angle on resistance through theatricality would be Judith Butler, who famously captured how the theatrical act can resist dominant norms. As she explains in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, "in imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency" ([1999] 2002, 175). In her chapter "Theatricality's Proper Objects: Genealogies of Performance and Gender Theory," Shannon Jackson outlines how theatricality constitutes a key dimension of feminist understandings of agency, including that of Butler: this approach "conceiv[es] of theatricality as something that worked within as well as against the conventions it sought to critique" (2003, 203). While I certainly do not wish to dismiss the enormous value and significance of Butler's argument in the feminist project, I will mainly borrow, in this chapter, from the work of Julia Jarcho, Rebecca Schneider, Carrie Noland, and from postphenomenology, to scrutinize the resistant force of theatricality. As I will indicate, in *Body of Work*, the way in which the textual strategies influence the audience's perception plays a key role in the resistant gesture of the piece. In *Indispensible blue (offline)*, the kinesthetic experience of Fritz's body in motion will be placed at the center of its resistant capacity, while I locate the resistance in *Submission Submission* in Fritz's use of mimetic strategies aimed at embodying the saints. These are three forms of theatrical resistance that are emphatically experiential and affective, and that are rooted in, but cannot be fully captured by, the operations of discursive signification that occupy a central position in Butler's notion of agency.[154]

Body of Work: a voiced theatricalization of Linehan's dance archive

Daniel Linehan's *Body of Work* offers a first example of kinetic textuality's rootedness in theatricality. Linehan was born in the U.S., where he first studied dance in Seattle. As he mentioned in the interview I conducted with him, "when I moved to New York, I wanted to dance for Trisha Brown. I really loved her work and it felt so good in the body and I had taken some classes with some of her dancers" (Daniel Linehan, pers. interview). In the end, he told me, he never worked with Brown but instead moved to Belgium to follow the

154 As we have seen in Chapter Two (pgs. 94-98), the paradigm of discursive signification does not always fully grasp the embodied dimensions particular to the performing arts. Reinelt, for instance, explains that Butler's argument about resistance is highly indebted to a poststructuralist understanding of the discursive sign: "failure is constitutive of the rupture between conditions and effects of the speech act, the resulting destabilization of law allows an opening for resistance and also for transformation in iteration" (2002, 204). As Julia Walker points out about Butler's argument on drag, "note that it is a conceptual distinction that is being subverted and a conceptual model that is being mocked; note, too, that it is the drag "utterance" and not the drag performer that is doing the subverting and the mocking" (2003, 165). Walker continues to explain that Butler's model relies on the assumption that "knowledge of the real is always mediated through the symbolic. While this is certainly true of conceptual knowledge, it denies the possibility that there are other ways of knowing reality, such as affectively and experientially" (166). Because of the more explicitly phenomenological focus of the theoretical line taken in this dissertation, it thus seems that a Butlerian approach towards theatricality and resistance would create too much theoretical dissonance.

Research Cycle program at the Brussels P.A.R.T.S. dance school.[155] In the spaces where he performs *Body of Work*, the usual audience platform has been removed and a rectangle of chairs, which almost covers the entire room, marks the edges of the performance space.[156] Each spectator is positioned quite close to the performance, looking at another row of spectators opposite them. This set-up contributes to what reviewers have called the "intimate" or "moving" atmosphere of the piece (e.g., Van der Putt 2019; Régnier 2019). Apart from the chairs for the audience, there are no other objects in the space. While the audience enters to take their seats on one of the rectangle's four sides, Linehan uses his body to measure various distances in the room. For instance, he places one foot behind the other to measure the distance between two chairs, walks to the other side of the rectangle, where a microphone is placed, and announces through the microphone: "take seven of my feet." He then steps out of the rectangle to measure a part of the wall between black theater cloths. To do so, he places his leg horizontally alongside the wall, walks back to the microphone and announces: "take three quarters of my leg." He measures the distance between two other chairs: "take three of my lower legs and one of my hands." He estimates the distance between two walls: "take eleven of my feet." In acting out these measurements, Linehan draws attention, in a very concrete way, to how the contingency of and variety in performance spaces already inhibits the exact repetition of a piece. These imperative phrases not only refer to the measurements of the room, they also seem to function as commands that Linehan addresses to himself, as if they are helping him to remember and keep track of the movement sequence he is performing.

This opening section already announces how notions such as remembering and memory play a key role in Linehan's performance. *Body of Work* is made up of choreographic traces from previous dances. As mentioned in the program notes, "he delves into the choreographic material he has created since his debut in 2005 and discovers fragments that are still present in his body after all this time. How do traces of his past continue to live on in his body today?" (DE SINGEL, n.d.; my translation).[157] In *Body of Work*, he reactivates these bodily memories by reenacting several movement sequences from previous performances. For example, when he drops his head down to the ground and slaps his thighs several times, he is referencing his 2016 performance *dbddbb*. The sequence in which he crawls to

155 His work is characterized by frequent use of spoken text, a compositional structure of repetition, and everyday movements, which, in his more recent work, are incorporated into pieces that deal with explicit ecological concerns. In his 2020 performance *sspeciess*, Linehan for instance uses spoken text to introduce reflections on co-existence and symbiosis, inspired by the work of ecological philosopher Timothy Morton. In 2021, Linehan created two pieces—*Listen Here: These Woods* and *Listen Here: This Cavern*—where these questions are explored in a more sensorial manner.

156 The performance has also toured throughout Belgium, The Netherlands, and France.

157 Original Dutch version: "hij verdiept zich in het choreografisch materiaal dat hij sinds zijn debuut in 2005 creëerde en ontdekt fragmenten die na al die tijd nog aanwezig zijn in zijn lichaam. Hoe blijven sporen uit zijn verleden verder leven in zijn lichaam vandaag?"

an audience member and kisses their feet is a movement from *Making It*, a short solo he performed in New York in 2006 (Daniel Linehan, pers. interview). The piece poignantly illustrates that "performing or rehearsing dance evokes memories of other dances" (Foster 2002, 167). Linehan described in our interview how he "took material from previous performances in terms of the physical material, but I would allow myself to freely transform it, the way that our memory of an event is often a transformation of what actually happened. So the point wasn't necessarily to stay strictly true to the exact written choreography of a previous piece" (Daniel Linehan, pers. interview). The flexibility of memory is in this piece mostly foregrounded through the compositional strategy of repetition and variation: by means of several modulations to both his movements and the text excerpts he utters, Linehan makes clear that this performance is not attempting to reproduce exact copies, but rather to investigate how a mo(ve)ment can be re-activated in a different space and time through repetition.

In his efforts to relive, reperform, and sometimes transform bits and pieces of earlier performances, *Body of Work* explores the bodily memory of dance and the different media in which choreographic traces can be stored. The traditional, discursive-oriented, and predominantly Western conception of the archive seems to ontologically preclude the continued existence of a performance, on the basis of its alleged ephemerality and its reliance on (corporeal) movement. "According to the logic of the archive," Rebecca Schneider explains, "what is given to the archive is that which is recognized as constituting a remain, that which can have been documented or has become document. […] As the logic goes, performance is so radically 'in time' (with time considered linear) that it cannot reside in its material traces and therefore 'disappears'" (2011, 98).[158] *Body of Work* resists this assumption that dance is irreproducible by using dance itself as an archival medium. In these performances, dance is passed on, to a large extent, through the activation of bodily traces and imprints. Timmy De Laet describes how the idea of the body as a living archive effectively "undermin[es] the pervasive doctrine of dance's irreducible transience by foregrounding the body as a repository of sorts with its own mnemonic procedures and proper epistemic faculties" (2020, 177). However, scrutinizing examples of dance performances that, in a comparable manner to Linehan, put traces of past dances *on stage*, De Laet argues that their staged condition compels us to also develop a topographical perspective on the relation between dance and the archive.[159] In the examples studied by De Laet, verbalized memories and written text play a crucial role, which demonstrates that "both textual and embodied rewriting is vital

158 As Sarah Whatley argues, despite the persistent assumption that it is impossible to archive dance, "this has not prevented the creation of numerous important archives of dance, worldwide" (2020, 133).
159 In so doing, De Laet reminds us that it is important not to focus on the dancing body as the exclusive medium of the dance archive. See for instance Lepecki's "The Body as Archive: Will to Re-Enact and the Afterlives of Dance," where it is claimed that "dance can only find its proper archival site onto/into a body" (2010, 43).

to the passing on of dance" (180). While this chapter does not seek to contribute to this discussion on the archiving of dance per se, I am taking cues from it, for it allows me to unravel how the complex temporality of the gesture of archiving an allegedly ephemeral medium resurfaces in textual compositional strategies.

The textual dimension of his archive also plays a key role in *Body of Work*, and emphasizes that not only the re-embodiment of movements but also language figures as an especially vital element in the crux of bodily memory and bodily movement. During the several traces of past dances that Linehan performs, he recounts anecdotes of a childhood trip to Disneyland, talks about a section in the history of the colonization of the U.S, or about the potato famine in Ireland in the 1840s. It is no surprise that Linehan uses not only corporeal but also textual references to stage his archive, given that he has frequently explored the interrelationship between voice and physicality in previous performances.[160] Unlike many of the physical movements, however, the text excerpts have never been part of previous performances, yet are intimately related to the movements he reperforms. In our interview he recounted how "some of the text arises as internal thoughts behind some of the pieces I was making that were maybe never spoken aloud, so the text is not like an excerpt from a performance" (Daniel Linehan, pers. interview). The childhood memories he recounts, for instance, are part of *Body of Work* because they were often on his mind while creating *Making It* in 2006: "It's a piece I did once in New York but never again, but I still remembered some images from that piece. And also, as I made that piece, some of these early memories were part of it. Even though in that performance, the original performance, I didn't speak any of those memories, they were somehow present for me as I created the dance" (Daniel Linehan, pers. interview).

Linehan's gesture of staging his own archive, and taking up the role of archivist and dancer at the same time, is already a theatrical strategy in itself.[161] Moreover, a structure of theatricality can also be seen in the multiple temporalities that are brought forth by the dynamic between reproduction and reinvention underpinning his archival performance. Mark Franko, for instance, reads the strategy of reproducing historical dances against the backdrop of theatrical theory on the repeatability of emotions, because he observes "a curious exchange that occurs between theatrical theory and the project of reconstruction" (1989, 72). His comparison suggests that a "fascination with the theatrical act itself as repeatable" (73) resurfaces in the gesture of reconstructing past dances. This strategy

160 In Linehan's pieces *The Karaoke Dialogues* (2015), *Doing While Doing* (2012) (whose title immediately reminded me of the opening sentence of Brown's *Accumulation…* piece: "start - started - starting - to talk - while doing this dance"), *Zombie Aporia* (2011), and *Not About Everything* (2007), for instance, spoken text played a prominent role.

161 Fransien Van der Putt seems to recognize a similar theatrical gesture in *Body of Work* when she argues that "Brecht's legacy […] has arrived in dance" (2019; my translation). (Original Dutch version: "de erfenis van Brecht […] in de dans is aangekomen.").

of reconstruction, in his view, inevitably results in a reinvention: "each reconstruction of historical dance inevitably reinvents the cultural act it means to replicate" (73). A similar argument returns in Schneider's more recent study on re-enactment, where she focusses on the temporal mechanisms of reproducing anew, representation, and repetition, in order to deconstruct binaries between ephemerality, presence, and liveness on the one hand and remains, recordings, and documentation on the other. Theatricality is a key term in her project to propose a nonlinear view on temporality and to bypass the "archive logic in modernity" which "came to value the document over event" and where "flesh is given to be that which slips away" (Schneider 2011, 100). Already in her introduction, Schneider refers to the "the warp and draw of one time in another time"—the focus of her argument—as "the theatricality of time" (6). As she argues, "for those suspicious of linearity and less willing to dismiss time's flexibility, mimesis and its close relative theatricality are not threats to authenticity, but, like language itself, vehicles for access to the transitive, performative, and cross-temporal real" (30).[162] With Schneider and Franko, we can thus recognize Linehan's gesture of reperforming traces of past dances as a theatrical gesture in itself: his repetition of past dances is mainly aimed at discovering what they can activate in the present, as reinvention is the main impetus behind his reconstructions.

The fact that the repetition and variation structure upon which his archival dance is constructed can be considered theatrical, however, does not yet fully describe the theatricality of kinetic textuality. To outline how the structure of repetition and variation returns also in some of his textual compositions, let us first consider the use of text in his archive. For Linehan, textuality is compatible with dance not only because it allows him to verbalize memories that are fundamental to the dance in question. Like the other artists included in this dissertation, he also uses text as a medium that can be choreographed—primarily by exploring its ties with body and rhythm. In our interview, he mentioned that "when I'm working […] with non-dance elements or text or video or sound, I'm often curious, how does this resonate in the body or how does it make you reflect as an audience on your own body?" (Daniel Linehan, pers. interview). He also mentioned that "before the reference to literature, I was interested in the rhythm of speaking, and that this could be like a musical score for the rhythm of movement" (Daniel Linehan, pers. interview). One of the elements that allows him to emphasize the rhythmicity or the corporeality of the text in

162 Schneider also demonstrates how the deconstruction of linear temporality in fact generates questions about the ontological difference between the "original" and the "copy": "to trouble linear temporality […] is to court the ancient (and tired) Western anxiety over ideality and originality" (2011, 30).

this particular piece is the recording device and a loop station.[163] Somewhere in the middle of the performance, for instance, Linehan first uses the loop-station to record the sentence "I have a question, it is about your plans, I want to ask you, what happens after," and then transmits it multiple times via the six surround speakers that are positioned behind the audience. Each sentence is produced via a different surround speaker, which generates a rotating sound effect: the text travels from one speaker to another, which creates the impression that Linehan's voice is circulating through space. In the following paragraphs, I will focus in on this specific text fragment, for it provides an insightful example of how kinetic textuality is grafted onto textual strategies that can be called "theatrical."

While Linehan in this excerpt does not restage traces of a past dance, the performance of this text is grafted upon the same mechanism of repetition as reinvention that structures his staged archive as a whole. In the recorded sentence itself, we can also observe various intersecting temporalities. In the first place, the blurring of timeframes is produced through the semantic and syntactical composition of the sentence: Linehan repeatedly asks the spectator about the future (their plans), but importantly, he invites them to think about or predict what happens after these plans, which implies that the future is here doubled. Each time the sentence is repeated, he returns to the "now" temporality of the first sentence ("I have a question"), so this now becomes gradually more and more unstable. This unsettling feeling is enhanced by the structure of the sentences. Each sentence consists of a 5-beat structure, which through repetition establishes a repetitive cadence and an almost hypnotic effect. The nature of this text excerpt as a recording is crucial to further understanding its temporal structure. Following Don Ihde's contention that "recording is also a *technological mediation* and thus displays features exhibited in any technology transforming phenomenon" (2007, 258; original emphasis), we can argue that the text undergoes a certain transformation in the recording. Although this transformation is provoked by the recording device, it mainly takes place in the perception of the audience. Specifically, each time we hear the same sentence repeated, our attention gradually moves away from the strictly semantical meaning of the words, because we already know them. The first time we hear the sentence, the content of the words tends to grasp our attention most explicitly, but after we have heard it a few times, a predictable rhythm emerges and our attention shifts towards the words' sonorous qualities, their materiality and musicality, and to the

163 The soundscape of the piece consists not only of voiced text, but also includes several nonverbal sounds. Here as well, his physicality remains present in every sound he produces, since, as he clarified in our interview, each sound that is used in the performance is created via his body. For instance, during the first part of the performance, Linehan brushes a microphone against his sweater, his chest, his jeans, his beard, his ears, and his hair and records these grainy sounds through a loop station. Afterwards, they are played on repeat while he dances. Dancing to the soundtrack of his own body-sounds, the section amplifies the physical materiality of his dancing body.

physicality of Linehan's voice.[164] As a result of this "exact" technological reproduction, to use sound scholar Mladen Dolar's phrasing, "the voice takes the upper hand" (2012, 551) in our perception of the text excerpt.

In his postphenomenological analysis of the perception of sound, Ihde argues that "in ordinary speech, the sounding of word remains in the background" (2007, 157), while repetition plays a key role in establishing a foreground-background in auditory perception (87–88). In the context of sound, Ihde's notion of "multistability" again draws attention to how the dimensions of sound can be experienced differently: "in both the auditory and the visual version of multistability, we may note that each possibility is one that can actually be experienced in a certain way, but while so experienced the other possibilities equally there to be discovered are not experienced" (188). In Linehan's fragment, by listening to the repetition of what in essence is still the same sentence, the background and foreground dimension of our auditory perception are gradually reversed and the language itself is more clearly presented as something that bears corporeal traces.[165] Because through the repetition, the spectator starts to notice increasingly the body that is delivering this text, they are potentially drawn more corporeally into the excerpt. In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty offers an elegant description of how the experience of someone's corporeality while listening draws us closer to them:

> among my movements, there are some that go nowhere [...]: these are the facial movements, many gestures, and especially those strange movements of the throat and mouth that form the cry and the voice. Those movements end in sounds and I hear them [...] But if I am close enough to the other who speaks to hear his breath [...], I almost witness, in him as in myself, the awesome birth of vociferation. As there is a reflexivity of the touch, of sight, and of the touch-vision system, there is a reflexivity of the movements of phonation and of hearing; they have their sonorous inscription, the vociferations have in me their motor echo. ([1964] 1968, 144)

The repetition of the recording in *Body of Work* indeed seems to bring us closer "to the other who speaks," for each repetition draws us nearer to the cracks in his voice, the slight hesitations, the specific intonation and pitch of his voice, and therefore always slightly alters the recording. As his re-performed movements are not exact copies of past movements, Linehan's use of the recording technology draws attention to the inevitable variation that

164 In his phenomenology of listening and sound, Ihde also reminds us that listening "mean[s] more than the comprehension of words" (2007, 150). In Chapter Five, I will elaborate on the interaction between text and voice, and the production of meaning through voice and musicality (pgs. 221 and following).

165 The way in which repetition works to transform perception is similar to Burt's studies of the structure of repetition in the work of Tisha Brown, Pina Bausch, and Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker: "what is disturbing about repetition," he writes, "is the way it brings into play qualities that exceed the explicit meaning of the repeated image" (2006, 143).

will always resurface in repetitions. This variation opens up different temporalities beyond the "now" of the performance, even though the variation that this repetition evokes is only a *perceived* variation. In this way, the main dramaturgical mechanism of Linehan's staged archive resurfaces in the composition and performance of the text excerpt. The repetition of something that is seemingly the same, but that is nevertheless gradually transformed, incorporates into the text the somewhat dazzling back-and-forth time structure of his reperformance of traces of past dances.

Finally, to further unpack how Linehan, through these strategies of theatricality, also resists linear temporality through the text, we can briefly turn to some observations made by Julia Jarcho about Gertrude Stein's textual strategies.[166] Jarcho unravels how Stein's writing complicates the immediacy of the here-and-now of the performance by employing compositional strategies that resist a linear conception of time. Jarcho observes that Stein's writing induces a peculiar temporality, because she "refuses simply to mark time's passing; rather, she posits time […] as a member of the perceptual field, subject to (and of) unpredictable divagations and specificities" (2017, 63). Repetition functions as a key strategy in Stein's writing to produce this effect: it establishes "not an attempt to impose 'synchronicity,' but a display of fundamental variation" (59). Since "Stein's present is inherently permeable" (46), it is "not a communion with what is happening here and now, but a movement that splinters the here-and-now beyond recognition" (48).[167] As we have seen, a comparable strategy is used in the "I have a question"-excerpt from *Body of Work*; here various strategies work together to establish a dazzling temporal structure which creates a similar "splintering" of the here-and-now. Because of this push against the singular temporality of the present, Jarcho traces a sense of resistance in these compositional

166 Schneider also takes her cue from Stein's notion of syncopation to identify the multi-layered and non-linear temporalities produced by repetition as a theatrical effect. In Stein's writings on the theater, Schneider argues, she "finds cracks in live theatre's seeming immediacy through which a syncopated doubleness – the same and something else – (re)occurs" (2011, 294).

167 Jarcho describes Stein's writing as "theatrical," because it subverts its own presentness and opens up the temporality of the now through compositional strategies of repetition and by establishing rhythm and movement. In so doing, Jarcho aims to counter the interpretation of Stein's work as an example of anti-theatrical modernism and argues that "we can read key aspects of Stein's modernist innovation *as* theatrical" (2017, 47). More specifically, Jarcho contends that her "poetics [is] based in a sense of theater's dimensions as *disrupting* or *dispersing* its own present" (20; original emphasis) and that her writing "aris[es] out of alternative experiential possibilities that theater itself harbors" (25). She borrows her understanding of theatricality from Samuel Weber and considers it as an operation of "parting with" (Weber 2004, 17-22, 158, cited in Jarcho 2017, 27), which refers to a process where "separation communicates with that from which it distances itself" (Weber 2004, 294, cited in Jarcho 2017, 27).

strategies.[168] It is from this perspective that we can also understand the resistant gesture operating in *Body of Work*: the theatricality that is activated in this text excerpt—and by extension, in the entire performance—continuously pushes against the present moment of the performance. In this fragment, through the use of kinetic textuality, Linehan resists the linear view of temporality that requires performance to be something ephemeral and disappearing. This resonates with the compositional strategies of the bodily movements he performs, which likewise introduce multi-layered temporalities into the piece and work together to resist the view that dance cannot be archived.

Of all the pieces included in this dissertation, this piece most explicitly incorporates the more anecdotal and casual way of talking while dancing which I discussed more elaborately in Chapter Two, in my comparison between Chloe Chignell's *Poems and Other Emergencies*, Bill. T. Jones's *Floating the Tongue*, and Trischa Brown's *Accumulation…* (pgs. 103 and following). The dramaturgical impetus to stage his own choreographic archive can already be seen as an autobiographical gesture, and the different sections in which he inserts anecdotes and childhood memories further amplify the autobiographical dimension of his piece. In his discussion of the "seemingly directionless flow of autobiographical utterances" (Laermans 2015, 168) in Meg Stuart's *Highway 101* (2000), Rudi Laermans aligns this with 21st century tendencies of "willed self-exposure" and "public confession" (169), which can be linked to "the omnipresence or all sorts of recording devices" (168). The effect of Linehan's use of the recording device in the "I have a question"-excerpt, however, is that it somewhat disentangles the autobiographical impulse of the piece. In this excerpt, the theatrical structure of the archival dance is also nestled in the text. Through compositional strategies and the mediation of the recording device, the text evokes the structure of different times stumbling over one another. Although the archival impetus of this piece plainly reveals that it is rooted in a dramaturgical structure of "self-presentation," (168), the way in which Linehan uses the recording device in this particular fragment tends to render this impulse more ambiguous.

To me, it feels that by recording himself and repeating the recording on stage, he somewhat fades into the background and removes himself from my grasp. This effect, I would argue, is produced by duplicating the sense of theatricality operating throughout his work

168 The sense of resistance traced by Jarcho in strategies that inject a different temporality into the here-and-now reflects the influence of Theodor Adorno in her perspective on the relation between text and performance. She takes her cue from "Adorno's insistence that art must be understood […] as a determinate negation that gestures *beyond* the real through a recognition of itself as within the real" (2017, 15; original emphasis). "While utterly implicated in and conditioned by historical reality," as Jarcho paraphrases him, Adorno theorizes how it can "imaginatively exceed that reality by negating it" (15). Obviously, this Adornian perspective transcends the scope of this dissertation and its methodological framework. Nevertheless, since kinetic textuality uses compositional strategies that are similar to those informing Jarcho's take on how writing stretches beyond the realm of the here-and-now (see Chapter One, pgs. 79 and following and Chapter Two, pgs. 101-103), we can take our cue from her understanding of resistance to capture the theatricality in *Body of Work*.

in the text itself. Even though the recording device supposedly guarantees an exact copy, phenomenologically speaking, as we have seen above, the repetition structure itself renders the exact copy different. Each time, the reproduction of the copy alters slightly because of its embeddedness in time and space. As a result, when Linehan employs the recording and replaying devices during the text sections, the rather one-dimensional timeframe of the confessional sections, which use text in a more anecdotal way, is traded for a more complex and layered temporality. As such, the recording device, almost counter-intuitively, allows Linehan to both perform the self as well as to undermine the direct alignment between performer and audience through which this presentation of the self often takes place. Iris Régnier also remarked in her review of the piece that "the artist does not create a self-centered autobiography": she attributes this to how Linehan "instead turns to the stars, past and future generations in this show that seems to place us all in a given lineage" (2019; my translation).[169] While the content of these text fragments certainly guides our attention away from Linehan himself and towards the outside world, I would argue that a similar gesture takes place on a formal level, through compositional strategies mediated by the recording device.

***Indispensible blue (offline)*: the human and technological labor of creating digital poetry**

Another form of theatricality and its potential for resistance is presented in Bryana Fritz's piece *Indispensible blue (offline)*, hereafter referred to as *Ib(o)*. The form of theatricality that I wish to foreground here has more to do with the act of "staging" and less with the sense of temporality I traced in *Body of Work*. In *Ib(o)*, the theater stage seems to have been exchanged for a projected computer screen, used as a canvas to stage various computer actions as well as, as we will see, her own labor conditions.[170] Fritz's work as a dancer consists of making her own dance pieces and performing as a dancer in the choreographies of others, such as Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Michiel Vandevelde, or Femke Gyselinck. Like Linehan, Fritz moved from the U.S., where she studied dance in Minneapolis, to Europe to continue her studies: first in Essen (Germany) and later at P.A.R.T.S. in Brussels. As she mentions herself in her artistic biography: "she works at the intersection of poetry and performance, often in duo with the OSX user interface," the operating system of her MacBook laptop (Lafayette Anticipations, n.d.).

169 Original French version: « L'artiste ne crée pas une autobiographie autocentrée mais se tourne au contraire vers les astres, les générations passées et futures dans ce spectacle qui semble nous placer tous dans une lignée donnée »

170 Throughout this chapter, I will use the terms "labor" and "work" as synonyms. Even though I am aware that some scholars have drawn attention to crucial differences between these two terms, the scope of this chapter does not allow me to also include that distinction in my argument.

In *Ib(o)*, kinetic textuality is largely produced visually—as moving words projected onto a screen. Fritz is sitting on a table behind her MacBook laptop, with her back towards the audience. We can follow the actions she performs on her computer on a larger screen behind her. At the beginning, Fritz disconnects her computer from the internet. Throughout the piece, she only uses the functionalities available on an offline computer, such as the computer settings, the Finder app, GarageBand, and a text editor. The computer screen becomes a canvas that Fritz uses to perform all kinds of peculiar actions: for instance, she draws a selection square around the folders, then lets the square disappear and opens the previously selected folders. Within the folders, she has to open numerous subfolders before arriving at the document she needs. She opens text documents, scrolls through them, types new words into them, and closes them again. Johanna Cockx writes in her review that "This show is not about the Internet, but about our relationship with the user software of the computer" (2016; my translation).[171] In a strange sense, the dance felt quite relatable: during uninspired or simply bored moments, I often find myself replacing folders on my desktop, or drawing invisible figures with the arrows or cursors. By approaching the computer interface through the framework of dance and choreography, as Fransien van der Putt mentions, "concepts like staging and transforming take on a different meaning in the context of soft- and hardware" (2018; my translation).[172] Since Fritz discovers ways to use the computer beyond its intended "efficient" use, these unusual and bizarre computer actions even feel quite radical.

