

THE BODY AS A POETIC-SOUND PRACTICE

EDUARDO PARTIDA

Research Proposal
Music (MA by Research)
University of Huddersfield

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La peau humaine des choses la dermo de la réalité

—Antonin Artaud

1. Introduction

The present project seeks to place the (human) body at the center of the sonic and musical act in order to show its philosophical and political content. To reach this goal it is necessary to forge a conceptual path that allows to analyze and deconstruct fundamental concepts and practices in the musical tradition (the instrument, the score, the composer-interpreter dichotomy, etc.) that inhibit us from thinking the body as the center of the poetic act. Thus, the present research has two outputs: the first one is the development of a musical composition focusing on the body as its poetic center. The second one is a text that will provide elements to problematize the arts, and especially music, as bodily practices that construct subjectivity. Both materials, the sound work and the text, aim to relocate the study of the arts, body and music away from a purely technical discourse, to show its influence and power in the production of subjects.

2. Problem Statement

In *The Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord noted that “all that once was directly lived has become mere representation”. (Debord 2002: 12). “Lived reality suffers the material assaults of the spectacle's mechanisms of contemplation [...] reality erupts within the spectacle, and the spectacle is real”. (Debord 2002: 14). The representation acquires autonomy from the represented. The spectacle emerges as a separate world, not as a set of images and symbols, but as the concrete, bodily and real relationships that it creates. The spectacle acquires autonomy, what is not lived becomes real, concrete.

Perhaps the late modernity has increased this spectacularization of the world transforming the language into mere symbols with little or no effect on the real and sensible life.

We learn language and words more through machines and screens than through the coexistence and the relationships with our mothers and with our communities. Language has lost its bodily, dermal, sensitive quality. The other's body is not longer functioning as a guarantee of the relation between language and physical reality. Here is our real crisis, because "when the relation between the signifier and the signified is no longer guaranteed by the presence of the body, my affective relation to the world starts to be disturbed. [...] This is the point where precariousness starts. At the point of disconnection between language and the body". (Berardi 2014: 102). The linguistic sign has emancipated from its referential, corporal function.

From here, the poetic act emerges as the transcendence of language, as an overcoming of the inherent representativeness of it. "Poetry is an awareness of the world, a particular way of relating to reality." (Tarkovski 2009: 21). Poetry returns the sensitive and corporeal quality of the world, it builds subjectivities from our bodies and sensibilities. "The language indicates, represents; the poem does not explain or represent: it presents. [...] Poetry is a penetration, being in reality. "(Paz 2014: 116).

"Poetry is the here and now of the voice, of the body, and of the word, sensuously giving birth to meaning" (Berardi 2014: 21). Poetry is the physical presentation of meaning, the creation of a world. In this sense, music is revealed as an absolutely corporal and sensitive poetic form. "All poetry is music, and in a more precise way, singing" (Gorostiza 1964). It is this corporeal, singable quality that is inherent in musical production, which gives it the potential to create worlds and subjectivities. "The evocational potencies of musical vibration directly act on the mind. In the musical action, in fact, signifier and signified are not separated, and music triggers effects of a-signifying immersive stimulation" (Berardi 2017: 117). In the words of the symbolist poet Alexander Blok: "[Music] creates the world, and is the spiritual body of the world, fluid thought... poetry, reaching beyond its limit, will probably drown into music"¹.

¹ Cited in: Berardi 2017: 165.

This project intends to reflect on music and sound as an absolutely bodily activity, in order to recover its poetic and political force. "There is more reason in your body than in your best wisdom". (Nietzsche 2009). It is the body that allows us to transcend the representative barriers of language and to approach a poetic experience beyond representativeness. "Only the body is able to fill in the gap that two thousand years of law, theology, and philosophy carved out between things and persons, placing one at the disposition of the other" (Esposito 2017: 110). The body enables the materialization of the world. In the words of Antonin Artaud: "It is through the skin that metaphysics will be made to reenter our minds; only the flesh can supply a definitive understanding of Life"².

This project places the body at the center of all philosophical reflection and of every aesthetic act, the body as the genesis of all knowledge. "One does not separate the mind from the body nor the senses from the intelligence, especially in a domain where the endlessly renewed fatigue of the organs requires intense and sudden shocks to revive our understanding." (Artaud 1978: 86). Recovering the poetic, political and philosophical potential of the body is the objective of this project, because, in the words of Silvia Federici:

"Our struggle then must begin with the re-appropriation of our body, the revaluation and rediscovery of its capacity for resistance, and expansion and celebration of its powers, individual and collective. [...] Our bodies have reasons that we need to learn, rediscover, reinvent. We need to listen to their language as the path to our health and healing, as we need to listen to the language and rhythms of the natural world as the path to the health and healing of the earth. Since the power to be affected and to affect, to be moved and move, a capacity which is indestructible, exhausted only with death, is constitutive of the body, there is an immanent politics residing in it: the capacity to transform itself, others, and change the world". (Federici 2016).

² Cited in: Sontag 2007: 57.

Finally, it is important to mention some of the bases, contributions and distances that this research aims to take with regard other corporal and musical practices and studies:

The discourse of the body, mainly from its politicization, is frequently used in some works of the composers belonging to *The New Discipline* and *The New Conceptualism*. In these works the body is usually treated as a significant object and the works deal, mainly, with the semantics previously established in the culture of gestures and body movements. This project intends to move off these practices, therefore it is not the cultural meanings of the body put into performance what concerns, but the poetic experience of the body beyond meanings, and its relation to sound and movement.