The piece alternates between the live actions Fritz is performing on her computer and screen videos of similar actions she recorded in advance. In both the screen videos and the live actions, language plays a central role: it appears regularly in the form of text in a .docx-document, but also via the names of folders and documents, which she continuously renames or replaces. In subtle ways, a certain atmosphere is smuggled into the piece via these bits of language. "Blue," for instance, is a central word, and in combination with words such as "horizon," "sun," or "landscape," the folder and file names evoke a landscape in the digital space of the computer screen. By incorporating text as a visual element, *Ib(o)* ties in with a tendency that, according to Karen Jürs-Munby, has appeared with "increasing frequency": "written words [...] are displayed on stage to be read by the audience" (2010, 102). In so doing, these pieces provide "an account of our electronically mediated world" (105).[173] Fritz's account of this world is quite enjoyable—in no way does her piece feel as

171 Original Dutch version: "deze voorstelling gaat niet over het internet, maar over onze relatie met de user software van de computer."
172 Original Dutch version: "begrippen als enscèneren en transformeren krijgen in de context van soft- en hardware een andere betekenis."
173 Jürs-Munby insightfully outlines how this strategy of displaying texts draws attention to the gap between text and performance and how this, in the examples that she provides, "can become productive for political aesthetics" (2010, 102).

if she aims to criticize this technological condition. At one point, she projects a video of an orange screen that switches to yellow, and then to blue. While the video is playing, she reduces the brightness of her computer screen (which of course does not reduce the brightness of the projector screen), so the characteristic MacBook sun appears at the top of the video, and while the screen color turns yellow and then blue, the sun is gradually turned off. Through peculiar computer actions and with the accompaniment of majestic GarageBand music, Fritz activates many affective registers we normally do not experience while using a computer. Towards the end of the performance, for instance, when Fritz selects the file "SUN," slowly moves it towards the right bottom corner of her screen, then eventually throws it into the recycle bin, she creates a certain sadness that at the same time is highly amusing.

The piece presents the computer as an instrument to write and stage poetry in inventive ways. As Cockx mentions in her review, "against a functional and mundane use [of the computer], she posits a playful, exploratory disruption: elusive to digital algorithms, molded into poetry" (2016; my translation).[174] Fritz recounted in our interview how she first created a poem on her computer, via a free writing exercise in which she had to start each sentence in the same way but had to remove the last word and finish it differently. In the performance, she uses different ways to stage the poems generated through this writing in performance—one of them is by using a *mise-en-abîme* structure in her Finder. For instance, in the folder "THE," four text documents are stored, called "blue," "empty the skies," "indispensible," and "of its." Underneath these .docx-files, the folder "IT PURPLES" is placed. First, Fritz changes the order of the files, so the sentence "empty the skies of its indispensible blue" emerges. When she clicks on "IT PURPLES," the same documents appear: this time, they are already placed in the correct order, yet the sentence is slightly modified: "empty the skies," "of its," "indispensible," "SUNRISE" (another folder). The folder "SUNRISE" stores the .exec-files "red," "orange," "pink," "yellow," "green," "purple," "sky blue," and another folder called "BLUE." After she opens this folder, the "empty the skies of its indispensible"-phrase returns, this time finished by the folder "HORIZON LINES." Here, the sentence ends with "PRECIPITATION." Now the pace of her actions accelerates a bit: the folders "RAIN TURNS HAIL" and "COLLECTING PALE" finish the next two sentences. The latter folder does not store any other .docx-files, only the folder "EMPTY." "EMPTY" displays a different verbal sequence: it contains the folder "TICK," which includes "THICK," which directs us to "QUICK," and then to "LOOK," and "LICK." Through these actions, Fritz uses the MacBook interface and its different functionalities to stage a poem via the parameters of dance choreography.

174 Original Dutch version: "tegenover een functioneel en alledaags gebruik [van de computer] stelt zij een speelse, verkennende ontwrichting: ongrijpbaar voor digitale algoritmes, verdicht tot poëzie."

A recurrent strategy of this piece is to use the digital screen to render language more flexible. This gesture already operates in the persistent misspelling (or the use of an older spelling) of the title's first word, "indispensible," but also reappears in her strategy to copy, modify, and edit the streams of words, so much so that they become unrecognizable. Halfway through the performance, Fritz opens the empty document "THICK," chooses Arial Narrow, font size 288 and types "A passer BY." The window of the document is tiny, so the first letters of the sentence disappear from view when new letters are inserted, which means that the phrase moves in and out of the screen and is never projected as a whole. She types the sentence for the second time, and again finishes it differently: "A passer BIRD." Then: "A passer BLURRRRRRRRRRRED." She slowly moves the screen downwards to gradually make another text document visible: "A passer blurred agape / smoke-ish by yellow puff / cloud without mouth and / pauses eyes directionlessly blown / A passer blurred into / landscape and its idyllic / softness by gentle pixels / settling finding beach sand," etc. At the same time, the folders "BLUE 8," "BLUE 9," and the files "SUN" and "CLICK" still linger in other folders and on her desktop, which confuses the distinction between words that belong to the actual poem and words that do not. After a musical intermezzo of two arrows hunting one another, and another sequence of renaming folders and replacing files, Fritz opens the text document "untitled," renames it "indispensible blue," and plays an audio file named "digitalize the sunrise." This file consists of forceful electronic beats and a computer-generated voice reading the text of the document "indispensible blue." The voice reads: "tick, thick, quick… look, lick, cook… thighs, eyes, digitize. The sunrise." At one point in the performance, Fritz projects a text document but scrolls through it so quickly that it becomes impossible to actually read the text. In our interview, Fritz referred to this strategy as her attempt to choreograph the audience's reading activity and "to amplify different aspects of the reading body" (Bryana Fritz, pers. interview). As a spectator, you realize in these moments that you are at the mercy of the performer's decisions. Unlike the process of reading a book on their own, in *Ib(o)* the audience cannot choose the pace at which they are processing the reading material. Waiting for Fritz to scroll a bit further in the projected Word document feels similar to listening to an actor delivering a text on stage, adding moments of silence to ratchet up the tension. At these moments, the audience experiences the dancer's sharp sense of timing: via the screen she guides the reader, plays with various tempos for the words to appear and the text to move on the screen. These strategies for choreographing the audience's reading process resonate with what Jürs-Munby has identified as a key impetus for exposing digital texts on stage—to slow down the audience's perception (2010, 105) or to draw attention to the physicality of reading (106).

The performance is reminiscent of a genre in poetry and video art, loosely assembled under the categories "digital poetry" or "digital poetics" (Pequeño Glazier 2002; Perloff 2006, 2010; Simanowski 2011; Knowles 2015; Tabbi 2017), "electronic literature" or "electronic poetry" (Filreis 2006; Tabbi 2017), or even "technotexts" (Morris and Swiss 2006) (see also Chapter One, pgs. 59-60).[175] Since the pioneering pieces created in the 1980s, which evolved contemporaneously with the development of computer technologies and the internet, the computer or any other digital surface has continued to serve as an attractive medium for literary explorations.[176] Although contemporary digital technologies afford many opportunities to further experiment with the spatial and visual aspects of poetry, the deeper impetus behind their strategies can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century. This practice is often regarded as the digital equivalent (and therefore, continuation) of modernist poetic innovations, such as those associated with Futurism or concrete poetry (e.g., Pequeño Glazier 2002; Filreis 2006; Perloff 2010; Simanowski 2011; Knowles 2015; Seiça 2017), or more specifically, with Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés* (Simanowksi 2011, 61; Knowles 2015, 49). As Dominique Fisher describes this poem, "the spatial configuration of *Un Coup de dés* stipulates both a horizontal and vertical reading of the poem in which the reader's experience is primarily a visual one" (1994, 27). *Ib(o)* is an example of a piece of writing where this initially modernist experiment takes place in the digital realm: the way in which text appears on Fritz's screen seems to obstruct a reading from left to right and top to bottom, and the movements of the words as well as the typographical experiments stimulate a visual interaction with the text.

In their reviews, both Cockx and van der Putt raise questions as to how far this rather self-absorbed performance can actually include or reach the audience.[177] Although it can be argued that the audience is, if not ignored, then at least slightly disregarded by Fritz

175 Some features of these works are their defiance of narrative coherence (Tabbi 2017), the fact that different versions can exist of the same artwork, even scattered among different media (Perloff 2006, 146), and the raising of questions about the relationship between word and image (Pequeño Glazier 2002, 27; Knowles 2015). The malleable and temporally evolving space afforded by the digital medium seems perfectly suited to these artistic aspirations. Because of their adherence to the realm of the digital or the electronic, many of these poems are characterized by a multi-media aesthetic (Pequeño Glazier 2002, 23; Perloff 2006; Seiça 2017): they are, more explicitly than their modernist heralds, time-based (Simanowski 2011, 63), have performative or interactive aspects (Simanowski 2011, 61, 65; Knowles 2015, 47), while they also probe the affinity between the visual text and its sound (Perloff 2006; Seiça 2017).

176 For examples of these poems, see Pequeño Glazier 2002, Perloff 2006, Noland 2006, Noland 2009, Simanowski 2011, Knowles 2015.

177 Cockx for instance writes that "unfortunately, it is not easy to share in this destabilizing pleasure as an audience [...] Too much we see 'a girl doing some experimenting on her laptop'; too little does this performance communicate with the viewer" (2016; my translation). (Original Dutch version: "jammer genoeg is het niet evident om als publiek te delen in dit destabiliserende plezier [...] Te veel zien we 'een meisje dat wat experimenteert op haar laptop'; te weinig communiceert deze voorstelling met de toeschouwer."). van der Putt puts it as follows: "it is also a rather dry and formal framework for the swooning encouraged by Fritz's texts [...] how do I identify with the circumlocutions and gentle touches of the cursor in the maze of folders that Fritz presents to her viewer?" (2018; my translation). (Original Dutch version: "het is ook een nogal droog en formeel kader voor het zwijmelen of swoonen waar de teksten van Fritz op aansturen [...] hoe identificeer ik mij met de omtrekkende bewegingen en zachte aanrakingen van de cursor in het doolhof van mapjes, dat Fritz haar toeschouwer voorschotelt?").

in this piece, I would contend that the movements of the letters on the screen address the audience and aim to get them involved in the piece.[178] Carrie Noland's astute reflections on digital poetry in *Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures, Producing Culture* (2009) offer an insightful perspective from which to further explore this. Noland argues that digital poetry highlights the corporeal movement that gives rise to writing. She contends that placing poetry in a digital context amplifies the kinetic energy of language production, so the poems remind us that writing is a physical activity. According to Noland, "digital poems mime and displace the corporeal energy channeled by the gestures of handwriting" (2009, 219) and they thereby are simultaneously "recalling to the user's consciousness a memory of the motions—both optical and kinetic—required to produce letters manually on a flat support" (119).[179] Considering the movements of the words on the screen as traces of the movements that gave rise to them reveals to us how a kinesthetic connection can potentially be established in *Ib(o)*. In keeping with Noland, we can recognize the screen of the digital poem as the privileged terrain upon which the corporeal and kinetic dimension of writing can be staged. This can consequently establish a kinesthetic connection between the poem and the reader, who, through watching the movements of the words on the screen, becomes implied in the various forms of movement involved in the activity of writing.

Noland's argument that digital poems contain an "implied theory of agency as an entailment of embodiment" (2009, 118) offers an important clue to better understand how resistance resurfaces in *Ib(o)*. In these poems' indebtedness to movement, Noland recognizes a gesture of disruption. She outlines that "whether the result of physical gestures or programmed codes, the digital poem works in the service of both meaning construction (static, legible inscription) and meaning disruption (illegible but suggestive recombinations of the elements—kinetic and durable—of inscription)" (122). According to Noland, the movements underlying the production of writing can themselves be used to manipulate and transform writing. Her comments about Henri Michaux can also be applied to Fritz's performance: "by exploring writing as a movement practice, we learn that our subjectivity is kinetically as well as discursively conditioned, and that we can resist our conditioning through citational practices involving movements as well as words" (169). In her contribution to *New Media Poetics: Contexts, Technotexts, and Theories*, she outlines how digital

178 A similar argument returns in Kim Knowles's analysis of digital poetry, in which the terminology of dance not only functions as a metaphor to simply describe that the text moves, but where it is also used to investigate the (bodily) impact that the piece of writing has on its audience and to uncover the kinesthetic dynamics it brings into play. Drawing on Deidre Reynold's argument that Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés* activates kinesthetic empathy via the spatial and visual arrangement of the words (see also Chapter Three, pgs. 121 and following), Knowles argues that words in movement can trigger a bodily experience as well as a visceral response in the reader (or audience) (2015, 53, 56).

179 In our interview, Fritz explained that she was primarily interested in performing poetry through the computer because she wanted to explore "the difference between writing with one hand and typing with two" (Bryana Fritz, pers. interview).

poetry "expos[es] the kinetic impulses that underlie the act of inscription" and argues that "these same kinetic impulses" are "disciplined but potentially transgressive" (2006, 219). She further outlines how digital poems can "draw our attention to the gestures rooting but also potentially undermining the integrity of the written character" (226). The approach to writing as a corporeal activity, governed by kinesthetic sensations, shifts the perspective on the relation between language and resistance: language is no longer that which we resist but rather functions as the medium of resistance. In his study of how language produces kinesthetic empathy, Stanton B. Garner, like Noland, also explains that "the movements that characterize intentional human interaction with the environment […] are marked by a sense of agency" (2018, 41). While he unravels how a theatricalized emphasis on the corporeal activities governing speech provides a kinesthetic connection between performer and audience, Fritz's performance indicates how such a connection can potentially also emerge by theatricalizing the corporeal activity of (in this case, computer) writing.

The perspective that Noland offers reveals how *Ib(o)* stages a form of resistance through poetry. To better understand how this resistance is not only expressed in the writing, but is also rooted in the specific relation she develops with her MacBook, it is helpful to briefly turn to postphenomenological theory on the relation between human bodies and technological devices. By using her computer in an unusual way, Fritz's piece poetically displays postphenomenology's notion of "multistability." The way in which Fritz uses the computer as an instrument to create dance in the form of poetry highlights that users can experience a technology in various ways, but that the scope of these variations is also restricted by the material composition of the technology itself. The way in which Fritz uses her computer as a way to generate dance via poetry encourages us to approach their relation in terms of what Ihde labeled an "embodiment relation" (e.g., 1990, 72) and what Peter-Paul Verbeek summarizes as a relation where "human beings take technological artifacts into their experiencing, and thereby broaden the area of sensitivity of their bodies to the world" (2001, 127). This is because the device fundamentally interacts with (and prescribes) the movements of the human user creating the dance. "Embodiment relation" is a category typically reserved in postphenomenological discourse for capturing how a human user interacts with glasses, hearing aids, or other technologies that are fully integrated into the body of the user and fundamentally change how the user navigates in the world (Rosenberger 2014, 375). In the staged context of *Ib(o)*, a reference to the relation between Fritz and her computer as an "embodiment relation," seeks to demonstrate that movement is something that is produced *within* this interaction, and not something that only Fritz alone is in charge of.

The embodiment relation between Fritz and the computer emerges most clearly when she uses the voice technology of the text editor to read the words of the document.[180] In some sections, Fritz is clearly in control of the procedure: it is obvious that we are reading and hearing two different text documents, when we for instance read on the screen “Across a hollow sleeping body,” but hear “A-crossa hol-low slee-ping bo-dy.” In the document that we cannot see, Fritz has inserted spacing between some letters so that the voice pronounces these words in an almost unrecognizable way. Although the sound of the computer voice is entirely generated by the text editor software, Fritz still controls part of it by experimenting with different spaces between the words. However, when we arrive at a stream of s’es (ssssssssssss) in the document, sometimes we hear “syesyesyesyesyes” and other times we hear “s s s s s s s s s s s s s.” Fritz explained to me that in this case, unlike in other parts of the piece where she could consciously modify the sound via the spacing between the words, she did not include any whitespaces to modify the sound of the s-stream: “I must say the s’es are like the biggest mystery to me. Oh, I have no idea. It would just change. […] I was trying to figure it out so I could, so I could deal with it as a material, but I could not figure it out […] I don’t know how to manipulate it, but it’s great” (Bryana Fritz, pers. interview).

The “embodiment relation” between Fritz and her computer illustrates how the space of agency which Fritz occupies in this interaction is restricted by the material outlook of the technological device. It is at this point that the staging context—the gesture to theatricalize this embodiment relation—plays a key role. Because the technological device is used differently from in daily life, it can also shed new light on the relation between the human user and the technology. This is precisely why postphenomenological thinker Mark Coeckelbergh turns to the performing arts in his *Moved by Machines: Performance Metaphors and Philosophy of Technology*. In his chapter “Dancing with Technology: How Machines Move and Choreograph Us,” he contends that the dance stage can function as “a site where we can explore the phenomenology and ethics of human-technology relations” (Coeckelbergh 2019, 27). He explains that “by using technology in a very different way than intended […], they [artists] may open up different *kine-aesthetic* […] possibilities, different ways of moving

180 Postphenomenological discourse does not strictly differentiate between “advanced” digital technologies and more analog technologies. The distinction drawn is between the different ways in which a technology interacts with the human user. For that reason, to refer to the MacBook, I prefer to also use the term “technology.”

with technology (and indeed of moving together)" (157; original emphasis).[181] The way in which Fritz "moves with technology" in *Ib(o)* indeed introduces a different kinesthetic regime, for she uses the computer far more slowly than I, at least, use it in my daily life. In our interview, Fritz told me that this slowness was essential during the creative process: "in order to kind of discover the functions and how to potentially misuse them, I had to move very slowly" (Bryana Fritz, pers. interview). She recounts how she had to position her arm in a very specific angle around her computer mouse to be able to move a cursor in a straight horizontal or vertical line, to click the right folders, to replace files and put them in their correct position, or to select folders or files without accidentally selecting others (which sometimes happened because the slow movements made her hand tremble). As a result, her "whole body became organized around [her] hand" (Bryana Fritz, pers. interview). Even though the audience cannot see the movements that Fritz makes, it is not difficult to imagine that she has to move the mouse and handle the keyboard very carefully to execute the various peculiar actions that she performs on her computer.

In *Ib(o)*, Fritz redefines, explores, and creates alternative modes of usership from within a MacBook, and finds out how it might function as a tool to create and stage poetry via the parameters of dance. As reviewers of the piece have described this process, the dancer "through the cursor, seeks a way to escape the fixed patterns in which the software directs her daily computer actions" (Cockx 2016; my translation) and she is trying to "bypass the functionality of standard navigation" (van der Putt 2018; my translation).[182] She lets herself be constrained by the interface of the offline computer to stage her poetry, but also uses the MacBook interface to modify the text and to transcend grammatical or semantic restrictions. In so doing, this performance illustrates that an interface has a lot in common with a choreographic structure that imposes specific movements on a dancer's body.[183] Like a choreographic structure, an interface pre-conceptualizes the movements a body is supposed to make. As the examples above illustrate, the MacBook interface offers Fritz a rigid movement structure out of which a dance can possibly emerge. As she mentioned in our interview, she thinks of the piece in terms of "the choreography of the computer and the

181 Similarly to the way in which Fritz attempts to dislodge the system of the interface via movement, she is to some extent also dislodging the technology called language by experimenting with how words and images can be made more flexible. In fact, because Fritz adopts comparable resistive strategies to the MacBook interface as to language, her piece reminds us of the similarities between language and technologies. As such, her presentation of language as an embodied technology is in line with the postphenomenologist understanding of language proposed by Coeckelbergh: "technologies and languages shape how we perceive, think, and act in the world […]. Technologies and languages are in-betweens and milieus, but phenomenologically they are […] embodied in everyday use" (2017, 173). (see also Chapter Two, pgs. 115-117).

182 Original Dutch versions: "zoekt, via de cursor, een weg om te ontsnappen aan de vaste patronen waarin de software haar dagelijkse computerhandelingen stuurt" en ze probeert om "de functionaliteit van de standaard-navigatie te omzeilen."

183 In some cases, choreographic expertise plays a key role in the design processes of interfaces, as Sydney Skybetter explains in his interview with designer and choreographer Lauren Bedal in "Meet the Choreographic Interface Designer Who Brings Her Dance Knowledge to Google" in *Dance Magazine* (2021).

dance of the user." For her, "choreography is like [...] a very like structural capacity. [...] It's the thing that is imposing. And then [...], dance is this substance that is escaping" (Bryana Fritz, pers. interview).[184] The movement demands to which Fritz is submitting herself in this piece are those prescribed by the MacBook interface, yet the dance that emerges out of it runs counter to its design geared to efficiency and high-speed productivity.[185] Many of the movements she performs on her computer serve no clear purpose, as when she circles a few times with her arrow around the X-button of her Finder screen before closing it, or when she very slowly draws a selection square around a file name before opening it.

The movement dynamic behind Fritz's submission to the choreographic structure of the interface is insightfully described by Noland in her discussion of tools. In this, Noland demonstrates that human agency can be better understood through the notion of kinesthesia. Thus far in this dissertation, we have mainly encountered kinesthesia in the sense of the empathy that it can establish between spectator and performer. In Noland's treatise, our capacity to sense movement from within our bodies is not explored in the context of a staged performance. Rather, she studies how this sense operates in how we orient ourselves in our material and socio-political environments. In the context of Fritz's performance and her creative process, Noland's insights into how kinesthesia plays a key role in tool use are particularly instructive. She explains how via "palpating, exploratory movements" that are "not always subordinated to a pre-conceived goal," users can discover different ways to use a tool (Noland 2009, 106). Noland outlines how the interplay between movement and kinesthetic feedback is crucial to discovering a space of agency in the interaction with a technological device that provokes a specific way of moving. Noland's focus on "kinesthetic resistance" (20) and her insistence on the "agentic function" (114) of this process encourages us to recognize a sense of resistance in Fritz's performance.[186] Drawing on the work of paleoethnographer André Leroi-Gourhan, Noland argues that "tools (including symbolic tools, such as language and other mnemonic devices) help determine the movements the

184 This resonates with how Mårten Spångberg defines the two terms in his account of "post-dance": "choreography, like architecture, is a matter of domesticating or taming movement. Choreography organizes movement. In other words, choreography is a matter of structuring" (2017, 360), while "dance in its initial state is not organized, it is pure expression, but in order to be located it needs organization, yet dance is not causal to choreography" (371). Here, Fritz expresses a view on the relation between choreography and dance that also appears in how Lepecki thinks of dance and agency. Precisely because choreography functions as a system of command, as Lepecki has demonstrated, "it becomes a site for investigating agency" (2016, 16), see also footnote 153.

185 During our interview, Fritz also mentioned how for her, being a dancer in someone else's choreography always entails a form of submission to specific formal constraints, and that a similar submission is taking place in *Ib(o)*.

186 Noland's theory of agency is fundamentally embodied, and therefore differs from the Butlerian perspective, where notions of embodiment, interoception, kinesthesia, and proprioception are not as elaborately taken into account as in Noland's view. For more details on the difference between Noland's and Butler's approaches towards agency, see Noland's take on Butler's conception of agency in the fifth chapter of her book. The main issue that Noland has with Butler's approach is that she "treat[s] verbal performatives and gestural performances as identical ontological forms" (2009, 170), which is partly why I chose not to include Bulter's thinking as a theoretical point of reference in this chapter (see also footnote 154).

subject will make; but the subject's embodiment of these movements […] will also play an agentic role in the evolution of symbolic, technical, and corporeal instruments" (Noland 2009, 110).[187] Her embodied and kinesthetic negotiation between the movements prescribed by the design of the MacBook interface, and the movements Fritz discovers which enable her to use the MacBook differently, captures precisely the dynamic of kinesthetic agency that Noland describes. From an embodiment relation with her performance, Fritz submits to the "physical demands of many inscriptive systems" (Noland 2009, 156) and "mov[es] […] the body in unscripted ways" (120). As she outlines in the quotation from the interview inserted in the previous paragraph, for Fritz, both language and the MacBook interface provide restrictive structures that she can resist through movements and out of which a dance can possibly emerge.[188]

Noland thus reveals to us the mechanisms of kinesthetic resistance on which *Ib(o)*'s dramaturgy relies. In this MacBook performance, *Ib(o)* theatricalizes a recognizable image of the contemporary worker: someone who is sitting almost motionless behind their computer and who is completely immersed in the various tasks they are conducting. While the MacBook is here used to create poetry, it at the same time functions as one of the devices most often used by many contemporary workers in the service economy, to meet the neoliberal demands of creativity and constant productivity. The lightness and compactness of the MacBook perfectly matches the nomadic and hyper-flexible lifestyle that is expected of the contemporary worker. In fact, the piece quite explicitly incorporates its own labor conditions. Fritz mentioned in our interview that "a lot of what was important to me in making *blue* was that I made it in hotel rooms and my apartment. […] that also was […] an aspect of why it became what it was. It was also the conditions of its production" (Bryana Fritz, pers. interview). By limiting the studio space of dance to the MacBook interface, Fritz found a way to continue creating a dance in-between touring and rehearsing schedules.

Ib(o) therefore reproduces a fundamental aspect of how contemporary labor—including artistic labor—is organized. As Annelies Van Assche put it, "in the digital era, Western European societies promote the idea that (and create a reality in which) artists should become entrepreneurial individuals who work anywhere and anytime in exchange for low wages or immaterial income" (2018, 143). Since the MacBook greatly contributes to this regime

187 Noland demonstrates that her account is theoretically congruent with Merleau-Ponty's conceptualization of embodiment. According to Noland, Merleau-Ponty has shown that "insofar as cultural subjects are moving bodies, they also produce a tension in the very culture whose inscriptions they bear" (2009, 40). Like Merleau-Ponty, whose work she reads as a "balancing act between a biologism […] and cultural constructivism" (61), "contingently forced on the level of the individual" (62), Noland insists that kinesthetic experience is crucial "for understanding how objective meaning-making structures work, how they can take root in the body *but also how they can be changed*" (45; emphasis added).

188 As Sally Gardner has argued, "a concern with choreography as opposed to, say, dancing might be symptomatic of the textual economy at work" (2008, 59). This logic not only returns in Fritz's definition of dance as that which escapes choreography, but also appears in accounts of dance's potential for resistance (see footnote 153).

of "working anywhere and anytime," it can be argued that Fritz somewhat uncritically embraces this condition. Fritz discovers a way to circumvent her own labor conditions and finds a way to continue making dance pieces. Even though Fritz "perform[s] [her] own working and living conditions" (Van Assche 2017, 238), they are not openly addressed. The piece is not concerned with exposing the injustice behind these conditions, but, on the contrary, presents the MacBook as a unique tool for the creation of digital poetry. From the text, we mainly receive images of landscapes and majestic scenery, intermingled with references to body parts, or to love and sexuality, that at first sight seem to celebrate the MacBook as a site of creativity. Behind the seeming embracing of these labor conditions, Fritz's gesture of "misusing" the computer, or in any case, using it beyond its intended purpose, however, presents a different story. When examining closely the various movements that these texts produce, and that are reproduced in them, we can also trace a moving body that is redefining the tools that it is using.

Fritz's gesture of presenting an embodiment relation with her computer marked by a kinesthetic regime of slowness offers an instructive perspective from which to approach some recurrent contentions about resistance in dance scholarship. In this discourse, the influence of labor conditions has frequently offered a productive angle of investigation (Wikström 2012; Kunst 2014; Franko 2019b). The ambiguity of Fritz's position vis-à-vis her labor conditions is typical of an often-returning observation in that discourse—the convoluted relation between how dance participates in neoliberalist labor conditions, and yet also attempts to resist them. As Bojana Kunst, for instance, explains, "contemporary production calls for creative and potential individuals, with their constant movement and dynamism promising economic value" (2014, 111). In their editorial for a special issue of *TDR* on the topic, Nicolas Ridout and Rebecca Schneider draw attention to the ambiguous position of art and creativity in these labor conditions: "neoliberal rhetoric fronts 'creativity' as a font for freedom, innovation, and economic promise, at the same time that it sets stock in fear and collective disenfranchisement. Thus, creativity and terror, art and structural insecurity, become uncomfortable affiliates" (2012, 8).[189] In *Choreographing Empathy: Kinesthesia in Performance* (2011), Susan Leigh Foster traces in a similar manner how the meaning of the word choreography can currently be situated between the jargon of market ideologies and connotations of resistance. While choreography on the one hand denominates "a process of uprooting, accomplished not by the symbolic encoding of movements principles, but instead by the application of criteria of marketability, such as glamour, authenticity,

189 Jose L. Reynoso similarly captures how this somewhat paradoxical situation affects the status of the dancing body, arguing that "the ontological reality of the contemporary post/modern dancing body is simultaneously resistive to the conditioning forces that mediate its subjectivization while also being, I will argue, an instantiation of neoliberalism's body" (2019, 51)

and professional quality," it on the other hand "is envisioned as providing an arena in which to encounter and potentially transcend the histories of oppression, colonization, or enslavement that form part of the corporeal legacies of potential collaborators so as to celebrate a common humanity (2011, 71). Van Assche, then, makes tangibly clear how this uncomfortable position impacts the status of the dancer as worker. She observes that "contemporary dance is especially precarious owing to the difficult to define nature of the profession, the demand for transnational mobility, the predominance of project-based work and network-oriented activities, and the dependence on bodily health and public funding" (Van Assche 2017, 238).

The idea that the working conditions of contemporary dancers are symptomatic of the current post-Fordist working regime often returns in arguments about dance's capacity for resistance (Klein and Kunst 2012, 2; Lepecki 2016, 15,17; Van Assche 2018, 143). For instance, in their introduction to *Emerging Bodies: The Performance of Worldmaking in Dance and Choreography*, Gabriele Klein and Sandra Noeth state that "this volume is based on the assumption that dance reveals its effectivity not in the representation of existing structures and systems, but unfolds its potentiality precisely in the offering of alternatives, of utopias, developed with the help of the body and through the organization of movement" (2011, 9). In her account of some works typical of the characteristic expansion of dance that can be observed in late 20th and early 21st century dance (see Introduction, pgs. 23 and following), Bojana Cvejić also reflects on the political potential of these dances. She claims that it "lies in critically and experimentally examining the ideological effects exerted by the socioeconomic consensus of contemporary capitalism on the theatrical apparatus of representation" (2015, 10-11).[190] From one angle, it can be argued that the developments in dance over the past three decades towards choreographic structures of stillness are especially well-suited to producing resistance, since these movements provide an entry point to a radically different movement regime from the quick, efficient, and hypermobile movement regime of neoliberalism. Kunst, for instance, explains how duration as an artistic strategy is particularly apt for this, because duration introduces "a dispossession that overwhelms us with non-functioning and non-operativity" (2014, 130). She outlines how slowing down or ceasing to "perform" counters contemporary labor imperatives of acceleration, constant mobility, and networking. A similar argument is expressed by André Lepecki, who builds upon Mark Franko's observation that dance has only since modernity been conceptually attached to the portrayal of bodily movement. Lepecki argues that the aesthetic of stillness in dance can be considered as a strategy to resist the imperative of mobility in modernity

190 This statement is an example of the gesture of criticizing theatricality-as-representation, which is sometimes identified as a major trend in late 20th and early 21st century dance. In the next section on Fritz's *Submission Submission*, I will return to this in more detail.

(2006, 2–3). He contends that "the undoing of the unquestioned alignment of dance with movement [...] initiates a performative critique of his or her participation in the general economy of mobility that informs, supports, and reproduces the ideological formations of late capitalist modernity" (16).

In *Ib(o)*, however, the way in which dance can resist these movement regimes is presented differently. Rather than stopping moving, this performance emphasizes the often-concealed human movements underlying contemporary labor, and the dancer uses her computer in a way that differs from the movement imperative of efficiency and productivity. By staging labor, *Ib(o)* demonstrates another way in which dance can create strategies of resistance, other than that referenced by Lepecki when he argues that stillness resists modernity's imperative of mobility. The piece illustrates that *movement* itself can also function as resistance in a world dictated by mobility and productivity. This approach differs from the understanding of dance's resistance not only in terms of stillness, slowness, or duration. From a broader historical perspective, it is also, importantly, very different from how labor resurfaced in the 1960s New York City dance scene. According to Franko, the use of everyday and pedestrian movement in Judson Dance Theater places an "emphasis on the body as material and the materiality of action devoid of motivation or psychology - the neutral doing of the neutral doer - actually designates movement toward a de- materialization of labor while maintaining the pretense of work as designated by the task" (2019b, 203). He argues that "this outcome is the product of a concealment [...] a maintenance of hidden labor" (203) which resonates with the tendency in post-Fordist labor models to hide labor. Thus, labor was presented there in disguise: "the erasure of the evidences of dance technique are [...] a way to maintain nonetheless a certain labor as the essential doing of a dance apparently shorn of all theatricality" (203). The way in which labor operates in a concealed way in these works seems to be the opposite of Fritz's strategy, in which labor conditions are rather foregrounded and even theatricalized.

Her approach seems to resonate better with the reemergence of labor in "the dance reforms of the early twentieth century," if we follow Kunst (2014, 102). Kunst outlines how these dances can be considered as kinesthetic alternatives to the movement demands of industrial labor: while the rationalization of the working body in Fordism and Taylorism gained more and more prominence on the work floor, the inner creative potential of the (moving) body was celebrated on dance stages and in dance classes (102–3). Somewhat similarly, by resisting the movement demands ingrained in the MacBook interface, Fritz's MacBook dance stages a kinesthetic alternative to contemporary labor movements. As Noland concludes, "it is then not the case [...] that computers now determine how we will move, for as many digital poems indicate, computers can in fact provide opportunities to

move in unpredictable ways […]—if only in an ephemeral performance space" (2009, 126). As we have seen, Fritz's enmeshment in the MacBook allows her to develop various tools to engage with the computer and find a form of computer usership that transcends the envisaged or more common uses geared more towards speed and productivity. As Kunst argues in "Art and Labour: On Consumption, Laziness and Less Work," in times where "every activity must have a purpose and strive for a value on the market" (2012, 122), "the most radical politization of art will be its detachment from any kind of economic value in order to reveal new affective and aesthetic articulations of the common" (119). Since in *Ib(o)*, Fritz almost stubbornly choses inefficient ways to perform the different computer tasks, the piece "opens up life atmospheres and rhythms that are different from anything production-oriented" (124). While computer work often implies that we stop moving, or forget to move, this piece—through kinetic textuality—highlights movement as something that might potentially allow us to use the computer in a more disruptive way.

Submission Submission: activating the resistant potential of spiritual experience

As a sort of addendum to this discussion on theatricality, I will now briefly expand my discussion of *Ib(o)* by looking into how its digital poetry aesthetics are incorporated into Fritz's 2019 performance, *Submission Submission*. This discussion builds upon some observations about kinesthetic mimesis already mentioned in Chapter One (see pgs. 66-68), as well as on the MacBook dance aesthetic studied in detail in the previous section: it will therefore be less oriented towards approaching kinetic textuality from a new angle and therefore less rooted in theoretical discussions. The main incentive for including this performance in the discussion, is that it allows me to foreground the reliance of kinetic textuality on strategies of theatricality-as-representation. As I will demonstrate, this piece is an example of how kinetic textuality, with its reliance on kinesthetic mimesis, marks an important distinction from often-foregrounded features of late 20th and early 21st century dance. By mainly describing the kinesthetic mimetic strategies at work in this piece, rather than introducing yet another theoretical angle to the discussion, I believe that this distinction will become clearer.

In *Submission Submission*, Fritz performs the work of an "amateur hagiographer" and presents various portraits of Christian mystics and religious women. While in *Ib(o)* Fritz remained seated behind her laptop, in *Submission Submission*, she returns on stage and presents the saints by singing, reading out stories about them, performing demonic dances, or praying. *Submission Submission* consists of various portraits, but the selection of portraits she includes in a specific performance depends on the place where Fritz is presenting the

piece.[191] An embodiment relation with her MacBook has again resulted in the production of many textual experiments that present kinetic textuality in its visual as well as auditory form. Sometimes, Fritz dances to an excerpt of a computer-generated or digitally modified rhythmic text. At other times, kinetic textuality functions as a visual background to her dances, as when she dances in front of five screen videos of word documents, where streams of the words "tongue," "eyes," "lips," "stomach," and "bladder" are endlessly copied to produce a stream of moving words. Unlike in *Ib(o)*, the digital poetry clearly serves a narrative and dramatic function in this piece. At the beginning of the performance at Vooruit in Ghent, Fritz welcomed "those agitated souls that we are going to arouse tonight and give some presence to" and announces the names of the "women [that] will be my subject of adoration for tonight": Hildegard of Bingen, Catherine of Siena, Christina of Bolsena, and Joan of Arc. In this prologue, she presents herself as both a hagiographer and someone who will try to summon the dead. This means that she will not merely recount the lives of the saints but will also embody them as characters.

In so doing, *Submission Submission* amplifies the "tendencies toward externalization and theatricality" that Amy Hollywood, a scholar of Christian Studies, recognizes as a key feature of the hagiographic genre (2002, 253). Especially when she focusses on the corporeal dimension of these women's religious experiences, Fritz's performance incorporates this literary genre's tendency "to represent the internal disposition of the soul through external narrative devices" (252). She announces in the prologue that she will try to embody and bring to life the different saints. Even at this point, she acknowledges that this theatricalization of the women's experiences will inevitably have some flaws, but "it is out of love that I perform the work at hand. And I will do it with my flesh, and as all flesh, it will fail, miserably." In this piece, we can thus trace a final way in which theatrical mechanisms are at work in kinetic textuality. Here, theatricality operates as a form of representation that aims to bring historical subjects back to life on stage. In these representations, Fritz highlights various aspects of these historical figures: Fritz's saints are not exclusively pious and devoted. Some of them are also presented as demonic or possessed, while the religious experience of others is presented as erotic. In his reflection on the piece, Rathsaran Sireekan mentions that "Fritz, queering hagiography, gives her audience a new unusual way to experience female 'saintliness'" (2019). Catherine of Siena's religiosity, for instance, is portrayed as both highly devoted and strongly erotic. In this portrait, Fritz places her T-shirt on her head so as to represent a white veil, evoking the iconography of Mary and other female saints and nuns. Fritz talks about how she—as Catherine—chose to stay a virgin and never marry, but how she one day encountered Jesus Christ who asked her to

191 The analysis of this performance is based on a recording of a performance at Vooruit on 26 June 2021, but also on the memories I have and the notes I made of the version I saw at beursschouwburg in March 2019.

marry her, and how she developed a strong desire for him. The portrait ends in a state of ecstasy, which, as she recounts, "usually last four hours (…) during these states, my eyes cannot see, my ears cannot hear, my hands cannot feel and my tongue cannot taste, I've thrown out everything else around me and the only thing I see is Jesus Christ." The ecstasy is performed via a song, an altered version of Madonna's "Like a Prayer," whose lyrics are much more eroticized than in the original version.

In the prologue, Fritz explains that she is fascinated by the women she is about to perform because "each one of them has fearlessly played and exceeded the roles of both medieval women and medieval saints." In our interview, Fritz explained her fascination for these medieval female religious figures in terms of this dynamic of submission and subversion, a process that specifically took place in their bodies. She pointed out that the

> intensive amounts of constraint for women within the medieval time period is also mainly why I'm dealing with women. Then employing all of these strategies, which often are very bodily strategies that have to do with like food practices like starving itself. And all of these forms of having control over one's body. Which can also I mean, now it would be mythologized as anorexia. But at the moment, I think it was more about having yeah, to be able to control one's flesh. All of these levels of control, submission, subversion that are happening within their public performance and becoming public figures. (Bryana Fritz, pers. interview)

As already mentioned in the context of *Ib(o)*, Fritz uses choreographic principles to approach structures of constraint which in turn allow her to arrive at some form of resistance against these constraints. As she further explained in our interview, she is interested in "trying to take the position of the one that's submissive and not the one that's dominating […] it's about also having like a woman's body or being a woman or identifying and trying to find a kind of agency from this subordinate sub position" (Bryana Fritz, pers. interview). We have seen in the previous section that in *Ib(o)*, Fritz submits to the constraints of the MacBook interface in order to create a dance through her kinesthetic engagement with the device. In *Submission Submission*, she literally steps into the body of the submissive figure by means of hagiography in a theatrical setting. As in *Ib(o)*, this embodiment position allows her to kinesthetically experience a space of agency, this time the space of agency of the resistant historical figures that she represents.

Submission Submission thus provides a third example of how the theatrical strategies operating through kinetic textuality provoke resistance. It is not so much that Fritz is resisting something specific; rather, she is embodying characters who have experienced degrees of constraint. By bringing forward these various aspects of female religiosity in an explicitly

contemporary aesthetic (the pop songs, the MacBook), Fritz makes it clear that her project is not about historical accuracy but rather an exploration of what the embodiment of these women can provoke in the contemporary moment of performing. As the interview sections already suggest, Fritz mainly embodies these historical figures because she is fascinated by the crux between submission and control that characterizes their religious lives. In that regard, Fritz's project ties in with a broader intellectual and artistic tradition involving medieval mystics as figures that continue to inspire people outside of their own religious and historical context.[192] According to Hollywood, "the modern fascination with the mystical exhibits a nostalgia for a time when there were ritual means to deal with the traumatic effects of loss, limitation, and death. Ritual and the body, contrary to many modern conceptions of mysticism, are crucial to that process, for it is through bodily practices and the affective work that they perform with and on the body that we work through loss" (2002, 20).[193] While Sireekan reads the "feminist politics" behind Fritz's work mainly in terms of a "linguistic activism," where the "emphasis on the constructedness of the performing body is mobilized together with Fritz's disassociation of linguistic signs" (2019), I would instead argue that the political dimension of Fritz's piece lies, rather, in her attempt to represent historical figures of past resistance. Embodiment and mimesis, rather than merely linguistic experimentation, are key strategies in this endeavor.

Fritz's piece has a rather fragmentary structure. The projection or announcement of the names of the saints before the start of each portrait already divides the performance into separate chapters and alludes to the hagiographic (and thus literary) structure of this project. In the prologue, she states that the embodiment will also be fragmentary:

> My labor here tonight is to perform the strange and mystical exercise of bringing these women into body. But someone might ask, you, you might ask, with which manner of body shall they come? That is a very good question. Their bodies will not rise up whole and intact, but through the instability

192 For instance, Finnish visual artist Suzanna Nevado, in an installation project *Holy and Unholy*, explores how women's bodies are represented in Catholic imagery and evokes the tension between lived corporeal experience and the disembodied portrayals of saintly women (Kontturi 2018, 48). A similar but less recent example is the 1985 performance *Hadewych*, by Belgian performance artist Frieda Pittoors, in which she employs the medieval figure of Hadewych to explore the socio-political position of women and the multi-layeredness of their identities (van Heer 1985). As Hollywood explains in her account of the frequent fascination with medieval mysticism in French 20th century thought (and also feminism inspired by psychoanalysis), "Bataille, Beauvoir, Lacan, and Irigaray, although each in a different way, all run to Christian mysticism as a potent site for philosophical reflection and for its disruption through bodily affect. They all hope somehow to translate aspects of medieval women mystics' experiences, texts, and practices into modern, non-theistic terms (although Beauvoir and Irigaray with much more ambivalence than Bataille and Lacan). In other words, they claim that medieval mystical texts can still be useful and meaningful—even if in highly mediated forms—in the modem world" (2002, 19).

193 Hollywood, for instance, summarizes feminist Hélène Cixous's interest in Christian mysticism as follows: "where earlier readings of some Christian mystics as hysterical reduced affective and erotic forms of mysticism to disease, thereby potentially, if not explicitly, undermining their religious value, Cixous argues that hysteria—and hence the mystical forms associated with it—marks the return of repressed desire and so unleashes a liberating force that works against the conservative and rigidifying power of religious belief and practice" (2002, 4).

> of the body and the instability of the word. What dies and then rises does not need to be the same.

Before the portrait of Catherine of Siena, for instance, Fritz literally announces "so, I am going to be saint Catherine of Siena," which again establishes a distance between herself and the character she is embodying. This distance is crucial for her, as she mentioned in our interview: "I distrust of me actually claiming to or stepping into positioning myself as these saints" (Bryana Fritz, pers. interview). These fragmentary and incomplete representations evoke only the contours of the saints. Sometimes, their representation is not evoked by a physical embodiment and the mimesis only takes place in the writing. In the portrait of Hildegard von Bingen, for instance, von Bingen mainly appears as the author who has written the text we are reading. In this portrait, a word document called "vision" is projected, and we can read a text written by Fritz, but from the perspective of Hildegard von Bingen.[194] Adopting similar strategies to those in *Ib(o)*, a computer-generated and modified voice reads the text out loud, while Fritz dances silently in front of the computer screen. In the portrait of Catherine of Siena, on the other hand, the embodiment is more complete, as Fritz literally performs the character of Catherine, who talks about her childhood and her love for Jesus Christ.[195] The portrayal or mimesis of the saints is often scattered among different bodies—the body that is scrolling through the word document, the body that is dancing, the body that is pronouncing the words, and the body that has written the texts. In this way, Fritz is not fully stepping into the position of these saints, but her embodiment rather remains fragmentary.

At several points in the performance, she also explicitly calls upon the spectators as participants in her hagiographic project. In her portrait of Catherine of Siena, she even literally addresses them as co-writers of this piece when she announces that the audience are her secretaries who are supposed to write down her visions. These strategies for including the audience in the piece create an intriguing friction with the rather fragmentary way in which the saints are portrayed through different bodies. By bringing her audience into the fiction of the piece, she radically extends the kinesthetic engagement that potentially results from reading the kinetic textuality on the screen, and the recording of the emphatically

194 Fritz explained in our interview that the genre of fan fiction played a key role in her writing process: "looking into fan fiction somehow opened up a space within writing which had much more to do with narration and collective narration and how do we write ourselves into these narratives? Somehow, medieval studies were creeping into my frame of interest and fanfiction at the same time" (Bryana Fritz, pers. interview). Fan fiction is mostly created by a community of readers (the "fans") of the source book, who start re-writing storylines or write extra storylines, using some of the novels' "original" characters and plotlines. The transformation from the source text to the fanfiction text happens through the reader's "self-insert" into the fictional world: the writer's (reader's) personal desires and their identification with the characters play a crucial role in the creation of the alternative storylines. It is mainly this notion of self-insert that Fritz borrows from the fan fiction genre.

195 In the portrait of Christina of Bolsena, Fritz embodies the saint while performing a dance with a fake tongue that she is ripping out of her mouth while screaming. In the final portrait, of Joan of Arc, the saint is again mainly represented through a text, as a character in an erotic love story written by Fritz about Joan of Arc.

corporeal and kinetic way in which she delivers her text. This is a slightly different strategy from that which we encountered in the previous chapter in the works of Mette Edvardsen and Dounia Mahammed. The incompleteness of the stories they presented was combined with textual strategies that sought to stimulate the audience to visually and corporeally imagine what is being described on an empty stage, while Edvardsen and Mahammed themselves mainly operated as facilitators of this imaginary journey. In Fritz's performance, various elements already occupy the stage as means to evoke the fictional story (the most important of which is Fritz's presence as the embodiment of the saints); we, therefore, as participants in the story, are instead drawn into what is happening on stage.

From a theater perspective, the theatrical strategies used in these dance pieces are actually quite straightforward and common ways to evoke resistance via theatricality: resistant historical figures are represented through mimetic strategies whose kinesthetic dimension is foregrounded. However, when we consider Fritz's mimetic strategies in the light of the discourse on late 20th and early 21st century dance, her piece seems to rely on quite inventive strategies. Bojana Cvejić, for instance, opens her book on key choreographies of this segment of dance history by claiming that it focusses on "the problems that critically address the prevailing regime of representation in theater dance" (2015, 2). Petra Sabisch similarly focusses on dance pieces which are less interested in representation: "these becomings, these qualitative transformations, are arepresentational processes which do not achieve their determination through mimetic operations (they do not imitate the term they become) but through assemblage" (2011, 63). In an overview of European dance at the turn of the millennium, Lepecki describes this scene in terms of "a move of dance from a theatrical paradigm to a performance paradigm" (2004a, 172) and explains how it "is a field where the visual arts, performance art, political art, meet performance theory and institute a mode of creation truly disciplinary" (172). In subsequent studies, he continues to approach dance from the perspective of performance and performance art (a move already made explicit in the subtitles of *Exhausting Dance*—"performance and the politics of movement"—and *Singularities*—"dance in the age of performance") and continues to focus on pieces that "erase the visible presence of dancers from representation" (2016, 11).

This theoretical tendency to present theatricality-as-representation as something absent from late 20th and early 21st century dance is informed by the legacy of conceptual dance,

which continues to resurface in these works and the discussions about them.[196] A quick look at two artists often discussed as examples of this tendency may provide an instructive angle, enabling us to consider this legacy in the light of the theatrical strategies of resistance adopted by Fritz. Jérôme Bel's performances in the 1990s, to begin with, have often been regarded as pivotal examples of this conceptual impulse in dance. As Lepecki describes his work, it "takes the form of a systematic critique of choreography's participation in the broader project of Western representation" (2006, 45). What this investigation yields, as Lepecki recognizes, is that it "displays how the end of representation remains both a project and an impossibility" (49).[197] At this point, Jacques Derrida's reading of Antonin Artaud helps Lepecki to lay bare the theoretical gesture of Bel's work: while it aims to critique representation, it ends up discovering its inevitability. Cvejić describes Bel's work in similar terms, and places him as a key figure within "a critique of representation," rooted in "a deconstruction of theatricality in self-referential speech acts and procedures with readymade, citation, and collage" (2015, 172). For Cvejić, Bel's work can be considered as part of the larger group of choreographies that have "broken through the epistemic horizon of formal abstraction and phenomenological embodiment towards more constructed, heterogeneous, pluralist practices of performances" (2015, 227). In Fritz's *Submission Submission*, the mimetic strategies do not function as a way to critique representation. On the contrary: as we have seen, representation is uncompromisingly embraced as a key dramaturgical strategy in this piece. Although Fritz does point to the artificiality of her theatrical hagiographic construction, she does not "criticize" representation as such. In Fritz's piece, the resistant aspect of foregrounding theatricality-as-representation thus has a dramaturgical function diametrically opposed to what Lepecki and Cvejić recognize in Bel's work.

We can explain this difference more specifically by focusing on a piece from another artist often associated with conceptual dance: Juan Dominguez's *All Good Spies Are My Age*, to which I have briefly referred in the Introduction (pg. 20). In Lepecki's *Exhausting Dance*, Dominguez's work appears as a key reference. Lepecki writes about this particular performance that "in this dance that performs itself as literally choreographic, typography frames signification and semantics by a playful reference to the performative impact of

196 Rudi Laermans (who prefers the term "reflexive dance") offers an insightful account of this tendency in his *Moving Together: Theorizing and Making Contemporary Dance*, placing it in the lineage of conceptualism in visual art (2015, 198–203). Laermans argues that the characteristic features of recent developments within dance which "no longer only order bodily movements and non-movements" (207) continue to rely on a conceptual logic precisely because they are redefining dance: "when the space of 'the choreographic' becomes populated by heterogeneous elements, varying from corporeal movements to video images as well as all sorts of sounds and divergent text genres, it is precisely one or more general notions that may guide the individual or collective dance maker when rationalizing the many possibilities generated during a work process" (207).

197 Pouillaude takes up a similar argument when he writes that "one might, for example, seek to show, from the inside, that contemporary […] art has taken on the essential task of representing the impossibility of representation – of presenting the unpresentable itself, and thereby also in the process representing our times." (2017, 289).

writing" (2006, 36). In this piece, Juan Dominguez sits behind a desk and carefully manipulates different cards containing words, phrases, and sentences, which are projected for the audience to read. Petra Sabisch writes the following about the performance:

> The continuous transformation of kinetic images and kinaesthetic emotions [...] is thus transposed in Dominguez's performance to the continuous transformation of semiological modulations and performative variations on time through reading [...] these transformations are no longer produced through physical movements on stage, but through the videographic projection of a mainly textual travelling. (Sabisch 2011, 218)

Both Lepecki and Sabisch's descriptions illustrate the parallels between Fritz's work and that of Dominguez. The latter's strategy of using language as something that produces movement through semiotic transformations, and through temporal adjustments to the activity of reading, clearly resembles Friz's pieces discussed in this chapter. In both *Ib(o)* and *Submission Submission*, the movement also takes place in the visual realm (the graphic words moving on the screen), but as we have seen, at the same time continues to foreground corporeal movement.

The similarity between Fritz and Dominguez's work is perhaps typical of how the legacy of conceptual dance continues to work through more contemporary pieces, including dance pieces in which we can trace kinetic textuality. However, while the inward dramaturgy of *Ib(o)* clearly resonates with the solipsistic gesture that Lepecki identifies in Dominiguez's *All Good Spies Are My Age*, Fritz's *Submission Submission* marks an important shift in this tendency. Although formally it resembles Dominiguez's play, with projected language and shifting meanings, Fritz's work, because of its embracing of theatricality-as-representation, is dramaturgically more difficult to align with the conceptual aesthetic that predominates in *All Good Spies Are My Age*. From the perspective of these two authors (and the conceptual dance tendency they exemplify), it is not surprising that a move away from representation is often identified in late 20th and early 21st century dance. However, the case of *Submission Submission* shows that in the context of kinetic textuality, the notion of theatricality-as-representation plays a fundamentally different role. This testifies to an important distinction between the use of kinesthetic mimesis in the corpus assembled for this dissertation and the conceptual dance tendency that continues to be recognized on contemporary stages.[198]

198 This re-emergence of theatricality within dance is probably not limited to the current corpus, but seems to be part of a withdrawal from the artistic strategies geared to withstanding it. As Timmy De Laet also observes in the context of dance re-enactments of modern dance, these works "signal, above all, that the previously predominant emphasis on expanding movement idioms by means of still-acts [...] is on the rebound, giving way to other registers of bodily expression, such as physical tension, *theatricality*, or flowing movement" (2016, 79; emphasis added).

Concluding thoughts

To end this chapter, I wish to reflect on one final aspect of the discourse on late 20th and early 21st century dance that I have so far left unaddressed: the tendency to introduce non-human elements as dancing entities (see also, Introduction, pgs. 23 and following). The role of technological mediation in the three pieces studied in this chapter is similar in some ways to the medial hybridity that is often put forward as a distinguishing characteristic of this most recent period of dance history. Yet the central role still played by corporeality in these technological mediations offers a more oblique angle on the gradual disappearance of the human dancer, often highlighted in the discourse. Rudi Laermans for instance writes that "the heterogeneous elements making up an assemblage are not constituted by the continually shifting relations they entertain with each other. Notwithstanding its particular agency within a singular network of entities, a sound, image or prop *remains materially independent* and may therefore be put to work in another assemblage" (2015, 232; emphasis added).[199] Lepecki suggests that the strategy of including elements that transcend the scope of human bodily movement on the dance stage can be considered as a form of resistance: "in neoliberal self-investment, the refusal of the dancer to make an appearance [...] is quite a powerful affirmation" (2016, 11).

By contrast, in *Body of Work*, *Ib(o)*, and *Submission Submission,* the way in which the technology *interacts* with the dancer plays a key role in the resistant quality of the piece. These three dances are built around a bodily interaction between human and machine, and the *dependence* of the technological device on the human body plays a key role in their theatrical strategies of resistance. Despite the strong focus on technologically mediated language in these three pieces, corporeality remains an important factor in understanding the choreographic nature of their use of text. The physical dimension of the text in *Body of Work* resurfaces through the rhythmic text, produced through recorded repetition. The MacBook dance that is *Ib(o)* is governed by a human body moving in a very specific way: although the arrows, words, and folders on the laptop screen perform more movements than Fritz, it is still Fritz's movements which steer them. In *Submission Submission*, the technologized text either functions as a narrative background to the dances of the various saints or is presented as the voice of saints that is being brought to life.