In order to enrich this work, I will introduce interdisciplinary experiences and investigations from different fields such as dance and theater, especially those developed by Antonin Artaud and Jerzy Grotowski. Also, Ko Murobushi, Kazuo Ohno and Tatsumi Hijikata's works are key for this research. In addition, it will be important to put my own body as the place of composition and problematization to locate the poetic and subjectivity creation. *Canti del Capricorno* by Giacinto Scelci and other music pieces where corporality plays an important role in the aesthetic act, are of main interest for this investigation.

3. Methodology

Differently to the traditional scientist methods where the author's experience tries to vanish to achieve a flawless objectivity, this research aims to focus on the sensual and poetic living experience of the body, of my body. Because "my experience still implies knowledge of the facts I am dealing with (in eroticism, of bodies; in religion, of the ritual forms without which collective religious practices could not exist). We cannot consider these forms except as illuminated by historical perspective with the erotic value they have acquired" (Bataille 2013: 39).

This research includes the production of a body practice condensed in a musical work and the production of a critical text. This double work aims to sum up the aesthetic, po-

litical and philosophical reflections developed during this investigation. I conceive this dichotomy of sound and written work only as a way to systematize and simplify what, due to the ambitiousness of the project, might become something too complex to be approached in unity.

3.1 The piece

3.1.1 Generalities

The background of this investigation can be traced in two past pieces: *De cada poro resuelto de mi piel* (2018)³, and *Verbo* (2019)⁴. The piece that I propose to develop in this project, continues the creative path for the materialization of this interest.

This work will be named *Cuerpo* (Body in english), and its main objective is to create a music that arises in its entirety from my own body. A music without instruments, without techniques or external processes, where my personal and sensitive experience of my own body is the piece itself.

3.1.2 Music and corporality

The work will consist of my naked body, lying on the floor, making rapid and violent movements, similar to those of a body in a state of convulsion, with short periods of relaxation⁵. Musically, the piece will be entirely composed of screams, guttural sounds, breaths and all the sonorities caused by body movements (the sound material will be similar to my previous work *Verbo*). In order to transform all movement into sound, it will be necessary to amplify the whole body, as much as possible. In order to achieve this goal, I will design microphones that register sounds inside my body, those caused by my voice and those produced by dragging my body against the floor. I will seek to place

³ The score of this work can be downloaded in the following link: <https://xhes.page.link/poroscr>, the video of the first performance can be seen in: <https://youtu.be/2SWFAf8zrMQ> and a studio version can be heard in: <https://xhes.page.link/poroscd>

⁴ The score of this work can be downloaded in: <https://xhes.page.link/verboscr>. The work will be performed for the first time on April 4, 2019.

⁵ I imagine that, visually, this piece may be a bit similar to some butoh dance works, for example: <https://youtu.be/rrgcchDjXbM>

microphones on my skin, the mouth, the windpipe and the throat. The work will last between 20 and 25 minutes.

3.1.3 The notation

Since the body is the center of the piece that I am proposing, it is necessary to develop a unique notation system in which the body movements are represented graphically. I have tried different corporal notation systems in the past, but in my piece *Verbo* I have reached a sufficiently solid degree of graphic systematization.

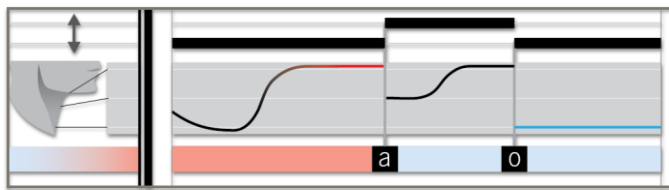


Figure 1

The notation system used in *Verbo* describes only the movements made within the phonic apparatus, leaving as a secondary element, resulting from the body movements,

the rhythmic-temporal part and the musical pitches. The graphics only describe the movements of the trachea, the pressure placed on it, the mouth opening and breathing (see Figure 1). This notation is intended to be a totally bodily writing and to treat music as a result of the poetic experience of the body.

The piece that I will develop in this project will take as a starting point the notation system used in *Verbo* and extend it to the rest of the body. I will seek to integrate and unify, in the same notation system, the movements of each part of the body that will integrate the entire sound-body universe of this work. I will seek to write every movement that my body produces.

To achieve this, I will make several short studies of each part of the body that requires a unique notation system, creating a gallery of small works for different organs of the body, and later, I will unify all this corporal and graphic explorations into a single work.

3.2 The text

The tentative chapters of this project are:

3.2.1 *Language and spectacle*

Starting from the analysis of modernity proposed by Guy Debord and Franco "Bifo" Berardi, this chapter will briefly analyze the current state of society.

3.2.2 *The poetic*

This chapter will problematize about poetic creation and its role in the formation of subjectivities in the current context studied in the previous chapter.

3.2.3 *Body*

In this chapter I will discuss the formation of the body as a field of political writing, its role in human subjectivity and its poetic potential.

3.2.4 *Music*

In this chapter I will problematize the current musical practice from the concepts presented in the previous chapters. I will analyze the role of the composer, the interpreter, the instrument, the interpretation and other vital elements in contemporary music, thinking them from as a poetic and corporal practice with its political and philosophical implications.

3.2.5 *Analysis of works*

This chapter will seek to analyze some authors and specific works of particular interest to this study using the concepts developed in the previous chapters. The authors and works to analyze will be the following:

- The body in the theater of Antonin Artaud and Jerzy Grotowski.
- Politics of the body in the butoh dance.
- The use of the voice in *Canti del Capricorno* of Giacinto Scelci.
- Analysis of my piece *Cuerpo*.

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