The difference between Laermans' and Lepecki's accounts and my analyses of *Body of Work*, *Ib(o)*, and *Submission Submission* in fact reflects the difference between the philosophical

199 According to Laermans, the development of including more and more nonhuman agencies is facilitated by technological evolutions centered on the computer: "the rapid breakthrough of the computer as the new material super-medium remediating text, sound or image in meaningless zeros and ones has undoubtedly furthered the transformation of the art of scenography into 'choreography in general'" (2015, 235).

strands that inform their approaches—Deleuze's assemblage perspective and Bruno Latour's actor-network theory—and the (post)phenomenological framework that I am adopting. From a (post)phenomenological perspective, it is theoretically impossible to remove the human body from the medial interplay taking place on stage. Laermans's suggestion to consider this development within dance as "dance in general," is an example of how his approach is informed by a "symmetrical" perspective on the interaction between humans and non-human elements. In his *Moving Together: Theorizing and Making Contemporary Dance*, he for instance writes that "*'Dance in general' re-articulates dance's medium* [...] *through a consistently symmetrical, non-hierarchical handling of the motion potentials of the human body and those of non-human materialities*" (2015, 230; emphasis in original).

This symmetrical perspective is different from the "situated perspective" that structures Ihde's postphenomenological framework on the relation between humans and technologies. Ihde outlines how the situatedness of his perspective reflects the heritage of phenomenological thinking: "in this tradition," Ihde argues, "to be situated entails that the knower is always embodied, located, is a body, and this must be accounted for in any analysis of knowledge" (2002, 68). Postphenomenology, in other words, offers a methodology of phenomenologically looking at technologies, in which the embodied and sensorial dimension of *experiencing* technology is the entrance point of the analysis.[200] For that reason, this framework is useful to describe human-technology interactions in pieces such those of Linehan and Fritz, where the human user is still clearly in charge of manipulating the machine, even though the scope of this manipulation is constrained by the materiality of the machine. Although the particular theoretical discussion transcends the scope of this dissertation, this chapter sought to further demonstrate how postphenomenology offers a particularly instructive framework on kinetic textuality. Its perspective on the mutual interactions between technology and embodiment shows that kinetic textuality does not necessarily participate in the move away from the paradigm of bodily movement in dance. It rather encourages us to trace how corporeality finds another medium through which to be choreographed, as I will further explore in the next chapter.

200 For a more detailed exploration of the difference between Bruno Latour's ANT theory (which informs Laermans' framework) and Ihde's postphenomenological framework, see Ihde 2002, 67–87.

CHAPTER FIVE
Kinetic Textuality and Relationality

Introduction

From a phenomenological point of view, there is no such thing as "the" artwork, there are only encounters with art. Merleau-Ponty describes the shape of this encounter by comparing the perception of a sentence and the perception of a painting: "I understand it [...] because it finds in me the system of resonators that it needs" ([1969] 1973, 59-60). The performances discussed so far have all been solos, which implies that the potential "resonance" provoked by kinetic textuality was mainly received by the audience. As we have seen, the presence of the audience was in some cases not always as explicitly acknowledged as in others. I have already outlined how the relationship between audience and performer that unfolds through kinetic textuality differs from the more commentary-oriented rhetoric that often predominates in talking dances, or the direct address rhetoric of theatrical monologues. To demonstrate this difference, I have focused on strategies that emphasize the text's writtenness, trigger kinesthetic responses, activate the imagination, or theatricalize the presented textuality. However, the relationality that kinetic textuality establishes is not limited to the interaction between audience and performer; it can also emerge between different performers on stage.

In this final chapter, I want to discuss in more detail the structure of relationality, by focusing on two performances in which the relational structure emerging from kinetic textuality also unfolds between the performers themselves: Abke Haring's *Platina* (2018) and Alma Söderberg's *Entangled Phrases* (2019). Taken together, these two performances suggest that structures of relationality are characterized by the same paradox that also haunts Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological endeavors, i.e. the attempt to transcend one's own individual embodied perspective while stumbling upon the impossibility of stepping into the position of someone else. However, Haring and Söderberg's works demonstrate that this impossibility does not preclude an attempt to overcome it. At the same time, their performances show that the attempt to achieve connection is more important than

the actual achievement of it. In these attempts, I will argue, we can trace a structure of relationality which is similar to the relationality that unfolds between kinetic textuality and its audience.

By focusing on relationality, this chapter ties in with a broader interest in relationality in performing arts scholarship. In her introduction to *Choreographing Relations: Practical Philosophy and Contemporary Choreography*, Petra Sabisch, for instance, argues that the connection between the choreography and its audience is based on "an interplay of relations," such as "relations to objects, to music, to bodies, relations between bodies, relations of visibility, relations between forces, relations of movement and rest, etc." (2011, 7). In a similar manner, and in a way that clearly testifies to the influence of Deleuze on his thinking about dance, Rudi Laermans places the spectator in the midst of the choreographic construction: "the implied virtuality is not just a transcendental condition of possibility [...]. The observer situates the virtual existence of other movements or poses in the dancers' bodily multiplicity, their presumed ability to move or to be moved differently" (2015, 183). In Laura Cull's discourse on Performance Philosophy (to which I have also referred in the Introduction of this dissertation, pgs. 32-33), the audience's encounter with the work plays a key role as well. Cull has theorized this encounter as a "move away from the application of the theoretical models we already possess and towards the perspective of an embodied encounter with the resistant materiality of performance's thinking," and describes this form of thinking as an "embodied-thinking, participatory-thinking, or durational-thinking" (2012, 25). The relationality staged in the work of Haring and Söderberg will offer an insightful cue, enabling us to better grasp the structure of this "embodied encounter" and the relationality that unfolds between kinetic textuality and its audience. Consequently, the focus on relationality in this chapter will allow me to offer some final reflections on the notion of kinesthesia, which I have defined in the first chapter as a pivotal aspect of kinetic textuality (pgs. 64-68) and which has provided an insightful perspective throughout the discussions of the different performances.[201]

To place the choreographic interest in relationality in its historical context, the work of Pina Bausch provides a crucial point of reference. The strategies Bausch adopted in her choreographies to address her audience will help us to see more clearly the strategies of

201 This specific relational structure marks not only Haring's and Söderberg's work, but also—remarkably enough—the solo performances included in the corpus of this dissertation. Because of the strategies they use to activate a kinesthetic response, the pieces studied so far include relationality as a key aspect of their performances. This comes close to what Rebecca Schneider identifies in "much late-century 'solo' performance work," which in her view often "appears as a critique of singularity – as if to show up the cracks in the face paint we call unitary subjectivity" (2005, 36). In a similar vein, the pieces discussed in this dissertation invite us to "listen for other voices in seeming 'solo' work" (32). In some performances, this invitation surfaces quite explicitly. At the beginning of *new skin*, for example, Hannah De Meyer enumerates a list of different people who contributed to the piece (the costume designer, the lighting designer, but also friends, family, and her favorite authors). In Bryana Fritz's *Submission Submission*, a similar reference to the (invisible) presence of other bodies is made.

kinetic textuality to establish a potential connection with the spectator. Moreover, in the performances themselves, relational structures between men and women are often the narrative focus of Bausch's pieces, and it has been argued that an important undercurrent of Bausch's work is the attempt to portray bourgeois society and explore social and gender roles (Fernandes 2000, 38). According to Susan Kozel, "Pina Bausch explores the essence of the human condition, particularly as it unfolds through the relations between men and women in social contexts" ([1993] 2013, 301). Most of the time, Bausch's choreographies present relations between performers or characters in a rather conflictual manner, which might explain why Ramsay Burt uses the phrase "relationless relations" (2006, 162) to refer to her work. Despite the discontinuity between the grotesque quality of Bausch's dances, with their large casts, and this corpus of pieces, with an overtly minimalist aesthetic, her work is a key historical reference for the contemporary use of kinetic textuality. In fact, as I have pointed out in the Introduction (pgs. 25 and following), because of her more theatrical way of using text, Bausch occupies a unique position in the landscape of talking dancers. As Luk Van den Dries and Timmy De Laet put it, "one of the most remarkable reformations Pina Bausch has introduced in dance is precisely that she wanted her performers to use their voice as they had never done before in the entire history of dance" (2021, 22). Burt, on the other hand, connects Bausch's use of spoken words with her impulse to "abandon conventional expectations and develop new structures of perception" (2006, 4). Her innovative experiments on the use of speech in dance are often geared explicitly to the spectator and provide the artistic example par excellence of dance's rapprochement to the theater.[202] Although steeped in a very different artistic and socio-political context, we will see that *Platina* and *Entangled Phrases* each bear some striking similarities to Bausch's work. In the works of all three artists, the formal strategies of repetition and the use of speech in dance are integrated into a dramaturgy that portrays a relational structure between different performers.[203]

By comparing some key choreographic mechanisms that are often identified in her work with the performances of Haring and Söderberg, I will demonstrate how the relational structures foregrounded in pieces by the latter two artists (both amongst performers and between performance and audience) are actually rooted in the relationship between text

202 The strategies she uses to deliberately not confirm to certain expectations or to explore the act of perception are an often-recurring element in discussions on Bausch's work (e.g., Birringer 1991, 136; Servos 1998, 43; Fernandes 2000, 16, 33–34; Burt 2006, 180; Van den Dries and De Laet 2021, 21). Another important characteristic of Bausch's artistic production is her use of repetition, fragmentation, and montage (Birringer 1991, 136; Kozel 1997, 103; Servos 1998, 38; Van Den Dries and De Laet 2021, 20; Confino [1988] 2013).

203 In my discussion of Bausch, I will mainly engage with the critical discourse surrounding her work. However, having seen both video recordings of many of Bausch's pieces as well as performances of *Le Sacre du Printemps* (1975), *Blaubart* (1977), *Café Muller* (1978), and *1980 – Ein Stück von Pina Bausch* (1980) at DE SINGEL in Antwerp, the comparison is also rooted in my own experience and interpretations of her work.

and performance that structures their use of kinetic textuality. The discourse on postdramatic theater in particular will serve as the theoretical background to both my historical comparison and my discussion of the contemporary works. Because *Platina* and *Entangled Phrases* adopt strategies that are most similar to those foregrounded in Hans-Thies Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theater*, these two performances are best suited to staging a dialogue between kinetic textuality and one of the most elaborate and widely referenced accounts of the shifted status of textuality in the performing arts. As we will see, Lehmann's terminology offers an insightful starting point to unravel the shifted status of representation in *Platina* and the strategies of chorality and musicality in *Entangled Phrases*. Nonetheless, while Lehmann rather generally outlines how, in postdramatic theater, "the configuration of the elements text and body [...] is rich in tension" (2006, 110), I have argued throughout this dissertation that the configuration between text and body in kinetic textuality is based on a hyper-dialectical intertwinement. As we will see, this hyper-dialectical perspective entails a different understanding of language from that underlying Lehmann's account.

To capture the structure of this intertwinement between text and body in *Platina* and *Entangled Phrases*, I will refer to the work of Sara Ahmed and Roland Barthes. As the recourse to Ahmed and Barthes's frameworks allows me to demonstrate, both pieces portray a relationship between text and body that marks a crucial distinction with the more conflictual way in which Lehmann theorized postdramatic theater. Throughout these two readings, it will become clear that Ahmed and Barthes, for reasons similar to Merleau-Ponty, can operate as key *compagnons de route* to unravel the hyper-dialectical relationship between text and body in kinetic textuality. While I have already referred to Merleau-Ponty's language theory to capture the same hyper-dialectical intertwinement in Chapter One (pgs. 58 and following), Ahmed and Barthes provide a more specific insight into the relation between text and body, from the perspective of, respectively, emotions and vocal soundscapes. Their observations about these aspects will also allow me to unravel the structure of this hyper-dialectical interplay against the background of the relationality unfolding amongst performers, which, as I will demonstrate, in turn determines the relation between performance and audience. Merleau-Ponty's reflections on relationality, finally, will enable me to more specifically focus in on the structure of relationality in both performances, and will help to demonstrate how that structure can be ascribed to the way in which text and body interact. In the discussion of the use of kinetic textuality in *Platina* and *Entangled Phrases*, this chapter will further elaborate on some of the arguments I have been constructing in the previous part of the dissertation. As in Chapter Three, where I explored how kinetic textuality is composed in such a way that it conforms to choreographic structures by looking at its composition on the page, I will now also trace how words' capacity to

operate as choreographic material is activated in *Entangled Phrases*; I do so, however, by focusing on the vocal and physical aspect of the act of delivering a poem. My discussion of *Platina*, on the other hand, ties in with some of the arguments developed in Chapter Four, where I drew attention to the theatrical impulse governing kinetic textuality. In the current chapter, I will concentrate on one specific form of this theatrical impulse, i.e. the dramatic structure of a dialogue between two characters. It will enable me to further outline how kinetic textuality as an artistic strategy corporeally draws the spectator into the performance, this time into the fictional universe that is represented by means of the dramatic dialogue.

Platina: the unbearable conversation

Platina, performed by Abke Haring and Koen Van Kaam, is the first performance that will help me to delve a bit deeper into the text-body interplay in kinetic textuality, against the backdrop of the notion of relationality. Haring is an actress, writer, and director of mainly text-based theater pieces. She studied at the former Herman Teirlinck Institute in Antwerp and was associated with Toneelhuis between 2004 and 2018.[204] *Platina* was the last piece she created for Toneelhuis. Both her pieces and her acting style have been praised for their meticulous and unique strong emotionality that arises from minimalistic formal choices. Her distinctive way of using text is often described by referring to her emphasis on physicality and the poignant images and atmospheres that characterize her pieces. The term "trip theater" also popped up in reviews of her work, to capture the mesmerizing effect of her performances (e.g., Hillaert 2010; Lambrechts 2014). Of all the pieces selected for this dissertation, *Platina* probably contains the most strongly articulated dramatic impulse: the piece tells the story of a husband and a wife who are trying to talk to each other and who, in so doing, experience difficulties creating a connection with one another through conversation. *Platina* opens with a long silence that lasts several minutes. Van Kaam and Haring are standing still, in a dimmed but warm yellow light, facing the audience, with a table in between them. Their facial expressions and concentrated movements make it clear that this is a fraught silence, announcing an uncomfortable conversation. After a couple of minutes, Van Kaam sits down on a chair that is positioned next to the table, still facing the audience. Another couple of minutes later, Haring walks towards the back of the table and positions herself next to Van Kaam. They continue to remain silent for a while. Finally, Haring starts talking: "erg lekkere kroepoek, wat sambal erbij." Van Kaam

204 During that time, Haring created, amongst other things, the monologues *Unisono* (2015) and *Hoop* (2006), and the dialogue *Flou* (2011), of which the texts, like *Platina*, were published afterwards by Bebequin (Antwerp) as playtexts. In all four pieces, topics such as loneliness, emptiness, and a complex relation to others return as central narrative elements.

answers: “beetje rijst, heerlijk hoe dat samengaat, de smaak van rijst en kroepoek, een beetje sambal” (Haring 2018, 7).[205] They keep on talking about their food, about the groceries, Van Kaam asks Haring who she wants to call—“wat mensen, vrienden, familie, gewoon, buren, kennissen, die het weten”—and then, we understand where the tediousness of their conversation comes from. Van Kaam responds: “dat ik doodga?” (8-9).[206]

In the printed version of *Platina*, the piece is divided into five different sections, which are labelled as “pogingen”—attempts, signaling the main dramatic action through which this piece unfolds: an endeavor of two people trying to talk to each other about the lingering death of the husband or about how much they mean to each other. In “attempt 1,” they mainly talk about food, groceries, crossword puzzles, the neighbors, or the interior of their home. Several parts of the dialogue return throughout the sections, such as “lekkere kroepoek,” (7, 10, 12, 13) “in amerika noemen ze dat een bun / wat? / dat broodje bij de hamburger, in amerika noemen ze dat een bun / de lichtinval is mooi hier het toont goed het reliëf van het behang, of hoe heet dat,” (10, 16) or “je ziet er goed uit” (11, 18).[207] These returning phrases suggest the repetitiveness and endlessness of the conversation and emphasize the fact that they are talking in circles around something they struggle to address. Although the conversation itself is quite mundane, the language is very carefully stylistically composed. Evelyne Coussens describes the meticulous composition of the performance as follows: “perhaps it sounds as if the scene is pathetic but it is minimal, just as everything in this production is flawless: the machine droning [...]; the side-lighting spotlight that turns Haring and Van Kaam into figures from a Vermeer painting, emerging from the darkness and disappearing back into it as well; the subtle and sublime choreography of the bodies” (2018; my translation).[208] The precision with which this piece is composed also characterizes the publication of the text, where the dynamic of hesitation and despair that dominates the conversation is subtly echoed in the typography and the line structure:

205 Translations: “very nice prawn crackers, some sambal with them,” and “some rice, wonderful how that goes together, the taste of rice and crackers, a little sambal.”
206 Translations: “some people, friends, family, just, neighbors, acquaintances, who know,” and “that I am dying?”.
207 Translations: “nice prawn crackers,” “in America they call that a bun / what? / that bread roll with the hamburger, in America they call that a bun / the light is beautiful here it shows nicely the relief of the wallpaper, or whatever it’s called,” and “you look great.”
208 Original Dutch version: “misschien klinkt het alsof de scène pathetisch is maar ze is minimaal, zoals alles in deze productie loepzuiver is: het machinale gedreun [...]; de zijdelings oplichtende spot die van Haring en Van Kaam figuren maakt uit een schilderij van Vermeer, opdoemend uit het duister en er ook weer in verdwijnend; de subtiele en sublieme choreografie van de lichamen.”

al
jaar
na
jaar
en ik wil naar je toe
maar ik moet ook nog
en ik moet ook nog
en ik weet niet
en ik
verlies
de
moed
de hoop
en ook
de kracht van mijn hart
stocht
wordt als een sticker in de zon valer
en valer
en straks is alleen de rand nog over
die je niet goed krijgt weggepulkt
want hartstocht, toch zeker als idee,
is krachtiger dan je denkt

fragment from *Platina* (Haring 2019, 26)[209]

209 Translation: "already
year
after
year
and I want to go to you
But I still have to
and I have to
and I don't know
and I
lose
the
courage
hope
and also
the power of my passion
is fading like a sticker in the sun, fainter
and fainter
and soon only the edge is left
that you can't quite get rid of
because passion, surely as an idea,
is more powerful than you think."

The enjambments in print resonate with the faltering and reluctant movements that structure the embodiment of this text on stage. The delays and white spaces generated by these enjambments reproduce, in turn, the long silences that reappear frequently during the performance.

Throughout the first attempt—which covers roughly half of the performance—Haring performs several peculiar movements that seem choreographed. Positioned behind the table, with her arms sometimes on the table and her back bent, she is shaking her head, or moving her arms and legs, yet she largely remains in the same place. These movements evoke a feeling of restlessness that Haring experiences from having this seemingly banal conversation. The more this "attempt" progresses, the more intense Haring's movements become. For instance, when they talk for the second time about how Van Kaam found his old watch, Haring suddenly places one foot on the table next to her arms and keeps moving restlessly with her head and hands. These bodily movements suggest that, even though the conversation is banal, about everyday topics, and carried on in a casual manner, it triggers strong emotions. As Jan Dertaelen describes it in his review of the piece: "hollow phrases return again and again, like a mantra to conjure everything that churns and brews under the skin. While the man remains undisturbed, as if in lethargy, a physical protest manifests itself in the woman's body. She wriggles into the most uncomfortable positions, suffers physically from the compelling repetition of meaningless platitudes" (2018; my translation).[210] The difference in the physicality between the two performers represents the difference in how they relate emotionally to the situation. This couple's story is told through a combination of the stylistically purloined text, delivered in an emphatically physical way, and by the careful inclusion of recurring silences in the conversation.

Their story mainly evolves around the expected death of the husband and how this affects the relation between the husband and wife. In the second and fourth attempt, Haring and Van Kaam address the fact that it is difficult to have this conversation, through phrases like "(a) ik heb vaak iets gezegd, ik heb vaak geprobeerd iets te zeggen, maar je hebt het nooit begrepen, mijn poging" (Haring 2018, 24), or "(k) allemaal woorden, woorden, en terwijl we dit tegen elkaar zeggen, zie ik weer dingen gebeuren in je hoofd, wat weer zeer doet, en we zijn weer aanbeland bij nul" (20).[211] Between the third and fourth attempt, the soundtrack grows louder and louder, and Van Kaam and Haring perform the following

210 Original Dutch version: "holle frasen keren steeds opnieuw terug, als een mantra om alles wat onderhuids kolkt en broeit te bezweren. Terwijl de man onverstoord, als in lethargie blijft zitten, manifesteert zich in het lichaam van de vrouw een fysiek protest. Ze wringt zich in de meest ongemakkelijke houdingen, lijdt fysiek onder de dwingende herhaling van nietszeggende dooddoeners."

211 "(a)" and "(k)" refer to the names of the two actors playing the characters. Translations: "I often said something, I often tried to say something, but you never understood, my attempt," and "all words, words, and as we say this to each other, I see things happening again in your head, which again hurts, and we're back at square one."

repetitive movement sequence: they sit on their chairs, stand up, turn their heads towards each other, walk away from the chair, sit back on it again, turn their heads towards each other, and so on. The continuous repetition and variation of this sequence evokes a sense of despair and agitation and mirrors the compositional strategy that structured the dialogue in the first attempt. At the end of the fourth attempt, Van Kaam leaves his chair, and lies down on the floor. There is another long silence, before Haring begins the fifth attempt and starts talking again. In this final monologue, Haring talks in the past tense and announces that what remains of their relationship is regret. At the very end of the performance, Van Kaam stands up again, positions himself behind the table (where Haring stood during most of the performance), while Haring sits on Van Kaam's chair. They face the audience in silence. Van Kaam turns around and turns his back to the audience. Slowly, the lights fade.

The conversations between the two characters represent their struggles, yet the full complexity of their relationship is represented through the failure of their conversation, through the words that remain unsaid, through the interaction between the conversation itself and the movements, silence, and physicality of the two performers. Especially at the beginning of the performance, the characters' physicality reveals an intense emotional struggle going on behind the trivial conversation about groceries, the neighbors, and crossword puzzles. The restless movements, full of tension, and quirky and strained postures are a typical feature of Haring's explicitly physical style of acting.[212] For instance, when Haring very calmly says that "de lichtinval is mooi hier, het toont heel goed het reliëf van het behang" (Haring 2018, 16), the character's emotionality behind this conversation comes to the surface only because she moves her upper body back and forth, looks impatiently left and right, and bends back to the table.[213] Marijn Lems praised this in his review as follows: "this is the strength of Haring's work: by placing great emotions in a framework of enormous formal control, she manages to present the feeling all the more arrestingly" (2018; my translation).[214] At this point, it might seem as if my observations about Haring's *Platina* are reinforcing the dichotomous logic between text (providing the narrative content) and body (portraying the emotionality) that this dissertation sought to work against.

212 When Haring was asked in an interview about what "acting" is for her, she answered: "I think it is to speak as clearly as possible on a stage, literally and figuratively. Literally speaking as clearly as possible and knowing what you're saying. It's about having a connection with what you're saying. That it comes from somewhere where you 'sit.' You are your own instrument. What you say must come from a place that is you, what you are, not somewhere beside you or behind you. It is you" (Lambrechts 2014; my translation). (Original Dutch version: "volgens mij is het zo duidelijk mogelijk spreken op een toneel, letterlijk en figuurlijk. Letterlijk zo duidelijk mogelijk spreken én weten wat je zegt. Het gaat erom dat je een connectie hebt met wat je zegt. Dat het ergens vandaan komt waar jij 'zit'. Je bent je eigen instrument. Wat je zegt moet van een plek komen die jij bent, wat jij bent, niet ergens naast of achter je. Jij bent het.").

213 Translation: "the light is beautiful here, it shows off very well the relief of the wallpaper."

214 Original Dutch version: "dit is de kracht van Harings werk: door grote emoties in een kader van enorme formele beheersing te plaatsen weet ze het gevoel des te beklijvender te bespelen."

However, the piece actually reveals a more complex dynamic in how emotions are evoked: they come to the surface precisely through the interplay between text and body. In the first attempt, for instance, the feeling of pain is not just something that is "added" to the conversation, but instead the conversation is presented as the cause of the feelings of pain. Moreover, Haring's uncontrolled and jerky movements that convey this pain are directly triggered by the conversation itself, for they become more intense each time a recurrent phrase is repeated.

In their book *Sex, or the Unbearable* (2014), Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman unravel (quite tellingly, through a dialogue) how structures of intimacy and relationality inevitably produce an encounter with the unmistakable unavailability of the other. This offers a fruitful perspective on further disentangling this relationship between the dialogue evolving in *Platina* and the emotionality it (textually and physically) presents. Berlant and Edelman continue to refer to this confrontation with otherness as something "unbearable." The way in which they theorize relationality, and particularly conversation, as the site of an encounter with the unbearable, can shed an interesting light on Haring's piece.[215] Berlant and Edelman build their argument on Lydia Davis' story "Break it Down," which also tells of the relationship of a couple that is about to separate. Commenting on this story, they argue that "conversation […] marks the site of a potential encounter with the unbearable, with the otherness that permits no relation despite our best efforts to construct one" (Berlant and Edelman 2014, 98). Here, Berlant and Edelman propose a view on relationality in which conversation is not only positioned as that which fails to compensate for the distance between the self and the other, but also as the very place that confronts us with that impossibility. While this presents a quite gloomy perspective on relationality, they do acknowledge that "the impossibility that structures the encounter, however, doesn't make relation impossible" (114). In *Platina*, we see a similar dynamic at work: their dialogue and the unspoken emotions underlying it are presented as something unbearable. In that way, the unbearable feeling triggered by the prospect of the death of the husband is reproduced through the dialogue and the difficulty of connection that they experience through it. Even though their banal conversation on the one hand signifies the couple's struggle to talk about how the husband is dying, it also signifies their longing to continue talking and their persistence in the effort towards some form of emotional connection, despite the struggle that comes with it.

To further unravel how the emotions behind this relationality are portrayed through the interplay between words and bodies in this performance, we can turn to Sara Ahmed's *The*

215 Berlant and Edelman's approach combines psychoanalytical thinking with queer studies and affect theory. This resonates with Sara Ahmed's critical position, to which I will turn in the next paragraph.

Cultural Politics of Emotion, in which she scrutinizes how emotions can have an impact on the meaning of certain words and how they establish specific corporeal effects. Ahmed's theory on emotions is, like the work of Berlant and Edelman, highly indebted to psychoanalytical thinking.[216] However, we can also trace a phenomenological undercurrent in her approach. A central argument in Ahmed's theory is for instance that "emotions are relational: they involve (re)actions or relations of 'towardness' or 'awayness' in relation to such objects" (2014, 8). This, as she explains herself, can be considered as a phenomenological perspective: emotions are not studied as isolated elements, but are mainly approached in terms of the relations and reactions they produce with their environment. She explains how she borrows, from the phenomenological perspective on emotions, the understanding that emotions are inherently intentional, that they are directed or oriented towards something (6–7). "A phenomenological model of emotions," as she summarizes it, "explores how emotions are directed towards objects" (209).[217] A key assumption of Ahmed's view on emotions is that the embodied experience of emotions is always mediated by language, which offers a fruitful extension to Merleau-Ponty's language theory.[218] As we by now have seen many times, Merleau-Ponty insists on the fundamental chiasmatic mediation between language

216 Throughout her work, she builds upon psychoanalytical insights of Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Frantz Fanon, and Julia Kristeva to capture the circulation (or, "economy," as she also names it) of emotions such as grief, disgust, fear, or hate. (Like Ahmed, Fanon's thinking can also be situated at the intersection between phenomenology and psychoanalysis. For an insightful perspective on this, see, for instance. the edited volume *Fanon, Phenomenology, and Psychology* (Laubscher, Hook, and Desai 2022)). While Ahmed borrows frequently from these thinkers throughout her treatise, to capture the specific way in which an object of an emotion becomes incorporated into the psychic structure of the subject experiencing the emotion, she also insists on the difference between her take and the psychoanalytical perspective. "Where my approach involves a departure from psychoanalysis," Ahmed argues, "is in my refusal to identify this economy as a psychic one (although neither is it *not* a psychic one)" (2014, 45; original emphasis). In addition to the rich and complex view on subject-object relations in psychoanalytical theory on emotions, Ahmed also regards these emotions from the perspective of the very tangible political effect they produce on the meaning of words and their impact on bodies.

217 Ahmed's explicit reference to phenomenology is however limited to a few remarks, and mainly resurfaces in the overall perspective on the intentional, relational, and embodied view on emotions. However, the phenomenological line that informs her thinking comes more clearly to the surface in her book *Queer Phenomenology* (Ahmed 2006). In this book, she insightfully demonstrates how phenomenological approaches towards positionality, orientation, body, space, and movement can be used as important and complementary angles within feminism and critical race studies.

218 In fact, when Merleau-Ponty writes, in *The Visible and the Invisible*, about how the gaze of the other fundamentally impacts the structure of perception, we can clearly trace a parallel with Ahmed's thinking. Merleau-Ponty argues that "the intervention of the foreign spectator does not leave my relationship with the things untouched" ([1964] 1968, 58) and a couple of pages later, he describes "my being reduced to what is visible in my situation" as an "experience of shame" (61). In her chapter "Shame Before Others," Ahmed offers a crucial revision of this "inter-corporeality and sociality of shame experiences" (2014, 105) by placing it in the specific context of racism.

and body, as something that structures our perception and our being-in-the-world.[219] The different emotions studied by Ahmed are not presented in cognitive or rational terms only, but rather as experiential phenomena that are emphatically corporeal and discursive at the same time. Her focus on how words give rise to various kinds of emotional circuits, which have different effects on different bodies, bears witness to a similar hyper-dialectical interplay between text and body, foregrounded in my argument as a key characteristic of kinetic textuality (see Chapter One, pgs. 58 and following). The dynamic between language and embodiment at the heart of Ahmed's terminological framework therefore offers an instructive angle on how emotions are conveyed through kinetic textuality.

Ahmed's phenomenologically inspired study into how emotions operate through an interplay between textuality and corporeality is mainly focused on understanding the emotional mechanisms at work in sexism, racism, and queerphobia. Nevertheless, her insights also help to scrutinize the dramaturgical function of kinetic textuality in *Platina*. In her book, Ahmed reminds us that "emotions can work in practice by circulating through words and figures and by sticking to bodies" (2014, 217). For instance, in her assessment of the emotion of pain—often perceived as mainly a corporeal sensation—, Ahmed insists that "the very words we then use to tell the story of our pain also work to reshape our bodies, creating new impressions" (25). This circulatory view on how emotions are produced through an interplay between words and bodies returns in how she approaches fear: "it does not reside positively in a particular object or sign. It is this lack of residence that allows fear to slide across signs and between bodies. This sliding becomes stuck only temporarily, in the very attachment of a sign to a body, an attachment that is taken on by the body, encircling it with a fear that becomes its own" (64). Ahmed furthermore argues that "fear involves shrinking the body; *it restricts the body's mobility precisely insofar as it seems to prepare the body for flight*" (69; original emphasis). She also explains that fear revolves around a specific temporal structure: "fear involves an *anticipation* of hurt or injury. Fear projects us from the present into a future. But the feeling of fear presses us into that future as an intense bodily experience in the present" (65; original emphasis). In *Platina*, we can recognize a similar

219 The fact that the psychoanalytical paradigm lends itself to being combined with a phenomenological perspective is also seen in Merleau-Ponty's own work. A more detailed view lies far beyond the scope of this dissertation, but in the context of the theoretical thread I am tracing, I think it is important to mention that, like Barthes and Ahmed, Merleau-Ponty's work has also partly been influenced by psychoanalytical thinking (e.g., Phillips 1996; Slatman 2000; Stawarska 2008; Csordas 2012). Beata Stawarska for example outlines how psychoanalysis and phenomenology function as "natural allies" in Merleau-Ponty's work, despite the often presumed radical distinction between them (2008, 58). Even though psychoanalysis informed Merleau-Ponty's thinking, Stawarska also detects a shift in the psychoanalytical undercurrent of Merleau-Ponty's thought. Towards *The Visible and the Invisible*, it became more and more clear that "to maintain the point of view of consciousness, even if redefined in terms of perception, motility and sexuality, still runs the risk of conceiving the body and nature as objects surveyed by a subject" (67). For that reason, Stawarska considers this work "at least in part a creative response to the limitations of the Freudian notion of the unconscious" (68). (For a more elaborate overview of how Merleau-Ponty can be positioned in affect theory and theory on emotions, see Cataldi 2008).

circulating interplay between words and bodies, used to represent Haring's character's fear. Together with the words that rather indirectly refer to the expected death of the husband, her shivering, quirky, and unusual movements capture the specific temporality that is at work behind the emotion of fear: together, they evoke how the death of the husband is to some extent already being experienced in the present.[220]

As well as highlighting the physical impact of the emotion by inserting various movement sequences into the dialogue, the recurrent use of repetition is another strategy used in the piece to capture the emotional interior of the characters. As mentioned, certain parts of the dialogue return throughout the performance, and with each repetition, the feelings of anticipated grief, powerlessness, despair, regret, or anguish seem to grow more and more intense. We can trace this accumulated emotional value through the progression of Haring's physical movements: for instance, the more the phrase "lekkere kroepoek" is repeated, the more it triggers Haring to move uneasily, nervously, and unnaturally. Repetition also plays a central role in Ahmed's understanding of how words can "acquire" an emotional value. She explains that the more a word is uttered in the same context, the more the emotions with which the word is uttered become intrinsic to the word (Ahmed 2014, 12, 91–93).[221] The way in which, according to Ahmed, words, through repetition, require an emotional tension that used to be less present in the words resonates with how Julia Jarcho approaches the emotional effect of repetition in the playwrighting of Suzan-Lori Parks: "repetition achieves 'accumulated weight'" (2017, 155). While the dramaturgical context of Parks' plays differs considerably from the context of *Platina*, Jarcho's observation offers an important addition to Ahmed's perspective, for it provides an insight into the effect of this strategy from the perspective of a spectator. As well as this gesture of drawing us into the emotionality communicated by the piece, Jarcho argues, repetition also reminds us of the writtenness of the text itself. As she summarizes it, repetition "operate[s] *both* as an invitation to emotional sympathy *and* as a sign of aesthetic structure" (146). In *Platina*, the repetition provokes the same two-fold effect that Jarcho describes: even though the repetition of certain phrases works to reinforce the emotional quality communicated by (and through) the text, it also highlights the compositionality of the text (as opposed to

220 We can also trace in Ahmed's work a parallel with how dialogue is approached in Berlant and Edelman's writings—as the space where emotion expresses itself. Noting that "the ungraspability of my own pain is brought to the surface by the ungraspability of the pain of others" (2014, 31), she maintains that "the impossibility of 'fellow feeling' is itself the confirmation of injury" (39).

221 As Ahmed explains in the context of language that functions as an insult, "we could argue signs become sticky through repetition; if a word is used in a certain way, again and again, then that 'use' becomes intrinsic; it becomes a form of signing. It is hard then to hear words like 'Pakis' without hearing that word as insulting. The resistance to the word acquiring new meaning is not about the referent; rather the resistance is an effect of this history of repetition of the word 'Paki'. This repetition has a binding effect; the word works to generate others as 'Paki'; it has particular effects on others who recognize themselves as the object of the address. The 'binding' effect of the word is also a 'blockage': it stops the word moving or acquiring new value. The sign is a 'sticky sign' as an effect of a history of articulation, which allow the sign to accumulate value" (2014, 91-92).

"natural speech"). The strategies that are used to represent a specific relational structure in *Platina* thus also contribute to the form taken by the relationality between audience and performer in this piece. From this perspective, we can argue that a kinesthetic engagement with the piece occurs not despite, but *because of* the unmistakable "artificiality" of the piece, manifesting itself both in the physical movements as well as in the carefully composed text.

The emphatically corporeal way of using language that characterizes *Platina*, and the strong focus on choreographed movements as a strategy to deliver the text, reveals a parallel between Haring's performance and the way in which Lehmann theorized postdramatic theater. To further study the parallels between kinetic textuality and postdrama that resurface here, we can turn to the work of Pina Bausch. Because of her use of montage, fragmentation, repetition, and spoken text in her choreography, Bausch's work is referenced as a key example in Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006, 23). According to Lehmann, Tanztheater is "an important variant of postdramatic theatre"; he describes it as "the persistent boom of a dance theatre carried by rhythm, music and erotic physicality but interspersed with the semantics of spoken theatre" (96).[222] As a key precursor of the selected contemporary corpus, Bausch's work will, in comparison with *Platina*, provide further insight into the kinesthetic dimension of how mimesis functions in kinetic textuality. Together, both the work of Bausch and Haring invite us to investigate a different take on mimesis from that of Lehmann.

The most striking parallel between Bausch's work and *Platina* is the way in which they both intriguingly intermingle spoken text with choreographic movements, both serving an impulse of representation. As Barbara Confino writes about Bausch's Tanztheater, "the stress is on movement. And yet, her impulse is dramatic: it's just that the drama is broken into fragments." ([1988] 2013, 47). The exact same description could be applied to *Platina*, which is also marked by a generic hybridity between dance and theater and the compositional strategies of fragmentation and montage. The dramatic story in *Platina* is presented through small fragments rather than elaborate scenes and the dialogue does not always follow a linear trajectory, for it is mainly structured through an arrangement of repetition and revision. Together with the strong emphasis on movement, silence, and rhythmicity, these strategies give *Platina* a choreographic aesthetic. In many accounts of Bausch's work, repetition—in both movement and speech—is foregrounded as one of its predominant formal strategies (Birringer 1991, 138; Fernandes 2000). As Ciane Fernandes puts it, via the repetition of rather simple movements, "daily gestures become abstract

222 The affinity between Bausch's idiosyncratic choreographic work and the formal and dramaturgical strategies often associated with postdramatic theater often also returns in discussions about her work (Weir 2018; Berger 2019; Van den Dries and De Laet 2021).

movements" (2000, 8). Deborah Jowitt refers to Bausch's use of repetition in *Café Muller* as a repetition with no conclusion ([1984] 2013, 139). According to Royd Climenhaga, repetition is also used in Bausch's work to transform quite banal or peaceful scenes into more problematic situations that gradually acquire a more dysfunctional overtone. He explains that "repetition becomes a habitual pattern and a faster tempo moves a gentle image to a violent one" (2009, 122). As the discussion of how emotions are represented in *Platina* already indicated, repetition also functions as a key strategy in *Platina*, to transform a seemingly banal conversation into an emotionally intense endeavor. Moreover, the specific phrases that reviewers of respectively Bausch and Haring have used to comment on their work point to other important similarities between them. Dertaelen explains that, in *Platina*, "everything is stuck in the grip of a compelling repetition" and that "Abke Haring stages two lonely souls talking side by side in a constant stream" (2018; my translation).[223] Using a comparable terminology, Jowitt says about Bausch's *Blaubart* that "the gestures become more brutal with every repetition" and that the piece represents "the isolation of human beings from one another" ([1984] 2013, 137).

As in *Platina*, these formal strategies are used to represent a relationality between different performers, which is in Bausch's case often governed by raw emotions, for instance, in the disturbing and frightening relationalities that are produced in *Blaubart – Beim Anhören einer Tonbandaufnahme von Bela Bartoks "Herzog Blaubarts Burg"* (1977) or in *Café Muller* (1978). In the work of both Haring and Bausch, relations between people are presented in all their complexity: ranging from inclination to connection, drawing out their stifling and almost suffocating aspects. Most important in the context of the current chapter, to emotionally include the audience in this portrayed relationality, both artists rely on mimetic strategies that highlight its kinesthetic dimension. In *Platina*, as we have seen, the combination of movement, silence, and text tangibly captures the difficulty of addressing or attuning the emotions experienced by the characters in light of the impending death of the husband. For the spectator, listening to the strongly emotionally loaded words as well as the silences, and watching the stifling movements, can provoke a quite intense physical sensation. This physical sensation is generated by the careful rhythmic composition of the text as well as by the specific way in which the text is embodied: the physical movements and the oscillation between silence and trance-like music all help to establish this kinesthetic connection with the fictional situation that is represented. As in the mimetic strategies that I foregrounded in *new skin* (see Chapter One, pgs. 66-68),

223 Original Dutch version: "alles staat muurvast in de greep van een ijzeren herhaling" en "in *Platina* laat Abke Haring twee eenzame zielen in een constante naast elkaar praten."

here too kinetic textuality gives rise to a form of mimesis that establishes an emphatically corporeal relational structure between audience and performance.[224]

In Bausch's work as well, a similar kinesthetic use of mimesis has often been recognized. In his chapter "Pina Bausch: Dance and Emancipation," Norbert Servos for instance seems to refer to a kinesthetic dimension in the way in which mimesis operates in her choreographies, by linking the mimetic gesture of her work to the sensorial experience it triggers: "dance theatre, with all its physical, *mimetic*, and gestural possibilities, again sets theatre in motion as a *communication of the senses*" (1998, 38; emphasis added). Climenhaga similarly understands Bausch's use of representation in terms of the audience appeal it generates, when he writes that "this, ultimately, is the goal of Bausch's approach to representation, to demand of the audience an inner search for a way to approach the images she unearths" (2009, 65). Similarly to in *Platina*, the kinesthetic effect of mimesis is not established despite, but rather because of the montage-like compositional structure of the work and the repetition of certain movement sequences or words, that create a clearly composed and fragmented narrative.

The kinesthetic dimension of mimesis that can be identified in Bausch and Haring's work marks a crucial distinction from Lehmann's theories on mimesis in his account of postdramatic theater. To begin with, the work of both artists draws attention to one of the central paradoxes of postdramatic theater, namely, that "any move beyond the representational entails a deep engagement with representation itself" (Woolf 2013, 41). Throughout his treatise, it becomes clear that Lehmann does not conceptualize mimesis in terms of its potential to draw a kinesthetic connection: he explains how postdramatic theater is "marked by an *overcoming* of the principles of mimesis and fiction" (2006, 99).[225] He argues that "wholeness, illusion and world representation are inherent in the model 'drama'; […] Dramatic theatre ends when these elements are no longer the regulating principle but merely one possible variant of theatrical art" (22). While it is important to remember that "the adjective 'postdramatic' […] does not mean […] an abstract negation and mere

224 In our interview, Haring made it clear that she thinks of her practice in terms that are similar to a guided meditation, that is, to bring the audience to a specific state of mind. She clarified that "in guided meditation, you also enter into states. You can certainly compare that to this. It's about a rhythm and about a volume. Not that I do that very consciously, but of course I've been meditating, so that's just in me. It's about a space where you can go. It's about how do I get people to a place in their heart, in their soul, in their head, where they wouldn't necessarily come on their own. Where can I touch them in a safe way?" (Abke Haring, pers. interview; my translation). (Original Dutch version: "bij een geleide meditatie kom je ook in toestanden terecht. Dat kan je hier zeker mee vergelijken. Het gaat over een ritme en over een volume. Niet dat ik dat heel bewust doe, maar ik heb natuurlijk ook al gemediteerd, dus dat zit gewoon in mij. Het gaat over een ruimte waar je heen kan. Het gaat over hoe krijg ik mensen op een plek in hun hart, in hun ziel, in hun hoofd, waar ze niet per se alleen zouden komen. Waar kan ik ze raken op een veilige manier?").

225 In the discussion on "drama" that precedes his account of postdramatic theater, Lehmann does refer to Adorno's notion of mimesis, which he paraphrases as "a presymbolic, affective 'becoming-like-something'" which differs from "mimesis in the narrow sense of imitation" (2006, 38). Nevertheless, throughout the rest of his text, the latter sense of mimesis prevails when he defines postdramatic theater as something that gestures beyond mimesis-as-imitation.

looking away from the tradition of drama" (27), Lehmann does insist that "through the structurally changed quality of the performance text," postdramatic theater "becomes more presence than representation, more shared than communicated experience, more process than product, more manifestation than signification, more energetic impulse than information" (85). Despite the dialectical relationship between drama and postdrama that Lehmann foregrounds, the notion of mimesis (which in his work seemingly functions as a synonym for "merely" representation) is nevertheless introduced as the opposite of physical sensation or immersion. This is an important difference from *Platina*, where "energetic impulses" can instead be activated through mimesis, and where the illusion of the fictionality makes it so emotionally charged and physically intense to watch. In her use of mimesis and in the kinesthetic effect it generates, *Platina* thus blurs the distinction drawn by Lehmann between the creation of a fictitious illusion and the evocation of strong physical and energetic impulses.

Although Haring and Bausch both foreground the kinesthetic dimension of mimesis, the status of the characters resulting from this strategy also highlights a crucial difference between the work of the two artists, which mainly has to do with how developed their characters are.[226] Whereas Bausch tends to present rather flat or emblematic characters, *Platina*'s characters are much more nuanced and complex. This difference becomes clear when considering how the specific status of Bausch's characters is captured in discussions of her work. According to Luk Van den Dries and Timmy De Laet, for instance, the use of speech in Bausch's work is linked to what Elinor Fuchs described as the "death of the character." They explain how Bausch's pieces are marked by a tendency to "destabiliz[e] the largely tacit assumption that bringing a character to life is one of the constitutive traits that defines theatre as theatre" (2021, 24). This resonates with Burt's perspective on Bausch's solo *Danzon* (1995), which in his view "showed no verifiable evidence of any psychological interiority" (2006, 180). A similar argument returns in Frédéric Pouillaude's observations on Bausch's Tanztheater. Even though, in Bausch's work, "dance behaves like theater" (2017, 132), it does so "only by subversion and diversion," insofar as principles of collage ensure her works "avoid the unity and continuity associated with plot" (133). As a result, according to Pouillaude, the performing bodies do not represent characters in the psychological sense:

> To some extent, character is always surpassed or bypassed, either because the focus is on the most general and codified of social types […] or because the personae are developed at the level of a quasi-prelinguistic and

226 Another difference between the two is that the so-called feeling of "voyeurism" that Bausch's pieces evoke (e.g., Croce [1984] 2013, 193; Goldberg [1984] 2013, 266; Kozel [1993] 2013, 305) is less present as a strategy in *Platina*.

> prepsychological individuation, being riven with gestural affects that cannot be related back to the explicit, solid identity of a self. (133)

In Haring's work, by contrast, the same strategies—repetition, kinesthetic mimesis, and the intermingling of a choreographic and dramatic aesthetic—seem to establish the opposite effect. Drawing on Ahmed, I have shown how the performers' physicality and the recurring words they utter work together to represent the emotional interiority of the characters and to show emotions that the characters experience in a very nuanced, tangible, and captivating way. Even though the plot is also assembled in a fragmentary structure, this does not mean that the characters are presented as "social types" with no complex psychological interiority.

The specific way in which mimesis functions in kinetic textuality, and in Haring's work in particular, further urges us to conceptualize the relationship between text and performance in terms other than those adopted by Lehmann, who mainly considers the status of text in postdramatic performance in terms of the tension that is evoked between the two poles. He approaches postdramatic theater as an affirmation of "the not so new insight that there is never a harmonious relationship but rather a perpetual conflict between text and scene" (2006, 145). This conflict between text and scene probably finds its clearest expression in the conflict between text and body. In fact, physical presence is often positioned as the opposite of textual or discursive signification in *Postdramatic Theatre*. Lehmann claims that "the aura of physical presence remains the point of theatre where the disappearance, the fading of all signification occurs," while the body marks a crucial site where this fading of signification takes place: "the body becomes the centre of attention, not as a carrier of meaning but in its physicality and gesticulation. The central theatrical sign, the actor's body, refuses to serve signification" (96). Underlying Lehmann's discussion is the notion that text functions as a "foreign body" in a postdramatic performance. He writes, for instance, that "the word does not belong to the speaker. It does not organically reside in his/her body but remains a *foreign body*" (147; emphasis added). This reference to the "foreign body"—"*Fremdkörper*" in German—points to a psychoanalytical understanding of language. He argues that in postdramatic theater, "out of the gaps of language emerges its feared adversary and double: stuttering, failure, accent, flawed pronunciation mark the conflict between body and word" (147). While the terminology here already suggests a psychoanalytical influence, Lehmann confirms this observation when he explicitly refers to Jacques Lacan as a way to understand the use of voice in postdramatic theater: "Lacan has advanced the thesis that the voice (just like the gaze) belongs to the fetishized objects of desire [...] The theatre presents the voice as the object of exposition, of an erotic perception" (147–8). Put differently, the somewhat conflictual relation between text and body

that resurfaces in Lehmann's account of postdramatic theater finds its theoretical backdrop in the psychoanalytical discourse on that relationship.[227]

As my reading of *Platina* through Ahmed's framework sought to indicate, the highly physically-oriented acting style of Haring, regardless of its parallels with postdramatic theater, does not line up with the conflictual relationship between text and body underlying Lehmann's psychoanalytically-informed approach. In *Platina*, the emphasis on physicality and the use of choreography work closely together with what the words communicate semantically: the emotional struggles of the characters are presented through the very interplay between the dialogue and the physical movements that it triggers. Moreover, Haring's "aura of physical presence" is not presented as something where "the disappearance, the fading of all signification occurs" (Lehmann 2006, 96), but rather strengthens and deepens the signification conveyed through the dialogue. While also acknowledging the complex dynamic taking place between words and bodies in the production of emotions, Ahmed focusses less on their dynamic as a conflict and rather looks at them from the perspective of their fundamental entanglement. Despite the similar influences of psychoanalysis on both Ahmed and Lehmann, Ahmed does not describe the relationship between language and bodies in terms of the gap foregrounded by Lehmann's psychoanalytically-informed view. Instead, Ahmed expresses a conception of language that continuously intersects with corporeality, which is similar to the Merleau-Pontian view on the hyper-dialectical relation between word and body. For that reason, her view on the relationship between text and body captures the way in which the physicality of the performers in *Platina* works in tandem with, and not—as the relationship is presented in Lehmann's account— against the semantic dimension of the words they speak.

Entangled Phrases: a repeated attempt to establish auditorial collectivity

The ways in which kinetic textuality is based on a text-performance relationship other than a postdramatic use of text, can be further explored by turning to *Entangled Phrases*. This piece is performed by Alma Söderberg, Anja Muller, and Angela Peris Alcantud. During the first thirty minutes of the piece, the three performers are seated next to each other on

227 This psychoanalytic perspective often returns, too, in the discourse on Bausch's work, where her artistic explorations are often interpreted in terms of the assumptions of this paradigm relating to language and body. Susan Kozel, for instance, refers to Luce Irigaray's notion of mimesis to explain how Bausch uses repetition as a means to draw attention to frictions and openings in the imposing structure that is repeated (1997, 102–3). Kozel's psychoanalytical reading of Bausch resonates with Fernandes's argument about the function of repetition in Bausch's work, which draws heavily on a Lacanian understanding of body and language (2000, 15–16, 22). For Kozel and Fernandes, the dancing body seeks to overcome the grip of language, which echoes Lehmann's portrayal of the relation between text and body in terms of a conflict. Another reading of Bausch's pieces linked to a psychoanalytical framework is Mark Franko's "Bausch and the Symptom" (Franko 2019a), in which he unravels how "hysteria" works as a choreographic structure in Bausch's *Le Sacre du Printemps*. Ramsay Burt's analysis of Bausch's *Danzon* makes use of the psychoanalytical notion of "melancholia" to capture the quality of movements in this piece.

three chairs alongside the right wall of the stage. The rest of the stage is empty, and the performers are gazing towards the left wall. After a brief moment of silence and utmost concentration, they start talking—or rather, they start producing sounds with words, turning them into music. Söderberg, who is sitting in the middle, initiates the soundscape: she places her two arms in front of her, moves them as if she is pulling a rope while saying "the time that, the time that, the time that, the time that…". Muller copies the movement and joins the sentence with something that sounds like: "needs that, needs that, needs that…". When Alcantud joins them, it has become almost impossible to discern what she and the other two performers are saying in this interplay between text, music, and movement. The text they are reciting is a poem that Söderberg wrote, yet because they use a different rhythm, pronounce different words simultaneously and combine various pitches, the poem as it appears on the page remains largely inaccessible during the performance. The printed and staged versions of the poem also differ from each other: for instance, while the poem itself starts with the phrase "the sound that needs that time to be," the first sentence that Söderberg recites in the performance is "the time that." We only encounter the full poem after the performance, when we receive it in a leaflet.[228] There are brief moments, however, when we can catch a glimpse of the poem, as when two of the three performers are reciting the same sentence, or when one of them pauses for a second. Suddenly, specific words (such as "institution," "problem," or "solution") can be distinguished within the at most times incomprehensible soundscape. These brief intervals remind the audience that Söderberg, Muller, and Alcantud are producing words and not mere sounds.

Despite these short moments of recognition, what mainly emerges through the recitation of the poem is a hypnotic, rhythmic, musical, and dynamic soundscape, in which the three separate voices collide in a heterogeneous, and multi-layered sound. As the performers almost never change their repeated sequence at the same time—and when one performer does break the repetition of her phrase and switches to different words, it almost goes unnoticed—modifications within this soundscape occur very subtly. Somewhere halfway through this first part of the performance, when the audience could gradually start to distinguish something that sounds like "re-a-lation, it's a re-lation, re-a-lations," the piece seems to make explicit what it wants to convey. Not only do their phrases become entangled (as the title suggests), but auditorily, the performers producing these phrases also become entangled, as it becomes difficult if not impossible to discern the different voices within the soundscape. Interestingly, the visual and the auditory dimensions of the dance piece seem to clash at this point: while the visual stimulus reminds the audience that they are watching three performers on stage, auditorily, the distinction between the three

228 As we have seen, a leaflet with the performance text was also handed out after the showings of *Black* (Edvardsen, 2011) and *Poems and Other Emergencies* (Chignell, 2020),

individuals seemingly dissolves. The piece exposes in a highly formal way how a voiced piece of text, in the form of "entangled phrases," auditorily generates an entanglement between individual bodies that renders the difference between collective and individual bodies ambiguous.

Not surprisingly, creating a soundscape together furnishes an intriguing strategy to explore relationality: as sound scholars have frequently emphasized—and as I briefly mentioned in Chapter One and Chapter Four (pgs. 73 and following, pgs. 175-177)—a crucial dimension of sound (and of listening to sound) is its ability to establish relational spaces.[229] Especially in this first part of the performance, we witness a continuous effort to synchronize the idiosyncrasy of the different voices and textual utterances into a collective soundscape. The sonorous structure of relationality presented in *Entangled Phrases* highlights how the attunement between three different voices requires a very careful and concentrated way of listening on the part of the performers. The concentration required to produce this soundscape, however, clearly does not prevent the joy of creating it. On the contrary, the relationality between the three performers is presented as a pleasurable one: quite often, the performers' body language and facial expressions reveal the enjoyment they are experiencing while composing this collective soundscape together. As Elke Huybrechts puts it in her review of the piece, "*Entangled Phrases* shows a community of three women who interact strongly by listening to each other and find their pleasure in doing so. [...] The choreography also has an intransigence precisely because of the pleasure of this absolute togetherness" (2019; my translation).[230] The performance makes it clear that this pleasurable being-together results from the activity of voicing a piece of text and from the sense of collectivity this produces.

In the second part of the piece, the performers gradually leave their seated position, and start to move all around the space, accompanied by an eerie soundscape that consists of noises made by the performers and electronic sounds created by Dechat "Hendrik" Lewillekens. Sometimes, the vocal noises that the performers produce are transformed into

229 Brandon LaBelle, for instance, who is "insisting on more than a representational semiotic," argues that "sound explicitly brings bodies together" (2010, xxiv). Needless to say, the capacity of sound to create a relational space is most explicit in studies on voice and speech: drawing on Jean-Luc Nancy, Adriana Cavarero contends that the "most naked function" of language is "the maintenance of a relation that communicates no other meaning than the relation itself" ([2003] 2005, 194-195). Ihde also argues that the act of listening evokes in the first place relationality: "when I listen to an other I hear him speaking. [...] My experiential listening stands in the near distance of language that is at one and the same time *the other speaking* in his voice*. I hear what he is saying*, and in this listening we are both presented with the penetrating presence of voiced language which is 'between' and 'in' both of us." (151; original emphasis). Christopher Wenn's phenomenological analysis of sound emphasizes a similar kind of relationality. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty, Wenn explains that "the phenomenological identification with the other that is listening and being listened to implies a being-with-ness that transcends the physical presence of an other" (2019, 267).

230 Original Dutch version: "*Entangled Phrases* toont een gemeenschap van drie vrouwen die sterk op elkaar inspelen door naar elkaar te luisteren en die daar hun plezier in vinden. [...] De choreografie heeft ook een onverzettelijkheid, precies door het plezier van dit absolute samen-zijn."

letters, syllables, or words, while the performers' movements recurrently resonate with the rhythmicity and even the content of the phrases they utter. For instance, when Söderberg and Alcantud are reciting variations on the sentences "pull it up," Muller makes a sharp, pulling movement each time Söderberg and Alcantud pronounce a "p" that includes a lot of breath, creating a thudding sound: "p-p-p-pull it up, p-p-p-p-pull it up, pull it up." The sentence "bring it all on me, bri-bri-bring it all on me" uttered by Söderberg and Alcantud functions as the soundtrack to which Muller dances. These sentences, as well as a shift in the electronic sounds towards something that is reminiscent of club music, introduce a videoclip-like aesthetic which differs from the more frivolous aesthetic of the first part. As in the first part of the performance, the corporeal effort that is required to produce this verbal soundscape is clearly emphasized: the performers for instance often accentuate their breath while pronouncing words, or the specific bodily postures they take up while speaking emphasize that the sounds are delivered by their entire body. Towards the end of the piece, when the three performers sit down on three chairs in a row on the left side of the stage, a weightier and almost sacred atmosphere is created. They end the piece by singing repetitions and variations of the following text, accompanied by similar pulling movements to those in the beginning:

> I wanna be your sound
> The brightness of you
> That sinks in me
> As we dance dance dance dance
> Dance dance dance dance
> Dance dance dance dance
> The night away

Throughout the piece, the text functions kinetically, either because its corporeal root is emphasized or because the text foregrounds its musical and rhythmic dimensions. In her use of text, Söderberg's performance also presents a choreographic strategy often examined in this dissertation, that is, the mechanisms through which kinetic textuality incorporates compositional principles of dance. As Robert Vesty puts it in his description of the use of speech in dance, "a dancer's animate exploration of language can create particular opportunities to crack open words and reveal our playing with them as a deeply contingent and remarkably fleshy affair" (2017, 3). It is this specific way of treating language that dominates in *Entangled Phrases*, which demonstrates how speech nestles itself into the logic of dance: not as casual commentary or discursive content, but as a fleshy material that can be choreographed through musicality and rhythm. Especially in the second half of the performance, it seems as if the performers are transmitting a sound to each other through space, so that sound is turned into an element that moves. The piece thus creates an

"auditory choreography" (Persyn 2019) in which the collective soundscape is synchronized with the physical choreography, and in which the efforts of the body parts needed to produce this soundscape are foregrounded (see also Chapter One, pgs. 73 and following).[231]

The exploration of the interplay between sound and choreographic movement is a recurring element in Söderberg's oeuvre.[232] Söderberg's background in flamenco—which is by its very nature about the dialogue between sound and movement—is important to her interest in the role of sound in relation to dance, insofar as the aesthetic of flamenco strongly determines her choreographic oeuvre. As she explained in our interview, as a dancer with a hip injury, she investigates how she "can expand dance without being able to jump around and throw myself on the floor" (Alma Söderberg, pers. interview). Flamenco, where the "dancer is also a musician" and where "the sound is part of the choreography [...] without hierarchy in the moment of performing," turned out to be an inspirational source for this (Alma Söderberg, pers. interview). Söderberg's work is mostly concerned with how sound can function choreographically, and "very little with [...] a preconceived idea of what it should be" (Alma Söderberg, pers. interview). She embarked on this exploration while she was studying at SNDO – School for New Dance Development in Amsterdam. There, one of Söderberg's teachers was Deborah Hay, a choreographer connected to Judson Dance Theater. During our interview, Söderberg frequently emphasized how formative these lessons had been to her development as a dancer and choreographer.[233] This becomes apparent too from what she says about the poem she wrote for *Entangled Phrases*: "quite soon I started experimenting with chopping the poem up into different kinds of polyrhythms [...] we were doing that more as improvisation and just sticking to these different rhythms and chopping up the poem into syllables and putting those on kind of a grid rhythm. [...] This is a way of practicing that I have learned from Deborah: just doing it over and over and over again" (Alma Söderberg, pers. interview).[234] Throughout the rest of Söderberg's

231 In both its dramaturgical focus and formal structure, *Entangled Phrases* is somewhat reminiscent of *Both Sitting Duet* (2003), created by choreographer Jonathan Burrows and musician Matteo Fargion. In this piece too, the two performers are sitting on a chair, and a similar dialogue between choreographic movement and musicality is explored in order to present the structure of relationality. Valerie A. Briginshaw writes about *Both Sitting Duet* that "it is as if a seductive energy emanates from that space, because of the interconnectivity and interdependency of the Other structure that plays between them" (2005, 25). As we will see in this chapter, *Entangled Phrases* similarly fuses musicality with choreography to explore the interplay between individuality and collectivity.

232 Other pieces that are structured around this interplay between sound and choreographic movement are *Nadita* (2015), *Deep Etude* (2018), and *The Listeners* (2020).

233 As she recounted, "I ended up in the School for New Dance Development in Amsterdam. There, I was exposed to a lot of different things, including a very strong relation to Judson Dance Theater and that whole lineage of improvisation. At that time, the work was also pretty related to the white box kind of conceptual works, smart works, all of that. So it was a funny encounter from my flamenco past with that setting" (Alma Söderberg, pers. interview).

234 According to Ramsay Burt, Deborah Hay's performance *Would They or Wouldn't They?* (1963) can be considered typical of the choreographic signature of Judson Dance Theater: "it had an indeterminate compositional structure, using a choreographic score in which there were moments when dancers had to make decisions, and these decisions had effects on other dancers, generating chance juxtapositions of unexpected actions" (2006, 47).

oeuvre, the formal strategy of repetition functions as a main strategy to uncover the choreographic dimension of sound and listening.

Through this repetitive use of text, the performance not only establishes a structure of relationality amongst the performers. Evidently, the soundscape that emerges in this piece also addresses the audience in a rather physical way, so that the audience become included as listeners in the relational space conveyed through the soundscape. In her article "Aural Spatiality and Sonic Materiality: Attending to the Space of Sound in Performances by Ivo Dimchev and Alma Söderberg," Rebecca Collins writes about the use of sound and repetition in Söderberg's *TRAVAIL* (2011), commenting that "sound is not staged as an object to be perceived and understood but as a palpable spatial event evolving and altering over time" (2018, 177). In *Entangled Phrases*, we can trace a similar strategy: with a strong emphasis on repetition, the sonorous space is presented as something in which both performers and audience can be immersed. Söderberg mentioned in my interview with her that while making *Entangled Phrases*, they experimented in different ways with "how to actually listen to each other when doing more complicated things" and with how voiced text can express "more complex realities where things are maybe sometimes contradictory" (Alma Söderberg, pers. interview). This meant that "there's a certain kind of attention that you go into. The tempo keeps changing all the time. So, you also need to have a certain kind of attention to change" (Alma Söderberg, pers. interview). In their search for "being really in the fine tune of playing out these different relations between space and body and the visual and aural," she wanted to explore "a certain way of listening and that produces a certain way of being" (Alma Söderberg, pers. interview). In the performance itself, the exercise of listening remains prominent and is presented as one of the main actions of the performers. This foregrounding of the activity of listening unites performers and audience as they orient themselves towards the soundscape produced, and invites the audience to develop—like the performers—a meticulous "attention to change."

As well as the direct influence of Hay on Söderberg's work, there are also clear resonances to be traced between the formal strategies adopted in *Entangled Phrases* and Bausch's work, as well as with postdramatic theater. Briefly outlining these similarities will help to specify why I will eventually turn to Roland Barthes's work to discuss *Entangled Phrases*. To begin with, the strategy of repetition plays a key role in Söderberg's approach to choreography, in a way that resonates with how repetition functions in Bausch's work. Barbara Confino describes Bausch's use of repetition as follows: "unlike Robert Wilson's use of repetition, Bausch's does not hypnotize, but awakens" ([1988] 2013, 47). Likewise, in *Entangled Phrases*, the sudden synchronous appearances of words that every now and then offer a glimpse into the actual poem activate the audience rather than producing a

hypnotic and passive effect. Another parallel that we can trace between the oeuvres of Bausch and Söderberg relates to their use of improvisation: the texts included in Bausch's choreographies were often created during improvisation exercises, allowing Bausch to borrow from the personal histories of the performers to create her pieces (Servos 1998, 42; Climenhaga 2013, 59-61). These improvised bits of language were then modified via repetition and fragmentation, so that the personal story of the dancer was altered and turned into an aesthetic form (Fernandes 2001, 28). In our interview, Söderberg recounted how, in her creative process, repetition also plays a key role in molding and sculpting the textscape through improvisation: "sometimes the starting point is a word and a content. And then really the meaning of that gets repeated or gets put into play somehow and kind of the intensity of that meaning actually and how that meaning also influences the body [...] and sometimes it can be that the word is coming to me more mysteriously from doing a rhythm or something and just like from a more physical place. So I think I move a lot between these two" (Alma Söderberg, pers. interview).

The emphasis in Söderberg's performance on sound and musicality furthermore ties in quite well with Lehmann's theorization of the materiality and musicality of language, as one of the main distinguishing artistic strategies in postdramatic's use of textuality. Probably more than *Platina* (where we can still trace a strong mimetic impulse), *Entangled Phrases* is clearly reminiscent of how textuality operates in postdrama, that is, as something that emphasizes the physicality of the voice and the rhythmicity and musicality of the text (Lehmann 2006, 149). In that regard, the notion of the "chorus" is central to understanding the postdramatic function of textuality. Jean-Pierre Ryngaert's observation that "the assigning and complex harmonizing of voices [...] has led to chorus-like devices" (2007, 26), or Lehmann's description of how "a chorus of speech and movement, lamenting and singing incantation often takes the place of drama and dialogue" (2006, 129), suggest that Söderberg's piece can be placed in this lineage. In Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theater*, the focus on musicalization and chorus is foregrounded, to mark the shift away from the portrayal of a fictitious relationship between performers. The specific emphasis on voice and musicality, Lehmann explains, "displaces the status of language: when texts are spoken chorally or by dramatis personae who are not individuals but raise their voices as part of a choral collective, the independent reality of the word, its musical sound and rhythm, is newly experienced" (130).[235] Again, Söderberg's *Entangled Phrases* uses textuality in a similar manner: the performers become, literally, entangled in an auditory collective and the musicality and rhythmicity of the words is emphasized.

235 In the work of Robert Wilson, Lehmann further asserts that the "postdramatic 'audio landscape' [...] does not mimetically represent reality but creates a space of association in the mind of the spectator" (2006, 148).

However, Lehmann's explanation of how postdramatic theater exposes text as a "foreign body" is less easy to reconcile with the textual dimension that dominates the musicality produced in *Entangled Phrases*. In Söderberg's piece, the musicality emerges through an interplay in which text and body function as complementary forces; this differs considerably from the more conflictual relation between text and body undergirding Lehmann's notion of "foreign body." While Söderberg does use the strategy of musicality and rhythm in her use of text, it is oriented towards a dramaturgy that differs from dominant postdramatic dramaturgies, since it is rooted in the same hyper-dialectical intertwinement between text and body that we encountered in *Platina*. Lehmann furthermore argues that "the consistent tendency towards a musicalization (not only of language) is an important chapter of the sign usage in postdramatic theatre," and explains that, as a result, "an independent auditory semiotics emerges" (91). In *Entangled Phrases*, however, it is difficult to think of the "auditory semiotics" as something "independent" from language, precisely because it is reliant on a specific vibration between bodies and the rhythmicity, musicality, but also meaning of the words.

To capture the specific "auditory semiotics" in *Entangled Phrases*, as well as the formal strategies that give rise to the sonorous relationality constructed in the piece, the terminology that Barthes develops in his 1972 essay "The Grain of the Voice" offers a more instructive avenue. In this essay, Barthes looks closely into the art of opera singers from the perspective of the intersection between language and music. To unravel that intersection, Barthes introduces the notions "grain," "geno-song," and "pheno-song." His prime locus of interest is "a part of vocal music (*lied* or *mélodie*): the very precise space (genre) of *the encounter between a language and a voice*" (Barthes [1972] 1977, 181; original emphasis). In this encounter, he writes, the voice's "grain" can materialize. Importantly, the grain emerges when the voice is simultaneously producing sound and language: when words are set to music and are produced through a singer's voice. While Barthes explains that it is primarily the grain that attracts him in the musical performance of opera singers, he also indicates how not all vocal performances produce a grain—its emergence also depends on the specific way in which the singer performs the music. Throughout his essay, the grain is thus used to appraise the performances of (a certain type of) opera singers. This offers Barthes an alternative to what he considers as a major flaw of music criticism, namely, its tendency to translate musical experience into "the poorest of linguistic categories: the adjective" (179).

Within sound studies, the intangibility of Barthes's "grain" has often been used to capture the difficult-to-name sonorous qualities of singers, or their physicality and corporeality as presented in the way they use their voice (e.g., Symonds 2007; Dunsby 2009; Boutin 2016).

In the context of this dissertation, however, Barthes's essay is in the first place helpful to probe the interaction between the sonority evoked by the text itself and the sonority of the pronounced text in interaction with a voice and a body. More specifically, Barthes's conceptual framework allows us to capture the dynamic between the musicality of the language, the body producing the sounds, and the semantic connotation of the words. Approached through the framework of sound, dance and language, Barthes's essay offers a valuable perspective on the contemporary tendency to use spoken words in and as dance, despite, to use Andrew Brown's phrasing, "the deliberate impurity of his discourse […], together with the fact that his writing defends itself by reflecting on its own presuppositions and procedures" (1992, 93). Brown lucidly describes the drifting form of writing that characterizes Barthes's work, of which "The Grain of the Voice" is exemplary: "Barthes's syntax is of the self-devouring kind, puncturing itself at every semicolon and quizzing its own assertiveness every time it opens a parenthesis" (73).[236] To some extent, and as my use of Barthes's essay seeks to illustrate, his somewhat confusing writing style can also be read as an invitation to the reader to participate in the reflection process, and it actually encourages us to expand his argument towards other topics and areas of interest. Because his essay focusses on music and voice from the perspective of linguistics *and* physicality, and because it is rooted in a discussion about specific artistic performances, I read it as an invitation to investigate the role of speech within dance, from the perspective of the formal parameters that he introduces.

Before further delving into the essay and the different approaches it provides to the use of text in dance, it is helpful to first situate the essay within the theoretical line of this chapter, as well as of this overall dissertation. Barthes's essay displays a similar phenomenology-inspired influence of psychoanalysis to that which also informs Ahmed's thinking. In fact, "The Grain of the Voice" is typical of how his later work is to a large extent indebted to psychoanalytical thinking and particularly that of Lacan and Julia Kristeva (Lavers 1982, 168–75).[237] The terms "pheno-song" and "geno-song" that he borrows from Kristeva bear the most explicit mark of the psychoanalytical undertone of this essay. Yet the way in which he puts these terms to use is indicative of how Barthes, in this essay, is less interested in a

236 Brown further outlines how this writing style can be interpreted as "a response to the violence inscribed within meaning: violence and meaning are for him inseparable because of his model of language, in which meaning is generated by binary opposites which function in an apparently value-free way, but which on a deeper level divide up the world in an imperious and surreptitiously evaluative fashion" (1992, 64).

237 Barthes's later work can, according to Michael Moriarty, be characterized by a gradually growing interest in unraveling how the body challenges the logic of the sign, which is provoked by an attempt "to disturb […] the symbolic order, the semiotic regime, that makes all ideology possible, that constitutes individuals as subjects" (1991, 113). However, as Moriarty contextualizes Lacan's influence on Barthes, "while accepting that subjectivity is a construction of language […], Barthes wants to preserve the possibility of an alternative to this monolithic and ubiquitous Symbolic" (1991, 112). Annette Lavers also traces the influence of psychoanalytic thinking in Barthes's characteristic writing style, which "seeks to be both sensuous and to exhibit the 'logic of the signifier'" and thereby mirrors "the very law of the unconscious" (1982, 23).

systemic understanding of psychic structures but mainly wants to give words to his own personal desires.[238] This brings us to the phenomenological dimension of his work: in "The Grain of the Voice," Barthes takes an unapologetically subjective perspective to scrutinize the crux between text and body. His analysis of the opera singers is clearly based on his own (desirous) fascination with the voice of a singer, so his own individual experience steers the entire essay.[239] In this essay, the involvement of the reader, which he praises in literature, is achieved by including himself in the interpretation, not only in cognitive or interpretative terms, but also in terms of an embodied engagement with the opera singers. For that reason, we can trace a phenomenological impulse in Barthes's essay, despite his explicit aversion to phenomenology's "essentialist" tendencies (Garner 1994, 11).[240] The phenomenological undercurrent of this particular essay can also be seen in his *Camera Lucida* (1980) (e.g., Burgin 1986; Jay 2001; Pagan 2019). As Martin Jay, for instance, argues about this work, "Barthes knew that experience was not merely a mental category, but involved the somatic dimension of human existence" (2001, 470). In "The Grain of the Voice" too, Barthes depicts his experience of the opera singers as emphatically sensorial and physical.[241] However, he does not describe his experience and bodily perception simply for the sake of it. Rather, in a truly phenomenological vein, he uses his experience as a methodological starting point, namely, to make an observation that eventually seeks to transcend the idiosyncrasy of both himself and the phenomenon he is studying. While the essay is clearly rooted in the subjective observation of Barthes himself (including his tastes

238 Martin Jay explains how "it was not […] the psychological subject in him who was erotically open to the distinguishing grain of the other, not the orthopsychic ego constituted by the specular doubling whose ideological implications he had learned from Lacan" (2001, 470). Burgin similarly traces a more ambivalent use of Lacan in Barthes: "*Camera Lucida*," Burgin explains, "for all its reference to Lacan, is based on a method of analysis – phenomenology – which rejects the concept of the unconscious" (1986, 83). The analysis of how corporeality manifests itself in language in his "The Grain of the Voice" shows the same combination of psychoanalysis and phenomenology. It results in a view of text and body as clearly distinct categories, that are however not seen as opposites.

239 Barthes in fact studies opera singers in a way that is similar to Ihde's phenomenological analysis of listening and voice, to which I already referred in Chapter One and Chapter Four (pgs. 73-74 and pgs. 175-177). Especially in his chapter "The Centre of Language," Ihde's perspective is reminiscent of Barthes's. As already referenced in footnote 229, Ihde for instance writes in that chapter that "my experiential listening stands in the near distance of language that is at one and the same time *the other speaking* in his voice. *I hear what he is saying*, and in this listening we are both presented with the penetrating presence of voiced language which is "between" and "in" both of us" (2007, 151).

240 Garner convincingly refutes Barthes's accusation of phenomenology and demonstrates how we can actually trace a resistance to essentialism in phenomenology itself (1994, 11). As this dissertation's use of phenomenology hopefully makes clear, phenomenology as a critical method aims to rather avoid the tendency to talk about performances and their artistic strategies in terms of essences or absolute truths.

241 We could further argue that "The Grain of the Voice" displays a similar critical perspective to that of *Camera Lucida* by referring to Dominic Pettman's article "Pavlov's Podcast: The Acousmatic Voice in the Age of MP3s," where he conceptualizes Barthes's grain as the "aural punctum" (2011, 159).

and distastes), there is also an attempt to translate this into a more methodical system, without ever fully abandoning this personal point of view.[242]

To conceptualize his notion of the "grain," Barthes performs a comparative analysis between two singers: the opera singer Charles Panzéra, whose voice, according to Barthes, produces a grain, and the more famous singer Dietrick Fischer-Dieskau, whose approach to the art of singing Barthes dislikes, because the grain remains absent from his performances. Barthes then draws a second comparison, between two aspects of a song: the "pheno-song" and the "geno-song," as two neologisms he introduces based on Kristeva's distinction between pheno-text and geno-text. With the term "pheno-song," Barthes aims to capture the qualities that belong to the structure of language and its signifying and expressive functions. The pheno-song primarily has to do with the content of the song and the language, with "everything in the performance which is in the service of communication, representation, expression" (Barthes [1972] 1977, 182). The "geno-song," on the other hand, refers to the sounds of the music and the materiality of the language being sung. It denotes the "volume of the singing and speaking voice, the space where significations germinate 'from within language and in its very materiality'" (182). As this definition of the geno-song already reveals, Barthes's terminology does not insist on a strict dichotomy between text (or, in this case, the text set to the musical score) and performance: the geno-song is something that is manifested in the performance of a song (it denotes "the volume of the singing and speaking voice"), while it is also described as something that is part of the text itself (it germinates "from within language and in its very materiality").

At first sight, the grain serves mainly to describe the presence of a body in the act of singing. Writing about the grain of a Russian bass singer, Barthes clarifies that it is

242 As Victor Burgin puts it, "Barthes's particular paradox is born of the uneasy union of two inherently contradictory discourses: semiotics and phenomenology" (1986, 77). This "uneasy union" between "semiotics and phenomenology" has frequently been embraced by theater scholars as a necessary critical perspective: Bert O. States refers to Barthes's conception of the studium-punctum dynamic in *Camera Lucida* as an example of the "binocular vison" (1985, 8) between phenomenology and semiotics that he deems necessary for the study of the theater (10-11). With the help of this "binocular vision," Barthes elegantly avoids a major risk of applying a phenomenological approach to theater, namely the solipsistic perspective which can result from this. Luk Van den Dries has summarized the need for this two-fold perspective as follows: "the absence of systemic performance laws, of code-based sign systems, does not yet absolve the field of a systematized theoretical approach. [...] And, finally, this does not mean that we must now be content just to analyze the way in which performance has concretely taken shape with a privileged spectator (be it the ideal spectator, or the analyst himself)" (1995, 11; my translation) (Original Dutch version: "het ontbreken van systeemgebonden opvoeringsregels, van codegebonden tekensystemen, ontslaat het vakgebied nog niet van een gesystematiseerde theoretische aanpak. [...] En dat betekent ten slotte ook niet dat we nu maar genoegen moeten nemen met de analyse van de manier waarop de opvoering geconcretiseerd gestalte heeft gekregen bij een gepriviligeerd toeschouwer (zij het de ideale toeschouwer, of de analyst zelf)"). In "The Grain of the Voice," Barthes navigates elegantly between the observation of "a privileged spectator," and something that works towards a "systematic theoretical approach" to analyze the performance of opera singers. The argument about the compatibility between phenomenology and semiotics also returns in Erika Fischer-Lichte's discussion of Romeo Castellucci's *Giulio Cesare* (1997), in which "the audience stumbles in their perception and experiences a constant oscillation between phenomenal body and character" (2008, 88). She traces the "perceptive multistability" (89) and proposes a "correctional shift in methodology away from such explanatory concepts as "text" or "representation"" (90).

something which is directly the cantor's body, brought to your ears in one and the same movement from deep down in the cavities, the muscles, the membranes, the cartilages and from deep down in the [...] language, as though a single skin lined the inner flesh of the performer and the music he sings. ([1972] 1977, 181)

However, as Barthes explains later in the essay, the appearance of the "grain" is not only dependent on whether or not the body manifests itself in the act of singing (by emphasizing the sounds of "the cavities, the muscles, the membranes, the cartilages"); it also depends on whether the song's geno-song, rather than its pheno-song, is emphasized in performance. Barthes thus seems to suggest that the grain appears when the song's geno-song—the materiality and the sonority of the language being sung—is amplified. The grain of the voice, Barthes elucidates, "is not—or is not merely—its timbre; the *signifiance* it opens cannot better be defined, indeed, than by the very friction between the music and something else, which something else is the particular language" (185; original emphasis). The "particular" language refers here to the prosodic characteristics of specific languages. There is a difference, for instance, between French—where hard consonants are only rarely pronounced at the ends of words, creating a sense of on-goingness—and English—where the second syllable of words is generally accented, which creates rifts in the sonorous continuity (Gardner 2010, 362). In sum, the grain refers to the efforts of the body that are audible in the act of singing, provided that the specific materiality and musicality of the language being sung are emphasized.

In *Entangled Phrases*, the grain of Söderberg, Muller, and Alcantud's voices emerges as a result of their emphasis on the geno-song, and because they render the bodily effort it takes to produce this soundscape visible. Even though the soundscape is—at least in the beginning—exclusively produced by human bodies, a remarkable tension emerges in the impression given by this emphatically corporeal voice performance of a rather *digital* aesthetic. For instance, when certain consonants of words are emphasized, it seems as if a beat is added to the text. Or, when one performer gradually moves towards a higher pitch while incessantly repeating one single phrase, she gives the impression that not she but a digital sound effect is modifying her words. These effects spring from the way in which the performers are continuously experimenting with the musical and material qualities of the words (their geno-song), such as their pitch, tempo, intonation and volume, as well as the careful and intensified pronunciation of certain letters or syllables. Barthes explains that in the case of Panzéra—the singer who produces a grain and whose "art (...) was in the letters" ([1972] 1977, 183)—"an extreme rigour of thought regulated the prosody of the enunciation" (183). Similarly, the performers in *Entangled Phrases* use language not only as a medium to convey a content, but by placing the phrases in a choreographic structure of

repetition, variation, and moments of unison and disharmony, they draw attention to the musicality and materiality of the verbal phrases. In this performance, the voice is not used for its "service role" (Cavarero [2003] 2005, 35); on the contrary, through the performers' experimentation with mainly the geno-song, the cooperation between text and voice in the production is explicitly accentuated.[243] Furthermore, in *Entangled Phrases*, the production of the soundscape is clearly presented as a corporeal activity: the piece often draws attention to the breathing patterns and the vocal muscles needed to pronounce words.

Importantly, in *Entangled Phrases*, what Barthes calls the "grain" is produced by a *collective* voice: it materializes through the interplay of three voices. By emphasizing the geno-song of the text, and by making a collective grain emerge, the performance thus represents a structure of relationality that is expressed in the interplay between the words, movements, sounds, and voices and auditorily renders the distinction between bodies ambiguous. *Entangled Phrases* exposes in a highly formal way this relational aspect of listening and producing sound, and how language, beyond the meaning it aims to communicate, functions as a medium to generate an entanglement between individual bodies. This collective grain also foregrounds the complexity of establishing an entanglement between bodies: it portrays the establishment of this relationality as a constant effort on the part of the performers and illustrates how it takes a very careful and concentrated activity of listening. Thus, the formal exploration of creating a soundscape together represents an attempt of different bodies to synchronize with each other while still maintaining the individual differences between them. In so doing, the piece demonstrates how the interaction between individuals, and the attempt to achieve a collectivity in which individuality does not become absorbed by the collective, requires a readiness to listen in a very careful and concentrated way.

Because the collective grain of the performers is emphasized in the soundscape they produce, it can be argued that Söderberg's treatment of sound as a choreographic element also needs to be understood in relation to the physicality that underlies it. More specifically, the voiced soundscape not only conforms to choreographic compositional principles because it moves auditorily through space, but it also behaves choreographically by emphasizing the physical efforts that are required to produce this soundscape. However, this does not imply that the choreographic dimension of Söderberg's kinetic textuality can only be ascribed to the way in which it behaves in performance. On the contrary: Barthes's understanding

243 The way in which the textual soundscape of *Entangled Phrases* foregrounds speech as a corporeal activity is reminiscent of the loop-station section in Daniel Linehan's *Body of Work*, which I discussed in Chapter Four (pgs. 170 and following). In this sequence, Linehan's vocal efforts seemed to become more emphatically present each time the recorded sentence was repeated. As Stanton B. Garner explains, "when utterance asserts itself as an object of perceptual attention, it relinquishes the seeming transparency that allows us to disattend to it and asserts its phenomenological role in the production and perception of speech" (2018, 195). Both Linehan and Söderberg adopt specific compositional strategies to "foregroun[d] the articulatory gesture" (191) and, in so doing, they remind us of the corporeal activity underlying the production of language.

of the grain is structured around a similar interacting text-performance relationship, as I have foregrounded in my understanding of kinetic textuality: he conceptualizes the grain as something that emerges within performance but nevertheless through the interplay between the voice and the materiality of the text (geno-song). In his essay, Barthes insists that the geno-song facilitates the emergence of the grain, even though he repeatedly makes it clear that the grain is something that appears in performance. In so doing, he also reveals that the appearance of the grain is predicated on the material composition of the text (on the page) as well—rooted in compositional poetic strategies such as rhythm and musicality. By conceptualizing a process in which a phenomenon that takes place in performance can simultaneously already be manifested in how the text is composed prior to the performance, Barthes lets the clear-cut distinction between text and performance dissolve.

Throughout the essay, Barthes therefore displays an understanding of "writing" as something that can be presented through speech—another main characteristic of kinetic textuality which I have been emphasizing throughout this dissertation. Towards the end of his essay, for instance, Barthes equates the geno-song with *writing*, which furthermore suggests that the emergence of the grain does not exclusively rely on strategies employed in the speech, but also on the material composition of the text itself. After he claims that "the song must speak, must *write*," Barthes mentions, almost in passing: "for what is produced at the level of the geno-song is finally writing" ([1972] 1977, 185). This suggests that when the text's geno-song (its materiality and musicality) is amplified, speech can function as writing. In "The Grain of the Voice," Barthes outlines that the manifestation of an impulse of writing within speech is a result of emphasis on the geno-song, and thus, of the emergence of the grain. In *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973), he makes a similar point on the simultaneous emergence of the grain and an écriture vocale. When he talks about "writing aloud" (or writing produced through speech), he mentions that it "belongs to the geno-text; [...] it is carried [...] by the *grain* of the voice" (Barthes [1973] 1975, 66). In other words, speech can be considered as writing when the grain of the voice emerges and when the geno-song of the text is emphasized in performance. As Barthes makes clear in "The Grain of the Voice," the form of writing aloud that the grain produces is essentially a kind of writing in which the effort of the body is audible. If we agree that the appearance of the grain also marks a dancerly quality in the use of text, as it emphasizes the bodily effort needed to produce language, it follows from Barthes's conceptualization of the grain that this choreographic approach to textuality is not only limited to strategies on the stage, but is already announced on the page.

Barthes's notion of the grain thus makes it possible to capture how the sonorous choreography of *Entangled Phrases* is based on a specific intertwinement between the voice of the performers and the materiality of the language. His essay therefore provides an important cue to further describe the hyper-dialectical relationship between text and body in kinetic textuality from an auditory perspective. As mentioned above, in Barthes's strategy in this essay to foreground the perspective of the embodied observer as the starting point to develop his arguments about the grain, we can already trace a phenomenological underpinning. However, this is not the sole reason: perhaps on a more fundamental level, "The Grain of the Voice" bears a phenomenological—or more accurately, a Merleau-Pontian—signature in the way in which it foregrounds the hyper-dialectical interaction between text and body in the production of the grain. A quick glance at Merleau-Ponty's *The Prose of the World* also illustrates the similarity between his views and those of Barthes. When Merleau-Ponty, for instance, writes that

> with my throat, my voice, my intonation, and, of course, with the words, with my preferred constructions and the time I allow each part of the phrase, I compose an enigma that has only one solution such that the other person, silently accompanying this melody bristling with changes, with switches and falls, can manage to take it into his own repertoire and say it with me, and this is what it means to understand. ([1969] 1973, 29-30)

he is describing the same corporeal-verbal interaction between speaker and listener that Barthes enjoyed while listening to opera singers. As James Edie mentions, Merleau-Ponty, "pays special attention to [...] the level of meaning which exists just on the level of the phonemic patterns [...] (given the natural phonology of that given language) [...]. He calls attention to [...] the primordial melody, intonation, and musical contour" (1976, 83). Like Barthes, and many French intellectuals at that time, Merleau-Ponty's language theory is highly indebted to the seminal work on structuralism by Ferdinand de Saussure (75–107) (see also Chapter One, pgs. 62-63). Similar to Barthes, Merleau-Ponty sought a way to incorporate the body into the network between signs introduced by Saussure: they each attempted to fit corporeality into that line of thinking and expressed a view in which the body does not become entirely immersed in the logic of the linguistic sign. Neither Merleau-Ponty nor the late Barthes emphasizes the linguistic sign as providing sufficient insight into how signification works. Despite the different aspirations of their studies, the contention that words cannot be isolated from the body that utters them plays a key role in the discourse of both thinkers. Like Ahmed's book on emotions, Barthes's essay on opera singers foregrounds a hyper-dialectical relationship between text and body, based on a fundamentally different structure from the more conflictual relationship between text and body foregrounded by Lehmann. It is for that reason that Barthes's essay offers a

useful terminological framework to discern the compositional strategies underlying the structure of relationality presented in *Entangled Phrases*, as well as the hyper-dialectical relationship between text and body that structures Söderberg's treatment of sound as choreographic material.

At the same time, "The Grain of the Voice" also allows us to develop an observation made earlier, that the audience of *Entangled Phrases* becomes implicated in the relational structure unfolding amongst the performers. Against the background of his reflections on the grain, which are largely rooted in his own experience of the singers as a member of the audience, there is also an attempt to trace the process through which the spectator becomes corporeally involved in the music they listen to. Aimée Boutin explains it as follows: "Barthes' 'grain' […] is not only a timbre that resides in the voice, but a textured relationship between speaker and listener that strokes the voice in the ear" (2016, 171). Barthes's essay thus provides a crucial addition to Stanton B. Garner's effort to conceptualize kinesthesia in relation to textuality. The former's emphasis on the grain as a form of "bodily writing," and the pleasure of the listener, resonate with Garner's argument that "spectators respond to articulation in the words they hear as well as in the vocal gestures as they observe" (2018, 195). It is by witnessing these vocal gestures, Garner argues, that we can become "kinesthetically implicated in [the] articulatory gesture" of the performers (197). The sonorous relationality established between the performers in *Entangled Phrases* can be recognized as something that also includes the audience in a sensorially integrated way. Through the emphasis in this soundscape on the collective grain of the performers, the relation between audience and performers emerges via a bodily connection produced by the words that are put to sound. As Timothy Scheie argues, in Barthes's thinking, "the process of writing is ascertainable, inviting the reading subject to assume the role of *scripteur* and to participate in the text's production rather than passively receiving it as an inert product" (1992, 94). In "The Grain of the Voice," where the written dimension of a text is grafted onto an emphatically physical activity, this "participation in the text's production" happens on a fundamentally corporeal level. Barthes's grain allows us to recognize how language produces a kinesthetic connection between audience and performance, and how this not only results from being immersed in the text's movement established through its rhythm and musicality, but also through the bodily effort reproduced and recognized in the act of producing language. This observation clearly ties in with Garner's study on kinesthetic connections provoked by language, and his observations about how this kinesthetic entanglement between audience and performance is generated with the help of vocal strategies. What Barthes's notion of the grain adds to this, is that compositional strategies in the materiality of the text (the geno-song) contribute to this process as well.

Concluding thoughts on relationality

In both *Platina* and *Entangled Phrases*, kinetic textuality helps to represent a fundamental aspect of the human condition, that is, the relationship we establish with others through language. *Entangled Phrases* uses a highly stylized form of language (emphasizing musicality and using repetition and variation) to explore how relationality through language emerges via physical and auditorial attunement, whereas in *Platina* this exploration happens primarily through a use of text that relies heavily on physicality and the intermingled choreography to represent the emotionality governing the relationality between the two performers. As we have seen, in *Platina*, two characters who are facing the imminent death of the husband and experiencing a longing to overcome the distance between them are represented by a combination of a careful selection of words and a sequence of cramped postures and movements. The entrapment of their situation is enhanced by the stifling physicality and the repetition of banal and therefore extra painful conversations. *Platina* uses kinetic textuality to present the entanglement between individuals not as a given, but as something that needs to be established and worked towards continuously. Although marked by a more pleasurable atmosphere, the search for connection in *Entangled Phrases* requires quite some effort as well. With each new sound added, the entanglement needs to be redefined and re-explored. Through an attentive listening on the part of the performers, and by allowing heterogeneity and friction to emerge within the soundscape, *Entangled Phrases* presents a structure of relationality that strikes a careful balance between the collectivity of the soundscape and the singularity of the individual voices. The disharmonious moments in the soundscape or the rhythmic clashes that sometimes emerge foreground the phenomenon of collectivity as something that is never self-evident, but rather needs to be renegotiated with every new sound that is added to the soundscape.

Both performances kinesthetically include the audience in this structure of relationality, either by introducing them into the emotionality represented by the fiction in a highly physical manner (*Platina*) or by auditorily involving them in the soundscape (*Entangled Phrases*). The physical sensations I experienced during both performances could not have been more different from one another. The distressing feeling in *Platina* made me walk out of the theater space quite somber and exhausted, while the pleasure that was clearly discernible in how the performers crafted the soundscape of *Entangled Phrases* left me feeling invigorated and cheerful. The fact that I (and my fellow spectators I talked with) experienced both performances in a highly physical manner is related to the considerable reliance in both pieces on artistic strategies that potentially activate a kinesthetic response. Not only was the enunciation of words and phrases in both pieces accompanied

by choreographed movements; as we have seen with the help of Ahmed and Barthes, the words themselves also implied and relied on corporeal effort. As a conclusion to this chapter, I will present some final thoughts on how these two pieces present a structure of relationality between the performers that actually strikes a similar chord to the relationality unfolding between audience and performer. To do so, I will briefly return to the specific interplay between text and body that structures the two pieces, and then turn to the writings of Merleau-Ponty on that matter. His thoughts on relationality help to articulate how the interplay between text and bodies that governs the two pieces also shapes the structure of relationality presented in them.

As I outlined, *Platina* and *Entangled Phrases* are each, in different ways, constructed upon not only formal but also dramaturgical strategies that are often associated with a postdramatic use of textuality. The emphasis on the musicality and physiology of speech, and the use of text in the dramaturgy of the chorus or “the reverberation of the voice in space” (Lehmann 2006, 74) (*Entangled Phrases*), as well as a strong focus on physicality and a fragmented dramaturgical structure (*Platina*), are often considered as typical strategies of postdramatic theater. However, as the readings of these pieces through Barthes and Ahmed sought to illustrate, the notion of text as a “foreign body” that informs Lehmann’s view on postdrama is difficult to align with either of these pieces. In *Entangled Phrases*, the collective grain, or the “bodily writing” that is expressed in speech via repetition and musicality, and the sense of pleasure that this evokes between listener and singer, creates a space in which different bodies carefully listening to each other become attuned. In *Platina*, the impossibility of coinciding with the other’s embodied consciousness is also presented through a hyper-dialectical interplay between text and body, in which the words themselves function as the markers as well as sources of the physical and emotional struggles.

While *Platina* places more of an emphasis on torment, instead of on the pleasure that structures the dynamic between the performers in *Entangled Phrases*, it is clear that both pieces rely emphatically on language to present the relationality between the performers. For that reason, Merleau-Ponty’s reflections on how language serves as a means to draw connections between different individuals are particularly helpful here, precisely because they tie in with the emphatically embodied view on language that he presents throughout his work. As he argues in *Signs*, for instance, “words, even in the art of prose, carry the speaker and the hearer into a common universe by drawing both toward a new signification through their power to designate in excess of their accepted definition” ([1960] 1964, 75). Merleau-Ponty thus develops a view on language that foregrounds its function as establishing a relation between two subjects—a process he describes in *The Prose of the World* as “the reverberation of my relations with myself and others” ([1969] 1973, 20). Through

conversation, the neat division between the individuality of the speaker and the listener dissolves: "speech concerns us, catches us indirectly, seduces us, trails us along, transforms us into the other and him into us, abolishes the limit between mine and not-mine, and ends the alternative [...] between me as subject and the other as object" ([1969] 1973, 145). Moreover, by pointing out that "the common language which we speak is something like the anonymous corporeality which we share with other organisms" (140), Merleau-Ponty emphasizes once more that verbal communication is a physical activity. Because speaker and listener become corporeally intertwined through conversation, Merleau-Ponty maintains that the various thoughts or ideas that emerge out of conversation cannot be attributed to one speaker only. In *The Visible and the Invisible*, he also asserts that "a genuine conversation gives me access to thoughts that I did not know myself capable of, that I *was* not capable of, and sometimes I feel myself *followed* in a route unknown to myself which my words, cast back by the other, are in the process of tracing out for me" ([1964] 1968, 13; original emphasis). This is in fact a reformulation of a thought he had already expressed in *Signs*, where he wrote that speaking is realized "not by a mind to a mind, but by a being who has body and language to a being who has body and language, each drawing the other by invisible threads like those which hold the marionettes—*making* the other speak, *think*, and become what he is but never would have been by himself" ([1960] 1964, 19). In these passages, Merleau-Ponty gestures towards a structure of relationality in which people become fundamentally entangled, because the distinction between the self and the other dissolves. He also demonstrates how (embodied) language plays a key role in establishing this form of relationality.[244]

As we can trace in *The Visible and the Invisible*, towards the end of his career Merleau-Ponty developed a slightly more complex understanding of the "common universe" ([1960] 1964, 75) between speaker and listener, complicating his view on alterity and relationality. While he insists on the inseparable merging of himself as a subject and another person, he does not see this merging as a site in which individuality disappears. From the outset, he acknowledges that "it is indeed impossible to grant access to the world to the others' perception; and by a sort of backlash, they also refuse me this access which I deny to them" ([1964] 1968, 9). Relating this idea to the faculty of vision, he argues that

> vision ceases to be solipsist only up close, when the other turns back upon me the luminous rays in which I had caught him, renders precise that corporeal adhesion of which I had a presentiment in the agile movements of his eyes, enlarges beyond measure that blind spot I divined at the center of

244 This dynamic resonates with Ihde's perspective on sound. Building on Merleau-Ponty's reflections on intersubjectivity, he argues that "if we are most manifestly related intersubjectively through language it is also the case that in its ordinary form that relation occurs within auditory experience" (1973, 37).

> my sovereign vision, and, invading my field through all its frontiers, attracts me into the prison I had prepared for him and, as long as he is there, makes me incapable of solitude. (78)

However, despite his emphasis on the intersubjective relationality between the self and the other, Merleau-Ponty refuses to resolve the inherent paradox of encountering alterity: time and again, he runs into the impossibility of reconciling this relational stance with his individual phenomenological perspective, because "placing us, him and myself, in the same universe of thought, ruins the alterity of the other and hence marks the triumph of a disguised solipsism" (79). Nevertheless, it is symptomatic of his hyper-dialectical thought that Merleau-Ponty keeps returning to the idea that subject and object are part of one fundamental structure: "why would this generality, which constitutes the unity of my body, not open it to other bodies? The handshake too is reversible [...] why would not the synergy exist among different organisms, if it is possible within each?" (142). While Merleau-Ponty seeks to acknowledge the presence of the other in the supposedly solipsistic universe of the perceiving subject, the other continues to claim an ambivalent position in the perception of the perceiving subject. Michael Sanders, too, recognizes this ambiguity when he writes that, even though Merleau-Ponty provides "an account of intersubjective relations arising out of the reciprocity of a shared corporeal existence" (2008, 144), the difficulty is that "in *The Visible and the Invisible* Merleau-Ponty claims that no strong coincidence between subject and object ever in fact obtains" (147).

Despite Merleau-Ponty's struggle to account for the relation between the self and the other, he refuses to think of it as an impossibility. While Merleau-Ponty clearly acknowledges the inaccessibility of the other, he nevertheless continues to believe in a synergy between people in which the separation between the self and the other is no longer relevant. Throughout his writing, conversation and dialogue are presented as the sites where the form of this relational structure can be experienced, and where an attempt to overcome the inaccessibility of the other can take place. As this chapter sought to lay bare, we can trace similar attempts in *Platina* and *Entangled Phrases*: both Haring and Söderberg use text and body in an intertwined way, serving their respective attempts to overcome the distance between individual bodies (while continuing to acknowledge it). Both pieces thus represent the continuous movement of trying to join with one another, while escaping a form of full absorption in which the individuality of the self and the other disappears; this movement is at the heart of Merleau-Ponty's struggles to grasp the phenomenology of our linguistic encounter with others. When dance critic Pieter T'Jonck writes about *Entangled Phrases* that it "is about a commonality that goes beyond language, that must rely on touch and physical alignment" (2019; my translation), he neglects to say how this

"commonality" and "physical attunement" is actually explored *within* and *by means of* the materiality of the text.[245] The dichotomy between physical attunement and language that informs T'Jonck's observation is precisely what Barthes's essay, as well as Merleau-Ponty's thoughts on relationality, invite us to dismantle. In *Entangled Phrases*, language becomes the very material through which relationality emerges: the physical connection between the performers is provoked within and by means of the words that the performers produce together in a rhythmic and musical manner. Likewise, in *Platina*, the search of the characters for (emotional) attunement in their relationship is represented as something that takes place within language, and through the interplay between words and bodies. This corresponds not only, as we have seen, with Ahmed's study on emotions, but also with how Merleau-Ponty situates intersubjective relationality within (and not beyond) speech and language.

While Merleau-Ponty's reflections on intersubjectivity capture the structure of relationality between the performers on stage, the two-fold dynamic that he traces also manifests itself in the relational structure between audience and performance. As we have seen, both performances rely heavily on strategies that potentially evoke a kinesthetic connection with their audience, yet they both establish this connection in such a way that the audience is never placed into some sort of unthinking trance. However immersed we are in the dramatic storyline or the soundscape presented, the way in which kinetic textuality operates in both pieces continues to demonstrate that our incorporation into the piece is inevitably incomplete. In both performances, the mechanisms of repetition—the compositional device that also strongly works towards this immersion—create this rift. In Haring's piece, the repetition reminds us of the compositionality of her text and presents this text as an object whose existence transcends the here-and-now temporality of our connection with the performance. In Söderberg's case, it functions as a strategy to render the text of the soundscape inaccessible, working to withhold from us the very basis of our kinesthetic connection. Through these seemingly very simple strategies, Haring and Söderberg's works continue to remind us of the inevitable distance between ourselves and the performance.

For that reason, I would argue, the kinetic textuality presented in *Platina* and *Entangled Phrases* also invites us to a very specific understanding of kinesthetic empathy, which might (wrongly) be understood as an unmediated, intuitive, because mainly physical connection between a performer and a spectator. As Garner argues, kinesthesia as a framework for performance analysis also provides an important tool to "bridge the gap between individuals without eclipsing the other within the self's projections" (2018, 234). In that sense,

245 Original Dutch version: "gaat over een verstandhouding die *voorbij* taal gaat, die het moet hebben van aanvoelen en fysieke afstemming."

the way in which kinesthesia operates in these performances offers a methodological cue, for it urges us to take a perspective that is both inevitably rooted in our individual experience but also tries to overcome its individuality. While the encounter with a performance necessarily takes place from an individual and situated perspective, the ways in which Haring and Söderberg present the negotiation between individuality and collectivity also encourage spectators not to become enclosed in a solipsistic perspective. On the one hand, both performances acknowledge the individuality of the performers or characters, and neither present the effort towards relationality as a smooth and easy process. At the same time, the continuous effort to bridge the gap between the individuals which nevertheless persists in both performances, reminds us that the effort, rather than the (impossible) accomplishment, is perhaps what makes this endeavor worthwhile.

It is tempting to conclude from this that the same holds true for the dialogue between audience and performance: the impossibility of transcending the individual perspective is no reason to stop trying to overcome it. With the help of Ahmed and Barthes, I have described my own kinesthetic encounter with the performances in this chapter against the background of a more systematic approach, precisely in order to avoid the solipsistic tendency of this perspective. Ahmed's understanding of how emotions circulate between words and bodies helped me to pinpoint the specific emotional quality behind some of the phrases in *Platina*, and to trace the relationality emerging from this very interplay, both between the performers and between the audience and the performances. Barthes's terminology allowed me to stipulate how, in *Entangled Phrases*, the geno-song (the materiality and musicality of the language) is amplified to conceal the pheno-song (the semantic meaning of the words), resulting in the emergence of a *collective* grain. These theoretical perspectives converge in their joint attempt to start from a very situated perspective, while at the same time transcending the particularity of the context in which they are written. Although these strategies help to transcend the individual perspective, this perspective, as Merleau-Ponty's writings on relationality point out, can never be fully transcended: the distance between the self and that which we fix our gaze upon is inevitable. However, as we have seen in the two performances, our kinesthetic sense can also help to overcome this incommensurability between the self and the other, without denying the inevitability of this distance. In quite distinct ways, both pieces use kinetic textuality as the site for an *attempt* to move towards relationality, instead of as the site that marks its impossibility. Even though the emphasis on the hyper-dialectical interplay between text and body as a key aspect of kinetic textuality might seem primarily a merely formal matter, the attempt to achieve connection that underlies this formal structure does convey a significant proposition.

CONCLUSION

In a passage from *The Visible and the Invisible* on the nature of philosophical reflection, Merleau-Ponty includes the following thought:

> One begins with the unreflected, because one does have to begin, but [...] the universe of thought that is opened up by reflection contains everything necessary to account for the mutilated thought of the beginning which is only the ladder one pulls up after oneself after having climbed it. ... But if this is so, there is no longer any philosophy of reflection, for there is no longer the originating and the derived; there is a thought traveling a circle where the condition and the conditioned, the reflection and the unreflected, are in a reciprocal, if not symmetrical, relationship, and where the end is in the beginning as much as the beginning is in the end. ([1964] 1968, 35)

Merleau-Ponty's observation beautifully captures the nonlinear relationship between beginnings and endings of thought processes, by pointing to the intrinsic relation between the moment of the unreflected and the reflections that follow on from it. Contrary to what is often assumed, phenomenology as a critical method is not, or at least, not *only*, concerned with "the unreflected," intuitive perceptions where the act of thinking is traded for "mere" observations. By closely tying the notion of the unreflected to "the universe of thought that is opened up by reflection," Merleau-Ponty reminds us—in his typically hyper-dialectical manner—that in phenomenology, the unreflected is not a goal in itself. He describes the entire process that lies behind or beyond it, a process where the moment of the unreflected is indispensable ("because one does have to begin") yet is not enough on its own. This beginning moment, however, is more fundamental than just a starting point. Merleau-Ponty points to how it becomes intrinsically enmeshed in the entire structure of the thought process, which includes as well as transcends this "unreflected" moment. Reflection, Merleau-Ponty seems to suggest, is a process where one keeps coming back to the first thought that sparked it, only to find it already transformed, as it has become intimately connected with the various reflections that followed on from it.

The observation of a growing interest in the intrisic connection between text and movement in contemporary performing arts was my moment of “the unreflected,” which eventually led to this dissertation on kinetic textuality. I first noticed how both choreographers and theater artists were not only (re)introducing language and text as the dominant element on stage, but were also exploring different ways in which choreographic movement can be intermingled with and set alongside text. This observation set an entire reflection process in motion, in which historical comparisons, artist interviews, philosophical questions, and discussions within performing arts scholarship played a key role. Kinetic textuality figured in each case as the main perspective from which I approached the different historical and theoretical views. At the same time, including these broader perspectives has also helped to open up and transcend the “thought of the beginning,” while remaining fundamentally rooted in it.

Merleau-Ponty’s sketch of the reflection process as a movement that keeps returning to the beginning resembles how this dissertation has emerged from the thought processes following on from this “thought of the beginning.” The different chapters are not so much a linear succession of sub-arguments, but rather mirror a structure of circling movements, where each reformulation aims to deepen the understanding of that initial observation. They present various attempts to grasp—in the sense of understanding and making visible—the compositional and dramaturgical mechanisms underlying the use of kinetic textuality in contemporary performing arts. Even though these attempts are in themselves quite diverse, they nevertheless keep coming back to similar arguments. Just as repetition and variation function as key compositional characteristics of kinetic textuality—as this study has frequently revealed—so too the same principle structured this dissertation. The various analyses of how language is molded and made flexible have shown that language can perform a movement sequence of repetition and variation that does not erase itself, but rather sets in motion the meanings it conveys.

Another incentive to organize this dissertation in a circulatory manner comes from the flexibility inherent to kinetic textuality. This study has demonstrated that artistic foregrounding of the connection between language and movement can take very divergent forms in the artistic practice under scrutiny. It was therefore necessary to adopt a versatile perspective when writing about kinetic textuality. While I initially defined kinetic textuality as a form of text that triggers physical as well as textual movement, I had to allow some room for adaptability within this definition, to avoid forcing this phenomenon into too rigid a conceptual framework. For instance, although Daniel Linehan performs many movements alongside the rhythmic text excerpts that he utters in *Body of Work*, these physical movements seem less directly triggered by the text than De Meyer’s movements

in *new skin*. The kinesthetic form of mimesis that is a key aspect of kinetic textuality also takes on different guises. The kinesthetic mimetic impulse which I have traced in Abke Haring's *Platina* or Bryana Fritz's *Submission Submission*, for instance, differs considerably from how Dounia Mahammed and Mette Edvardsen bring characters to life in their pieces. In *Platina*, kinetic textuality is used to represent fictional characters, offering a way for the audience to connect emotionally with the narrative presented on stage. In Fritz's piece, kinetic textuality allows her to embody various saints, some of them as writers of the texts she projects during the performance, others as embodied by Fritz herself through the saints' movements she is performing and their speech she is uttering. The characters of Edvardsen's *oslo* or Mahammed's *Salut Copain*, on the other hand, remain more immaterial. The man who endlessly walks into the room that Edvardsen describes, or the undefined man who Mahammed introduces to different absurd situations mainly emerge in the audience's imagination, which is triggered when listening to the texts.

Throughout the dissertation, I have also considered kinetic textuality as the 21st century re-emergence of a much broader artistic exploration of the affinity between language and movement. I have pointed out how the fascination with connecting language to movement (and vice versa) not only runs through the poetic explorations of Stéphane Mallarmé or digital poetry, but also occurs in the choreographic experiments and various talking dance pieces of Judson Dance Theater, as well as in Pina Bausch's highly theatricalized approach to dance through the inclusion of speech. Tracing this trajectory helped to historicize the twelve performances selected for this dissertation and to treat them as contemporary manifestations of a recurrent artistic interest dating back much further. After circling around kinetic textuality in order to approach it from different angles, I shall now summarize the main arguments around which this dissertation has been orbiting. In these final pages, I will express the main arguments I have distilled from closely looking at, reflecting on, and theoretically grounding the presence of kinetic textuality in contemporary performing arts, and from tracing its retroactive echoes in a range of historical cases. The following sections each deal with one of the central arguments in this study: the two-fold condition of appearance of kinetic textuality on the stage and on the page, kinetic textuality's status as a literary object that can be choreographed, and the relationship unfolding between kinetic textuality and its audience. As we have seen, due to its close affinity with movement, these three key aspects of kinetic textuality reflect a hyper-dialectical relationship between stage and page, dance and literature, immersion and withdrawal.

The intersection between the stage and the page in kinetic textuality

One of the main arguments put forward in the five chapters is that kinetic textuality breaks down a clear-cut distinction between the stage and the page. In Chapter One, I have primarily grasped this intersection between the two realms by focusing on the hyper-dialectical relation between text and body underlying kinetic textuality. I outlined how kinetic textuality is rooted in the same hyper-dialectical relation between language and embodiment that Merleau-Ponty foregrounds in his reflections on language: both the material qualities of the text and the form of its embodiment contribute to how language conveys meaning. From this hyper-dialectical perspective on the relationship between text and body, I have described how the movement produced by kinetic textuality in the text can be traced by considering its rhythmic structure as well as the textured soundscape it produces. As frequently highlighted in this chapter, the use of choreographic movement is a distinguishing feature of the embodiment of the text in kinetic textuality. Both the text's rhythm and its auditory component also regulate its embodiment in performance, while the specific manner of embodiment in turn influences the material qualities of the text itself. *new skin* is an example of that dynamic structuring kinetic textuality, since the rhythm and soundscape evoked by the text compel De Meyer to move physically in a highly specific way: responding with bouncing movements to the words she is saying in turns allows her to emphasize their rhythmic and sonorous dimensions. Moreover, when copying movements described in the text with actual movements on stage, De Meyer also causes spectators to imagine the scenery pictured in the text as something that is happening on stage. In this sense, the hyper-dialectical relationship between text and body also resurfaces in the way in which kinetic textuality combines kinesthetic with mimetic strategies. These kinesthetic strategies include the many ways in which movement emerges through the text (through the physical movements that accompany it, the movements described in the text, and the compositional movements evoked by rhythm and sound) that potentially activate kinesthetic engagement in the audience. The mimetic dimension of kinetic textuality, as I have demonstrated in *new skin*, means that the movements and the spoken text work together to evoke a transformation, from performer into fictional character.

While Chapter One mainly approached the hyper-dialectical relationship between text and body in kinetic textuality through the notions of mimesis, kinesthesia, rhythm, and sound, Chapter Two delved deeper into this by focusing on the text-performance relationship that governs kinetic textuality. Here, I argued that the context of dance and choreography plays a key role in the text-performance relationship structuring kinetic textuality: its fundamental connection to choreographic movement accentuates the key role of embodiment in

kinetic textuality. However, with the exception of the work of Susan Leigh Foster, the use of speech in dance has not yet been thoroughly scrutinized in relation to this choreographic context. In this chapter, I therefore looked at how the long-standing debate in theater and performance scholarship on the relationship between text and performance can contribute to a better understanding of the use of text in dance. Two positions expressed in the context of drama and playwriting offered the most relevant perspectives to approach the status of text in dance: Julia Jarcho's claim that the compositional qualities of the text can highlight its "foreignness" to the stage (2017) and Stanton B. Garner's work on the fundamentally embodied and kinesthetic dimensions of writing for the stage (1994, 2018) proved to be particularly suited to grasping the relation between text and performance from the perspective of dance. By analyzing different uses of language in Chignell's performance, I indicated that kinetic textuality more emphatically accentuates the oscillation between its condition as a written and as a performed element oriented towards spectators. The specificity of kinetic textuality lies in how it functions as a text that clearly presents itself as written, yet establishes a distinctly kinesthetic connection between the performer and audience, which develops through the various forms of movement provoked by the text. As I have demonstrated, material qualities of kinetic textuality in print, such as the emphasis on rhythm and sound, point towards a specific pronunciation (or embodiment) on stage, while in performance, these features continue to draw attention to kinetic textuality's written existence on the page. By uncovering the specific relationship between text and performance which governs kinetic textuality, I furthermore aimed at illustrating how a key methodological assumption of postphenomenology returns in my approach to kinetic textuality. The observation that the form of the text's embodiment in performance can be traced back to the specific material composition of the text is in line with the postphenomenological understanding that a tool is a multistable entity. From the perspective of multistability, the text already partly prescribes its embodiment in its material composition, yet it does leave space for different manifestations of that embodiment. From this, I have argued that postphenomenological discourses offer a valuable perspective from which to further develop W.B. Worthen's suggestion that writing for the stage should be considered as a tool or a technology.

The first two chapters were mainly devoted to introducing the main theoretical frameworks and key notions of my approach to kinetic textuality, emphasizing how the interaction between text and performance figures within it. The next three chapters explored further how empathically embodied texts (because intertwined with choreographic physical movement), which nevertheless present themselves as pieces of writing, function in the rest of the corpus. The notions of "imagination," "theatricality," and "relationality" foregrounded

in the final three chapters allowed me to unpack the structure of kinetic textuality's twofold material appearance on both the stage and the page, against the background of the different dramaturgical contexts in which kinetic textuality is used.

In Chapter Three, I elaborated further on the different strategies used in kinetic textuality to appeal to the imagination of the audience, also briefly touched upon in Chapter One. Here too, it became clear that that appeal is realized through the conjunction of stage and page, given that some strategies adopted on the page already point towards its existence on the stage. More specifically, the social space in which the audience is confronted with the text can already be traced in the specific compositional strategies in the text that activate the participation of the audience. The inclusion, for instance, of generic categories or structures of drifting significations and negation in Mette Edvardsen and Dounia Mahammed's texts invite the audience to fill in the contours of the images provided by the texts, or to generate images, even though the self-contradictory language used to describe them makes them inconceivable in the first place. Mallarmé's reflections on dance and his recognition of choreographic structures in poetry helped to trace the mechanisms used to evoke the shared social space of performance in poetry. From this perspective, I have argued that kinetic textuality's emphasis on the audience's imagination can be considered as a strategy through which the page incorporates the compositional logic of the stage. I traced this mechanism through a close reading of the text itself, rather than through an assessment of how the text operates within performance. While this approach might seem to contradict the embodied, spatial, and staged perspective I introduced as my main angle on kinetic textuality in the first two chapters, this is not the case. On the contrary, it actually confirmed and expanded my earlier claim that certain aspects of the choreographic nature of the embodied nature of kinetic textuality can already be discerned in the text itself.

Chapter Four focused on kinetic textuality through broader discussions on the role of theatricality in late 20th and early 21st century dance, and the discourse on dance and resistance. More specifically, referring to Daniel Linehan's *Body of Work*, I explained how he not only theatricalizes his own dance archive, but also incorporates theatricality as a compositional strategy in his use of textual repetition and variation. His use of kinetic textuality, I argued, mirrors the piece's overall gesture of resistance against a linear understanding of temporality, which states that dance cannot be archived. My analysis of Bryana Fritz's MacBook dance *Indispensible blue (offline)* showed that resistance mainly emerges from what postphenomenology calls an "embodiment relation" between human users, language, and a computer; her gesture of staging this embodiment relation also provides insights into a kinesthetic way of resisting some movement imperatives ingrained in the computer. In contrast to the kinesthetic type of resistance portrayed in *Indispensible blue*

(offline), Fritz's use of theatricality in *Submission Submission*, to reproduce the force of resistance in the lives of medieval female saints, relies mainly on mimetic strategies. This, I contended, highlights an important distinction between kinetic textuality on the one hand, and, on the other, the use of text in dance that more clearly reflects a conceptual dance legacy. In the latter case, text tends to become incorporated in a dramaturgy in which we can trace a gesture of resistance *against* (and not *through*) theatricality-as-representation. Together, the three pieces thus demonstrate that the resistant gesture of kinetic textuality should be seen in relation to the strategies of theatricality that it relies on. My discussion of these pieces further revealed how the theatrical strategies of Linehan and Fritz insert the spatial and temporal logic of the page into the medium of the stage. In Fritz's case, this happens explicitly when the page features as a Word document on stage, while in Linehan's case, the logic of the page emerges through strategies of repetition that highlight the text's repeatability and therefore its written dimension.

In Chapter Five, I extended my argument that kinetic textuality establishes a specific relationship with its audience, by showing how it can also produce specific structures of relationality between different performers on stage. My analysis of Abke Haring's *Platina* stressed how the piece presents a rather painful relational space between the characters through the interaction of text and choreographic movement. The carefully constructed and stylistically composed dialogue uses rhythmic strategies of repetition and variation, while its phrases, when uttered in performance, provoke strong physical reactions in Haring's body. Sara Ahmed's theory on emotions enabled me to express this merging of writing and corporeality as the basis for representing the emotional circuit governing the relations between the characters in *Platina*. The same balancing act between the written and embodied nature of kinetic textuality resurfaces in Alma Söderberg's *Entangled Phrases*, which presents a more pleasurable site of relationality. The intersection between stage and page that also structures this performance is revealed through Roland Barthes's conceptual framework of "pheno-song," "geno-song," and "grain." In this chapter, I outlined how, in both pieces, kinetic textuality portrays a specific site of relationality, where the distance from the other is acknowledged but where an attempt is nevertheless made to overcome it. The textures of relationality produced by *Platina* and *Entangled Phrases* thus mirror the way in which kinetic textuality establishes a two-sided relationship with its audience: an attempt to transcend the distance between audience and performer, which continuously, nevertheless, recalls the inevitability of that distance.

Kinetic textuality as a (choreographed) literary object

The different ways in which text is hyper-dialectically connected to movement demonstrate not only that text can function as the trigger for movement. This interfusion also indicates that text itself can be choreographed, by playing with typography, projecting words, or adopting formal strategies that install a sense of textual movement and highlight the compositionality of the text. This brings me to another key contention that kept returning in my analyses of the performances: that kinetic textuality presents itself as a literary object on stage, one that conforms to choreographic compositional strategies. The emphasis on the text's "objecthood" suggests that kinetic textuality ties in with two broader tendencies within the performing arts. Firstly, the use of text with a strong emphasis on corporeality and choreography is reminiscent of textual strategies often adopted in postdramatic theater, where the status of the text within the performance shifted considerably so that it, as Hans-Thies Lehmann has described it, "becomes like an exhibited object" (2006, 147). Secondly, kinetic textuality's appearance as a literary object that can be choreographed also mirrors broader trends in 21st century dance, where, according to Rudi Laermans, "sound, video imagery, light or specific elements of the set are no longer only used to support a choreography, but are explored as movement sources in their own right […] thereby supplementing the human body as the presupposed prime medium of dance" (2015, 230).

Despite these similarities, this study has also revealed that kinetic textuality moves away from what are considered to be the main characteristics of postdramatic theater and 21st century dance. The argument that, in postdramatic theater, "the theatrical means beyond language are positioned equally alongside the text and are systematically thinkable without it" (Lehmann 2006, 55) is impossible to reconcile with the foregrounding of the text by kinetic textuality, as the guiding element of the performance. In the discussion on 21st century dance, as we have seen, text and language are often included in the list of "objects" that can be choregraphed in the more "inclusive approach to dance" (Laermans 2015, 229). Nevertheless, the text is often considered as just one of many elements within the choreographic structure, while the question of what exactly it is that makes a certain use of text "choreographic" is still largely unexplored. This study has pointed out that the choreographic dimension of kinetic textuality is in fact rooted in the tension it produces from its nature as a literary but also highly embodied object. This invites us to re-assess the rather disembodied perspective often adopted to account for key shifts within 21st century dance. Contrary to what kinetic textuality's presence as a "literary object" on stage might suggest, the corporeality underpinning how this writing is eventually produced in

performance contributes as much to its choreographic dimension as do its compositional strategies.

In order to better comprehend how compositional strategies of texts can also be deeply choreographic in nature, I have turned to a historical corpus of works that show a similar fascination with the affinities between text and movement. The transhistorical comparisons have shown that what distinguishes kinetic textuality from its historical precursors is that the choreographic nature of kinetic textuality needs to be sought in the enmeshment between two of its conditions: being embodied and being written. The four influential and widely recognized 20th century artists in the historical corpus (Stéphane Mallarmé, Trisha Brown, Bill T. Jones, Pina Bausch) also provided the necessary clues to understanding the changed status of text, without making it subordinate to other theatrical elements. I will now briefly summarize how the transhistorical comparisons enabled me to better understand kinetic textuality's status as a literary object, and how these findings helped me in turn to position kinetic textuality vis-à-vis the discourse on postdramatic theater or 21st century dance. I will do so by shuffling the order of the five chapters, in order to more insightfully connect some of the main claims made in them and point to different cross-connections between the chapters.

In Chapter Four, I traced how the emphatically corporeal dimension of kinetic textuality crucially contrasts with many theories characterizing a main segment of 21st-century dance as a move away from the human body in motion. To do so, I examined the theatrical strategies adopted by Linehan and Fritz to foreground the corporeal dimension of their texts. On the one hand, the texts of Linehan and Fritz clearly presented themselves through technological mediation as literary objects: as objects that can be sculpted with the help of either a recording device projecting the text as sound into space, or by a computer projecting the text as a visual element onto the screen. On the other hand, the ways in which recording devices or computers were used in these pieces were part of attempts not to replace the human body of the dancer with a technological device, but rather to foreground the physical effort of the body uttering or writing the text. By presenting the text as an exhibited and projected object, Linehan and Fritz remind us of the bodily movements that brought it forth. The choreographic nature of their texts, therefore, resides in their corporeal quality, which is foregrounded *as a result of* compositional textual strategies such as repetition or the visual projection of words.

Adopting similar strategies of repetition and theatricality, Pina Bausch's talking dances perhaps come closer to kinetic textuality than the other historical precursors I discuss in this dissertation. However, the crucial difference is that, in Bausch's work, neither the repetition

nor the theatricality produced on stage are presented as something that also took place on the page. In the performances of Haring and Söderberg, however, the text is introduced as a literary object, using choreographic compositional strategies. *Platina* is more clearly presented as a corporeal performance that is nevertheless rooted in a dramatic piece of writing. Even though the explicit choral and musical way of using language almost hides the fact that the soundscape produced in *Entangled Phrases* is a piece of poetry, the leaflet containing the poem given to the audience after the performance explicitly exposes the text as an object. Moreover, as my reading of *Platina* and *Entangled Phrases* through Lehmann's account of postdramatic theater demonstrated, the rather conflicting relationship between text and body studied by Lehmann differs considerably from the hyper-dialectical interplay between text and body in kinetic textuality.

The historical comparisons I developed in Chapter Two allowed me to gain an insight into the mechanisms behind a text "assimilated to choreographic purposes" (Foster 2002, 177). The talking dances discussed in this chapter (Trisha Brown's *Accumulation with Talking Plus Watermotor* or Bill T. Jones's *Floating the Tongue*) provided examples of how text indeed becomes an object that can be choreographed: by emphasizing the physical and cognitive effort that producing speech while dancing requires, by using compositional structures of repetition and revision in their texts, or by organizing physical movements and the uttered text in such a way that the one functions as a verbal or corporeal duplicate of the other. However, the anecdotal, improvisatory, or commentary modes of speaking in Brown and Jones's choreographies contrast sharply with the more composed, somewhat enigmatic, and definitely *un*natural way of using language that characterizes kinetic textuality. In Chignell's *Poems and Other Emergencies*, as I have outlined, kinetic textuality is more clearly presented as a piece of poetry. Its literary nature is conveyed not only in the fact that the text is sometimes read aloud through a microphone in the dark, organizing our concentration in such a way that we become fully focused on the text itself, creating an experience that resembles reading; its carefully constructed composition also reveals that it has not come about through improvisation in the here-and-now. This marks a difference from the anecdotal and improvisational (Brown) or conceptual and metatheatrical way (Jones) of using text studied in this chapter.

Of the various historical examples included in this dissertation, the writings of Mallarmé helped me most to grasp how, on stage, kinetic textuality presents itself as a literary object that adopts choreographic strategies. More specifically, I have drawn from Mallarmé's suggestion that a poem can behave as a dance, not only in the modulating semantic movements of sentences, but also through the involvement of the audience, triggered by this semantic instability. By identifying these aspects also in the texts of Mahammed and Edvardsen, I

concluded that kinetic textuality is not only an artistic strategy that emphasizes the inherently corporeal and kinetic dimension of language, but that it is also a way in which compositionally adjusts text to the logic of dance. However, these readings also demonstrated, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, that the staged nature of kinetic textuality is still essential for it to appear as a choreographed literary object.

The incomplete immersion in kinetic textuality and its withdrawal

What also emerged from the historical comparisons was a better understanding of the specific encounter taking place between kinetic textuality and the audience. This brings me to the final main argument which has evolved over the course of this dissertation: that in its relationship with the audience, kinetic textuality produces a form of kinesthetic immersion which is consistently disrupted. In Chapter One, I indicated how kinetic textuality does not fully become graspable at the time of performance. The text's carefully composed rhythmicity and soundscape, emphasized in performance, as well as the often quite rapid pace in which De Meyer delivers the text, sometimes conceal the full semantic depth of the spoken phrases. The use of kinetic textuality in *new skin* thus shows a hyper-dialectical movement in kinetic textuality, where the same compositional strategies that help to include the audience immersively in the text simultaneously create a rift in this connection. While Chapter One already demonstrated how the encounter between kinetic textuality and its audience results in an incomplete immersion, I will now describe how the same dual effect—both mesmerizing and distancing—returns in the other eleven pieces.

In my reading of Chignell's *Poems and Other Emergencies*, I indicated how especially the ending of the performance generates a kinesthetic immersion of the audience in kinetic textuality, by emphasizing the rhythmicity of the text, together with the choreographic movement it describes. However, by describing the performed movements through negations, Chignell also undermines this connection, creating a somewhat confusing dissonance in the seemingly symbiotic relation between text and movement, whereby the text subverts our kinesthetic connection with the visual input we receive from the physical movements. A similar two-fold dynamic can be traced in the work of Mahammed and Edvardsen. As I have shown, their pieces are composed in such a way that they rely highly on the kinesthetic imagination and participation of the spectators, and thereby include them in the piece. Yet, the somewhat mechanical (Edvardsen) or introspective (Mahammed) ways in which they deliver their texts also seem to disavow the presence of the audience. This disavowal probably manifests itself most clearly in Edvardsen closing her eyes in *No Title*, but also returns in how Mahammed presents her text: as thoughts she speaks aloud, as if they are not intended to be presented to an audience. Linehan's use of kinetic textuality

in *Body of Work* produces the same mesmerizing effect, also resulting in a disruption. On the one hand, his use of repetition clearly highlights the corporeal dimension of the text, and thus creates an opportunity for the audience to engage with it on a kinesthetic level. On the other hand, this repetition adds a temporal layer that renders our unmediated and here-and-now connection with the text more ambiguous, forming a breach in this kinesthetic connection. In *Platina*, an inherently incomplete form of immersion is reproduced on stage in the form of relational structures between performers. While, in the storyline, these strategies help to show an attempt towards connection between two characters, the strategy of repetition used by the performance to present this also foregrounds the compositionality of both text and movements, emphasizing the constructed nature of the narrative, however kinesthetically involved we become in it. In Fritz's *Submission Submission*, the representation of the different saints is fragmentary and scattered between different writing bodies, reminding us of the incompleteness of that gesture and presenting the saints as figures that will inevitably remain beyond our reach.

In some cases, the incomplete immersion can be attributed to the text's *withdrawal* in the performance. As my discussion of *new skin* has outlined, textual compositional strategies can remind us of the text's writtenness, which in turn emphasizes its status as something that lies beyond the performance. When embodied so as to foreground this written dimension, when the performer speaks at a pace that seems oblivious of the tempo that the audience needs to fully digest the text, or adopts enunciation strategies that simply make it too difficult to fully grasp the text, kinetic textuality also displays a movement of withdrawal from its audience. In Fritz's *Indispensible blue (offline)*, for instance, the text is rendered somewhat inaccessible since it is projected on stage far too quickly for the audience to be able to read all of it. When Mahammed rapidly shifts from Dutch, to English, to French, to German (and back) in *waterwaswasser*, giving us too little time to really digest the full scope of her linguistic play on translations, her text also seems to escape the grasp of the audience. *Entangled Phrases* perhaps offers the most acute representation of how the same strategies that seek to create a kinesthetic attunement between the audience and the performers also mark the text's withdrawal in the moment of performing it. The corporeal dimension, as well as the musicality and rhythmicity highlighted in the way the three performers deliver the text, make the poem unrecognizable in the moment of performance. While I have argued from the outset of this study that performances using kinetic textuality are characterized by a renewed prominence of the text, an important aspect of this central position is sometimes also the retraction of the text in the performance.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, these final conclusions about the encounter between kinetic textuality and its audience emerged as some of the first observations from this study. In

Chapter One, I finished the discussion of the hyper-dialectical relation between "kinetic" and "textuality" by highlighting how kinetic textuality produces a two-fold effect of mesmerizing and resignation. To reach and to return to this argument throughout the rest of the dissertation, I included various ways of reformulating the mesmerizing and distancing effect of kinetic textuality, which persistently brought me back to the hyper-dialectical dynamics between words and movements, stage and page, dance and literature. As such, my aim in this dissertation was not to confine kinetic textuality to a solid, stable, or unmovable "typology," but rather to acknowledge its versatility by scrutinizing it from various angles. A central observation from the beginning of this study is that kinetic textuality is a moving phenomenon, whose flexibility I have demonstrated not only by including twelve different performances, but also by considering different historical cases and theorists. I hope that the kaleidoscopic view resulting from this multi-faceted approach can encourage other alterations, disagreements, and further explorations seeking to grasp the inherent mobility of kinetic textuality. As in the theater foyer, I am convinced that the most interesting insights into this phenomenon, which I have called kinetic textuality, will only emerge when we continue to talk about it.

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DUTCH SUMMARY

Er is in de Westerse podiumkunsten van het laatste decennium een toenemende tendens om de correlatie tussen taal en beweging artistiek te verkennen. Hierbij valt vooral de intrinsieke connectie tussen taal en beweging als expressieve middelen op. In sommige voorstellingen zetten woordenstromen onmiddellijk verschillende fysieke bewegingen in gang, terwijl deze bewegingen op hun beurt ook functioneren als directe aansporingen voor het uitspreken van specifieke woorden. In andere gevallen onderzoeken kunstenaars hoe een tekst zelf compositiestrategieën integreert die als choreografisch worden bestempeld, omdat de zinnen zo zijn gecomponeerd dat ze een bewegingssequentie installeren, zij het een die uit woorden is samengesteld.

Dit proefschrift brengt deze artistieke strategieën in kaart om zo de intrinsieke parallellen tussen tekst en beweging te belichten, en verzamelt hen onder de noemer 'kinetische tekstualiteit'. Het exemplarische corpus bestaat uit twaalf performances die tussen 2011 en 2020 werden gecreëerd door Chloe Chignell, Hannah De Meyer, Mette Edvardsen, Bryana Fritz, Abke Haring, Daniel Linehan, Dounia Mahammed en Alma Söderberg. Het corpus wordt voornamelijk bestudeerd aan de hand van de eigenlijke performances en de bijbehorende gepubliceerde teksten, maar het wordt ook benaderd via interviews met kunstenaars en het bredere discours rond de performances, zoals recensies of gepubliceerde interviews. De studie van dit corpus is gericht op een beter begrip van het gebruik van kinetische tekstualiteit binnen de concrete artistieke context van de voorstellingen (formele, dramaturgische en poëtische keuzes) maar ook in het licht van bredere tendensen binnen de hedendaagse podiumkunsten, en tegen de achtergrond van oudere vormen van artistiek onderzoek naar de affiniteit tussen tekst en beweging.

Om deze vragen te beantwoorden worden mediumspecifieke theoretische discussies over de relatie tussen tekst en performance en beschouwingen over dans uit de late 20^{e} en vroege 21^{e} eeuw geanalyseerd. Naast die analyse wordt ook een transhistorische vergelijking gemaakt tussen het geselecteerde hedendaagse corpus en een historisch corpus van kunstenaars die ook artistiek onderzoek hebben gedaan naar de relatie tussen tekst en beweging, dans en spraak, choreografie en schrijven. Dit historische corpus omvat het werk van choreografen als Trisha Brown, Bill T. Jones en Pina Bausch, maar ook de geschriften over dans van dichter Stéphane Mallarmé. Uit deze transhistorische vergelijking blijkt

dat kinetische tekstualiteit kan worden beschouwd als de hedendaagse uitdrukking van een artistiek onderzoek dat reeds veel eerder in gang werd gezet. De manier waarop het vandaag wordt ingezet is echter radicaler: de kunstenaars experimenteren meer met hoe choreografische principes kunnen worden opgenomen in de tekstcompositie zelf.

De fenomenologische reflecties op de relatie tussen taal en belichaming van met name Maurice Merleau-Ponty, maar ook van postfenomenologen Don Ihde en Mark Coeckelbergh, vormen het belangrijkste theoretische kader van waaruit dit proefschrift het geselecteerde corpus leest en bekijkt. De terugkerende aanname in het werk van deze filosofen is dat taal enkel kan bestudeerd worden in de context van haar relatie met belichaming. Dit biedt een cruciaal perspectief om te traceren hoe hun correlatie artistiek verkend wordt door kinetische tekstualiteit, juist omdat deze artistieke vorm de fundamentele belichaamde conditie van taal benadrukt door haar nauw af te stemmen op choreografische beweging. Bovendien wordt het fenomenologische kader ook gebruikt als methodologische houding in dit proefschrift: om bloot te leggen hoe kinetische tekstualiteit functioneert binnen de artistieke context van de verschillende voorstellingen, vormt de relatie die zich ontvouwt tussen kinetische tekstualiteit en de toeschouwer die ermee in aanraking komt een centraal vertrekpunt.

De eerste twee hoofdstukken van het proefschrift schetsen de belangrijkste invalshoeken en theoretische discussies die het concept ‘kinetische tekstualiteit’ onderbouwen. In het eerste hoofdstuk wordt een definitie van kinetische tekstualiteit gepresenteerd. Dit door verschillende kaders te introduceren die een begrip van ‘tekst’ ondersteunen als iets dat beweging kan installeren en produceren. Het tweede hoofdstuk houdt de onderscheidende formele kenmerken van kinetische tekstualiteit uit het eerste hoofdstuk tegen het licht van de tekst-performancerelatie waarop kinetische tekstualiteit is gebaseerd. Het tweede deel van het proefschrift traceert meer specifiek hoe kinetische tekstualiteit dramaturgisch functioneert binnen verschillende voorstellingen. De begrippen ‘verbeelding’, ‘theatraliteit’ en ‘relationaliteit’ die in deze hoofdstukken voorop staan, helpen om de verschillende toepassingen van kinetische tekstualiteit in het geselecteerde corpus verder te onderzoeken vanuit het perspectief van de dramaturgische structuren waarin elke specifieke voorstelling is ingebed. Als artistieke strategie wordt kinetische tekstualiteit gekenmerkt door de verwevenheid van tekst en beweging en biedt het daarom inzicht in de complexe relatie tussen lichaam en taal. In de vijf hoofdstukken wordt nagegaan hoe de verschillende voorstellingen deze relatie onderzoeken en vormgeven, om zo licht te werpen op de specificiteit van deze hedendaagse praktijk en deze te relateren aan zijn historische en bredere hedendaagse context.

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